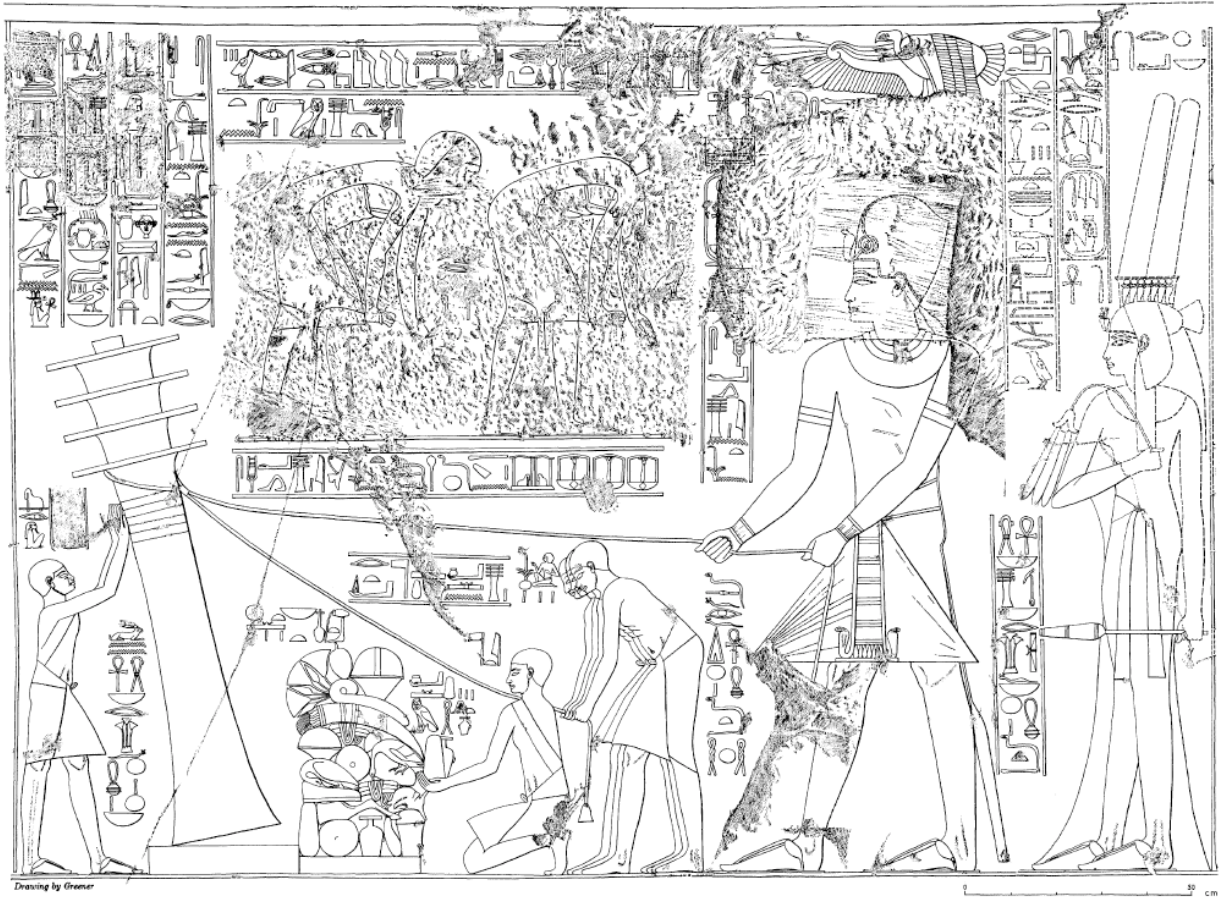


RAISING THE DJED PILLAR, THE RAMESSEUM DRAMATIC PAPYRUS

Adapted by Stuart Tyson Smith from the translation & commentary of Kurt Sethe (1964, German translation by Jessika Akmenkalns), Henri Frankfort (1948), & Edward Wente (1980).



Amenhotep III raises the Djed during his Heb-Sed in the tomb of Kheruef at Thebes.

