BY ÉVA LIPTAY

In 2017 an object made of bronze was transferred from the Department of Art after 1800 of the Museum of Fine Arts Budapest to the Department of Egyptian Antiquities.¹ The object shows all the classical characteristic traits of an ancient Egyptian or Egyptianizing² Roman Osiris-Canopus or Osiris-Hydreios. In the following study I will use the latter term when referring to the object discussed.

According to the oral tradition within the museum, the object may have been manufactured around the end of the eighteenth century; however, due to lack of documentation, nobody seems to know anything about by whom, where and exactly when the object was made. In the following I will try to find clues to confirm that the object is indeed a modern copy and to identify the original ancient object that served as a model for the unknown copyist.

Description of the object (figs 1-4)

The lower part/body of the almost 20-cm tall figure is in the form of a water jar (or hydria), which is surmounted by a human-headed attachment. The body is bedded upon a garland of roses encircling the base.³ The decoration of the body is in high relief.

The head of the figure is covered by a headdress, which is a unique combination of a stylized *nemes* and a tripartite striated wig with lappets. A highly stylized uraeus diadem can be observed on the forehead. The top of the head is surmounted by a small hemispherical element, the face itself being adorned with a rounded divine beard that is thicker than usually found. Moreover, it is flanked on both sides by a rather odd, and at first sight inexplicable, additional 'pendant'. The shoulders are covered by a stylized collar. In addition, a heavy naosshaped pectoral hangs around the neck of the figure. Inside the naos, two squatting figures can be seen facing each other, both of them holding the same lengthwise object in their hands.

Below the pectoral, the main motif of the front is a winged scarab supporting a sun disc flanked by uraei on both sides, each crowned with a sun disc. The motif is set on a stylized solar boat. Above the wings of the scarab on both sides is a representation of a nude boy (Harpokrates), each of the boys holding one of their hands to the mouth, and holding a sceptre with their other hand. Above their heads a falcon-like bird appears on both sides. On the right

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¹ Inv. no. 2017.1-E; measures: height 18.5 cm; width 10 cm; depth 7 cm.

² About ancient Roman Aegyptiaca, see Swetnam-Burland 2006.

³ For the symbolism of the garland of roses, see Derchain 1955: 251; Panofsky 1961: 195–196; Wild 1981: 121.

and left sides of the body three figures can be distinguished: a crocodile at the bottom, a seated baboon crowned with the crescent and the full moon (Thoth) above, and upwards a standing goddess (Isis and Nephthys) with one arm raised in adoration.

The main figure of the back side is a standing Osiris (facing right), crowned with the *atef*-crown and holding his usual insignia in his hands. The peculiarity of our Osiris figure is that his legs on the pedestal are represented *en face*. On the lower part, his figure is flanked by two jackals. Above the animals, a standing jackal-headed god (Anubis) can be seen on both sides.

Religious symbolism and ritual contexts

Since there is a number of studies discussing the religious symbolism and ritual contexts of the object type,⁴ I will give only a brief summary of this subject.

The general scholarly opinion is that the origin of the Osiris-Hydreios image originates in the first century BC.⁵ The motif seems to have been rooted in, and developed from, a pharaonic concept first represented in the roof chapel of Osiris in the temple of Hathor at Dendara. There, in the ritual contexts of the Khoiak feast, the deities of the nomes of Egypt are depicted bringing sacred water vessels symbolically containing a part or member of the Osirian body associated with the nome.⁶ Each of the vessels carried by the nome gods is topped with the head of the chief god of the nome, decorated with appropriate headdresses/crowns. During the first century AD, a standardized version of the theological concept seems to have rapidly gained popularity throughout Egypt, and was almost simultaneously adopted in Isiac cults in Italy.

