

# ANIMAL SARCOPHAGI



These small animal sarcophagi were discovered in the area of the **temple of Khonsu-Thoth** in the northern part of Thonis-Heracleion. They are made of very fine and particularly white limestone. The Egyptians associated this colour with purity, as in the alabaster they used for the embalming tables of the Apis bulls, certain sarcophagi, naoi or statues.

## Mummies of ibises and hawks

The coffins probably contained the mummies of ibises or hawks, or possibly both; on the one hand because these two species are often connected with the necropoleis of birds, and secondly because the former one is connected with Thoth, and the latter one with Khonsu.

Possibly, ibises and hawks had been deified as sacred animals of Khonsu-Thoth, and then mummified and buried in a necropolis that was dedicated to them.





## Evolution of funeral rites

The hawk-headed form of these small sarcophagi suggests that in the Late Period, the deceased is readily identified with **Sokar**, the form of solar rebirth of Osiris.

The impressive silver sarcophagus with the head of a falcon of pharaoh Sheshonk II (around 890 BC) found at Tanis, which contained an interior coffin of gold, also falcon-headed, with its innovative form mark a time of evolution in the conception of funeral rites.





**Objects:** Sarcophagi: Limestone. L. ca. 35 cm. XXVIth dynasty. Maritime Museum, Alexandria (SCA 1513, 1514, 1517); Statuette of an ibis: 6th-2nd c. BC, H. 10cm. Bronze, Maritime Museum Alexandria (SCA 1087)

**Source:** Original description by Sophie von Bomhard in exhibition catalogue „Osiris - Egypt's Sunken Mysteries“, Paris, 2015, re-ed 2018, exh. Egypt's Sunken Cities, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis 4 November 2018 - 14 April 2019

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