

Greek and Egyptian Dreams in Two Ptolemaic Archives: Individual and Cultural Layers of Meaning

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A cultural comparison is made of dreams in the archives of an Egyptian (Hor) and a Greek (Ptolemaios) in second-century BCE Egypt. The content of the dreams is discussed with reference to actual events in the lives of the dreamers as known from their archives and to ancient Greek and Egyptian dream books. The possible social phenomena which might account for differences and similarities between the dreams are discussed. It is found that the dreams in Hor's archive generally reveal a stronger cultural layer with a deep immersion in a specifically Egyptian environment. In contrast, those in Ptolemaios' archive generally have a stronger individual layer and are more concerned with personal struggles reflecting social and economic factors.

KEY WORDS: Egypt, Greece, comparative, dream-books, cultural meaning

This article attempts a cultural comparison of the dreams in the archives of two second-century BCE inhabitants of the Sarapieion at Memphis, a religious complex renowned for oracular consultation, dream-interpretation, and dream-incubation;¹ and named after the Græco-Egyptian deity, Sarapis. These two archives contain the only extant collections of personal dreams together with associated documentary texts from the entire span of roughly 3,500 years of ancient Egyptian history.² The fact that they are contemporary and belonged to individuals with different cultural

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¹ I.e., the practice of sleeping in a temple in order to solicit a divine dream which would address a specific problem or query.

² Approximately thirty-five personal Egyptian dream-texts have been identified, though they are mostly isolated examples without associated archives (Ray, 1987, p. 85). Most Egyptian dreams are from literary and official contexts, or dream-interpretation books. These have been the focus of works such as Oppenheim (1956); Sauneron (1959); Zibelius-Chen (1988), all largely superceded by Szpakowska (2003). In contrast to the dreams discussed here, such texts are subject to conventions of genre and cannot be considered genuine personal dreams.

backgrounds, though living within the same religious complex, makes them ideal for comparison.

The first archive belonged to a Greek recluse (*katochos*) in the temple of Astarte: Ptolemaios, Son of Glaukias (b. circa 202 BCE). It contains his own dreams as well as those of his adolescent brother Apollonios, of the young Egyptian twin girls Tawê and Taous whom Ptolemaios “adopted” when they were abandoned by their mother (Nephoris) and of a certain Nektembes, possibly another *katochos* (Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit I 79, Wilcken 1927; henceforth *UPZ*). The second archive belonged to an Egyptian priestly scribe in the temples of Isis and Thoth,³ Hor of Sebennytos (b. circa 195-200 BCE), and records only his own dreams. It is likely that Ptolemaios and Hor knew each other, and there is a mention of twins in the latter’s archive (Ray, 2002, p. 148).

Two combined approaches are taken, both of which contribute to the concluding discussion on layers of individual, cultural, and universal meanings in the dreams; and how social phenomena such as ethnicity/culture, social standing, religious beliefs, and individual personalities and circumstances might account for differences and similarities between the types of dreams in the two archives. The first approach is to attempt an understanding of the manifest content of the dreams, with reference to actual occurrences in the lives of the dreamers as revealed in the archives. This provides insight into the individuals’ lives and dreams without recourse to speculative psychoanalytical interpretations. Examples of previous attempts at such interpretations of these dreams will be discussed in order to contrast their inadequacy, and frequent irrelevance, with the more fruitful methods adopted here. The second approach is to attempt to interpret the dreams within their cultural contexts using Greek and Egyptian dream-books in order to determine what the dreams may have meant to the individuals themselves. There are clearly culture-specific ways of interpreting dreams. For example, the Greek interpreter Artemidorus (1.79; White, 1975) considered dreams of sleeping with one’s mother as symbolic of conquering a country. In the Egyptian *Papyrus Chester Beatty III* (*CBIII*; Gardiner, 1935) (3.7; Szpakowska, 2003) such dreams indicate that the dreamer “will be joined by his clansmen.” It must be acknowledged, however, that none of the ancient dream-books are contemporary with our archives—*CBIII*, in fact, is thought to have been composed around a thousand years earlier (c. 1300-1200 BCE). *Papyrus Jena 1209* (Zauzich, 1980) dates to the first-century BCE; Artemidorus’ *Oneirocritica* to the second-century CE; and *Papyrus Carlsberg* (Volten, 1942) and *Papyrus Berlin* (Zauzich, 1980) to the first-century CE.⁴

Although the approach taken here may result in multiple, if not conflicting, interpretations, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and in fact demonstrate only some of the various potential levels on which the dreams might be “read.” The dreams, in fact, could well have had multiple meanings for their dreamers.

The meanings of the Demotic texts themselves are not always clear, and even translations of the Greek texts vary. Ptolemaios’ archive contains over twice as

³ Isis was the Egyptian mother goddess; and Thoth was the god of wisdom, writing, and hidden knowledge.

