

GOLD COIN FROM CYPRUS



This Phoenician hemistater of **Pumiyaton**, King of Kition, was discovered by the IEASM in the north façade of the large temenos in Thonis-Heracleion off the coast of Egypt in today's Aboukir Bay. It bears the only Greek image of the demigod Heracles found on the site.

Nude Heracles with bow

The obverse features Heracles walking, naked except for his head and his arm which are covered by lion skin, as he draws back his bow and brandishes his club.

An almost identical representation, accompanied by an inscription in Phoenician, appears in particular on the coins of Demonicus II, King of Lapethus around 390 BC (a Phoenician ruler, despite his Greek name).



According to Yon, who has rigorously examined the iconography peculiar to the Cypriot Heracles-Melqart, he is a young beardless man, unlike the classical heavily bearded Heracles.

Lion attacking a stag

On the reverse, a lion leaps onto the back of a stag and sinks its teeth into the base of the wild animal's neck. The same subject, drawn from old Asiatic or Egyptian traditions and taken up in the 5th century BC by the dynasty of Kition, seems to have interested Heracles' Asiatic followers.



For example, it adorns the reverse side of a coin of Mazaeus, the Iranian satrap from Cilicia whose patron was Baaltars, the 'Baal of Tarsus'.

The Phoenician inscription that appears above and in front of the scene called Mlq Pmyytn, the 'King Pumiyaton', dates the issue to the seventh or eighth year of his reign (either 355/354 or 354/353 BC).

Object: Hemistater, Gold. Diam. 1.37 cm., Fourth century BC (Pumiyaton). National Museum, Alexandria (SCA 287)

Source: Original description by Jean Yoyotte and Barbara Lichocka 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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