In the case of the Osiris-Hydreios figures, the divine body is represented as a high-shouldered cultic water jar (*hydria*) containing Nile water, thereby symbolically linking the Osirian body with the life-giving sacred water of the Nile, especially at its annual inundation.⁷ The body is usually decorated in relief with collar, pectoral and divine figures associated with the Osirian rites, while the head can be covered with a stylized/Egyptianizing version of the royal *nemes* headcloth and surmounted with several different types of Egyptian and Egyptianizing crowns or headdresses.⁸ Based on the relief decoration on the body, two types can be distinguished:⁹ the earlier type is intensively decorated with Osirian and solar symbols in relief, while figures of a later type wear folded drapery and a prominent pendulous, U-shaped collar.¹⁰

⁴ Wild 1981: 101–126; Kettel 1994; Whitehouse 1997; Winand 1998; Quack 2003; Tricoche 2009: 135–137.

⁵ Wild 1981: 102; Whitehouse 1997: 303.

⁶ Beinlich 1984: 302–304; D'Auria et al. 1992: 243 (cat. 206); Cauville 1997: 33–45; Quack 2003: 61. For futher associations between the Nile water and the Osirian body, see Kettel 1994.

⁷ Wild 1981: 103; Kettel 1994: 323–330.

⁸ Wild 1981: 113.

⁹ Wild 1981: 120–121. See also Winand 1998.

¹⁰ Panofsky 1961: 196; Whitehouse 1997: 303; Riggs 2001: 64.

The Osiris-Hydreios cult images (as a rule) were not hollow but solid;¹¹ consequently they never contained any liquid: i.e., they were not used as ritual vessels. Several large-sized versions¹² should clearly be interpreted as cult images of the divinity to be worshipped in temples. According to relief-representations, Osiris-Hydreios figures were carried in ritual processions associated predominantly with the Isis cult.¹³ Both statues of priests¹⁴ and their representations on temple reliefs¹⁵ show them carrying Hydreios figures as sacred cult objects in their veiled hands.¹⁶ Most of the free-standing figures and the representations of the object type on coins known to us originate from northern Egypt (mainly Alexandria) and central and southern Italy (mainly Rome).¹⁷

Osiris-Hydreios figures exist in stone, terracotta and bronze. It is very likely that – following the ancient Egyptian tradition – the larger stone pieces were used as cult images, while the smaller terracotta and bronze specimens served as votive objects or as parts of the funerary equipment in individual tombs.

Early modern owners and representations

In 1986 Maarten Raven published an essential study of a bronze Osiris-Hydreios acquired in 1984 by the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden. In addition to providing a list of bronze Osiris-Hydreios figures preserved in various collections, in his publication Raven also gave a detailed study of the first early modern European representations of this special ancient Egyptian cult object of the Roman period. And it is right there, among the first early modern Osiris-Hydreios representations that we can find the closest analogy to the Budapest piece.

The first representation of an Osiris Hydreios known to us can be found in the *Thesaurus hieroglyphicorum*²⁰ (fig. 5), the earliest catalogue of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions known in Europe, published by Johann Georg Herwart von Hohenburg (1553–1622) sometime after 1607. According to its Latin caption, the object was at that time in the possession of Lelio Pasqualini (1549–1611),²¹ a canon at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, a member of the Pope's inner circle and one of his closer staff members.²² The fine drawings on Plate XV²³ of the

¹¹ With one exceptional case, see Wild 1981: 115 and n. 98. See also Panofsky 1961: 196.

¹² See e.g. Wild 1981: 117.

¹³ Roullet 1972: 99.

¹⁴ See e.g. Wild 1981: Pl. XXV; Goddio and Clauss 2006: 214; Tricoche 2009: fig. 73.

¹⁵ E.g. Wild 1981: Pl. XIII and XVIII; Quack 2003: Abb. 1.

¹⁶ Wild 1981: 118; Ritner 2015.

¹⁷ Wild 1981: 119–120.

¹⁸ Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheden inv. no. F 1984/4.4; Raven 1986.

¹⁹ Raven 1986: 22–26.

²⁰ Raven 1986: 23–24.

²¹ Herz 1990. Raven (1986: 23–24) after Iversen (1961: 86, n. 101) identifies him with Carlo Pasquali or Charles Paschal (1547–1625), a French diplomat of Piemontese origin, but in my opinion Lelio Pasqualini in Rome is a more plausible candidate.