⁴ There is a newly discovered Late Period dream book (perhaps two) in Berlin (according to J. K. Quack; Szpakowska 2003: 114, n. 1). It is hoped that publication of the texts might shed more light on these dreams.

many texts as Hor's.⁵ The fragmentary condition of some of Hor's dreams (e.g., 9, 11, 13, 14) leaves us with less material of often less certain meaning with which to work. The indefinite dating of many of the texts in both archives has made correlations to particular events in the dreamers' lives problematic. It has also made a chronological discussion of the dreams impractical in both cases, and they are therefore dealt with thematically.

DREAMS IN THE ARCHIVE OF PTOLEMAIOS

Previous enquiries into the meanings of the dreams have predominantly been Freudian speculations by ancient historians not qualified in psychoanalysis, or in one case by psychoanalysts not qualified in ancient history (Storch & Heichelheim, 1931).⁶ Most have been overwhelmingly concerned with their alleged latent sexual content,⁷ making often unfounded and/or vague interpretations which ignore the dreams' individual, social, or archival contexts.

The twins, for example, were clearly important to Ptolemaios and appear in fifty documents, though Storch and Heichelheim found it "obvious" that the mere frequent appearance of Tawê in his dreams revealed his repressed lust for her. A reference to Taous' foot being "big and pure" in one of Ptolemaios' dreams (*UPZ*⁸ 77; trans. Rowlandson, 1998, pp. 102-103) has been similarly interpreted, though without explanation (Thompson, 1988, p. 224; Chauveau, 2000, p. 128). Given the dream's context, the phrase instead likely reflects the twins' position portraying the goddesses Isis and Nephthys in ceremonies related to the Apis bull cult.⁸ The phrase recalls an oracle of Thoth in *Hor* 27 regarding ritual requirements, including that one must be "pure upon the foot." Alternatively, Ray (2002, p. 141-142) has translated the adjectives as "well and whole," suggesting simple concern over some injury to the Taous' foot. She is also laughing in the dream, while her sister is singing and happy. In *UPZ* 77 Ptolemaios dreams that she is joking, and in *UPZ* 79 Nektembes dreams that two women (the twins, according to Ptolemaios) joke and swear with a man. Although the latter may reflect further concern, what more clearly emerges is that the twins were seen as good-humored personalities.

The dreams in *UPZ* 78 are recorded in a letter to a certain Damoxenos written by Ptolemaios regarding his concern for the twins when he dies. The reference to death is echoed in the dream wherein Ptolemaios walks from west to east (i.e., the direction of the Land of the Dead to the Land of the Living, an association shared by Greece and Egypt). With his eyes "sort of closed," he is joined by a man from the west upon a pile of chaff, perhaps a metaphor for the uselessness of materiality

⁵ There are 150 Greek texts on papyri and five Demotic texts on ostraca in the archive of Ptolemaios (Thompson, 1988, p. 213). The archive of Hor consists of 68 Demotic ostraca and five Greek fragments, though many of these are either fragmentary or revisions/recensions (Ray, 1976, p. xiv).

⁶ A fundamental misunderstanding of the period combined with a deep ethnocentrism led these authors to characterize the household of Ptolemaios as being charged with "erotic mysticism," and Ptolemaic religion as "uncertain," "brittle," and lacking "Religious Truth" (Storch & Heichelheim, 1931, p. 569).

⁷ In addition to those discussed below, cf. Sauneron (1959, p. 37); and Rowlandson (1998, p. 99), both of whom suggested some basic Freudian reductionist interpretations of these dreams.

⁸ The Apis bull was the physical manifestation on earth of the creator deity Ptah.

to a departed soul. When he opens his eyes, he is in the twins' schoolroom. He says that he has reversed his bed and that the twins' schoolteacher is weary of finding him. In Artemidorus (1.74) a bed is symbolic of a man's "whole life."⁹ Reversing one's bed may thus be referring to an inversion of life (i.e., death). When the twins are then brought to Ptolemaios, he tells them "I have but a brief time in this upper air, and what I was will disappear tomorrow morning" (trans. Lewis, 1980, pp. 49-50).

They walk together into the street, and one of the twins runs away to urinate in "a dark place in someone's house." In Artemidorus (4.44) urinating in public means contempt and ostracism for the offender. The dream therefore probably indicates further concern for the twin's proper behavior. This is supported when immediately after this episode Ptolemaios prays to Isis and Sarapis that the twins should not be "defiled," for their temple positions would likely have depended upon their virginity (Bell, 1926, p. 565). At the end of the letter, he asks Damoxenos to care for them in his absence, adding, "I worry about nothing else." His general concern for them is reflected in his letters to the king regarding their welfare (e.g., *UPZ* 24); and the twins themselves wrote that Ptolemaios was like a father to them (*UPZ* 18, 20). Montserrat's (1996, p. 22) suggestion that the dream reveals Ptolemaios' repressed desire to impregnate the twins, on the basis that in Freudian symbology bodily fluids are interchangeable (itself a dubious assumption), is thus unnecessary.

