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‘Skulls and tears: Identifying and analysing an African fantasy space extending over 5000 kilometres and across 5000 years’

paper read at the conference ‘Fantasy spaces: The power of images in a globalizing world’ (convenors Bonno Thoden van Velzen & Birgit Meyer), part of the WOTRO [Netherlands Foundation for Tropical Research] research programme ‘Globalization and the construction of communal identities’, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, 26-29 August 1998¹

0. PREFACE/ POSTSCRIPT 2006

The concept of fantasy space was developed in the context of one of the three constitutive subprogrammes of the Netherlands Foundation for Tropical Research (WOTRO) research programme ‘Globalization and the construction of communal identities’, which Peter Geschiere and I initiated in 1992, and which ran with considerable success up to 1999. Contrary to my own title for the present paper, the conference’s pivotal concept was supposed to refer, not to extension in geographical and/or temporal dimensions, but to the kind of virtual space of freedom, possibilities and alternatives, which is created by the human imagination. Such fantasy space was supposed to form the context of popular culture, and to be decisively transformed by the process of contemporary, technologically-induced globalisation. The focus of the sub-programme and its conference was, therefore, on innovation in contemporary popular culture rather than on the continuity in ancient myths, the fantasy was supposed to be that of the Third World social actors that were being studied, and not that – like in the case of the present paper – also that of the researcher herself or himself.² For these reasons the present paper was ill received by the convenors, although the discussant Peter Pels had some positive things to say about it. As one of the convenors reproached me in private:

‘You are an old-fashioned 19th-century entrenched scholar, and you did not even come with a paper.’

¹ Thanks are due to Ulrich Seeger (cf. Seeger, Ulrich, n.d. [2002], ‘Fonts apt to the transcription of Semitic texts’, at: http://semitistik.uni-hd.de/seeger/english/fonts_e.htm#anfang) and Peter Broers for their fonts Bock and Kefas2, respectively, as sources of special characters in Latin script under Microsoft Windows; Egyptian hieroglyphics in the present text were sampled directly from professional texts, mainly: Gardiner, A.H., 1994, *Egyptian Grammar: Being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs*, rev. 3rd ed., Oxford: Griffith Institute/ Ashmolean Museum, this edition first published 1957, first edition published 1927.

² On the temptation to try and impose objective, distancing rationality upon the study of myth, and the realisation that in fact even the scholarly study of myth has to combine both distancing rupture and mythopoeic fusion, on the part of the scholar, see: van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., in press, ‘Rupture and fusion in the approach to myth: Situating myth analysis between philosophy, poetics, and long-range historical reconstruction, with an application to the ancient and world-wide mythical complex of leopard-skin symbolism’, in press in: Schipper., M., Merolla, D., & Segal, R., eds., *Myth and the disciplines* [provisional title], special issue of *Mythology*, also at:

http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/Myth_shorter_for_journal.pdf.

Yet the whole point of my paper was, of course, to claim a near-global space for the continuity of ancient myth, and thus to present an exercise in the study of cultural proto-globalisation – like so much of my other work. In this respect the paper was the first installment in a series of papers on the near-universality of mythical knowledge, which I was soon to contrast with the near-universality (in the sense of global presence and application) that Sandra Harding is claiming as a distinctive feature of modern science.³

I started out as a historicising anthropologist of religion, conducting ethnographic and historical fieldwork in Tunisia (1968-), Zambia (1971-) and Guinea-Bissau (1981, 1983). In my 1988-1989 Botswana fieldwork⁴ I discovered the presence, in Southern African villages and cults, and as an apparent local African cultural achievement, of mainstream geomancy, which is in fact an intercontinental form of divinatory science with demonstrable points of manifestation, innovation and diffusion in classical China (Yi Jing 易經, ‘the Book of Changes’), in Abbāṣīd Iran around the turn of the first millennium CE (‘ilm al-raml علم الرمل ‘the science of sand’), in Madagascar (under the name of sikidy), in West Africa (under the name of Ifa), and in Medieval and Renaissance Europe (as geomantia ‘divination by the earth, terrestrial astrology’ and Punktierkunst ‘the art of divining by dots’). My subsequent research throughout the 1990s focused on tracing the ramifications of these, essentially Bronze and Iron Age, intercontinental connections, and formulating a theoretical and methodological frame in which they could be empirically demonstrated (for, given the demise of diffusionism as anthropology’s main stock-in-trade in the 1930s, the very claim of such intercontinental connections in space and time was now contentious),⁵ could be understood as forms of proto-globalisation, and within which their implications for our (largely fragmented and presentist) theory of culture could be spelled out.

The attempt to trace these connections as far back in time as history allowed, and to find the primordial forms of the formalisms (dots, lines, other basic signs, grids, oppositions, analogies, conceptions of the earth, of fate and of chance) on which these

³ Harding, S., 1997, ‘Is modern science an ethnoscience?: Rethinking epistemological assumptions’, in: Eze, E.C., ed., *Postcolonial African philosophy: A critical reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 45-70. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 2002c, ‘The underpinning of scientific knowledge systems: Epistemology or hegemonic power? The implications of Sandra Harding’s critique of North Atlantic science for the appreciation of African knowledge systems’, paper presented at the Colloquium ‘La rencontre des rationalités’, organised by the African Centre for Advanced Studies, the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies (CIPSH) and UNESCO, Porto Novo, Benin, September 18-21, 2002; available at: http://www.shikanda.net/general/porto_novo_for_hountondji_2-2003_bis.pdf ; now in press in the proceedings of the colloquium (*Le rencontre des rationalités*, ed. Paulin Hountondji), with CODESRIA, Dakar / Karthala, Paris. My paper on animal symbolism and ancient astronomies was another attempt to demonstrate the universalism parallel between modern science and other knowledge systems, and so was my extensive work on leopard symbolism; cf. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 2002, ‘From an African bestiary to universal science? Cluster analysis opens up a world-wide historical perspective on animal symbolism in divine attributes, divination sets, and in the naming of clans, constellations, zodiacs, and lunar mansions’, at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/animal.htm .

⁴ This background, and its theoretical implications for Intercultural Philosophy and long-range comparative historical research, is discussed at length in my 1999 Rotterdam inaugural lecture, a greatly expanded and revised English version constitutes the concluding chapter 15 of van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 2003, *Intercultural encounters: African and anthropological towards a philosophy of interculturality*, Berlin/Muenster: LIT, also at: http://www.shikanda.net/intercultural_encounters/Intercultural%20encounters%20ch15.pdf

⁵ Cf. Amselle, J.-L., 2001, *Branchements: Anthropologie de l’universalité des cultures*, Paris: Flammarion, with extensive, dismissive reference to my own work in this field.

divination systems were based, drove me to the study of the Ancient Near East, and I was soon fortunate to be coopted (through the very intervention of the above convenor) as a fulltime member of the Workgroup on Magic and Religion in the Ancient Near East, at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Wassenaar, 1994-1995. In this stimulating environment I became exposed to the mythologies of the Ancient Near East and of the world at large. I was prompted to extend my quest into the study of other formal systems besides divination (writing, board-games, languages, the symbolism of dots, of animals, of dotted animal skins, ancient astronomies, and combinations of these topics), and to make a personal contribution to the Black Athena debate which was then being waged.⁶ Immediately after this had led to the publication of my collection *Black Athena Ten Years After* (1997), I was invited by Martin Bernal to contribute to a collection of positive responses to his work, but the Africa-focussed paper I drafted in that connection, within a year developed, first into book-size length, and secondly, into an argument that could no longer conceal my disagreements with Bernal, his theories, methods, and politics of knowledge (as had already announced themselves when working on *Black Athena Ten Years Later*).

Various factors combined to lead to a situation where my own emerging book (provisionally baptised *Global bee flight* because it had come to focus on the bee symbolism of the ancient Egyptian royal titlature), despite substantial growth and rewriting in the years 1998-2001, was shelved until now (2006): I had taken on an new appointment as professor of intercultural philosophy, which initially took up all my time; I felt that I needed to study the Egyptian language and script much more closely; I also realised that I needed to develop an explicit theory of long-range historical comparison before I could protect my emerging writings from the clichéd criticism of being merely a revival of outdated diffusionism; I needed to acquaint myself much more fully with the long-range approaches that were being developed in archaeology, comparative linguistics (the hesitant recognition of such macro-families as Nostratic and Dene-Sino-Caucasian), genetics (Cavalli-Sforza and his school), and myth analysis (Witzel and his Harvard Round Table network). I became increasingly clear to me that, until I could formulate a master long-range model of cultural continuity and transformation since at least Upper Palaeolithic times across the entire Old World (Africa, Asia, Europe), neither my geomantic studies, nor *Global bee flight*, could obtain a sufficiently solid grounding to be sent into the world without risking my international academic reputation. Exchanging (1998) my chair in the anthropology of ethnicity for the chair of Foundations of Intercultural Philosophy created a situated where (not having received much formal philosophical training to begin with) I had to give priority to conceptual and analytical research over empirical historical research. Yet the continuous engagement, as intercultural philosopher, with issues of globalisation and the global politics of knowledge helped me to identify and understand the geopolitical ideological paradigms that sought to block my ever stronger sense of long-range world-wide cultural continuity. This philosophical work also helped me to realise how these

⁶ Cf. Bernal, M., 1987, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Vol. I, The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1787-1987*, London: Free Association Books/ New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; Bernal, M., 1991, *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. II, The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence*. London: Free Association Books; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press; Lefkowitz, M.R., & MacLean Rogers, G., eds, 1996, *Black Athena revisited*, Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press

paradigms in themselves represented hardening identitary positions, increasingly obsolescent in the face of cultural and communicative globalisation today; on the other hand, the kind of excessive, global and world historical connectivity I was claiming in my own work, seemed to be the conceptual and historical counterpart of the cultural and technological globalisation that had become the reality of today. Allowing my ongoing long-range research to ramify further and further afield, and to diversify into new fields were I hoped to meet with new encouragement,⁷ new knowledge and new criticism, a number of part projects gradually gave me the experience, the credentials and the confidence of an emerging overarching synthesis, under whose umbrella the many loose strands of the earlier, grander projects could gradually be tied together.

Thus I look now with very different eyes at the text that is being presented here, but my several lengthy postscripts still convey the sense of an ongoing project that I continue to stand for, despite the need of revision on many points.

NOTE: the present text was revised in 2006 on the basis of the paper presented in 1998; as a chapter of *Global bee flight*, that paper was also revised in the years 1998-2001, but those revision have not yet been taken into account here. Minor changes have been made in passing, major comments have been marked as Postscript 2006, and highlighted in yellow.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our explorations in the previous chapter⁸ brought out a large number of very specific, intriguing parallels between the civilisation of ancient Egypt, and the royal traditions and institutions of the modern Nkoya people of western central Zambia, 5000 km south of the Lower Nile valley, and 5000 years later. The identification and interpretation of these parallels depend on two corpora of data:

1. Nkoya traditions,
2. and ancient Egyptian history.

Both data sets are very incomplete. The concerted efforts of more than a dozen intellectual generations of Egyptologists have certainly brought our knowledge of Egyptian history up to a level impossible to predict at the inception of professional Egyptology in the early 19th

⁷ These projects are largely presented in the pages of my website ‘Ancient models of thought’ (at http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/index.html , as part of my <http://www.shikanda.net> portal). They include my extensive ongoing work on games, geomancy, archaeoastronomy and Neanderthal palaeoanthropology, the *Black Athena* debate, myth, and leopard-skin symbolism, – both published pieces, and provisional drafts. What that website does not yet present is my work in progress on *Ethnicity in Mediterranean protohistory* (with extensive studies of Late Bronze Age identities and proto-globalisation, including Egypt, Palestine, and the Aegean; in collaboration with Fred Woudhuizen), nor my related study on the work of Joseph Karst.

⁸ The present text is chapter 5 from a book draft: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., forthcoming, *Global Bee Flight: Sub-Saharan Africa, Ancient Egypt, and the World – Beyond the Black Athena thesis*, written in 1998-1999.

century CE. The present generation of Egyptologists numbers at least 300 members.⁹ Clearly, the data set concerning Egyptian history is at an enormous advantage as compared to the Nkoya one, which my Nkoya collaborators and I myself have pioneered only since 1972, and in the virtual absence of such usual aids as a professional dictionary, a professional grammar, a considerable number of publications available in the local language, the possibility of exchange with scholars studying the same language and culture, etc.¹⁰ However, working through the Egyptological literature it becomes clear that it does not yet represent a coherent and penetrating, theoretically informed analysis of, for instance, Egypt in the Archaic period, such as a comparative anthropologist of the late twentieth century CE would expect on the basis of her or his own discipline. Like its sister science Assyriology,¹¹ Egyptology has until quite recently¹² largely kept aloof of the main developments in the social sciences and the humanities in the course of the twentieth century CE; its members – not unlike Africanists – tend to be regional universalists, who are rarely truly at home in any specialist field of comparative or theoretical science which extends beyond ancient Egypt, but as far as ancient Egypt is concerned will tackle any topic, from religion to bee-keeping, from sexuality to architecture and writing systems. Partly as a result, the two main disciplines studying the Ancient Near East are still haunted by what their protagonists proudly acclaim as ‘positivism’: a dogged refusal to go beyond the crudest factual evidence and to engage in reasoned speculation informed by the many advances which the expansion of comparative and theoretical studies of historical periods, cultures, political systems and religions have reached since 1900 CE. In this context, even the moderately informed comparative anthropologist can not only *ask* awkward questions from the Egyptological material but may also be in a position to suggest new tentative *answers*, on the basis of the sociological and cultural theoretical imagination cultivated in anthropology in addition to a great respect for empirical data.


⁹ Baines, J., & Málek, J., 1987, *Atlas of ancient Egypt*, Oxford: Phaidon, first published 1984.

¹⁰ For a long time, the only linguistic material available to me in addition to what I learned from participant observation was: Anonymous, n.d., n.p. [Luampa Mission], ‘Nkoya grammar’, typescript, author’s collection, 20 pp; and: Anonymous [Shimunika, J.M.] n.d., ‘Dictionary Shinkoya-English’, typescript, author’s collection, 8°, 96 pp. Only by the end of my work on *Likota lya Bankoya* could I benefit from: Yasutoshi Yukawa, 1987, *A classified vocabulary of the Nkoya language*, Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. A full list of published material in the Nkoya language up to 1991 is included in my: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1992, *Tears of Rain: Ethnicity and history in central western Zambia*, London/Boston: Kegan Paul International, the full text is also available at <http://www.shikanda.net/ethnicity/Tearsweb/pdftears.htm> ; in addition to the long text of *Likota lya Bankoya* as published by myself, the only substantial text among these has been: Testamenta, 1952, *Testamenta ya yipyala Nyimbo* [Nkoya New Testament and Psalms], London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1952.

¹¹ For Assyriology, cf. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & Wiggermann, F.A.M., 2000, ‘Magic in history: A theoretical perspective and its application to Ancient Mesopotamia’, in: T. Abusch & K. van der Toorn, eds., *Magic in the Ancient Near East*, Groningen: Styx, and also at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/index.html

¹² But see, e.g., Trigger, B.G., 1995, *Early civilizations: Ancient Egypt in context*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, first published 1993; Kemp, B.J., 1995, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a civilization*, London: Routledge, first published 1989; Weeks, K.R., 1979, ed., *Egyptology and the social sciences*, Cairo: American University in Cairo Press; Wenke, R.J., 1989, ‘Egypt: Origin of complex societies’, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18: 129-155. To illustrate the shift in emphasis in anthropological approaches to Egypt in the course of the twentieth century CE, cf. Newberry, P.E., 1923, ‘Egypt as a Field for Anthropological Research.’ (Presidential Address to the Anthropological Section of the British Association).

Our exploration of possible Egyptian reminiscences in the latter-day Nkoya material poses a number of specific questions which unfortunately cannot be answered from the corpus of contemporary Egyptology, but for which the available data have to be first re-processed and re-analysed beyond the point reached in that specialist literature. I am thoroughly aware of the dangers involved in venturing into this specialist domain. My knowledge of the ancient Egyptian language and writing systems is flimsy, my overall acquaintance with the culture, religion and history of ancient history that of a mere amateur. I can only hope that those of my Egyptological friends who have had the time and generosity to read through my text before publication, have saved me from the greatest blunders. But there are limits to what they could do: I know that already too large a part of the working time of the average Egyptologist is spent on keeping the numerous pranks at bay who proffer totally new, amateur interpretations of fine details of Egyptology injudiciously browsed from specialised libraries and from Internet. The difference between specialist training in a discipline, and externally cannibalising the discipline's published output for quick results, is that the latter approach carries enormous risks of misunderstanding and misinterpretation for lack of a proper background, context and method, even if details are captured correctly. My argument in the next chapters is likely to suffer from such misunderstanding, even if I did my best to get the facts right. On the other hand, there is no fundamental reason why the Egyptological material should be sacrosanct and reserved exclusively to professional Egyptologists. I sincerely hope the following exploration does justice to their skill, dedication and vision, yet can be appreciated by them as interesting and somewhat innovating. Meanwhile, I apologise both for my unqualified intrusion, and for my errors. All I can say in my defence is that I simply needed to have the fullest understanding of skulls, tears, reed and especially bees in the ancient Egyptian context, before I could consider the argument of the present book conclusive. Since such insight was not available in a systematic and integrated form in the Egyptological literature at my disposal, I had to search for it myself. Professional Egyptologists can surely do much better than I, but to the best of my knowledge they have not, so far.

If this Part II of the present book (i.e. *Global bee flight*) is spiced with hieroglyphic signs this is not to display my newly-won near-ignorance, but because ancient Egyptian script (especially the bee-sign ) inevitably plays a central role in an argument seeking to explain the origin of the royal formula *n-sw-bit* and its subsequent diffusion to South Central Africa; in order to ascertain the very restricted use of the bee-sign in ancient Egyptian texts, and its political and cultic relevance, other signs and their use in specific expressions had occasionally to be displayed as well, – that is all.

The central questions which need to be answered in order to fully appreciate the significance of the Nkoya/ Egyptian parallels, include the following:

- If the bee and reed motif occurs in Nkoya traditions and has a likely ancient Egyptian background at the same time, what then is the origin and the history of the bee and reed motif in Egyptian history?
- If ancient Egyptian material turns out to be somehow preserved in South Central African traditions, can these traditions, and our analyses of them, inspire us to formulate more advanced interpretative models for the early history of ancient Egyptian civilisation, in its turn?

- Considering the unique continuity of ancient Egyptian civilisation over more than three millennia, and considering the likelihood that the parallels we have noted are actually due to processes of diffusion from Egypt to sub-Saharan Africa, can we then put a date to these processes on the basis of what we know about the internal dynamics of ancient Egyptian history?
- What can we learn about processes of state formation in general, and especially of the role of cosmology, religion and gender in such processes, from an examination of ancient Egyptian patterns and their resonances in sub-Saharan Africa?