²² Herz 1990: 201.

https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b2300699s/f16.item.r=hieroglyphicorum.langFR (Available on 03.04.2019)

Thesaurus show all the four views of the copied object. Fifty years later, drawings of the same object reappeared in the *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1652–1654) by Athanasius Kircher (1602–1680)²⁴ (fig. 6) The caption of that illustration reveals that by that time the figure had a new owner in Rome, a member of the lesser aristocracy, a certain Knight of Saint Stefano, Francesco Gualdi (1574–1654).²⁵ Kircher himself records that he saw the piece in the museum (Wunderkammer) of Gualdi.²⁶ Additionally, in his discussion *De Canopis hieroglyphicis*, he mentions that the object was manufactured in a greyish coloured stone, but unfortunately makes no clear reference to its size.²⁷

It is obvious at first sight that the object represented in the *Thesaurus* and the *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* is essentially the same in every detail as the Budapest piece. Thus we can state with confidence that the Budapest piece was copied after the very object that was represented in these early publications.

At approximately the same time, in 1651, the motif of an Osiris-Hydreios appeared as a 'natural' part of the equipment of the archaeological setting in the *Finding of Moses* by Nicolas Poussin;²⁸ however, it was not in its original context, but rather as a decorative element of antique architecture.²⁹

Fifty years later, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, we find the Pasqualini Osiris-Hydreios still in Rome, but now in the famous antiquities collection of Cardinal Flavio Chigi (1631–1693), nephew of Pope Alexander VII.³⁰ Drawings of the object with a reference to the collection of Cardinal Chigi were published in 1706 in *Le grand cabinet romain* by Michel Ange de La Chausse (1660?–1724).³¹ The engravings of de La Chausse are much more sophisticated as compared to those in the *Thesaurus* or the *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, and some corrections also seem to have been made.³²

A back view of the Osiris-Hydreios of Cardinal Chigi is also represented in the *Entwurff Einer Historischen Architectur* published by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (1656–1723)

²⁴ *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* III, 434–436; Raven 1986: 24–25.

²⁵ Franzoni and Tempesta 1992: 7–8 (no. 28, fig. 8).

²⁶ On the collection of Gualdi, see Franzoni and Tempesta 1992: 30–33. For an additional Egyptian or Egyptianizing object, see the sistrum of the Gualdi collection: Franzoni and Tempesta 1992: 6–7 (no. 27; fig. 7).

²⁷ Oedipus Aegyptiacus III, 436.

²⁸ Dempsey 1963: 115.

²⁹ It is worth mentioning here that on coins of Traian (108/109 AD) a pair of Canopus deities often appears in an architectural context; i.e. represented on the gate of a pylon: Winand 1998: 1081.

³⁰ Raven 1986: 25; Cacciotti 2004: 13.

³¹ Figs XXII–XXV. https://archive.org/details/gri_33125010845317/page/n119

Two drawings of the sistrum of the ex-Gualdi collection (see n. 26) can also be found in the same book: *Le cabinet romaine*, page 80.

³² Raven 1986: 25. The Osiris Hydreios representations of de La Chausse seem to have inspired those published by Bernard de Montfoucon *L'antiquité expliquée et representé en figures* 1719) who refers to de La Chausse as a source on page 321.

in 1721.³³ The caption to the illustration seems to prove that after the death of the cardinal the object still remained in the possession of the Chigi family. However, the rest of the already-eventful story cannot be reconstructed, as all trace of the object is lost after the second half of the eighteenth century.³⁴

Considering the striking similarities between the Budapest piece and the above listed representations, we can safely conclude that the Budapest bronze object was copied after an original Osiris-Hydreios that was in various private collections in Rome during the seventeenth century and in the first half of the eighteenth century, before its subsequent disappearance. However, if we thoroughly observe the iconograpical details of the Budapest object, it becomes obvious that the artist who manufactured it had never actually seen the original, but had worked after one of the aforementioned two-dimensional representations. Indeed, a number of details suggest that this pattern must have been the representation published in Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, as the decoration of the Budapest piece even follows some of the mistakes and misunderstandings that the illustrator made.

