

Introduction

(From the forthcoming **Images of Set: Changing Impressions of a Multi-faceted God**
by Joan Ann Lansberry)

Art tells the story!



(Traced from a photo in "Creation on the Potter's Wheel at the Eastern Horizon of Heaven"
by Peter F. Dorman in *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente*.)

It is only to a superficial viewer that the art of ancient Egypt, which spans roughly 3000 years, seems to never change. Spend some time looking at their art, and soon subtle differences start pointing to their time of creation. Those artistic changes reflect the cultural changes, of which there were many. Periods of stability were interwoven with periods of relative instability. When the civilization rebounded after each one of the three 'Intermediate periods', it never returned exactly to the way things were before. Thus, the art of the Old Kingdom will not likely be confused with the art of the Ptolemaic period.

Studying the art reveals surprising details about the ancient Egyptians' daily lives. Their attempts to provide for the KA (*an aspect of the soul*) of their loved ones who had passed on show vignettes of everyday life which they did their best to insure would continue in the afterlife. Their recreations are depicted on the tomb walls. Most endearing is Sennefer's "tomb of vines", in which the uneven ceiling, decorated as a grape vine arbor, evinces the sense of walking under real foliage. In this way, Sennefer, who was a gardener, could enjoy his vineyards in perpetuity.

From such obvious descriptions, the imagery goes on to more subtle references. How the ancients felt about their world and the gods who created it were encoded into the art via symbols having a double meaning combining the obvious with the hidden. Only the educated would understand the hidden implications. Religion was inseparable from art. Indeed, even their written language, which today we call 'hieroglyphs' after the Greek words for 'sacred engravings', was called *mdw·w-ntr* (*medu-netjer*) or 'the god's words'. As they did not envision a huge gulf between wretched man and holy god, evolved

people, drawing on the divine within themselves, could employ such words. The symbolic aspects of the glyphs were not limited to only the words, but also the imagery of the people and gods. Their poses which match the hieroglyphs reveal the deeper symbolism. An artist today usually has his subject pose in a naturalistic manner, with nothing further being conveyed by that pose, except perhaps something of his personality.

The pose is meaningful! By his stance as he stands in the solar boat, Ramesses IX is rejoicing, for Set at the head of the ship will be able to vanquish his foes so he can safely pass.

He is in the pose of the hieroglyph 'hai', which denotes 'rejoicing'.

Thus it is we can study Set's imagery through out ancient Egypt's long history and see just how people's views of Set both changed and stayed the same through out the ages.

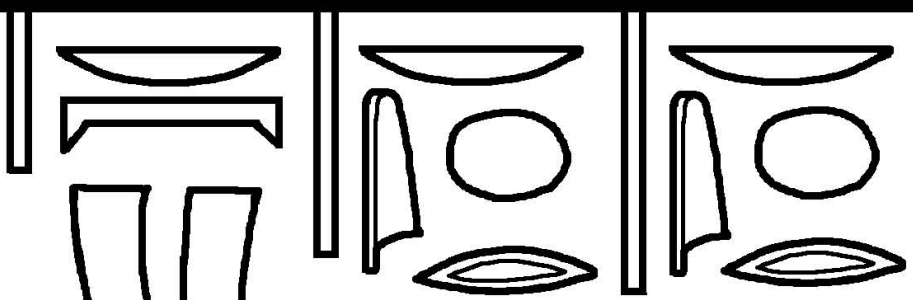
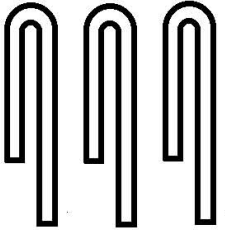
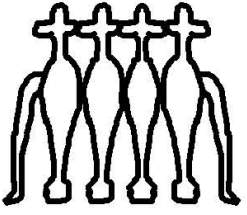
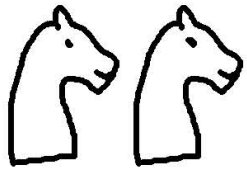
The god Set (*aka Seth*) has been much of a puzzle to Egyptologists. If we go with the attitude of later Egyptians, we find Set blamed for every misfortune that can befall humanity. However, if we go with the attitude of earlier times, in particular the Ramesside period, when Egypt was at its peak in prosperity, we find a completely different picture. For we find a god who was very much adored. Most of the surviving imagery is from that period, although even in Ptolemaic and Roman times we occasionally find a piece that was a part of worship and magical rites. Set was always seen as 'Great of Power', even when he was feared. Putting all his imagery together, placing it in chronological context, sheds new light on the Dark god.