2. THE PRESENT RE-INTERPRETATION OF SOUTH CENTRAL AFRICAN HISTORY IN THE LIGHT OF ANCIENT EGYPTIAN AND EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN MODELS: SERENDIPITY, COINCIDENCE, OR INSANITY

The massive Egyptian parallels in *Likota lya Bankoya* were not spotted by me in the many years that I struggled with the edition and analysis of that text in the 1980s. Under the conditions of disciplinary separation then prevailing one could not really reproach an Africanist anthropologist for not being an Egyptologist at the same time. The *Likota lya Bankoya* text is a compilation of oral traditions from western central Zambia, collected by the first Nkoya Christian pastor, Rev. Jehosaphat Shimunika, as from the 1930s. He and his associates at Luampa Mission, Kaoma district, Zambia, worked the raw material into a more or less coherent, sustained argument in the 1960s. Such streamlining and ideological processing as the integration of disparate oral traditions inevitably involved, does not concern us here.¹³ When working on the text and confronting it with oral traditions I had collected myself in the 1970-80s, I did realise, of course, that the form and contents of the *Likota lya Bankoya* text were partly mythical, and to that extent belonged to an undetermined and probably partly imaginary mythical past. At the same time however, most of the scores of royal figures featuring in *Likota lya Bankoya* are locally claimed to have known tombs within western Zambia, some of which have even been raised to the status of protected national monuments. Before colonial times (1900-1964, for Zambia), a ruler was buried in his or her capital after which this place was abandoned and left to be reclaimed by the forest; *Tears of Rain* gives a full list and detailed maps of the location of their capitals and tombs. The same royals occur in genealogies of people born in the twentieth century CE with only two or three generations' distance. All this tempted me to situate these royal figures in the second half of the second millennium CE. Nor was I alone in this: the initial compiler of *Likota lya Bankoya*, Rev. Shimunika, inserted numerous nineteenth-century dates of his own reconstruction into the aggregated text of the collection, and incumbents of the kingship bearing identical names were issued by him with ordinal numerals ('Mwene Kahare IV', 'Mwene Kahare V', etc.) so as to produce, not only close parallels with the powerful and celebrated royals of the North Atlantic colonial states, but especially the suggestion of an unbroken chain extending down to the Nkoya royal incumbents in the twentieth century CE. Such a dating, again, is in accordance with the

¹³ For an extensive discussion, see: van Binsbergen, *Tears*, o.c.

converging traditions from throughout South Central Africa, concerning processes of state formation induced by the Lunda political culture situated in southern Congo (formerly Zaire), and commonly connected with the presumed population explosion and migratory tendencies in that region, brought about by the gradual introduction of American food crops after Europe's discovery of the Americas in 1492.

In the 1960s, the recognition of oral tradition as an untapped source of the late pre-colonial and the colonial history of Africa was one of the main factors responsible for the take-off of African history as a distinct academic discipline. The other factor, of course, was the decolonisation of Africa and hence the desire to find an Africa-centred perspective on African history, away from European-generated documentary sources which principally portrayed African people and events from the viewpoint of mere European involvement and interest. Soon after Vansina's *Oral history* had been hailed as the bible of the new approach,¹⁴ and after his *Kingdoms of the savanna* had whetted our appetite for the kind of

¹⁴ Vansina, J., 1973, *Oral tradition*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, first English edition: 1965, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. This book was subsequently completely revised so as to accommodate the criticism that its earlier version had taken oral tradition much too literally: Vansina, J., 1985, *Oral tradition as history*, London/Nairobi: Currey/ Heinemann Kenya. In that edition, my own historical analysis of the myth of a North African local saint (e.g. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1980, 'Interpreting the Myth of Sidi Mhammad', in: Brown, K., & Roberts, M., eds., *Using Oral Sources: Vansina and Beyond*, special issue, *Social Analysis*, 4, Adelaide: University of Adelaide, pp. 51-73; revised version: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1985, 'The historical interpretation of myth in the context of popular Islam' in: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & Schoffeleers, J.M., 1985, *Theoretical explorations in African religion*, London/Boston: Kegan Paul, pp. 189-224, also at: http://www.shikanda.net/african_religion/myth0.htm) features an example of homeostasis in oral historical sources.

POSTSCRIPT 2006: When I drafted the book *Global bee flight* in 1998-1999, exploring possible (essentially Bronze Age and Iron Age) connections between South Central Africa and the Ancient Near East including Egypt was as far as my competence and imagination allowed me to go. In subsequent years, the analysis of formal classification systems in ancient astronomies, clan systems, divination systems, as well as the study of animal symbolism (especially leopard) and of African cosmogonic myths and their possible worldwide impact under the 'Out of Africa' hypothesis, and the inspiration I derived, in this connection, from the Harvard Round Table on Comparative Mythology (centring on Michael Witzel, Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard) afforded me a much more comprehensive, long-range perspective on latterday Old World mythical material. In this light I have to seriously doubt *Tears of Rain's* interpretation of the Nkoya oral tradition in terms of real-life political and religious history of precolonial South Central African history in the 16th-19th century CE. In fact, these oral traditions turn out to reiterate mythical material that may be thousands of years old and that has been attested over thousands of kilometers. This criticism converges with that leveled against the historical work of my friend and sometime PhD supervisor Matthew Schoffeleers, whose historical method for precolonial Iron Age in South Central Africa historical reconstruction converged with my own (cf. Wrigley, Christopher, 1988, 'The river-god and the historians: Myth in the Shire Valley and elsewhere', *Journal of African History*, 29, 3: 367-383; Schoffeleers, J.M., 1992, *River of blood: The genesis of a martyr cult in southern Malawi*, Madison: Wisconsin University Press; Schoffeleers, J.M., 1979, ed., *Guardians of the Land: Essays on African territorial cults*, Gwelo: Mambo Press, to which I contributed a long chapter on Zambia 1500-1900 CE: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1979, 'Explorations in the sociology and history of territorial cults in Zambia', in: Schoffeleers, J.M., eds, 1979, *Guardians of the Land*, Gwelo: Mambo Press, pp. 47-88; revised edition in: W.M.J. van Binsbergen, *Religious change in Zambia: Exploratory studies*, chapter 3, 'Explorations in the history and sociology of territorial cults in Zambia', pp. 100-134; also at : http://www.shikanda.net/african_religion/RelChZamI_chIII/explorat.htm). In my most recent papers on myth, I acknowledge this insight, towards which the drafting of *Global bee flight*, and thus the present 1998 paper, were major steps. Cf. my 'Rupture and fusion', o.c.; and: van Binsbergen. Wim M.J., in press, 'Mythological archaeology: Situating sub-Saharan African cosmogonic myths within a long-range intercontinental comparative perspective', in: Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN) , *Proceedings of the Pre-Symposium / 7th ESCA Harvard-Kyoto Roundtable on 'Ethnogenesis of South and Central Asia'*, organised by RIHN, NIHU / Harvard University, the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Kyoto, Japan, 6-8 June, 2005 [provisional title], Kyoto: Research Institute for Humanity and Nature, also at:

rich synthetic views of the African precolonial past that now apparently were to come within reach,¹⁵ a counter-movement emerged. It was concentrated around David Henige's journal *Oral history* and stressed the view that African oral sources tended to be so saturated with myth as to rule them out as valid and reliable sources of historical fact. Against this dismissal a prudent defence of oral history claimed that what little historical information oral traditions contain is coded under layers and layers of myth and requires a painstaking, sophisticated methodology to uncover; yet, difficult though this may be, it is not impossible, nor entirely arbitrary. Much of the work in this field ever since has revolved on the formulation of such methodologies.¹⁶

There is no lack of possible mythical themes in *Likota Iya Bankoya*. How about a Nkoya king Shihoka Nalinanga: 'Snake, the Mother of Dryness',¹⁷ or (less correctly but in line with modern Nkoya views that all kings are male) 'Son of Dryness', who in oral traditions circulating among twentieth-century Nkoya is considered a great cattle raider living on the Maniinga river north of the Kabompo-Zambezi confluence. His name is suspiciously suggestive of myth. In *Likota Iya Bankoya* he is described as an early male ruler who declines to accommodate his sister's request to share in his wealth, and who is killed by the disease which she send him in the shape of a beautiful maiden doll (*kanankishi*, 'personified medicine-containing idol') magically come alive.¹⁸ The latter may be seen as a version of the Pandora theme;¹⁹ it also recalls (perhaps as a reminder of more general links between the Celtic world and ancient Egypt, of which below we shall find a few more indications) the conflictive relationship between King Arthur and his sister Morgana la Faye. In Shihoka Nalinanga, a specific reminiscence of ancient Egypt may be detected in the fact that there we have the First-Dynasty King Snake (W3d) whose name may also be

http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/mythical_archaeology/myth%20binsbergen%20for%20kyoto%20proceedings%20BETTER%20hyphen%20%20columns.pdf

¹⁵ Vansina, J., 1966, *Kingdoms of the savanna*, Madison: Wisconsin University Press.

¹⁶ Cf. Henige, D., 1982, *Oral historiography*, London/ New York/ Lagos: Longman; Willis, R.G., 1976, *On historical reconstruction from oral-traditional sources: A structuralist approach*, Evanston: Northwestern University, Twelfth Melville Herskovits Memorial Lecture; Miller, J.C., 1980, ed., *The African past speaks*, Folkestone: Dawson; Schoffeleers, J.M., 1985, 'Oral history and the retrieval of the distant past: on the use of legendary chronicles as sources of historical information', in: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & Schoffeleers, J.M., eds., *Theoretical explorations in African religion*, London/ Boston: Kegan Paul International, pp. 164-188; Schoffeleers, J.M., 1992, *River of blood: The genesis of a martyr cult in southern Malawi*, Madison: Wisconsin University Press; van Binsbergen, *Tears, o.c.*

¹⁷ The basic meaning of Nkoya *linanga* is 'lie'; it becomes 'dryness' in combination with *mvula*, 'rain'; cf. van Binsbergen, *Tears, o.c.*

¹⁸ Van Binsbergen, *Tears, o.c.*

¹⁹ In this connection it is noteworthy that Bernal could find no Anatolian or Mesopotamian parallel to the Pandora motif ('A Reply to John Baines', which after circulating in various unofficial versions was finally published as Bernal, M., 2001, '1. Can We Be Fair? A Reply to John Baines', in: Bernal, M. Gardiner (D. Chioni Moore, ed.), *Black Athena writes back: Martin Bernal responds to his critics*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, pp. 25-43). Bernal could only find an ancient Egyptian one, from the New Kingdom period; cf. Walcot, P., 1966, *Hesiod and the Near East*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press. However, the Pandora motif has been convincingly identified in Mesopotamia by Penglas, C., 1997, *Greek Myths and Mesopotamia; Parallels and Influence in the Homeric Hymns and Hesiod*, London/New York: Routledge, paperback edition, first published 1997, ch. 10, pp. 197f. As has often been remarked in the context of the *Black Athena* debate, Bernal's knowledge of Mesopotamia is much more limited than his Egyptological knowledge (Martin Bernal prides himself that his grandfather was Alan Gardiner – leading British Egyptologist in the early 20th century, and millionaire due to his tea estates in Malawi – , whose library Martin inherited). This one-sidedness has brought the latter to overemphasise Egyptian-Aegean relations.

translated as Green. Moreover Šw, the ancient Egyptian air-god whose name means Emptiness or Dryness, has a son Geb, the earth god, – the latter is not himself represented as a snake but displaying the chthonic connotations of the snake which are virtually universal.²⁰

Although, in *Tears of Rain*, I deliberately underplayed the mythical dimension in an attempt to show that it is possible to write precolonial African political and ideological history on the basis of the available oral and traditional sources, my analysis in that earlier book tried to be sophisticated on at least the following points:

- The confrontation of thoroughly reworked, aggregated, publicly mediated historical traditions with far less structured and far more idiosyncratic oral accounts from the same region.
- The detection of the female gender of many royal figures which twentieth-century Nkoya had tacitly taken to be male, since political office has been exclusively in male hands for the past hundred years; such a gender shift was possible because gender is not directly, morphologically marked in the Nkoya language but can only be determined by a painstaking analysis of context in oral traditions, applying a methodology whose development takes up a considerable part of the argument in *Tears of Rain*;
- The reconstruction of processes of state formation as on the one hand the imposition of an organisational and military regime on the basis of royal control over branches of production, on the other hand the emergence of a male ideology concentrating on violence, and on the notion of women's polluted nature through menstruation; via an intermediate stage of men acting as royal escorts, or while in royal office leaning heavily on such legitimation as their mothers or sister could accord them, this led to women's gradual exclusion from the royal office of which they had been the original incumbents in the first place;
- The emphasis on women as early rulers turned out to be far from unique to the Nkoya, but to represent a submerged and under-analysed aspect of early kingship in many parts of South Central and Southern Africa.²¹
- The utilisation for historical reconstruction of a structuralist method, which related the structure of the oral traditions as revolving on systematic, transformations, all of which could be regarded, ultimately, to transformations of the Nkoya gendered world-view;

Yet I must admit that I, when writing *Tears of Rain*, I completely overlooked the Egyptian angle which now seems so obvious. As a result, the time scale that I adopted in *Tears of Rain* (second half of the second millennium CE), as well as the regional context

²⁰ The claim of a sub-Saharan presence of the Geb theme is also argued convincingly for the Cameroonian Basaa people; cf. Ndigi, Oum, 1996, 'Gb/K.b/Gbgb/Kòbá/ Kòbákòbá: Ou le nom du Dieu de la Terre et de l 'oiseau créateur mythologique chez les Égyptiens et les Basaa du Comeroun', *Bulletin: Société d'Égyptologie* (Genève), 20, 1996: 49-70.

²¹ See van Binsbergen, *Tears, o.c.*, and references cited there; and in addition: Jaeger, D., 1974, ed., 'Kaonde Histories (Part II)', Amsterdam, Royal Tropical Institute, mimeo, p. 6 (the first Kaonde king Kapiji claimed to be female); Brelsford, W.V., 1935, 'History and customs of the Basala', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 65: 205-215; Krige, E. Jensen & J.D. Krige, 1943, *The realm of a rain-queen: A study of the pattern of Lovedu society*, London: Oxford University Press; Papstein, R.J., 1978, 'The Upper Zambezi: A history of the Luvale people 1000-1900', Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles; Berger, I., 1981, *Religion and resistance: East African kingdoms in the precolonial period*, Tervuren: Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale.

(exclusively South Central African), now seem to be partly wrong. *The traditions collected in Likota lya Bankoya reflect a far greater time depth and a far greater geographical scope than I would have believed possible only a few years ago.* It now looks as if historical narrative concerning the late nineteenth century CE in South Central Africa merges seamlessly into a narrative concerning the third millennium BCE in the lower Nile valley and Delta – a narrative which on the one hand (since it poses as historically related to generations in South Central Africa which immediately precede those of the late 19th century CE) can only be regarded as mythical, but which on the other hand does not merely contain references to ancient Egyptian divinities and myths, but also to Archaic historical personages such as the kings ^h3 and W3d; and above all evokes a women-centred political system which, as I shall establish in the course of this Part II of the present book (i.e. *Global bee flight*), works amazingly like that of First Dynasty Egypt.

What I had always realised, however, was that the text of *Likota lya Bankoya* offers problems of translation and interpretation that were often insurmountable, not only to a foreign researcher like myself, but also to the native speakers who involved in the translation and the editing of the *Likota lya Bankoya* manuscript. Part of the lexical material proved alien to modern Nkoya, and to have Lunda, Luba, Ila and Southern Sotho (Lozi) connotations. Often a literal translation proved impossible or absurd, and the text had to be interpreted with great freedom and corresponding uncertainty. One often had the impression of the intrusion of imagery and literary formulae totally alien to modern Nkoya society and culture; however, I did not yet have the critical distance and the comparative knowledge needed to try and suggest an origin for these apparent intrusions.

Let us for example look at the following section of *Likota lya Bankoya*, dealing with the accession of the female ruler Mwene Mutondo Shinkisha Mate Lushiku. She is generally thought, among twentieth-century Nkoya (who until my publication of *Tears of Rain* considered her to be male), to have acceded to the throne in the middle of the nineteenth century CE, and to have initiated the dynastic name ‘Mutondo’, in addition to her mother’s name Manenga. *Mutondo* is the common local designation of the trees belonging to the *Brachystegia* family, which dominates the savanna of the South Central African plateau.

‘Mwene Kayambila died on the Mangongi. The Nkoya elected Mate Lushiku, the last-born child of that generation, to be Lady Mwene [, inheriting the name of] Mwene Manenga. They said: ‘Shinkisha for Mwene.’ When Mate Lushiku (...) was ‘caught’ to inherit the kingship, in the morning when she came out of the ceremonial reed shelter, she adopted the following praise-name:

‘I am Mwene in the following way:
 “I am the Mutondo Tree,
 Daughter of Manenga,
 the Mushroom which Causes Deafness.”’

This name [of ‘Mutondo’] then adhered to the drum of Mwene Mutondo. It is hers. The children of the *Bilolo* [‘courtiers’] were full of praise for her, they would prostrate before her with their faces to the ground, saying:

‘You are the Wonderful Tree,
 Daughter of Manenga,
 With Branches only at the Top,
 Without any Scars from fallen-off Branches,
 Shinkisha Who can Face the Cat,
 The Firebox of Nyambi’s Child.’

2²² They started singing the *makwasha* song:

‘Come and behold the Stork
The Stork, the Owner of the Plain
Come and behold the Stork
The Stork, the Owner of the Plain.’

Mwene Mutondo lived in her capital on the other side of the Lalafuta river, 3 in the valley of Kalimbata; between Kalimbata and Mulalila, that is where she had her capital. There she died and there her grave has been to this day. In the time of her kingship her sisters Nahonge and Kabandala were residing with her; the [Two] Ladies Myene shared with her in the ruling of the land.²³

In this passage, obscure, even incomprehensible details abound, even though other aspects are perfectly clear.

Among the Nkoya, the installation (Nkoya: *ku swanisha*) of a principal heir (to the kingship, the headmanship, or simply to the name of a any deceased kinsman) takes the form of a chase. When announced in the midst of nocturnal celebrations, the candidate chosen and announced by the elders tries to escape the imminent, formidable responsibilities by running to the river which is to be found at the bottom of any inhabited valley, and only in the contact with the purifying (and underworld-associated) water of the stream there will she or he find sanctuary. The elders and their assistants usually apprehend (‘catch’, *ku kwata*) the candidate in time and seat the latter on a reed mat within a reed shelter, where the installation ceremony is then performed in the early morning light. Note the similarities with early dynastic Egypt, both in the use of the reed mat and shelter and in the imagery of catching – although in the Egyptian case the catching is done by the candidate himself or herself, and refers then not to the candidate but to the ancestral spirit (in the form of the father’s *k3*) which he is to ‘catch’.²⁴

We have already encountered [in earlier chapters of *Global bee flight*] the drum as the central symbol of kingship among the Nkoya and many other African peoples.

The tree symbolism appears to be interpretable; at least, I have elsewhere presented an elaborate argument interpreting the tree and branches imagery as a spurious declaration of dynastic, genealogical purity.²⁵

But why should it testify to the greatness of the princes and heiress to the throne Shinkisha (whose name evokes *nkishi* ‘medicine container’, *kanankisha* ‘magical doll’, and *makishi* ‘masked dancers impersonating archetypal personages’) that she ‘Can Face the Cat’ – an animal species which is further conspicuously absent from the corpus of Nkoya myths and traditions? Twentieth-century Nkoya hesitantly interpret this passage as an obscure evocation of generosity – for no more specific reason than that such generosity, in addition to ritual separation, magical terror in the pursuit of longevity and power, and abstinence from productive labour, are locally considered to be the distinctive features of kings. However, in view of the other ancient Egyptian parallels as outlined above and as further to be explored in this Part II [of *Global bee flight*] one is reminded that the cat in

²² Like the Bible after which it was modelled, *Likota lya Bankoya* arbitrarily assigns numbers to verses comprising from one to ten or more sentences.

