



A Study About Sed

By

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Religion is one of the effects of the political history in ancient Egypt and there had been no other power in the life of ancient man whose impact affected his activity as did the religion, so kingship was connected to religion, and as kingship in ancient Egypt was a divine one, the festivals held in honour of the gods had a great importance in the life of ancient Egyptians.

The Sed festival ⁽¹⁾ is one of these ancient Egyptian festivals, which kings of Egypt celebrated to renovate their kingship. In spite of the reputation of this festival, its origin is still obscure, and this led some researchers such as Murray ⁽²⁾ and Frankfort ⁽³⁾ to assume that the Sed festival was named after the god Sed ⁽⁴⁾ recorded in the Palermo stone, where the major events of fourteen years of unknowing king of the First Dynasty were mentioned, and probably he is the king Den (Udymu) ⁽⁵⁾ as the third annual register mentions festivals called "The appearance of the

(1) Martin, K., "Sed Fest", L.A., V, 782-790.

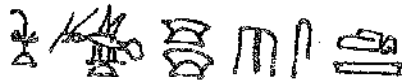
(2) Murray, M., The Osireion at Abydos, BSAE 9, 1903, P. 33.

(3) Frankfort, H., Kingship and the Gods, Chicago, 1948, P. 79 n.1. Neither Murray nor Frankfort offered an archeological evidence on this hypothesis.

(4) Brawarski, E. "Sed", L.A., V, 779 ff.

(5) Newberry, P.E. and Wainwright, G.A., "King Udymu (Den) and the Palermo stone", AE 1914, P. 148.

king of Upper and Lower Egypt and the celebration of Sed festival"




ḥcwy nsw-bꜣty, ḥb - Sd (1),

While the eleventh annual register defines a festival called

"The birth of Sed" (2)



mswt Sd.

The eleventh annual register shows that a statue was made for the birth of the god Sed (3) who was represented as it appears from his carving on the Palermo stone - either as walf or as a wild dog (4) standing on a stand with a projection in the shape  on its front known as šdšd



(6) as it is surmounted with the ostrich

feather, symbol of the goddess Maat and there is a sceptre crossed with the pole of the stand (7).

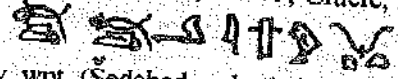
(1) Petrie, W.M.F, The Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty, I, EEF, 18 1900, Pl. XI, 5, 14.

(2) Ibid., Pl. XXXII, 39.

(3) The Term "birth of the god" means the belief that these statues enjoyed life after the festival of "opening the mouth"; see: Gardiner, A.H, Egypt of the Pharaohs, Oxford, 1964, P. 450.

(4) Murray, M., Op. Cit., P. 33.

(5) Browarski, E., Op. Cit., P. 779; Craefe, E., "Upuaut" LA, VI, 863.

(6)  šdšd žny wpt (Šedshed who is in front), see: Sethe, K., (in) Garstrang, J., Mahasna and Bet Khalhf, London, 1903, P. 19.

On the base of this sacred banner with shedshed a phrase says: "The king ascended to the heaven on his death and united with the solar-disk". See:

Sethe, K., Dramatische Texte in alt ägyptischen-Mysterienspiele, Nachdt. d. Ausg. 1928, UGAA, 10, 1964, P. 31;

Wilson, J., "The story of Si-Nuhe", ANET, P. 18.

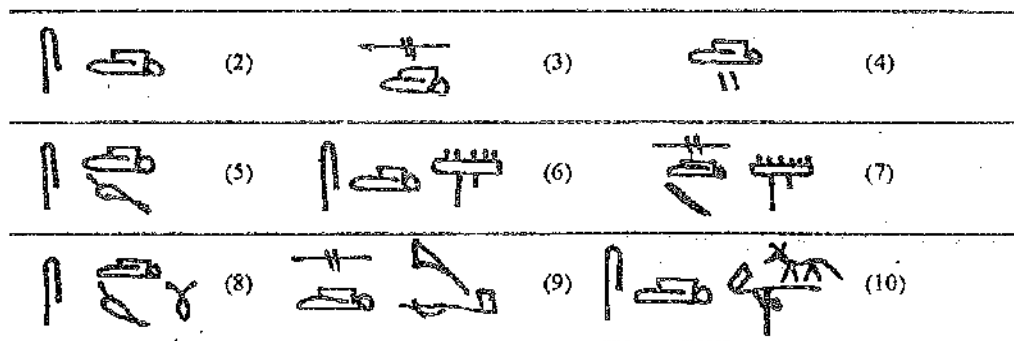
For Further information about šdšd see:

