



Græco-Roman Depictions of Harpocrates Riding Animals from Egypt

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ABSTRACT

The deity Horus is one of the most important gods mentioned in the Osirian myth. He was a symbol of goodness and generosity and has been associated with the ruler of Egypt since the beginning of ancient Egyptian history. Horus the Child (Harpocrates) is considered as one of the god Horus forms and a member of the Alexandria Triad. His worship and symbolism spread during the Græco-Roman period and was frequently depicted in minor arts; among these are uncommon artistic styles that appeared during the Græco-Roman period, represented by the depiction of the child Horus riding various animals such as camel, elephant, lion, horse, ram, dog, serpent and goose. This forms the core of the research idea in which the light will be shed on the most important aspects of these figurines, the reasons that led the artist to choose these animals, their origins in ancient Egyptian culture, and presents the significance of these animals and their connection to Harpocrates until the end of the Græco-Roman period.

KEYWORDS

Harpocrates, Riding, Animals, Birds, Deities, cornucopia

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تصويرات يونانية رومانية لحربوقراط يمتطى الحيوانات من مصر

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الملخص

المعبود حورس أحد أهم المعبودات الواردة بالأسطورة الأوزورية، وكان رمزاً للخير والعطاء، وإرتبط منذ بداية التاريخ المصرى القديم بحاكم مصر، ويُعد حورس الطفل (حربوقراط) صورة من صورالمعبود حورس، وعضواً في ثالوث الإسكندرية، وقد انتشرت عبادته ورمزيته خلال العصر اليوناني - الروماني، وكثير تصويره في الفنون الصغرى، ومنها أنماط فنية غير شائعة ظهرت خلال العصر اليوناني - الروماني تتمثل في إمتطاء حورس الطفل بعض الحيوانات مثل الجمل - الفيل - الأسد - الحصان - الكبش - الكلب - الكوبرا -الأوز فكان ذلك نواة لفكرة بحث يُلقى فيها الضوء على اهم مظاهر هذه الاشكال، والأسباب التي دفعت الفنان لإختيار تلك الحيوانات، وكذلك تأصيلها بالحضارة المصرية القديمة، وعرض لأهمية تلك الحيوانات ومدى إرتباطها بالمعبود حورس الطفل حتى نهاية العصر اليوناني -الروماني.

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



1. Introduction

The worship of the deity Harpocrates and his statuettes were widely popular throughout ancient Egypt, especially during the Græco-Roman period. International museums are filled with numerous artworks depicting the deity Harpocrates in various artistic styles, such as a knight riding his horse or other animals, such as a goose or an elephant. Due to the popularity and wide recognition of these minor arts. These statuettes were placed in houses and used as vows¹, as well as being placed in tombs². The depiction of the deity Harpocrates riding animals was the more popular and favored style among artists; this is confirmed by the widespread distribution of these types of terracotta statuettes across Egypt. Additionally, the childlike appearance of this deity made him a protector god of children³. Terracotta statuettes are considered one of the Græco-Roman artistic styles related to domestic worship, characterized by comprehensive diversity in both content and form.⁴

2. Methodology

The research will discuss Egyptian examples of minor arts depicting the god Harpocrates riding animals during the Græco-Roman period, along with a presentation of their names, the reasons that prompted the artist to use this artistic style, and the elements that contributed to its spread. Also, the research aims to trace the religious significance of the animals and the religious relevance between Horus and the animals. A descriptive and analytical approach will be used to present the research topic.

3. Harpocrates

In ancient Egyptian civilization, Harpocrates was called  *hr-p3-hrd*⁵, meaning Horus the Child⁶, and the Greeks called him Harpocrates⁷ Ἄρποκράτης, which is the Greek translation of the Egyptian name⁸. Horus the Child is one of the depictions of the god Horus ( *hr*)⁹ in the form of a child and son of Osiris ( *wsir*)¹⁰ and Isis ( *3st*)¹¹, and a member of the Alexandria triad (Serapis *wsir hp*    ¹², Isis *3st*, and Harpocrates *hr-p3-hrd*). He is usually depicted as a child with his

¹ Elkady, M. (2021), Figurines of Harpocrates the Horseman and Isis-Aphrodite in Egyptian Cultural Heritage, *Annals Of General Union of Arab Archaeologists*, Issue 24, 1-23.

² Savvopoulos, K. (2019) Popular Divine Image in Hellenistic and Roman Alexandria. The Terracotta Figurines Collection of The Patriarchal Sacristy in Alexandria, *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, pp. 1-52.

³ صفاء سمير درويش (2022) دراسة لتمائيل حيوانات من الطين المحروق (التراكوتا) – غير منشورة، مجلة كلية السياحة والفنادق – جامعة المنصورة، عدد 11، يونيو، ص 317-416.

⁴ Savvopoulos 2019, 1.

⁵ Leitz, C. (2002) *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*, Band V, Louvain, p. 281.

⁶ Elkady 2021, 6.