The annual ritual of “Raising the Djed” was the culmination of the larger “Mysteries of Osiris,” which commemorated the resurrection of Osiris after his murder by Seth and the restoration of the throne to Osiris’s son Horus. During the Coronation and Heb-Sed festival, Pharaoh took the place of Horus in the ritual, emphasizing the stability of his rule and his connection with the Osiris myth. Its phallic overtones alluded to the renewal of Pharaoh’s potency as ruler like Osiris in the myth. The Djed appears already in Predynastic art and was probably originally a fetish consisting of a pole with sheaves of grain attached. The Djed is described later on as the “Backbone of Osiris” in the Book of the Dead, but the original harvest and renewal symbolism was retained in the ritual. Although probably originally part of Ptah’s cult, the two gods were associated through a syncretism with Sokar, and the ceremony resonated with Osiris’s role as a god of the agricultural cycle.

Cast: Lector Priest, Thoth, Geb, Horus/the King, Children of Horus, Osiris (as the Djed), Seth, Isis, Nephthys, Descendants of the King/Followers of Horus/Great Ones of Lower Egypt (royal princes and princesses), Musicians, Dancers and Singers, Followers of Seth/Great Ones of Upper Egypt, Spirit Seekers and the Keeper of the Two Feathers. Note that the speeches of the Lector Priest are also stage directions.

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Part I Preparation of the accessories, namely the royal barge and barges of the royal princes and the making of various sacrifices.

Staging throughout the play: a threshing floor before a boat-shrine (staging is based mostly upon illustrations in the Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus).

Lector: The royal ship was made. Horus speaks to his children about his Eye.

Horus speaks to his children: “Bring to me my ... Eye; by its power the sea is opened. The ship is the opener of the seas.”

Eight mensa-jars are brought to the ship's bow by the descendants of the king.

Thoth places Osiris upon Seth's back, thereby exalting him.

Thoth speaks to Seth: “You cannot linger beneath him who is greater than you.”

The counting of the elders of the palace (ie: the princes present themselves to Horus).

Thoth speaks to Osiris: “His heart will not be content beneath you.”

Seth: “I ascend to the heavens.”

Staging: Thoth and a bound bull before the Boat-shrine.

Lector: A sacrificial bull belonging to the king is released. Horus is angered, and in the form of a large-chested falcon, he takes his Eye from Thoth, coming as the one who pours out the Eye at the release of all the sacrificial cattle.

Isis speaks to Thoth: “By your mouth has this been done by you.”

Thoth first releases and then tethers the sacrificial cattle.

Isis speaks to Thoth: “Open your mouth again.”

Thoth slaughters the cattle. The god's slaughterers are fetched. Thoth brings Horus.

Horus speaks to Thoth: “Did you [...] slaughter the cattle?”

Osiris speaks: “O Thoth, the slaughterer.”

Thoth speaks to Horus: “[...] Take your diadem (šd).”

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Osiris speaks: “The father comes to his son.”

Thoth speaks to Horus: “The son of the god is behind him, the son comes to his father.”

Osiris (?) speaks: “Seek me out among the fish and fowl.” (Probably a reference to Seth’s dismemberment of Osiris and dumping his parts in the Nile).

Lector: Grain is laid upon the threshing floor (in the shape of Osiris). Horus speaks with his children about his Eye.

Horus speaks to his children: “Give me what remains of my Eye.” [...]

Staging: The bark-shrine with two small boats opposite.

The Lector Priest gives a Sha’at cake to the king. Thoth gives one Eye of Horus to Seth, and the other Eye to Horus.

Thoth speaks to Horus: “I extend your Eye to you. It will not be taken from you again.”

Thoth gives from two Sha’at-cakes.

Horus speaks to Thoth: “My Eye dances before you.”

Lector: Thoth is the dancer of the children of Horus.

Lector: The Capsizer-of-boats (Seth?) left both ships alone while one of the *Ima* (totem in the form of a sheaf of grain) was inside. Osiris is seated upon the back of Seth, the inferior aggressor.

The gods speak to Seth: “You do not wish to linger beneath him who is greater than you.”

While Osiris stomps down Seth, the Ima enters (ie: are placed in) the two ships.