²³ After: *Likota lya Bankoya*, 26: 1f; both the original Nkoya text, and the English version, are to be found in *Tears, o.c.*; there I also give a lengthy discussion of the literary imagery and its difficulties.

²⁴ Kaplony, P., 1963, *Die Inschriften der ägyptischen Frühzeit*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 8, Bd. 1-3, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

²⁵ van Binsbergen, *Tears, o.c.*, pp. 234ff.

late Egyptian iconography is the deadly opponent of the snake of chaos, Apopi, and that Apopi is reputed²⁶ to be created from the spittle of the underworld-associated Great Goddess Nt [Neith]; such an interpretation at least reveals Shinkisha in the terror that justifies her subjects' prostration. Prostration is no longer practised among the Nkoya, and when Nkoya today seek to express their abhorrence at Lozi arrogance vis-à-vis the Nkoya they give as an example that the Lozi king in the nineteenth and early twentieth century insisted on prostration on the part of his recently subjugated Nkoya subjects, including their kings.

And what to make of the Firebox of Nyambi's Child, i.e. of Mvula, 'Rain'? I earlier translated 'Snuffbox', and suggested that this might be a reference to any particular olfactory effect rainfall ('Nyambi's Child', i.e. *Mvula*, 'Rain') has on the *mutondo* tree in the forest,²⁷ but to my knowledge there is nothing in Nkoya conceptualisation of rain to explicitly support such a reading. In fact, in ways I and my co-translator the native speaker of Nkoya Mr. M. Malapa did not realise when preparing *Tears of Rain*, there is a play in this passage on various connotations of the Nkoya words *nkumba/nkomba*. In the first place it means 'mushroom', and hence the name of a clan widespread in Western and Northern Zambia, Southern Congo (formerly Zaire) and Northeastern Angola. Giant mushrooms are locally considered grow on (royal) graves. More to the point is that dried mushroom serves as a wick in the traditional Nkoya firebox (a shuttle-shaped wooden container with a tight lid, seldom taller than 10 cm, containing a piece of flint, a small bent iron scraper to produce sparks in contact with the flint, and dried mushroom to be subsequently set aflame by the spark). The word is also applicable to the firebox as a whole. The translation of our passage therefore differs slightly from the one given in the 1992 printed edition of *Tears of Rain*. For the 'snuffbox' element one may, moreover, think of the mushroom rapidly developing and shedding its spores upon rainfall – an evocation of fertility and multiplication reminiscent of the expression 'Tears of Rain'; and thus perhaps even of the 'procreation through male masturbation' motif which we shall explore below. There may even be a link with Allegro's *Sacred mushroom* motif.²⁸

The *makwasha* song text looks innocent and local enough. I recorded the same song text locally in 1977. Brown²⁹ broadly defined *makwasha* as:

'the most ancient repertoire of Nkoya royal music'.









Makwasha however also has a more restricted meaning: using the ancient musical repertoire as accompaniment, it is a dance reserved for (predominantly male) elders; the dancers bend their knees, alternately lifting now their left leg now their right leg, in movements which could be interpreted as impersonating a long-legged bird. In our passage from *Likota lya Bankoya* however, a mythical and alien nature is suggested by the fact that, like the cat, the stork is otherwise absent from Nkoya imagery and symbolism. Could the

²⁶ At least in a very old Roman source; cf. Hart, G., 1993, *A dictionary of Egyptian gods and goddesses*, London: Routledge, first published 1986.

²⁷ van Binsbergen, *Tears*, o.c.

²⁸ Cf. Allegro, J.M., 1970, *The sacred mushroom and the cross*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, which was critically but not dismissively discussed in an earlier chapter of *Global bee flight*.



²⁹ Brown, E.D., 1984, 'Drums of life: Royal music and social life in Western Zambia', Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, School of Music; University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, p. 151.

Plain be an echo of the ancient Egyptian Delta; and could the stork be a local interpolation for the flamingo, ? This sign is used as a hieroglyphic sign with the phonetic value *dšrt*, and marks the Delta-associated ancient Egyptian goddess  ,  Nt [Neith] as ‘the Red One’    , also marking her shrines as ‘belonging to the Red One’, and her high-priestess (the first Dynastic queen on record, king ḥ3’s great wife Nt Htp  ) as ‘Red Queen’ (*Hmt Dšrt*) or ‘Red Shrine’ (*Hm Dšrt*)?³⁰ These themes will be developed in the course of the present Part II [of *Global bee flight*].

Finally, the passage extensively quoted above ends with the ruling queen being associated with two other ladies of similar status. A similar passage occurs elsewhere in *Likota lya Bankoya*:

‘Kabongo II took over the kingship from his mother [Mwene Manenga] . She left with the Ladies Myene Lipepo and Nkulo. Mate Shinkisha belonged to the Nkomba [‘Mushroom’] clan, going back to the matrilineage of Mashiku. Their father however, Mukwetunga [Royal Escort] Mulyata, was a member of the Shungu clan, and it was this man who begot all the children of Mwene Manenga. When Mwene Manenga died, Kabongo II inherited the kingship.’³¹

Incidentally, the emphasis on one man being the father of all of Manenga’s children is most probably an implicit reference to the shifting amorous and marital relations for which Nkoya female members of the royal family have been known, as documented from many other sources outside *Likota lya Bankoya*; by implication Manenga is here claimed to have been an exception to this pattern.

There is always the possibility that the Two Ladies Nahonge and Kabandala were historical figures, and that so were the Two Ladies Lipepo and Nkulo. However, our suspicion of a mythical or emblematic meaning is aroused when we realise that tradition presents Mwene Lipepo as a sibling to the twins Luhamba and Katete, whom we have already encountered as ‘Royal Person Soaring High’ and ‘Reed Person’, in other words, as equivalents of the ‘Sedge and the Bee’ (*nsw bit*,  ) of the ancient Egyptian royal title. Moreover, Lipepo’s traditional epithet is:

Lipepo mwenda na Nkuli, ‘Lipepo Who Has as Characteristic Attribute³² the Tribute Gourd’,



as befits a ruler ‘Who Lives on Tribute Alone’³³ and does not personally engage in productive activities. The interpretations which my Nkoya interlocutors offer for *nkuli* in this phrase range from ‘tribute gourd’, via ‘heart’ (the normal Nkoya word however is *mutima*) and ‘strong wind, breeze’ – in acknowledgement of the fact that the name Lipepo itself means ‘Royal Person Wind’. The same root also occurs in several hydronyms, such as Nkulo and Nkulashi, tributaries of the major Western Zambian rivers Lwena and Dongwe


³⁰ Kaplony, *Inschriften*, o.c.. The interpretation of *Hmt Dšrt* leaves many possibilities, since depending on the writing variants used (which are often very elliptical in Archaic texts anyway), the former word may be read as ‘wife’, ‘queen’, ‘female servant’, ‘vulva’, and the latter as ‘red’ but also as ‘of the Red One’.



³¹ *Likota lya Bankoya*, 17: 6:

³² Literally: ‘who walks with’; cf. the praise-names *Kahare mwenda na njimba* (‘Kahare whose characteristic object is the xylophone’) and *mwana mwenda na mpande* (‘the [royal] child who has appropriated the Conus shell ornament as a principal emblem of legitimate succession to the kingship’; van Binsbergen, *Tears*, o.c.

³³ Lipepo’s praise-name as recorded in *Likota lya Bankoya* 9: 1; van Binsbergen, *Tears*, o.c.

respectively; the Nkoya repetitive verb *ku nkulukila* means ‘to trickle down’. Lipepo and Nkulo therefore echo the paired concepts of Wind and Moisture, which in ancient Egyptian mythology appear personified as the twin gods Šw  and Tfmt , whom we shall meet more often in the course of this chapter.

The names Nahonge, ‘Mother Red One’,³⁴ and Kabandala (‘Person Who Strikes’) are not at all out of place in Nkoya genealogies of the second half of the second millennium CE. Yet these names, too, are reminiscent of the Archaic Egyptian context. Kabandala reminds us of the first dynastic king ḥ3 (‘Fighter’, rendered with the hieroglyphic sign  which specifically depicts a shield and a battle mace as the main weapons); Nahonge evokes the ‘red’ complex around the goddess Neith and her high-priestess/ queen.

Then again, speaking of the Two Ladies: in Archaic Egyptian inscriptions queen Ḥtp-Nt appears as habitually accompanied by two other high-ranking ladies who may have been her sisters, or co-wives, or both: Queen Zm3-nbwy and Lady , whose name we cannot transliterate on the basis of our present knowledge.³⁵ More systematically, one of the three throne names of the Egyptian ruler in the Archaic period was the Two Ladies (*nbtj*) name, , commemorating the ruler’s being protected by the vulture goddess Nḥbt of the ancient Egyptian town of Nḥb (which like most ancient Egyptian sites also has an ancient Greek name, Eileithyiaspolis, and a modern Arabic name, El-Kab) in Upper Egypt and the cobra goddess W3dyt of Pe (Greek Buto, modern Tell al-Fara^cin) in Lower Egypt.

Finally there is the name of the great queen Mwene Manenga. Many Nkoya names begin with a prefix *Ma-* whose semantic contents varies and is sometimes zero. In Nkoya, *ma-* marks the plural of various noun classes for non-human living beings, abstractions, and foreign humans. *Manda*, as form of address *mawa*, but not *ma*, is the word for mother – which like in most African systems of kinship terminology is used in a classificatory manner, in other words, not only for the one biological mother M and one or several social mothers M’, but in fact for all sisters and classificatory sisters of any person qualifying as M or M’ (her cousins, distant cousins, co-wives etc.), and for all wives of all classificatory fathers. The root *-neng(a)* means ‘begin saturated’, and Manenga may be interpreted as ‘Mother (or Primal Source) of Saturation’ – which is the exact equivalent of the Egyptian goddess Mḥ-wrt,³⁶ ‘Great Inundation’, ‘Emanation of Greatness’, ‘Mighty Fullness’, or ‘Watery Abyss’ representing the primeval female creative principle.

Thus a typically obscure passage in the modern aggregated traditional account *Likota lya Bankoya* from Zambia may be considerably illuminated by connecting it to ancient Egyptian religious concepts and Archaic Egyptian kinship. The correspondences between Nkoya and Ancient Egyptian on this point converge with those evoked in the previous chapter [of *Global bee flight*].

Yet this is a solution which raises many more problems than it solves. For I wholeheartedly admit that all these suggestions of parallels convey a sense of utter compulsive insanity, of connections and cross-references too improbable to be true, – as if

³⁴ Cf. the larger reed-buck, *Redunca redunca*, known as the ‘red antelope’ among the Nkoya because of the reddish colour of its dorsal coat of hair.

³⁵ Kaplony, *Inschriften*, o.c., p. 612f.

³⁶ Budge, E.A. Wallis, 1969, *The Gods of the Egyptians: Or studies in Egyptian mythology*, 2 vols, New York: Dover, 1969, republication of the first edition, Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company & London: Methuen & Co., 1904., p. i: 422f

Nkoya history were rewritten into a closed and excessively coherent corpus by a Vladimir Nabokov conjuring up an African sequel to his novel *Pale Fire*. In that book such insane and fake correspondences between what to all other people must appear mere contingencies, are the hallmark of the protagonist Kinbote's paranoia. This literary device must be situated against the background of Nabokov's use of coincidence as a dominant narrative device throughout his literary work, which allows him to constantly intrude with sparkling display of omnipotence, as the God-like author, into the worlds of his literary creations. As a novel,³⁷ *Pale Fire* consists of two parallel texts that have as little to do with each other as possible. On the one hand there is the long poem entitled *Pale Fire*, written – just before he was accidentally killed by a stray lunatic broken out of an asylum – by the New Wye (Appalachia state) poet and Wordsmith University professor John Shade – all placenames are punning and fictitious. On the other hand there is the extensive so-called editorial commentary upon that poem by Shade's foreign colleague at Wordsmith University, Kinbote (cf. the 'bare bodkin' making for 'quietus' in Hamlet's soliloquy,³⁸ and Maud Bodkin, author of a seminal Jungian analysis of modern literature;³⁹ also note the poet's surname, Shade, which evokes a sunshade, and the concept of the *k3*...). Wordsmith is clearly modelled after Cornell University, where Nabokov taught in the 1940s-50s, and where Bernal has been teaching for over decades now. Kinbote takes the opportunity of twisting any remotely suitable phrase in the poem into a peg on which to hang his own psychotic self-account. There he poses as an exiled king from the 'distant northern land' of Zembla, around whom the assassin Gradus – a figment of Kinbote's imagination, *post facto* modelled on Shade's mentally deranged killer – draws his net ever tighter. For Kinbote, the bullet that killed John Shade came from not from a mentally disturbed escapee but from a political murderer, and was meant for Kinbote in his delusory identity as exiled king. Although Nabokov probably loathed anthropology only marginally less than psychoanalysis, there is here even the *Golden bough*⁴⁰ theme of the priest-king who is ousted and killed; Kinbote's appropriation of Shade's poem reflects the mythical sacred king's desperate search for strategies to prolong his life and his reign...

³⁷ Nabokov, V.V., 1962, *Pale Fire*, New York: Putnam; cf. Pilon, K., 1974, 'A chronology of Pale Fire', in: Proffer, C.R., ed., *Nabokov: A book of things about Vladimir Nabokov*, Ann Arbor: Ardis, pp. 218-225; Sprowles, A., 1974, 'Preliminary annotation to Charles Kinbote's Commentary on Pale Fire', *ibid.*: 226-248; Rorty, R., 1992, 'Introduction', in: Nabokov, V.V., *Pale Fire*, Everyman's Library, New York: Random House; the following entries at: 'Zembla, the website of the International Nabokov Society': Anonymous, n.d., '*Pale Fire*', at: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/wpale.htm> ; Morris, J., n.d., 'Genius and Plausibility: Suspension of Disbelief in *Pale Fire*', at: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/morris1.htm> ; Boyd, Brian, Shade and Shape in *Pale Fire*, at: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/boydpf1.htm> ; forty years ago I drafted a study of *Pale Fire* which I hope to finish one day.

³⁸'For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?...' (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3. I)

³⁹ Bodkin, M., 1934, *Archetypal pattern in poetry: Psychological Studies in Imagination*, London: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁰ Frazer, J.G., 1911-1915, *The golden bough: A study in magic and religion*, 8 vols in 12, 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged, London: Macmillan.

If Shade's poem is the equivalent of the established, relatively small, corpus of Nkoya historical traditions, my 'creative' re-reading of that corpus in terms of historical processes in Archaic Egypt ('a distant northern land' as seen from Zambia, like Zembra as seen from Wordsworth University), may appear equally psychotic as Kinbote's preposterous commentary. Or would we say that I am playing Kinbote to the corpus of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena* volumes?

Anyway, at this point in the present book's argument I do not yet expect the reader to take the Nkoya/ Egyptian parallels any more seriously than I was myself prepared to do for a long, incredulous time. At this stage, the only point about these *possible* intrusions of Archaic Egyptian elements into modern Nkoya material is that they are profoundly disturbing. My book *Tears of Rain* presented an analysis of Nkoya history, interpreting the royal personages and the events surrounding them as if they allowed us, not literal and detailed, but at least a general and structural, insight in state formation in western Zambia from the middle of the second millennium CE onwards. What if their names and emblems were to reveal these personages to be nothing but oblique and eroded images of Archaic Egyptian history, transmitted across nearly 5000 years and across 5000 kilometres, and utterly devoid of any substantial information about local conditions in South Central Africa during the past few centuries? Is a complete annihilation of my painstaking, supposedly historical argument in *Tears of Rain*, the price I have to pay for my critique of Martin Bernal's *Black Athena*, and for my attempt to proceed beyond the latter book's thesis? Or is there an unexpected compensation, in this sense that the analytical models I developed for the Nkoya (especially the idea of a religiously underpinned female kingship, soon to be usurped by male royal escorts in a process of 'masculinisation' both of the state's personnel and of its ideology) may offer an illuminating new perspective from which to understand Archaic Egyptian dynastic history (as dimly reflected in modern Nkoya traditions, but as also documented in much more detail in numerous inscriptions and archaeological finds dating from the Archaic period itself)? That is a question which I seek to answer in the subsequent chapters of *Global bee flight*.

3. BUILDING WITH SKULLS: THE KAYAMBILA THEME AMONG THE NKOYA AND IN THE ANCIENT MEDITERRANEAN WORLD

My first inkling that there was something profoundly wrong with the supposed historicity and local nature of the personages in *Likota lya Bankoya*, came when I looked closer at the material concerning the use of skulls in what looked as early Nkoya dynastic history.

When discussing the modern Kazanga festival we came across the Nkoya practice, now discarded, of drinking from the skulls of slain enemies. To judge by the scattered oral traditions which I collected in western Zambia, as well as the aggregated text of *Likota lya Bankoya*, during one phase in their history this practice, and the connected head-hunting practices, were so marked that one particularly powerful and violent king, Shishopa, upon accession chose the throne name of Kayambila, 'the Thatcher':

‘I am Kayambila ka Matunga,⁴¹
The Thatcher who Takes Care of the Skulls of People
Like the Thatcher Takes Care of the Roofs of Houses –
The Son of Manenga,
Shishopa Mikende.’⁴²

Popular fantasy among the Nkoya today takes the image literally and depicts Mwene Kayambila as someone who roofed his palace with human skulls.

Even if we do not wish to claim historical cultural connections between South Central Africa and the ancient Mediterranean, it does no harm to formally situate the Nkoya skull complex in a wider context. The Nkoya custom of drinking from the occiput of slain enemies is also attested for their northern neighbours the Kaonde.⁴³ A clear-cut parallel from the European Iron Age (Gallia Cisalpina, Northern Italy) is described by Livy:⁴⁴ the skull of a slain Roman general was solemnly used as a libation vessel by Gallic priests. A related example from Eastern Europe is the sixteenth century CE tradition concerning a drinking vessel of the ninth century Kiev ruler Svyatoslav: made out of a human skull. It bore an inscription which every anthropologist engaging in prolonged participant observation should heed:

‘Looking for the exotic he lost that which was eminently his own’.⁴⁵

Skull cults are a widespread feature of Neolithic cultures in the Near East.⁴⁶ Like heads conserved in honey, human skulls were widely used in divination,⁴⁷ which may have extended to libation or drinking from such skulls. Ultimately, the skull cult is likely to go back to Paleolithic times. Binford has argued that what has been construed as evidence of cultic and cannibalistic practices of Palaeolithic man may very well be attributed to the known actions of predatory animals.⁴⁸ Yet the cult of the cave-bear and the practice of skull offerings continue to be more or less accepted themes in the study of prehistoric religion.⁴⁹

⁴¹ *Ka Matunga*: ‘son of Matunga’, or more likely: ‘of the Lands’; cf. *T3wy*, ‘The Two Lands’, one of the standard expressions for Egypt in the ancient Egyptian language. In modern Nkoya geopolitical conceptions there is no ready explanation for the use, in this text passage, of the plural form of *matunga*, *citunga* being ancestral land administered by a king or headman.

⁴² *Likota lya Bankoya*, 23: 2

⁴³ Jaeger, D., 1974, ed., ‘Kaonde Histories (Part II)’, Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, mimeo, p. 22.

⁴⁴ Livy, 23: 24.

⁴⁵ Schreiber, H., n.d. [c. 1970], *Kooplui veroveren de wereld*, Den Haag/Brussel: Van Goor/Van Hoeve/Manteau, p. 304; my translation.

