

**Seth Against Apophis.  
Originating The Scene  
Depicting Seth Spearing  
Apophis**

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### Abstract

The binary oppositions or contrasts that complement each other are evident in Ancient Egypt. One of the most well-known archetypes in ancient Egyptian religion is the combat between Horus and Seth; the strife between Good and evil. But when speaking about Seth and Apophis, separately we see them both in a different aspect. Apophis is always a symbol of evil. But concerning Seth, matters changed. Seth has a binary aspect.

The Pyramid Texts, the Coffin Texts, and the Book of the Dead mention huge numbers of spells recited to protect the king and then the dead from the danger threatened by snakes. then, by the time of the NK, we find for the first time a scene representing Seth in the barque of the god *Re* sharing in repelling the serpent Apophis together with other deities to defend *Re*.

Contrary to the well-known negative attitude of Seth, we see Seth as one of the crew, in the 7<sup>th</sup> Hour of New Kingdom Book of Amduat-middle register- stands on the prow of the sun-god barque protecting *Re* against Apophis.

therefore, in the course of this article, we shall have to ask when and how the god Seth becomes the fighter of snakes, and why did

Seth become the main and only deity who continues to be depicted in the solar barque spearing Apophis to defend *Re*? This concept, which is transmitted through various changes might go -according to this study- back to the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts!

### الملخص

التناقضات الثنائية التي تكمل بعضها البعض واضحة في مصر القديمة. فيعتبر القتال بين حورس وست من أشهر النماذج البدائية المعروفة في مصر القديمة، وكذلك الصراع بين الخير والشر. ولكن عندما نتحدث عن الإله ست وأبوفيس، فإننا نراهم بشكل منفصل. فالثعبان أبوفيس هو دائماً رمزاً للشر. لكن بالنسبة لست، تغيرت الأمور، فالإله ست لديه جانب ثنائي.

تشير نصوص الأهرام ونصوص التابوت وكتاب الموتى إلى أعداد هائلة من التعاويذ التي يتم تلاوتها لحماية الملك ثم الموتى من الخطر الذي تهدده الأفاعي لهم. بعد ذلك، بحلول وقت الدولة الحديثة، وجدنا لأول مرة مشهداً يمثل ست في مركبة الإله رع مع الآلهة الأخرى للمشاركة في صد الثعبان أبوفيس والدفاع عن اله الشمس.

على عكس الموقف السلبي المعروف لست، نراه كواحد من أفراد الطاقم، في الساعة السابعة من كتاب الأمدوات - السجل الأوسط - حيث يقف على مقدمة مركب إله الشمس حامياً رع ضد أبوفيس.

لذلك، في سياق هذه المقالة، يجب أن نسأل متى وكيف أصبح الإله ست مقاتلاً للثعابين، ولماذا أصبح ست الإله الرئيسي والوحيد الذي لا يزال يصور في المركب الشمسي للدفاع عن رع ضد أبوفيس؟ هذا المفهوم الذي ينتقل من خلال تغييرات مختلفة قد يعود - وفقاً لهذه الدراسة - إلى نصوص أهرام الدولة القديمة.

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### Introduction:

Commonly, the god Seth is represented according to the religious texts in three aspects. The first of which as the rival of the god Horus, the second as the killer of the god Osiris,<sup>1</sup> and the third is the god who stands on the prow of the sun- god barque repelling the eternal fiend of *Re* Apophis (Fig.1),<sup>2</sup> as Seth *ꜥ3 phty* was considered to have great physical strength.<sup>3</sup> This depiction of Seth standing

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<sup>1</sup> Seth is called *nbꜥ* not only as killer of the god Osiris, but as well the militant against the serpent Apophis: Te Velde, *Seth God of confusion*, p. 101. *Nbꜥ* is either a name of Apophis or a form of Seth; but here it must represent Seth, as not the enemy of the deceased but one of the allies of the sun; it is he who pierces all the enemies who seek to attack the solar boat with his lance: Nagel, *BIFAO* 29, 1929, p. 62, 65 (n. 19).

<sup>2</sup> The incarnation of the forces of chaos Apophis represented - according to Egyptians' beliefs - the incarnation of the destructive force of chaos in the form of a giant snake: Fortier, *Le voyage de Rê et sa lutte contre Apophis*, p. 279. the origin of Apophis upon of which the known texts, with the exception of one, agree that he was not conceived by Atum. Therefore, he was there before creation. The exception as to its origin comes from a very original cosmogony, that of Neith, the mother *Re*, at the temple of Khnum in Esna. It relates the creation of Apophis to a jet of saliva pat from Neith which was repelled by the primordial gods. Within the initial water (= the Nun); he turned into a serpent of 120 cubits, which was named Apophis: Fortier, *Le voyage de Rê et sa lutte contre Apophis*, p. 279.280.

<sup>3</sup>Te Velde, *LÄ V* col.909. About the iconographic and textual sources relating to the fight between Seth and Apophis; a mythological commentary that deal with differences between Seth and Apophis; the political and religious reasons why the Ramessides, and especially Ramesses II, promoted the positive role of Seth as defender of the solar barque, and evidence for the clear differentiation between Seth, the cosmic god that protects *Re* **Magda Gad**

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at the prow of *Re*'s barque is seen once again in many other different scenes that represent Seth -whether he is in the barque or even not- killing Apophis through the lance he holds in hand (see: Fig. 2 <sup>4,3</sup> (a, b) <sup>5,4</sup> <sup>6,5</sup> (a, b) <sup>7,6</sup> <sup>8,7</sup> <sup>9</sup>).

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against Apophis, and the Seth of Avaris with Hyksos origins, see: De Maré, *Le combat mythique entre Seth et Apophis*, 145-164.

<sup>4</sup> A round-topped stela dated back to Dyn. XVIII (Limestone, 41.5cm tall, 29cm wide). It represents the god Seth (*Nbty*) having a human face, rather than the usual snout and ears, spearing Apophis-serpent that is as well depicted with hands and a human face. The scene below shows the owner of the stela kneeling in adoration before offerings, with hymn to *Re* and Nubti (Seth), see: Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, p.99.

<sup>5</sup> An upper right part of a round-topped stela, it represents the bull-headed winged Seth 'bull of Ombos' in the barque {part of which is visible] spearing [Apophis]. Both two scenes show a hybrid figure with the wings of Seth (unknown for Ba'al!). But the garb is that of Ba'al. In the case of [Fig. 3a] the serpent killer is even depicted with Cretan elements, as the kilt and horns are un-Egyptian and the god can best be described as Ba'al-Seth, i.e., Ba'al! with the head of a bull, but with Seth-like wings. Fig. 3a shows one part of the total context (namely the barque) and Fig. 3b another (namely the serpent). When combined, the motif can be reconstructed as Ba'al-Seth conquering the wicked serpent. The inscription attached read as: *Sth k3 nbty* "Seth, the bull of Ombos", see: Izak, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al*, p. 163-164, pls. 44,43.

<sup>6</sup> A scarab of steatite with dark green glaze, on which a bearded, winged figure strides to the right. He wears a white crown with the head of the Seth animal, holding a long spear with the one wing and pierces a rearing serpent. The figure stands with both feet on the serpent. Above is a sun-disk. The figure can be identified as the

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The first two aspects of Seth reveal his negative role, contrary to the third aspect that reveals the positive impotent and outstanding role which is imagined in texts by word since the Middle kingdom in the Coffin Texts as Te Velde mentioned in his great work about the god Seth.<sup>10</sup>

But if so, as always said, nothing comes from nowhere. Therefore, in examining the Pyramid Texts, there are many texts that could be the origin of this aspect, not in a direct way, but could be the inspiration of Seth 'positive role. Accordingly, the texts upon of which this paper depends, and through of which this idea will be traced,

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winged Ba'al-Seth the serpent slayer, see: Izak, *The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al*, p. 215, pl. 50 (BM 78).

<sup>7</sup> In [Fig.5a]: The solar barque is towed by four jackals, and by four cobras with human arms. On the prow the god Seth spears a huge serpent whose coils support the heaven sign on which the barque is placed, see: Piankoff & Rambova, *Mythological Papyri – Texts*, p.75-76, fig. 54; whether [Fig. 5b] depicts a similar scene in which the god Seth was replaced by the god *Hr-nd-it.f*: the coffin of Nespawershepi, chief scribe of the Temple of Amun, Dyn. XXI.