Ptolemaios also asks Isis and Sarapis to "release" him.¹⁰ Storch and Heichelheim (1931, p. 568) interpreted this as Ptolemaios asking the gods to be released from an immoral relationship with Tawê.¹¹ In fact, the letter itself and its context clearly explain the passage. Although becoming a *katochos* was apparently a voluntary arrangement, movement was then restricted to the individual's *pastophorion* (or cell) in the temple. Ptolemaios states he was "held" by the god in "detention." He is thus asking the gods for *release* from the arrangement. By the end of the letter, they have responded: Ptolemaios writes to Damoxenos that he will soon be *released* from his cell. In Artemidorus (2.39) dreams of Isis and Sarapis indicate "immediate salvation" for those in crisis.

Three months later, Nektembes dreamed of Ptolemaios capturing an escaped dove and placing it in his left hand (*UPZ* 79). In Artemidorus (2.20) doves signify women as well as love, and friendship;¹² while birds are also associated with the maternal goddess Isis. The left hand symbolizes retaining what you have, as well as the female sex (1.42). The dream thus seems to relate to Ptolemaios' fears of losing the twins, as Weber (1998) also suggested—perhaps specifically the one who portrayed Isis in the Apis ceremonies. Ptolemaios himself wrote that the dreams in the document concern the "divine custody" of himself and the twins.

Ptolemaios' concern for the twins may not have been entirely selfless, however. In another dream by Nektembes stated in the text to involve Ptolemaios and the

⁹ Unsurprisingly, the bed has also been given sexual significance by Storch & Heichelheim (1931, p. 568).

¹⁰ The text seems to indicate that he is praying while still in the dream, though this is not entirely clear: "I also saw much more, and I again implored Sarapis and Isis. . . ." It could be construed as being part of an epistolary break.

¹¹ Cf. Montserrat's (1996, p. 22) translation as "Release me from temptation."

¹² Though they are also associated with Aphrodite, desire, and business relations.

twins, a woman and two children sit on a mat. Nektembes says, “Your mat is producing vegetables and cabbage.” The two children obviously represent the twins, and the vegetables may refer to Ptolemaios financially benefiting from their employment (Thompson, 1988, p. 223).¹³ In Artemidorus (1.67; 1.15) dreams of children mean prosperity, although “dreams about cabbage are entirely inauspicious.”

Nektembes also dreamed that he saw Ptolemaios walking in the street with a knife in his hand, then knocking on a door of a house and assaulting the person who answered. He tells Ptolemaios not to kill the man, for “a master doesn’t destroy his own slave” (*UPZ* 79; trans. Lewis, 1980, p. 50-51). Storch and Heichelheim (1931, p. 566-567) misinterpreted the text as Nektembes referring to *himself* as Ptolemaios’ slave, leading them to suggest that the two had a (possibly repressed) homosexual relationship. However, given that Ptolemaios described the dream as concerning himself and the twins, it is likely a reference to the fact that his home had been repeatedly broken into, and himself assaulted (*UPZ* 7, 8, 19, 11)—a reversal of what he intended in Nektembes’ dream. In the same document Nektembes dreams of cleaning a house, and in the Bologna Demotic Papyrus (3173; henceforth *P. Dem. Bol.*) Apollonios dreams of Ptolemaios and Tawê sitting in his house, weeping over lost property. There are numerous references in the archives to the general poverty and material struggles of the group.

In *UPZ* 77 Tawê dreams of counting nine houses on a street. The “nine houses” could have a religious significance, representing the nine temples of the Ennead—deities with which Tawê would certainly have been familiar. The number also has magical associations as thrice three, featuring often in Græco-Egyptian magical papyri (e.g., Papyri Graecae Magicae IV.2524; Betz, 1986; henceforth *PGM*). However, in this case a sexually related interpretation may be more compelling. Storch and Heichelheim (1931, p. 566) saw the nine houses as symbolic of Tawê’s term of pregnancy by Apollonios. When Ptolemaios wants “to turn back,” someone tells him that he is “free to go,” and he replies, “my time is late in coming” (trans. Thompson, 1988, p. 115¹⁴). This could refer to Tawê’s late menstruation signifying pregnancy; though “free to go” might suggest Ptolemaios’ detention (Ray, 2002, p. 142)—or perhaps even both issues at once. That Apollonios had a particular involvement with Tawê is demonstrated in a letter in which he writes, “I am faint with worry. . . over Tawê. How may we survive?” (*UPZ* 63; trans. Thompson, 1988, p. 247). He also dreamed of having sex with her (*P. Dem. Bol.* 3173), though he does state in his description of the dream that she is a virgin. Ptolemaios’ concern for the twins’ virginity may also be relevant here, as may Apollonios’ dreams of children (*P. Dem. Bol.* 3171), a dream by one of the twins involving marriage and motherhood (*Petersburg* [a.k.a. *Hermitage*] *Ostraca* 1129; Ray, 2002, p. 144; henceforth *O. Pet.*), and Ptolemaios’ dream of a bull birth (*UPZ* 77; Delekat, 1964, p. 145-146).

