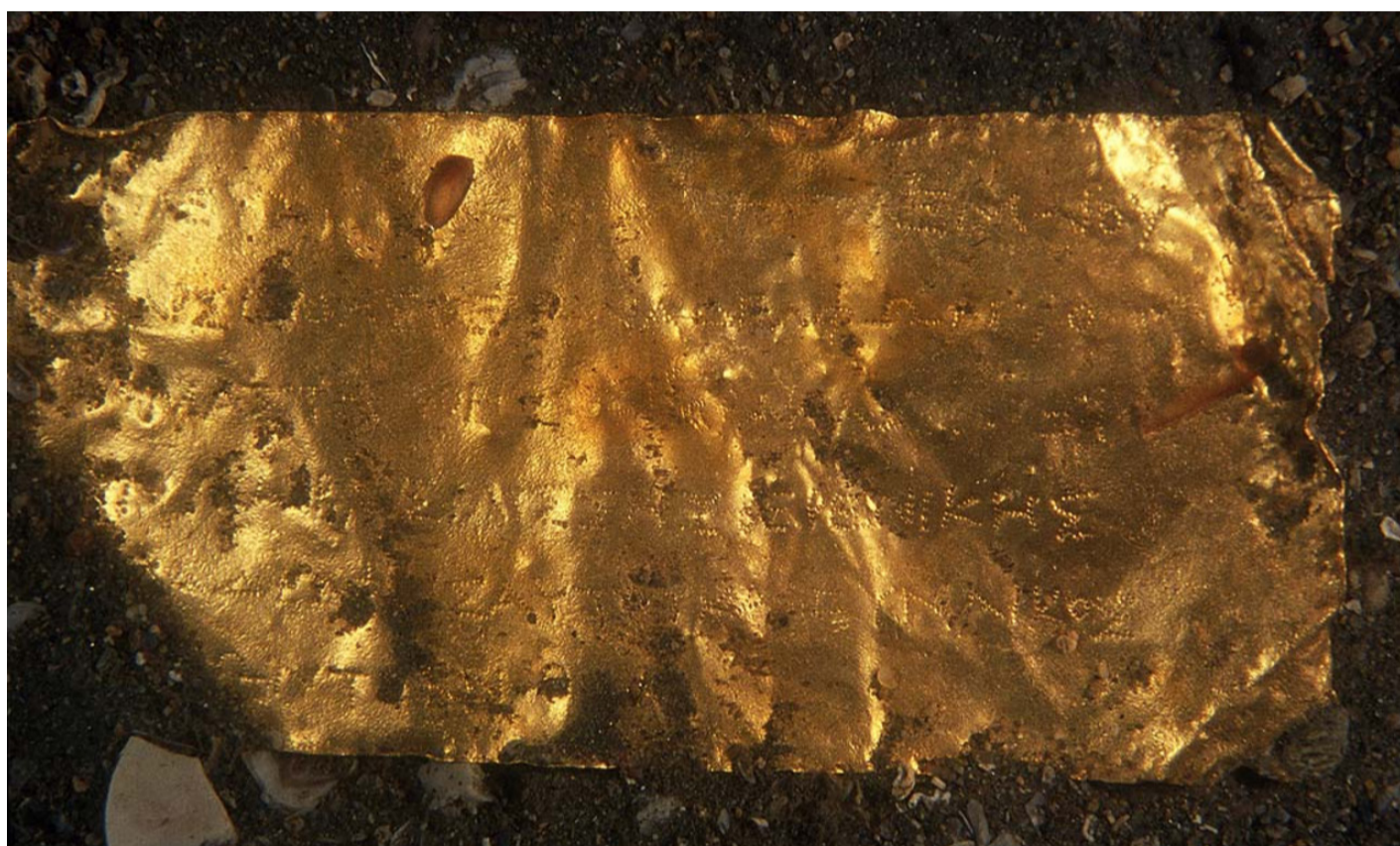


GOLD PLAQUE FOR THE HOUSE OF THE GODS

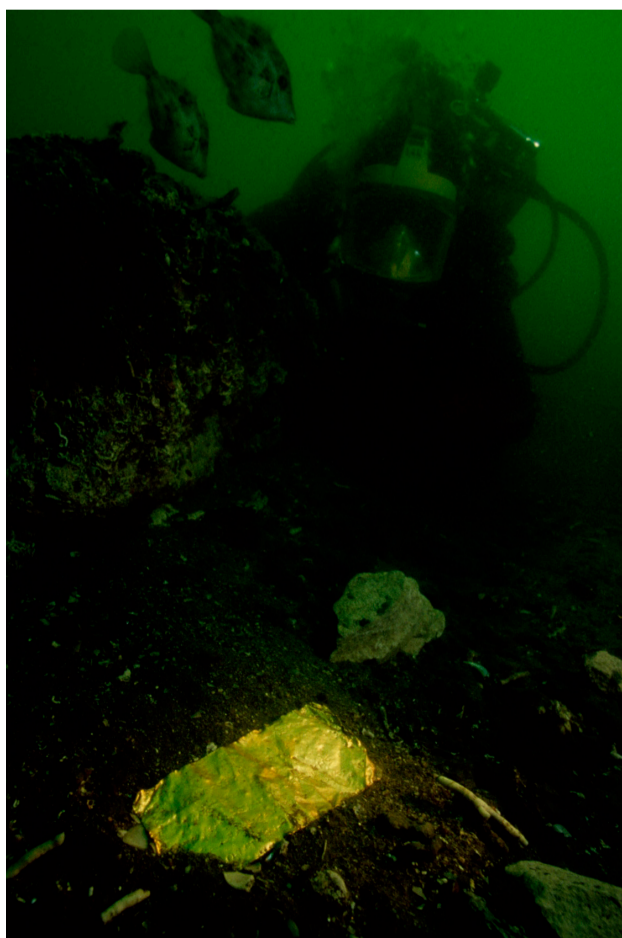


This gold object was found during the IEASM excavations of 2003 in the preliminary exploration of Thonis-Heracleion's northern sector. It is 5 centimetres high, 10.8 centimetres wide and 0.8 centimetres thick and engraved with a **Greek text** consisting of five and a half dotted lines.

In the name of Ptolemy III

The examination identified a dedication made in the name of Ptolemy III and his family. More specifically, it is one of the plaques buried with foundation gifts under the corners of temenos walls and shrines, 'signed' in the name of the king who oversaw their construction.