⁴⁶ Cf. Mellaart, J., 1967, *Çatal Hüyük: A Neolithic town in Anatolia*, New York: McGraw-Hill; Edwards, I.E.S., C.J. Gadd & N.G.L. Hammond, eds., 1986, *The Cambridge Ancient History, vol. 1 part 1: Prolegomena and prehistory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3rd ed., first ed. 1970, index, s. v. skulls (painted, plastered, on floors, skull-burials and cult, Jericho), pp. 505-6

⁴⁷ Betz, H.D., 1986, *The Greek magical papyri in translation: Including the demotic spells*, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, p. 75: PGM IV.2125-39; Montgomery, J.A., 1911, ‘A Magical Skull’, *The Museum Journal*, 2: 58-60.

⁴⁸ Binford, L.R., 1981, *Bones: Ancient men and modern myths*, New York: Academic Press.

⁴⁹ Maringer, J., 1952, *De godsdienst der praehistorie*, Roermond/Maaseik: Romen, 1952, pp. 75-82 and *passim*; English translation, 1960, *The gods of prehistoric man*, New York: Knopf. Maringer’s study contains a wealth of information of skull cults (see index of that book, s. v. ‘schedel’ / ‘skull’). Also cf. Gahs, A., 1928, ‘Kopf, Schädel- und Langknochenopfer bei Rentiervölkern’, in: Koppers, W., ed.,

Nkoya traditions⁵⁰ emphatically present Mwene Kayambila as a contemporary of the Luyana (Barotse, Lozi) king Mulambwa Notulu, who features prominently in Lozi traditions⁵¹ and is usually dated to the early decades of the nineteenth century CE. Specifically, Kayambila is remembered as the king who graciously (as if he had much of an option) honoured Mulambwa's request to be given a royal orchestra and royal medicine, the two regal prerogatives on which Kayambila's court thrived as do the courts of his present-day successors, the Nkoya kings. The story is profoundly ironic and subversive, since for the past century and a half the Nkoya kings have been subservient to the Lozi kings, Mulambwa's successors; and for much of that period the latter have denied the Nkoya kings the royal privilege of the most important instruments of the royal orchestra, the *mawoma* kettle drums. A kettle drum was only re-installed – complete with at least two cases of human sacrifice – at the court of Mwene Mutondo in 1994.⁵²

Some of the traditions concerning Kayambila have a remarkable real-life flavour, for instance when he is depicted as naming his new-born grandson in the early morning light.⁵³ The grandson was explicitly claimed to be still alive in the early twentieth century CE, when Rev. Shimunika – his close kinsmen – was in his teens. I was therefore persuaded, in *Tears of Rain*, to consider Kayambila as a historical figure, and to situate him shortly after 1800 CE. However, the skull theme makes him more than life-size. It suggests that he has taken on the features of a death demon or a king of the underworld. This already casts a different light on the Nkoya tradition according to which the founders of present-day royal dynasties came to their present homeland in western central Zambia in an attempt to escape from the humiliation they were suffering at the court of Mwaat Yaamv, the 'Lord of Death'. Are we talking about historical migrations of small proto-dynastic groups from Southern Congo (formerly Zaire) in the second half of the second millennium CE? Or about man's eternal struggle with death? *Or must we reckon, here and in the other cases of extensive ancient parallels in modern Nkoya traditions and institutions, with the possibility that old themes were deliberately revived and enacted – by what were truly eighteenth and nineteenth century CE political actors in Nkoyaland – in an atavistic bid to create continuity with the very remote past of several millennia ago?*

There are many parallels to the Kayambila theme in Greek mythology. I list them here without already going so far (we will come to that in later chapters of this book) as to claim specific historical links between the modern Nkoya and the ancient Mediterranean.

For after all, such mythological parallels might also, in the fashion of Jung's analytical psychology, be explained as parallel but historically independent results of the presumable

Festschrift/Publication d'hommage offerte au P.W. Schmidt, Vienna: Mechitaristen-Congregations-Buchdruckerei, p. 231-269. A general study of the place of the human skull in cultural history was made by: Henschen, F., 1966, *Der menschliche Schädel in der Kulturgeschichte*, Berlin/ Heidelberg: Springer.

⁵⁰ van Binsbergen, *Tears, o.c.*

⁵¹ Mutumba Mainga, 1973, *Bulozi under the Luyana Kings*, London: Longman.

⁵² van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1994, 'The Kazanga festival: Ethnicity as cultural mediation and transformation in central western Zambia', *African Studies*, 53, 2, 1994, pp 92-125; also at: <http://www.shikanda.net/ethnicity/kazanga.htm>

⁵³ van Binsbergen, *Tears, o.c.*; Anonymous [J.M. Shimunika], n.d., 'Muhumpu wa byambo bya mwaka – Nkoya', s.l. [Luampa, Mankoya]: s.n. [South African General Mission], typescript in my possession. Egyptologists will recognise that the same custom has been attested for Ancient Egypt, cf. Stricker, B. H., 1963-1989, *De geboorte van Horus, I-V*, Leiden: Brill, *Ex Oriente Lux*.

universal structure of the human collective unconscious.⁵⁴ The concept of the collective unconscious is unacceptable to most social scientists because its transmission from generation to generation is claimed to be genetic and innate rather than cultural i.e. taking place through learning processes.⁵⁵ Yet this difficulty may be overcome by the combined effects of two corrections of the crude idea of an innate collective unconsciousness. First we may assume that socially constructed and transmitted verbal and ritual practices may act as an implicit repository of coherent and articulate images and thoughts whose explicit meaning is effectively obscured from direct consciousness by powerful censor mechanisms, but with which most individuals may surreptitiously communicate so as to express them in dreams, fantasies, personal delusions, works of art, and mass movements. And secondly, the collective unconscious need not encompass the whole of humanity (which until the modern spread of world religions, mass literacy, and electronic media had no way of universal global communality except on the basis of the human body, its gendered nature, and its universal process of pregnancy and birth, growth, decay, and death as shared by all humans. More likely, a cultural region – identifiable because this is where a unique ensemble of mutually accommodated cultural traits is manifest – also shared the implicit, censored-out messages packaged with those surface traits, in other words, elements (however distorted) of a widely distributed, but non-universal, collective consciousness. However, this modification towards the cultural transmission and the regional nature of the collective unconscious makes it implausible that at different places A_{p_1} and A_{p_2} , or at different times A_{t_1} and A_{t_2} , the same mythical themes should break through to the surface of explicit, conscious expressions, without an underlying historical link between A_{p_1} and A_{p_2} , or A_{t_1} and A_{t_2} . In short, while it is difficult to accept that there is something our universal human genes which predisposes us to re-invent the Kayambila themes time and again in parallel ways, such Nkoya/ ancient Mediterranean parallels as do in fact occur around this theme should be recognised as suggestions of actual historical linkages.

But let us return to the Greek parallel myths themselves.

⁵⁴ Jung, C.G., 1938, *Psychology and religion*, New Haven (Conn.): Yale University Press; German translation: Jung, C.G., 1940, *Psychologie und Religion: Die Terry Lectures 1937*, Zürich: Rascher; Jung, C.G., 1948, *Symbolik des Geistes*, Zürich: Rascher; Jung, C.G., 1950, *Gestaltungen des Unbewussten*, Zürich: Rascher; Jung, C.G., 1954, *Von den Wurzeln des Bewusstseins: Studien über den Archetypus*, Zürich: Rascher; Jung, C.G., 1959, 'The archetypes and the collective unconscious', *Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, IX.1, Routledge: London, pp. 87-110; Jung, C.G., & Kerényi, C., 1951, *An introduction to the science of mythology*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Wilson, C., 1984, *Lord of the underworld: Jung and the twentieth century*, Wellingborough: Aquarian.

⁵⁵ POSTSCRIPT 2006. That cultural elements are transmitted through a social learning process and are, by definition, not innate, is a central tenet of modern cultural anthropology, which makes Jung's position anathema. However, the more I went back in time in my recent long-range reconstructions, especially in my attempt to identify Anatomically Modern Humans' most ancient myths as, presumably, contained in the 'Out-of-Africa' package (what I am now beginning to call the real Pandora's Box) 140,000 Before Present (my 2005 Kyoto paper), the more I had to admit that, in the domain of fundamental myths and of other (near-)universals of Anatomically Modern Humans, there is substantial evidence of cultural retention and uniformity throughout humankind and over exceedingly long periods hitherto un contemplated by cultural anthropology and its theory of culture. The survival value of most of these items of near-universal culture is hard to argue. We may postulate that religion (especially puberty rites, which can be argued to be particularly old and unchanging, inert) offers the venue through which some of these universals are handed down across thousands of generations. Yet, in addition, the hypothesis of some cultural material having, or ultimately acquiring, in part a biologically hereditary base in humans does deserve serious reconsideration. Of course, the greatest linguist of the 20th century, Noam Chomsky, has made similar claims for language, which has often served anthropology as a model for culture.

Kuknos⁵⁶ ('Swan') was reported to be in the habit of ambushing travellers and piling up their skulls, from which he intended to build a temple for Apollo; only Herakles's victory over him prevented this architectural feat. Considering the Nkoya veneration of the morning sun, and their belief that the king as an epiphany of the sun (as Bernal has stressed,⁵⁷ Apollo, like Horus and Hpri – the probable etymon of the name Apollo –, is a sun-god), we seem justified to reinterpret the Nkoya legend of the dedication of his newborn infant to the morning sun (which in Nkoya oral traditions is only specific to Kayambila) as indication of Apollo/Horus/Hpri traits. Fontenrose argues that Kuknos in reality is a manifestation of the underworld god Hades. Nor was the possession of a mound of skulls limited to Kuknos: Diomedes son of Ares, and Antaios son of Poseidon, boasted similar collections.⁵⁸ Like Kuknos, Antaios was reputedly killed by Herakles, notably in Libya, which in classical Antiquity was⁵⁹ the generic name for the continent we now call Africa. This adds an interesting African location to our mythological parallels. In fact it is remarkable that Antaios, the most important skull-related mythological figure in Greek mythology, should be associated with various landscapes in Morocco, Tunisia, and Lake Tritonis (modern Šott al-Jarīd in Southern Tunisia);⁶⁰ the latter location is also supposed to be the birth-place of the goddess Pallas Athena.⁶¹ This becomes even more significant in the light of various

⁵⁶ Fontenrose, J., 1980, *Python: A study of Delphic myth and its origins*, Berkeley etc.: University of California Press; paperback edition, reprint of the 1959 first edition, p. 29.

⁵⁷ Bernal, *Black Athena II*, p. 587 n. 93.

⁵⁸ Fontenrose, *o.c.*, p. 330

⁵⁹ POSTSCRIPT 2006: in Antiquity, Libya referred to Africa, but not to Africa alone, there also being vast stretches of Asia also designated by that name; see my discussion of Karst in a further POSTSCRIPT below, and (for a full discussion) my draft MS on Karst.

⁶⁰ Fontenrose, *o.c.*, p. 331

⁶¹ Athena is called *tritogeneia* in Homer, *Iliad*, iv. 515; in Hesiod (*Theogony* 895) and in the *Orphic hymns* (XXXI, 3.).

POSTSCRIPT 3 2006: The superimposed layers of symbolic and geographical references in this epithet, and in the Athena figure in general, are much more complex than I can do justice to here.

In the first place there is the argument on Athena as a mere Greek appropriation of the Ancient Egyptian goddess Nt [Neith] of Saïs, first advanced by Herodotus, revived by Bernal (*Black Athena*, *o.c.*), and refuted in the context of the subsequent *Black Athena* debate (cf. Egberts, A., 1997, 'Consonants in collision: Neith and Athena reconsidered', pp. 149-163, and van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1997, 'Black Athena Ten Years After: Towards a constructive re-assessment', pp. 11-64 (also at: <http://www.shikanda.net/afrocentrism/black1.htm>), both in: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1997, ed., *Black Athena: Ten Years After*, Hoofddorp: Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society, special issue, *Talanta: Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society*, vols 28-29, 1996-97.

Then, despite the faltering of Bernal's reductionist and one-directionally Egyptocentric etymological argument, there are the unmistakable parallel between Inanna, Athena, Nt [Neith], Anahit, Anath, Anansi, Nzambi/Nyambi – a whole series of goddesses, with assonating names, associated with virginhood and some of its virtues (especially spinning and warfare), and attested from Neolithic times onwards across a vast region extending from Iran to West Africa – what I have earlier designated 'The Extended Fertile Crescent' (cf. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 1997, 'Rethinking Africa's contribution to global cultural history: Lessons from a comparative historical analysis of mankala board-games and geomantic divination', in: *Black Athena: Ten Years After*, *o.c.* pp. 221-254, also at: <http://www.shikanda.net/afrocentrism/rethink1.htm>).

Finally, in 2004 I drafted a book on Joseph Karst, who pioneered long-range historical research into languages and ethnogenesis at Strassbourg in the 1920s-30s. One of his most seminal ideas appears to me to be that of the integral transposition of sets of mutually interdependent geopolitically relevant toponyms, and theonyms, on the assumption that all such names in the last analysis merely stand for collectivities of people, i.e. ethnonyms (cf. van Binsbergen, W.M.J., 'Ethnicity in Mediterranean proto-history: Explorations in theory and method', in: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & Woudhuizen, F.C., in press, *Ethnicity*

in *Mediterranean proto-history*, Oxford: British Archaeology Reports, pp. 11-177, where I use this perspective but without lengthy discussion of Karst himself). This perspective invites us to try and identify mythological material involving the same few divine figures, and/or ancient toponymy involving the combination of the same few toponyms, and to interpret these as indications of historical continuity between various distinct regions, and between the interrelated ethnic groups that inhabit these regions. The Libyan/Athena/Tritona association echoes the Libyan associations of Saïtic Nt [Neith]. It also resonates in the Greek and Roman versions of the Aristaios myth, whose ancient Egyptian parallels, in their turn, are unmistakable – as demonstrated in another chapter of *Global bee flight*. Now, it is Karst's contention (which I am prepared to take rather seriously) that the convergence of these themes on the region that was foremost known as Libya in Antiquity (modern North Africa, where Lake Tritonis is situated in modern Southern Tunisia) is based on a secondary transposition of a geopolitical and identity set (involving cognates of the toponym Libya and cognates of theonyms Athena and Poseidon – cf. the latter's struggle over Attica) that originally is at home in the Central Asian region (for which Karst cherished the name 'Turan'). Further analysis will reveal that the Dionysian character, as well as the Dioscuroi, can also be implicated in this scheme, – all have Central and East Asian ramifications, the most striking of which is the possible identification of Poseidon with the Chinese culture hero Fu Xi 伏羲 (which would make his female counterpart Nü Wa 女娲 – attested since Neolithic times – cognate to the more Western Athena/Nt [Neith]/Anahit/Anansi/Inanna figures). The transposition would then reflect a major east-west migration in prehistoric times, which Karst mistakenly (writing on the basis of now obsolete linguistic models, with little human genetics to his assistance, and using less than he should of the then available archaeological literature) situates close to the Bronze Age and unattractively associates with Atlantis. However, such a migration much more likely corresponds with the west- and then south-bound 'Return into Africa' migration from Central Asia, which state-of-the-art genetic research (Cavalli-Sforza and his school) has revealed and to which we should attach a chronology of 15,000 to 10,000 years Before Present.

In my most recent work ('Mythical archaeology', o.c.) I argue, on extensive empirical grounds, that this west- then southbound movement in the Upper Palaeolithic has brought major and identifiable contributions to the mythical material which West Asia (including Ancient Egypt), Europe, and much of Africa have held in common since the Neolithic. I suspect that this Upper Palaeolithic movement is also in part responsible (not excluding possible further contributions from the African continent itself) for the inroads of Nostratic (or Mega-Nostratic, including proto-Nilo-Saharan and proto-Niger-Congo; cf. Blench, R., 1995, 'Is Niger-Congo simply a branch of Nilo-Sahara?', in: Nicolai, R., & Rotland, Fr., eds., *Cinquième Colloque de Linguistique Nilo-saharienne, Nice, 24-29 août 1992*, Köln, pp. 68-118; Kaiser, M., & Shevoroshkin, V., 1988, 'Nostratic', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 17: 309-329.) What makes the entire proposed pattern so complex, and our pronouncements on it so extremely tentative, is that, *prior* to the Upper Palaeolithic east-west movement, we also have to reckon with a west-east movement into Central and East Asia, originating in East Africa and travelling,

- not route A i.e. along the Indian Ocean Coast into South East Asia, Australia and New Guinea, and then branching of north and west into Asia, and ultimately back into Africa)
- but route B, i.e. due north from East Africa, into West Asia, delayed for scores of millennia by Namderthaloid control over that region, yet finally (from ca. 40,000 BP on) into Asia and Europe, and probably bringing in its trail, the Athena/Poseidon/Dionysos/Dioscuroi divine figures to Central and East Asia in the first place.

Figures 1 and 6 may elucidate the overall model as presented in my Kyoto 2005 paper:

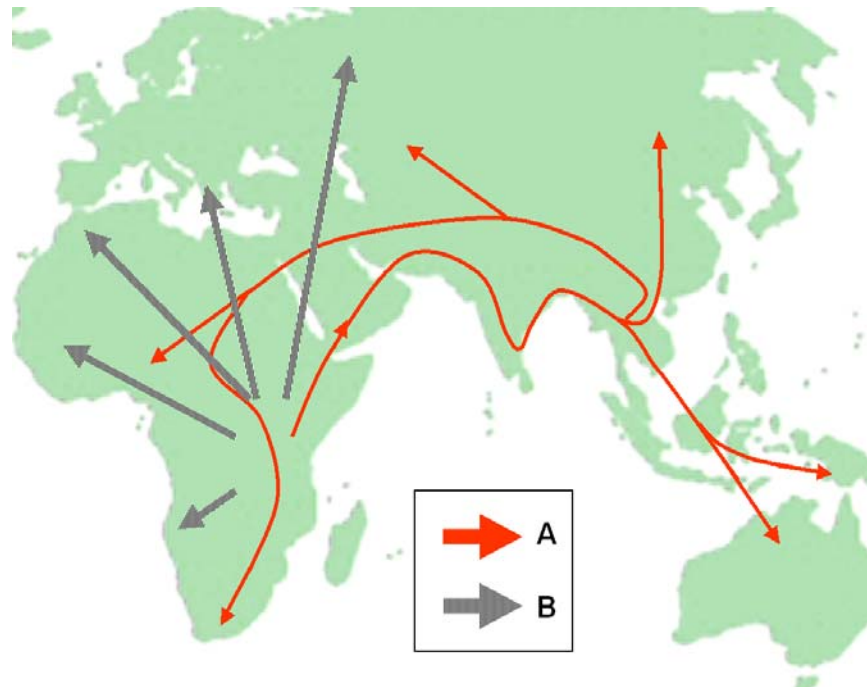


Figure 1. Simplified model of the Out-of-Africa migration (c. 140,000 BP) and the Back-to-Africa return migration (from c. 20,000 BP)

A. Out-of-Africa migration and subsequent major migrations of Anatomically Modern Man

B. Local spread of the pre-Out of Africa cultural package

in order to highlight the basic west-east-west movement, secondary spread and feedback effects have largely been ignored.

