REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TOMB OF OSIRIS IN THE RELIEFS OF HADRIAN’S GATE AT PHILAE
(Ch. IV, nn. 115, 116)

Representations of the tomb of Osiris in the island of Bigeh may be seen in the reliefs on the walls of a landing station at Philae, known as Hadrian’s Gate. The first relief is on the inner side of the south wall of Hadrian’s Gate at Philae (fig. 82). Junker assumed that this represented the sacred grove. The picture of the Abaton shows a clump of stylised branches or trees rising from the hieroglyphic figure for a pond or an irrigated piece of land. This interpretation would offer a fine parallel for the island with the grove in the Nile Mosaic. However, it is not certain that this interpretation is correct. In the first place the various representations of the Abaton show an embarrassing lack of similarity, especially in regard of the trees or branches. The representation in the relief of Hadrian’s Gate recurs in reduced form as a hieroglyph in the spelling of the name Abaton. In a relief in the temple of Isis at Philae we find the same row of trees or branches, but now rising from what seems to be a kind of tub. In another relief of Hadrian’s Gate appears the same figure of a pond, but now a large bush of branches rises from it. Another relief in the Isis temple depicts a tree with branches similar to the trees or branches rising from the pond in our figure 82. Junker assumed that all these representations depicted the same tree or trees, which in Egyptian texts are especially connected with Osiris’ tomb. However, various trees and plants are associated with

1 For this relief see PM VI, 254 (4); Junker 37 ff., 50 ff., fig. 20; Vassilika, pl. XL B. The entire wall is reproduced in Description de l’Égypte, Antiquités I, pl. 19, 1. For the date in the reign of Marcus Aurelius see Ch. IV, n. 114.
2 See Junker 50 ff., cf. 26, where it is stated that the Ba of Osiris dwells on the trees of the grove. In this he was followed by PM l.c. and RARG 528, fig. 131; 576, s.v. Osirisgrab.
3 See Junker 51, 72.
4 See Junker 61, fig. 21; Philae, pl. XXXVI.
5 See Junker 54, fig. 18.
6 See Junker 52, fig. 17; Philae, pl. XLII.
7 Junker 50 ff.
Osiris' tomb. The Dendera inscription states that the sarcophagus of Osiris must be buried in the place of the nbh plants in the crypt beneath the Ished trees. At Philae mention is made of the iw tree or plant beside the sarcophagus. In addition we hear of the Ished tree beside Osiris' tomb which has been identified with the Balanites. The iw is sometimes identified as a sycamore. Since, however, it is consistently spelled with the hieroglyph for a plant instead of that for a tree, such as is used for example for the Ished tree, it seems to have been a plant rather than a large tree like the sycamore. At all events its identity remains uncertain. The plant nbh has not been identified either. Its connection with the crypt may imply that it was identical with or related to the iw plant.

The stylised trees or branches in the relief of Hadrian's Gate are reminiscent of ears of barley, without the stalks, and so could perhaps represent a stylised cornfield. This could suggest an identification with the field of corn and barley which lay somewhere near the Abaton. However, this field served only for the preparation of the corn-mummy, and, although the corn was a necessary element of the ritual, the field was not a central part of it. In connection with ears of corn one could also consider the possibility that the scene represents the ears of corn sprouting from the corn-mummy which was the central element in the ritual of Osiris. Usually this is represented by the figure of a mummy with ears sprouting from it (see fig. 81). But perhaps we have in this case a representation which shows the ears sprouting from the basin in which the corn-mummy was placed to be watered till the germination of the grain and which was called

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8 See Chassinat 231 f., Baum 273; for the Dendera inscription Ch. IV, n. 126; and for the crypt and the burial ritual Appendix 9.
9 Junker 50-54.
10 See Ch. IV, n. 111.
11 See Baum 69, n. 203; 309, n. 442; 311, n. 456.
12 Cf. Junker 52.
13 Cf. Baum 18 ff.
14 Cf. R.T. Rundle Clark, Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt (1959) 101: corn rising from the symbol of an irrigated piece of land.
15 See Junker 39; Chassinat 498. The name which Diodorus gives to Bigeh, i.e. the 'sacred field' could point in the same direction (Diod. I 22, 3; Junker 74 f).
16 See Chassinat 502 ff.; and for the corn-mummy Ch. IV, n. 127.
17 See Ch. IV, n. 127.