

Schu. Shu represents the life-principle. He is one of the gods of the ennead (*Neunheit) of *Heliopolis. Apart from the data that are clearly influenced by the Heliopolitan theology i.e. *Pyramid-texts and Coffin-texts (*Sargtexte), Shu is not mentioned before and during the OK, and hardly even before the NK.¹

Because life was one of the main themes of Egyptian theology² of the NK and later, Shu became then more and more prominent and was connected with locally venerated gods (*Onuris, *Chons, *Horus, *Sopdu) and local cults.³ Shu and his sister and spouse *Tefnut are the twin-children of *Atum and constitute the first divine pair differentiated in male and female. As the first exclusive male god and oldest son Shu may be given aggressive and bellicose traits just like Onuris and be connected with the pharaoh.⁴ The mythologoumenon of the originating of Shu and Tefnut is crucial for the understanding of the place of Shu in Egyptian theology and religion. Already in the Pyramid-texts diverse details and variants are given. The variant with sexual details is not necessarily very primitive or coarsely sensual, but gives an answer to the problem how two children could come forth from Atum. What is sometimes referred to as onanism of Atum indicates the self-impregnation of the yet undifferentiated bisexual creator-god in the mouth. The vital seed from the phallus of Atum does not remain enclosed in his mouth but is spat out or snuffed forth.⁵ The important point is that to spit and to snuff are signs of life. The famous Shu-texts⁶ in the Coffin-texts have made this meaning later explicit in Atum's words about Shu as the life-principle: "It is my son, Life, that lifts up my heart; he causes

my heart to live."⁷ Atum's becoming conscious or coming to life causes him to open his eyes i.e. to shine as sun and moon. His eye is sent forth to seek for Shu and Tefnut⁸ i.e. the beginning of purposeful and conscious creative action and the appearance of light. Thus the originating of Shu means the originating of life which manifests itself in wind or air, light and water.⁹

As god of life Shu has the power of "opening the portals of the womb".¹⁰ Yet Shu is not merely assistent at the birth, he is also creator of life. "He brings to life who is in the egg."¹¹ At the birth of the sun in the end of *Amduat Shu is called "who separates the sky from the earth in the primeval darkness and whose arms are those that seal the Dat (anew)"¹². The powerful arms of Shu, which as is known from many texts and representations,¹³ usually support the goddess *Nut or the sky, are sunrays¹⁴ of the god who reveals himself in light. But this god standing between heaven and earth can also be said to be a column of air. The word *šw* determined with the hieroglyph sun or ray-emitting sun that is found since the MK is best translated as "light" and not so much as "sun" as usually was done in older translations. There is no convincing reason to distinguish between an older air-god and a younger sun-god Shu.¹⁵ The capacity of hearing¹⁶ sound and language and even attentiveness¹⁷ are other signs of life that are connected with Shu. A later development of the in origin Heliopolitan myth, since the NK and elaborated in Graeco-Roman times, is that Shu brings Tefnut the first female being i.e. the sun-eye (*Sonnenaue, *Arens-nuphis, Onuris) back to Egypt.

Although the etymological explanation of divine names can rarely be proved, but usually only rendered probable, the explanation of the name of Shu given by Derchain¹⁸ as "who rises up" seems more acceptable than earlier explanations¹⁹ given as "emptiness" or "dryness". Shu is indeed the god who rises up because he is the god who began life and who maintains it by supporting the heaven.

¹ Barbara L. Begelsbacher-Fischer, *Untersuchungen zur Götterwelt des Alten Reiches*, OBO 37, Fribourg 1981, 268; Joachim Spiegel, *Die Götter von Abydos*, GOF IV. 1, 1973, 102f. — ² Jan Assmann, *Re und Amun*, OBO 51, Fribourg 1983, 246ff. et passim. — ³ Cf. the survey given by Roeder, in: Roscher, *Lex. Myth.*, 565–578 (s. v. Schow). See also Vandier, in: MDAIK 15, 1957, 268–275. Much material on Shu in Kom Ombo in: Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo I–II*, BdE 47, 1973. — ⁴ See inter alia: G. Goyon, in: *Kémi* 6, 1936, 1–42, and in general RÄRG, 686f. — ⁵ Pyr. 1652. 1871 and often. — ⁶ CT Spells 75–80, cf. Adriaan de Buck, *Plaats en Betekenis van Sjoe in de Egyptische Theologie*, Mededeelingen der Konink-

lijke Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, N.R. 10.9, Amsterdam 1947, 215–249; Faulkner, in: JEOL 18, 1965, 266–271; Zandee, in: ZÄS 97, 1971, 155–162; 98, 1972, 149–155; 99, 1973, 48–63; 100, 1974, 60–72. 141–149; 101, 1974, 62–80. – ⁷ CT II, 34j–35 a. – ⁸ CT II, 5b; IV, 174f–i. – ⁹ Shu brings the life-giving floodwater: Pyr. 1039. – ¹⁰ Esna, no. 366, 2, cf. Dieter Kurth, Den Himmel stützen, Brussels 1975, 87. – ¹¹ CT II, 33. – ¹² Erik Hornung, Amduat II, 188. – ¹³ Erik Hornung, Der ägyptische Mythos von der Himmelskuh, OBO 46, 1982; te Velde, in: StudAeg 3, 1977, 161–170. – ¹⁴ Sunrays are Shu-forms of Re (*šuw R*): CT VII, 231j, cf. Brigitte Altenmüller, Synkretismus, 211. – ¹⁵ See the recent discussion of Shu and also of his iconography by van de Walle, in: CdE 55, no. 109, 1980, 23–26. – ¹⁶ When a certain oil is applied to the mummy, the “Ritual of Embalment” prescribes to be said: “It gives your ears to hear what you will, as Shu hears what he will in Heliopolis.” Cf. Goyon, Rituels funéraires, 57. See for earlier texts: Derchain, in: RdE 27, 1975, 114f. – ¹⁷ Medinet Habu, 79, 8; 80, 7; cf. Grapow, Bildl. Ausdrücke, 182. 185. – ¹⁸ Derchain, in: RdE 27, 1975, 110–116; 30, 1978, 57. Westendorf, Darstellungen des Sonnenlaufs, 14. 26–27 Anm. 17. 20. – ¹⁹ Fecht, in: ZÄS 85, 1960, 91–118; Winfried Barta, Untersuchungen zum Götterkreis der Neunheit, MÄS 28, 1973, 85–89. Still Jürgen Osing, Nominalbildung des Ägyptischen, Mainz 1976, 45. 47 derives the name of the god from *šwj* “leer sein” and not from *šwj* “sich erheben”.

Lit.: Roeder, in: Roscher, Lex. Myth., 565–578; RÄRG, 686f.; de Buck, Plaats en Betekenis van Sjoe (v. n. 6); Derchain, in: RdE 27, 1975, 110–116; 30, 1978, 57; te Velde, in: JEOL 27, 1983, 23–28 and (especially for the iconography) Van de Walle, in: CdE 55, no. 109, 1980, 23–26.
H. te V.