<sup>8</sup> Seth, a hawk-headed figure, depicted in a human body with a hawk's wing and tail and a second pair of wings outspread, spears the serpent enemy beneath his feet. The scene comes from the court of the Amun of Hibis. The text attaches reads as: *ḏd-mdw in Sth ʿz phty ntr ʿz hry-ib Hbt ir.n.f di ʿnh mi Rʿ dt* "Recitatus by Seth, great of strength, great god, in the midst of Hebet, who gives life like *Re* eternally". See: Davies, *The Temple of Hibis in El Khargeh Oasis*. Part III, p. 27, pls. 42-3, 77b.

<sup>9</sup> A large stela from the Ptolemaic or Roman period, showing the same image, the winged Seth is spearing Apophis, see: Kaper, *The sacred landscape* in: Roger, Aravecchia, Cribiore, Davoli, Kaper and McFadden, *An Oasis City*, fig. 15.

<sup>10</sup> Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, p. 101ff.

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will be that of the ‘Pyramid Texts’, the ‘Coffin Texts’, the ‘Book of the Dead’ and assuredly the ‘Book of Amduat’.

### A- Seth and the Pyramid Texts

Despite the role of Seth as a royal counterpart of Horus, the positive texts of the ‘Pyramid Texts’ show his role as more benevolent. In some of these positive texts, Seth helps the dead king Osiris ascend to heaven either physically by raising him or providing him with a ladder. Seth in other spells aids in removing the deceased ‘fetters and as well in his resurrection. There is an unanimity among Egyptologists that the purpose of genre PT 226-243<sup>11</sup> is to protect the deceased king from snakes and other reptiles.<sup>12</sup> They are non-ritual spells, spoken in the

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<sup>11</sup>The genre PT 226-243, consists of 18 spells, which entirely attested only in the pyramid of Unis, filling the west gable of his burial chamber, see: Abd El-Sattar, *EJARS* Vol. 10 (1), p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to these texts recited to protect the deceased king from snakes, there are others mentioned concerning different snakes with various names as: *mnni.k* (see the commentary about this verb in: Faulkner, *The Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, p. 125) *m rn.k m mnnw g33.k m rn.k n 'Igz3i m twt is hpiw hry ht.f .... hmi* “May you shut up in your name of ‘Fortress’; May you overturned in your name of *Igz3i*, because you are the *hpiw*-snake who is on his belly .... Get back” *PT* 662a-c; *mk N N pw Hr pr m Šnt sin .... Tbb.n Hr r.f m tbw.f* “Behold king N, Horus is the king who escaped from the *Šnt*-snake and run .... Horus has shattered his mouth with the sole of his foot”. Compare the nowadays expression of the vernacular dialect when man is forced not to talk: ‘put your shoes in your mouth, and don’t talk’. *PT* 681a, b, e; compare too *PT* Utt.378 where it is recited for the sake of Horus

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first-person pronoun, and chanted by the deceased king himself as magical spells.<sup>13</sup>

The Pyramid Texts show many deities that help the deceased in that fight against the snakes such as: Isis and Horus; Osiris; Atum and *Re*; Mafdet; Thoth; Geb, Nut und Aker; Shu; and Min.<sup>14</sup>

One of those deities who is also credited with warding off snakes, is Seth, who appears here in the Pyramid Texts for the first time, along with Horus to fend off many of the snakes mentioned by different names:<sup>15</sup>

*tf.k iħr ifn<sup>16</sup>pn<sup>c</sup> gbgb.n tw Hr n ĩnh.k inin.n tw Stš n ĩħ<sup>c</sup>.k*

“May you be spat upon; fall, turn upside down, Horus has felled you and you will not live; Seth has cut you up and you will not rise up”.<sup>17</sup>

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the child; 384 where the hand of the reciter is compared to that of *Mafdet*.

<sup>13</sup> Abdelsattar, *EJARS* Vol. 10 (1), p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Meurer, *OBO* 189, p.291, 292, 294, 295, 297 (Isis and Horus as in: *PT* 1302b, 670b, 678b, 684a, 444b, 425c); (Osiris as in: *PT* 684a, 442c-443b); (Atum and *Re* as in: *PT* 229a-c, 425a-b, 1302c, 673a,442a,226; (Mafdet as in: *PT* 440a-441a, 672a-c, 685c-d, 438a-b, 1212a-f, 230c); (Thoth, does not always appear by name as a helper against snakes, but in his form as an ibis as in: *PT* 690); (Geb, Nut und Aker as in: *PT* 674b-675b, 225c, 689d, 441 b, 676a, 2254d); (Shu as in: *PT* 692c, 677a-b); (Min together with other two lesser deities appear in the serpent spells. They are *H<sup>c</sup>y-t<sup>c</sup>w* and *H<sup>m</sup>n* as in: *PT* 424a-b, *H<sup>c</sup>y-t<sup>c</sup>w* a god originally from Lebanon and only documented in the Old Kingdom in a cattle form: 518d, 423c, 242c).

<sup>15</sup> The snakes mentioned are as followed: *dsr*, *ħfnw*, *ħfnnt*, *sriw*.

<sup>16</sup> *Wb* I 70, 13-14.

<sup>17</sup> *PT* 678a-c.

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Amazingly, the god Seth rarely intervenes against snakes, as in this spell, in which he and the other king god Horus sharing this mission. This commonality with Horus might probably explain his positive behavior at this point.<sup>18</sup> Since this incantation is the only text that obviously links Seth with the snakes; therefore, these texts could have been the key to the texts that clearly refer later to the giant snake given the name of ʿꜣpp ‘Apophis’ and which is first well recognized in religious texts in the Middle kingdom Coffin Texts.<sup>19</sup>

### **B- Seth and the Coffin Texts**

Seth appeared in the Coffin Texts in both that negative and positive way, as many of these texts are supposed to be based upon the Pyramid texts.

The positive role of Seth is so evident in the Coffin Texts. He helps the deceased in many ways. Seth supports the deceased during the process of his

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<sup>18</sup> Meurer, *OBO* 189, p.292.

<sup>19</sup> One of the earliest records of Apophis found in the tomb of Governor Ankhtifi in Mo’alla from the First Intermediate Period where Apophis is associated with the sandbanks of the Nile on which the hungry will die, in the inscription of ‘the great famine’: *snb mt n ḥꜣr ḥr ts pn n ʿꜣpp* “every man starved to death on this sandbank of Apophis”, see: Vandier, - *Mo’alla: La Tombe d’Ankhtifi et la Tombe de Sebekhotep*, Insc.X, p.220. This sandbank of Apophis mentioned here is an allusion to the navigation of the sun in the *Book of Amduat* and to the 7<sup>th</sup> Hour where Apophis swallowed the water on which the god *Re* sails. The lack of water which would lead to famine here is compared to the lack of water in the Netherworld that would cause the stoppage of the journey of *Re*.

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resurrection,<sup>20</sup> protecting him;<sup>21</sup> likewise, the deceased ascends to heaven on the ladder that Horus and Seth set up.<sup>22</sup> Seth gives his strength to the deceased identified as Horus,<sup>23</sup> as the knot is tied behind him by Seth.<sup>24</sup> The deceased shares food with both Seth and Horus;<sup>25</sup> and as he dwells with Seth, the deceased refuses to eat faeces, wishing to eat from which the gods eat.<sup>26</sup> Seth gives his crown to the deceased,<sup>27</sup> subduing the patricians for him.<sup>28</sup>

In other texts, the deceased behaves as Seth does. The purification of the deceased is the purification of Horus and Seth,<sup>29</sup> he inhales as does Seth,<sup>30</sup> having power over

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<sup>20</sup> CT VI 108 d-j.

<sup>21</sup> CT II 143 a-c; see as well CT VI 269 p-u.

<sup>22</sup> CT VI 402j-s. These gods are: *Wsir*, *Dḥwty*, *Dwn-ḥnwty*, *Hnty-n-irty*. Cf. *PT* 17. see too CT VII 142 q, s, v.