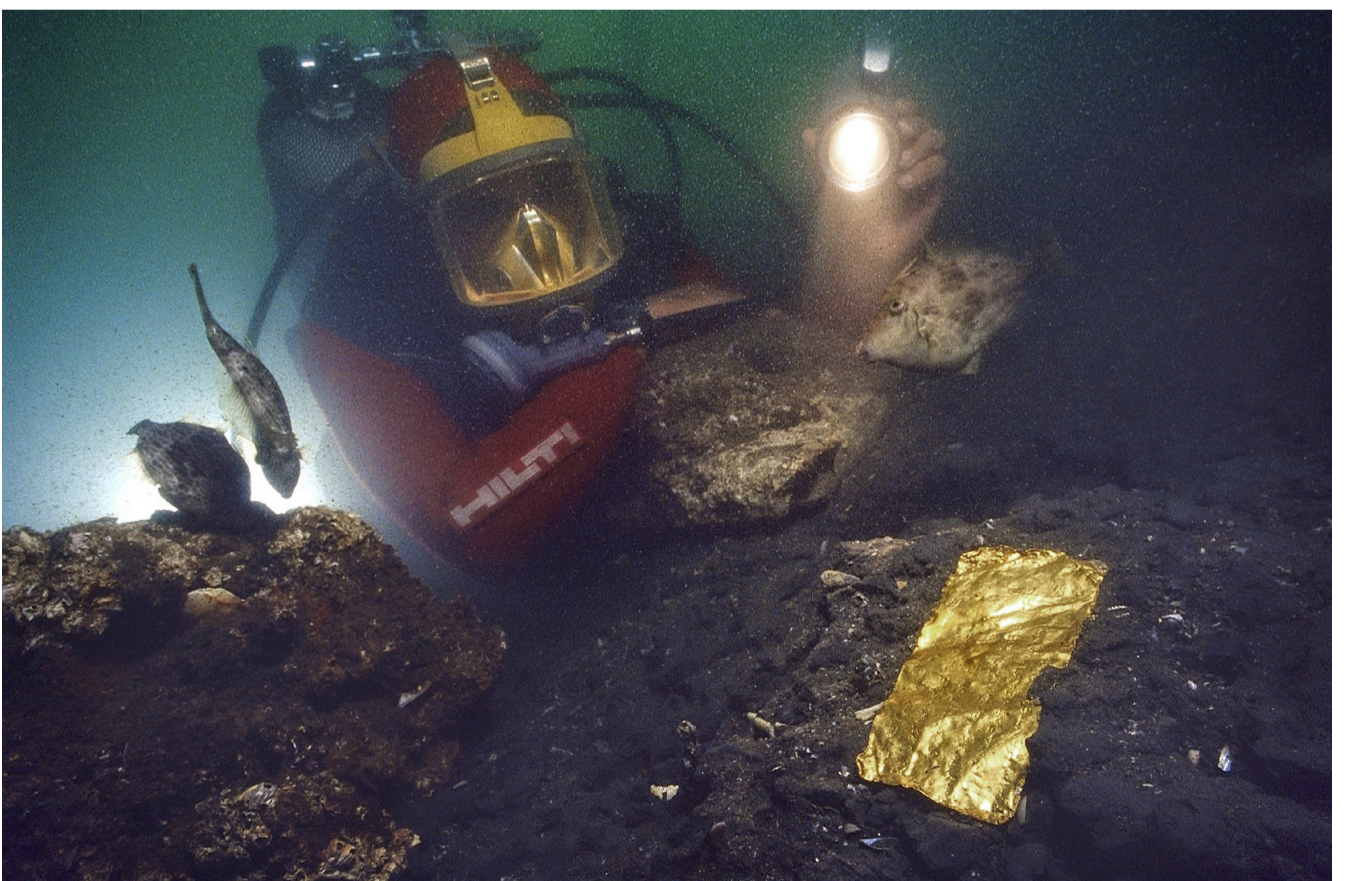
It is noteworthy that the same dotted style is seen in another gold plaque uncovered by chance in 1818 in the middle of the Aboukir peninsula (West Canopus) and bearing the dedication of a temenos to Osiris in the name of the same Ptolemy III and Berenice II (British Museum, no.1063).



Only reminder of the building's existence

The positioning of the plaque was meticulously determined and its taphonomic configuration recorded. Lying flat, with the inscribed side facing upwards on ground previously occupied in the 4th century BC, this plaque was buried under less than 20 centimetres of marine deposits.

