

Sth ȝ phty “Seth, God of Power and Might”

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Abstract

The author evaluates several earlier studies on the god Seth and argues that Seth was not to be seen as a god of confusion, but as a normative deity who had specific functions related to the preservation of kingship. The study also critiques the idea of a situational usage of the Seth figure in temples and tombs and argues for an earlier denigration (not proscription) of the Seth figure in certain temple and tomb circumstances. The article ends with a catalogue of fifty examples of Seth figures (some unpublished) from all time periods of ancient Egypt.

A clear understanding of the role of the god Seth can be a most elusive venture. When H. te Velde published his major study of this deity,¹ he provided a starting point for examining the variety of divine aspects of that god. His work provoked a great deal of review and commentary by a number of scholars and the monograph is considered to be a seminal study of that god. Over the years numerous scholars have made additions to the inventory of representations of this deity and what kind of animal is represented by the Seth figure.² More recently, O. Kaper³ has presented new discussions of this deity based mainly on his work on excavated materials in Dakhla Oasis and how the cult of Seth was able to survive its supposed proscription in the 25th dynasty.⁴

My own work on the god Seth derives in part from viewing at Hibis temple the famous image of the god Seth in Hypostyle N where this god is shown as a falcon-headed, winged, striding figure, spearing Apophis.⁵ What struck me as most telling of that scene was that it was considered by the ancient priests and draughtsmen as being a normative figure for a traditional Egyptian temple. That it was placed in such a prominent position in a time frame after the supposed proscription of Seth is equally important.⁶ While some may argue that this simply reflected the unique nature of the Seth cult in the oases,⁷ there was a persistent theme attached to this cult that may suggest otherwise.

Editor's note: The editor did not take part in the external review of this article.

¹ *Seth: God of Confusion* (Leiden, 1967 [1977]).

² P. de Maret, “L’oryctérope, un animal “bon à penser” pour les Africains, est-il à l’origine du dieu égyptien Seth?” *BIFAO* 105 (2005), 107–28, is the latest of a long series of articles attempting to identify the very enigmatic Seth figure. See also A. McDonald, “Tall Tails. The Seth Animal Reconsidered,” in A. McDonald and C. Riggs, eds., *Current Research in Egyptology 2000* (Oxford, 2000), 75–81, which is a better discussion.

³ O. Kaper, *Temples and Gods in Roman Dakhleh. Studies in the indigenous cults of an Egyptian oasis* (Proefschrift Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1997), note especially chapter 3.

⁴ G. Soukiassian, “Une étape de la proscription de Seth,” *GM* 44 (1981), 59–68.

⁵ N. de Garis Davies, *The Temple of Hibis in el Khargeh Oasis. Part III. The Decoration*, ed. L. Bull and L. Hall (New York, 1953), pls. 42–43 and E. Cruz-Uribe, *Hibis Temple Project I* (San Antonio, 1988), 147. The scene was used as the frontispiece in J.-Cl. Goyon, *Les dieux-gardiens et la genèse des temples (d’après les textes de l’époque gréco-romaine). Les soixante d’Edfou et les soixante-dix-sept dieux de Pharaos. I et II* (Cairo, 1985), where the god was labeled Seth-Horus. See also his page 122.

⁶ The area in question was decorated during the reign of Darius I of the 27th dynasty, Cruz-Uribe, “Hibis Temple Project, Preliminary Report of 2nd and 3rd Field Seasons,” *VA* 3 (1987), 215–30.

⁷ Following Kaper’s *Temples and Gods in Roman Dakhleh*, *passim*.

The intent of this article is to examine a series of representations of the god Seth that span much of Egyptian history. Some of these items are well known and have been published in various sources. Others are unpublished. In some cases I stumbled upon the material while visiting sites. In other cases friends and colleagues have pointed these out to me. Some I came across while working on specific field projects in the Nile Valley or out in Kharga Oasis.⁸

While te Velde's volume is a masterful work on Egyptian religion, I feel his interpretation of Seth as a god of confusion may not be totally adequate. Te Velde does not take the word *phty* as meaning simply "strength," but explores the homosexual aspects as it relates to the contendings with Horus.⁹ This is a strength of his study, but it does appear to lessen the power aspect of that deity and Seth's importance to the maintenance of world order. When Seth is in his element, he is not attempting to confuse the enemies of Egypt and the sun god, he is emanating his power and might. He expresses this power and might in a variety of ways, with his voice, with his many forms, and with his weapons. These aspects prove too much for the enemies and they are always defeated. Likewise, I am uncomfortable with the notion that Seth was uniformly portrayed as a negative character. It is almost as if certain of the interpretations from the later periods, where Seth is in one thread identified with Apophis, were then applied retroactively to Seth from the earliest periods. In my discussions below I do not take that approach. Rather, the actions of Seth in murdering his brother Osiris are not to be seen as evil in the earliest periods, if at all, but as necessary actions to explain the experience of death, as well as the notion of utilization of power. Seth is judged by the rest of the gods and is not destroyed. Instead he is reconciled with Horus and their "contendings" provide both instructions into the nature of divine events, as well as potential models for human events.¹⁰ The storm that Seth evokes is not one of confusion and disorder, but of power and might over the enemies of Egypt and the sun god.

In the catalogue at the end of this study, I provide a line drawing and some photographs of each item. This catalogue is not intended to be the principal/complete publication of these items, but mainly a listing of several important views of the god Seth which will aid in our discussion.

Discussion

The artifacts in the catalogue sometimes address specific issues related to the role of Seth in Egyptian religion and history.¹¹ The first area I wish to address is the notion of the "situational" usage of

⁸ For the item from the tomb of Montuherkheposhef in the Valley of the Kings, I want to thank Ted Brock for first pointing it out to me. My comments below are not to undercut his proposed examination of that tomb and who occupied it. I was able to record this item in full during the summer of 2007 while working on the VOK Demotic Graffiti Project with Stephen Vinson and Jackie Jay. The ostraca from Deir el Bagawat and Ain Zaf were made available for me as part of the Kharga Oasis Coptic Graffiti Project while working with Jennifer Westerfeld. Thanks go to our inspector Mr. Abdel Aziz Khitr and Mr. Ahmed Osman of the Kharga Coptic-Islamic SCA Inspectorate for their assistance. Photographs of the items in the Cairo Museum were provided through the good offices of Mr. Hisham el-Leithy, my liaison with the SCA during my Fulbright Project in Egypt in 2007. The block from the Isis Temple on Philae Island was recorded in 2004 and 2007 while working on the Demotic Graffiti from Philae Project with thanks to my inspector Mr. Mohammed Baset and Mr. Mohamed el Bialy of the Aswan SCA Inspectorate. I first viewed the items from the quarry at Gebel Teir during my various seasons working at the site with thanks to Mr. Ibrahim Mohamed Bagat of the Kharga Pharaonic SCA Inspectorate. I also want to thank Peter Dorman and Peter Brand for help on several references. Special thanks go to Francois Gaudard, Salima Ikram and Gaye Robins for reading an earlier version of this article and for their numerous comments and corrections.

⁹ *Seth, God of Confusion*, 38. *Med. Habu* V, 289, 12, gives an example where we have the *phty Hr Stb*. This would seem to argue against te Velde's idea as he does not associate *phty* with Horus, only Seth. This example is cited in A. McDonald, "A Metaphor for Troubled Times," *ZÄS* 134 (2007), 36, n. g. She takes the example of the Horus and Seth figures as a sportive, iconographic writing for *nbyw*, but I think it makes better sense as simply Horus and Seth. Compare to catalogue numbers 11 and 12 below.

¹⁰ As pointed by H. Brunner, "Seth und Apophis—Gegengötter im ägyptischen Pantheon?" *Saeculum* 34 (1983), 228.

¹¹ There are numerous other sites in Kharga and Dakhla Oases where we find additional examples of new and interesting images of the god Seth. In particular is a site known as "Seth Rock" north of Kharga discovered by S. Ikram and C. Rossi as part of their North Kharga Oasis Survey project. A complete publication of this site is in preparation.

the god Seth's name from the reign of Sety I during the 19th dynasty. G. Robins has noted that, at the temple of Sety I at Abydos and in Sety I's tomb in the Valley of the Kings, Sety I's name was altered because having the image of the god Seth in the temple or tomb would be "dangerous in the context."¹² There is some support for this notion in that the Abydos temple and the royal tomb both are consistent in their use of the "Isis"-knot and the Osiris figure, respectively, rather than the Seth-animal figure. This notion assumes then that any image associated with the god Seth should not occur in these contexts. But catalogue **numbers 5** and **6** give ambiguous ideas. Why would we have an offering stand probably from a temple, but not Abydos, make a substitution with the Isis-knot? And why would a scene worshiping Osiris, again not from Abydos, make a substitution with the Osiris figure in the cartouche of Sety I? And why in the Qurneh temple of Sety I do we have some of Sety I's cartouches substituting the Isis-knot, but others leaving it with the Seth-animal?¹³ In the private tomb of Paser we see in some cases the name of Sety I written with the Osiris figure, while others have the Seth-animal.¹⁴ In the tomb of Amenwahsu we see the Isis-knot used.¹⁵

Before answering this issue, we need to take into consideration the next group of Seth figures.¹⁶ Catalogue **numbers 2** and **9–17** all derive from the temple of Amun at Karnak. What is most apparent from these ten examples, is that the god Seth was found in decorations in a cult temple dedicated to Amun in the Middle Kingdom, during Dynasty 18, and during Dynasty 19. In **numbers 2, 9, 10, and 14** the god is shown as the Seth animal. **Numbers 13, 15, 16, and 17** show Seth as a human headed figure. **Numbers 11 and 12** give examples of the falcon hieroglyph alongside the Seth-animal hieroglyph in presenting the names of Horus and Seth.¹⁷ The types of scenes include regular offering scenes, Seth and Horus purifying ("baptizing") pharaoh, and Seth acting as one of the deities in the Great Ennead of Karnak alongside Isis, Osiris, and Horus. This variety of examples of Seth is not restricted just to Karnak temple either.¹⁸

What these examples suggest is that within cult temples there do not seem to have been any restrictions upon including Seth within the decorative scheme. The scenes are normative and **number 2** has the added text where the king is given the "years of Seth upon the throne of Horus." This would indicate that the god Seth was able to replace other deities, such as Amun-Re, in providing eternal kingship to the reigning pharaoh. The same sentiment is given by **number 11** in which the "[year]s of Horus and Seth" are alluded. Likewise, Seth practiced normative behavior in his position within the ennead of gods. **Numbers 15, 16, and 17** each show Seth as a member of the ennead, seated as a human-headed deity next to Osiris, Isis, and Horus. That Seth can display multiple forms (Seth-animal head, human head, Seth figure) also shows that the depiction of Seth with the Seth-animal form was not in itself inimical to other deities in a cult temple setting.¹⁹

The next group of items should be introduced by **number 7**, a Deir el Medina ostracon. Here we find the god Seth portrayed seated on a throne. That this piece comes from the workmen's community of Deir el Medina indicates that this "practice" piece was intended to be used on some funerary

¹² See G. Robins, *The Art of Ancient Egypt* (Cambridge, 1997), 172–74, fig. 204.

¹³ KRI I 216, 10 and 15.

¹⁴ KRI I, 285, 291, and 293.

¹⁵ KRI I, 320.

¹⁶ The idea to be suggested, that Seth was a standard deity during these time periods, is also addressed by J. Vandier, "Le dieu Seth au Nouvel Empire. A propos d'une récente acquisition du Louvre," *MDAIK* 25 (1969), 188–97.