Helck, w., "Das Horusgeleit" Ar. Or. 18, 1950, P. 130

(7) The existence of the feather was connected with the goddess Maat as an aspect of order, stability and of the crisis represented with the death of a king and appointing another on the throne instead of him to delight the two lands because

At Abydos a royal seal belonging to the king (Ger) of the First Dynasty was found, representing him wearing the dress of Sed festival and sitting once with the white crown of Upper Egypt above his head and once more with the red crown of Lower Egypt accompanied by the same sacred banner (1).

The oldest document that reached us with the mention of Sed festival and the name of Sed is that of the palermo stone-previously mentioned-and here some forms of writing Sed in the ancient Egyptian inscription. Sd :



of his maintenance with Maat who besides her being as a regular aspect valid for all the times means also justice for all, see: Helck, W., *Maat*, LÄ, III, 1110-1119.

- (1) Petrie, W.M.F., *The Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty*, II, EEF, 21, 1901, P. 30, PL. XV; Frankfort, H., *Op.Cit.*, P. 87.
 (2) Hassan, S., *Excavations at Giza*, Vol. III, Cairo 1941, P. 110; Wb IV, 363.
 (3) Wb IV, 365.
 (4) PNI, 323, 14.
 (5) Spiegelberg, W., "Der Name des ägyptischen Regierungsjubilaeums", *OLZ*, 4, 1901, S. 10; Wb IV, 363 F.
 (6) Wb IV, 365.
 (7) Wb IV, 265.
 (8) Wb IV, 365.
 (9) Wb IV, 365.
 (10) Mariette, A., *Les Mastabs de l'Ancien Empire*. Fragment du dernier ouvrage d'A. Mariette, publié d'après le manuscrit de l'auteur par G. Maspero-Paris 1889, P. 229 (D 19); Petrie, W.M.F., *The Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty*, I, London, 1900, PL. XXXII, 39; Murray, M., *Saqqara Mastabas*, I, BSAE, 10, 1905, Pl. 7; Wb IV, 365.

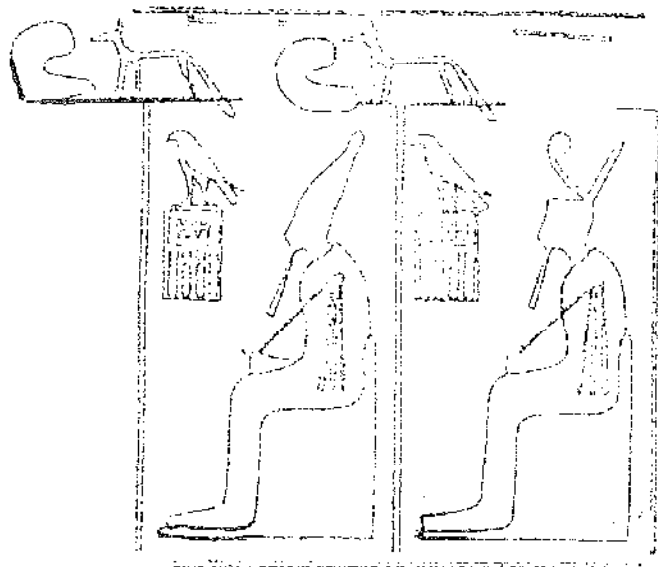


Figure I

A Seal Belonging to the King Ger

Source: Petrie, W.M.F., *The Royal Tombs of the First Dynasty*, II, Pl. XV, 108.

The study of the existence of the god Sed depends on evidences such as:

First, The ancient Egyptians domesticated dogs ⁽¹⁾ from a very remote period, perhaps for their use in hunting and guarding. Several kinds whose origins cannot be determined so clearly from the pictures were chosen as sacred symbols in different places. The kind commonly and widely appeared in these pictures was that called Upuaut (opener of the road) the god of Asuit ⁽²⁾, and his name indicates his nature in finding and wandering about, and perhaps this name was only an epithet, while his real name which appeared from an early period was Sed ⁽³⁾.

(1) About the dogs in Ancient Egypt see:
Fischer. H.G., "Hunde" LA, III, PP. 77-81.

