

**Seth.** The name of the god Seth (*stš*, *ztš*, *sth*, *zth*, *swth*, *sth*, *swti*) was probably pronounced Suta and especially in Lower Egypt Sutekh. As in the first mill. B.C. the *ū* evolved to *ē* the Greek rendering of the name became Set or Seth. The meaning of the name is unknown. The Egyptian explanations of the name: 'instigator of confusion', 'deserter' or 'drunkard' connected with the words *tš* and *th* are pseudo-etymologies. The name was often written with the hieroglyph of the so-called Seth-animal as an ideogram or as a determinative. Although many attempts have been made to determine the

zoological identity of the S.-animal, it seems to be a fabulous animal (\*Fabeltiere) supposed to live in the desert just like the griffin (\*Greif). In the system of writing the S.-animal served as a determinative for some 25 words denoting disturbances and confusion in cosmic, social and personal life such as storm, tumult, illness. Obviously S. represented a reality that was not according to order (*m³t*). The earliest representation of the S.-animal is on the mace-head of King Scorpion (dyn. I), if not on pots and combs from Negada I or II.

Already in the Pyr. and later texts S. has an important and outstanding role as the enemy and friend of Horus (\*Horus und Seth) and as the murderer of \*Osiris. As such he is the god of confusion who disturbs the order. But as limited disorder was accepted as essential to a living order, S. was accepted and venerated as a god with whom one had to come to terms. Since the CT and later texts S. is also famous in a third and more positive role as repelling \*Apophis. He is imagined in texts and depictions as standing on the prow of the barque of the sungod (\*Sonnenbarke) and conquering Apophis by word or deed. In the myth of \*Re S. is, however, not totally different from the Seth in the myth of Osiris/Horus: In many primitive cultures the figure of the "trickster" – as this Egyptian god of confusion may be called – is also slayer-of-the-monster. In a land where the ideal gentleman is the truly modest or silent man (*gr m³ʔ*), characterized by self-control, S. is the one who raises the voice (*šd hrw*) who causes commotion. In a land that is irrigated by the Nile and where thunderstorms are of course a rather confusing and superfluous phenomenon in contrast with other near-eastern countries, S. rather braggingly reveals himself in the fight with Apophis with the words 'I am S., the originator of confusion (*šd hnmw*), who thunders in the horizon of heaven' (Tb 39). S. was considered to have great physical strength who could easily kill a god with his scepter. A standing epitheton of S. is 'great of strength' (*š phtj*).

In the course of history, already indicated in the OK, but especially in ramesidic times S. proves to be lord of foreign countries. The god of the Lybians \*Asch, the god of the western Semites \*Baal, the god of the Hittites Teshub were recognised as forms of S., whereas identification of Seth with other Egyptian gods are rare, although he had his traditional place in the Ennead (\*Neunheit) of \*Heliopolis. As it is apparent from the disorders between Horus and Seth with sometimes drastic pederastic details (\*Homosexualität), S. is not considered as a typical sedate family god. His marriage with \*Nephtys does not include a divine child and remains a rather formal affair. It

is at least doubtful whether S. was ever held to be the father of \*Anubis, the child of Nephtys. Incidentally S. whose exuberant sexual activities are so well-known that he may be invoked in love charms and whose testicles are a religious symbol as a pendant of the eye of Horus, is connected with other goddesses: \*Hathor, \*Neith and especially the foreign goddesses \*Anat and \*Astarte.

S. may be represented in animal form as the sitting, standing or lying S.-animal, but also in human form, often with the head of the S.-animal. He may wear a crown, mostly the double crown, because he is together with Horus lord of the two lands. The bipartition of the world between these two lords could be imagined in such a fashion during the NK that Horus was not just lord of Lower Egypt but lord of the home country and S. not just lord of Upper Egypt but lord of foreign countries and the desert. As such he may easily be represented as a foreigner in exotic costume, as a Baal, wearing not an Egyptian crown, but a conical tiara with horns and sun.

Places in Egypt with a special cult of S. lay on the border of the desert and where caravan routes began. Main cult centers of S. were inter alia \*Ombos (5th U.E.nome) \*Seper-meru (19th U.E.nome), the \*oases in the western desert, and \*Auaris and Piramesse (\*Ramsesstadt) in the northeastern delta. But the frontier god and rather disorderly foreigner became a god of state and court when pharaohs of the 19th and 20th dyn. had their residence in Piramesse in the northeastern delta. Even pharaohs took their name from him: \*Sethos and \*Sethnacht.

The special reputation of S. in mythology and his reputedly disorderly character have not prevented at least some Egyptians to accept him unrestrictedly as their god. It is interesting that personal names show that some did not hesitate to ascribe the same qualities to S. that others assigned to other gods: 'Seth-is-great'; 'Seth-is-gracious'; 'Seth-is-kind'; 'Seth-is-content'; 'Seth-gives-salvation'; 'Seth-causes-to live', etc.

It seems that no temples for S. were built or restored after the 20th dyn. His name, which appeared so often in the personal names of the 19th and 20th dyn., disappears practically from the ensuing period. Texts and images referring to S. are scarce after the 20th dyn. compared with the time before. Hatred against foreigners combined with the growing importance of the cult of Osiris leads in the first mill. B.C. to a growing disinterest and even persecution of S. as enemy of the gods.

The turning-point from veneration to demonisation must be dated in the 25th dyn.

*Lit.*: Details with reference to texts, iconographic material and older literature in: Herman te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, Leiden 1967. In the preface of the second edition of 1977 the more recent articles are listed, especially Bianchi in: *RHR* 129, 1971, 113–135; Hornung in: *Symbolon* 2, 1975, 49–63; Vandier in: *MDAIK* 25, 1969, 188–197; te Velde in: *JARCE* 7, 1968, 37–40; Yoyotte in: *Ann. EPHE*, 5e sect. 77, 1969–70, 177–193. See now also Manfred Bietak, *Avaris and Piramesse*, Oxford 1979; Donadoni in: *MDAIK* 37, 1981, 115–123; Ramadan El-Sayed in: *Suppl. BIFAO* 81, 1981, 119–140. On the proscription of Seth: Soukiasian in: *GM* 44, 1981, 59–68. On the Egyptian and biblical Seth: Onasch, in: *AfP* 27, 1980, 99–119.

H. te V.