¹⁷ Compare to the Old Kingdom title *hm-ntr Hr Stb* "priest of Horus and Seth," H. Junker, *Giza II* (Leipzig, 1934), 189–91.

¹⁸ E.g., the temple of Amun at Soleb where we have Seth and Horus purifying pharaoh (Amenhotep III, later changed to Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten), M. Schiff Giorgini, *Soleb V: Le Temple. Bas-Reliefs et Inscriptions*, (Cairo, 1998–2002), pls. 4–5, and 23. Compare also to the appearance of Seth at the Dynasty 18 temple at Medinet Habu, *PM* 2, 467, pillar M. Seth is also found at Khonsu temple (2 damaged scenes): *PM* 235 (37) and 236 (40, I 7) (mislabeled as Khonsu).

¹⁹ E.g., *Edfu II*, 51–52, where we have the four Seth figures.

monument(s). Given the context, this could be either for a royal mortuary setting, or perhaps a private one in the Theban area.²⁰ What we see with this piece is that it portrays Seth in a normative fashion, just like any other deity. He is seated on a throne holding a scepter/staff and an ankh sign. There is clearly no hesitation in portraying this figure as he was an integral part of Egyptian culture.

This leads us to the numerous examples of Seth found in the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. **Numbers 18 and 19**, from the tomb of Montuherkhopshef (KV19), show a situation where a Seth figure was replaced by a falcon-headed Montu figure in a tomb decoration. It is reasonable to think that the change was not made to denigrate the Seth figure, but to indicate one person taking over possession of the tomb. This event probably took place in the 20th Dynasty, but that discussion is outside the scope of this paper. What is important is that the figure of Seth was included in the first place in a royal type tomb.

The other examples from the Valley of the Kings (**numbers 20–44**) show a number of different aspects in the use of Seth figures. **Number 20** is found on the ceiling of the tomb of Sety II. The surviving cartouches of that king in the tomb uniformly show the substitution of the Osiris figure in the writing of the name Sety. What I have observed on many of the cartouches on the ceiling is that originally the cartouche had included the Seth hieroglyph (Gardiner C7—seated human figure with Seth-animal head), but this had been altered to the Osiris figure. Traces of the Seth figure are clearly visible on a number of the cartouches. This would indicate that the figure of Seth was not, in and of itself, a problem initially. It does appear that the final version of the tomb perhaps wanted to mimic that of Sety I and the cartouches were altered to mirror that tomb's decorative scheme where Seth figures were replaced with Osiris figures.

Number 21 on the other hand shows a bit of wordplay going on. In scenes where a figure attacks a figure of chaos (often represented by some animal such as a hippopotamus) while standing on a boat, the notion is the figure in the boat is preserving world order against the forces of chaos. In later times this type of scene in one version finds expression in the numerous scenes found at Edfu temple where Horus spears the hippopotamus.²¹ Our figure shows the king performing that duty and it has as a parallel a statue in the tomb of Tutankhamun. This scene is very ancient in Egyptian records going back at least to Dynasty 1 to the reign of Den.²² Our scene is a bit different in that Sety II is wearing the white crown versus the more typical red crown that is seen in similar images. By the New Kingdom, we already know that Seth plays a significant role in protecting the sun god as he travels in his bark by spearing Apophis, the agent of chaos, from the prow of the solar boat.²³ I think what we have here is Sety II as Seth performing that function. I believe that the harpooning figure is the model for the Seth at the prow of the solar bark scenes.

Number 43 is the well known scene of a pig on a bark. Our example comes from the tomb of Ramesses VI (KV9).²⁴ It is part of the Judgment Hall of Osiris scene and there are parallels in a number of NK royal tombs including Horemheb and Ramesses VII. Hornung notes that the pig is called the “Verschlingen” or the “Verschlucken.”²⁵ What Hornung does not recognize is the action of the

²⁰ Compare Stela OI Chicago 10510, te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, 68, n. 5, pl. 4.1, where Seth has this pose on a funerary stela.

²¹ See, e.g., D. Kurth, “A World Order in Stone—The Late Temples,” in R. Schulz and M. Seidel, eds., *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs* (Königswinter, 2007), 308–9.

²² T. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt* (London-New York: Routledge, 1999), 276, and W. Fairman, *The Triumph of Horus* (Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1974), 34–35.

²³ H. de Meulenaere, “Pyramidions d’Abydos,” *JEOL* 20 (1968), 2–4, notes a Late Period pyramidion of the vizier Neskashuty where he as a private individual has taken on the role of the god in spearing Apophis.

²⁴ E. Hornung, *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits* II, 143ff.

²⁵ Hornung, *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits* II, 152.

pig, the “Swallower,” is an attested result for when the harpoon slays Apophis.²⁶ The idea is that the harpoon, as it bites into the sacrificial animal and/or Apophis, “swallows” it. So the pig is to be understood as a personification of the harpoon and/or the person holding the harpoon.²⁷ Since Seth is the normal deity at the prow of the solar bark, this would be a representation of the god Seth.²⁸ Te Velde²⁹ notes our scene and argues that the pig in the boat is being driven away by the baboons inside and in front of the boat.³⁰ I think it is more likely that the baboons are using the sticks to cause the pig to squeal. The shrieking of the pig would be equivalent to the cry of Seth on the battlefield where he immobilizes the enemy, and in the case of the pig, he can then devour them.³¹

The examples found on the ceiling of the tomb of Ramesses VI (**Numbers 22–41**) are all labeled as the god Geb. What is most peculiar about this attestation is that Geb is nowhere else found as the deity at the prow of the solar bark. This duty is normally fulfilled by Seth.³² Originally the figure was misidentified as a hare-headed deity.³³ The figure in every example is shown as an ass-headed man holding a spear. It is well known that Seth was frequently shown having the head of an ass,³⁴ though that feature is not normally seen until the Late Period.³⁵ Geb, on the other hand, is never shown as having the head of an ass other than in these examples. In addition to the examples found in the tomb of Ramesses VI, we also have a single example (unlabeled) of an ass-headed figure at the prow of the solar bark from the tomb of Ramesses IX (KV6) (**number 44**). Ass-headed deities are not common, though we do find an example of Osiris with an ass-head in a Dynasty 21 papyrus.³⁶

So the conundrum exists: what was being done in Ramesses VI’s tomb? Was it a case where images of Seth were not allowed? To this I can say no, as the Seth pig (**number 43**) clearly demonstrates. Likewise, the Seth hieroglyph in the burial chamber (**number 42**) suggests the same. I think it reasonable to think that the scribe in charge of the decoration understood two major Egyptian ways of viewing

²⁶ P. Wilson, *A Ptolemaic Lexikon* (Leuven, 1997), 152–53.

²⁷ One must consider that the “harpooner” as a name for Seth may be a play on words with *sty* “to harpoon,” see H. Fischer, *Varia Nova* (New York, 1996), 192–94.

²⁸ For the identification of Seth as a pig, see J. Bergman, “Isis auf der Sau,” *Boreas* 6 (1974), 81–109; H. te Velde, “Some Egyptian Deities and Their Piggishness,” *Fs. Kakosy* (1992), 571–78; and R. Lobban, “Pigs in Ancient Egypt,” in S. Nelson, ed., *Ancestors for the Pigs: Pigs in Prehistory* (Philadelphia, 1998), 137–48.

²⁹ H. te Velde, “Some Egyptian Deities and Their Piggishness,” 577.

³⁰ C. Seeber, *Untersuchungen zur Darstellung des Totengerichts in alten Ägypten* (Munich-Berlin, 1976), 189, n. 856, argues the figure is Seth, but a manifestation of evil.

³¹ H. te Velde, “Some Egyptian Deities and Their Piggishness,” 577, where he notes the “sow who attacks with her voice,” and *idem*, *Seth: God of Confusion*, 20. For the king using the voice of Seth on the battlefield, see J. Spiegel, “Der ‘Ruf’ des Königs,” *WZKM* 54 (1957), 191–203, and M. Bonnmas, *Die Mythisierung der Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 93.

³² G. Nagel, “Set dans la barque solaire,” *BIFAO* 28 (1929), 33–39, and R. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practices* (Chicago, 1993), 65–66, and 85–86. S. Hassan, *Excavations at Giza VI, Part I, 1934–1935* (Cairo, 1946), 110–51, esp., 132–37, gives an older outline of the various deities associated with solar boats, especially Seth’s role at the prow. He also gives (208–56) an extensive discussion of the god Geb. Although he notes that Geb was sometimes found on the solar bark, he is never mentioned as being at the prow. See also A. Piankoff, *La livre du jour et de la nuit* (Cairo, 1942), 16, and H. te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, 99ff. Instead of a spear Seth could carry a sounding pole to ward off Apophis, see S. Vinson, *The Nile Boatman at Work* (Mainz, 1998), 84–85, though that is less likely.

³³ E.g., A. Piankoff and I. Rambova, *The Tomb of Ramesses VI* (Princeton, 1954), vol. 1, 394 and 397. This identification was followed by C. Leitz, *LGG* 7, 304, Ikonographie Ca. Leitz also does not note the writing of the deity’s name using the standing winged goose. He (303) only notes the alighting goose. For hare deities see G. Von Gynzrekowski, “Hasenhieroglyphe und Hasengöttin in Ägypten,” *Klio* 50 (1968), 5–28.

³⁴ See, e.g., G. Daressy, “L’animal séthien à tête d’âne,” *ASAE* 20 (1920), 165–66.

³⁵ *LdÄ* II, 29; S. Donadoni, “Per la morfologia del dio Seth,” *MDAIK* 37 (1981), 122; and G. Michaelides, “Papyrus contenant un dessin dieu Seth à tête d’âne,” *Aegyptus* 32 (1952), 45–53. The ass can be seen as a protective figure such as in TT335 (Dyn. 19), see M. Minas-Nerpel, *Der Gott Chepri* (Peeters, 2006), 130–31.

³⁶ “Khenty-Imentiu,” in A. Piankoff and N. Rambova, *Mythological Papyri, Texts* (Princeton: Pantheon Books, 1957), 154, papyrus 18, scene 6. See also 126, papyrus 12, where we have the “Lord of the West” as an ass-headed protective deity.

Seth in the 20th Dynasty. On the one hand, he saw Seth as a normative deity. That is, he was a member of the Greater Ennead. He was a standard deity found at Karnak. He was a deity who was seen in royal tombs from the 19th dynasty, such as the tombs of Sety I³⁷ and Ramesses II.³⁸ Seth also was a deity who was held in high esteem by members of the royal family.³⁹ Seth was well known as a deity who had power to keep away illness (and death).⁴⁰ Perhaps there was some resistance to putting the more usual Seth figure in the tomb due to developing new understandings about the god Seth. Maybe what we have here is the earliest “stage” of the later demonization of Seth, a term first suggested by Soukiassian.⁴¹ I, however, reject the idea of a proscription of Seth. Rather, I think that this shows the development of additional understandings of the role of Seth within the Egyptian canonical religious sphere. If there was an actual proscription, then the cult of Seth would not have continued to survive for more than another millennium after the New Kingdom.⁴²

Thus the scribe of the tomb introduced some variations such as making the Seth at the prow of the solar bark into an ass-headed figure, making these images the earliest examples of the association of the ass with Seth. Likewise, he took Seth as a normative deity and he substituted a “contemporary” deity from the Great Ennead, his father Geb, in his place. In a sense, the scribe had it both ways: traditional Egyptian thought allowed related deities to adopt or be exchanged for other deities by absorbing aspects of their persona. In so doing, the scribe provided a model for later deific substitutions.⁴³ The scribe thus was able to deal with the desire of the royal family to emulate 19th Dynasty forms, as well as to address any developing religious associations. In a sense we might ask, when is Seth really Seth, and when is Geb really Geb?⁴⁴ It is for this reason I feel confident in identifying the twenty examples of the ass-headed figure at the prow of the solar bark as intending to be Seth, but labeled as Geb.

