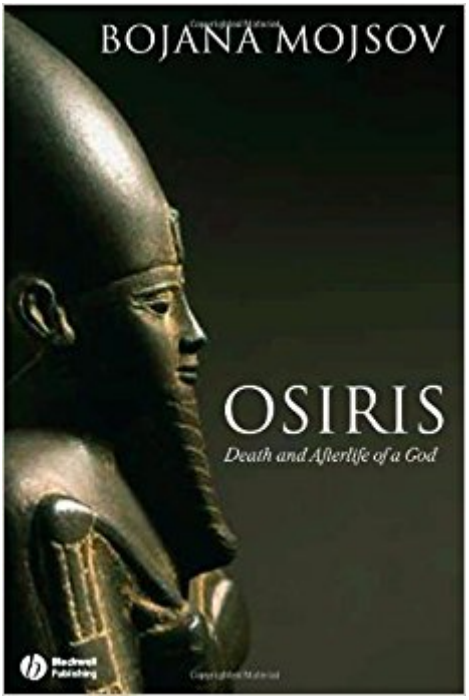
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Osiris: Death And Afterlife Of A God



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Synopsis

Bojana Mojsov tells the story of the cult of Osiris from beginning to end, sketching its development throughout 3,000 years of Egyptian history. Draws together the numerous records about Osiris from the third millennium B.C. to the Roman conquest of Egypt. Demonstrates that the cult of Osiris was the most popular and enduring of the ancient religions. Shows how the cult provided direct antecedents for many ideas, traits and customs in Christianity, including the concept of the trinity, baptism in the sacred river, and the sacrament of the Eucharist. Reveals the cultÃ¢â ¬â„¢s influence on other western mystical traditions and groups, such as the Alchemists, Rosicrucians and Freemasons. Written for a general, as well as a scholarly audience.

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Customer Reviews

Osiris, ruler of the netherworld, played a central part in the religious life of the ancient Egyptians, and his cult grew in popularity down the ages, resonating in all the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean. This is the first book to tell the story of the cult of Osiris from beginning to end. Drawing together the numerous records about Osiris from the third millennium bc to the Roman conquest of Egypt, Bojana Mojsov sketches the development of the cult throughout 3,000 years of Egyptian history. The author proves that the cult of Osiris was the most popular and enduring in any ancient religion. She shows how it provided direct antecedents for many ideas, traits, and customs in Christianity, including the resurrection after three days, the concept of god as trinity, baptism in the sacred river, and the sacrament of the Eucharist. She also reveals the cult’s influence on other Western mystical traditions and groups, such as the Alchemists, Rosicrucians, and Freemasons.

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The author is a well-known Egyptologist. This is an excellent book with some photographs and many pen and ink drawing, heavily annotated and with a list of all the Egyptian gods,two pages of maps, a glossary, and Egyptian chronology, to help with references. The author does not assume the reader is an ancient Egyptian scholar: she starts the Osiris myth saga as it changes and develops over 3000 years of documented Egyptian history in the easiest way, by using Egyptian history as the backdrop. Osiris was the god of the underworld, of death, but also of resurrection, and important in that it was he who welcomed the newly dead but surviving souls to the life everlasting and to their first trial after death, the trial of the heart and the feather. Osiris had been a great god, one of the first in all of creation, but was killed by his perfidious brother Seth or Set. (whose name may be a root word for the Hebrew word which became Satan.) Now, he ruled the world of the dead, not a negative image at all, but positive: he was beloved and worshipped. His wife was his sister, Isis, who after his murder searched the whole world until she found his dis-membered body and was able to magically have it put together again, and to create the child Horus from Osiris' dead flesh. Osiris went to the afterlife to rule there. In his role as the god whom one met in the afterlife, his role was to judge and to guide and help. Every person faced a type of judgement of one's sins, and had to recite a "negative confession", such as: "I did not kill" "I did not steal milk from the mouth of babes" are two such of 40-some such. He or she then stated they had given to the poor, and so on. Finally, the deceased's heart was weighed against a feather. The heart, the seat of the soul, the mind, understanding and morality must not fail this test, and along with the verbal statements it determined if the deceased would be devoured by a terrible monster, or would stand the chance to

go on to the immortal afterlife. If his heart survived that test, Osiris would give him bread and beer, a sort of communion, and point him on his way with his shepard's crook to the next passage to eternal life. pp48-49. The Egyptian afterlife was a place not ethereal and angelic, but like the real and usual world, and everything one could do in the real world, one could do in the afterlife, one reason why they prepared for the afterlife as if packing for a move to a new residence. A spell or prayer on a funeral papyrus says: "A spell for going out into the day. Of coming and going in the realms of the dead. Of entering the field of reeds...Having power there. Plowing there and reaping. Eating there, drinking there, making love there. Doing everything that used to be done on earth." As for Osiris himself: Each year Osiris died again and was reborn again. It is believed that each year there was a public re-enactment of his death (murder) and his resurrection: "At last the procession arrived at the tomb of Osiris. Reading, chanting, and prayers for the god's resurrection were spoken at the tomb. Then, the priests entered the sepulcher by the western door and reverently laid the chest of Osiris on a bed of sand in the chamber...Plutarch described how every year the earth and silt from the inundation (of the Nile) were placed in a wooden chest with seeds to symbolize the body of Osiris. After the chest was buried the death of the god was mourned for three days and nights....Three images were made, symbolizing his dead, re-membered, and risen body. They possessed sacramental, magical power....the festival lived on for thousands of years, lasting as late as Roman times." pp51-53The many changes and the ways in which Osiris, god of the dead, was seen, worshipped, and incorporated with other gods who then weakened and disappeared into him, is explained quite clearly. Ra, and Amun were two important gods who became interwoven in some ways with Osiris over many hundreds of years. Aside from this, the main gist of the book, quite a lot of time is spent on the influence Osiris and the rest of the Egyptian religion had on other religions---especially those touched by/carried away by the Roman soldiers who would finally conquer and occupy Egypt. Through them many Egyptian cults were spread to Rome and thus to the Roman Empire as a whole. Worship of Osiris, Isis and their son Horus were among those. "Horus-the-Child,was conceived at the Spring Equinox at the time of harvest, and born at the winter solstice...the worship of Osiris explicitly encompassed the doctrine of One-in-Three: the Resurrected Redeemer, the Holy Mother, the Savior Child." pp91 She also traces the influence of the Osiris cult and others directly on later Christianity and Islam. For example, speaking of the god Amun, "once a year the statue of Amun of Karnak was carried in a procession on a barge...went to visit his harem, then made the rounds of the sacred places in Thebes. To this day in Thebes (modern Luxor)revelers carry boats on their shoulders every year to celebrate the feast of Abu el Hagag, the Muslim Saint..."p61 "The cult of Isis and Horus-the-Child was especially popular. Hundreds of