¹³ It has also been suggested that the dream of Ptolemaios seeing the god Knephis through a pair of reeds (= the twins) reveals his hopes that the girls would support him in old age (Delekat, 1964, p. 150; *UPZ* 78).

¹⁴ Rowlandson (1998, p. 102–103) translates the phrase as “It is too late for me,”; and Ray (2002, p. 140) as “It is late for me.”

In the latter, Ptolemaios calls upon Amun, an Egyptian creator god, who arrives and pulls a bull from the womb of a cow (an animal associated with the Egyptian birth-goddess, Hathor). Whether this was Ptolemaios' intention when he called the god is unclear, though the connection with the local bull cult in which the twins were employed is obvious. However, Chauveau (2000, p. 125) speculates that the dream prophesied the birth of a new Mnevis bull.¹⁵ The dream is dated six months after the previous bull's death (December 159 BCE), and perhaps a replacement had not yet been found. Specifying that Amun came "from the north" might have indicated the bull would be found in the Nile Delta.

In the final dream in the letter to Damoxenos, Ptolemaios is atop the Lighthouse at Alexandria and his face has become so beautiful he does not want anyone to see him.¹⁶ He is led by an old woman to Knephis, a creator god. Given the other references to his impending death in the letter, this could reveal feelings that he is returning to his creator. However, Thompson (1987, p. 116) has suggested that being atop the Lighthouse, a powerful symbol of Hellenism in Egypt (and the subject of an epigram by Poseidippos found in Ptolemaios' library), may be an assertion of his Greek identity, which to him is "above" Egyptian.¹⁷ The appearance of Knephis could also have relevant political significance. In a Demotic nationalistic literary text, "The Potter's Oracle," it is prophesied that Alexandria will fall, Greek rule will come to an end, and Knephis will return to Memphis (Fowden, 1986, p. 21).¹⁸ The encounter with Knephis at the Lighthouse seems to refer to this prophecy, though considering Ptolemaios' associated transformation to a state of preternatural beauty, it does not appear that he was particularly concerned with the fate of Greeks in Egypt.¹⁹ It rather seems to suggest that he dreamed according to his Græco-Egyptian syncretistic religious environment—though not without some inner conflict. In one of many petitions Ptolemaios wrote regarding his personal welfare, the reason he gave for being victimized was "I am Greek" (*UPZ* 4)—despite the fact that his Egyptian cellmate Harmais was also targeted.

Apollonios was more demonstrably conflicted about his ethnicity. In *P. Dem. Bol.* 3173 he dreams that a priest sings "Apollonios speaks Greek, Petiharenpi speaks Egyptian." It is believed that both names were actually his, the latter being the Egyptian version of the former. The dream is thus a reflection of his biculturalism (Ray, 2002, p. 143; cf. Thompson, 1988, p. 263),²⁰ or indeed an "identity crisis" (Chauveau, 2000, p. 132). Such conflict is evident in the annotation of his copy of the prologue of Euripides' *Telephos*, in which the hero complains of being "a Hellene among barbarians." He wrote: "Apollonios the Macedonian. . . a Macedonian I say" (trans. Thompson, 1988, p. 246). In fact, Apollonios was particularly

¹⁵ The Mnevis bull was the physical manifestation on earth of the creator/solar deity Re-Atum.

¹⁶ Cf. the face of Moses following his divine encounter on Mt. Sinai, *Exodus* 34.29.

¹⁷ It is perhaps needless to mention that Storch and Heichelheim (1931, p. 568) saw the Lighthouse as a phallic symbol.

¹⁸ Thanks to Dr. D. J. Thompson (personal communication) for pointing out the relevance of "The Potter's Oracle" here.

¹⁹ It should also be noted that the three extant copies of the text are from the Roman period, and Ptolemaios may not have been familiar with it.

²⁰ Some individuals in Ptolemaic Egypt appear to have been bicultural, with double Greek-Egyptian names which they would alternate as circumstances dictated (see Quaegebeur, 1992).

Egyptianized: His Demotic is better than his Greek, and was the language in which he recorded his dreams.²¹

In addition to Greek philosophical and literary texts, the archive contains extracts of Egyptian literature and a Greek translation of the nationalistic Egyptian story “The Dream of Nectanebo” in Apollonios’ hand with explanatory notes for Greeks.²²

Three further dreams relating to the personal lives of the dreamers are worth mentioning. In *O. Pet.* 1129, Tawê dreams that Nephoris is on the opposite (eastern) side of the riverbank during an inundation. Tawê removes her clothes, throws them “up into the sky,” and swims across to her mother. A “washerwoman” gives her new clothes, and Tawê says to Nephoris, “this is the second time that I have crossed over to you. . .and lodged safely in your house.” The riverbank setting likely refers to the death of the twins’ father: Before Nephoris abandoned them, her Greek soldier lover tried to kill their father, who fled by leaping into the river, dying soon after (*UPZ* 19).²³ In *UPZ* 77, Ptolemaios dreams that two men give him and Tawê coins which they refer to as “money for the blood.” This brings to mind an incident the previous year wherein Nephoris stole money intended for the circumcision of their sister (*UPZ* 2; 19); or perhaps an inheritance following their father’s death (Storch & Heichelheim, 1931, p. 567).