We now pass on to some of the catalogue items from the latest periods in Egypt. **Number 46** is an ostracon found in Kharga Oasis. It presents for us the understanding that in the Roman period the

³⁷ For several examples of Seth (Seth animal head) in the burial chamber of Sety I's tomb (KV 17), see P. Hardy, “The Cairo Calendar as a Stellar Almanac,” *Archaeoastronomy* 17 (2002–2003), 48–63, esp. 52–53 and figs. 1–2, where Seth is in the company of Isis, Nephthys, and Horus.

³⁸ KV7, *PM* 1.2, 506, Hall J, 16, only notes a scene of the king offering to [Hathor]. The Theban Mapping Project (http://www.thebanmappingproject.com/sites/browse_component_70.html) lists this as chamber I, but does not mention the Seth figure. While examining the tomb in 2007 with S. Vinson and J. Jay, we observed that this wall has a broken scene showing Horus and Seth anointing/“baptizing” Ramesses II. My photograph was not of sufficient quality to produce a drawing so we must await the completion of the new conservation work currently underway in that tomb before a definitive reproduction can be made.

³⁹ Note the Seth in the scenes from Medinet Habu temple from the reign of Ramesses III, e.g., *Med. Habu* 8, 605, Seth “who has given kingship”; 8, 619f.; *Med. Habu* 1, 27; *Med. Habu* 5, 282c; and *Med. Habu* 6, 420 (at prow of solar bark spearing Apophis).

⁴⁰ J. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden, 1978), 37. Cited also in T. Bardinet, “Remarques sur les maladies de la peau, la lèpre, et le châtiment divin dans l’Égypte ancienne,” *RdE* 39 (1988), 17, and H. Goedicke, “The Canaanite Illness,” *SÄK* 11 (1984), 94. Note that Seth also has control over powerful poisons (Bardinet, 15). For Seth as the oldest magician, see W. Barta, *Die Bedeutung der Jenseitstexte für den verstorbenen König* (Munich-Berlin, 1985), 70. See also Y. Koenig, “The Image of the Foreigner in the Magical Texts,” in P. Kousoulis and K. Magliveras, eds., *Moving Across Borders*. OLA 159 (Leuven, 2007), 229.

⁴¹ G. Soukiassian, “Une étape de la proscription de Seth,” 59–68.

⁴² Y. Koenig, “The Image of the Foreigner in the Magical Texts,” 231ff., and n. 45.

⁴³ For Geb being substituted for Seth, see Soukiassian, *GM* 44 (1981), 62, no. 27, and M. Patané, “Quelques remarques sur la présence de Seth dans les *Textes des Pyramides* à la Basse Époque,” *BSEG* 14 (1990), 71. For Thoth replacing Seth see E. Otto, “Thot als Stellvertreter des Seth,” *Orientalia* 7 (1938), 69–79.

⁴⁴ There is one unclear passage in the *Pyramid Texts* (2128a) where we have *hn̄i m Stš Gb ḫ rpw wnm(?) bskw* “travel with Seth (as) Geb, the divine being who eats entrails.” R. Faulkner, *Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford, 1969), 302, translates “Quell Seth as Geb . . .” Since *hn̄i m* can mean “to travel to (heaven)” (Wb III, 374.10), perhaps we have in both of these examples reference to the god going up to the heavens with Seth–Geb in the solar bark.

cult of the god Seth was still active and that there were individuals who were holders of the office of “prophet of Seth.”⁴⁵ While the cult of Seth was well known in the oases from earliest periods,⁴⁶ it continued to play a prominent role until the end of antiquity.⁴⁷

In the Nile Valley, we begin to see during the later periods a change in the understanding of the role of Seth. Many see the change as one where Seth becomes demonized and eventually is associated with Apophis, the image of chaos. At such Late Period temples as Dendera and Edfu, Seth and his followers are seen as the enemy of Re and of cosmic order. It is in this role that Horus begins to be reshaped as the defender of the world and this serves as the basis for the dramatization exhibited in the “Triumph of Horus” scenes. It is within that context that we now need to examine **Number 45** found at the temple of Isis on Philae. The basis for this scene appears to be the standard weighing of the heart scene from the *Book of the Dead*.⁴⁸ In that scene Osiris observes while the heart of the deceased is placed upon the scale and weighed against a Maat-feather. If the heart fails the test, the Amet-demon is there to devour the deceased. Otherwise, the deceased proceeds towards Osiris where he is embraced by the god and reborn. Oftentimes the god Thoth is there to record the event and insure the accuracy of the scale and Isis and Nephthys sometimes serve as witnesses. In our example we have a combination of the weighing of the heart scene as well as a ritual binding scene.⁴⁹ Our example seems to show a situation where Seth is bound as a captive and is presented to Osiris who will pass judgment upon him.

What is striking about that notion is that Osiris would not normally ever sit in judgment on Seth. We know from already in the *Pyramid Texts*,⁵⁰ that the ennead of gods had made the judgment for Seth’s actions against Osiris and instigated the reconciliation between Horus and Seth. Since Osiris was deceased, he could not take part in that scenario. Our scene makes a bit more sense if we see it as a logical misinterpretation by a Late Period scribe/artist who wanted to present the judgment scene from the *Book of Gates*. As we know, in that scene from the 5th and 6th hours of the night, the enemies of the sun god are bound and presented to the sun god (who is often shown as the god Osiris in his guise as Re-Osiris) who is the vanquisher of Apophis.⁵¹ In the 5th hour we see the sun god on his throne, sometimes with Anubis and Thoth before him as well as the ennead of gods. It is during the 6th hour that the followers of Apophis are bound with ropes and presented to the sun-god. In **number 45** the scribe/artist presents a Roman version of this. He uses two common motifs from his canon: (a) the judgment scene from the *Book of the Dead* with scales, demon, Isis watching with Osiris on throne, and (b) the ritually bound prisoner = enemy of sun-god = a bound ass-headed Seth.⁵² Thus we have the triumph of the sun god over the forces of chaos. In essence this block is a Roman version of the *Book of Gates* scene we saw earlier and discussed in our **number 43** below.

⁴⁵ There are various examples of this office after the New Kingdom, see, e.g., O. Kaper, *Temples and Gods*, 55 (Dyn. 21); A. Niwinski, *21st Dynasty Coffins from Thebes* (Mainz, 1988), 119 (Dyn. 21); A. Kamal, “Un monument nouveau de Sheshonq Ier,” *RecTrav* 31 (1909), 34 (Dyn. 22); J. Janssen, “The Smaller Dakhla Stela,” *JEA* 54 (1968), 167 (Dyn. 25); and S. Yamani, “New Year’s Bottle from Tell Marqula (Dakhla Oasis),” *BIFAO* 102 (2002), 427–28 (Dyn. 26).

⁴⁶ A. Mills (personal communication) notes the existence of a site called “Seth Hill,” a site on the top of a hill in Dakhla from the 6th Dynasty where numerous figures of Seth were inscribed. This site will be published by O. Kaper.

⁴⁷ See, Kaper, *Temples and Gods*, passim. For personal names combined with Seth see M. Chauveau, “Les qanats dans les ostraca de Manâwîr,” in P. Briant, ed., *Irrigation et drainage dans l’antiquité* (Paris, 2001), 137, and H. Jacquet-Gordon, “A Statue from Dakhla Oasis,” *MDAIK* 47 (1991), 175–76.

⁴⁸ The illustrated scenes are often attached to Spell 125, where the deceased proclaims his innocence of having committed any evil deeds while alive.

⁴⁹ For binding rituals, see Ritner, *Mechanics*, 142ff.

⁵⁰ For example, PT Spell 477.

⁵¹ E. Hornung, *Das Buch von den Pforten*, 143ff.

⁵² Compare to the scene from Dendera, Ritner, *Mechanics*, 167, fig. 14g.

While the Philae block is from the early Roman period, the painted scene from Ain Turba (**number 50**) is much later in date. While one thread of the Seth story was being followed in one part of Egypt, another thread was being followed in another. In this wall scene we have the story of Seth protecting world order by slaying the forces of chaos, here represented by a dragon-like creature. He appears in three forms: a human-headed figure, a Seth-animal-headed figure, and a falcon-headed figure. Instead of being at the prow of the solar bark, Seth has now taken up a horse from which he rides over Apophis and spears it. The third figure shows the falcon-headed Seth with outstretched wings which clearly derives from the famous scene on the nearby Hibis temple.⁵³ What is made pointedly clear in this scene is that the Seth-animal-headed figure is as potent and as normative as the falcon-headed and the human-headed versions of Seth.

Since the introduction of the horse into Egypt, there was little in the way of connection between horsemanship and native deities.⁵⁴ Thus we need to determine what other motifs could have served as models for the Ain Turba scene. One possible model was the Anubis figure placed on a horse with arm upraised.⁵⁵ In his discussion of the piece, Grenier also notes how a deity on a horse is not a normal posture for Egyptian gods. Another potential model can be found in the representation of the Dioskouroi, a human-headed figure on a horse, holding a lance with a star on his head.⁵⁶ This last example comes from Dakhla Oasis and is early Roman in date. These two would show that Egyptian artists had viewed other examples of deities on horses from which they could draw upon for our scene.

We have the aspect of Seth notable in the New Kingdom, protector of world order fighting Apophis, displayed again at the latest periods of antiquity. While in part of Egypt we see Seth identified with the forces of chaos, in another area we have him taking a new version of his old role as protector of world order. If nothing else, these scenes show some of the vitality and adaptiveness of traditional Egyptian cultural practices regarding Seth.⁵⁷

The next two items (**numbers 48** and **49**) both come from the quarry at Gebel Teir in Kharga Oasis. They are both found on the west wall of the cave known as Zone 4. The cave was used for many years, perhaps first as a limestone quarry and there we find a number of Demotic graffiti. At a slightly lower and later level⁵⁸ we find a number of Coptic graffiti in particular a figure of the Virgin and Child in dipinto which probably served as a focal point for religious pilgrimage.⁵⁹ On the west wall opposite that scene we find separately our two examples. **Number 48** was noted by Fakhry, but he did not see the Coptic letters next to it identifying the figure as Seth. It is likely that these figures date from the 4th to 5th century AD at the earliest. There has been much discussion whether there was any connection between the traditional Egyptian god Seth and the Biblical figure of the same name.⁶⁰ Given the

⁵³ West wall of Hypostyle N, Davies, *The Temple of Hibis III*, pls. 42–43.

⁵⁴ The Syrian deities Astarte and Reshep are found on horses. See C. Rommelaere, *Les chevaux du Nouvel Empire égyptien* (Brussels, 1991), esp. chapter 8, where little connection is found with the god Seth.

⁵⁵ Ptolemaic-Roman period piece, Louvre E 17410, J.-C. Grenier, “L’Anubis cavalier du musée du Louvre,” in M. DeBoer and T. Dridge, eds., *Hommages à Maarten J. Vermaseren* (Leiden, 1978), 405–8.