(2) There appeared two of the Upuaut resembling very much Anubis, but they differed in one thing only, that is Anubis is represented as a crouching animal and was called "That lies on its belly" while the Upuaut was represented wandering on its legs. Perhaps there was another difference between them, as the Greeks, who get acquainted with the Egyptian at that time, divide what we call jackal into two kind: The first is Anubis and they make knowledge of him as a dog while the other Upuaut as a wolf.

The two gods Upuaut played an important part in the myth of Osir as they were "The openers of the roads" Osir's fellows in his struggle, preceded him in the battle field, and so sometimes we find those two gods represented with a suppression toad and a bow and among their titles "Those armed with arrows .. victori ... the porserful and mighty above all the gods and who over comed Egypt in the battle of decisive victory". So it was common that the king - in ancient times - was preceded with a man carrying a standard represents the god Upuaut, for whom he opens the road among the enemies.

See:

Adoel Aroman: "Religion of Ancient Egypt, Translated and revised by Abdel Moneim Abu-Bakr, Mohamad Anwar Shaukri, Cairo, 1952, PP. 52 - 53.

For the god Upuaut see:

Graefe. E., Op.Cit., 862 - 864.

For the god Anubis see:

Ahenmuller B., "Anubis", LA, I, 327 - 333.

⁽³⁾ Frankfort, H., Op.Cit., P. 79, n.I.

As Upuaut counterbalanced for the Ancient Egyptians the firstborn of the dead king, he inherited the throne of his dead father (1).

The god Upuaut was a sacred form of the king in his aspect as firstborn, and we can deduce that from a text belongs to Shapaka of the 25th Dynasty, Geb says about Hor that he is "... The heir, my son, walf of Upper Egypt, opener of the body, Upuaut" and adds too" ... This is a son born in the festival of Upuaut birth" (2) .

Also among the inscriptions in the tomb of ntr kht of the Third Dynasty at Bet Kallaf (fig. 2) what shows the god Upuaut on his stand (3) just as that represented for the god Sed on Palermo stone.

Secondly: It is known that each god had his own priests who served him-and that Sed was a god - in spite of the lack

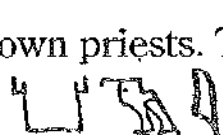
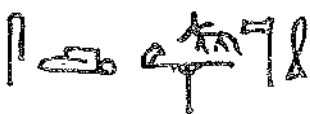
(1) Patric, W.M.F., Op.Cit., Pl. XV, 108; Frankfort, H., Op.Cit., P.P. 87, 92 F.
In the Pyramid texts (passages 463, 1090) is indicated that it is Upuaut who open the road for the dead king on his ascending to the heaven (as what he did for the living pharaoh "Hor) see.


Faulkner, R.O., The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Text-Translation, Oxford, 1969, P.P. 7, 157, 160, 197.

(2) Frankfort, H. Op.Cit., P. 92; Lichthcim, M., Ancient Egyptian literature, Vol. I, London, 1973, P. 53.

(3) Garstang, J. Op.Cit., PL. VIII, I.

of the traces of his cult - places - for whom prayers and offerings were made.

There is evidence from archaeological inscriptions found in tombs of certain individuals, to support that he had his own priests. The first tomb belongs to a certain "kay"  in which he mentions that he is ⁽¹⁾ "A priest of the god Ssed"  hm-ntr sd.

Another evidence is a tomb of a certain "Sekhemka"  Shm k3 which that its owner had the title ⁽²⁾ "priest of the god Sed".

 hm ntr Sd.

Salim Hassan discovered a tomb at Gizeh, in which the reading can be made of the title [...] ns represented as a walf on a sacred stand as "priest of the god Upuaut ⁽³⁾. And as there were no priests known of the god Upuaut, this is certainly another example of the title "priest of the god Sed" ⁽⁴⁾. It appears clearly in the title "priest of the god Sed" that the determinative of the god Sed is the same as that of the god on Palermo stone, the seal of king Ger (fig. D) and the tomb inscription at Bet khallaf (fig. 2).

(1) Mariette, A., Op.Cit., P. 229 (D 19).

(2) Murray, M., Op.Cit., Pl. 7.

(3) Hassan, S., Excavations at Giza, Vol. V (1933 - 1934 Cairo, 1944, P. 267

(4) Browarski, E., Op.Cit., 780, n. 10.