<sup>23</sup> CT I 47-50a.

<sup>24</sup> CT VI 261 e-I. The knot was tightened behind the deceased or around him to grant him control and security; see: Mahmoud, *The Knot in Examples of Religious Texts*, in *Shedet* Issue n. 6, p. 60; see also: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight* 130; see also Wendrich, in: *DE* 7, p.29-36.

<sup>25</sup> CT III 89 b-f. Cf. CT III137: 'I will live on seven portions of bread; four loaves are in the House of Horus and three in the House of Thoth'.

<sup>26</sup> CT VI 196.

<sup>27</sup> CT VI 118-9.

<sup>28</sup> CT VI 170 g, 172 g-n.

<sup>29</sup> CT VI 120a-c: an 'Opening of the Mouth' ritual, as those rituals found in *PT*.

<sup>30</sup> CT VI 255 k-m. This spell might be of resurrection.

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water as Seth;<sup>31</sup> and as Seth, he will not enter the slaughter house of the god.<sup>32</sup>

This is one aspect of the positive role of Seth, i.e., the help offered to the deceased. The other and the outstanding aspect is that his role against snakes, which is to be the aim of this paper.

But on the other hand, the deceased either identified with gods or even not, he declares his enmity to Apophis - in his explicit name - in many ways: he will open the way for *Re* that he may voyage to the western horizon and save him from Apophis<sup>33</sup> when he travels to the western horizon;<sup>34</sup> ‘I have come that I may drive off Apophis’;<sup>35</sup> he called the ferryman (*hr.f-h3.f*) announcing that ‘I will fell Apophis’;<sup>36</sup> and attacking him.<sup>37</sup> The deceased wishes that ‘May my eyes be open ..... so that I may not fear Apophis the Wanderer (?), and he (Apophis) will never see *M3ˆt* or *Re*, so that you may not be afraid, O *Re*’.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> CT IV 392 a; 396 a-b.

<sup>32</sup> CT V 59 a-b. See as well CT VI 163 a,f-h. About the places where the guilty dead are punished: see, Hornung, Altägyptische Höllenvorstellungen. ASAW 59 (3).

<sup>33</sup> Cf. CT IV 34: ‘N .... who rescues *Re* from Apophis’.

<sup>34</sup> CT II 37-8.

<sup>35</sup> CT VI 264.

<sup>36</sup> CT VI 3, 16.

<sup>37</sup> CT VI 308.

<sup>38</sup> CT VII 174.

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The deceased repels the strength of Apophis and nourishes the crews of *Re*,<sup>39</sup> refusing to fall into his bonds.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, the deceased boasts that there is no god who can do what he has done, as he has driven off Apophis in his striking power.<sup>41</sup>

Abd al-Sattar stated that post-Unis Pyramid Texts corpora editors marginalized the genre PT 226–243, while it was fundamental in the Middle Kingdom. Moreover, the liberators of the Middle Kingdom not only revived this genre, but also explained its meaning.<sup>42</sup>

These texts often attributed the introductory spell PT 226 to the title *r3 n hsf Rrk m hrt- ntr* (spell to drive away the Rerek-serpent into the Realm of the Dead).<sup>43</sup> this meaning is taken up as well by another spells: *hsf Rrk h<sup>c</sup> R<sup>c</sup>* “Driving away Rerek-serpent so that *Re* may shine”.<sup>44</sup>

Rerek seems to have initially become a common word for the word "snake" in these texts,<sup>45</sup> as there are several spells - moreover their titles - that are recited to repel snakes:

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<sup>39</sup> *CT VII* 332.

<sup>40</sup> *CT VII* 377. In a weird spell in which the deceased asked the gate-keeper not to come against him as any kind of a snake; he threatens that *Re* will die and Apophis will be hostile, see: *CT VII* 416-19.

<sup>41</sup> *CT VI* 320-1.

<sup>42</sup> Abd El-Sattar, *EJARS* Vol. 10 (1), p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> See: Allen, *The Egyptian coffin texts*, Spell 226, p. 233.

<sup>44</sup> *CT VII*. 94 m.

<sup>45</sup> Faulkner, *the ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts II*, p. 7, n.1. According to Faulkner, it could even have originated in a misunderstanding of the imperative *pr r.k* 'get out!' when addressed to a snake.

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*pr Rrk (m) šmt Šw iw wnm.k pnw bwt R<sup>c</sup> pw .... hsf  
hfz<sup>w</sup> m hrt-ntr*

“Go forth, O Rerek-snake, at the movements of Shu (?).  
You have eaten a mouse, which *Re* abominates ....  
driving off a snake in the Realm of the Dead”.<sup>46</sup>

*hsf Rrk tm nhm tp n s m-<sup>c</sup>.f 'I Rrk .... hfz(w)t hr t(w) hr  
hrw.tn š<sup>c</sup> tpw.sn sni tsw.sn .... hsf Rrk*

“To drive off a Rerek-snake and not to take a man's head  
from him. O Rerek-snake .... O you snakes, fall on your  
faces! Their heads shall be cut off and their vertebrae  
severed .... driving off a snake”.<sup>47</sup>

Surprisingly, not once have these texts been explicitly  
linked between Rerek-serpent and the god Seth as its  
repellent, despite one text recited to repel Rerek, the  
context of which has made Seth protecting the deceased  
through his power:

*hsf Rrk .... 'Iw ts ts,tw hz N in Stš psdt m wsr (.f) tpy n  
(hp)rt hnnw*

“(spell to) repel a Rerek-snake .... The knot is tied  
behind N by Seth, in whose power the Ennead were at  
first, before uproar had come into being”.<sup>48</sup>

As stated above, the serpent Apophis has been mentioned  
in many spells of the Coffin Texts.<sup>49</sup> But amazingly, not

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<sup>46</sup> CT V 31a-b-c, e.

<sup>47</sup> CT V 41a-b, e. Cf. CT V 44c, d-e; 44h-l; 283b; 286a and 287a:  
*hsf Rrk smz mtwt.f* ‘to drive off a snake and destroy its venom’; VI  
205h: *hsf Rrk hsf mshw* ‘to repel a snake and to repel crocodiles’.

<sup>48</sup> CT VI 261a, f-h (coffin: M2 MY).

<sup>49</sup> It is also important to mention that many of the spells against  
snakes (genre PT 226-243) found their way into the corpus of the  
Coffin Texts under the collective title “repelling the *Rrk*-Snake in

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once in its explicit name  $\epsilon 3pp$  associated with the god Seth;<sup>50</sup> despite the spells mentioned here connected frankly the deceased – occasionally identified with Seth-with Apophis.

In the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts, we encountered just only authentic spell in which the god Seth repelling snakes;<sup>51</sup> but now Seth's role as an 'Apophis-Snake' repellent - that was not attested before - and as a protector of the solar barque is evident obviously.

There are only three texts that include what highlights the role of Seth; the first relates generally to repelling the snakes, the second to being one of the crew members of the sun-god barque and finally his role as a protector of the solar barque.

### 1- A text concerned with driving away snakes

$hsf hf3w$  [...]  $wnnw m š m hrt-ntr$  ....  $iw s^c h n.f w3t in Stš$

“(Spell to) drive away snakes [...] which are in the garden in the Realm of the Dead .... a path has been cleared for him (namely the deceased) by Seth”.<sup>52</sup>

### 2- Seth is one of the gods comprising the crew of the Night-barque.<sup>53</sup>

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the Realm of the Dead:  $r3 n(j) hsf rrk m hrt ntr$  see: Leitz, *Orientalia*, vol. 65, No. 4, p. 359 note 29. See too: Abd El-sattar: *EJARS* Vol. 10 (1), p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> Fortier, *Le voyage de Rê et sa lutte contre Apophis*, p. 279.

<sup>51</sup> According to Turner, there is little evidence for the worship of Seth during the First Intermediate Period, as he is depicted on reliefs from the Middle Kingdom indicating that his cult must have established through this period. Moreover, the Hyksos rulers took him as their god, see: Turner, *Seth – A Misrepresented God in the Ancient Egyptian Pantheon?* p.53.