⁵⁶ O. Kaper and K. Worp, “Dipinti on the temenos wall at Deir el-Haggar (Dakhla Oasis),” *BIFAO* 99 (1999), 246–47.

⁵⁷ As noted by D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt* (Princeton, 1998), 112–15. I thank Richard Fazzini for reminding me of this reference.

⁵⁸ Later in time because more limestone would have been removed and thus the floor level would have dropped.

⁵⁹ These Coptic items were partially noted by Fakhry, “The Rock Inscriptions of Gabal El-Teir at Kharga Oasis,” *ASAE* 51 (1951), 426–33. A complete publication of the Coptic material at Gebel Teir will be the subject of a joint publication by this author, J. Westerfeld, and V. Ghica of the French Institute in Cairo.

⁶⁰ C. Onasch, “Der ägyptische und der biblische Seth,” *AfP* 27 (1980), 99–119; W. Fauth, “Seth-Typhon, Onoel under der eselköpfige Sabaoth. Zur Theriomorphie der ophitisch-barbelognostoschen Archonten,” *Oriens Christianus* 57 (1973), 79–120; M. Broze, “Aphrodite, Hathor, Ève, Marie et Barbélo: À propos du language mythique des écrits de Nag Hammadi,” *Kernos* 7 (1994), 49, no. 6; T. DuQuesne, *A Coptic Initiatory Invocation (PGM IV 1–25)* (Thame, 1991), 30–32, 47, and 54; and A. Atiya, ed., *The Coptic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1991), vol. 5, 1503.

context of the figures, it is unclear what their function in this cave would have been. Could they relate to some magical ability of Seth? In the case of **number 49** could it be an example of the destruction of the agathadaimon Seth on a fire altar? In all cases, it does show that the identity of a Sethian creature was still alive in Egypt in late antique Egypt.

The last four items we shall mention are **numbers 1, 3, 4, and 47**. The placing of a deity on top of a standard is a very traditional motif in ancient Egypt. This motif went back to pre-dynastic times and remained a standard iconic form for over three millennia. In simple terms, the placement of Seth on a standard simply reinforces the notion that Seth played a normative role in Egyptian religion and culture.⁶¹ In fact, **numbers 3** and **4** reinforce the notion that both Seth and Horus played a significant role in the initiation of the pharaoh in ritual matters, especially those cases in the hebsed festival where the king ritually dies and is reborn through the actions of the gods and the performance of the requisite rituals. As has been long commented upon,⁶² Seth and Horus formed a reconciled group where they maintained the cosmic order after a period of conflict.⁶³ This pairing can be expressed in a number of ways, such as the *Hr-wy.fy* figure showing a double headed (falcon—Seth animal) figure.⁶⁴ An unlabeled example can be seen in the 21st Dynasty papyrus of Djedkhonsuiufankh where we have the sun god in the solar bark with a falcon-headed figure steering the boat and a second falcon-headed figure at the prow spearing Apophis.⁶⁵ Context clearly identifies the figure spearing as Seth and the one holding the rudder as Horus. It was the combined pair, both with falcon heads, that assisted the sun god through the perils of travel within the mythological world. If **number 47** is a Late Period item, then it matches nicely with **number 1** from the first dynasty. Thus a single Seth figure from the end of Egyptian times can be matched with a pair of falcons, who are assuredly Seth and Horus, each on a standard, representing the vigilance and power of the gods from the beginning of Egyptian times.

This discussion began with the question of whether G. Robins was correct in assigning a situational context explanation for the substitution of the Seth figure in the cartouche of Sety I in his tomb (Osiris figure) and in his Abydos temple (Isis-knot). In light of the above discussion I would have to answer yes and no. On the one hand, she is correct in noting that there was a substitution of the Seth figure in the tomb and temple context, and it is likely that she is also correct that it was done because of concern for maintaining a stable cosmic order. After the Amarna period there was a major reinterpretation of the solar cult and a re-examination of the position of various deities within that scenario.⁶⁶ I think what may have happened is that while the various issues were being pondered by the Egyptian priests, discussions concerning Seth's role may have entered the picture, especially in light of the favor shown that deity by the 19th Dynasty pharaohs. In the Theban area, it may have been thought that a "northern" deity who was patron for the current dynasty should not be playing such a positive role over the local Amun cult. At the same time, they could hardly denigrate openly that same patron's deity.⁶⁷ I think they began to utilize the traditional notion of substitution of deities

⁶¹ S. Ikram (personal comm.) notes that they found an example of Seth on a standard at "Seth Rock" in Kharga Oasis.

⁶² E.g., H. Kees, *Horus und Seth als Götterpaar* (Leipzig, 1923).

⁶³ See, e.g., te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, 62ff.

⁶⁴ A good example is seen in the tomb of Ramesses VI, te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, 69. See also B. Bruyère, *La tombe No 1 de Sen-nedjem à Deir el-Médineh* (Cairo, 1959), 70.

⁶⁵ Piankoff and Rambova, *Mythological Papyri, Texts*, 157, fig. 64. See also A. von Lieven, *Der Himmel über Esna* (Wiesbaden, 2000), 138, nos. 393–96.

⁶⁶ Discussed by J. Assmann, in a variety of publications, such as his *Egyptian Solar Religion in the New Kingdom: Re, Amun and the Crisis of Polytheism* (London-New York, 1995).

⁶⁷ M. Bietak, *Tell el-Dab'a II* (Vienna, 1975), in his discussion of the cult in the north argues that the proscription of Seth could not have come before Dynasty 22 as the kings were such patrons. If we think of this "proscription" as localized to certain threads of thought concerning Seth, then earlier "proscriptive" behaviors can be explained. E. Uphill, *The Temples of Per Ramesses* (Warminster, 1984), 221–23, argues for Dynasty 21 action.

as an honorable way around that problem. It is only over time then that Seth's role is further denigrated. Now this is only speculation, but what Professor Robins has done is to point out to us the first official stage in the denigration of the Seth cult. This denigration was then expressed in well known ways in one thread (mainly Nile Valley) of the observance of the Seth cult (Edfu scenes), while other areas (mainly the western oases) maintained and developed earlier practices.⁶⁸ It is in that sense that Professor Robins is incorrect. It was not a situational substitution, but rather an attempt to relegate a potentially troublesome deity into a new category.

Postscript: A Final Catalogue Item

Number 7 of the catalogue has thus far not been discussed. I have saved it as it differs in many ways from the other catalogue entries. The major issue with this glazed, ceramic cartouche of Sety II is not its size or construction. Rather, it interests me because it spells the name of the king using what is probably a brazier hieroglyph. One nice thing about the Egyptian system of hieroglyphs is that there can exist multiple levels of meaning. The obvious one here is that it is the name of the king, Sety II "He of Seth." With that determinative added to the name other potential word plays may be involved. One is a word play with *sty* "odor, fragrance" (Wb IV, 349). Wilson notes that *sty* often denotes the fragrance of incense which causes rejoicing and, potentially, sexual arousal.⁶⁹ Given the sexual strength aspect of Seth, this seems like a reasonable explanation. This can be carried even further when we note that *sty ntr* is a term used in the divine birth scenario.⁷⁰ We can also see this as the term *sty* "fire" (Wb IV, 330), a term frequently used of the sun god. Perhaps "He of Seth" is being identified with the fiery aspect of the sun god as he shoots light upon the world. Or he is like Seth who burns the enemies of the sun god with a fiery glance.⁷¹ While neither of these interpretations is earth shattering, the appearance of such minutiae can easily confuse this scholar as he meditates upon the role of Seth.

Catalogue

1) Schist Bowl Cairo Museum JE88345⁷² (*Figure 1*)

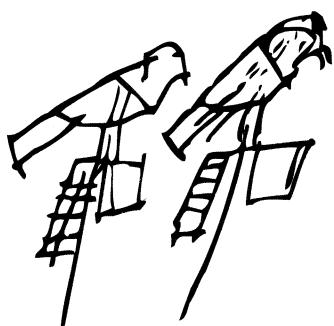


Fig. 1

This well known artifact from the first dynasty has long been discussed because it contains a portion of the names of several kings of Dynasty 1. What is of more interest is the appearance of a pair of falcons each on a standard without a label. These have normally been identified as a pair of Horus falcons, but here should be seen as Horus and Seth on standards.

2) Lintel Karnak Open Air Museum (*Figure 2*) (*Photograph 1*)

Excavated in Karnak as fill, this sandstone lintel shows a standing Amun, lord of the thrones of the two lands giving life to Sesostris I. Amun wears the double feathered crown and holds a *was*-scepter. Sesostris wears the red crown and holds a stick and a mace. Behind the king is the personified *ka*-standard with his Horus name "Living of Births." To the left is a figure of a falcon headed Montu

⁶⁸ P. Bremner-Rhind, from the Ptolemaic period, maintains that Seth was "he who is most mighty at the prow of the bark of Re," R. Faulkner, "The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus III," *JEA* 23 (1937), 167.

⁶⁹ P. Wilson, *Ptolemaic Lexikon*, 968–69.

⁷⁰ P. Wilson, *Ptolemaic Lexikon*, 969, who notes that *sty* can also mean "impregnate" (956).

⁷¹ J. Assmann, *Egyptian Solar Religion*, 52–53.

⁷² A. Bongioanni and M. Sole Croce, eds., *The Illustrated Guide to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo* (Cairo, 2001), 38.

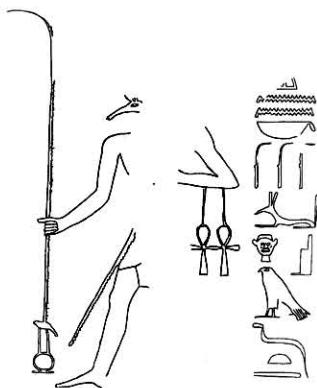
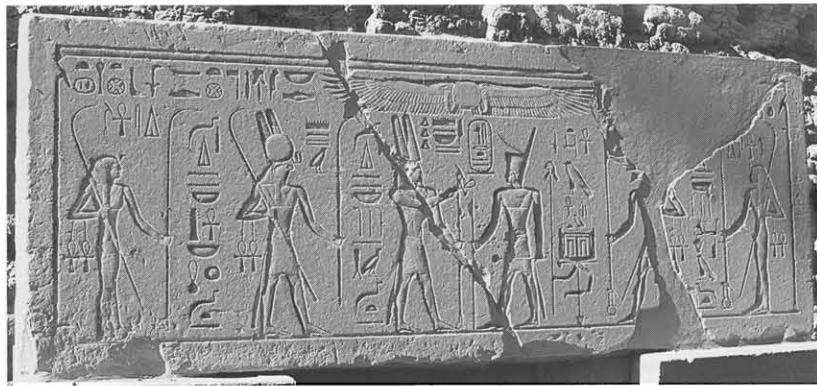


Fig. 2



Photograph 1—Cat. No. 2—Karnak Open Air Museum (photograph by author).

holding the year-sign in each hand. He says “I have given to you years forever and ever.” Behind him is a standing figure of Nekhbet holding a pair of year signs who says “I have given to you all life and stability like Re forever.” To the right of the king is a broken figure of Seth. In one hand he holds a year sign and the other is a year sign with a tadpole—double fingers and shen-sign (indicating tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of years united). He says “I have given to you the years of Seth upon the throne of Horus forever.”⁷³ This is followed on the right by a standing female deity (probably Wadjet) holding the same year—staffs as Seth.⁷⁴

3) and 4) Cairo Museum JE56497A and JE56496bis⁷⁵ (Figure 3)

The lintel of the hebsed chapel depicts Sesostris III seated on a throne wearing the white crown and hebsed robe in a hebsed shrine facing left. In front is a personified standard holding a year sign also grasped by the king. The standard has a falcon figure and is labeled “Behdet.” To the right we have the king seated on a throne wearing the red crown and hebseb robe. In front of him is a personified standard holding a year sign also grasped by the king. The standard has a figure of Seth and is labeled “the Ombite.” This scene is duplicated in the Dynasty 13 lintel from the reign of Sobekhotep II Amenemhet.