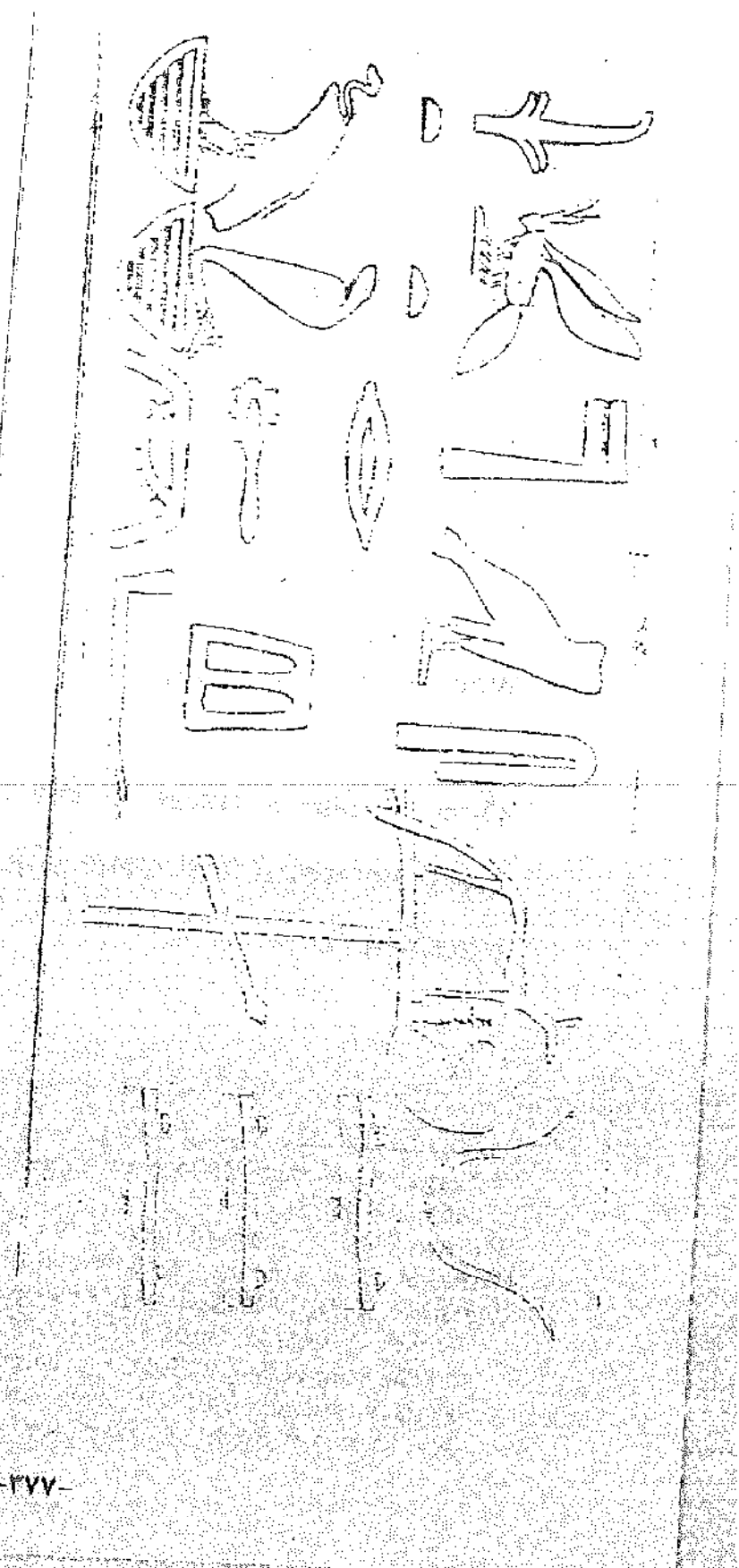



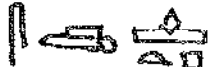
Fig. 2

Inscription from the Tomb of
Ntr Rkht at Bet Khallaf

Source: Garstrang, J., *Mahasna and Bet Khallaf*,
London, 1903, Pl. VIII, Seal No. I.

At Um el-Ekab a tomb of the king  (1) hps
Sd, was discovered, which Petrie previously read as Mr sd (2).

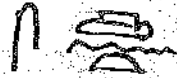
Thirdly, man in ancient Egypt devoted himself to the respect and reverence of the gods. The Support comes from the fact that many names of the god used to be included in man's names. There is evidence that Sed was a god as his name was included in the names of the very important persons of that time. Also, there is a tomb at Giza belongs to a certain Sd htp (3).

 in which there is an inscription:



Wcb nsw n Pr-C3 Sd-htp

"The royal purificator of the great house Sed htp".