<sup>52</sup> *CT VI* 315a; 316b.

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*Šnt nt sđt [šnt] nt sđt sđt (m)sktt šnt imyt ḥzt ʒst Stš Hr  
šnt imyt pḥwy Hw Siʒ R<sup>c</sup>*

“Circle of fire. [Circle] of fire. The fire of the Night-  
barque. The company which is in the bow is Isis, Seth  
and Horus. The company which is in the stern is Hu, Sia  
and *Re*”.<sup>54</sup>

### 3- Seth defends *Re* against Apophis.

*Iw.i rh.kwi đw pw n bʒhw nty pt rhn.s ḥr.f .... iw.i  
rh.kwi rn n ḥfʒw pn tp đw Whn.f rn.f .... pn<sup>c</sup>.ḥr.f irt.f r  
R<sup>c</sup> ḥpr.ḥr <sup>c</sup>kw m iswt .... k<sup>c</sup>h.ḥr sw Stš m đrt.f idđ.f m  
ḥKʒw ḥ<sup>c</sup>.i m đr.k .... <sup>c</sup>n r.k irt.k snḥ.n.i tw*

“I know that mountain of Bakhu upon which the sky rests  
.... I know the name of this serpent which is upon the  
mountain, its name is *Whn. f* “He who destroys” .... He  
will turn his eye against *Re*, and a stoppage will occur in  
the crew .... and Seth will bend him with his hand. (Spell  
which) he <sup>55</sup> utters as magic: ‘I rise up against you ....  
Close your eye, for I have bound you’”.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> About the connection between Seth- the victor over Apophis,  
which hindered the healing of the sun- and the god Baaal of the  
Semites which was considered as a manifestation of Seth who  
fought against the serpentine sea god and the lion motive as  
embodiment of the drought and death, see: Keel; *Shuval*;  
*Uehlinger, Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln Aus Palästina/Israel*  
III, p. 202.

<sup>54</sup> CT VII 458a-1. These gods are to be the ones who are depicted  
later in *Amduat*, See below Fig. 1.

<sup>55</sup> The deceased is here identified as Seth.

<sup>56</sup> CT II 375c, 376a, c; 379a, c; -380a, c; 381a-e; 382a-b. Cf. below  
*BD* 108.

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### C- Seth and the Book of the Dead.

Seth is also, in general, mentioned in the Book of the Dead in both negative and positive roles. Many of the negative are concerned with the harm that Seth did to Osiris, the battle between Horus and Seth and then Horus's revenge, including reference to the damage done to Seth's testicles and Horus's eye.<sup>57</sup> But in Chapter [175] of the *Book of the Dead*, there is a reference to the fear that Seth, namely his soul, causes even when he is in the solar barque. The deceased starts asking *Atum* whether Seth's soul has been sent to the west, to which *Atum* replies that he has put Seth's soul under guard so that *Osiris* should not fear:

grt<sup>58</sup> h3b b3 n Stš tnw r ntrw nbw iw rdi.n.i s3wt b3.f  
imy wīz n mr.f snd ḥw ntr

“And has Seth's soul, rather than (those of) all the (other) gods, been sent (to the west)? I have put under guard his soul that is in the barque, that he may (not cause) the god's body to fear”<sup>59</sup>.

This spell which has no equivalence from earlier time, depicts Seth in the barque of the sun-god so badly, that *Atum* locked him up. Therefore, the fear of Seth's power might have led -apparently- to the negative manner in which he is portrayed. These same qualities could also be

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<sup>57</sup> Turner, *Seth – A Misrepresented God in the Ancient Egyptian Pantheon?* p.104.

<sup>58</sup> A weird position of *grt*, see: Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* § 255.

<sup>59</sup> Allen, *The Book of the Dead or going Forth by Day*, p. 184. See a different translation given by Quirke, *Going out in Daylight* p. 438: “And has the ba-soul of Seth been sent out, as distinct from that of all other gods. I have placed a guard on his ba-soul in the boat, of his wish to revere the body of the god”.

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applied to identifying him in that positive manner. The snakes mentioned in the Pyramid Texts and the Coffin Texts, that are to be a threat to the deceased in the Realm of the Dead, are as well depicted here in the Book of the Dead. We meet here the Rerek-snake that appeared first in the Coffin Texts. On repelling aggressors and destructive forces, Quirke mentions anti-snakes' compositions (Chapters 33-35).<sup>60</sup> In Chapter [33], it reduces the enemy of the deceased i.e., Rerek-snake to a consumer of a rotten matter abhorrent to the creator sun-god *Re*. the gods Geb and Shu are needed in defense:

*R n ḥsf ḥfꜣw ḏḏ -mdw in N .... ꜥ Rrk m šm mk Gb Šw ꜥḥꜣ  
r.k iw wnm.n.k pnw bwt Rꜣ iw wšꜣ.n.k ꜣsw nw myt ḥwꜣt*  
“Spell for warding off a snake. Recitations by N .... O Rerek, move not; behold, Geb<sup>61</sup> and Shu are stood against you. You have eaten a mouse, which *Re* abominates; you have crunched the bones of a putrefied cat”.<sup>62</sup>

This spell despises the serpent Rerek - the enemy of the deceased - making him a consumer of musty matter which is to be abhorrent to the creator Sun-god *Re*. And what is interesting here is the help needed from the god

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<sup>60</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.101.

<sup>61</sup> Geb is considered to be the father of the snakes. The snake's name is *sꜣ-tꜣ*. *PT* (674b-675b) confirm that the snakes have to listen to their father Geb lest they will hear his brand (*ꜣbt*) on their head (Meurer, *OBO* 189, p. 295) i.e., the hissing of the hot metal as it burns the skin (Faulkner, *the Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, p. 127, n. 3)

<sup>62</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.106.

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Geb<sup>63</sup> and Shu, the second and first generation of male offspring of *Re*, whom they protect from this snake.<sup>64</sup> Snakes present the danger of "biting" and "eating". Chapter [34] is recited to rescue the deceased from being died due to the bite of snakes:

*r n tm psh N in hfzw m hrt-ntr*

“Spell for preventing N from being bitten by a snake in the Realm of the Dead”.<sup>65</sup>

Whereas chapter [35] is to protect the deceased lest these snakes might eat him:

*r n tm wnm N in hfzw m hrt-ntr*

“Spell for preventing N from being eaten by a snake in the Realm of the Dead”.<sup>66</sup>

But in an unexpected change, the following compositions were transformed into broader divine forces that must be resisted such as: The Serpent of Absolute Darkness Apophis. It is Rerek, which is to be another name of the snake Apophis, the archenemy of the sun-god.<sup>67</sup>

Apophis is ordered to leave the eastern part of the sky and to move to the deep, as there he will encounter a slaughter carried out by a group of gods.

In this chapter [39],<sup>68</sup> an incantation is recited to do repelling a Rerek-snake in the Realm of the Dead,<sup>69</sup> in

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. Hornung & Abt, *The Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 372: the 11<sup>th</sup> Hour, 69<sup>th</sup> scene, upper register, we see the confederates of Apophis kept in check by Geb and the four sons of Horus.

<sup>64</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.106.

<sup>65</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.107.

<sup>66</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.108.

<sup>67</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.101.

<sup>68</sup> Most vignettes feature a man spearing a coiled serpent, which is not exclusively characteristic of *BD* 39. Alternatively, the vignette here shows a man armed with a knife facing an erect snake.

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which Seth is to defeat the snake Apophis - who appears under many other names as *Nik*, *Rik*, *W3mmty*<sup>70</sup>, a name of Rerek - each night when he attempts to attack the sun-god *Re* in his barque during its journey through the darkness of the Netherworld.