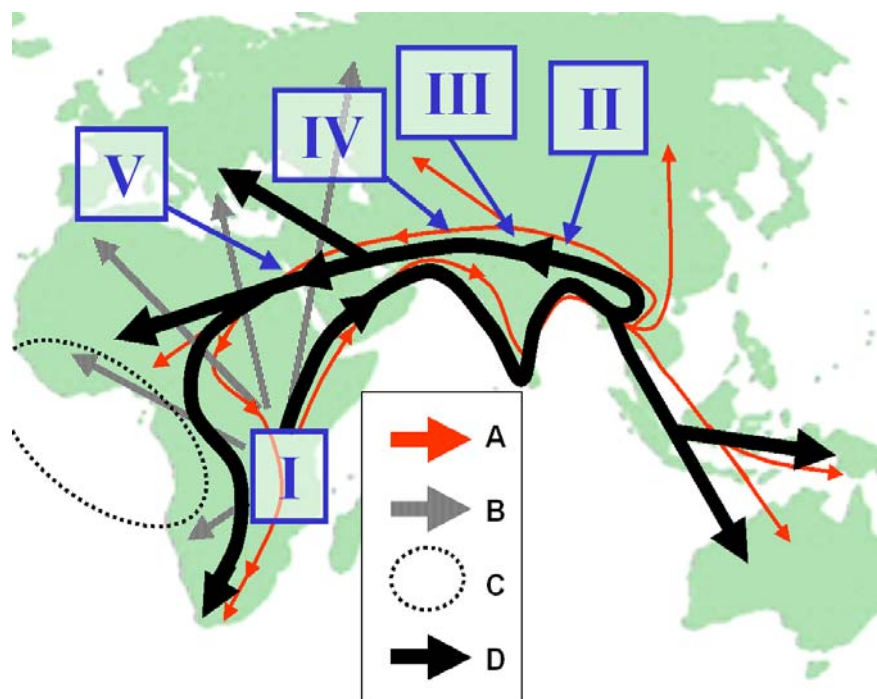


Figure 6. Summary of results: Preliminary situation in space and time of major Old World mythical complexes, in relation to the Out-of-Africa migration (c. 140,000 BP) and the Into-Africa return migration (from c. 20,000 BP)

A and B see Figure 1

C. Frobenius' 'pristine' Africa

D. Out-of-Africa mythological package and subsequent mythological developments

I: Out-of-Africa mythical package, 140,000 BP: Narrative Complexes 4, 10, 13

II: West or Central Asia, Upper Palaeolithic/ Mesolithic: Narrative Complexes 5, 12, 16

III: Central, South or South East Asia, Upper Palaeolithic/ Mesolithic: Narrative Complexes 11, 6

IV: South or South East Asia, Mesolithic/ Neolithic: Narrative Complex 9

V: Neolithic Extended Fertile Crescent: Narrative Complexes 2, 7, 14, 15, 19

in order to highlight the basic west-east-west movement, secondary spread and feedback effects have largely been ignored
missing numbers were discarded

The roman numerals in the legend to Figure 6 correspond with the specific Narrative Complexes I have distinguished in Old World mythology on the basis of an analysis of African cosmogonic mythical material attested in historical time. The following table provides a key:

indications to be discussed below⁶² that also Herakles himself has African connotations.

Narrative Complex	
1. The separation of heaven and earth	11. The primal waters and the flood
2. The connection between heaven and earth after separation	12. From under the tree
3. What is in heaven?	13. The cosmic / rainbow snake
4. The lightning bird (and the world egg)	14. Fundamental duality
5. The mantis	15. The spider and feminine arts
6. The ogre	16. Shamanism, bones
7. From the mouth	17. Spottedness and the leopard
8. The stones	18. Honey and honey-beer
9. The moon	19. The cosmogonic virgin and her son/ lover
10. The earth as primary	20. Contradictory messengers bring death

Table 2. Overview of a set of twenty cosmogonic Narrative Complexes as constructed on the basis of the set of over two hundred individual mythemes

Incidentally, when routes A and B intersected, in Central Asia in the Upper Palaeolithic, this may have created the right kind of symbolic complexity and contradiction to produce shamanism, as one of humankind's principal achievements towards writing, the state, organised religion, and science. (van Binsbergen, W.M.J., forthcoming, *The leopard's unchanging spots: Long-range comparative research on the world history of shamanism as a key to enduring patterns of African agency*; various previews in the form of very extensive slide presentations available at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/index.html).

Meanwhile, this long-range argument has devastating implications for the *Black Athena* thesis. It suggests the existence of such a dense space of mythical communality over a vast region, that Bernal's insistence on correspondences between Greek and Egyptian myths

- is, in the first instance, vindicated,
- but in the second instance, appears merely trivial, obvious, and myopically parochial, because
- his Egyptocentrism does not allow him to see that Ancient Egypt itself merely shared in a much wider movement in space and in time
- this presses all the more when we consider the place of sub-Saharan Africa in Bernal's scheme: what Egypt and the Aegean are rightly stressed to have in common
 - is not so much (as many Afrocentrists would have it) sub-Saharan African material mediated to the wider world through the intermediary of Egypt,
 - nor (as strong Egyptocentrists would have it) original Egyptian material mediated both north (to the Aegean) and south (into sub-Saharan African) during Bronze Age and Iron Age times
 - but rather a common mythical (and linguistic, and social-institutional) bond uniting the whole of West Asia and Northeastern Africa with adjacent areas (including the Aegean) and going back to Upper Palaeolithic times.

⁶² In the following chapters of the *Global bee flight* draft.

POSTSCRIPT 2006: My subsequent comparative historical research into myths and animal symbolism gives me the impression of understanding the Herakles figure much better now. With his lion skin (a solar symbol) and his club (representing the earth's axis, around which the heavens revolve diurnally), Herakles is primarily one of the many and widespread manifestation of a divine figure found all over the Old World, and in Africa attested under the name of Luwe (his name is identical to the lexical item for 'lion' in proto-Indo-European and proto-Afro-Asiatic), and extensively discussed in a seminal article by the comparative religionist von Sicard (von Sicard, H., 1968-69, 'Luwe und verwandte mythische Gestalten', *Anthropos*, 63-64: 665-737). My extensive webpages on leopard symbolism (accessible at http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/index.html) contain plenty of information on this figure and his amazingly wide distribution, as a complex and heterogeneous hunting/ pastoral weather/ blacksmithing god. My present contention is that Luwe is not originally at home in the African continent, but belongs to a context of astronomical discoveries (the fixing and naming of some constellations, the discovery of the heaven's diurnal revolution, and the emergence of the notion of the earth's axis) which I would associate with the emergence of shamanism in Central Asia in the Upper Palaeolithic – subsequently brought to Africa in the trail of the 'Back-into-Africa' return migration, from 15,000 / 10,000 BP onwards. However, this is precisely the place and time when the two 'Out of Africa' routes, A and B, met, and I still have to reconsider in detail to what extent route B may have contributed original, pre-Out of Africa elements to

Whereas in the Kuknos myth the skulls serve as building bricks rather than as roofing-tiles, Antaios corresponds even more closely with Kayambila in that it was his specific intention to use the collected skulls for roofing, in his case roofing a temple for his father Poseidon; Antaios's link with the underworld is further accentuated by the fact that his mother was Gē, 'Earth', so that whenever he was exhausted from combat, he would only have to lie down in order to have his strength replenished – Herakles could only overcome him by preventing this contact with Earth – lifting him up as Šw (Herakles' ancient Egyptian counterpart in this respect) lifted Nt from out of her embrace with Gb. Robert Graves claims,⁶³ no doubt correctly, that the form of Šw presented by the priests of Egyptian Thebes⁶⁴ is identical to Herakles. Nor was this the end of the sinister skull collection in the Greek myths:

'...Oinomaos, Euenos, and Atalanta's father. Of all these kings it is said that they heaped up or hung up the skulls of those suitors [of their daughter, reminiscent of the *Golden bough* theme] who lost the race [whose winner would marry the daughter] ; and the first two are linked with Phorbas, Kyknos, and Antaios.'⁶⁵

Even the name of Geryon, whom Herakles relieved of his cattle, may be etymologically linked to *karanos*, 'cranium, skull'.⁶⁶ And also Hercules's enemy Cacus, another death demon and cattle rustler (cf. the Nkoya tradition on Shihoka Nalinanga!), had hung the entrance to his cave with the skulls of his slain victims. Finally, the statehouse of the mythical Phlegyan nation was a skull-hung oak tree.⁶⁷ Since that name derives from Indo-European **bhleg-*, 'to burn black with smoke',⁶⁸ and hence is a cognate of our word 'black', we may surmise that the Phlegyans, though mythical, were at one stage thought of as Black people. Whatever its Old World ramifications, the skull theme has strong African connotations.

Here for the first time it was as if the ground sunk away under my painstaking reconstruction of Nkoya precolonial history which it had taken me many years to complete. If at least one of its protagonists could be shown to have such unreal connotations that several ancient, Africa-related Greek mythical characters resonated in him, how could he ever be restored to the status of a historical figure in South Central Africa in the early nineteenth century CE? Was this really a case of atavistic re-enactment, in the sense that 19th-century CE Nkoya royals could be supposed to be emulating, more or less consciously,

this result (cf. van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., in preparation, 'Pandora's Box: Tracing Scenario "B" ', proposed paper, 8th ESCA Round Table on Comparative Mythology, Peking University in collaboration with Harvard University, May 11-13 2006, Beijing, China). In other words, on a time scale encompassing the present to the Upper Palaeolithic I no longer consider Herakles an originally African figure, but it is not impossible that I will soon have to admit that Middle Palaeolithic African elements contributed to the Herakles figure travelling to Central Asia via route B.

⁶³ Graves, R., 1988, *The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth*, London/Boston: Faber & Faber, reprint of 1961 edition, first published 1948.

⁶⁴ Also known as Luxor, Karnak, Diospolis Magna, No, Waset.

⁶⁵ Fontenrose, *o.c.*, p. 333,

⁶⁶ Fontenrose, *o.c.*, p. 333, where also other etymological associations are cited, with ample bibliography.

⁶⁷ Fontenrose, *o.c.*, p. 54.

⁶⁸ Partridge, E., 1979, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, first published 1958; *s.v.* 'black'.

Ancient Egyptian, myth-derived models of identity and behaviour? Could time have stood still at the peripheries of the Old World pattern of myths and kingship? Was I not simply a victim of telescoping, so that with the extremely compressed temporal sense of Nkoya traditions, an absolutely mythical time populated only with figments of the imagination (suggestive of a regional collective unconscious storing macabre myths about the underworld) was held to be practically adjacent to the historical time of living memory? The same effect, I now realised, had occurred under my very eyes, *when the centenarian Mwe [‘headman’] Kapesh was seriously considered* (as numerous public and private statements to that effect proclaimed, made in a language I have known for decades), by his fellow-villagers inhabiting Kapesh village on the Kawanga stream, Kaoma district, western central Zambia in 1989, *to be a survivor from truly mythical times, when the Ladder into heaven had been build and had collapsed; he allegedly owed his life to having stepped aside in time...* Was the edifice of my analysis of the history of western Zambia in the last few centuries before the imposition of colonial rule (1900) to collapse in the same way? Could I myself step aside in time?

In this book (*Global bee flight*) we explore what the losses and the gains are of confronting my reconstructions of Nkoya precolonial history with the extensive data on ancient Egypt, and, alternatively, of confronting ancient Egyptian history with the models emerging from my study of Nkoya history – however mythical.

4. MEN AND BEES AS TEARS OF THE DIVINITY

4.1. People as the tears of Re^c



I shall now discuss one set of parallels between modern Nkoya sources and ancient Egypt: those revolving on the Nkoya image of kings as the tears of Mvula, ‘Rain’, the demiurge who is considered the child of the High God Nyambi. On this point the Egyptian parallels are so clear-cut and so convincing, that our analysis yields a specific chronology for the processes of borrowing, and suggests methodological guidelines for the analysis of the much more complex problem of parallels involving the Reed and Bee theme, which is to occupy us the subsequent chapters of this book.

It is important that for ancient Egypt, the ‘tears of the divinity’ image is ascertained to emerge only in the Middle Kingdom,⁶⁹ i.e. a time when the Egyptian unified state and its religion had been in existence for a thousand years. We cannot ignore the question as to what mythical formula preceded the ‘tears of the divinity’ myth. Given the relatively rich records of the Archaic period and the Old Kingdom this may not prove an impossible question to answer – if only we heed Sir Thomas Browne’s adage, which Graves took as the opening motto for his book *The White Goddess*:

⁶⁹ Anthes, R., ‘Mythology In Ancient Egypt’, in: Kramer, S.N., 1961, *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, Garden City (NY): Doubleday, pp. 15-92, p. 30.

‘what song the Sirens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions are not beyond all conjecture’⁷⁰

Meanwhile, in another version humankind did not directly issue from Rē^c’s tears, but Rē^c’s tears fertilised the earth so that it could bring forth mankind:

‘Re is sometimes called the “weeper” which refers to his creation of mankind, explained by means of a play on words: the sun-god wept and from the tear (Egyptian *remy* []) that fell on earth, there sprang man (Egyptian *remet* []),’⁷¹

This is probably a late version. It is alien to the dominant orientation of ancient Egyptian religion, where earth is male, partner to the female sky. On the other hand there is a remarkable parallel here with the Erichthonios myth of Greek Antiquity. That apical ancestor of Attica was supposed to have sprung from Hephaistos’s seed, spent when the latter was aroused by the presence of the virgin goddess Athena. The male god ejaculated against her thigh and she, in disgust, wiped off the issue with a tuft of wool and cast it onto the Earth; the latter immediately conceived and produced Erichthonios, and Athena knew no better than adopting the babe on the spot – perhaps by the very act squeamishly admitting that her role in the child’s production had even extended beyond her somewhat hypocritical preservation of virginity while catalytically acting as ejaculation-stimulating pin-up at the same time. I earlier discussed this theme in the context of the *Black Athena* thesis.⁷² At the time I reluctantly admitted the possibility of a link with Egyptian mythology on the general basis that the latter corpus contains several instances of irregular sexual and procreative behaviour; however, when I wrote I was not yet in a position to make the obvious connection with the ‘tears of the divinity’ theme, and I preferred an Anatolian or Tyrrhenian reading. Now it seems obvious that, in line with Bernal’s overall *Black Athena* thesis, the Erichthonios myth has an Egyptian provenance. Incidentally, this is more or less what Graves claimed half a century ago.⁷³

Beyond apparently⁷⁴ corroborating the *Black Athena* thesis statement on Egyptian influence upon the Aegean in remote Antiquity, the Erichthonios myth has another and perhaps more important lesson to teach us. In a perverted way the Attican myth of origin reminds us of the facts of life: it is (non-virgin) women who bear children, and it is men who by their sperm (*and not by their tears*) make women conceive so that the latter may

⁷⁰ Browne, Sir Thomas, 1658, *Hydriotaphia: Urne-Buriall. OR, A Brief Discourse of the Sepulchrall Urnes Lately Found in Norfolk, published with The Garden of Cyrus*, London; Internet edition, University of Chicago, at: <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/>

⁷¹ Hart, *o.c.*, p. 181; hieroglyphic text added by me.

⁷² Van Binsbergen, W.M.J., ‘Alternative models of intercontinental interaction towards the earliest Cretan script’, in: *Black Athena, o.c.*, pp. 131-148.

⁷³ Graves, R., 1988, *The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth*, London/ Boston: Faber & Faber, reprint of 1961 edition, first published 1948, pp. 140f, 436f. Graves preferred to call the myth Libyan rather than Egyptian for excellent reasons we shall come back to in the following chapters.

POSTSCRIPT 2006: Meanwhile the long postscript to note 51 above lends a different, Central Asian, but ultimately intercontinental dimension to this Libyan connection.

⁷⁴ See my present reservations in Postscript 2006 (xxx): the apparent Egyptian influence upon the Aegean I now consider to be primarily a reflection of the fact that Egypt and the Aegean have shared (with much of Africa, of West Asia, and of Europe) the same overall regional cultural history, especially since the Mesolithic/Early Neolithic.

give birth. In ordinary life, a male person's tears are often a sign that who sheds them has been *denied* love's privileges; hyperbolically, they can be considered the sign, not of male procreation, but of its frustration. This means that the 'tears of the divinity' theme involves at least two fundamental transformations in the official topography of the human body:

1. By a horizontal process of gender replacement, in other words through *masculinisation*, giving birth is transferred from woman to man, Rē^c undoubtedly⁷⁵ being a male god.
2. Subsequently, by a process of vertical displacement from a lower region of the human body (the groin) to a higher level (the face), in other words through *sublimation*, the male usurpation of parturition is transferred from the male genitals (with sperm as the standard product) to the eyes (with tears as the standard product).

A schematic representation of this dual structural shift is presented in Figure 14, which shows from left to right: a female body giving birth; a male body in the act of masturbation; and an implicitly male body weeping.

In passing we note that the same scheme can be applied to Greek mythology, with Athena's birth from her father's skull as another application of the sublimation phase (3). Less complete transformations towards masculinisation can be seen Aphrodite's birth from Kronos' or Ouranos' severed male genitals, and in Erichthonios' birth from the tuft of wool cast to the earth (Earth, female Gē) after a disgusted Athena had wiped Hephaistos' unwelcome and prematurely ejaculated seed from her thigh.

After this formal, structural analysis, our next step is to search for historical indications that such a twofold process has actually taken place. This does not prove difficult.

⁷⁵ POSTSCRIPT 2006. *Undoubtedly*, that is, ever since Rē^c's rise to exalted prominence, in the Fifth dynasty. However, there are indications that underneath the emphatic male nature of the sun god lurks a more original female identity, well in line with the sun's central nurturative role for all life on earth. Some of these indications derive from Ancient Egypt itself, e.g. the tradition according to which Rē^c is the son of a more primal Nt [Neith], whose female nature is never doubted. Other indications are comparative, e.g. the fact that the sun is female in the traditions of Ancient Crete (cf. Goodison, L., 1989, *Death, Women and the Sun: Symbolism and Regeneration in Early Aegean Religion*, London: Institute of Classical Studies), implicitly in the Germanic world (where 'die Sonne' has female gender), and also in the African Niger-Congo speaking world, where Anansi/Nzamb/Nyambi is a female spider/sun god. The thrust of my comparative historical research over the years is that these various cultural area substantially continuous with (although not one-sidedly dependent upon) Ancient Egypt. For an independent corroboration of this thesis from an accomplished Egyptologist, cf. Stricker, o.c., who argues with incredible display of an erudite referential apparatus that in the specific domain of the thinking about conception, pregnancy and birth – highly relevant in the present connexion –, Ancient Egypt, classical Graeco-Roman civilisation, Ancient Germanic civilisation, Ancient Israelite civilisation, and Ancient Indian civilisation, constitute, in fact, one continuous cultural and historical region. He could have added several post-Neolithic civilisations to which he had no specialist intellectual access: Ancient Mesopotamia (cf. Stol, M., 1998, *Pregnancy and birth in ancient Mesopotamia*, Leiden: Brill, originally published in Dutch 1975), and two regions on which the relevant documentation, although available in a scattered form, stills needs to be compiled: Ancient China, and Niger-Congo speaking Africa in historical times.

