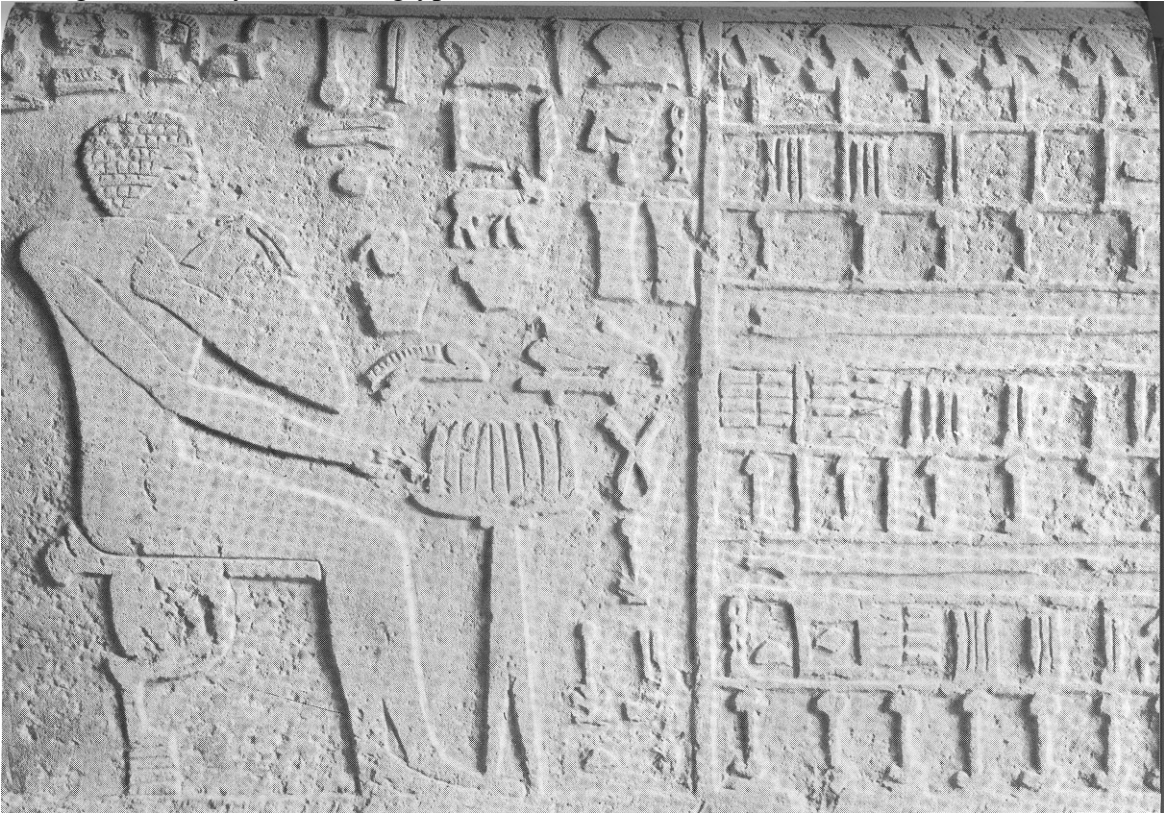


## Second Dynasty Stela of Priest Named 'Set is Beautiful'

I was scanning Toby A. H. Wilkinson's *Early Dynastic Egypt*, in which he asserts the popularity of Set during the early dynasties. He described some examples, and I easily hunted a couple down at their respective museums. They weren't very exciting, one being crude, and the other missing its head. But Wilkinson gave hint of better, a "late Second Dynasty inscribed stone slab from Helwan[which] belonged to a royal priest called Nfr-Sts, 'Seth is beautiful', (Saad 1957: 51-3, pl. XXX [no. 25])", pg 295. I was determined to find this, so I noted the author quoted, 'Saad'. I wasn't able to find the 1957 book, but I did locate one from 1969. Perhaps *The Excavations at Helwan* by Zaki Y. Saad would have this 'stone slab'.

Nowhere in this book did I find mention of this priest. But I did find an intriguing stela, and I gazed closely at its hieroglyphs:



"Stela found in tomb 247 H.6 showing a figure dressed in a long robe tied at the shoulder, seated at a table surrounded by funerary offerings"

He gives no mention of who that figure is. But I had my suspicions. I gazed closely at its hieroglyphs. Being from the Old Kingdom, they weren't the usual ones for Set, or even 'beautiful'. TeVelde in *Seth, God of Confusion*, shows the usual phonetic characters:

Many different forms of the name of Seth occur in the Egyptian texts.<sup>1)</sup> In the texts of the pyramids, except in the Unas pyramid, it is written: *štš*.<sup>a)</sup>





The first letter is usually ś, less often s. Whenever the ś or s is written, the t is written also. Other signs show more variation. Often combined with one of the usual determinatives of gods or one of the different forms of the Seth-animal as a more special determinative the various spellings are as follows: śtš; stš; śth; sth; ś(ω)th; śth; ś(ω)t(y); st(y); śt.°)



Let's have a closer look at those hieroglyphs:



They are rather unusual. However, a booklet I'd bought at the Met museum last May gave me a clue: *The Evolution of Composite Hieroglyphs in Ancient Egypt*, by Henry G. Fischer, Metropolitan Museum Journal, Vol. 12) The Old Kingdom often made composites, combining glyphs and ideas. Thus, they've done so with 'nefer' and 'neter':

**nefer** =  "god" =  **composite**  
**'beautiful god'**

Thus, we have a determinative of a god. Now what about the rest of the letters?