However, as the dream is Ptolemaios’ and not Tawê’s, the phrase more likely refers to the pay Ptolemaios and Apollonios received for their work as police informants (*UPZ* 70; Ray, 2002, p. 139). It is perhaps through such activities that they contributed to, or caused, some financial loss suffered by a certain Menedemos, who sought revenge by trying to drive the brothers out of the Sarapieion (*UPZ* 70). Apollonios even dreamed of being chased by Menedemos (*UPZ* 68), and shortly after he deserted his post as a policeman (*UPZ* 71). In Artemidorus (2.58) dreams of coins are indicative of “discontent and the painful exchange of words,” and blood is itself associated with money (1.33) (cf. Weber, 1998).

DREAMS IN THE ARCHIVE OF HOR

Consisting primarily of documents relating to a petition to the king regarding a legal matter involving Hor and temple authorities, Hor’s archive is both less organic than Ptolemaios’ and of narrower scope. The dreams in the archive were likely “designed to prove the author’s reliability as a seer and true exponent of the divine” (Ray, 1976, p. 123) in support of his case. Consequently, doubt is cast upon their validity as actual dreams.

This is especially the case with the dream related in *Hor* 1, 2, 4, and 66 (cf. Skeat & Turner, 1968), which Hor reported as a prophecy to the king at Alexandria

²¹ With the exception of *UPZ* 68, which is a letter to Ptolemaios.

²² *P. Leiden* I 396. See Clarysse (1982, p. 57–60) for a discussion of the literary texts in the archive.

²³ The dream is usually interpreted as indicative of a reconciliation between the twins and Nephoris (Weber, 1998), or at least a wish for one (Ray, 2002, p. 144); or that Tawê had anxiety about losing her mother (Storch & Heichelheim, 1931, p. 566). However, these interpretations rely on a reading of the dream which considers the flood to be *threatening* Nephoris and Tawê overcoming her bitterness to rescue her. The dream does not, however, actually portray Nephoris as being in danger, and in fact Tawê swims to her ‘to lodge safely’ in her house.

(*Hor* 2, 3). In the dream, Isis is walking upon the water and is joined by Thoth who takes her hand. At Alexandria she proclaims that the city is safe from enemy invaders and prophesies a long line of generations of sons for the king. Inconsistencies between the four versions support the impression that this is not a genuine dream. *Hor* 1, for example, mentions only the general security of Alexandria; though *Hor* 2 claims that the same dream specifically prophesied the retreat of the Syrian king Antiochus by a specified date; whereas *Hor* 66 (Ray, 1978, p. 114) states that the dream indicated that Antiochus would “perish immediately.” Another indication of the dream’s fictiveness is the dramatic “Biblical”-sounding phrasing, similar to oracular passages in the *Demotic Chronicle*, *Papyrus Dodgson*, and *Papyrus Rylands IX* (Ray, 1976, p. 13). The image of Thoth taking Isis’ hand bears striking similarities to temple iconography, as Ray (1987, p. 92) pointed out. Furthermore, “The Dream of Nectanebo” displays similarities not only to Hor’s oracular “dream,” but also to his life. Before going to Memphis, Hor had been employed at a Temple of Isis in Sebennytos, in the birth-chapel of the sacred ibis (Ray, 1976, p. 133). There he was officially investigated in relation to a dispute over the ibis-food for which he was responsible (*Hor* 26). Petesis, the protagonist of “The Dream of Nectanebo,” also fails his employers at a temple in Sebennytos.²⁴ More significantly, newly discovered Demotic fragments of a sequel to the story²⁵ suggest that Petesis also prophesies to the king that Egypt will be invaded by a foreign power. Though incomplete, the text likely went on to prophesy the birth of a new heir to the king as is common in similar texts.²⁶ Indeed, a fragment with just such a prophesy may in fact belong to the story (Ryholt, 2002, p. 233, 237-238). If Hor knew the story, he may have identified with the character of Petesis through the link with Sebennytos and his own trouble with temple authorities. In any case, Hor’s oracular “dream” was likely inspired (or at least informed) by the text or another in the genre.

Some of the more genuine-seeming dreams in the archive also bear similarities to Egyptian magical or literary texts, conforming to cultural themes and religious iconography. Ray (1976, p. 131) suggested that Hor dreamed what he expected to dream, according to fixed conventions. As Burke (1997, p. 27) noted, “Myths shape dreams, but dreams in turn authenticate myths.” *Hor* 13, for example, has distinct parallels to Græco-Egyptian magical texts. A figure in the dream—probably the god Nefertem (Ray, 1976, p. 57)—sits on a papyrus thicket holding a lotus. A priest of great age wears a byssus on his back and myrrh on his eyes, and there is an obscure reference to his feet. Some magical texts (e.g., *PGM* VII 1-17, 234; VIII 91) involve wearing a byssus and painting the eyes with myrrh, and in one example a god in the likeness of a priest has “his face upon his feet.”

