

The Earliest Known Representation of the god Osiris. On a block of the Fifth-Dynasty King Djedkare Izezi.

*Courtesy of Professor Klaus Baer, of Chicago, and Professor Jean Leclant, of Paris.*

# THE ORIGINS OF OSIRIS AND HIS CULT

BY

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## ADDENDA


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*The Earliest Representation*

In an initial letter (3 August 1964) Professor Klaus Baer kindly informed me that the relief on a block of Djedkare Izezi was excavated by Abd es-Salâm Hussein and that he (Prof. Baer) saw it in Professor Fakhry's storehouse behind the pyramids at Giza. Professor Baer continued thus:

The figure of Osiris occurs (human headed) in a line of small figures of gods much like those in Jéquier, *Le monument funéraire de Pepi II*, Vol. II, pp. 11, 46-47, 50, 52-54 etc., and presumably from the corresponding room in Djedkarē's temple. The name is slightly damaged, but there cannot be any question as to the reading.

He then indicated the presence of the signs for throne and eye with slight damage which did not put the reading in doubt.

Another scholar who has shown keen interest in this representation is Dr Elisabeth Staehelin, of the University of Basel. She informed me at the Second International Congress of Egyptologists in Grenoble, which was held in September 1979, that she had seen a photograph. Afterwards she was good enough to send me (20 Sept. 1979) a number of comments and also a sketch. She confirms the reading of the name which appears above, and to the right of, the figure of the god. A *was*-sceptre appears further to the right and behind the figure of the god. This sceptre clearly belongs to another god who is now missing. The sign  appears behind the sceptre, and Dr Staehelin believes that this is the *f* of *dī.fnh*, *may he give life*, which relates to the god who followed Osiris. As for the Osiris-figure itself, its lower part is missing, so that the form of the legs can only be guessed at. Certainly the freely hanging left arms suggests that there was nothing mummiform about the figure. A normal human form in a standing posture is indicated, save that the long wig worn by gods is present; in the words of Dr Staehelin we have here 'a god without special characteristics'. There is no suggestion that he is carrying the flail and the crook, although the missing right arm might be holding something.

In spite of a recent severe illness Professor Klaus Baer has again (20 Sept. 1979) very kindly written to me with a promise that a

photograph may prove accessible. The promise was soon fulfilled, and a copy of the photograph, which was taken by the late Ahmed Fakhry (or at least under his supervision) appears as our frontispiece. It is the French Mission at Saqqâra that has taken over Fakhry's material, and Professor Jean Leclant has generously granted permission to reproduce the photograph. It will be noticed that the throne-sign comes first, on this block, in the writing of the name; that is the usual sequence in the Pyramid Texts.

The upshot is that an anthropomorphic Osiris is firmly attested for the end of the Fifth Dynasty. The figure is disappointing in that it shows only one divine attribute — the long wig. Osiris is here *ein Gott ohne Eigenschaften*. That he was sometimes envisaged, at an earlier stage, as a jackal-god is, of course, not ruled out by the block from the pyramid temple of Djedkare.

p. 78 *et al.**The Stela of Ikhernofret*

Rudolf Anthes discusses the Osiris-festival in Abydos, as presented in the reports of Ikhernofret and Neferhotep, in *Festschrift zum 150 jährigen Bestehen des Berliner Ägyptischen Museums* (Berlin, 1974), 15-49. On the burial of the god in Peqer he notes (p. 41) that Neferhotep's text shows that the god, when freed from the sarcophagus, reveals himself as King; and the King recites the old hymn assigned to Horus. Anthes (p. 25) further believes that the festival of Osiris probably took place annually. To him, in spite of the clear connexion with early kingship in Abydos, Osiris was not himself a historical figure: '... Osiris niemals ein Lebender war' (p. 28 n. 17).

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*The Name*

In an article entitled 'Bemerkungen zur Etymologie und Semantik der Götternamen von Isis und Osiris' in *MDAIK* 34 (1978), 9-13 Winfried Barta reviews recent discussions and concludes that the derivation of the second element of the Osiris-name from *iri*, 'to do', is likely and that this