Let us first examine the rather odd additonal 'pendants' that flank the stylized false beard. If we look closely at the representation of the beard in Kircher's book, it becomes evident that the artist who fashioned the Budapest figure misunderstood and misrepresented an Egyptianizing false beard that was actually separated from the neck. I.e., the copyist reinterpreted the space between the beard and the neck as an "extra pendant" added to the beard. A similar mistake or reinterpretation was made with the cloak of the Harpocrates figures. The special hemispherical headdress of the Budapest Osiris Hydreios is probably, in fact, only a small fragment of the original headdress. However, the most obvious concordance is the representation of the legs of Osiris *en face*: it appears only and exclusively in Kircher's book, all the other sources keep the traditional ancient Egyptian representation of legs in profile.

Iseum Campense – a possible provenance

In an extensive study in 1961, Erwin Panofsky explored the appearance and development of the iconographic motif of Osiris-Hydreios in 16th century European art.³⁵ He convincingly demonstrated that scholars and artists of that time had never seen any original Osiris-Hydreios figures; consequently, they had no idea how to depict one.

Instead of copying an existing specimen, the sixteenth century artists' only source was the well-known and frequently interpreted legend, recorded by the late fourth-century

³³ Lib. V, tav. 5 see http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/fischer1725/0121/image; Cacciotti 2004: 13. On Tav. 5 the Chigi Osiris Hydreios can be seen between an "Egyptian vase" of the same owner and an additional Osiris Hydreios "aus der Kaisers Schatzkammer/Cabinet Imperial".

³⁴ Raven 1986: 25–26; Cacciotti 2004: 18 and n. 186. See also the representation of a very similar Osiris Hydreios figure published in 1737 (Gordon 1737: Tab. VIII) that – according to the scale – was about 35–36 cm tall but according to the inscription was made from alabaster (Raven 1986: 25–26).

³⁵ Panofsky 1961. See also Stricker 1943: 4–8.

Christian writer Rufinus in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, about how the god Canobos (i.e. the priest of Canopus) defeated his rival fire-god through trickery. The imaginary cult statue of the god Canobos – a human-headed vase or a vase-shaped human figure – was first illustrated in 1571 as an imaginary figure in *Imagini de i Dei de gli antichi*, a very popular publication of the first Italian mythographer Vincenzo Cartari. However, in a revised edition of the same book in 1615³⁷ the imaginary figure has already been replaced by a new iconographic motif, which was obviously modelled after a real Osiris-Hydreios that is strongly reminiscent of the object owned by Lelio Pasqualini represented in the *Theasurus hieroglyphicorum*.

As we have seen, the first clearly identifiable representations of Osiris-Hydreios figures appeared no earlier than the beginning of the 17th century. Moreover, it seems that until the beginning of the eighteenth century there was only one single original Osiris-Hydreios available in Europe, i.e. the Pasqualini object – the representation of which inspired the artist of the Budapest copy. Reference to a second specimen seems only to have been first made in Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurff Einer Historischen Architectur* in 1721. ³⁹

The author is in agreement with Maarten Raven, who assumes that the now lost Pasqualini Canopus 'was found and bought in Rome, where the sixteenth century building activities produced so many Egyptian or Egyptianizing finds'. ⁴⁰ Consequently, we must search for a Roman Isis sanctuary in Rome and its environs where an Osiris-Hydreios might have been discovered during the second half or around the end of the sixteenth century.

One of the possible candidates is the Villa Hadriana, from where, however, the most significant finds date to the 18th and 19th centuries:⁴¹ examples include Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Egizio, inv. no. 22852⁴² and a piece from the Dutch royal collection,⁴³ now on display in the Rijksmuseum in Leiden. The famous Osiris-Hydreios of Villa Albani⁴⁴ was also found as late as the first half of the 18th century⁴⁵ – consequently, the Villa can probably be excluded as an option.