**s** =  **or**  **th** =   
**from Budge's 2 Vol. Dictionary**

An expected 'S', per TeVelde, is there. And although the usual 'T' isn't there, a hieroglyph with a 'th' sound value is. Thus, it is most likely this is the stela of the royal priest "Seth is Beautiful".

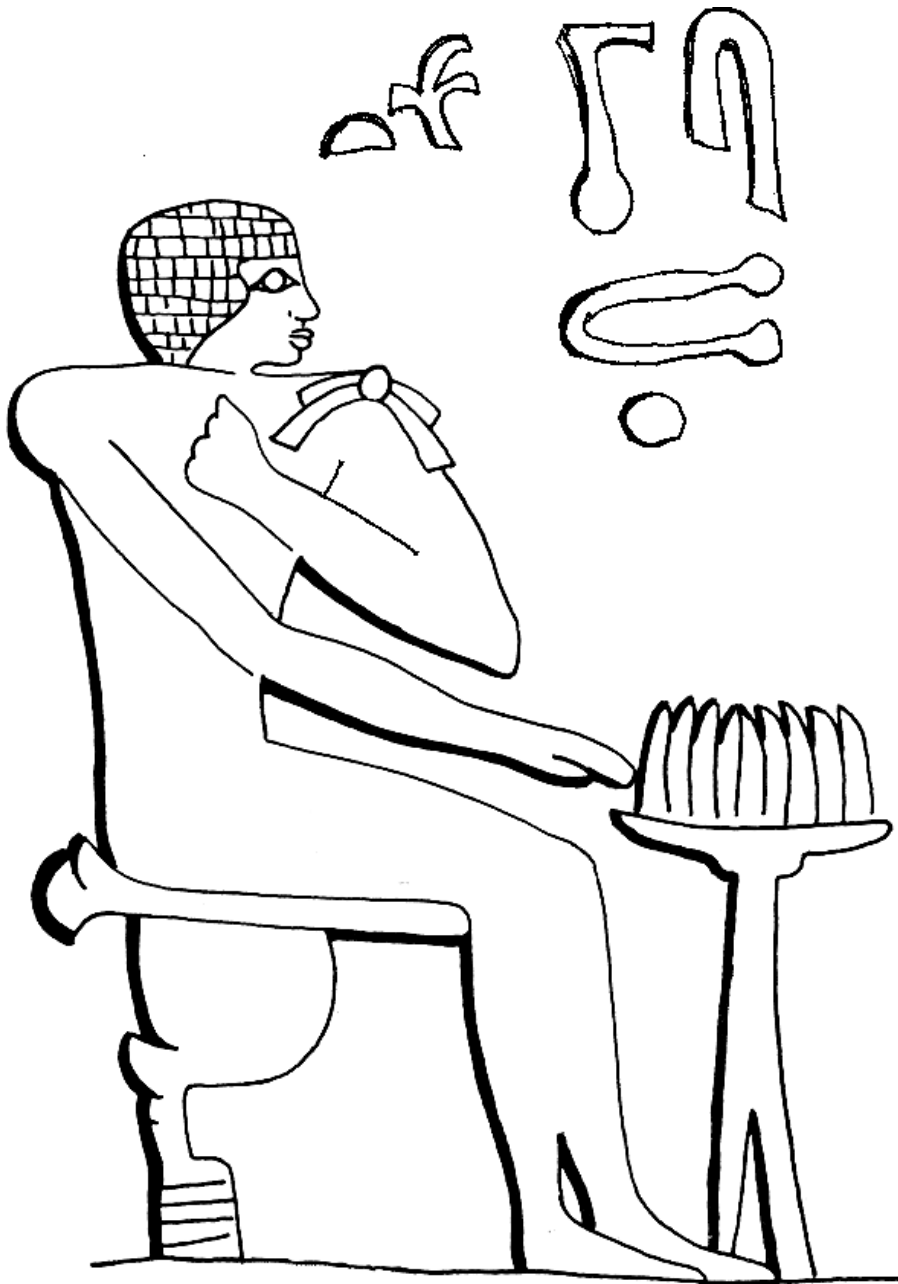


Figure 4

This is a clarifying line drawing in Saad's book, however I added the hieroglyphs...

(Compiled by Joan Lansberry, November 2008 )