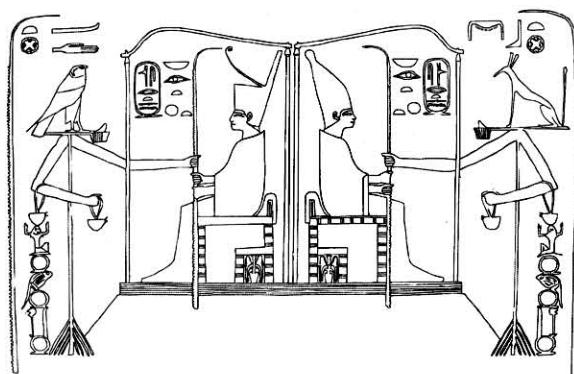


Fig. 3

⁷³ Cf. H. Smith, *The Fortress of Buhen The Inscriptions* (London, 1976), 100, where we have “may you repeat years like Seth.”

⁷⁴ Comparable to a lintel of Ahmose (Dyn. 18) found near the 3rd pylon, M. Ullmann, *König für die Ewigkeit* (Wiesbaden, 2002), 24, no. 91.

⁷⁵ The Hebsed chapels which these two lintels belong were excavated at Medamud and are now in the Grand Sculpture gallery of the Cairo Museum labeled with numbers 6189 and 6190. See H. Willems, *JSSEA* 14 (1984), 103–4, pl. 7; K. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period* (Copenhagen, 1997), 336; and R. Schulz and M. Seidel, eds., *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, 452, no. 48.

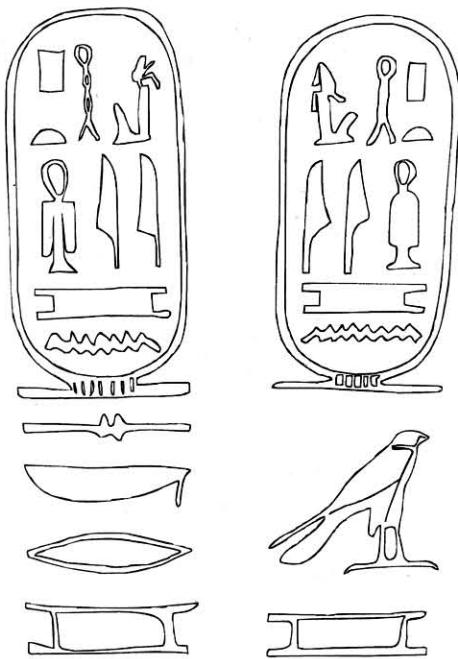


Fig. 4



Photograph 2—Cat. No. 5—Cairo Museum SR12018 J4743 (photograph courtesy of H. El-Leithy).

5) Cairo Museum SR12018 J4743 (Figure 4) (Photograph 2)

The granite offering stand has hieroglyphic inscriptions on each side. The figure shows the cartouches of the stand where the king is called “beloved of Sokar” and “beloved of Horus.” The nomen of Sety I is given in the cartouche with his name written in each case using the Isis-knot replacing the Seth sign. Flanking the column of hieroglyphs are figures of Hapy holding ankh and an offering plate.



Fig. 5



Photograph 3—Cat. No. 6—Cairo Museum 32091 SR12035 (photograph courtesy of H. El-Leithy).

6) Cairo Museum 32091 SR12035 (Figure 5) (Photograph 3)

The granite lintel comes from a shrine of Sety I. It has parallel scenes of a kneeling king wearing a nemes-headpiece offering water jars (label says “offering cool water”) to a seated Osiris figure wear-



Fig. 6

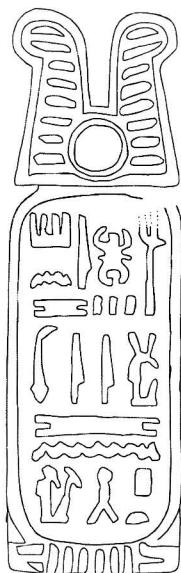


Fig. 7



Photograph 4—Cat. No. 8—Cairo Museum (no number) (photograph courtesy of H. El-Leithy).

9) Karnak Open Air Museum Block (Figure 8) (Photograph 5)

The block is currently (2007) located on the mastabas in the Open Air Museum at Karnak temple on which were also stored the blocks for the Chapelle Rouge of Hatshepsut prior to its partial re-assembly. Presumably this block was also found during the excavations that revealed that structure. The scene shows the god Seth offering a combination was-ankh to the nose of the God's Wife, King Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut is supported by the goddess Nephthys "foremost of Karnak."

ing the atef crown. The god Osiris holds a crook, flail, and was-scepter in his hands. In front of the god is a short label "I have given to you the lifetime of Re" (left scene) and "I have given to you all life and dominion" (right scene). Above the deity the inscription reads: "I have given to you all life, stability and dominion. I have given to you the kingship of the two lands. (Right scene: health, joy) Osiris-Wennefer (right scene: Foremost of the Westerners)." The cartouches read "Menmaatre Sety-Merneptah" where the Seth-sign has been replaced with the seated Osiris sign.

7) Cairo Museum JE43659⁷⁶ (Figure 6)

Ostrakon from Deir el-Medina on which is painted a figure of the god Seth, a human figure with Seth animal head, seated on a throne. In one hand he holds an ankh and the other probably had a was-scepter or the like. The figure is labeled "Seth" written with a Seth-animal followed by the god-sign and a seated divine figure.

8) Cairo Museum (no number) (Figure 7) (Photograph 4)

A glazed ceramic cartouche with double atef feathers belonging to Sety II (*wsr hprw mr 'Imn Sty mr n Pth*). The writing of Sety is unique in that following the two read-leaf signs there is what I thought at first was the pestle (Gardiner U33), but feel more confident in seeing a narrowed brazier (Gardiner Q7). An exact duplicate of this item can be seen in the British Museum.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ C. Leitz, *LGG VI*, 694, no. 86.

⁷⁷ R. Parkinson, *Cracking the Code* (Berkeley-Los Angeles, 1999), 109, no. 31e (EA 67970).

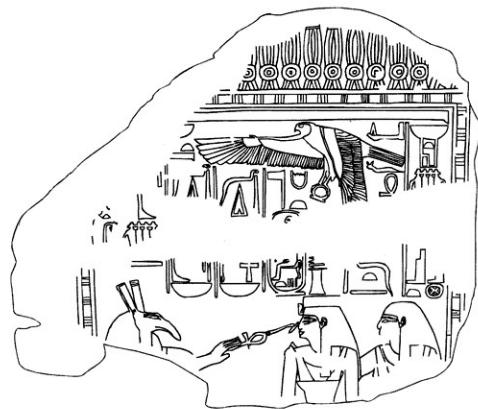
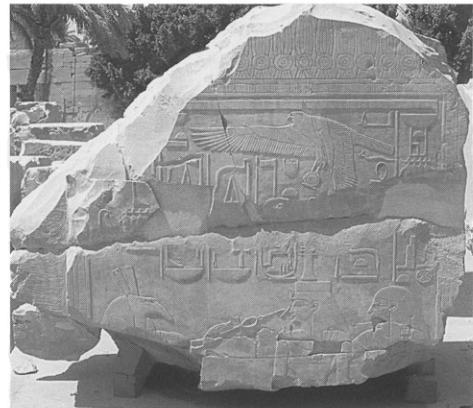


Fig. 8



Photograph 5—Cat. No. 9—Karnak Open Air Museum Block (photograph by author).

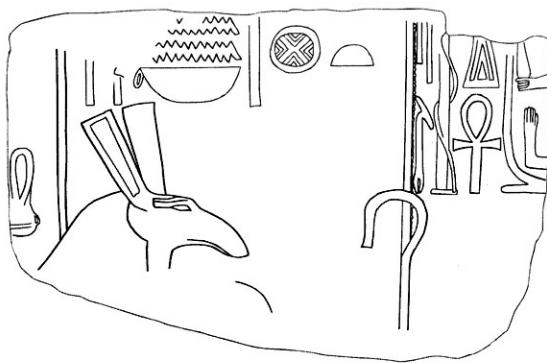
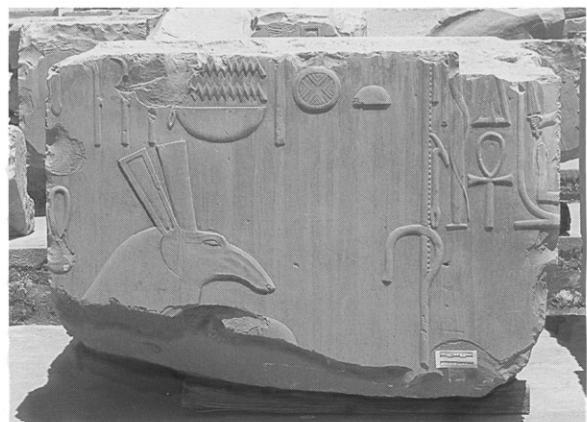


Fig. 9



Photograph 6—Cat. No. 10—Karnak Block 1 (photograph by author).

10) Karnak Block 1 (Figure 9) (Photograph 6)

The block is currently (2007) in the large open air block yard south of the main portion of the temple and north of Khonsu temple. This and the following blocks all appear to have come from some structure built and/or decorated during the reign of Horemheb at the end of Dynasty 18. The block shows a fragment of a scene where the god Seth, holding a crook, stands before the king (only a portion of the cartouche of Horemheb remains).

11) Karnak Block 2 (Figure 10)

The block also comes from the Karnak group in the open air block yard south of the main portion of the temple and north of Khonsu temple. It shows a fragment of a scene where we have the lower portion of the legs of a king with a partial standard inscription behind. There is also a portion of a line of hieroglyphs which may read “[year]s of Horus and Seth, living.”

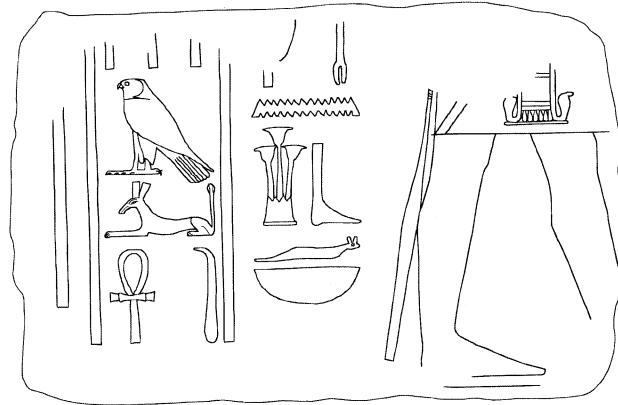


Fig. 10

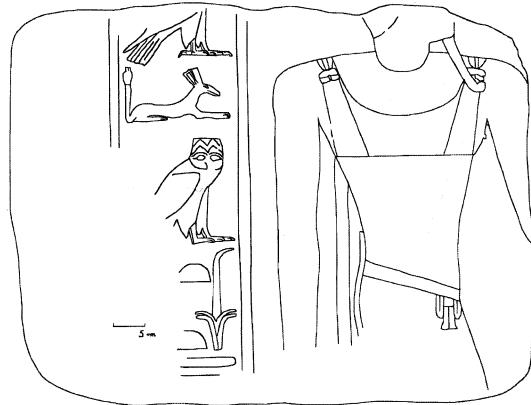


Fig. 11



Fig. 12

12) Karnak Block 3 (Figure 11)

The block is the last of the group in the open air block yard south of the main portion of the temple and north of Khonsu temple. It shows a partial figure of a king with a portion of an inscription behind. It reads “[. . . H]orus and Seth in the kingship of the two lan[ds . . .].”