There is also a statue in the Museum of Berlin inv. no. 11078 on which the name N3t Sd  was inscribed (4).

(1) Legge, F., "Recent Discoveries at Abydos and Negadah", PSBA, XXI, 1899, P.P 185, 187, fig. 3.

(2) Petrie, W.M.F., History of Egypt, Vol. I, London, 1912, P. 19.

(3) Hassan, S., Excavations at Giza, Vol. III, P. 110.



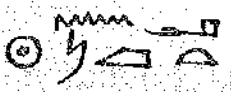
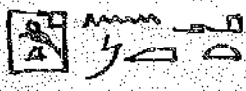
(4) Ranke, H. Die Altägyptischen Personennamen, I Glückstadt, 1935, S. 323, 13; Junker, H., Giza IX, Wien, 1950, P. 108.

The name of the god Sed was connected to the goddess Neith who preceded the kings in military battles as among her titles was "it is she who opens the roads". For the goddess Neith see: Rebort, Sch. "Neith" LÄ, IV 392-394.

Another statue in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo shows the name of the owner inscribed Ni - m3ct sd (1).

The god Sed was also connected to the goddess Maat in the coffin texts, wherever it mentioned:

".... appeased Sed with his own right as Maat" and probably the god Sed supports justice as the goddess Maat. So the researcher mentions some of the personal names which involved the name of the goddess Maat together with other gods and also the king in order to indicate that the inclusion of the name of Sed in the personal names necessarily means that it was a name of a god just as other ancient Egyptian gods. For example:

(2)		Ni m3ct ntr	Ni Maat nthr
(3)		Ni-m3ct pth	Ni Maat ptah
(4)		Ni-m3ct Rc	Ni Maat Rc
(5)		Ni (t?) -m3ct Hthr	Ni(+) Matt Hathor

(1) Ranke, H., Op.Cit., 172, 20; 323, 10.

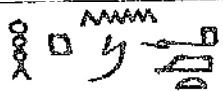
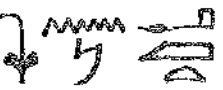
(2) Faulkner, R.O., The Ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts, Vol. III, Wernimster, England, 1978, P. 80 (sp.941).

(3) Ranke, H., Die Ägyptischen Personennamen II, Glückstadt, 1952, S. 294, 14.

(4) Mariette, A., Op.Cit., P. 250.

(5) Borchardt, L., Das Grabdenkmal des Königs S'a 3hu - rcc, II, WDOG, 15, 1913, P. 91.

(6) Roeder, G., Die Denkmäler der Pelizaeus - Museum in Hildesheim, Berlin, 1921, P. 416.

(1)		Ni - m3ct - Hp	Ni - Maat Hp.
(2)		Ni - m3ct - nsw.t	Ni-Maat nithwt

Although the name of the god Sed included the names of individuals during the Old and Middle Kingdoms, the name of Upuaut did not appear in the personal names until the Middle kingdom (3). The inclusion of the name of Sed in personal names probably supports the divinity of Sed represented in "appease Sed with his own right as Maat" and the same companionship in the title "Sed" in "who oversees on the wide courtyard" (4) and perhaps in wsht included in the juridical titles (5) and other names, the court of Sed festival is meant hrp w3ht, imj - r3 wsht where Sed played his prominent role (6).

From the above discussion, it could be concluded that there was a god called "Sed" but the reverence of the ancient

(1) Garstang, J., Op.Cit., Pl. X, 7; Ranke, H., Op.Cit., 172, 19.

(2) Reisner G.A., History of the Giza Necropolis, I, London, 1942, G. 4832.

(3) Ranke, H., Op.Cit., 77, 78.

(4) Mariette, A., Op.Cit., P. 29, o (D 19); CF

Barbaro, L., Begelsbacher-Fischer, Untersuchungen zur Gotterwelt des Alten Reiches, Göttingen, 1981, S. 236.

(5) Helck, W., Untersuchungen Zu Den Beamtentiteln-des Ägyptischen Alten Reiches, Glückstadt-Hamburg - New York, 1954, S.S. 34, 72.

(6) Frankfort, H., Op.Cit., P. 91.

Egyptians to this god did not carry them to build a temple for him, where prayers and offerings could be made, but he enjoyed a great respect and esteem during what was called "Sed Festival".

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