*R n ḥsf rrk m ḥrt-ntr .... ḥz.k .... ʿzpp ḥfty Rʿ .... r bw wdt.n it ir.ì šʿt.k .... ḥz ʿzpp ḥfty n Rʿ .... ḥsf ḥr.k msdd Rʿ .... ḥp nfr n pr sdb ḏw m r.k ink Stš ʿd ḥnnwt kṛi .... mʒʿ ḥrw Rʿ r ʿzpp*

“Spell for repelling the Rerek-serpent in the Realm of the Dead<sup>71</sup> .... you back .... Apophis, enemy of *Re*.... to the place where the father ordered that I do slaughtering you .... go down, Apophis, enemy of *Re* .... Punishment is on you, who are hated by *Re* .... Move well, no evil obstacle has gone out from your mouth. I am Seth,<sup>72</sup> who clears the turbulence of the storm<sup>73</sup>.... *Re* is justified against Apophis”<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> About the translation and commentary of this spell see: Borghouts, *Book of the Dead* [39].

<sup>70</sup> *LÄ* I 350; cf. above n. 45.

<sup>71</sup> It is the 'Domain of the god', as all the events take place in the night-world, see: Borghouts, *Book of the Dead* [39], p.12, n. 28.

<sup>72</sup> Or 'son of Seth', see: Borghouts, *Book of the Dead* [39], p.16, n. 79.

<sup>73</sup> Borghouts (*Book of the Dead* [39], p.16, n. 79) who translated this sentence differently 'who causes disturbance and storm' depending upon Te Velde who mentioned that Seth braggingly reveals himself in these words, see Te Velde, in: *JARCE* 7, p. 38.

<sup>74</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.113-4. The reciter orders the serpent *Apophis* to its own destruction in three declarations, and then hails *Re* as victorious.

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The reciter here identifies himself as Seth, god of disorder, harnessed to the service of *Re* as a defender against annihilation that could be carried out by Apophis.<sup>75</sup> The effect of Seth in his positive role is shown once again in Chapter [108].<sup>76</sup> It is a spell for knowing the souls of the Westerners; it concerns with repelling the serpent Apophis, who threatens to halt the sacred night barque of the sun-god: ‘Seth will project a lance of iron against him and will make him vomit up all that he has swallowed. Seth will place him before him and will say to him with magic power’:<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> What is interesting is that the 7<sup>th</sup> mound of chapter [149] is inhabited by that Rerek-serpent ( Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.357), but his danger is annihilated, not in this time by Seth, but through the goddess *Mꜣfdt* (About the Goddess Mafdet, see: Kammerzell, *Panther, Löwe und Sprachentwicklung im Neolithikum*): *iw hfꜣw im.f Rrk rn.f ny-sw mh sfh m ꜣw n psd.f .... hꜣ. K rrk imy ꜣss psh m r.f gbꜣ m irty.fy sd ꜣsw.k bdš mtwt.k nn iwt.k r.i nn hꜣ mtwt.k im.i .... hw.kwi hꜣk tp.k in Mꜣfdt* “There is a serpent in it called Rerek, 7 cubits in the length of its back .... Back Rerek, the one who is in Ises, who bites with his mouth and blinds with his eyes. Your bones are broken, your poison is weakened. You cannot come against me; your poison cannot fall in me .... I am protected; your head is severed by Mafdet” (Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.360-1).

<sup>76</sup> See below Fig. 6. Chapter [108] of the Book of the Dead gives the name of the monster and provides additional information about the attack on the solar barque, see: Fortier, *Le voyage de Rê et sa lutte contre Apophis*, p.280.

<sup>77</sup> Apophis a force that threatens to halt the barque of the sun-god, a threat evokes in chapter [7] as the “sandbank of Apophis”: *R n swꜣ hr ts ꜣsn n ꜣꜣꜣ .... nn ꜣꜣ mtwt.k m ꜣwt.i ꜣwt.i ꜣwt itm* “Spell for passing the hard sandbank of Apophis .... Your poison will not enter my limbs. My limbs are the limbs of Atum”. See: See Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.23. About Egyptians' knowledge  
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*r n rh b3w imntyw .... iw hf3w hr wpt nt dw pf .... N rh  
rn n hf3w pn tpy dw.f imy-h3.f rn.f ir-m-ht h3w hrw  
pn3.hr.f irty.fy (r) R3 hpr.hr h3w m w3z .... shp.hr.f mh  
sfh n mw 3 rdi.hr Swty w3r mt3 r.f n b3z rdi.hr.f b3.f  
3mt.n.f nbt rdi.hr sw Stš m dri.f dd.hr.f m hk3w hm n  
b3z imy 3 i h3.i m dri.k m33 skdwt m33 w3 .... ink wr  
hk3w s3 nwt iw rdi.n.i 3hw.i r.k .... šm hr ht.f phty.f n  
ts.f mk wi šm.kwi r.k phty.ky m-(.i) .... ii.n.i 3wy.i  
3kryw n R3 htp.f n.i m mšrw dbn.i pt tn iw.k m intt ....  
htp.hr.f R3 m 3nh r 3ht.f iw.i rh.kwi sšmw ht hsf<sup>TD</sup> n 3pp  
hr.s*

“Spell for knowing the western Ba-souls .... There is a serpent on the brow of that mountain .... N knows the name of this serpent that is upon its mountain, its name is *Imy-h3*, after the sessions of the day, he is to overturn his eyes to *Re*, and then standstill will hit the barque .... Then he is to gorge the seven cubits of high water. Then Seth to fend him off with a lance of metal, (the scene being depicted later, see Fig.5a, b) to force him to spew out all he swallowed. Then Seth is to set him in his grip, and then he is to speak in magic: Back! At the metal point that is in my hand, as I stand gripping you, so that the sailing may be smooth, seeing far .... I am the great in magic, son of Nut. My light-power (*3hw*) is given to

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of and attitude toward snakes and their poisons, both on a religious and on a profane/medical level, see: Stegbauer, *Magie als Waffe gegen Schlangen in der ägyptischen Bronzezeit*. (Chapters 4 and 5).

<sup>78</sup> *hsf* that takes the meaning of ‘to punish’, see: Faulkner, *A Concise Dictionary of Middle Egyptian*, p. 197.

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me against you .... The snake that walks on its belly, his strength is at his bond. See me, gone against you; your strength is with [me] .... I have come to assault the earth-snakes<sup>79</sup> for *Re*, so that he might be content with me in the evening, as I circle this sky, while you are in chains .... Then he may rest, *Re*, in life, at his horizon. I know the procedure of the things for which Apophis is punished”<sup>80</sup>.

Chapter [111] is an abbreviated version of chapter [108], it involves Seth defeating the snake, and success in moving the barque of *Re* past the standstill Apophis caused:

*ir-m-ht ḥꜥ hrw pnꜥ.ḥr.f irty.fy r Rꜥ ḥpr ḥꜥ pw .... rdī swty mḏr.f*<sup>81</sup> *mꜣꜥ skḏ .... ink ts pḥty iw rdī.n.i ꜣḥ pn r.k ii.n.i .... hrw pn m mšrw*

“After the sessions of the day (i.e., at evening) he is to overturn his eyes to *Re*, and then standstill shall happen .... with Seth casting his block wall,<sup>82</sup> so that the sailing may be smooth .... I am the one who raises strength. I have set this ꜣḥ- spirit against you, I have come .... on this day in the evening”<sup>83</sup>.

Finally, chapter [140] lists Seth along with many other gods and goddesses as being joyful when Apophis has been defeated:

*hꜣy nt ḥknw Rꜥ skḏd ist wꜣꜣ šḥr ꜣꜣpp .... ḥꜥꜥ im.f dr ḥftyw.f*

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<sup>79</sup> *Wb* I 22,7.

<sup>80</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.239.

<sup>81</sup> Quirke sees in *mḏr* the meaning of ‘armoury’, Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.248.

<sup>82</sup> The translation depends on the context of the spell.

<sup>83</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.248.

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“Acclamation of praise to *Re*, as the crew of the barque sail, and Apophis is overthrown .... rejoice over him at the driving away of his enemies”<sup>84</sup>.

**D- Seth and the Book of Amduat.**

The creation of the universe by the demiurge did not make the Nun, it was only pushed to the limits of the created world as well as all that was not created. In Nun, at twilight, *Re* disappears into the western horizon; *Re* regenerates there and Apophis attacks his barque. Only at dawn Apophis will be defeated, and the victorious sun will be reborn on the eastern horizon.<sup>85</sup> Thus, creation is not completed, but is renewed every day.<sup>86</sup> During these various attacks represented in Amduat, *Re* often involves one of his crew members, the most emblematic of whom is Seth; In this function, he is also referred to as "the chosen one of *Re*."<sup>87</sup>

Seth is the violent aspect of *Re*. According to Te Velde, each of the crew expresses an aspect of *Re* himself when they occupy a place in the sun barque. One characteristic

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<sup>84</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.316.