13) Karnak Hypostyle Hall—B218⁷⁸ (Figure 12)

The scene from the north wall—top register of the hypostyle hall at Karnak depicts a kneeling king Sety I wearing the red crown making a bread offering “to his father Seth” “great of strength who dwells in the temple of Sety I in the temple of Amun” and the goddess Nephthys. Seth is here depicted with a human head.⁷⁹

14) Karnak Hypostyle Hall—B230⁸⁰ (Figure 13)

The scene from the north wall—second register of the hypostyle hall at Karnak depicts a standard purification/baptism scene where Horus

⁷⁸ H. Nelson and M. Murnane, *The Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak, Volume 1, Part 1: The Wall Reliefs* (Chicago, 1981), pl. 139; *PM* II, 43, Interior, North half, 152, I, 2.

⁷⁹ Human headed examples of Seth do occur on several NK stela from Deir el Medina, see G. Nagel, “Un papyrus funéraire de la fin du Nouvel Empire [Louvre 3292 (inv.)],” *BIFAO* 29 (1929), 66. See also the Old Kingdom examples in L. Morenz, “Die Götter und ihr Redetext,” in H. Beinlich et al., eds., 5. *Ägyptologisches Tempeltagung Würzburg, 23.-26. September 1999* (Wiesbaden, 2002), 137–58, esp. Abb. 2 and 9.

⁸⁰ Nelson and Murnane, *Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*, pl. 148; *PM* II, 44, Interior, North half, 152, II, 7.

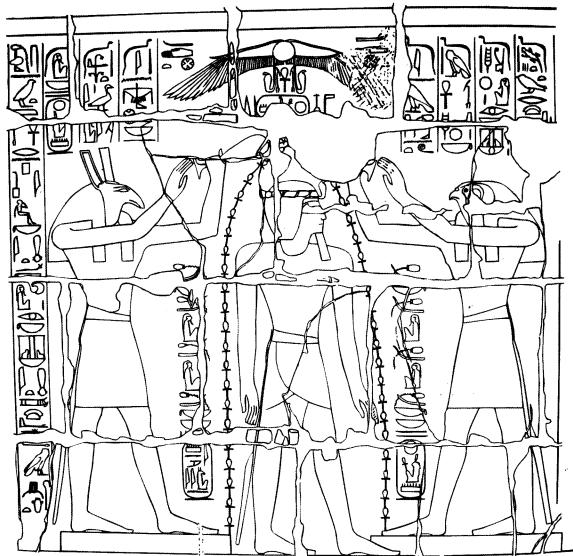


Fig. 13

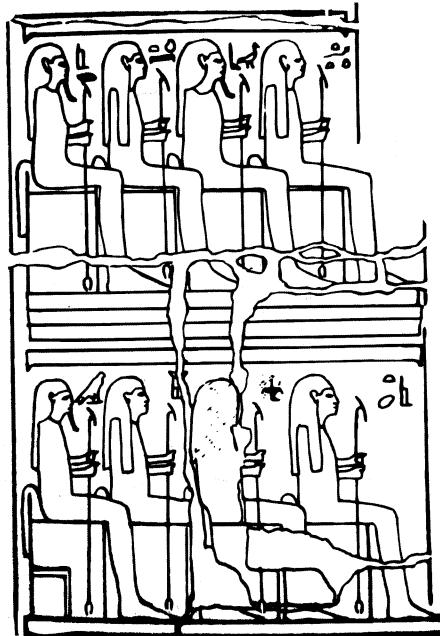


Fig. 14

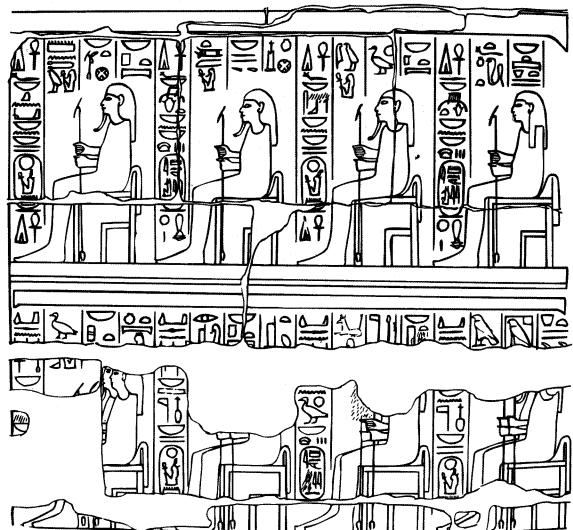


Fig. 15

This fragmentary scene on the north wall also shows the Great Ennead. The figure shows the gods Montu, Atum, Shu, Tefnut, Geb, Osiris, Seth, and Horus as human headed, seated figures each holding a *was*-scepter.

and Seth ("the Ombite, Lord of Upper Egypt") purify king Sety I. Seth is depicted with the Seth-animal head while Horus has a falcon head. This two dimensional scene is paralleled by the famous granite statue group of Horus and Seth anointing the king now in the Cairo Museum.

15) Karnak Hypostyle Hall—B97–98⁸¹ (Figure 14)

The double scene on the south wall shows the king (Ramesses II) receiving regalia and jubilees from Amun-Re, Mut, and Khonsu. To the left we have the Iunmutef priest addressing the Great Ennead of Karnak (fifteen gods in four registers). The figure shows the middle two registers with Tefnut, Geb, Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth ("the Ombite"), Nephthys, and Horus as human headed, seated figures each holding a *was*-scepter.

16) Karnak Hypostyle Hall—B296⁸² (Figure 15)

⁸¹ Nelson and Murnane, *Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*, pl. 52; *PM* II, 47, Interior, South half, 158, III.

⁸² Nelson and Murnane, *Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*, pl. 201; *PM* II, 45, Interior, North half, 154, III, 5.



Fig. 16

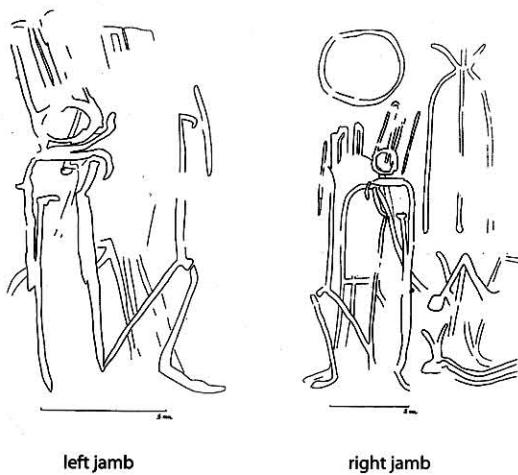


Fig. 17

Photograph 7—Cat. No. 18—Valley of the Kings—KV19
Right Door Jamb (photograph by author).

17) Karnak Hypostyle Hall—B70⁸³ (Figure 16)

This scene on the west wall shows the king (Ramesses II) and the Great Ennead (fifteen gods in three registers) of Karnak adoring Amun-Re, Mut, and Khonsu. The figure shows the middle register with Nut, Osiris, Isis, Seth ("the Ombite") and Nephthys as human headed, standing figures with arms raised in adoration of the Theban triad.

18)—19) Valley of the Kings—KV19 Left and Right Door Jambs⁸⁴ (Figure 17) (Photograph 7)

On the left and right jambs of the tomb of Ramses-Montuherkhopshef, a son of Ramesses IX, we find the unfinished painted names and titles of the tomb's owner. Close inspection of these jambs shows

⁸³ Nelson and Murnane, *Great Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*, pl. 36; PM II, 45, Interior, South half, 157, IV, 2.

⁸⁴ PM I.2, 546.

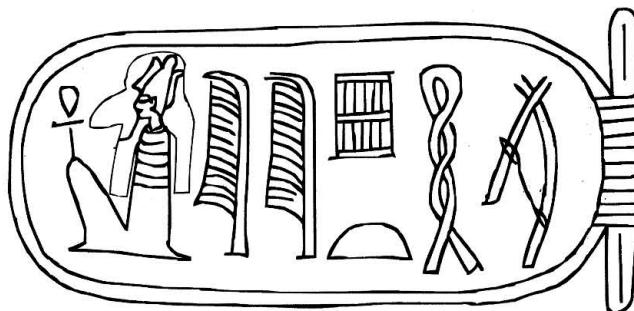
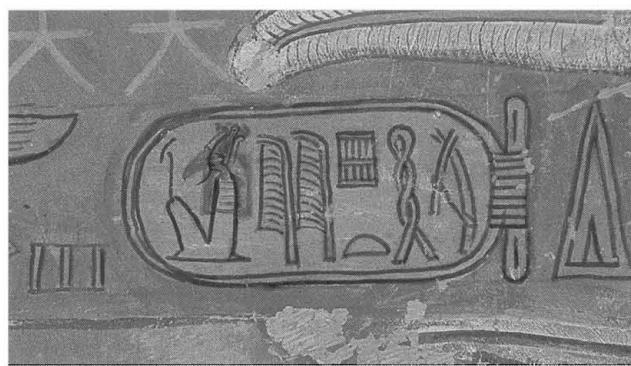


Fig. 18



Photograph 8—Cat. No. 20—Valley of the Kings—KV15—Ceiling (photograph by author).

one such example where Sety II is shown with his arm raised holding a spear while standing on a raft. This pose is also seen on a wooden Tutankhamun statue.⁸⁸

22)—41) Valley of the Kings—KV9—Misc. Scenes from Ceiling⁸⁹ (Figures 20–21)

In the tomb of Ramesses VI on the ceilings of Corridor C, D, and E and on the ceiling of the Burial Chamber, there are twenty different examples of a standing figure. In eighteen of the examples this figure is standing at the prow of the solar bark with a variety of other deities accompanying the sun god. Most of these scenes are from the *Book of Night* and the *Book of Day*. As the figure at the prow of

⁸⁵ This phenomenon was noted earlier by Mr. Ted Brock who showed it to me. For an interpretation of whom the tomb originally belonged, I defer to his forthcoming discussions. I thank Ted for allowing me to note this example of the name Seth in this study.

⁸⁶ PM I.2, 532, Corridor A Ceiling.

⁸⁷ PM I.2, 533.

⁸⁸ See N. Reeves, *The Complete Tutankhamun* (London, 1990), 130 and 132, and I. Edwards, in K. Gilbert, ed., *The Treasures of Tutankhamun* (New York, 1976), 146–47.

⁸⁹ For photographs of the twenty different examples see A. Piankoff and I. Rambova, *The Tomb of Ramesses VI* (Princeton, 1954), vol. 2, pls. 152–57, and 187–91. See also drawings in vol. I, figures 130, 131, and 133.

that the tomb originally belonged to a person whose name began with a “Seth”-animal (see traces on the drawings) and this was later changed to a falcon headed figure representing “Montu.”⁸⁵ Only traces of the Seth-animal hieroglyph survive.