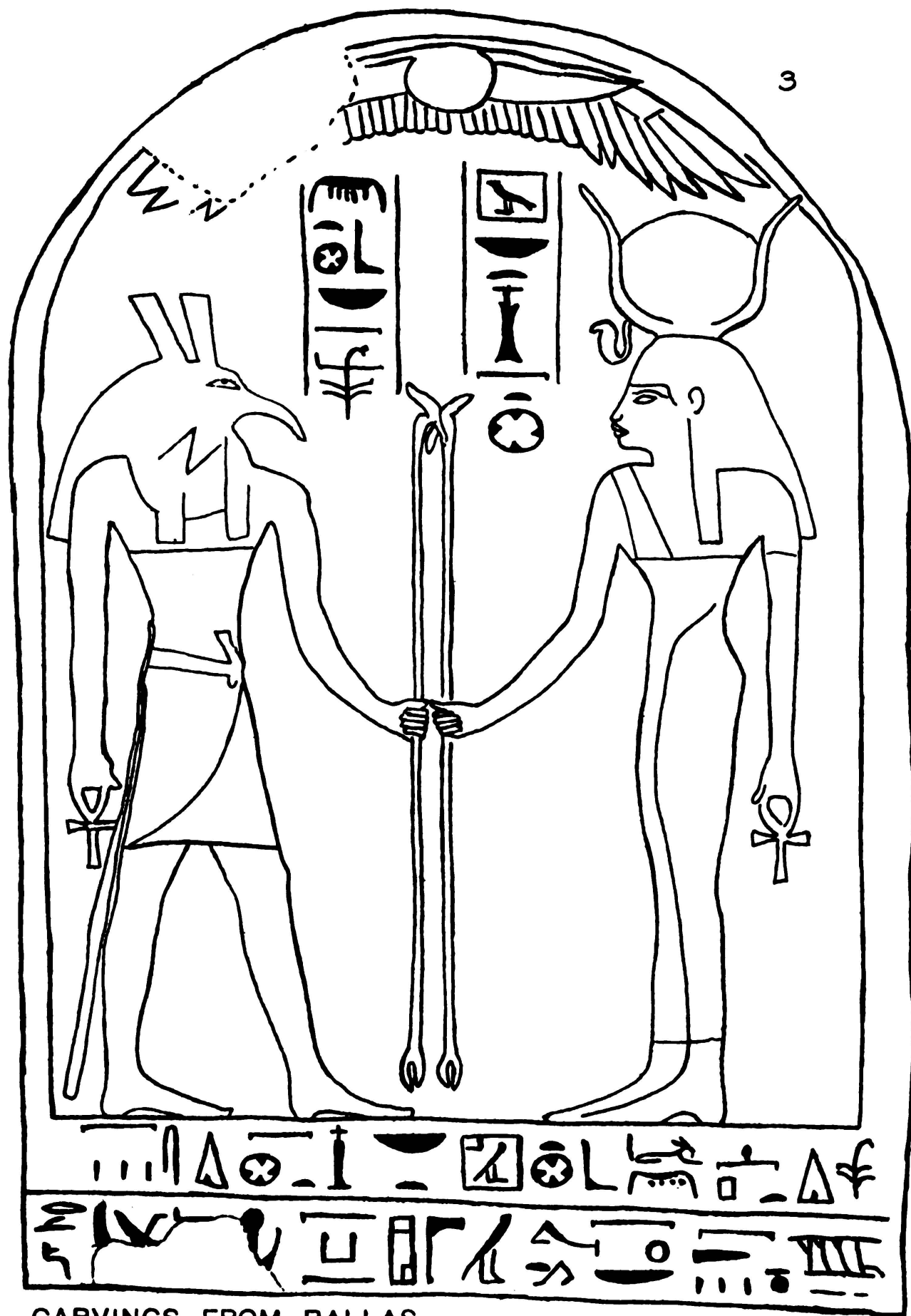
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*And that is what Joan Ann Lansberry does in **Images of Set: Changing Impressions of a Multi-faceted God**. We start at the very beginning and see what remains consistent and what changes in the iconography of Set. In ninety three illustrations, most created by the author herself, we see the image of Set as it evolves through the ages. We also get an idea how ancient Egypt's wisdom is currently meaningful for people today.*

