

BRONZE LADLES



Numerous ritual objects were discovered in the canals and port basins at Thonis-Heracleion and in the Grand Canal leading to the city of Canopus. Among these were **over one hundred bronze ladles** - known as simpula - with long, straight handles ending with a duck's head. They were used during the religious ceremonies in honour of Osiris celebrated between the sanctuaries of the two towns.

Votive deposits?

The simpula present all criteria for votive deposits. They were often associated with instruments for incense or fumigation, as well as receptacles in bronze or lead that contained the remains of fauna or flora, which were closed by hand with a gesture aiming to squash the opening and seal the contents inside before throwing them into the water.

These are votive deposits, offerings dropped into the waters in order to consecrate a place or to celebrate a god.



Link to festivities of Khoiak

Some of the ladles found at Thonis-Heracleion and Canopus had been intentionally twisted in order to doubly protect them from possible desecration by putting them out of reach, and by rendering them useless once they had served in their sacred function.

These simpula should be linked to the festivities of Khoiak, during which they were used for the Osirian (and Dionysian) ritual practices. During the Mysteries, as they are represented on the **chapel walls on the roof of Dendera**, such a ladle was used to pour a measure of earth soaked in water from the holy lake into fourteen vessels in gold, silver and bronze.

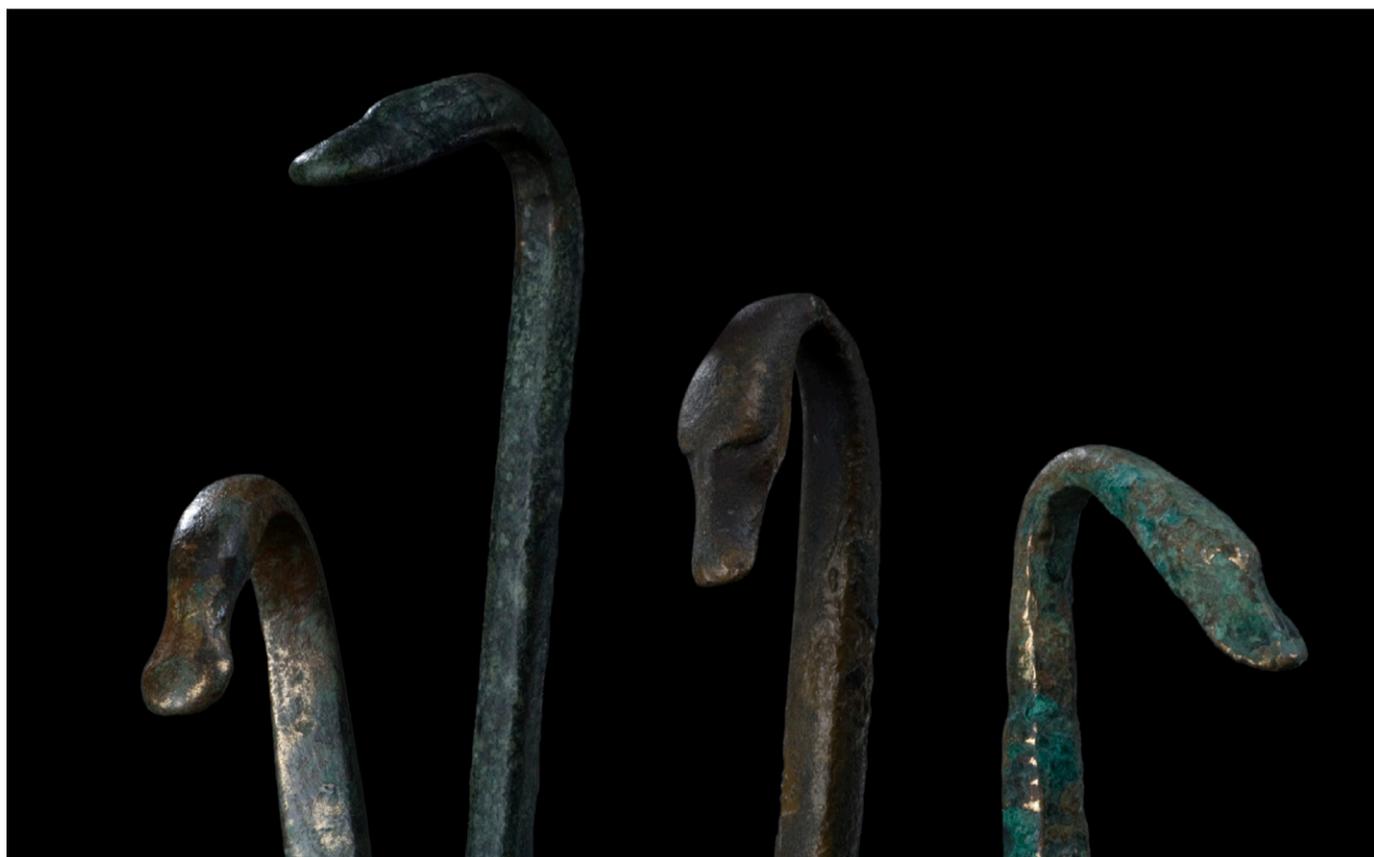


They soaked the substances that went into in the making of the **Osiris Sokaris** statue. A Thonis-Heracleion simpulum shows a wadjet eye or “eye of Horus” engraved on its bowl. In the ritual of Khoiak at Dendera, the ladle was significantly named “the Great Assembleress”.



Appearance throughout ancient world

From the fifth-fourth century BC on, this type of instrument appears throughout the ancient world (Greece, Italy, Gaul, Asia Minor, Balkans, etc.), playing an important role in the sequences of the rituals of **wine libation** during the feasts of Dionysus, who had been assimilated to Osiris by the Greeks.



Object: Bronze. L. 43-57 cm. Heracleion. Late Period - Ptolemaic Period. Maritime Museum, Alexandria (SCA 579, 1014, 478, 397, 909, 931, 220, 1034, 1042, 1043, 1032)

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