

FOUNDATION DEPOSIT



A deposit, composed of the statuette of a child god with his small wooden naos surrounded by amulets, was discovered in the northeast corner of the **Khonsu temple**, which stood in the northern area of the grand temple of Amun-Gereb at Thonis-Heracleion. The temple was active from the early 4th until the middle second century BC.

Same style objects

Apart from the wooden naos, the remarkably fine **faïence objects**, all in the same style were manifestly made at the same time and with the intention of being placed together. The juvenile god, standing in the nude and wearing a uraeus is recognized by the classical lock of hair on one side and the finger to his mouth. As D. Fabre noted, it is Harpocrates/Khonsu, assimilated by the Greeks with Heracles, the god who had given his name to the temple and then to the town of Heracleion.



Khonsu assimilated with Heracles

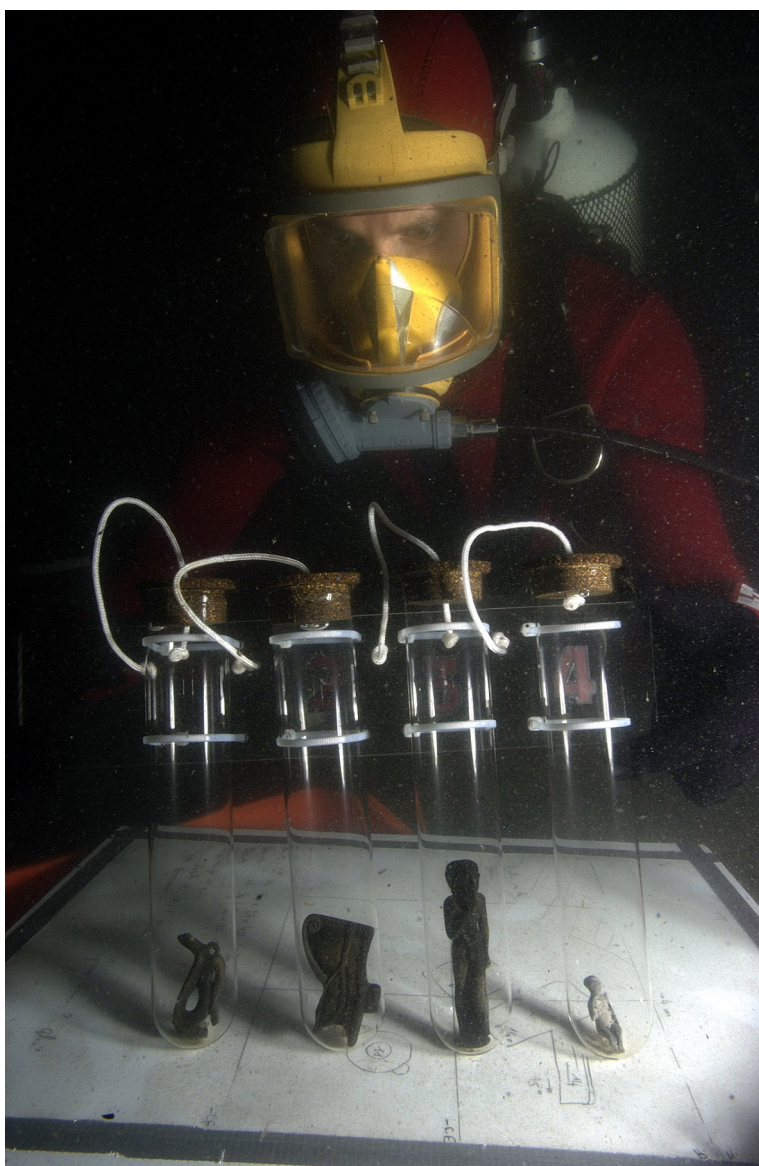
Reputed to be lord and master of the waters, Heracles, incidentally, gave his name to the Canopic branch of the Nile, called also the Heracleotic branch. At Thonis, Khonsu, the son of Amun and Mut and the divine heir, appears as the figure of the terrestrial heir, and even the symbol of the dynastic function of the temple of Amun called “of the gereb”, the seat of perpetuation of royal power and monarchic legitimacy.



Protection of the young god

The amulets that surround the young god, turquoise green before the sea water altered their colour, protect and revivify him:

a **double vase** (purification by the water of the Nile), a little **papyrus column** (revitalization and health), the **god Shu** bearing the sun on his head, to support heaven (the cosmic god controlling the stars and therefore the god of destiny protecting the sun's heir), **uraei** (rising cobras) and a **wadjet eye** (wholeness of the body).



Rare find of outstanding significance

This collection, exceptional because of the immense rarity of divine images discovered in foundation deposits so far, appears to be outstanding in its significance.



On the one hand it emphasizes the function attributed to the temple it consecrates, to wit the maintenance and advancement of the royal heritage, and on the other it throws light on the major function of Heracles, the emblematic divinity of the entire region of Heracleion.

Very efficiently protected from the gigantic natural earthquakes and human pillage by these amulets, the beautiful child from the bottom of the sea reappears out of the deep almost intact after more than two millennia in hiding.

Object: Wood and faïence. XXXth dynasty. Naos in wood, H. 13 cm. Faïence amulets: Harpocrates, H. 7.9 cm; papyrus column, H. 13 cm; double hes-vase, H. 7.3 cm; Shu, H. 5.8 cm; wadjet eye, H. 4 cm; uraei, H. 4.2 cm; faïence plaque, L. 8.4 cm; Maritime and National Museums Alexandria (SCA 583, 562, 565, 559, 553, 558, 552, 555, 560)

Source: Original description in exhibition catalogue „Osiris - Egypt's Sunken Mysteries“, p 76, 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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