<sup>85</sup> About Apophis' mythology that might be inspired or mirrored by the Northern constellation *Htp-Rdwy*, and that could explain why the primary sources ascribe the realm of Apophis to the celestial sphere more frequently than to the Underworld and why he is said to threaten and attack the sun god anywhere in the sky, at nearly any stage and time of the solar journey, see: Stemmler-Harding, *Devil in Disguise*, p. 95-112; Priskin, in: *ENiM* 12, 2019, p. 137-180.

<sup>86</sup> Fortier, *Le voyage de Rê et sa lutte contre Apophis*, p. 277.

<sup>87</sup> Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*, p. 99, 107, n. 4.

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of *Re* is his aggressive actions towards his opponents, in this case it is Apophis. It must be emphasized that Seth is not the only hero and assistant to *Re* in the fight with Apophis. But the reason that Seth was often chosen for this mission wasn't because he was as friendly and good as the other gods, but rather that he was just as aggressive as other mythical characters, even surpassing them in aggressiveness and brutality. As the infamous boisterous deity and opponent of Horus and murderer of Osiris, he was well suited to do the difficult mission.<sup>88</sup>

Here, we encounter two striking things to observe: Depiction of Seth for the first time - not as before the deceased repelling snakes in scenes of the Coffin Texts and Book of the Dead - standing at the prow of *Re*'s barque defeating the dark serpent Apophis; the second is representing the snake – the enemy of *Re*- with its explicit and well-known name, i.e., Apophis and as well with other names. The title of the 7<sup>th</sup> Hour reflects the events that will take place here:

*Rn n wnt nt grḥ sšmt ntr pn ʕz ḥsft ḥiw ḥskt nḥz-ḥr*

“The name of the Hour of the night guiding this great god is: repelling *ḥiw* (i.e., The Evil One) and beheading *nḥz-ḥr* (i.e., the Horrible Face)”<sup>89</sup>

According to the nature of this region, the sun-god here will acquire another form to move away from Apophis, due to the magic of Isis<sup>90</sup> and Seth:

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<sup>88</sup> See: *Te Velde, Seth, God of Confusion*, p.106.

<sup>89</sup> Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*, p.218.

<sup>90</sup> Isis takes part in the execration of Apophis from the prow of the solar barque by reciting magical spells according to the caption to this scene. However, some documents from the Late Period show an iconographic variant: the goddess holding a knife or a harpoon

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*iw ntr pn iry.f ky irw r tpht tn stnm.f w3t r 3pp m hk3w  
3st hk3w smsw*

“This god assumes another form at this cavern. He turns away from Apophis through the magic of Isis and the Eldest Magician”.<sup>91</sup>

The sun-god could proceed on his way, apart from water has been swallowed by Apophis, as Isis and Seth are there, helping him:

*3pp.f hr w3t tn iwty mw.s iwty st3w.s skdd.f m hk3w 3st  
Hk3w Smsw m 3hw tpy-r3 n ntr pn ds.f irr.t(w) šct 3pp  
m dw3t r krrt tn*

“He proceeds on this way, which is without any water, without (the possibility of) towing. He sails by the magic of Isis and the Eldest Magician, and by the magical power which is in the mouth of this (great) god himself. The slaughtering of Apophis is done in the Netherworld at this cavern”.<sup>92</sup>

In the middle register of this 7<sup>th</sup> Hour, the sun-barque is separated from the rest of the register by a double line, and from now on, the sun-god is encircled by the protecting serpent *Mhn*.<sup>93</sup> The crew is reinforced with the

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and cutting the throat of Apophis, see: Régen, *Quand Isis met à mort Apophis*, pp. 247-271.

<sup>91</sup> Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*. p. 217.

<sup>92</sup> Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*. p. 218-9.

<sup>93</sup> About the serpent god *Mhn*, best known as protector of the sun god during his nightly journey, and the secret knowledge referred to in (*CT VI 77d, i*) as *št3w Mhn* "the mysteries of Mehen", the barque of Mehen that encircles nine concentric roads and the Old Kingdom coiled-serpent game which is a means of transformation

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goddess Isis <sup>94</sup> and the Eldest Magician *Hkꜣw Smsw*, namely Seth, <sup>95</sup> standing at the prow, using their magical power to enchant Apophis. The text above reads as:

*skdd ntr pn ꜣ m niwt tn m wꜣt nt krrt Wsir hr stꜣw m  
hkꜣw ꜣst Hkꜣw Smsw r stnm wꜣt r nhꜣ-hr iw ir.t(w) nn  
hkꜣw ꜣst hkꜣw smsw n hsf ꜣpp hr Rꜥ m imnt*

“This great god passes along in this place on the path of the cavern of Osiris, being elevated by the magic of Isis and the Eldest Magician, <sup>96</sup> to turn away from ‘*Nhꜣ-hr*’.” <sup>97</sup>

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to rebirth through a process of journey, see: Piccione, in: *JARCE* 27, P.43-52.

<sup>94</sup> N. 505 in: Abt & Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife*, p.90.

<sup>95</sup> N.507, Abt & Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife*, p.90. The crew of the barge has remained the same in numbers, but the deities shown in the previous Hour “*nbt-wiꜣ*” “the Mistress of the barque” is replaced by Isis (n.505) and *wꜣ-wꜣwt* “Wepwawet” is replaced by the “Eldest Magician” *Hkꜣw-Smsw*, (n.507). Both are supposed to ward off Apophis with their magical spells and let the sun barque drive safely along the muddy water-bared roadway, see Hornung, *Das Amduat*, Teil II, S.131.

<sup>96</sup> According to Hornung, it is not known how old the figure of the *Hkꜣw-Smsw* is; in his point of view, it was perhaps first created for the Amduat, in order to give Seth the proper place in the sun barque as a helper against Apophis. But *Hkꜣw-Smsw* was mentioned before in (CT VII 457a, j-1) in connection with Apophis: *ꜣpp ts.f ... dd-mdw in Hkꜣ-smsw iw.k tr r sbw ir mꜣꜣ it.f hr.ti hr.k* “Apophis and his backbone ... Recitations by the Eldest Magician: ‘You shall go; for he who sees his father is fallen because of you’”. See *LGG* V 555.

<sup>97</sup> For his roles, as an enemy of gods such as *Re*, Horus, Osiris, of the king and of the dead, and as well as in his beneficial role, see: Sayed in: *BIFAO* 81, p. 119-140.

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This magic of Isis and the Eldest Magician is enacted to ward off Apophis from *Re* in the west”.<sup>98</sup>

The huge serpent Apophis facing the barque, is already bound and transfixed with knives. At his head stands the goddess Selket,<sup>99</sup> and at his tail a god holding his chains.

<sup>100</sup>Enchanting Apophis - carried out just only by the magical words coming forth from the mouth of Isis and Seth-<sup>101</sup> becomes later being done by word and deed. This is the development that occurred and was applied later in those scenes depicting Apophis repelling Apophis through a lance in hand as mentioned above.

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<sup>98</sup> Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*. P.228-9.

<sup>99</sup> The scorpion-goddess Selket throws fetters around the snake body, N. 516: Abt & Hornung, *Knowledge for the Afterlife*, p.90. About the temple reliefs of the New Kingdom that show the Scorpion goddess Selkis, the role she plays, being depicted in the temple reliefs as part of the so-called Sed-fest symbols, her appearing together with the goddesses Isis, Nephthys and Neith on royal sarcophagi, coffins from private individuals, on canopy boxes and jars, see: Stoof, in: *AF* 23.

<sup>100</sup> N. 517: *hry-dsw.f* ‘He above his knives’. Similar to the idea of this scene, two group of four gods carrying paddles are found in the 12<sup>th</sup> Hour- Lower Register. The text above stresses their struggle against Apophis who is driven away a last time before sunshine: *ntsn hsfw ʿzpp m izbt pt m-ht mswt ntr* “They are those who fend Apophis in the eastern sky after the birth of the god”, see: Warburton, *The Egyptian Amduat*. p.375.