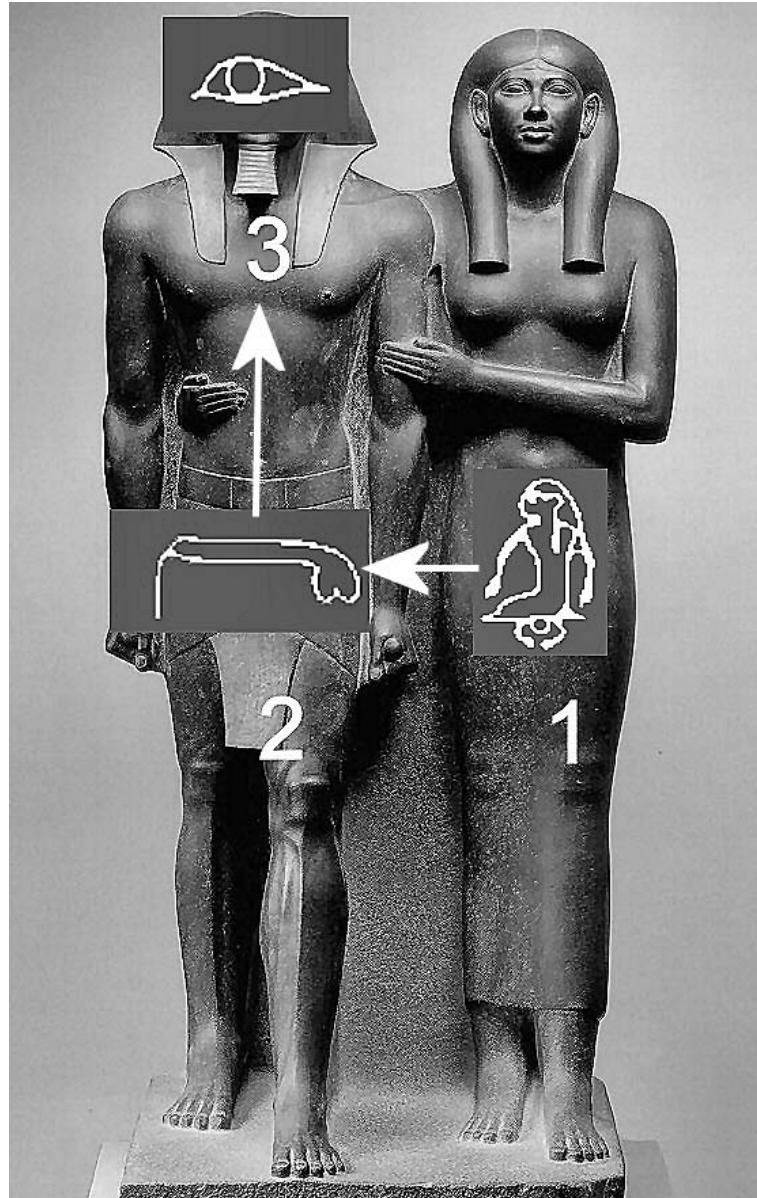


Figure 14. Schematic representation of the double shift (masculinisation i.e. 1 to 2; and sublimation i.e. 2 to 3) in the ‘tears of the divinity’ theme in ancient Egyptian mythology

source of background photo (King Mycerinus with his Queen):

http://www.neilos.org/wandsgallery/016_mykerinus.jpg ; the hieroglyphic signs mean (1) woman giving birth; (2) ejacuating penis; (3) eye.

Budge⁷⁶ gives a very late version of the myth according to which humans are the tears of the sun-god; it derives from a text entitled *The Book of knowing the Evolutions of Ra [Rē^c], and of Overthrowing Apepi [Apopi]*⁷⁷, written by Nesi-Amsu, c. 312 BCE. The text gives our Victorian Egyptologist considerable difficulty, because of its original yet logical solution to the problem of parthenogenetic creation in male hands: masturbation. In ways which half a century later Anthes was still to circumscribe as ‘unnatural though human’,⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Present-day Egyptologists have rightly discarded Budge, whose work reflects the state of knowledge in Egyptology a century ago, and less than a century after its inception. Yet despite Budge’s many errors of fact and interpretation, his books continue to be cited, for their accessibility – as Dover reprints –, affordability – in contrast to most other Egyptological publications –, comprehensive treatment, and their lavish quotations from primary sources. This may justify my own reliance on his work, here.

⁷⁷ Apopi is the snake-like cosmic enemy; his hieroglyphic sign shows a horizontal snake with undulating coils, with a knife stuck at the top of every coil and in the head; Budge, *Gods*, *o.c.*, p. ii: 245.

⁷⁸ Anthes, ‘Mythology’, *o.c.*, p. 36



the first god (*Hpri*, ‘the sun-god at his rising’,⁷⁹ a form of Rē^c) says

‘I had union with my hand, and I embraced my shadow in a love embrace; I poured seed into my own mouth, and I sent forth from myself issue in the form of the gods Šw and Tfnt,’⁸⁰

Šw and Tfnt being the original pair of Air (or Sunshine) and Moisture, out of whom the other major gods were subsequently born. Unable to hide his embarrassment, Budge shows himself to be truly a child of his racist, imperialist age,⁸¹ and he is quite relieved when another late text, the *Book of Pylons*,⁸² seems to offer reasons to relegate the masturbation motif, however physiologically and logically plausible, and however *universally* human, to what was from the standpoint of Victorian England a remote global periphery: sub-Saharan Africa, thus saving the moral purity of the ancient Egyptians:

‘In late dynastic times the Egyptians divided mankind into four classes, namely, the Egyptians, the Aamu, the Neḥesu, and the Themēḥu. Thus in the Book of Pylons Horus says to the “chiefs of Ra,” [...] who are in the Tuat [Underworld] of the Black Land and the Red Land (i.e. Egypt and the deserts to the South):

“Ye are the tears made by my Eye in your name of ‘Men’.” [...]

The Āamu, [...] (i.e., the Semitic nomad tribes of the Eastern Desert), were created by Horus and Sekhet, [the lion-goddess] [...], and this goddess protected their souls; the Themēḥu, or Libyans, , were also created by Horus and Sekhet, and the goddess protected their souls. Of the Neḥesu,  (i.e., the Negroes), Horus says,

“I masturbated for you, and I have been content at the millions who have come forth from me in your name of Neḥesu; Horus hath created you, and it is he who hath protected their souls.” (...)

This last statement is of interest, for it connects the idea of masturbation with the Negroes, that is to say, with the dark or black-skinned races of Nubia who lived on the banks of the Nile so far south as the Sixth Cataract, and, as we have already said, the legend as to the origin of the gods Shu and Tefnut is far more likely to have been the product of some indigenous dark-skinned race than of the group of mixed peoples whom we call Egyptians. It will be noticed that only the Egyptians, or offspring of Ra, are said to have been produced by the tears of Ra, which are the same as the tears of the Eye of Horus, i.e., the sun.’⁸⁴

Budge was led astray by his Victorian orientation as to the public non-existence of human sexuality let alone auto-sexuality, his desire to reshape the ancient Egyptians after that hypocritical European model, and his racism.


The motif of creation through masturbation is a very ancient part of Egyptian

⁷⁹ Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar*, o.c., p. 584.

⁸⁰ Budge, *Gods*, o.c., p. i: 297.


⁸¹ Budge, *Gods*, o.c., pp. i: 297f.

⁸² Original [but, as usual with Budge, imprecise] reference to: Bonomi, Joseph, & Sharpe, Samuel (ed.), 1864, *The Alabaster sarcophagus of Oimenephah I., king of Egypt : now in sir John Soane's Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields*, London : Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, plates 7 and 6b.

⁸³ According to Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar*, s.v. G21, the first sign should be , phonetic value *nh*.

⁸⁴ Budge, *Gods*, o.c., pp. i, 304f. Typography altered so as to highlight direct speech. Round parentheses are Budge's, square brackets my own.

cosmogony.⁸⁵

‘The oldest legend about the origin of the gods is contained in the text of Pepi I [c. 2300 BCE] , wherein it is said (line 465) that once upon a time Tem [*Tm, itm*, i.e. ‘Atum’] went to the city of Annu and that he there produced from his own body by the irregular means of masturbation his two children Shu and Tefnut. In this crude form the myth is probably of Libyan origin, [again, Budge relegate the masturbation theme to non-Egyptian savagery, although the ancient Libyans were supposed to be light-skinned and Afro-Asiatic (Berber) speaking] and it suggests that its inventors were in a semi-savage, or perhaps wholly savage, state when it was first promulgated. In later times, as we have already seen, the Egyptians appear to have rejected certain of the details of the myth, or to have felt some difficulty in believing that Shu and Tefnut were begotten and conceived and brought forth by Tem, and they therefore assumed that his shadow, , *khaibit*,⁸⁶ acted the part of wife to him; another view was that the goddess Iusaaset was his wife.⁸⁷



The old ideas about the origin of the twin gods, however, maintained their position in the minds of the Egyptians, and we find them categorically expressed in some of the hymns addressed to Amen-Ra, who under the New Empire was identified with Tem, just as at an earlier period Ra was identified with the same god. (...) The Twin Lion-gods [in two hymns quoted by Brugsch⁸⁸] are, of course, Shu and

⁸⁵ POSTSCRIPT 2006. For the Ancient Egyptians of dynastic times, male masturbation constituted the principal solution to the intellectual puzzle of how to account for the first birth, in other words: for cosmogony and anthropogony, if in common experience every birth springs from the coupling to two living human beings of complementary gender. Comparatively (cf. my ‘Mythological archaeology’, o.c.), this solution of the puzzle is far from standard, and already reflects the masculinisation process on which (as I will argue in detail throughout the chapters of *Global bee flight*) the Ancient Egyptian dynastic state was built. Two much more standard solutions are:

- the primal bird (usually the lightning bird, with cosmogonic connotations) lays the world egg – this solution can be argued to go back to pre-Out of Africa times (over 140,000 BP!); it feature in the above Table 2 as Narrative Complex 4, and it has left substantial traces throughout world mythology, including of course Ancient Egyptian mythology, where the cosmogonic Great Cackler is closely associated with the (male) earth god, Gb; also cf. Ndigi, o.c.
- female parthenogenesis: if all human life is known to spring from a female womb, the first offspring must have come from a woman who, in the absence of a male inpregnator, must have given virgin birth; usually the first offspring is considered to be male, and it is immediately pressed into service as the lover of his mother; geographical distribution. This is Narrative Complex 19 of the above Table 2. The reliance on knowledge of the fundamentals of procreative physiology, suggest this solution to be scarcely older than the Neolithic (of course, agriculture and animal husbandry, as distinctive Neolithic technological achievements, are predicated on such knowledge), where it is found all over the Extended Fertile Crescent. Also this second solution is attested in Ancient Egyptian traditions; e.g. it can be read into the relation between Isis and Osiris (on the assumption that Osiris was originally considered to be subservient to Isis), Isis and Horus, Nt [Neith] and Rē^c, etc. Its standard form in the Ancient Near East is the Ishtar/Thammuz myth.

⁸⁶ Gardiner (*Egyptian grammar*, o.c., p. 508) gives in transliteration ḥ, not h, and in general makes clear that there is no connection here with the words *bit* or *3ḥ-bit*, which are to play such a prominent role in the next two chapters [of the *Global bee flight* draft].

⁸⁷ Budge adds in a note (ii, 88):

‘In the passage referred to the opening words are “Tem came to take pleasure in himself”, , *iu sa*, and M. Maspero thinks that the name of the goddess Iusaaset  may be derived from them. See [Maspero, Gaston, 1893,] ‘La Mythologie Égyptienne’, [in: Maspero, Gaston, 1893-1916, *Etudes de Mythologie et d’archéologie égyptiennes*, I-VIII, vol. I. ii, Paris: Leroux,] p. 247.

⁸⁸ Brugsch, [Heinrich, 1891/1969,] *Religion [und Mythologie der alten Ägypter: Nach den Denkmälern. Zweite Ausgabe mit Namenregister*, Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung 1891, Reprint Zentralantiquariat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Leipzig 1969] p. 422.

Tefnut'.⁸⁹

The expression 'Twin Lion Gods'⁹⁰ for our first divine siblings links them to the lion theme as a personification of the king, both among the ancient Egyptians (as born out by numerous sculptural monuments) and the modern Nkoya (where the king is considered to turn into a lion upon his death, roaming the surroundings of his capital).⁹¹

Anthes⁹² says that the complex as a whole – and his summary includes the masturbation motif –

'originated in about the First Dynasty, is attested in the Third Dynasty, about 2700 B.C., and in the Pyramid Texts, and was the standard concept of Egyptian religion in all succeeding periods.'

The first attestation of the 'men as *tears* of the divinity' motif is almost a full millennium later, while until very late times a rival motif of human creation through direct masturbation persists. Therefore, and considering also the symbolic equivalence of transparent human fluids: tears, sperm, saliva, throughout the ancient Mediterranean and much of the Old World, I would interpret the masturbation theme not so much as an *alien* element but as the *original* element, as the first step in the symbolic operation of masculinisation (possibly but not necessarily of southern, sub-Saharan, provenance), which was subsequently bowdlerised, literally sublimated from the groin upwards to the face and the eyes. Budge (*Gods, o.c.*, p. i: 304) also indicates the existence of an intermediate model, an 'older version', of imperfect sublimation but with the same male parthenogenetic delusion, where the tears fall on the male sexual organs and cause them to produce. The possibility of punning on the ancient Egyptian words for 'weeping' and for 'mankind' did help, but did not cause the theme 'men as tears of the divinity' motif to come into being in the first place. The latter is a simple transformation, along the lines illustrated in Figure 14, from the adult – possibly esoteric, secret – language domain to that of public everyday speech. We can only guess at

⁸⁹ Budge, *Gods, o.c.*, p. ii: 88.

⁹⁰ Is it too far-fetched to allow the distribution of the symbolic complex to which Šw and Tfnt owe their existence, to extend as far in space and time as the *feng-shui* ('wind and water') system of Chinese geomantic divination? de Groot, J.J.M., 1890, *The religious system of China*, III, *Fêng-Shui*, Leiden: Brill; Dukes, E.J., 1912, 'Fêng-Shui', in: *Hastings encyclopaedia of religion and ethics*, v: 833; Eitel, E.J., 1873, *Fêng-Shui: Principles of the natural science of the Chinese*, London: Trübner; reprint 1973, Bristol: Pentacle Books/ Cockayne. also French translation by L. de Milloué, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, 1880, 1: 203f; Hübrig, H., 1879, 'Feng Schui [Fêng Shui], oder chinesische Geomantie', *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, 2: 5f; Skinner, S., 1982, *Living earth manual of Feng Shui*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Feuchtwang, S., 1974, *An anthropological analysis of Chinese geomancy*, Vientiane (Laos): Vithagna; Walters, D., 1991, *Chinese geomancy*, Shaftesbury: Element Books.

⁹¹ Is it too far-fetched to allow the distribution of the symbolic complex to which Šw and Tfnt owe their existence, to extend as far in space and time as the *feng-shui* 風水 ('wind and water') system of Chinese geomantic divination? de Groot, J.J.M., 1890, *The religious system of China*, III, *Fêng-Shui*, Leiden: Brill; Dukes, E.J., 1912, 'Fêng-Shui', in: *Hastings encyclopaedia of religion and ethics*, v: 833; Eitel, E.J., 1873, *Fêng-Shui: Principles of the natural science of the Chinese*, London: Trübner; reprint 1973, Bristol: Pentacle Books/ Cockayne. also French translation by L. de Milloué, *Annales du Musée Guimet*, 1880, 1: 203f; Hübrig, H., 1879, 'Feng Schui [Fêng Shui], oder chinesische Geomantie', *Sitzungsberichte der Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte*, 2: 5f; Skinner, S., 1982, *Living earth manual of Feng Shui*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Feuchtwang, S., 1974, *An anthropological analysis of Chinese geomancy*, Vientiane (Laos): Vithagna; Walters, D., 1991, *Chinese geomancy*, Shaftesbury: Element Books.

⁹² Anthes, *o.c.*, p. 36

the reasons for such a transformation. Had the masturbation motif become embarrassing in the light of later cultural conceptions of decency? Was it no longer properly understood? Did it need to be reformulated in terms of a later, more sophisticated concept of the sacred, where notions of power no longer primarily derived from human physiology and the tangible world in general, but in an increasingly logocentric manner from abstract symbolic concepts sublimated beyond their original materiality? Was this development a further stage in the masculinisation process that separated the First Dynasty queen from the more strongly (but still incompletely) masculine pharaonic state of the Old Kingdom and after (see below, further chapters of *Global bee flight*)? Or, alternatively (but this sounds convincingly or in line with the historical evidence), did the masturbation theme have to be sublimated precisely for lack of success of the masculinisation process, in other words when, in the face of later feminine power, men could no longer get away with the open assertion of male parthenogenetic power as in the masturbation theme?

In passing we note that the masturbation motif offers a possible link between ancient Egyptian and classical Greek myths, not only the myth of Erichthonios but also e.g. the doubly parthenogenetic birth of Athena from Zeus's head⁹³ (where as a sign of even more advanced sublimation towards logocentricity all reference to bodily fluids, even to tears, is suppressed, and a male god single-handedly produces a virgin goddess) and the birth of Aphrodite from foam or sperm when Ouranos's severed genitals were cast into the sea.

While we thus detect the theme of male masturbation as a pre-sublimation phase underneath that of 'tears of the divinity', masculinisation in the form of a gender shift in the production of offspring is also manifest. A parallel from elsewhere in the Ancient Near East may sensitise us to the fact that we are *not* confronted here with merely the timeless and universal, innate capabilities of the human psyche for creating and transforming body-derived symbols at will, or of bringing supposedly universal archetypes to the surface of consciousness. Far more specific, we operate here within a relatively well-defined and restricted cultural region. At this point we encounter *masculinisation as a fundamental dimension of the process of early state formation, probably to be situated at the transition from the Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age*.

The psychoanalyst Fromm has this to say about the same gender shift in procreation as it informs the founding myth of the Babylonian conception of patriarchal order, in heaven as on earth:

'The Babylonian myth of Creation (Enuma Elish) tells us of a victorious rebellion of male gods against Tiamat, the great mother who ruled the universe. They form an alliance against her and choose Marduk to be their leader in this fight. After a bitter war Tiamat is slain, from her body heaven and earth are formed, and Marduk was installed as supreme God.

However, before he is chosen to be the leader, Marduk has to pass a test [: he has to prove that by the sheer power of his word he can make a particular garment disappear and re-appear.