Horus speaks to Osiris: “How lovely the *Ima*’s face is, this great one.”

Lector: Osiris, the *Ima* with the children of Horus.

Horus speaks to Seth: “You do not wish to make plans under him.”

Lector: A different Seth, (transformed into) the ship.

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Part II: Horus receives Insignia in the Hall of Eating while Standing

Staging: Before the boat-shrine and an altar.

The descendants of the King bring out the staff of Horus, together with the leg of meat, the meteh.

Thoth speaks to Osiris: "I will give Horus's Eye to [...] him."

The Eyes of Horus form the staff of Horus at the northern altar of Eating and Standing.

Thoth speaks to Osiris and Horus: "Horus has become powerful and takes his Eye again into his possession. Horus, receive the crown of lower Egypt in the temple."

Thoth crowns Horus with the Red Crown.

Thoth speaks to Osiris: "I have reared Horus so that he may avenge you."

Lector: Horus takes his insignia and the leg of meat and marches in procession up through the mountains, establishing dominion over desert and valley.

Part III: Horus defeats Seth on the Threshing Floor in Letopolis

Staging: Three cows and three donkeys led onto the threshing floor before the boat-shrine.

Lector: It happened that Osiris in the form of barley was laid upon the threshing floor in Letopolis. Male animals, the followers of Seth in the form of cows and donkeys were brought to strike Osiris (thresh the barley) so that they may be sacrificed. Horus is the one who avenges his father.

Horus speaks to the followers of Seth (in the form of bulls and donkeys): "O followers of Seth, do not trample this my father."

The Seth animals continue trampling the Osiris-Barley, cutting him into several pieces.

Horus speaks to the followers of Seth: "Do not strike my father!"

The Seth-animals continue to trample the Barley-Osiris. Horus attacks and binds them.

Horus speaks to Osiris: "For you, Osiris, I have struck those who struck you."

The followers of Seth, the bulls of Letopolis, are sacrificed.

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Horus speaks to Osiris: "Seth's poisonous spit shall not splash upon you."

Seth, the donkey, stands next to Osiris-Barley.

Lector: Osiris ascends to the heavens.

The grain is gathered up and placed on the Seth-donkey.

Staging: Thoth carries 4 Ima-fetishes and a bowl filled with white gypsum plaster to the boat-shrine.

The Ima-fetishes are brought to the bow of the ship, together with a bowl of besen (white gypsum plaster) by Thoth.

Thoth speaks to Horus: "How very lovely is this Eye that has come from your father."

Osiris, the Ima and the children of Horus stand by.

Horus speaks to Osiris: "Come to me."

Lector: Osiris, besen, transformed as the white gypsum to cover Seth as the boat-shrine.

The boat-shrine is painted white with the gypsum. The 3 Ima-fetishes and 8 mensa-jars are brought to the bow of the ship by Thoth.

Horus speaks to Seth: "You will not remove yourself from beneath him who is greater than you."

Lector: Seth, the ship, the festival of *deshet* - making of the ship.

Isis speaks to Nephthys: "Your scent is lovely, your fragrance is sweet."

Osiris, the Ima and the children of Horus stand by.

Horus speaks to Thoth: "Let it cost you your evil."

Staging: A bound goose and ram are sacrificed before the boat-shrine, their heads cut off.

Lector: The sign is given for the *henket*-offering. Horus is the one who takes his Eye once more into his possession.

Thoth speaks to the followers of Seth: "Bow your heads."

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The followers of Seth, the goats bow.

Thoth speaks to Horus: “I present the *ib*-ram and the *semen* goose [...] to you [...].”

Lector: Thoth, the slaughterer.

Horus speaks to Thoth: “Give him the head again.”

The god to whom the head was given, pots poured out onto the ground.

Horus speaks to the local god: “He smells of a fragrance after which my mouth thirsts.”

Lector: Seth, the little *ib*-ram.

Horus speaks to Seth: “What is your nature?”

Lector: Thoth, the slaughter of the *semen*-goose.

Thoth: “The brazier (for censuring? or for the offerings) [is?] set down.”

A goose and a ram are sacrificed and decapitated.