The format of *Hor* 14 closely follows dream-books and eclipse- and lunar-omina texts (see Parker, 1959, p. 1, 36) in the repetitive use of the word “another” (*ky*) to introduce each new dream or prediction. The references to a donkey (one

²⁴ Petesis does not fulfill his promise to finish cutting the hieroglyphs in the temple of the Egyptian hunter god Onuris-Shu.

²⁵ These fragments (*P. Carlsberg* 424, 499, and 559) come from Tebtunis and date to the first- or second-century CE (Ryholt, 2002: 222). Although this attests to the long-term popularity of the story, we cannot be sure that the version known in the second-century BCE text was the same as that represented by the later fragments.

²⁶ E.g., “The Potter’s Oracle,” and the *Alexander Romance* (see Ryholt, 2002, p. 233ff).

to striking it, another to lifting it) recall two dream-interpretations in *CBIII* (3.19; 3.20): “Binding fast a donkey: good [. . .]; [. . .] donkey: good, eating a meal from the palace.”

The second dream in *Hor* 8 has similarities to the Ramesside “Ghost Story”:²⁷ Both feature tombs fallen into decay and the central figure assisting a spirit to gain a proper burial. Although the end of the tale is lost, in the dream the spirit promises Hor a proper burial in return. The theme is echoed in statements of ethical behavior on Egyptian self-presentation stelae, e.g., “I buried the old and clothed the naked.”²⁸ In *CBIII* (6.1; 6.23) “burying an old man” is good, for “it means prosperity.” Seeing a tomb is also good, “it means his possessions will be great.”

Promises of sustenance and/or a Memphite burial occur in many of Hor’s dreams, and were apparently continual concerns. In the first dream in *Hor* 8, Thoth promises him a proper burial in exchange for exclusive worship and for remaining with a “great man.” In *Hor* 9 Isis promises him a happy life and death, and a proper burial with an eternity in Memphis after he pledges annual sacrifices to her. In *Hor* 11 an invocation to Isis refers to “dwelling with the god,”²⁹ and an authority figure promises him sustenance. Following the series of brief dreams in *Hor* 14, Hor interprets them as meaning “salvation” and “sustenance.” In *Hor* 59 a priest seems to reassure him about his bread. *Hor* 10 contains incantations to Isis, asking for sustenance and a proper burial, probably in a dream (Ray, 1976, p. 48). As observed by Szpakowska (2003, pp. 75-76) the dominant concern shown by the *CBIII* dream interpretations is nourishment (followed by wealth, prestige, and interaction with the divine; funerary concerns are surprisingly average). For example: “Seeing the god who is above: good, it means a great meal” (2.14). A high proportion of the dreams in *P. Jena* likewise concern nourishment.

It is also significant that Hor’s personal concerns were mirrored in his professional life at Sebennytos, as the individual responsible for the nourishment and proper burial of the sacred ibises (Ray, 1976, p. 33). In the second dream in *Hor* 8, a “great man” commands him to bring clover to feed the sixty-thousand ibises (cf. *Hor* 12). In exchange, Hor is promised a “living soul from the thirty-fifth day,” referring to the stage in the embalming ceremony when the body was able to receive its new life (Ray, 1976, p. 43). Thus, for providing nourishment for the ibises, Hor is to receive a proper funeral. That he once failed the ibises in reality surely contributed to the anxiety apparent in his dreams.

Another preoccupation of Hor’s was authority figures. Both dreams in *Hor* 8 refer to his impropriety in his temple position and the consequences. The first involves his taxes, and the second the ibis food scandal (despite the fact that it occurred some 25 years earlier). In both, as well as in *Hor* 11, he is interrogated by officials and confronted with his own inadequacy. In the first he even flees from the officials, is captured, and put on trial. In *Hor* 17 he is wronged by “mighty men” whom he curses. Hor may have believed that such dreams were auspicious, however. In *CBIII* (6.25) if a man sees himself “with one greater than himself; good, it

²⁷ For translation, see Simpson, 2003, pp. 112–115.

²⁸ E.g., on the stela of Intef [BM EA 562], Middle Kingdom.

²⁹ Perhaps a reference to becoming a *katochos* in Isis’ temple (Ray, 1976, p. 161) rather than to spending eternity with the goddess.

means that he will be exalted by his own ability.” In *P. Jena* (1209.9), a man will rule over his superiors if he dreams of feeding an ibis.