(...) Quite clearly the Babylonian myth reports the conflict between patriarchal and matriarchal principles of social organization and of religious orientation. The rule of the Great Mother is challenged by the male sons. But how can they win when they are inferior to women in one essential aspect? Women have the gift of natural creation, they can bear children. Men are sterile in this respect. (...) Quite in contrast to Freud's assumption that the "penis envy" is a natural phenomenon in the constitution of the woman's psyche, there are good reasons for assuming that before male supremacy was established there was a "pregnancy envy" in the man (...). In order to defeat the mother, the male must prove that he is not inferior, that he has the gift to produce. Since he cannot produce with a womb, he must produce in another fashion; he produces with his mouth, his word, his thought. This, then, is

⁹³ Pindar, *Odes*, 7, 35ff; Euripides, *Ion* 454ff.

the meaning of the test: Marduk can defeat Tiamat only if he can prove that he can also create even though in a different fashion. The test shows us the deep male-female antagonism, which is the basis of the fight between Tiamat and Marduk and the essential point of contention in this fight between the two sexes. With Marduk's victory male supremacy is established, the natural productiveness of the women is devaluated, and the male begins his domination based on his ability to produce by the power of thought, a form of production which underlies the development of human civilization.⁹⁴

Of course, as a psychoanalyst, Fromm is tempted to appropriate the ancient Babylonian myth and use it to understand the male individual psyche in a general, even universal perspective. His important insight however becomes all the more illuminating when we realise that Marduk symbolises the moment of the historical emergence, in the Late Neolithic, of the state as a distinct institutional domain, whose internal conceptualisation and structure is no longer derived from the pre-existing domains of production, reproduction and sociability in the family, the village, the clan.⁹⁵ Marduk's fight against Tiamat (whose maternal connotations sum up the nurturative, reciprocal, pacifist, gender-complementary orientation of many pre-state (proto-)Neolithic societies, often expressed in a balanced, gendered, dualist cosmology) means the disruption of reciprocity, gender complementarity and non-violence. Male Marduk's battle against Tiamat at one level of analysis is the battle of the political domain to gain its independence from the pre-existing inclusive domain where kinship reigned supreme and violence therefore had to be mitigated or even banned from the domestic domain. Masculinisation (complete with male, especially priestly and royal, claims to control the fertility of the land and the human body) is merely an expression of state formation. When I encountered the same masculinisation process in Nkoya traditions, I was tempted to take these at face value and situate Nkoya state formation through masculinisation in the second half of the second millennium CE;⁹⁶ however, it is not impossible that all that was really involved was distant echoes from the earliest historical state formation in the Ancient Near East, both in Early Dynastic Egypt and in Mesopotamia. In the latter context the Enuma Elish myth, meanwhile, evokes two distinct historical processes at the same time:

- primordial state formation in the late fourth millennia BCE, and
- the installation of Marduk at the head of the pantheon in recognition of the hegemony established by Marduk's city state Babylon in the late third millennium BCE.

It is masturbation which logically enables the authors of the Egyptian myths to effect the gender shift towards procreation as a divine male prerogative, as an aspect of the installation of a distinct political domain – in other words, of state formation. Through a

⁹⁴ Fromm, E., 1976, *The forgotten language: An introduction to the understanding of dreams, fairy tales, and myths*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, first published 1951, p. 231f. Original reference to: Heidel, A., 1942, *The Babylonian Genesis*, Chicago: Chicago University Press: ENUMA ELISH (When Above), Tablet IV. Budge, *Gods, o.c.*, p. i: 305, refers to the same Babylonian story but misses the point about gender rivalry.

⁹⁵ Cf. van Binsbergen & Wiggermann, *o.c.*

⁹⁶ Incidentally, this passage is effectively my rejoinder to Vansina, who in an otherwise highly positive review of my *Tears of Rain* yet doubts whether the political formations I describe for the Nkoya, deserve to be called states. Vansina, J., 1993, [Review of: Binsbergen, W.M.J. van, 1992, *Tears of Rain: Ethnicity and history in Central Western Zambia*, London/ Boston: Kegan Paul International], *Anthropos*, 88: 215-217.

simple process of sublimation – which however probably took centuries, perhaps a full millennium, to take effect – the ‘tears’ are direct transformations of the ‘sperm’. At the end of the development stands the ‘tears of the divinity’ theme, and a fully-fledged pharaonic state; at the beginning, human procreation by women, a pre-statal domain of kinship and clanship, and presumably the first divine procreation by a female divinity. The abundance of female original creators in Egyptian mythology (in the form of Nt [Neith], Ḥt-Ḥr [Hathor], and Mḥ-wrt, primarily) throughout the millennia makes it very likely that the postulated primary idea of ‘first divine procreation by a female divinity’ was truly the baseline of the earliest Egyptian ideas on creation – in line with the standard Neolithic conception of female parthenogenetic cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis as set out above. There is even a specific, albeit late, source which claims that the Great Goddess Nt produced the snake of chaos Apopi from her spittle;⁹⁷ this is highly significant in the light of the fact that there are several myths linking Nt closely to Rē^c, and that in certain version about the creation of Šw and Tfnt a distinction is made between the latter two: whereas Šw is created from Rē^c ejaculated sperm, Tfnt is alleged to have sprung from Rē^c’s spittle. Clearly underneath the dominant male version a female one lurks, which attributes to Nt the procreative role which Rē^c has apparently usurped. It is amazing that this theme was preserved into Late Antiquity, when Plurch records:

‘In Saïs the statue of Athena, whom they believe to be Isis, bore the inscription: “I am all that has been, and is, and shall be, and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered”’⁹⁸

Even several centuries later again, Proclus⁹⁹ is to reveal another part of the inscription on this statue, making Nt the mother of Rē^c:

‘And the fruit I bore is the sun.’

The continued references to cosmogonic goddesses in general also shows that the masculinisation process was never entirely completed and that even at the manifest surface of publicly mediated religious forms and expressions (let alone in the regional collective unconscious) strong female themes continued to resonate. If Nkoya parallels are anything to go by, the idea of a first female creator is well attested also there:

‘Our grandparents used to say that we, all the people in the world, were born from the same great-grandmother. She was fertile, and from her womb came forth all the clans’¹⁰⁰

The transformation process involved must not be seen as simply unilineal, and without inner contradictions. Despite masculinisation, gender complementarity has remained an element in ancient Egyptian religion, politics and culture throughout three millennia.¹⁰¹ This is already obvious in the relationship between Šw and Tfnt as the first twin pair of

⁹⁷ Hart, *Dictionary*, o.c.

⁹⁸ Plutarch, *De Iride et Osiride*, 9, in: *Moralia*, vol V, tr. Frank Cole Babitt, Loeb Classical Library, London: Heinemann, 1936; now, thanks to the Herculean labours of Bill Thayer, available at: http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Moralia/Isis_and_Osiris*/home.html

⁹⁹ Proclus, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. Ernestus Diehl, Lipsiae, 1903.

¹⁰⁰ *Likota Iya Bankoya*, 3: 2; van Binsbergen, *Tears*, o.c.

¹⁰¹ Schultze, P.H., 1993, *Vrouwen in de Egyptische oudheid*, The Hague: BZZTôH, first published 1988; Dutch translation of: *Frauen im alten Ägypten*, Lübbe, 1987

created gods. Neither should we automatically assume the primacy of bodily physiological images, as if these are only self-referential, or non-referential, and in themselves could not be the symbol of relationships and expressions that are primarily not of a bodily (including sexual) but of a social and spiritual nature. The same problem comes up time and again when we wish to determine our position vis-à-vis the sexual reductionism that was characteristic of Freud's work before *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*¹⁰² and that is unfortunately still the hallmark of routinised psychoanalytical truisms schematised for popular consumption. As Jung has argued,¹⁰³ sexuality is far from the necessary and final end of a chain of symbolic associations; Hermetic, alchemistic and Christian mysticism, among others, demonstrates that sexuality in itself often functions as a mere metaphor of processes of amalgamation and union in the world of abstract concepts and religious symbols.

Even in their earliest attestations the tears therefore issuing from Rē^c, and even the sperm, may therefore be read as more than mere physiological products. The following textual quotation already brings out such meta-physiological symbolism, in terms of light:

‘that which Tem, or Ra-Tem, has poured out [in order to produce Šw] is the light, and light was declared to be the prop of the sky.’¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile we must admit that the theme of ‘mankind as the tears of a male divinity’ involves yet another transformation in addition to masculinisation and sublimation: *anthropogenetic amplification*, from the original pair of twins Šw and Tfmt, ‘Air’ and ‘Moisture’, as the first gods beside the creator god, are generalised – to ultimately an extensive collectivity of beings, who moreover are no longer gods, but humans. It is the very same transformation (but working in the opposite direction) which characterises the Nkoya version as compared to the ancient Egyptian one: from ‘all of mankind as tears of Rē^c’ to ‘divine kings as tears of Mvula’.

Šw, god of the dry air and of sunshine,¹⁰⁵ has an exact counterpart in the Sumerian Enlil, ‘Lord Ether’. In evocation of the fundamental act by which he (technically their father) raised the sky goddess Nwt from out of her embrace on top of the male earth god Gb, Šw's name includes the notion of: ‘to raise’¹⁰⁶, and as such he is the literal counterpart of Luhamba, ‘Royal Person Soaring High’, in the Nkoya traditions – even although I prefer to discuss Luhamba under the ‘Reed and Bee’ theme in the following chapters of *Global bee flight*. This also makes Lipepo (Royal Person Wind’) and Luhamba (‘Royal Person Soaring High’) identical: both Nkoya princes can be interpreted as forms of the Egyptian Šw.

As the link between heaven and earth, Šw has the ladder among his characteristic

¹⁰² Freud, S., *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, in: *Gesammelte Werke*, 13, 1, Frankfurt a/M.: Fischer, 1968-1977; Freud, S., n.d., *Het levensmysterie en de psycho-analyse*, Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek.

¹⁰³ Jung, C.G., 1944, *Psychologie und Alchemie*, Zürich: Rascher; Jung, C.G., 1955, *Mysterium coniunctionis*, Zürich: Rascher;

¹⁰⁴ Budge, *Gods, o.c.*, p. ii: 90:






¹⁰⁵ Anthes, ‘Mythology’, *o.c.*, p. 37

¹⁰⁶ Viaud, J., 1975, ‘Egyptian mythology’, in: *New Larousse Encyclopedia of mythology*, introduction R. Graves, London/ New York/ Sidney/ Toronto: Larousse, 11th edition, pp. 9-48. The semantic field activated by the name Šw further comprises (cf. Faulkner, R.O., 1962, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, Oxford: Griffith Institute/ Ashmolean Museum, p. 262), ‘to be empty’, ‘sunlight’, ‘dryness’, ‘shade’ (both as absence of sunlight, as parasol, and as aspect of men's personality), and ‘feather’.

paraphernalia.¹⁰⁷ The main instrument of honey hunters, the ladder¹⁰⁸ is of very great antiquity and already features in prehistoric attestations of honey collecting – but in Egyptian funerary magic Budge¹⁰⁹ identified this theme as a relatively late development. Considering the prominence of the ladder on the Meroitic signet ring which we have suggested (in a previous chapter of *Global bee flight*) to be a crucial signpost on the path of divine kingship across Africa, and considering the prominence of apparently Šw-associated names in early Nkoya traditions, we may suggest that Šw was a dominant, perhaps the dominant, form for the Egyptian-derived divine king to take when diffusing across Africa. However, other ancient Egyptian myths¹¹⁰ indicate that the ladder as a characteristic attribute was shared by Šw and Horus, and in that light the bird perched on the ladder as depicted in the signet ring may be a double, but somehow unfocused, evocation of Horus and of the king's Horus title.

Robert Graves sees Šw not only as Herakles but also as a personification of the wind of the North, identical to Greek Boreas.¹¹¹ By implication Šw is claimed to have strong Libyan connotations.

Kees maintains that Tfnt is simply the semantically empty female complement of male Šw, produced solely by the formal compulsion in Egyptian mythology to have gendered pairs of all the primal divinities. Budge however cites etymological reasons (none too convincing, I suspect) to accord Tfnt an identity of her own as a goddess of gentle rain and soft wind.¹¹²

If male Šw can be identified with the Nkoya mythical figure Luhamba on semantic grounds, his twin sister Tfnt has to be equated with Katete. The legendary Nkoya twin princes hiding for their hideous enemy Mwaat Yaamv, 'Lord of Death', and his army, take on truly mythical dimensions once we realise that a Graecised ancient Egyptian mythological variant (in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*) situates Šw and Tfnt at the place called Chemmis, hiding under their forms of Sun and Moon for the demonised god Seth [*Stħ*]. Chemmis, *3ħ-bit* in ancient Egyptian, is as we shall see one of the very few ancient Egyptian localities explicitly associated with the bee sign ( *bit*;  or  *3ħ-bit*, *Chemmis*; however, for this placename there is also the orthography ). The complex semantic field of the bee sign  *bit*, to be explored below (in the subsequent chapters of *Global bee flight*) includes that of 'King of Lower Egypt' which Helck favours in his reading of the meaning of the toponym Chemmis:

¹⁰⁷ Budge, *Gods, o.c.*, p. ii: 92, 241

¹⁰⁸ POSTSCRIPT 2006: One of the prominent 'Narrative Complexes' characteristic of Old World mythology throughout the Extended Fertile Crescent in (proto-)Neolithic times, was the theme of 'the connection between heaven and earth' (item 2 in Table 2 above), logically complementary to the theme of the 'separation of heaven and earth'. An enormous variety of devises were cited to bring about this connection: the demiurge, the king, birds, angels and other messengers, a suspended rope, and ascending ladder or tower (as in the Nkoya Kapesh theme), etc. Šw's ladder certainly is to be situated in this context. Cf. my 'Mythological archaeology', o.c.

¹⁰⁹ Budge, *Gods, o.c.*, pp. i: 167f.

¹¹⁰ Budge, *Gods, o.c.*

¹¹¹ Graves, R., 1988, *The White Goddess: A historical grammar of poetic myth*, London/ Boston: Faber & Faber, reprint of 1961 edition, first published 1948, p. 124f

¹¹² Budge, *Gods, o.c.*, p. ii: 92

‘Ch[emmis] hieß nach H[erodotus]¹¹³ eine schwimmende Insel bei Buto im Westdelta, auf der Isis Apollon und Artemis geboren habe. Die Göttin Buto [i.e. W3dyt] habe als Amme des Horus die Insel zum Schwimmen gebracht, um ihn gegen Seth zu schützen. In äg[yptische] Texten versteckte Isis ihren Sohn Horus in einem *3h-bit* genannten Dickicht. Eine ältere Sage von den ‘‘beiden Kindern des unteräg[yptischen] Königs’’ läßt diese als Sonne und Mond (später als Schu und Tfnt = Apollon und Artemis erklärt) im Papyrusumpfen von Buto geboren werden. H[erodotus]’ Bericht geht also auf eine altäg[yptischen] Mythe zurück.’¹¹⁴

Helck translates here ‘the two children of the king of Lower Egypt’, presumably from *hrdwy bit*. Although ‘King of Lower Egypt’ is certainly the preferred translation of *bit* among Egyptologists, we shall see below that equally plausible alternative readings include ‘the two children of the goddess of Lower Egypt’, and even ‘the two children of the bee’. It is the same term *bit* which we encounter in the royal name *n-sw-bit* and in *3h-bit*, ‘papyrus swamp of the *bit*’, again with the same three semantic options. Here we have in a nutshell the problematic which will keep us occupied in the next two chapters of *Global bee flight*.

When Helck stresses the aspect that Chemmis is a *floating* island, we are reminded of the Nkoya tradition that, as a people, they ‘originally’ lived on floating islands up in the north; my ‘de-mythifying attempt, in *Tears of Rain*, to interpret this as a reminiscence of an earlier historical stay in the swamps in Kasempa district, scarcely 100 km. north of the present-day Nkoya region, looks shamefully inadequate against this background of an ancient Egyptian myth, in which we can also trace prototypes of Nkoya traditional royal figures such as Lipepo, Luhamba and Katete: forms of Šw and Tfnt hiding at Chemmis. Gardiner, however, calls Chemmis a town instead of a floating island.¹¹⁵


Towards the end of this Part II of *Global bee flight* we shall discuss the masculinisation process that characterised the ancient Egyptian state as from the First Dynasty. It can be taken as an indication of progressive masculinisation that in the older myth it is still two princes, twins of either gender, who are born in Buto’s papyrus swamp, whereas the younger myth as transmitted by Plutarch in *De Iside et Osiride* has uniquely the male Horus child.¹¹⁶

4.2. Is it possible to assign a date to the sub-Saharan borrowing of the ancient Egyptian ‘tears of the divinity’ motif?

As far as the ‘Tears of Rain’, or in general ‘tears of the male divinity’ theme is concerned,

¹¹³ Original reference to: Hist. 2, 156.

¹¹⁴ Helck, W., ‘Chemmis’, in: K. Ziegler & W. Sontheimer, eds., *Der kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike*, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, cols. i: 1143.

¹¹⁵ Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar, o.c.*, p. 550, s. v. , and s.v. *i3h*, p. 551; cf. *w3hy*, ‘hall of inundation in Palace’, Gardiner, *Egyptian grammar, o.c.* We are also reminded of the hypothetical ‘aquatic’ African societies that crop up time and again in reconstructions of African social and linguistic prehistory, cf. Sutton, J.E.G., 1974, ‘The aquatic civilization of Middle Africa’, *Journal of African History*, 15: 527-546; Sutton, J.E.G., 1977, ‘The African aqualithic’, *Antiquity*, 51: 25-34; Sanchez-Mazas, A., E.S. Polonil, B. Kervaire, J-M Dugoujon, S. Tomay, F. Rodhain, L. Excoffier, Y. Naciri-Graven, J-M Tiercy, and A. Langaney, n.d., ‘A genetic view on Nilo-Saharan’, at <http://www.santafe.edu/files/gems/ehlchronology/SanchezMazas.pdf>

¹¹⁶ Griffiths, J.G., 1970, *Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press. [**this seems in contradiction with a passage above**]

our analysis has established beyond reasonable doubt a truly historical link between ancient Egypt and the modern Nkoya. A discussion of the Egyptian material and an analysis of its evolution in the course of three millennia of recorded ancient Egyptian religious history has offered us an unequivocal way out from Fairman’s dilemma i.e. the question of ascertaining whether manifest correspondences between Ancient Egypt and sub-Saharan Africa in historical times is due to sub-Saharan African influences on Egypt, or Egyptian influences on sub-Saharan Africa.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ POSTSCRIPT 2006. The argument here, whose essence will only become clear in the next few pages, is the following: the possibility of punning on the similarity of the words for tear (*rmy*) and for people (*rmt*) is so specific to the Ancient Egyptian language, that the influence can only have gone from Egypt to Africa, and not the other way around. This would be very reassuring, but the evidence brought together in the following table (a product of the long-range comparative research on leopard-skin symbolism) suggests that also the Ancient Egyptian lexical usage may in itself reflect long-range substrate, pre-Afro-Asiatic influences. Of these, semantic resonances may be detected (as we have seen above) in a Niger-Congo speaking context like Nkoya in historical times, but what is even more puzzling is that the punning between ‘person’ and ‘drops’ appears to extend even to Dene-Sino-Caucasian – a language family which we may consider to have been one of the substrate languages of Northeastern Africa and of West Asia from Upper Palaeolithic times onward.