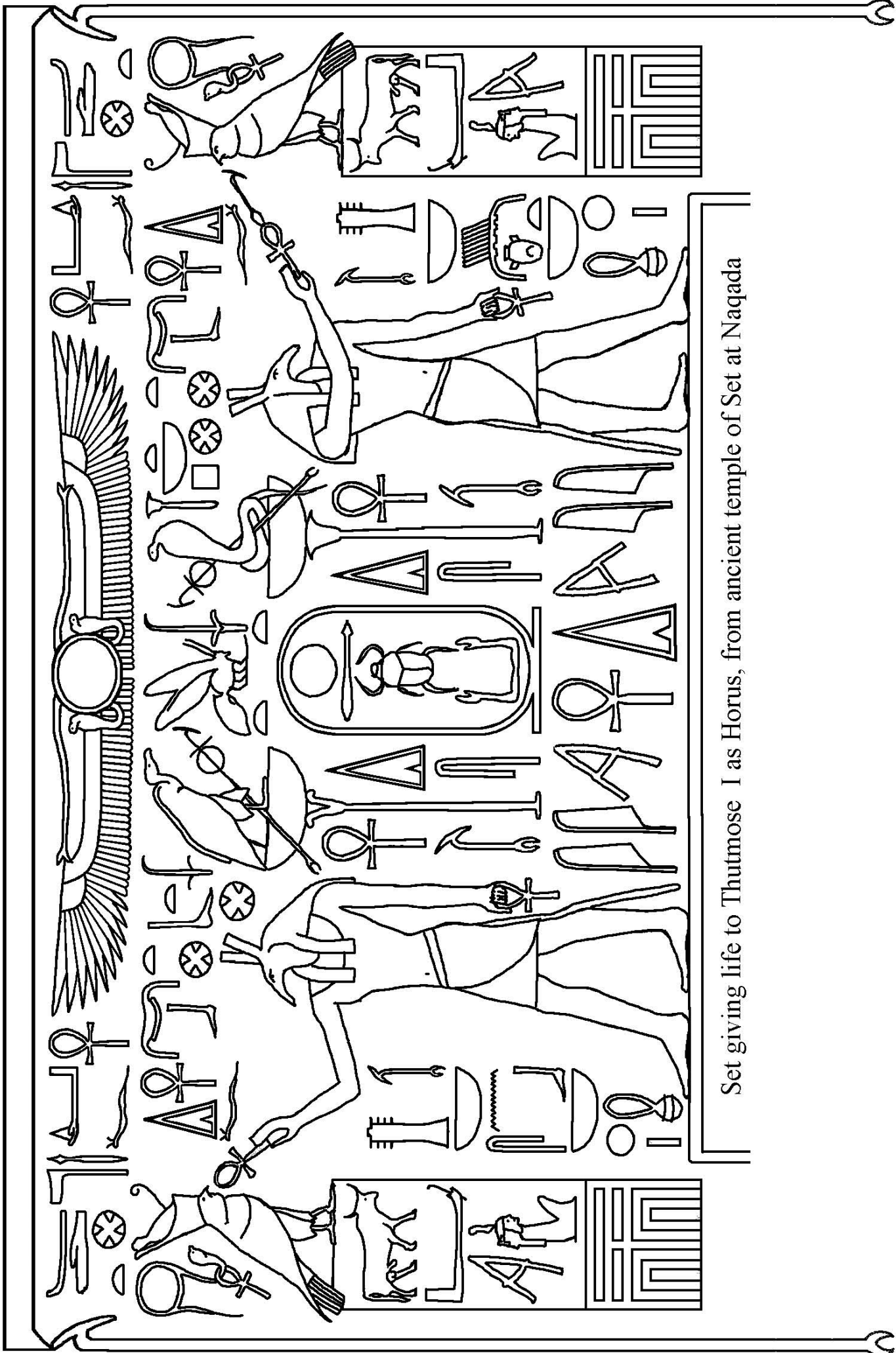
Stay tuned for further announcement of the book's release!

Meanwhile, here are a few illustrations you can print and color as you desire:





CARVINGS FROM BALLAS.



Set giving life to Thutmose I as Horus, from ancient temple of Set at Naqada

(Set and Hathor illustration from Petrie's **Naqada and Ballas**)
Print extra pages and color them if you like!



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