

# Lexikon der Ägyptologie

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**Wepset**, one of the many names of the fire-spitting \*uraeus and of the goddess in the myth of the Eye of \*Re who returned from Nubia (\*Augensagen, \*Sonnenauge). Her name "She who burns" is probably derived from a verb *wps* "to burn" attested since the NK.<sup>1</sup> An alternative explanation proposed by Sethe, who analysed *wps(t)* as *wp.t* "brow" + the nominal affix *-s*<sup>2</sup> is unlikely, not only because Sethe wrongly denied the existence of a verb *wps*,<sup>3</sup> but also since the earliest attestations of the goddess already write her name with the fire-determinative (Gardiner, EG<sup>3</sup>, Sign-list, Q 7).<sup>4</sup>

W. is usually depicted as a uraeus<sup>5</sup> but in the Graeco-Roman temples of Lower Nubia she appears as an anthropomorphic goddess wearing a uraeus on top of her head,<sup>6</sup> in which case she does not wear the vulture-cap (\*Geierhaube).<sup>7</sup> Occasionally the uraeus is supplied with \*Hathor or \*Tefnut symbols such as a sundisc between cow's horns<sup>8</sup> or a lion's head.<sup>9</sup>

Already in CT Spell 75 W. is associated with the mythical complex of the Eye of Re: Shu (\*Schu) is said to have calmed (the Ba of) W. "who is in the midst of her rage" and to have "made her to travel," sc. from Nubia back to Egypt.<sup>10</sup> In the NK Guides to the Hereafter (\*Jenseitsführer) she prepares the way for the resurrection of Re-\*Osiris by destroying his enemies. Thus in the \*Amduat she is one of a group of 12 apotropaic uraei (\*Götter, apotropäische) "who illumine the darkness of the Netherworld",<sup>11</sup> whereas in the Book of Caverns (\*Höhlenbuch) W. and her consort *Nsrt* "kindle the fire under the cauldrons which contain the enemies of Osiris" and "their fire opens up the Netherworld".<sup>12</sup> As a goddess who annihilates the enemies of Osiris and Re she appears also in a hymn to Osiris in the Memphite tomb of \*Haremheb<sup>13</sup> and in LP ritual texts.<sup>14</sup>

In \*Philae and other Graeco-Roman temples of Lower Nubia W. appears both as a deity on her own and as a "determinative-goddess"<sup>15</sup> of Tefnut and related goddesses.<sup>16</sup> Her most frequent epithet is "Mistress of the Flame in \*Bigga" (*nbt nbj m Snmt*). Owing to the ruinous state of the temple structures of Bigga no traces of her cult have been found on the island itself, but texts from other temples, notably Philae, make it clear that this was the place where Tefnut settled in the

form of W.<sup>17</sup> after Shu and \*Thot had brought her back from Nubia. At Bigga W. “purified her body”, i.e., cooled her rage;<sup>18</sup> here she was pacified (\*Besänftigung) by Thot, who is called *shṭp nsrt* and who receives a scribe’s palette in her presence.<sup>19</sup> Here too she dwells in the Chapel of the Flame (*Hwt-Nbj*) surrounded with flames (*nbj m phr.s*<sup>20</sup>) and burns the enemies of god and king with the blast of fire from her mouth.<sup>21</sup> In the Mammisi (\*Geburtshaus) of Philae W. appears as a hypostatization of the apotropaic aspect of the mother-goddess Hathor<sup>22</sup> while she herself is never called “mother of the god”. That she was nevertheless an active force in the (re)birth of the child-god is documented by texts in the temple of \*Kom Ombo. Here she is associated with the local form of Tefnut, Tasentnefret (\*Sent-nofret) and with \*Nechbet.<sup>23</sup> The latter is called “Ba of W.” who “flies up to the sky as incense”<sup>24</sup> to join the Ba of Dewen’awy (\*Dunanui) representing Shu, and as Gutbub has shown the unification of air and incense symbolizes the theogamy of Shu and Tefnut resulting in the birth of the child-god.<sup>25</sup> A similar concept may have existed at Philae<sup>26</sup> and the Chapel of the Flame of W. may be compared with the Island of Fire (\*Flammeninsel) of Egyptian funerary literature which is both the place where Re is engendered and the place where his enemies are destroyed.<sup>27</sup> The parallelism between the annual return of the Eye of Re from Nubia and the daily return of the Sungod (\*Sonnengott) from the Netherworld is likewise found in earlier religious texts and indeed forms the background of the passage from CT Spell 75 quoted above.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wb I, 305,8. – <sup>2</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Zur altägyptischen Sage vom Sonnenauge das in der Fremde war*, UGAÄ 5,3, 1912, 13–14. – <sup>3</sup> Cf. Junker, *Onurislegende*, 82. – <sup>4</sup> CT I, 378/9b. 382/3a; Hornung, *Amduat I*, 15. See also Osing, *Nominalbildung*, 872 n.1415. It seems rather unlikely that a group consisting of the *wṗ*-sign (Gardiner, EG<sup>3</sup>, Sign-list, F 13) and the throne-sign (Q 1) found on certain archaic vases should be interpreted as (a personal name containing) the name of the goddess W., cf. F.Ll.Griffith, in: Petrie, RT I, 38, pl.4,5; II, 49, pl.25,2; Kaplony, *Inscriben* I, 465; III, pl.149 (no.859); Dieter Jankuhn, *Das Buch “Schutz des Hauses”*, Bonn 1972, 115. In any case W. does not appear in later theophorous names. – <sup>5</sup> E.g., Bucher, *Tombes de Thoutmosis III et d’Aménophis II*, pls.2. 14. 27; Piankoff, *Rameses VI*, pl.117. – <sup>6</sup> E.g., Junker, *Philae I*, 228, fig.132; Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 54. 158. 176 etc.; Dakke II, pls.51. 63. 74 etc. – <sup>7</sup> Cf. Maria-Theresia Derchain-Urtel, *Synkretismus in ägyptischer Ikonographie*, GOF IV. 8, 1979, 50–51. – <sup>8</sup> Dakke II, pl.100; Debd bis Bab Kalabsche II, pl.33; LD IV, 74b (Philae). – <sup>9</sup> Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 216; cf. Junker, *Onurislegende*, 85. – <sup>10</sup> See n.4 and Kees, *Totenglauben*, 192; Zandee, in: ZÄS 99, 1973, 52. – <sup>11</sup> Hornung, *Amduat I*, 15; II, 29. – <sup>12</sup> Piankoff, in: BIFAO 43, 1945,

