



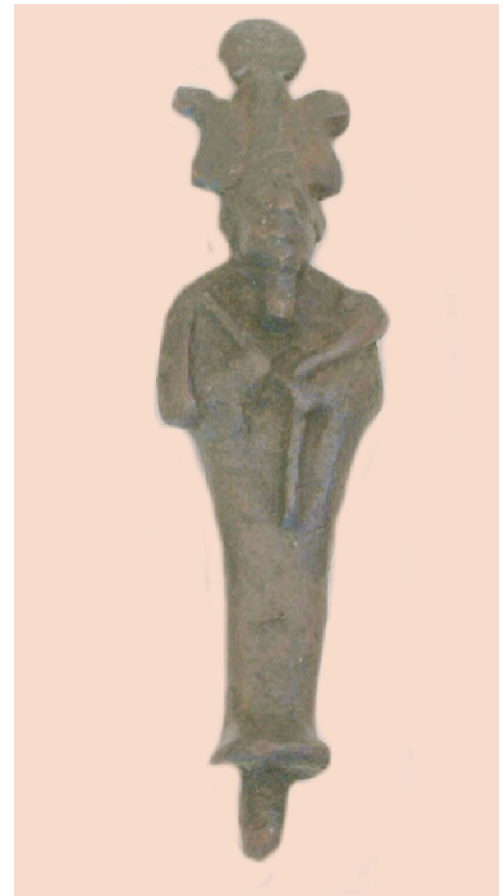
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STATUES OF OSIRIS AH35/A

In this box there are three statues of Osiris. Osiris was the Egyptian god of the dead and ruler of the Underworld. The Egyptians believed that Osiris was the first son of the earth god, Geb, and sky goddess, Nut. He became king of Egypt and married his sister, Isis, who became his queen. According to the story Osiris was a gentle and popular king. He was thought to have introduced the Egyptian people to growing grain and was also credited with teaching them law and order, how to worship the gods and how to build towns and temples. However, his brother Seth is said to have grown jealous and plotted to kill Osiris. In the most popular version of the story, Seth tricked Osiris into climbing into a chest, which he then sealed, trapping the king. The chest was then flung into the river Nile and Osiris was drowned. Isis and her sister Nephtys went searching for Osiris and managed to find his body. However, Seth heard of this and destroyed the body, scattering pieces of Osiris all over Egypt.





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Isis went looking for the pieces and gradually collected them up. She is said to have bandaged them all together, creating the first ever mummy and then have magically restored Osiris to life. Osiris then went to rule in the Underworld, as king of the dead and left his son Horus to rule Egypt and fight against Seth.

The story of Osiris reminded the Egyptians of many cycles in nature and his worship became associated with these things. Since Osiris was magically brought back to life from the dead, the Egyptians worshipped him as a god of rebirth. He was connected with the yearly cycle of crop growth and death, the daily rising and setting of the sun and the annual flooding of the river Nile. When a pharaoh died they were thought to be reborn as Osiris in the Afterlife and the pharaoh who ruled Egypt was known as the 'living Horus'.





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A very large temple was built to honour Osiris at Abydos in Upper Egypt.

Osiris was typically shown the way he appears in these figures. His body is shaped like that of a mummy. In his hands he carries a crook and a flail, which are symbols of his power. On his head he wears the special 'atef' crown of Egypt, which is decorated with an ostrich feather on each side. The front of the crown has the protective symbol of the cobra on it.

Statues like these three would have been mass-produced and offered by people to the gods at temples. All three figures have pegs to fix them onto bases of stands or seats, which are now lost. They are all made of copper alloy, but the surface of the smallest one has been damaged by chemicals and turned a greenish colour.