Hor 59 features yet another authority figure, one who demands that Hor select a single town in Egypt to save from destruction. Hor chooses his home town, Pi(?)*-Thoth*, because of its associations with Isis. This is despite the instructions regarding exclusive devotion to Thoth he received in his dream eleven years earlier. In the second dream of *Hor 8*, he is also told to call upon Isis and Osiris. Other dreams (e.g., *Hor 9; 59*) contain appearances of Amun-Re, Harpocrates, Isis, Osiris, and Imhotep. It is notable that Hor dreamed about Thoth during that god’s festival and about Isis during hers (*Hor 8* and *9*, respectively). This may suggest that the dreams were incubated (Ray, 1976, p. 113). Whatever the case, dreams of multiple deities, as well as numerous references to temples, priests, and various Egyptian religious concepts, places, themes, and iconography³⁰ demonstrate the deeply rooted, and almost wholly Egyptian, cultural-religious context of Hor’s dreams.

CULTURAL COMPARISON OF THE DREAMS IN THE TWO ARCHIVES

With the exception of the fragmentary list in *Hor 14*, the twelve main dreams in Hor’s archive feature at least one divinity. This contrasts with three out of the thirty main dreams in Ptolemaios’ archive, all of which belong to Ptolemaios himself (though others, particularly Apollonios’, have apparently incidental temple settings and other minor religion-related elements). Hor thus emerges as an individual deeply immersed in and preoccupied with a highly culture-specific religious orientation. The dreams of Ptolemaios et al., on the other hand, appear to be generally more concerned with personal struggles. Economic factors may partly account for this contrast, for Hor was more financially secure than Ptolemaios et al., and would therefore have been less concerned with such issues. This is not to suggest that Ptolemaios’ divine dreams were not spiritually and personally significant to him. However, as Price (1986, p. 20) pointed out, such dreams are too far removed from our experience for us to fully comprehend. Our distinctions between “reality” and “dream” might be irrelevant: Hor mixes divine dreams with personal narrative and historical references with no distinction between levels of “truth” (Ray, 1976, p. 30). Ptolemaios does not make clear what is dream and what is real in *UPZ 78*.

It may also be that Hor only recorded dreams he felt were important; or that his dreams were mostly incubated while those in Ptolemaios’ archive were mostly spontaneous (Ray, 1976, p. 132). The fact that Hor worked in the ibis-temple does not account for his greater preoccupation with the divine, for Ptolemaios dwelled in a temple. It may be that Hor was simply a more devout individual. Significantly, he mostly dreamed of his patron deities Isis and Thoth, though none of Ptolemaios’ dreams are of Astarte. In addition, unlike Hor’s dreams, Ptolemaios’ do not appear to reflect a magical tradition.

The recurring themes of sustenance and a proper burial are clear indications of Hor’s culture-specific dreaming. Despite including the dreams of Egyptians (the

³⁰ In addition to those discussed above, we may add the afterlife region of Rosetau, the celestial boat [*Hor 4*], sacrifices [9], ritual costume, the lotus [13], and festivals [14], among others.

twins and Nektembes), there is nothing so obviously culture-specific in Ptolemaios' archive, except perhaps the prominent appearance of the Lighthouse in *UPZ* 78. It seems that Ptolemaios is more traditionally Greek (despite his dreams of Isis, Sarapis, Knephis, and Amun), while Hor is more traditionally Egyptian. Apollonios is biculturally somewhere in between (as perhaps are the other three individuals). This culture-bound dreaming is further demonstrated by the fact that Hor's dreams have no significant correlations with the Greek dream-book of Artemidorus (except dreaming of Isis, who was popular throughout the ancient world by this time), while only Apollonios' dreams in Ptolemaios' archive have any significant correlations with the Egyptian dream-books.³¹ No clear correlations could be made with the apparently Mesopotamian-influenced *Papyrus Carlsberg* or *Papyrus Berlin*. The connections which have been made between the culturally corresponding dreams and dream-books are consistent with the themes and contexts of the dreams themselves, demonstrating the culture-specific meanings and occurrence of dream symbols. It also incidentally suggests that the dream books were actually based on real dreams.

Although there are few similarities in dream imagery between the two archives, two examples stand out. Both are in Apollonios' dreams and may provide further evidence of his Egyptian enculturation. Although Hor's dreams of official investigation following divine transgressions may appear to be individual, they recall Apollonios' dream of Sekhmet³² telling a man to touch the Sarapieion lamp which results in his associates being delayed. Apollonios tells the man that an investigation will be conducted and that he will "suffer a setback" (*P. Dem. Bol.* 3173; Ray 2002, p. 143). Hor's general preoccupation with authority figures, however, is surely personal and related to actual events in his life. The anonymous individuals in his dreams are consistently feared and respected, while the roles played by such figures in the dreams in Ptolemaios' archive have no such consistency.

The second example is the theme of death being associated with personal financial gain, particularly in the context of ruined tombs (*P. Dem. Bologna* 3171 and *Hor* 8). In Hor's case, he stands to gain from helping the ghost achieve a proper burial after his tomb is ruined. In Apollonios' dream, someone is living in a ruined tomb. Apollonios gives gifts to the son of a woman who is having sex (on or near the tomb, presumably), and who had financially benefited from the death of a certain "Phatres."³³ Sex and death are associated in *CBIII* (7.17) wherein dreams of intercourse with a woman are bad because they mean "mourning." In *Ostraca Petersburg* 1128 (Wilcken, 1927) Apollonios dreams that a man pays him a debt, then dies along with his wife. Apollonios' concern, however, is not for "nourishment" as Hor's seems to be; and Hor did not record any sexual dreams.

