MINISTÈRE DE L'ÉDUCATION NATIONALE, DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR ET DE LA RECHERCHE

BULLETIN
DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS
D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne en ligne

BIFAO 87 (1987), p. 167-169

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A Nineteenth Dynasty Representation of the Winged Djed-Pillar at Abydos.

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A NINETEENTH DYNASTY REPRESENTATION OF THE WINGED DJED-PILLAR AT ABYDOS

Ahmed EL-SAWI

On the wooden anthropoid coffins of the Bubastite Period the representations of the djed-pillar with large wings can be sometimes seen. The representations, not very common, occur on the bottom of the coffin, at a place usually occupied by the figure of the Goddess Nut or Isis [1]. The djed-pillar is depicted in such a way that it seems to enfold the dead in its wings. And the dead is thus put under protection of that powerful emblem of Osiris, sometimes even the personification of the God himself [2].

In this brief communication we want to draw the attention to much earlier and interesting representations of the winged djed-pillar from the temples of Sethi I and Ramesses II at Abydos. One of the examples occurs on the rear wall of a small niche in the Temple of Ramesses II (Fig. 1) [3]. The scene shows Ramesses II anointing the figure of the God Osiris. The King holds in his left hand a golden vessel with the ointment whereas his right arm is raised with the thumb and the little finger stretched in the characteristic gesture of anointing. The figure of the God Osiris, facing the King, stands on the *mꜣʿt*-pedestal. He wears an atef-crown above which his name, *Wśir,* is inscribed. Behind Osiris stands the djed-pillar embracing the God's figure with its large wings [4]. The djed-pillar wears the same crown as Osiris to which only a pair of uraei is added. Between the djed-pillar and Osiris is a vertical inscription reading : «*I give to thee all health*».

From the other scene (Fig. 2), that from the Temple of Sethi I, only the lower part is extant. The scene occurs in the upper register on the western wall of the « Osiris-Hall » [5] and shows Sethi I kneeling in front of the figure of Osiris. Between the God and the King stood an offering table with a bunch of lotus flowers of which only the stand and the lotus stems hanging down are now visible. A beer-jug in a stand, decorated

[1] Mariette, *Dendérah* IV, pl. 66; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods,* p. 187 and figs. 40, 41.

[2] Sethe, *ZÄS* 45 12 ff. and 47 71 f.; Frazer, *The Golden Bough* IV, Vol. II, p. 108 ff.

[3] The southernmost niche in the western wall of the southern statue-hall.

[4] It stands upon the same *mꜣʿt*-pedestal as Osiris.

[5] Calverly-Gardiner, *The Temple of Sethos I at Abydos* III, pl. 10.

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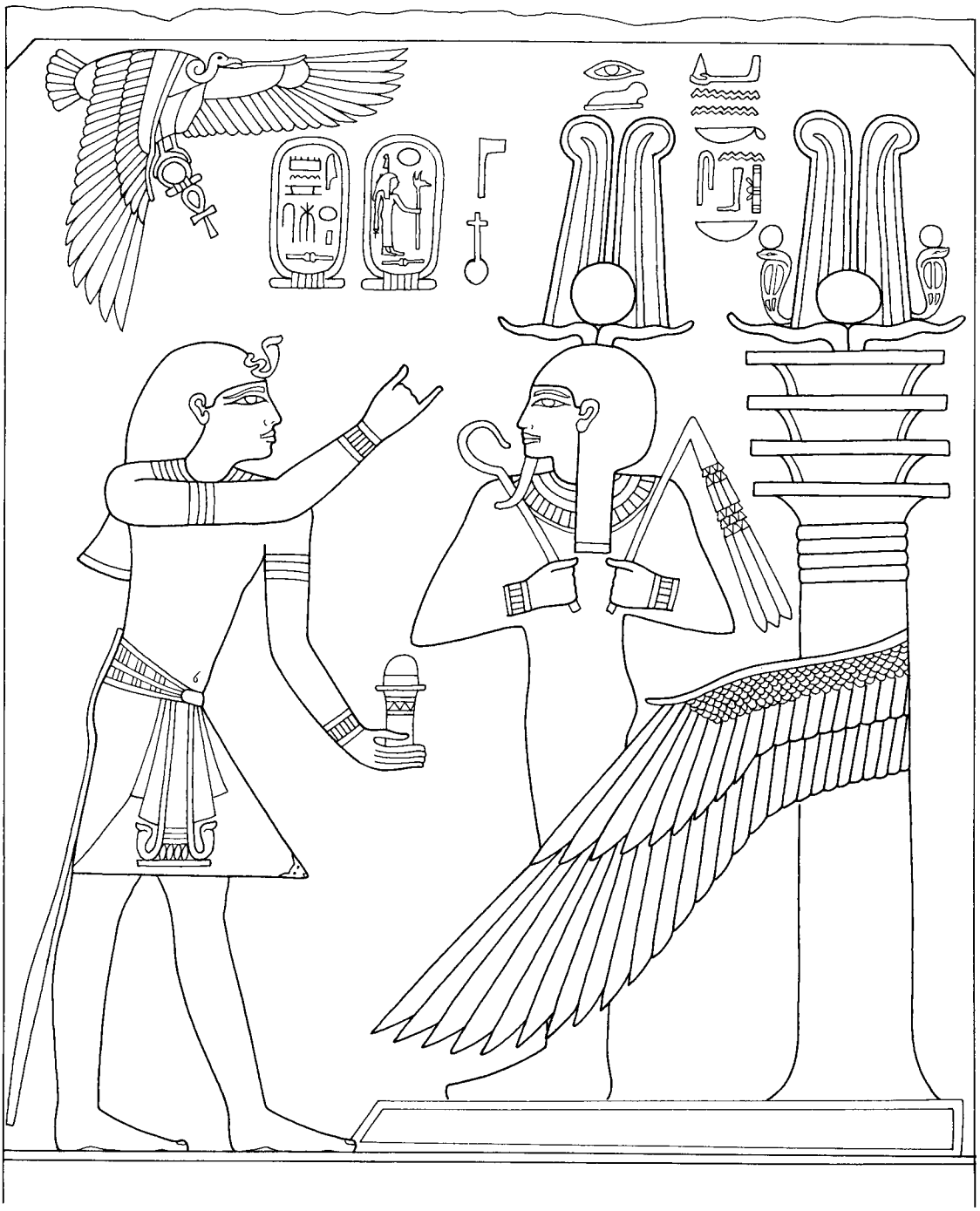