Part IV: Raising the Djed

Staging: A kneeling figure offers the goose and goat head to the Djed Pillar with an *Ima*-fetish on top. Afterwards, the pillar with the *Ima*-fetish is raised using ropes lashed to it.

*The heads of the little *ib*-ram and the *semen*-goose are given before the Djed-pillar as offerings.*

Lector: Horus is the one who was made mighty and whose words shall be obeyed.

Horus: “Someone give me the crown of the king.”

*Presentation of *Sha*'at-grain.*

Geb speaks to Thoth: “Give him both of the heads.”

The head of Seth, the presentation of the goats' and geese's heads, the gold house.

The Djed-pillar is raised by the descendants of the king.

Dancing and music by the followers of Horus.

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The princesses (ie: of the royal children/followers of Horus) say or sing: To you Ka, the sistra, and to your kindly face, the *menat* necklaces (used like a rattle) and *sekhem* sistra (like the cymbals on a tambourine) as you arise, O august Djed Pillar, Osiris Sokar, the Lord of Shetyet.

Hymn recited by the Chanters:

Osiris-Sokar appears in glory.
Praised are you now;
Exalted are you, O rudder in the boat.
You join with the earth
In order that you may travel through it.
May Re favor you because of your goodness.
Come, let us exalt him.

(More dancing)

You have filled the Two Lands with your beauty like the sky, radiant with glaze.
Inasmuch as you have been reborn as the solar disk in the sky.

(The dancing and music ends)

Lector: Horus is the one who commanded his children to raise up Seth beneath Osiris.

Horus speaks to his children: "Let him linger beneath him."

Seth who is lamenting beneath Osiris, the Djed-pillar raised.

Isis and Nephthys speak to the children of Horus: "Move the one who has fallen below."

The children of Horus, the descendants of the king, the wer-ma'uw (the High Priest of Heliopolis).

A rope was laid on the Djed-pillar.

Lector: Seth is the one who is slaughtered; meanwhile Horus commands his children.

Horus speaks to his children: "Let him stand, bound in shackles."

Seth is bound in shackles, the Djed-pillar lowered.

Part VI: The Battle between Horus and Seth and their followers.

Staging: Fighting before the boat-shrine, the lowered Djed in the background.

Seth breaks loose from his shackles and attacks Horus, they fence with sticks.

Geb speaks to Horus and Seth: "Forget!"

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The fight between Horus and Seth continues, the combatants being joined by their followers, who box.

Horus speaks to the Children of Horus. "It is you who must forget."

The boxing between Children of Horus and Seth continues, ending with Horus and his followers triumphant.

Lector: Horus "Appearing in Truth" has prevailed!

Part VII: The Coronation of Horus

Staging: Two falcon standards placed before the boat-shrine.

Directed by Thoth, the Spirit Seekers and the Royal kinsmen go around the two falcon standards.

Lector: Thoth takes of the two eyes of Horus for him.

Two scepters and two feathers are brought by the Keeper of the Two Feathers.

Thoth: "Horus, incorporate the testacies of Seth into yourself to increase your power."

Lector: An offering which the king gives.

Half loaves are distributed to the Great Ones of Upper and Lower Egypt and the king. The king eats.

Geb says to the Great Ones of Upper and Lower Egypt (ie: the Followers of Horus and Seth): "Come."

Lector: Thoth lets the gods be in attendance upon Horus, by order of Geb.

Geb speaks to the Children of Horus and the Followers of Seth: "Attend to Horus, Thou, O Horus, art their lord."

Lector: Upper and Lower Egypt are unified through the unification of Horus and Seth and their followers.

The Keeper of the two feathers fixes the crown upon the head of the monarch, who is protected by incense throughout the ceremony, and hands him the scepters.

Thoth speaks to Horus:
Take thou thine Eye, whole, to thy face.

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Place it well in thy face.

Thine Eye shall not sadden with sadness.

Take though the fragrance of the gods

(Censing)

That which cleanses, which has come out of thyself.

(Crown of Upper Egypt and feathers placed on the head of the king).

Cense thy face with it so that it be fragrant through and through.