<sup>101</sup> However, Seth isn't the only defender of *Re*. In Chapter [39] of the Book of the Dead, other gods are involved in the fight as the gods of the south, north, west, and east who cast him down.

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### Discussion :

When tracing the vignettes attached to these spells, we have to mention that some of these scenes are supposed to be relevant to the context, while others are not. Furthermore, it is important to observe that some of these scenes come from the late period and the Ptolemaic period.<sup>102</sup>

- The vignette of Chapter [7] (Dynasty 18) depicts the deceased spears a coiled snake (Fig.8).
- The vignette of Chapter [33] (Ptolemaic period) depicts the dead spears a coiled snake (Fig. 9).
- The vignette of Chapter [35] (Ptolemaic period) depicts the deceased spears a snake (Fig. 10).
- The vignette of Chapter [39] (Ptolemaic period) depicts a man spears a snake (Fig. 11).
- The vignette of chapter [108] (Dynasty 19) depicts a serpent facing deity with plumed crown (as if the god Osiris) on a mountain (Fig. 12).<sup>103</sup>

But as for chapters [34], [111] and [140], the vignettes of which do not entirely reflect the content of the titles of these spells. Some vignettes, as in chapter [10] (Dynasty 19) depicts the deceased spears a serpent symbolic of any force hostile to the dead, apart from neither the title nor the context has to do with snakes (Fig. 13).<sup>104</sup> The

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<sup>102</sup> About Late period Book of the Dead: See publication Mosher, *An Intriguing Theban Book of the Dead Tradition in the Late Period (BMSAES 15, 2010)*.

<sup>103</sup> The vignette of this spell is not always the same, as those attached to the spell from the 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> dynasties and Ptolemaic Period are all different. See, Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.238.

<sup>104</sup> Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 37, 40. But the title of the spell is: *r n [.....] ..... r hftyw.f* “spell for [.....] **Magda Gad**

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vignette of Chapter [37] (Ptolemaic period) as well depicts the deceased repulsing with two spears an undulating serpent which represents the two *mrty* - Songstress-snakes (Fig. 14). The title of the spell says: *r n ḥsf mrty* “spell for repelling the two Chant-goddesses”.<sup>105</sup>

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..... (to go forth) against his enemies, might refer to a kind of threat to the dead.

<sup>105</sup> Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.110. Quirke mentions that in this spell repelling hostile forces is turned here to *mrty*, the female companions of solar kingship and in which the dead has to be identified with Horus to pass them in order to see *Osiris*. Of greater importance as well is to say that, using spears in not confined only on repelling snakes, but we encounter spearing other hostile forces as: The crocodile in chapter 31 (Dynasty 18 & 19) and chapter 32 (cf. same spell with little variation: late Dynast 21): *r n ḥsf mshii r itt ḥkzw n N m-ḥf m ḥrt-ntr* “spell for repelling a crocodile which comes to take away N’s word-power from him in the realm of dead”: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.102; the beetle in chapter 36 (Dynasty 19 & Ptolemaic Period): *r n ḥsf ḥpšyt*: “Spell for repelling a bug”: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.109. In another version of this spell (Dynasty 18 & 19), its vignette depicts the deceased spearing a pig and a snake which would ham him: Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 59; and also spearing a symbolic representation of the hieroglyph *št* ‘slaughter’ topped by a snake in chapter 41, the donkey-swallower in chapter 40 (Dynasty 18 & 19 & Ptolemaic Period): *r n ḥsf ḥm ḥz* “Spell for repelling the donkey-swallower”: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, p.116. cf. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 62. See as well Vandenberg, *Sur les pas de l’âne dans la religion égyptienne*, chapter 11.

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By some means, spearing to repel hostile entities is evident in many vignettes. But except two of which that are of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> dynasties and which represent repulsing snakes, all are dated back to Late period and the Ptolemaic Period. These scenes usually depict the deceased, not once the god Seth.

### **Conclusion :**

The positive role of Seth repulsing Apophis transmitted through various stages. He in the Pyramid Texts, the god who cuts different snakes with many names up; while in the Coffin Texts he is one of the sun-god barque crew, repulses snakes, and defends *Re* against the snake *Whn. f.* When it comes to the Book of the Dead, it is different, as each spell has its own text accompanied by its own vignette attached to it. Spells are divided into three: The first is generally related to snakes, which are dangerous to the dead because they fear being bitten or devoured by them.

The second is the spells about: the snake Rerek destined to eat what *Re* detests; the seventh mound of the underworld where he lives, and the danger of the snake - given this time the name Apophis - against the barque of the sun god that Seth must fend off. Finally, the third of which are the texts that mention Apophis clearly and directly: the sandbank of Apophis, Seth repels Apophis, Seth rejoices when Apophis is bitten, and an imaginary text that depict - in words - the battle in which Seth spears Apophis and his prowess to allow the barque to sail unimpeded.

Then arises the question, which comes first? Did the scenes representing the deceased spearing snakes appear first? And did the Book of Amduat adopt later this

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attitude coping the scene with modification replacing Seth instead of the deceased? Or did the scenes first depicted in the New Kingdom royal tombs and then later was adopted into the spells of the Book of the dead?

Depending on the materials in hand, I assume that the kings adopted the scenes representing the dead repelling snakes in the Book of the Dead, and making modification by replacing Seth instead of the deceased, the scene which becomes popular later.<sup>106</sup>

The god Seth who stands on the prow of the sun- god barque as one of its crew, doing nothing but reciting words by which he and Isis preventing Apophis from harming *Re*, is in other scenes standing upon the prow of the solar barque mimicking the previous and early scenes of the dead repelling snakes in the vignettes of the Book of the Dead. He is directing a lance in hand against Apophis<sup>107</sup> to cause him to cough up all that he had swallowed.<sup>108</sup> What supports and confirms this view is that, the Book of Gates lacks scenes similar to that found in Book of the Amduat.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> See Piankoff, *Mythological Papyri*, where the scenes much adopted from *Book of Amduat*, *Gates*, and *Book of the Dead* that dated back to the 21<sup>st</sup> Dynasty.

<sup>107</sup> Behind the boat, a lion-headed entity runs a blade through the serpent Apophis. See: Piankoff, *Mythological Papyri*, pl.2.

<sup>108</sup> See Te. Velde, Seth, *God of Confusion*, Pl. VII.

<sup>109</sup> According to 13<sup>th</sup> scene of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Hour, lower Register, we see the God Atum leaning on a staff, confronting the multi-coiled serpent ꜥꜣꜣ Apophis, before him is the nine blessed dead named as: *dꜣdꜣt ꜥꜣꜣ* “the council that drives away Apophis”: (Hornung & Abt, *the Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 83); accordingly, who repels Apophis is the council and as well Atum who speaks to

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Summing up what was stated above: Repelling snakes was first attested in the Pyramid Texts. Then appeared the spells that are recited against the Rerek - serpent, named also as Apophis. the danger of this snake was highlighted in the Coffin Texts as the fiend of the sun-god barque, where he -for the first time- faced by Seth as a defender of Re.

According to Hussain, the meaning and purpose of genre PT 226-234 go beyond protecting the king to a cosmic and mythical meaning; it refers to the mythical conflict between *Re* and the chaos represented by Apophis.<sup>110</sup>

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the snake Apophis saying: *mꜣꜥ-ḥrw.i r,k ḏr.i tw n Rꜥ* “I have triumphed against you, I have driven you away on behalf of *Re*”: (Hornung & Abt, *the Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 84). Also is enchanted Apophis by the *Nbw-ḥrt*, when saying: *wnw tꜣ n Rꜥ ḥtmw tꜣ r ꜥꜣpp* “open is the earth for *Re*, sealed is the earth against Apophis”: (Scene 14: Hornung & Abt, *the Egyptian Book of Gates*, p. 87). Other scenes depict other deities responsible for destroying the snake Apophis; as we see twelve gods carrying forked sticks whom *Re* ordered to thrust them into the body of Apophis; (Scene 34: Hornung & Abt, *the Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.198-201), fourteen deities enchant Apophis cutting him to pieces: (Scene 66: Hornung & Abt, *the Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.352), three gods with spears to prevent the multi-coiled Apophis from approaching the sun-god barque: ( Scene 67: Hornung & Abt, *the Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.354-5); and finally, Selket and sons of Horus punishing the children of Apophis:( Scene 69: Hornung & Abt, *the Egyptian Book of Gates*, p.376).