Table of Nations	Afro-Asiatic		Dene-Sino-Caucasian	Niger-Congo	remarks ⁵
	Hebrew ¹	Ancient Egyptian ²	Sino-Tibetan ³	Bantu: Central Bantu: Nkoya ⁴	
Noah (Nuah) נח	‘rest, resting place’	3h, ‘placenta’;  3ht ‘horizon’;  cf. the creator god Atwm 	Nu Wa, 女娲 primal (moon) goddess attested in Neolithic; only later paired to the male culture hero, first emperor and sun god Fu Xi 伏羲	(1) Nkoya (Zambia) creation myth: ‘The original mother became fertile and produced the entire world from her womb’; (2) Nankuwa [‘Mother Nkuwa’, no clear etymology] appears in a pivotal place as an apical ancestor in mythical Nkoya royal genealogies	Of Noah’s three sons, Šem’s name is puzzlingly meaningless if interpreted (which is probably unwarranted) as Hebrew: ‘Name’, i.e. 1) an abstract cosmogonic/divine principle (throughout Israel’s tradition), 2) the third celestial item after Sun and Moon, i.e. ‘Stars’ (widely represented as leopard’s spots)
Japhet יפת	‘open-ness’ (a popular etymology)	cf. the goddess Tftit, ‘spray’; equated with the Moon 			Cf. Greek Iapetos, ‘hurrier’ (Graves) = Moon (traversing the entire zodiac in a month, whereas the Sun takes a year); North
Ham חם	‘heat, sun, daylight’	Cf. Šw, ‘the air god’, equated with the sun (šw) 			Sun; South; Day; Nimrod, Ham’s son but in a corrupt sequence; as ‘Noon’ (Karst), and as ‘subduer of the leopard’, Nimrod is supposed to have solar connotations
Šem שם	‘name’; cf. שמע	Cf. rn  ‘name, person’; cf. the goddess ‘Hand’ assisting Atwm in his creative masturbation; humankind (<i>rmtj</i>)  said to have sprung from the tears (<i>rmtj</i>) of Re’ 	<i>ren</i> (Modern Beijing Chinese; Old Chinese: <i>nin</i>) 人 ‘man, person’; Old Chinese <i>rin</i> (modern Beijing <i>ling</i> 2), 霖 ‘rain’, universally with demiurgical connotations, and often (but hardly in China) with leopard connotations	‘Wene wetu wa limata lya Mvula’: Our kingship is from the drops (tears) of Rain; <i>ka-mpulu</i> = leopard	Cf. Gen. 1 (‘mouth over water’):  ‘...And the Spirit of God moved upon [the face of] the waters. And God said, ...’; ⁶ catalytic principle, demiurge, cf. leopard. Cf. Empedocles, whose enumeration of the 4 elements includes ‘Nestis [Persephone] who moistens the mortal springs with her tears’...

Table 5.3. Long-range cosmologico-symbolic associations surrounding Noah and his sons
Source: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., *Mythological archaeology: Reconstructing humankind’s oldest discourse: A preliminary attempt to situate sub-Saharan African cosmogonic myths within a long-range intercontinental comparative perspective*, draft book manuscript, provisionally available at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/mythical_archaeology/mytholog.htm

Notes to this table:

¹Strong, J.H., 1989, *Strong’s exhaustive concordance: Compact edition*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprint of the unspecified late-19th century edition; Heubner, H.L., 1866, ed., *M. Gottfried Büchner’s biblische Real- und Verbal- Hand-Concordanz oder Exegetisch-homiletisches Lexikon*, 12th ed., Braunschweig: Schwetschke.


The theme ‘tears of the male divinity’ seems to have developed, via an intermediate stage of creation through male masturbation, out of the idea of creation through parturition by a female divinity. This development required a double transformation of masculinisation and sublimation, with additional transformations of amplification and humanisation: first from twin gods Šw and Tfn̄t to mankind as a whole, followed (in the sub-Saharan African context) by a contraction reducing ‘mankind as a whole’ to ‘divine kings’ (presumably the members of the migrant lineages that had brought the mytheme, and other aspects of the kingship, from pharaonic Egypt).¹¹⁸ As such, the ‘tears of a male divinity’ belongs to such a

²Bonnet, H., 1971, *Reallexikon der Ägyptischen Religionsgeschichte*, Berlin: de Gruyter, Nachdr. der 1. Aufl. Berlin 1952; Gardiner, o.c.

³Ye Shuxian, 2003, ‘Myth in China: The case of ancient goddess studies’, paper read at the International Colloquium on Myth and the Disciplines, Leiden (convenors Mineke Schipper & Daniela Merolla), December 2003; The Table of Bable: An etymological database project: Chinese characters, n.d., at: <http://starling.rinet.ru/index.htm> (but note that the Chinese entry is probably spurious: the modern form rén 人 ‘man’, with its apparent assonance with both old and new forms that are both semantically and phonologically close to, e.g., English ‘rain’, probably derives from Old Chinese *nin < *nej-n); van Binsbergen, *The leopard’s unchanging spots*, o.c.

⁴my *Tears of Rain*, o.c.

⁵Graves, R., 1964, *The Greek myths*, 2 vols., Harmondsworth: Penguin, first published 1955; Karst, J., 1931, *Origines Mediterraneae: Die vorgeschichtlichen Mittelmeervölker nach Ursprung, Schichtung und Verwandtschaft: Ethnologisch-linguistische Forschungen über Euskaldenak (Urbasken), Alarodier und Proto-Phrygen, Pyrenaeo-Kaukasier und Atlanto-Ligurer, West- und Ostiberer, Liguro-Leleger, Etrusker und Pelasger, Tyrrhener, Lyder und Hetiter*, Heidelberg: Winters; Capelle, Wilhelm, 1968, *Die Vorsokratiker: Die Fragmente und Quellenberichte, übersetzt und eingeleitet von Wilhelm Capelle*. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag; *Leopard*, o.c.

⁶In other words, it is almost as if an Israelite with access to hieroglyphic representations but unable to interpret them correctly in terms of the Ancient Egyptian language, had idiosyncratically attempted to interpret the ligature , not unlike the fantasies that attended the pre-decipherment contemplation of hieroglyphic script from Horapollo to Kircher.

¹¹⁸ POSTSCRIPT 2006. Today I would reformulate this in more or less the following terms: ...the migrant lineages that, originating in the Extended Fertile Crescent and gradually migrating into South Central Africa, had shared in the notion of the divine king as one of the most striking forms which the connection between heaven and earth could take. Despite the amazing parallels between the Nkoya in historical times, and Ancient Egypt, I am no longer convinced that in order to explain them we need to assume a direct, one-directional transmission of cultural material from Ancient Egypt to South Central Africa – not any more than we need that type of transmission in order to explain the many, and unmistakable, linguistic, religious and mythical parallels between Ancient Egypt and the Ancient Aegean. Participating, or originating as the case may be, in a widely extending, (proto-)Neolithic cultural region, seems to be the real key we are looking for. And in the specific case of the Nkoya with their Kapesh tower myth, there are many indications (which I am summarising in the final version of my Kyoto paper, now in press in the Kyoto proceedings) that what we are looking at, in the case of the Nkoya kingship, is not so much emanations directly and purely from Ancient Egyptian pharaonic kingship. The name Kapesh points in a different direction. In the Kyoto proceedings I have the following to say on this point:

‘In South Central Africa, especially in Zambia, it is elaborated in the story of the king who built a tower into heaven from forked branches; the name of that king is given as *Kapesh kamununga mpanda* ‘Kapesh joiner of forked branches’. The last two words are straightforward Bantu, but the name Kapesh has no Bantu etymology. It could derive from Afro-Asiatic, notably Hebrew, *qps̄*, *קפס* used for a capering movement as of a fleeing deer, with the remote possibility of containing a reference to the hobbling gait of the divine king for whom the forced displacement of the hip joint was often part of the initiation (Graves, *Goddess, Greek Myths*, o.c.). However, much more probable is an Indo-Aryan etymology **gabhasti-*, ‘forked carriage pole, hand’ (de Vries, J., 1958, *Etymologisch woordenboek: Waar komen onze woorden en plaatsnamen vandaan?* Utrecht/Antwerpen: Spectrum, first edition, s.v. ‘gaffel’). Both phonologically and semantically the fit is perfect, albeit that the horseless environment of the African savannah south of the rain forest could not accommodate the reference to the wheeled vehicle; however, it does retain the implied reference to the celestial pole as one of the principal

specific, late stage of the *internal* development of ancient Egyptian religion, that there can be no doubt (but see the postscripts!) that in this case the borrowing went from ancient Egypt to sub-Saharan Africa, and not the other way round. Whatever the input of African mythological material, the masculinisation and sublimation process took place in the context of historical Egyptian culture in the course of the third and second millennium BCE. Now we are also justified in suggesting a date for the earliest moment that this ancient Egyptian theme can have left the lower Nile valley on its way to South Central Africa. Whether as H̄pri or as Rē^c, we are dealing with male gods insisting on their male anatomy and physiology while dissimulating the fact that these are unsuitable for direct biological reproduction. The prominence of the sun god in this entire complex already shows it to be post-Achaic: Rē^c, although attested in one or two Achaic names, was only established as the dominant Egyptian god after the fourth dynasty, and the sublimation in terms of our theme must necessarily post-date that development. Another chronological indication lies in the convergence with mythological material presented by Herodotus (5th century BCE) and Plutarch (c. 46-120 CE), even although New Kingdom themes have been shown to reverberate particularly in this Greek material.

connections between heaven and earth, along with the tower. I take the distribution area of the Tower theme in Figure 4 as an indication of massive cultural influence from South Asia (and, via South Asia, from South East Asia), one of whose items was kingship with an elaborate court culture in which musical instruments and orchestras played a major role. At the courts of MweneKahare and Mwene Mutondo, two major kings of the Nkoya people in Zambia, who have become my close relatives since I started research in their area in 1972, many royals have names straight out of the Mahabharata, such as S(hi)kanda and Mangala. Karst claims (but without giving sources) that under the name Kale, Gypsy groups have penetrated Africa from India. Indeed, Gypsy groups have been studied in Sudan (Streck 1996), Kale ('Black') as a Gypsy name is widespread in Eastern Europe, and Kale is indeed the alternative name of the Kahare royal title (Smith & Dale 1920). The trajectory of Indo-Arian speaking, horse- and/or chariot-orientated groups can be traced through Mitanni in West Asia (late 2nd mill. BCE), and leads perhaps on to the mysterious (somatically African) X-Group, Nubia, early 1st mill. CE.'

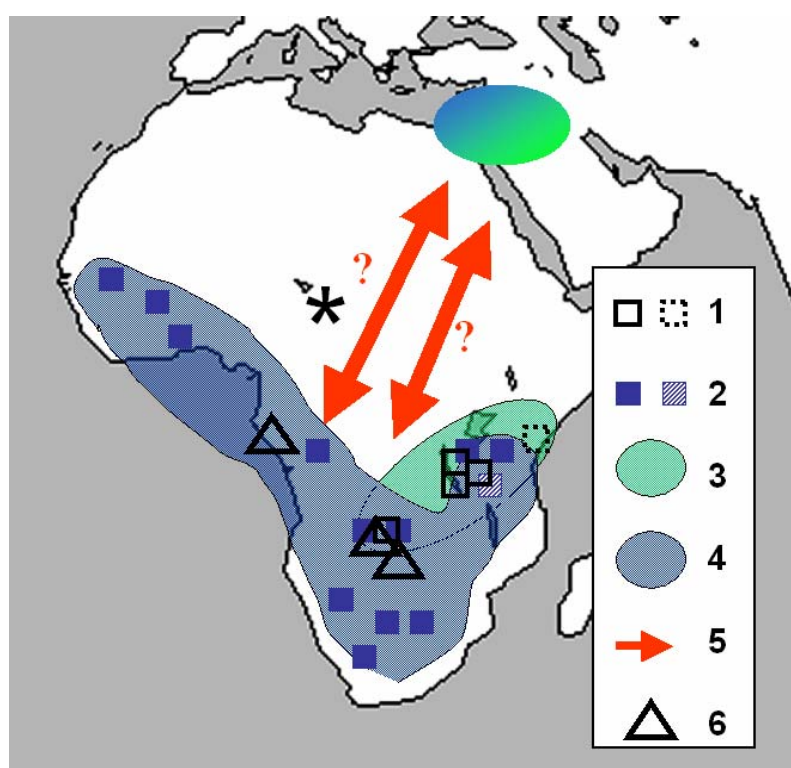


Figure 4. An example of distributional analysis as a clue to dating a Narrative Complex: (1) *Tower myths* and (2) *Flood myth ('Primal Waters' Narrative Complex)* in Africa in historical times: not absent (pace Witzel), but the restricted distributions suggest recent introduction related to return migration into Africa

1. Tower mytheme attested
 2. Flood mytheme attested
 3. African distribution of (1)
 4. African distribution of (2)
 5. improbability of borrowing from South West Asia, where both mythemes occur together in the biblical context
- hatched outline or fill indicates doubtful attestation

Sources include Frobenius, L., 1931, *Erythräa: Länder und Zeiten des heiligen Königsmordes*, Berlin/Zürich: Atlantis-Verlag: Introduction and pp. 166f, 169; *Tears*, o.c.; van der Sluijs, M.A, n.d., *Mythaeum: An archetypal encyclopaedia of myth*, at: <http://www.mythopedia.info/26-north-america.htm>.

The itinerary of this group with connotations of Indo-Iranian and horsekeeping background, via Nubia so presumably also Egypt, into South Central Africa, would perhaps afford them sufficient exposure to Late Egyptian mythological themes to account for the apparent Egyptian parallels we have found among their modern descendants, the Nkoya royal elite.

When then even the ladder theme in Egyptian magic is recognised as late,¹¹⁹ it appears as if we have much reason to situate the full development of the ancient Egyptian Šw-related theme which gave rise to the ‘Tears of Rain’ theme in the Nkoya context, *to the second half of the first millennium BCE* – so that it could very well have been part of the package of divine kingship which was diffused through Meroe, in the way discussed in chapter 5 above of *Global bee flight*.

The only (...! 2006) point which is in slight disagreement with such a view is that the Šw and Tfnt episode, in a transformed version about two princes hidden in the Buto papyrus swamp, may be considered relatively early as compared with the late first millennium Horus version. However, we may assume that such older versions continued to circulate in ancient Egypt and were there loosely incorporated in the package of divine kingship to be transmitted over sub-Saharan Africa.

Formalised, our argument is like this:

- Of a particular mythical theme (‘mytheme’) M: ‘the coming into existence of gods and humans’, variants $V_1, V_2, \dots V_n$ are available and attested inside ancient Egypt at moments $t_1, t_2, \dots t_n$;
- Non-controversial structuralist analysis shows variants $v_1, v_2, \dots v_n$ to be in reality all versions of the same underlying myth, linked to each other through transparent transformations;
- This allows us to see one continuous development within ancient Egyptian cultural history from V_1 to V_n over a time t_1 to t_n ;
- Thus we have a compelling reason why the latest version, V_n , can only have emerged within the context of ancient Egypt itself;
- The latest Egyptian version (V_n) to be found also outside ancient Egypt at whatever moment in time after t_n therefore determines the moment ‘ante qua no’ for diffusion of the mythical complex from Egypt to elsewhere;
- The systematic nature of the development process producing the various variants requires a common and continuous context of ancient Egyptian culture, and therefore absolutely rules out the possibility that a variant which is typologically earlier (V_{n-x}) found outside Egypt, would have left separately at any time before t_n ; it cannot be based

¹¹⁹ POSTSCRIPT 2006: In view of the place of the ladder theme within the overall Narrative Complex ‘The connection between Heaven and Earth’ as characteristic of the (proto-)Neolithic Extended Fertile Crescent, there is no reason why the ladder theme should be late, in Ancient Egypt or elsewhere in that cultural region. Nor are they late in Egypt: the ladder theme abounds in the Pyramid texts, e.g. from the Pyramid of Unas, North Wall:

Utterance 304: 468: ‘To say the words: “Hail to you, daughter of Anubis, she who stands at the peeping holes (ptr.w) of the sky, you friend of Thot, she who stands at the two side rails of the *ladder*, open the way for Unas that he may pass !”’

Utterance 305: 472: ‘To say the words : ‘The *ladder* is tied together by Re before Osiris. The *ladder* is tied together by Horus before his father Osiris, when he goes to his soul (ax), one of them is on this side, one of them is on that side while Unas is between them.’”

Utterance 306: 476f: ‘To say the words : ‘How beautiful is indeed the sight, how good indeed to see, so say the gods, when this god ascends to heaven, (when) Unas ascends to heaven 477: while his power (bA.w) is over him, the fear on both his sides, his magical power in front of his legs. Geb acted towards him as it was done towards himself. 478: They come towards him, the gods Baw Pe, the gods Baw Nekhen, the gods of the sky, the gods of the earth. They elevate Unas on their arms. 479: and you ascend, Unas, to the sky, you climb on it in this its name of *ladder*...’” (source: ‘Pyramid texts online’, n.d., <http://www.pyramidtextsonline.com/Antenorth.htm>).

on the parallel development *outside Egypt* of an even earlier variant V_{n-x-a} (x and a positive integers) hypothetically diffused from Egypt;

- Therefore, if older variants are found, along with later ones, outside Egypt, the moment of diffusion remains that of the attestation, inside Egypt, of the latest variant V_n ; or later.

Will we be able to use the same principles when tackling the far more complex problem of the Egyptian origin and subsequent diffusion of the *n-sw-bit* formula, in chapters 7 and 8 of this book?

4.3. Bees as the tears of $R\bar{e}^c$

Finally, a transition to the major argument on the ‘Reed and Bee’ motif is provided by an aetiological myth in ancient Egypt according to which it is not so much mankind but bees which are the product of the tears of $R\bar{e}^c$, as related by Sauneron:

‘“Der Gott Re weinte, und die Tränen fielen aus seinen Augen auf den Boden und verwandelten sich in Bienen. Die Biene baute ihre Waben und besuchte die Blüten aller Pflanzen; auf diese Weise entstand das Wachs und ebenso der Honig aus den Tränen des Re.” Mit diesen Worten erklärt die Mythe die Entstehung der Bienen und des Honigs.’¹²⁰

Sauneron does not date this myth, but our preceding argument demonstrates it to be late,¹²¹ and to be derivative of a more original (although, as we have seen, in itself already highly secondary) image of human beings, not bees, as the tears of $R\bar{e}^c$. The primacy of the latter idea is already demonstrated by the fact that it does have a philological basis in the correspondence between the ancient Egyptian words *rmy* and *rmt* – a link which is absolutely absent between bees and honey on the one hand (*bit*), and *rmy* on the other. We may consider the idea of bees as the tears of $R\bar{e}^c$ as a simple literary variant of the human version of that myth. At least it conveys the idea that in ancient Egypt the bee, the bee sign, and everything the bee sign stood for, was of such crucial importance that it could easily function as equivalent to human beings. To this theme we shall now turn.

¹²⁰ Sauneron, S., ‘Honig’, in: Posener, G. (with S. Sauneron et J. Yoyotte), 1959, *Dictionnaire de la civilisation égyptienne*, Paris: Hasan, 1959; German translation: *Lexikon der ägyptischen Kultur*, Wiesbaden: Löwit, n.d., p. 108.

¹²¹ POSTSCRIPT 2006: I no longer believe that the bee theme here is late, and now reject the argument of this paragraph. From earliest dynastic times, bee associations refer to the Delta, Nt, her temple, and to the rulership (priestly or secular) of Lower Egypt. With the rise to prominence of Saïs in the Late Period, these associations were revived after an interval of two millennia in which the bee theme in Egypt was largely limited to royal titlature, and to the actual craft of bee-keeping. Apparently, there is not a single instance of local reflection on the bee symbolism of the royal titlature to be found anywhere in the extensive written sources which Ancient Egypt produced in the course of nearly three millennia. This suggests that the bee theme is tabooed, very old, going back to predynastic times, and to substrate association (notably with West Asia up to Anatolia) that cannot be explained on the basis of the Ancient Egyptian language and culture alone. Bee- and honey-related themes from the Eastern Mediterranean (including *Melissa*, ‘bee’ as designation for priests and priestesses, the prominence of the bee in the Hittite Telepinu epic) lead us to recognise these themes as, specifically, non-Egyptian, non-Afro-Asiatic, and non-African, but West Asian. These are tell-tale signs that, however great the insight is that we may derive from an Afrocentrist perspective, we should not close our eyes to the evidence concerning non-African, notably West Asian contributions to the making of the Ancient Egyptian dynastic state and culture.