20) Valley of the Kings—KV15—Ceiling⁸⁶ (Figure 18) (Photograph 8)

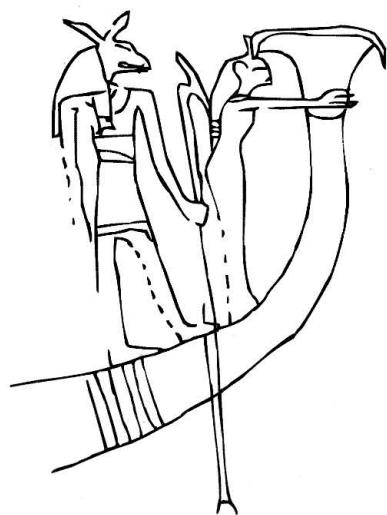
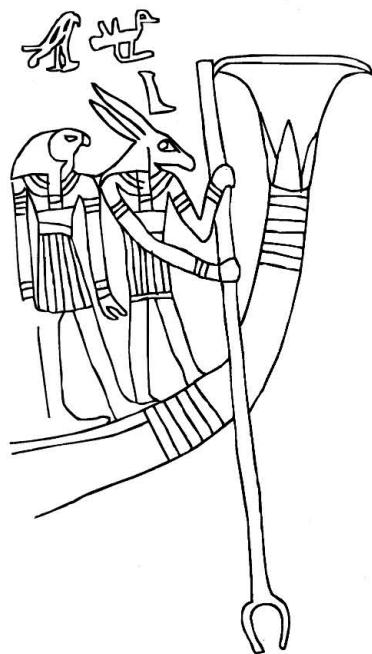
The decoration of the tomb of Sety II underwent some change after an initial beginning. From the traces shown in the figure, it appears that originally Sety II had his cartouche written using the Seth-animal sign, but this was changed to the Osiris figure at some point. Traces of the Seth-animal can be seen on a number of the ceiling cartouches, of which our figure is just a sample. Cartouches found on the side walls of the tomb do not show evidence of alteration.

21) Valley of the Kings—KV15—Hall E⁸⁷ (Figure 19) (Photograph 9)

The discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun (KV62) shed significant light on items placed in the royal tombs. Of note were the numerous statues some of which were found with depictions on other royal tombs such as scenes found in the tomb of Sety II. The figure shows



Fig. 19

Photograph 9—Cat. No. 21—Valley of the Kings—KV15—
Hall E (photograph by author).

Figs. 20-21



Fig. 22

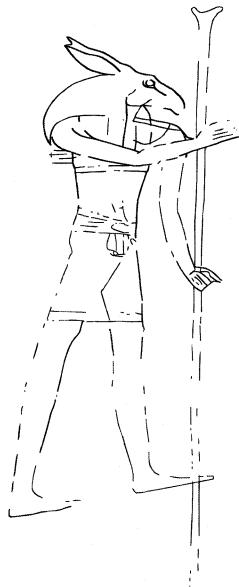


Fig. 24

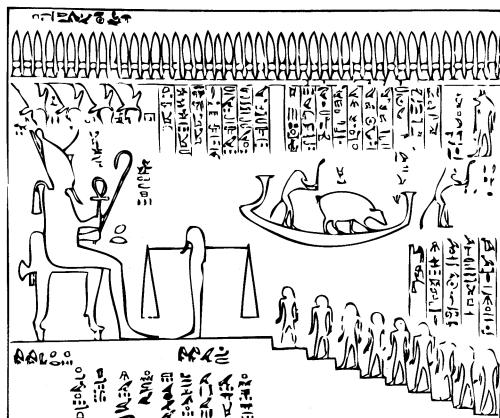


Fig. 23

the solar bark, he is holding a type of spear in which he is spearing into the great void in order to destroy chaos before it can hinder the progress of the solar bark. In addition we have a solitary figure holding a spear in Corridor C not in a solar bark, and another figure without a spear on the ceiling of the Burial Chamber. In all cases the figure has the head of an ass.⁹⁰ In sixteen of the cases the head of the ass has the ears going back (as shown in Figure 20). In three cases on the ceiling of Corridor C the ass has his ears split going one forward and one back (as shown in Figure 21). In all cases, except where damaged, the figure is identified as "Geb."

42) Valley of the Kings—KV9—Burial Chamber⁹¹ (Figure 22)

In a text which is part of the *Book of Day*, we find an interesting passage evoking "this thigh of Seth" (*mshtyw pw n Stb*). I have included it in this catalogue because the god's name is written using a variation of the Seth animal within the burial chamber of the king.

43) Valley of the Kings—KV9—Corridor B Left wall⁹² (Figure 23)

As part of the fifth division of the *Book of Gates* we have a scene where Osiris is enthroned on a dais with a scale and a row of figures on the stairs of the dais (called the enemies of Re). Facing away from the god is a bark on which we have a baboon holding a stick with a pig.⁹³ The pig is labeled: "Swallower."

44) Valley of the Kings—KV6—East Wall of Burial Chamber⁹⁴ (Figure 24)

In a scene that parallels the ceiling scenes from the tomb of Ramesses VI, we find on the rear wall of the burial chamber of Ramesses IX a portion of a solar bark with an ass-headed figure holding a spear at the prow. The figures in the solar bark are not labeled.

⁹⁰ Piankoff and Rambova, *Ramesses VI*, vol. I, 397, no. 24, identify the figures as having a hare head. For analysis of this misidentification see the discussion above.

⁹¹ Piankoff and Rambova, *Ramesses VI*, vol. I, 400, vol. II, pl. 191.

⁹² Piankoff and Rambova, *Ramesses VI*, vol. I, 171–73, figs. 45 and 154–55, vol. II, pls. 47–48.

⁹³ E. Hornung, *Das Buch von den Pforten des Jenseits* II (Geneva, 1980), 144, notes that the parallel scene in the tomb of Ramesses VII labels this as the solar bark.

⁹⁴ PM I.2, 505, 28, II.



Fig. 25



Photograph 10—Cat. No. 45—Block Isis Temple—Philae Island (photograph by author).

45) Block Isis Temple—Philae Island (Figure 25) (Photograph 10)

The unpublished sandstone block is currently (2007) located in a small blockyard of loose blocks on the east side of the main temple next to the small temple of Hathor. The block contains a unique scene showing a variation on the judgment of the dead scene common in the *Book of the Dead*. In this case we have Osiris on a throne with the crook and flail. In front of him are the gods Horus and Thoth escorting a bound ass-headed Seth with three knives in his head. There follows a baboon on top of a scale with the heart and Maat-figure in the scale's pans over a bound captive on a low platform. Then we have the demon Amit (crocodile, hippo, lion combination) on a higher platform. Finally there is the goddess Isis arms down in a sign of greeting.

46) Ostracon Deir el Bagawat (Figure 26) (Photograph 11)

The Coptic-Islamic Inspectorate in Kharga Oasis conducted a series of excavations at Late Period sites in Kharga Oasis. While excavating at Ain Zaf and Deir el Bagawat, both just northwest of the Coptic cemetery at Bagawat, they discovered a number of Coptic, Greek and Demotic Ostraca.⁹⁵ Several of the Demotic ostraca make reference to the cult of the god Seth. The ostraca probably date to the 1st-2nd century AD. A preliminary transliteration and translation of the text follows.

⁹⁵ Complete publication of these texts will be done in a future study.

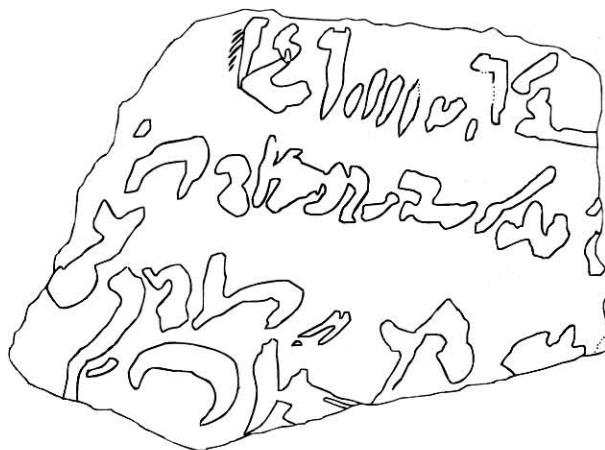


Fig. 26



Photograph 11—Cat. No. 46—Ostracon Deir el Bagawat (photograph by author).

[...] *rn p3 hm-ntr Stb*
 [...] *Hrs3-?Ist iw ir.w n.y 3*
 [...] ... *r 3½ ¼ n*
 [...] *ti sp ...*

name of the prophet of Seth
 Harsiese. It is for me one made (paid?) 3
 ... making $3\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{4}$ again
 give a remainder ...

That the cult of Seth was still active in the oases during the Roman period is well known as demonstrated by Kaper.⁹⁶ The writing of the name Seth in Demotic is standard Roman period orthography.

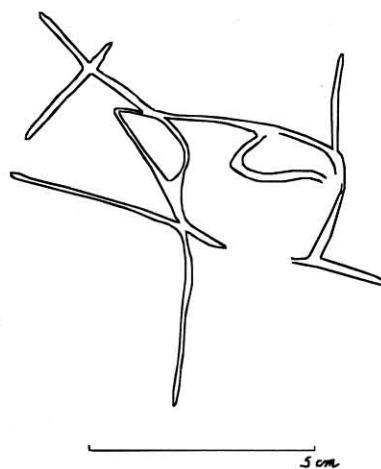


Fig. 27



Photograph 12—Cat. No. 47—Graffito Gebel Teir Field Number 143 (photograph by author).

47) Graffito Gebel Teir Field Number 143 (Figure 27) (Photograph 12)

The site of Gebel Teir is located about 2 km north of Bagawat in Kharga Oasis. It is a large quarry with several zones where numerous graffiti are found.⁹⁷ In 2005 I was shown an additional section of

⁹⁶ O. Kaper, *Temples and Gods in Roman Dakhleh*, passim.

⁹⁷ For the Greek and Demotic graffiti, see D. Devauchelle and G. Wagner, *Le graffites du Gebel Teir* (Cairo, 1984). For a re-edition of all of the Demotic graffiti, see E. Cruz-Uribe, *Hibis Temple Project Volume 2, The Demotic Graffiti from Gebel Teir* (San Antonio, 1995). These volumes deal with texts found in zones 1–4.