Fig. 1. — Ramesses II anointing Osiris protected by the winged djed-pillar.

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with a lotus bud, stands under the table. The figure of the God Osiris stands upon the *m3t*-pedestal. Behind him, on the same pedestal, stands the winged djed-pillar. Unfortunately, only the feet of the God and the base and the tip of the wing of the djed-pillar are extant, no inscription is preserved.

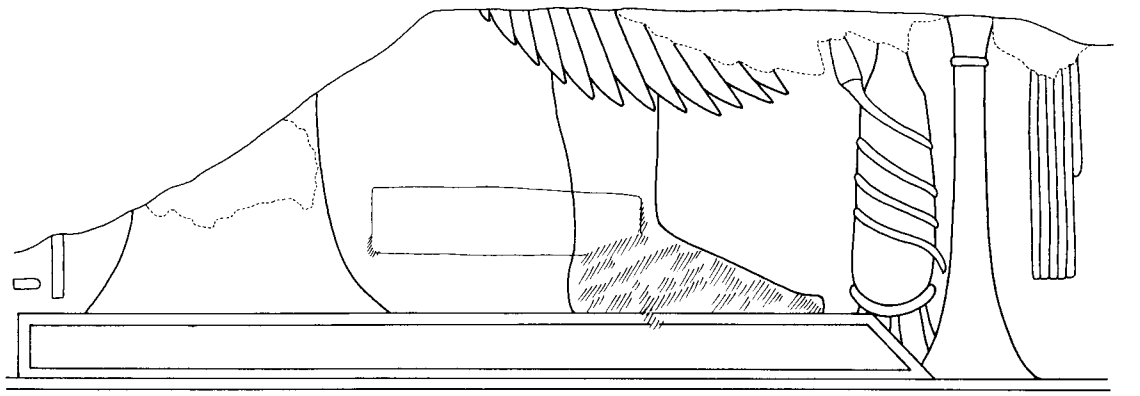


Fig. 2. — Winged djed-pillar protecting Osiris in the temple of Sethi I.

The two above described scenes have a common subject : the djed-pillar protecting the God Osiris [1]. Had e.g. the winged emblem been the « girdle » of Isis, it would be easy to say that the emblem was simply a substitute for the anthropomorphic figure of the Goddess [2]. The djed-pillar, however, was never used as a substitute for the figure of Isis, but as that for Osiris [3]. The above mentioned scenes seem therefore to show Osiris protecting himself, which might be, at first sight, devoid of logic. They had presumably a deeper meaning : the djed-pillar, a symbol of « stability » and « endurance », set up annually during a ceremony in the month of khoiak, evoked the resurrection of Osiris [4]. Therefore, the winged djed-pillar in the above described scenes might represent the power of resurrection innate of Osiris, protecting the perishable mummified form of the God and preserving it for resurrection and eternity [5].

[1] It has the same role in the Bubastite coffins since the dead were always identified with Osiris, see above note 2 p. 167.

[2] W. Budge, *Book of the Dead* (ed. 1977), 522 (a similar emblem, but without wings and surmounted with a female head with a crown occurs in the centre of the eastern wall of the Great Hall of the Osireion; it is clearly a substitute of Isis).

[3] See the scene of the erection of the djed-pillar on the wall of the Osiris Hall in the Temple of Sethi I, on the East wall of the Great Hall of the Temple of Ramses II at Abydos.

[4] Frankfort, *o.c.*, 79, 104 and 193. The text from Denderah (Mariette, *o.c.*, 77) was translated by V. Loret, in : *Internationale Woche für Religionsethnologie* 3 (1922), 414-26; a.o.

[5] Brugsch, Dümichen, *Recueil de monuments égyptiens* I, 15 f.; Mariette, *o.c.*, pls. 35-39.

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