bronze figures of Isis nursing her infant found in temples and households became the models for the Christian figures of the Virgin and Child. Steadily, the story of Osiris had spread beyond Egypt and around the entire Mediterranean."pp101Eventually, after Christianity had conquered the entire region, including Egypt, by the 4th century, the pagan temples were closed and the great library in Alexandria Egypt, which had supposedly held every book in the then-known world, was burned to the ground by monks, pagan worship of the old gods went underground. "The cult of Isis, one of the last bastions of paganism...as late as the fifth century we here of the existance of pagan temples in Egypt and of an Isis fesitval celebrated by peasants in north Italy. At the beginning of the sixth century the statue of Isis was still carried up the Nile to Sudan to bless the crops...as late as the tenth century (medieval historians wrote)people from local villages still gathered at Philae for the annual feast of Isis. It is from Philae we have the last hierglyphic inscriptions." pp119." Very good book, very accessable to reader who is interested in Egypt or in comparative relgion or comparative mythology. Not written for specialists or scholars, highly recommended.

This book is arranged chronologically, which might be useful for seeing how Osiris and his myth developed over time. However, it spends too much time describing wider events in Egypt, so much so that a lot of it feels like a rehash ofÃ Â Religion and Magic in Ancient Egypt. The book has to include historical context, of course, but much of the time it simply wanders off onto tangents. While it does describe many aspects of the worship of Osiris, it rarely does so in great depth, and because the text rambles so much, the relevant information is kind of hidden by digressions.More serious are misleading or inaccurate statements. For example, Mojsov says "References to the Mysteries of Osiris evoked secret rituals reserved for the initiated." While most Egyptians would not have been allowed to see many of the rituals in Osiris' honor at Abydos, this wording is liable to make people imagine some sort of priestly brotherhood of initiates--an old image of ancient Egypt that is inspired more by Greek and Roman initiations, and even Freemasonry, than by anything in Egypt itself. She also constantly refers to Osiris and his family in terms that evoke Christian concepts. Yes, it's very possible that elements from Egyptian religion influenced Christianity, and scholars should not simply ignore that possibility. But loose similarity does not prove direct influence, and not many people have studied the question as rigorously as they should. More importantly, it does a disservice to Egyptian religion to imply that Egyptian and Christian beliefs were exactly alike. Forcing Egyptian religion into a Christian mold hides its uniqueness.There are also some more concrete signs of careless research, and even outright plagiarism. Mojsov quotes James Joyce, who drew on the Book of the Dead when writing Finnegans Wake, as saying that "a reader who tried to find a

gripping story in it would ’go and hang himself’". Apparently she has misreadÃ Â Joyce’s Book of the Dark, whose author, not Joyce, wrote that about the Book of the Dead, while acknowledging that he lifted the phrase "go and hang himself" from Samuel Johnson. Mojsov copies another phrase, with no attribution or quotation marks, from Erik Hornung’sÃ Â The Secret Lore of Egypt.Maybe I’m being too hard on this book, because I already know most of what it says about Osiris and his worship. Newcomers to the subject would get more out of it. There’s no solid, comprehensive book on Osiris that I can point them to instead. But I can’t recommend this one.

I found reading this book to be very frustrating. The cover claims that Osiris will be put into context with Christianity and other ideas. Actually, there is very little of this in most of the text. I expected more of the book but it did not deliver.There are distracting spelling errors missed by the proofreaders throughout, which just added to my frustration, e.g., "wander" instead of "wonder".I have read a great number of books on Ancient Egypt and so, therefore, knew much of the history. The book starts relatively well and describes ideas about Osiris in the Old Kingdom. But the author had a decision to make about how to present concepts of Osiris in the New Kingdom and did something with the text that was difficult to understand. A rapid-fire history of the reigns of several pharoahs is given in just a few pages, presumeably as background, and then views of Osiris are given in a subsequent chapter. If one did not understand the history of Egypt before reading this book one would certainly not even know what was going on. Some things are left out, others rapidly glossed over, and some things mere speculation on the author’s part with no documentation or background. Many paragraphs start out with a statement, veer off into another idea that is tantalizing, but the paragraph ends abruptly with a statement that has nothing to do with the idea presented at the beginning of the paragraph. I found this very distracting and difficult to follow. In short, I was disappointed at how badly it was written especially in the middle chapters.I better enjoyed Joann Fletcher’s Amenhotep III book. It was well illustrated, had one subject like this book, but fully discussed the history in a well-written manner.

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