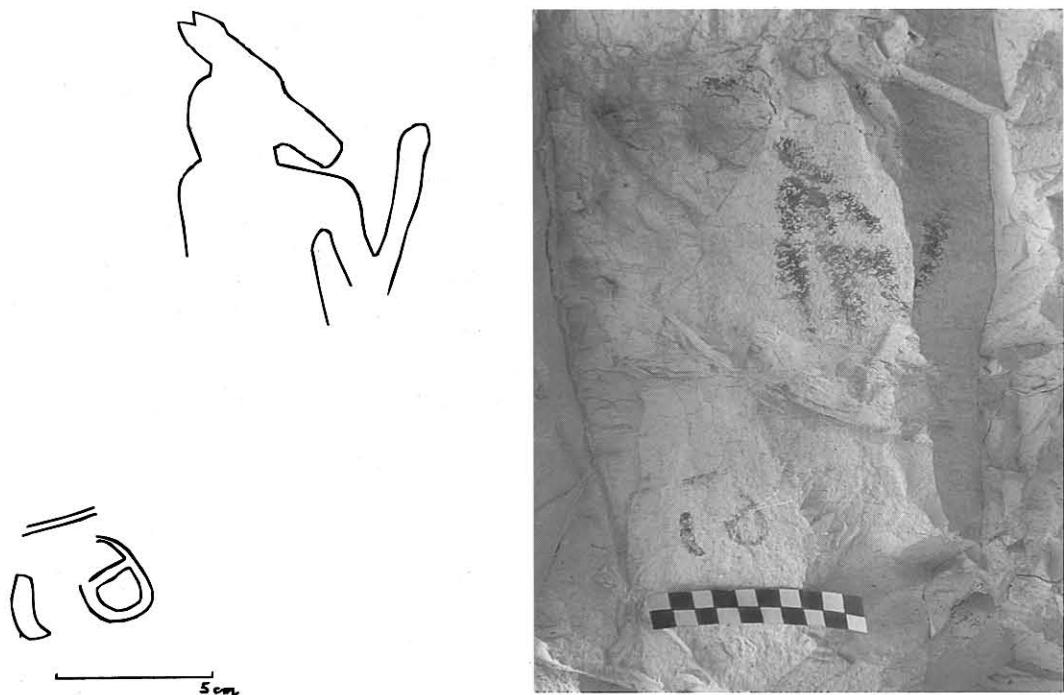


Fig. 28

Photograph 13—Cat. No. 48—Graffito Gebel Teir Zone 4 Field Number 79 (photograph by author).

the quarry now called Zone 5 where numerous Demotic and some Coptic graffiti are found. At the far end of the wadi I discovered this figure of a Seth animal on a standard. I tentatively date the graffiti to the Roman period, though there is no way to be certain of its date.

48) Graffito Gebel Teir Zone 4 Field Number 79⁹⁸ (Figure 28) (Photograph 13)

While examining the Coptic and Demotic graffiti in Zone 4 at the Gebel Teir quarry, we re-discovered the figure of the god Seth first published by Ahmed Fakhry. Since the time when Fakhry recorded the graffiti significant damage has been done, but we also found traces of the Coptic label of the figure. Fakhry shows a standing figure with a Seth animal head holding an ankh. What remains is the upper half of the figure, but below and to the left is the Coptic label **ce** “S<e>th.” This figure should be compared to the Seth figure in P. Leiden 384, verso 4.⁹⁹

49) Graffito Gebel Teir Zone 4 Field Number 61 (Figure 29) (Photograph 14)

Of all of the items presented in this catalogue, this is the one about which I have reservations. The surface next to the Coptic graffiti where it is found on the west wall of the cave at Zone 4 is heavily scratched. As can be seen on the photograph, there are numerous lines in and around the figure as drawn in the figure. What I see is a figure of a Seth-like animal inside a fire altar. I have seen numerous fire altars depicted on the gates at nearby Hibis temple.¹⁰⁰ I conjecture that the Seth-like figure

⁹⁸ A. Fakhry, *ASAE* 51 (1951), 413, no. 6, fig. 26.

⁹⁹ See G. Pinch, “Red things: the symbolism of colour in magic,” in W. Davies, ed., *Colour and Painting in Ancient Egypt* (London, 2001), 183.

¹⁰⁰ E. Cruz-Uribe, *Hibis Temple Project Volume 3, The Graffiti from the Temple Precinct* (San Antonio, 2008), 57–60.

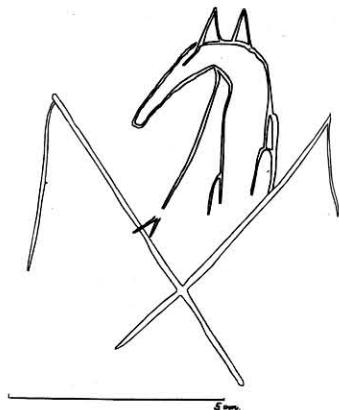


Fig. 29



Photograph 14—Cat. No. 49—Graffito Gebel Teir Zone 4 Field Number 61 (photograph by author).

was drawn and someone later added the “M” lines indicating a fire altar, almost as if making a sacrifice of the Seth deity.

50) Ain Turba fresco (Figure 30) (Photograph 15)

During the 1908–1909 MMA excavations at the site of Ain Turba (located between Hibis temple and the Bagawat cemetery), H. Winlock discovered a number of painted plaster sections of the houses being cleared. In one structure he found a painted scene of three mounted figures, each holding lances, over a dragon-like creature. The first figure was human headed, the second was Seth-headed, and the third had a falcon head. The area of Ain Turba was occupied up through the 4th century AD. Amongst the excavation records there was the following note (unsigned but probably by Winlock) discussing the scene¹⁰¹.

“A scene painted in red, yellow & black—which though extraordinarily crude presents a certain amount of interest. The scene consists of three mounted figures—all bearing lances in their hands and all mounted on horseback- ^ with spurs on their heels! ^ running beneath them is a long sinuous dragon that sprouts root-like feet at short intervals. The first rider, before whom the dragon curls upwards, is apparently in a shrine. He is clothed in a garment with two parallel black straps. His horse has trappings—a saddle cloth of a rough geometric design + ornamented, leather straps or chains are to be seen on the animal’s rump. Two crosses are to be seen on the hind legs—which suggest either branding or else, as is seen today—now usually on your donkeys, colored bands that round the legs. This figure alone would hardly be of any interest—he would probably have been dismissed as “Saint George” by one unused to early Christian Art or to those better acquainted—as a saint on horseback.—Particularly as nearby is the Necropolis of Bagawât—famous for its early Xian tombs.

In the next horseman we see no ordinary human, but Seth (crossed off and “Thoth” is inserted) so often identified with evil—but in this case he too bears a lance in his hands and assists in this undramatic slaying of the dragon. Upon his head hastily (crossed out: the typical long snout familiar to this deity)—are painted horns—& between the horns appears the real sun-disk. The upper part of the body is covered with crude feathers (crossed out: as it were scales) . His horse has decorated saddle but in his mouth is the bit—& a bridle of chain. The figure may be Seth -

¹⁰¹ Extracted from the field notes by H. Winlock from excavations at Ain Turba, Kharga Oasis, 1908–1911. From the excavation archive located in The Department of Medieval Art and The Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Used with permission. Figure 30 is based upon Winlock’s hand sketch of the scene.

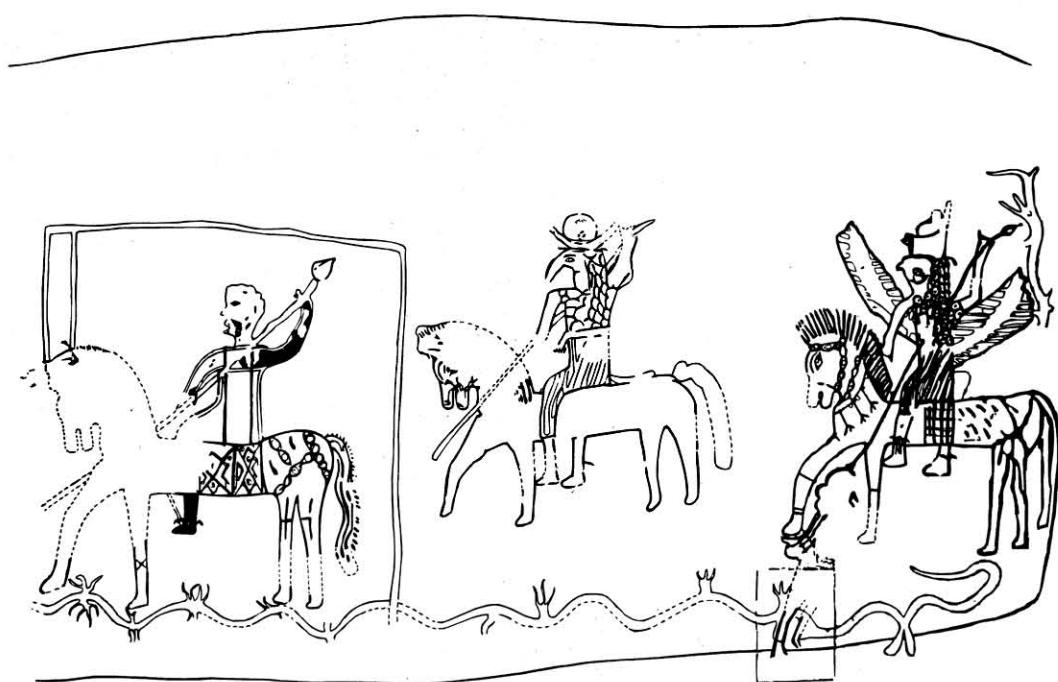


Fig. 30



Photograph 15—Cat. No. 50—Ain Turba fresco (photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Egyptian Expedition. Used with permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art).

The last rider—behind whom is the tail end of the dragon is of still other form. Here is Horus—with double crown of Egypt, hawk-headed with wings outspread- with human body & in his left hand the lance—the right in the position to hold the bridle- the horses head has trappings of chain or belted on around the neck a string decorated with tritwisted pendants. Running cross wise around the rump is another chain or decorated strap. There are signs of another figure by the head of the lance but unfortunately they cannot be made into anything very definite.

As soon as we take into consideration the proximity of the site to the temple of Hibis, it becomes practically certain that the second figure is also Seth—but identified with Horus- as is the case in one of the best pieces of relief in the whole temple—though in that instance he is not mounted on horseback, but he too kills the serpent with a lance while at his feet runs the {lion? hound?} (written above one another).

(Last section crossed out: We know that Seth was worshipped as a beneficent god in the oases—cite Kees . . .”

A recent inspection of the site of Ain Turba (2007) has revealed where the fresco was originally, but all of the painted plaster on the building has since disappeared. We thus must rely upon the drawing by Winlock and the single photograph of the scene found in the excavation records and reproduced here.¹⁰² He makes the parallel to the famous scene in Hypostyle N at Hibis temple (noted above) and we should make a further parallel to the paintings found at Deir el Haggar (Dakhla Oasis).¹⁰³ There we have a figure identified as one of the Dioskouroi, a human-headed figure on a horse, holding a lance with a star on his head. What we can determine is that there are three figures and they probably all represent the same deity. That deity is clearly Seth based upon his upraised arm spearing Apophis (here a dragon), as well as being human-, Seth-, and falcon-headed, all of which are common appearances of Seth. These three figures would be a unique version of Seth: riding on horseback. The last figure clearly is paralleled in the Hibis example with the raised arm, wings and double crown.¹⁰⁴

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¹⁰² A brief discussion of the MMA excavations can be found in the preliminary reports of the Egyptian Expedition published by A. Lythgoe in the *BMMA* 3, No. 5 (May, 1908), 83–86; *BMMA* 3, No. 11 (November, 1908), 203–8; and *BMMA* 4, No. 7 (July, 1909), 119–23.

¹⁰³ O. Kaper and K. Worp, “Dipinti on the temenos wall at Deir el-Haggar,” 246–47.

¹⁰⁴ See also the example in Ismant el-Kharab, O. Kaper, “A Group of Priestly Dipinti in Shrine IV at Ismant el-Kharab,” in C. Hope and G. Bowen, eds., *Dakhleh Oasis Project: Preliminary Reports on the 1994–1995 to 1998–1999 Fields seasons* (Oxford, 2002), 215.