



EMORY

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classroom TUTORIALS

Statue of Standing Osiris



Osiris was the king of the Underworld. He is easily recognized by his mummiform figure, *atef* crown, crook, flail, and false beard. The *atef* crown resembles a bowling pin flanked by two large ostrich feathers. The crook is a type of cane with a hooked handle. The flail is a rod attached to three strands of beads, which may have originally derived from the flywhisk. Living kings of Egypt were often depicted with the attributes of Osiris to associate them with the god. Both the king and Osiris were depicted with a false beard. This type of faux facial hair was plated and attached to the face with a strap. Sometimes, as in this example, the strap that attaches the fake beard is visible.

This statue of a standing Osiris was made during the Late Period (712–332 BC), a time in Egyptian history when stone statues had extremely smooth, velvety surfaces. Certain areas of the stone here, however, look very rough. These rough areas—the crown, crook, flail, and area around the neck where a broad collar (necklace) would have been—likely were covered with gold in antiquity. The statue is carved from schist, a slightly greenish stone. Osiris is often represented with green skin because it is the color of new vegetation, new life, regeneration.

The most famous story of Osiris is the story of his death and resurrection. Egyptian myth tells us that Osiris was the son of the earth god Geb and the sky goddess Nut. Osiris, often regarded a source of the earth's fertility, presided over the beginning of Egyptian civilization as a kind and just pharaoh. Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth who, in a ghastly act, cut the body into pieces and scattered them across the world. But Isis, wife of Osiris, searched tirelessly until she recovered all the pieces of his body. She put the body back together and used her powerful magic to restore Osiris to life.

Isis then gave birth to their son, Horus, who grew up to avenge his father's murder. Horus overthrew Seth and became pharaoh, conquering the forces of chaos and restoring order (*maat*) to Egypt. While Seth represented chaos (*isfet*), Osiris represented order and—having been restored to life after death—was often associated with the renewing, life-giving forces of nature. The historical pharaohs of ancient Egypt were regarded as the living Horus and, upon their death, were revered as Osiris, god of the Underworld.

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