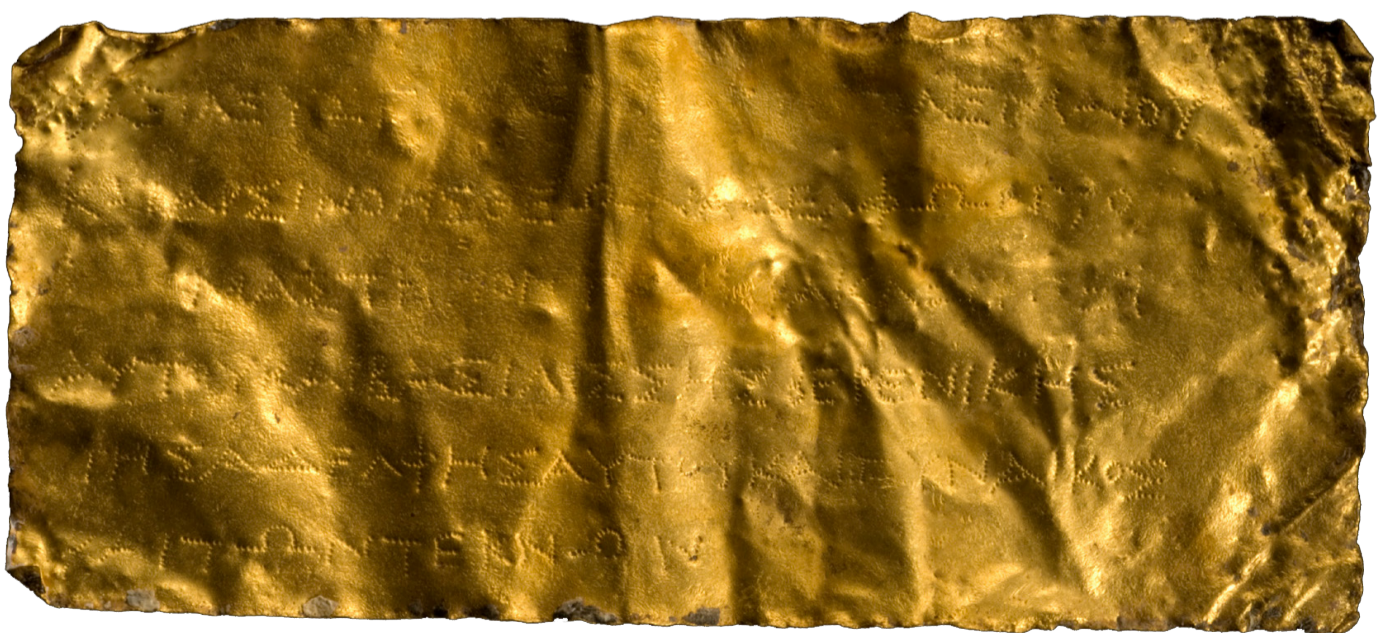
The presence in this object of nodules created by the decomposition of limestone blocks clearly following the subsidence that appeared in the 8th century AD is the only possible reminder of the existence of a building.



Wandering plaque

Obviously, the plaque has moved from its point of origin, both horizontally and vertically. During its peregrinations, it has been roughly handled. The four corners were bent, and one was even bent double.

The plaque has three undulations as if it received lateral shocks. Vertical pressure has created a pattern of small pointed bumps. Because of these alterations, letters have completely disappeared in places, are barely visible or worse, distorted and unrecognizable.



A gymnasium to Heracles

After thorough cleaning and restoration, Professor Manfred Clauss has been able to read the entire text of the dedication:

“King Ptolemy, [son] of Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the sibling gods, gives this gymnasterium to Heracles for his own [well-being] and that of Queen Berenice, his sister and wife, and that of their children.”

The ruler dedicated a ‘gymnasterium’, that is a gymnasium, a sporting and educational facility, to Heracles.

Heracles was worshipped as the **patron of athletics**, and from the Hellenistic Period almost every gymnasium had an altar or statue dedicated to the god.

Thanks to this extraordinary discovery we now know that the same was true in Thonis-Heracleion.

Interest in Canopic region

Nevertheless, this wandering plaque still contributes important evidence to the history of the northern sector, which was filled with monuments by the Ptolemaic rulers, as attested by the monumental stele of Ptolemy VIII Euergetes I.

The gold plaque also enriches our knowledge of the first Euergetes' interest in the Canopic region, where prophets and priests came to proclaim him benefactor.

Object: Ptolemaic Period (Ptolemy III), Gold, H. 5 cm | W. 10.8 cm | Th. 0.8 cm, Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria (SCA 876)

Source: Original description by Jean Yoyotte and Manfred Clauss in exhibition catalogue Egypt's Sunken Treasures, Berlin 2006, exh. Egypt's Sunken Treasures, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, May - September 2006

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