However, it was much earlier, between 1550 and 1568, that the *antiquario* Pirro Ligorio (1513/14–1583) had made 'the first large-scale modern archaeological dig' at Tivoli (Hadrian's Villa), in order to find building materials and statues for the new villa of his patron, Cardinal

https://www.koninklijkeverzamelingen.nl/mediabank/detail/aebdc715-a0e3-5565-801b-2e9d25433f5a

³⁶ Panofsky 1961: 201–209 and figs 13–16.

³⁷ Vere et nove Imagini de gli Dei delli antichi, page 231. See also Johnson 2018: 3 and n. 19.

³⁸ Panofsky 1961: 206–207.

³⁹ See n. 33.

⁴⁰ Raven 1986: 24.

⁴¹ Curran 2007: 31 and n. 39.

⁴² Weber 1911: 35–36; Botti and Romanelli 1951: 122–124, Tav. LXXXIV.

⁴³ It was found in the Villa of the Emperor Hadrian near Tivoli and, in 1846, given by Pope Pius IX to Queen Anna Pavlovna, the wife of King Willem II of the Netherlands.

⁴⁴ Weber 1911: 36; Roullet 1972: 97–98; Curto, 1985: no.13; Raven, 1986: 24, n. 22.

⁴⁵ See also Grimm 2000.

Ippolito d'Este. 46 Ligorio's interest in ancient Egyptian religion is clearly demonstrated by his discourse on some Egyptian gods that also contains an essay on the origins and meaning of the jar-bodied Canopus. 47 In addition, among Ligorio's drawings there is an unusual representation of an ancient Egyptian block statue with the characteristic decorative motifs (nemes-headdress; a pair of falcon-like birds on the top of a naos-shaped pendant; a pair of baboons with a lunar disc and crescent on the head; a winged scarab supporting a sun disc) of an Osiris-Hydreios. 48 Ligorio's description of the object states that it originated in Palestrina ("in Praeneste"), and was found in a poor condition ("molto consumato et rotto in piu luoghi il corpo"). That Ligorio's drawing combines the iconographic features of an ancient Egyptian block statue with an Osiris-Hydreios suggests that he created it from memory or from his own imagination. However, it clearly testifies that he must have seen an original exemplar — probably a fragmentary stone one — during his fieldwork at Tivoli and in the vicinity. Although the sketch is inaccurate, it seems to have been inspired not by the Pasqualini Osiris-Hydreios, but by another one, similar to those found during the 18th to 19th centuries at the same archaeological site (see above).

However, there is another plausible candidate for the provenance of the Pasqualini Osiris-Hydreios: the Iseum Campense, found near and below the Dominican church and convent of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, where excavations were begun as early as the 16th century.⁴⁹ There is a well-known anecdote recorded by Pirro Ligorio himself about an incident that took place there in the middle of the century when the friars unearthed an ancient statue of a(n Apis) bull from the ruins and smashed the pagan image to pieces.⁵⁰

According to Roullet, 'the Osiris Canopus of the Iseum Campense must have stood inside the cella, together with the statue of Isis'.⁵¹ Considering that these cult images must have played a key role in Roman period Isis cults, it is rather surprising that among the ancient finds originating from the Iseum Campense there is not a single Osiris-Hydreios figure.⁵² It is true that a now-lost, green stone, head of an Osiris-Hydreios was probably found at the Iseum Campense and 'was kept in the sixteenth century in the palace of Cardinal Capri near the Church of Minerva, i.e. in the immediate area of Campus Martius Iseum'.⁵³ This head is mentioned by two contemporaneous sources, Ulysses Aldrovandi⁵⁴ and Jean-Jacques Boissard⁵⁵ in the second half of the sixteenth century.

⁴⁶ Campbell 2004: 18–19; Coffin 2004: 104.

⁴⁷ Curran 2007: 281.

⁴⁸ Mandowsky and Mitchell, 1963: 103 (cat. 93) and pl. 58a.

⁴⁹ Roullet, 1972: 34; Claridge 2004: 47 (20).

⁵⁰ Curran 2007: 280-281.