Oppenheim (1956, p. 228) suggested that Ptolemaios recorded his dreams "solely for scientific reasons." The collection of his own dreams along with those of family and friends obviously indicates that they held an interest in the subject, as

³¹ This latter fact was apparently overlooked by Weber (1998).

³² An aggressive Egyptian lion-headed goddess responsible for divine justice on earth.

³³ In Greek, "Phatres" is connected with the root for "brother," thus possibly indicating a reference to Ptolemaios. Thanks to Nicholas Spicer (personal communication) for pointing this out to me.

does the copy of “The Dream of Nectanebo.” However, belief in divine instruction and prophesy through dreams was common to both Greece and Egypt.³⁴ Texts such as *UPZ* 78 regarding Ptolemaios’ release and the twins’ welfare show that divine dreams also provided guidance in life. In the penultimate text in the archive, Apollonios wrote to Ptolemaios denouncing him and the gods as liars and expressing shame that they trusted in dreams (*UPZ* 69-70).

Hor also relied upon divine dreams for guidance as evidenced by the fact that he followed the instructions given to him by the gods and actually did relocate to Memphis and devote himself to Thoth. He also used oracles and dreams to facilitate reforms to the ibis-cult (Ray, 1976, p. 144, 162; *Hor* 16, 17, 22, 23). Unlike Ptolemaios, he was apparently more interested in *oneiroi* than in *enhyphnia* (i.e., oracular dreams rather than dreams relating to personal events in the dreamer’s life). This may be a reflection of the fact that his archive is primarily related to his petition. Some of the dreams certainly appear to be more “genuine” than others, and it is difficult to see how they could have benefited his case.³⁵

It is tempting to speculate that the *oneiromantic* dreams of Hor and Ptolemaios may have given rise to the literary texts containing similar motifs (e.g., “The Potter’s Oracle” and “The Dream of Nectanebo”). Although it may not have been these specific dreams, it is easy to imagine how such accounts could have gained the status of legend and become subjects of literature.

CONCLUSIONS

Burke (1997, p. 28) wrote that “dreams have a cultural layer of meaning” in addition to an individual and a universal layer. The comparison of the dreams in our two archives supports this perspective to some extent. It is clear that some of the dreams discussed here are predominately individual (e.g., Ptolemaios’ dreams of release; Hor’s dreams of authority figures), while others conform more to a “culture pattern” (e.g., Ptolemaios’ Lighthouse; Apollonios’ bicultural names; Hor’s concern for sustenance and proper burial). Overall, the cultural level is most evident in Hor’s dreams which contain typically Egyptian images and themes similar to Egyptian literary and magical texts and dream-books. In contrast, the dreams in Ptolemaios’ archive contain more prominent personal levels, reflecting the struggles and concerns of daily life. Almost all the dreams contain both individual and cultural layers. For example, Ptolemaios’ dream of the god Knephis seems to involve issues of ethnicity (the Lighthouse being an important symbol of the Greek domination of Egypt, though Knephis is associated with Egyptian nationalism) and religiosity (divine beauty, encountering the deity), perhaps even associating the two; though Ptolemaios himself interpreted it as pertaining to his detention and the twins.

Both archives appear to contain dreams with (quasi-)universal levels (e.g., divinities, personal struggles, significant anonymous figures), though this is hardly

³⁴ See especially Van Lieshout (1980) for Greece and Szpakowska (2003) for Egypt.

³⁵ One example is *Hor* 14 with its brief jottings of the contents of various dreams (cf. *UPZ* 80). Ray (1976, p. 132) suggests that such texts were written shortly after waking to be used in assisting dream recall.

relevant here. It would be dubious to extrapolate universality from texts in only two archives, particularly when both originated from the same place in a contemporary, general Græco-Egyptian cultural milieu. The issue of universal content of dreams, in any case, is too complex to be explored here.³⁶ The archives in which these dreams are found contain documents which reveal much of the private and public lives, the social and economic positions, and concerns and preoccupations of the individuals in their own words. This makes them fruitful ground for a qualified individual to re-evaluate the dreams from a modern psychological perspective. Attempts so far with Ptolemaios' archive have been largely unsuccessful, though this does not mean it should not be undertaken afresh. Although the texts have been successfully explored here using phenomenological analysis in conjunction with a consideration of associated historical data and with reference to ancient dream books, modern psychology might further contribute to our understanding of these dreams and their dreamers.

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³⁶ Meier (1949/1967, p. xi) argued for the universality of dream-symbols across ancient cultures; and Oppenheim (1956, p. 184) argued that dreams involving daily life and the "pressures and needs" of the individual are universal. Domhoff (2001, p. 316-317) claims that statistical content analysis of dreams has found that they are "more similar across cultures than neo-Freudians and anthropologists might think."

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