<sup>110</sup> See: Hussein, *The Saite Pyramid Texts Copies in the Memphite and Heliopolitan Shaft-Tombs* 277. These spells contain references to the sun and its actions against the serpent. Among them is *PT* 229a, *ꜥnt tw nn nt tm* (this is the nail of Atum), which calls to mind the vignette of chapter [17] of the Book of the Dead that depicts the sun in the form of a cat killing the serpent Apophis, see: Hussein, *Études et Travaux*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 289.

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Accordingly, the snakes mentioned in these texts of the Pyramid Texts could be the dawn of the emergence of the "belief" of Apophis. Therefore, it would be as well the beginning of the emergence of the idea that represents Seth killing Apophis.

The deceased interacts with *Re* in the Middle Kingdom Coffin Texts to defend him against snakes. In other spells, the deceased was incarnated by the god Seth, so in these spells related to the protection of *Re*, the deceased can also be incarnated by Seth, reflecting the idea that may have appeared before in the Old Kingdom Pyramid Texts.

While in the New Kingdom Book of the Dead, referring to Seth is evident in too many spells but not once with a vignette depicting him, always represented is the deceased.

Spells of the Book of the Dead were recited to protect generally the deceased from snakes lest to be bitten or eaten. Other spells were recited against Rerek, which might be first a name for 'snake' then became as another name of Apophis, some of which begins with '*r n hsf Rrk*' and within the text we find that Seth, the god who repels it. Moreover, the texts mention explicitly the god Seth spearing Apophis through a lance in hand which is depicted later in various scenes.

Although not all serpents are Apophis and Seth is not found in the vignettes or in the accompanying text, any later belief must have an origin. Therefore, it appears that the killing of Apophis was inspired by the killing of snakes in early texts; and the deceased was replaced later

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by Seth who is the best to carry out this mission in the realm of mythology.

Seth is to be depicted for the first time in the Book of Amduat, as said before, just using the utterances comes forth from his mouth to defend *Re*. But using enchanting words, becomes later, developed into a scene representing him repulsing Apophis with a metal lance in hand; therefore, the word converted into a deed, an action.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. Seth was replaced by Horus in this action: see (Fig.18.) from the coffin of Nespawershepi, chief scribe of the Temple of Amun, The sun god *Re* in his solar barque and the daily killing of the serpent Apophis by Horus - *ndt it.f ntr ʿ3 nb imntt* 'Horus the avenger of his father, the great god, lord of the west' - instead of Seth. 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty.

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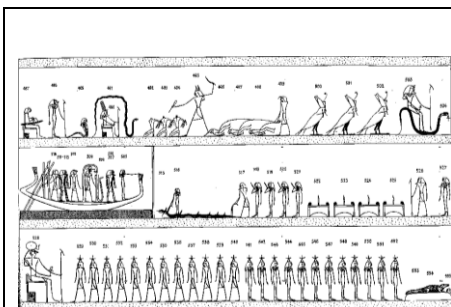


Fig. 1: Amduat. 7<sup>th</sup> Hour (After: Warburton, the Egyptian Amduat p.214-5)



Fig. 2: Stele of Taqayna (Dyn. XVIII) Leiden. Rijksmuseum Van Oudheden [06/001], AP 60 (After: Te Velde, Seth, God of Confusion, Pl. 8, fig.2)

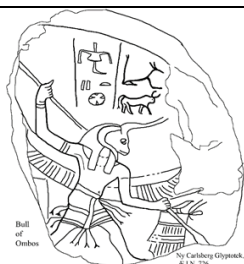


Fig. 3a: Stela (Limestone, H. 22 cm.) New Kingdom, probably Dyn. XIX. Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Æ.I.N. 726.

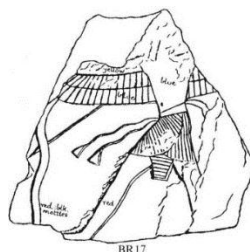


Fig. 3b: Stela from the Temple of Ramesses II at Matmar (After: Izak, The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al, Pl. 44, 43)



Fig. 4: Ramesside scarab from Tell el-Far'ah (After: Izak, The Iconography of the Canaanite Gods Reshef and Ba'al, Pl. 50 [BM 78])

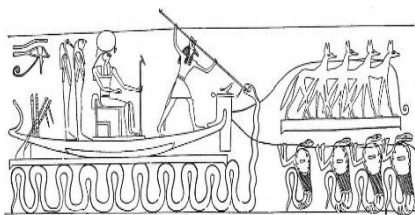


Fig. 5a: Papyrus of Her-Uben B Dyn. XIX (After: Piankoff & Rambova, Mythological Papyri, fig. 54)

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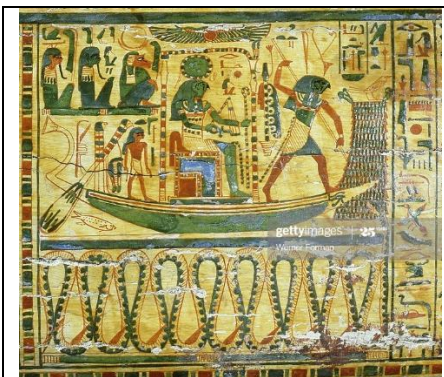


Fig. 5b: Coffin of 21<sup>st</sup> dynasty  
(From the net:

<https://www.alamy.com/detail-from-coffin-of-Nespawershepi>)



Fig. 6: Seth spears the serpent enemy beneath his feet (After: Davie, The Temple of Hibis in El Khargeh Oasis, Hypostyle N. West wall, Northernmost Bay)



Fig. 7: The stela of Seth from Amheida, the Ptolemaic or Roman period (After: Kaper, The sacred landscape, fig. 15)



Fig. 8: BD chapter 7 (After: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, prt m hrw, 23)



Fig.9: BD chapter 33(After: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight*, prt m hrw, 106; Faulkner, *The Ancient Book of the Dead*, p. 59)



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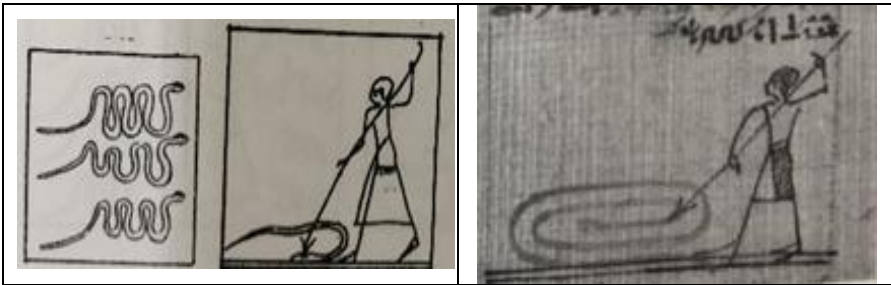


Fig. 10: BD chapter 35 (After: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw*, 108; Faulkner, *The Ancient Book of the Dead*, p. 59)

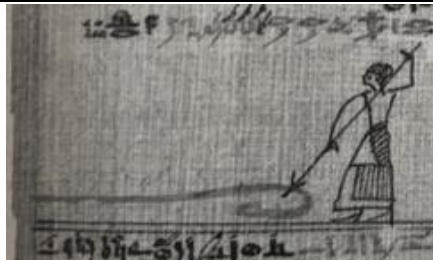


Fig. 11: BD chapter 39 (After: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw*, 113)



Fig. 12: BD chapter 108 (After: Quirke, *Going out in Daylight, prt m hrw*, 238)



Fig. 13: BD chapter 10 (After: Faulkner, *The Ancient Book of the Dead*, p. 40)



Fig. 14: BD chapter 37 (After: Faulkner, *The Ancient Book of the Dead*, p. 60)