⁵¹ Roullet 1972: 99.

⁵² Quack 2003: 63–64. See also Jones, 1912: 359 and Pl. 92; Roullet, 1972: 98 (no. 145); Wild, 1981: 118–119; Curl, 1994: 21–24.

⁵³ Wild, 1981: 119 and n. 118. See also Roullet, 1972: 98–99 (no. 145).

⁵⁴ Aldrovandi 1562: 203.

⁵⁵ Boissard 1597–98: I, 108.

Additionally, it is also worthy of note that, in his reconstruction drawing of the Iseum Campense,⁵⁶ among sphinxes, obelisks and other divine images in the seventeenth century Athanasius Kircher himself highlighted two statues at the entrance of the temple precinct: those of a large-sized Apis bull⁵⁷ and a mummy-shaped figure labelled 'Canopus'. It means that he also considered the image of the Canopus-god as a prominent part of the cult setting.

Summary

The original-but-lost Pasqualini Osiris-Hydreios may have been manufactured in a local atelier in Rome. According to Athanasius Kircher, it was made from a dark greyish stone, i.e. a material that was often used for Roman copies of Egyptian works.⁵⁸ It may have served as a cult statue in the Iseum Campense in Rome, the ruins of which had already been found by the second half of the sixteenth century.

The Budapest copy was modelled after the four-view representation of the Pasqualini Osiris-Hydreios published in Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*. We may not know when and by whom this bronze figure was made, yet – as we have seen – it reveals a lot about both the original ancient object and its reinterpretations through the centuries.

⁵⁶ Roullet, 1972: plate X; Mole 2018: 361–365.

⁵⁷ See n. 50 for the a well-known anecdote recorded by Pirro Ligorio about the discovery of an ancient statue of a bull at the site (Curran 2007: 280–281).

⁵⁸ Allen 2015: 159–160.



Fig. 1: The Osiris Hydreios of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (front)



Fig. 2: The Osiris Hydreios of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (back)



Fig. 3: The Osiris Hydreios of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (right)



Fig. 4: The Osiris Hydreios of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (left)

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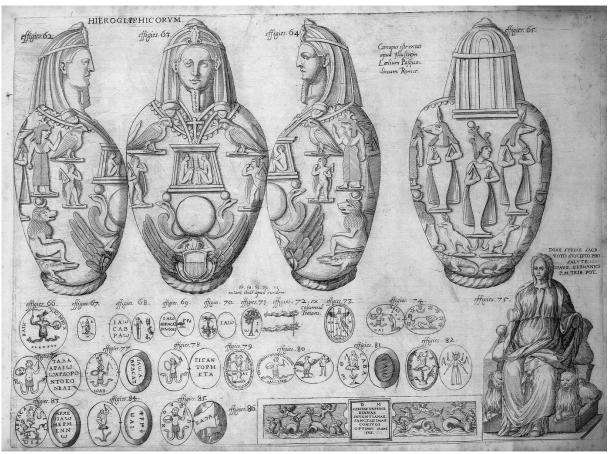


Fig. 5: The Osiris Hydreios in the Thesaurus Hieroglyphicorum

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

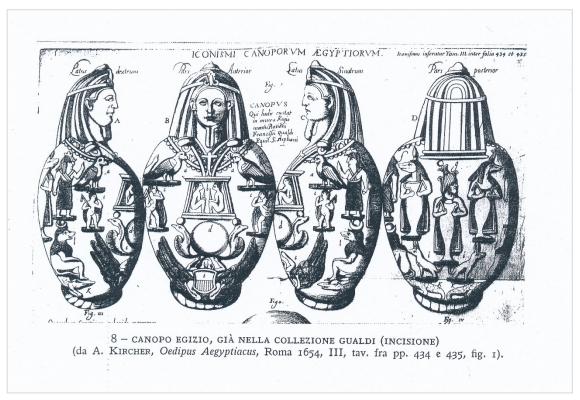


Fig. 6: The Osiris Hydreios in Kircher's Oedipus Aegyptiacus

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