pls.97–98. 100; cf. Erik Hornung, *Ägyptische Unterweltsbücher*, Zürich–München 1972, 392–393; id., *Altägyptische Höllenvorstellungen*, ASAW 59. 3, 1968, 24–27. S. also the Book of the Earth (\*Erde, Buch von der), where W. and *Nsrt* guard the place of execution when Re passes: Alexandre Piankoff, *La Création du disque solaire*, BdE 19, 1953, 26; Hornung, *Unterweltsbücher*, 445–446. – <sup>13</sup> Jacobus van Dijk, in: Geoffrey T. Martin, *The Memphite Tomb of Horemheb I* (forthcoming). – <sup>14</sup> pBremner-Rhind 24,11; 25,5,9; 31,20, cf. Faulkner, in: JEA 23, 1937, 169–170; 24, 1938, 45; J.-Cl. Goyon, *Textes Mythologiques II*, 216, 8–9 = BIFAO 75, 1975, 381; Edfou I, 490. – <sup>15</sup> Kurth, in: SAK 5, 1977, 175–181. – <sup>16</sup> Hathor: Junker, *Onurislegende*, 110–111; \*Sachmet: *ibid.*, 82 (Philae Phot. 329); \*Repit: *ibid.*, 86–89; \*Mut: Hermann Junker, *Der Auszug der Hathor-Tefnut aus Nubien*, APAW 1911. 3, 34. – <sup>17</sup> Junker, *Philae I*, 196–197, 1–8; Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 44–45, 16–23; Dakke I, 331–332; cf. Junker, *Auszug*, 30–32. – <sup>18</sup> Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 44–45, 20; cf. Junker, *Onurislegende*, 126–128. – <sup>19</sup> E.g., Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 176; Dakke II, pl.54. Cf. Junker, *Onurislegende*, 93; Emma Brunner-Traut, in: Gs Otto, 137; Maria-Theresia Derchain-Urtel, *Thot, Rites égyptiens 3*, Brussels 1981, 1–26. 62–63. 134–135. – <sup>20</sup> Junker, *Onurislegende*, 84 (Philae Phot. 465). – <sup>21</sup> E.g., Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 216–217, 11–16; 320–321, 14–17; Dakke I, 153. There may be a connection between this aspect of W. and the human sacrifices that seem to have been practised at Bigga for Pharaoh-of-Bigga (\*Bigga, \*Menschenopfer), cf. H. Junker, in: ZÄS 48, 1910, 70; Griffiths, in: ASAE 48, 1948, 409–423; Yoyotte, in: EPHE 89, 1980–1981, 31–102. W. is sometimes shown as consort of Pharaoh-of-Bigga, e.g. LD IV, 74b; Dakke II, pl.74. – <sup>22</sup> Cf. Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 44 (Hathor-Wepset with child-god) and *ibid.*, 320. 398 (Hathor with child-god protected by W.). W. is also mentioned in the Birthhouse of Edfu (Chassinat, *Mammisi d’Edfou*, 175,6 = Edfou VI, 150,11), with reference to her own primaeval birth from Atum. – <sup>23</sup> Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo*, BdE 47.1, 1973, 191–193. 230–231. – <sup>24</sup> Gutbub, o.c., 387. – <sup>25</sup> O.c., 299–300. 347–348. 392. See also De Morgan, *Cat. des Mon. II*, 146 where the king is said to have been “begotten by Shu and born by W. the Great”. – <sup>26</sup> Cf. the allusion to the theogamy of Shu and Hathor-Wepset at Bigga, Junker–Winter, *Philae II*, 44–45, 22: *šw hn̄.s hr qm̄s nfrw.s* (cf. in Kom Ombo De Morgan, *Cat. des Mon. III*, 31: *Tfnt ... Wpst urt hn̄.s sn.s*). – <sup>27</sup> Cf. van Dijk, in: JEOL 26, 1979–1980, 12–14. It should be noted that *hwt-nbj* may not only be translated as “Chapel of the Flame” but also as “Chapel of the Creation”, cf. Gutbub, o.c., 14. – <sup>28</sup> See nn.4 and 10; cf. already Pyr. 698 d: “I am that Eye of Re which is conceived by night and born every day”. The parallelism is also evident from the hymns in the Berlin Ritual of Mut, see J. van Dijk, in: K.R. Veenhof (ed.), *Sprekend Verleden*, MVEOL 24, 1983, 233–246. *Lit.*: Junker, *Onurislegende*, 82–94. 110–111; Adolphe Gutbub, *Textes fondamentaux de la théologie de Kom Ombo*, BdE 47.2, 1973, 31 s.v. Oupset (but add: pp. 347–348). J.v.D.