⁷ روبرت آرموار (2005) *الالهة المصرية القديمة وأساطيرها*، ترجمة مروة الفقي، مراجعة محمد بكر، المجلس الأعلى للثقافة، ص 69.


⁸ Meeks, D., (1977) "Harpokrates", *LA II*, Wiesbaden, col.1003-1011.

⁹ Leitz 2002, Band V, 230.

¹⁰ Leitz 2002, Band II, 528.

¹¹ Leitz 2002, Band I, 62.

¹² Leitz 2002, Band II, 554.

finger in his mouth, symbolizing childhood, or nursing from his mother Isis. He has a tuft of hair on the side¹³, naked¹⁴ and plump¹⁵. He was born in the papyrus swamps of the northern Delta and was raised in secret for fear of the god Seth¹⁶ ( swth)¹⁷. He was considered one of the protective deities of Alexandria and beloved by the people, which led to the spread of his worship throughout Egypt and beyond¹⁸. Harpocrates was frequently depicted in minor arts wearing various royal crowns, the most famous being the double crown. During the Græco-Roman period, some new attributes were added to him as a god of abundance; he became a household deity associated with the family and protector of children. He was also depicted riding animals such as goose, elephant, horse, and others, adopting a military appearance alongside his child form¹⁹. as a symbol of victory over evil. He was also commonly depicted on magical stele dominating monsters and reptiles, and on clay seals as a sign of his prominence during the Græco-Roman period.²⁰

Sometimes, Harpocrates was shown seated on a lotus flower, reflecting his association with the sun god, as he embodied the first two hours of the day²¹, and represented the newly born sun²². Consequently, in the Roman period, he became a common symbol for amulets and a god of dawn, the most effective time for performing magical spells²³. Occasionally, he was depicted crowned with a solar or lunar disk on his head and holding cornucopia²⁴. He was also linked to agriculture and harvest. Therefore, wheat spikes were worn in some statuettes, and as a result, he became revered throughout the Mediterranean²⁵. The child Gods had two roles in ancient Egyptian mythology: the first symbolized the renewal of the universe, and the second was to overcome the evil creatures that threatened the cosmic order.²⁶

4. Figurines of Harpocrates Riding Animals

The ancient Egyptians used to depict all kinds of animals in his art (predatory – domestic – aquatic), as well as birds and reptiles, as a part of representing their daily life²⁷. The nature of the ancient Egyptian environment was an important element in the establishment of civilization, characterized by its geographical location, climate, the Nile River, and fertile soil. All of this contributed to the diversity of animals and birds,

¹³ عبدالحليم نور الدين (2009)، *الديانة المصرية القديمة*، الجزء الأول "المعبودات"، الطبعة الأولى، القاهرة، ص 208.

¹⁴ Cristea, S. (2013) Egyptian, Greek, Roman Harpocrates – A Protecting and Saviour God, *In Angeles, demons and representation of afterlife within the Jewish, pagan and Christian imagery*, Editura Universitatii, pp. 73-86.

¹⁵ Erman, A. (1907) *A Handbook of Egyptian Religion*, London, p. 218.

¹⁶ Wilkinson, R. (2003) *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, London, p. 132.

¹⁷ Leitz 2002, Band VI, 691.

¹⁸ عنايات محمد أحمد (2007)، *تاريخ مصر في العصرين اليوناني والروماني*، الإسكندرية، ص 35.

¹⁹ Elkady 2021, 7.

²⁰ Abdelwahed, Y. (2019) The Harpokratia in Graeco-Roman Egypt, *Rosetta* 23, UK, pp. 1-27.

²¹ Meeks 1977, 1003: 1011.

²² Cristea 2013, 73.

²³ Pinch, G. (2002) *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*, California, pp. 146, 147.

²⁴ Cristea 2013, 73, 77.

²⁵ Meeks 1977, 1003: 1011.

²⁶ Pinch 2002, 146.

²⁷ Halim, S. & Weshahy, M. (2020) The Camel in Coptic Art: An Artistic and Archaeological Study, *International Journal of Heritage, Tourism and Hospitality*, 14, No. 3, 283-299.

granting them a significant role in art and religion through their depiction in various forms of art as well as their use in the ancient Egyptian language through hieroglyphic signs²⁸. The ancient Egyptians viewed these creatures with a mixture of fear of their harm and a desire to benefit from them²⁹. Kindness to animals was considered a sacred duty³⁰. The relationship between the ancient Egyptians and animals was not merely secular; animals played an important role in religion, as they were associated with many deities³¹. However, the ancient Egyptians did not worship animals themselves but they sanctified a higher spirit, the spirit of God that resided in them³².

Harpocrates's association with solar, chthonic, and oracular deities like Amun (𓁢𓏏𓏏 *imn*)³³, who was often linked to the ram, led to his appearance on animals such as the ram, goose, and dog. The use of these animals was a way to visually connect Harpocrates to the attributes of other gods. Over time, this practice expanded to include a wider range of animals, including rooster, horse, camel, and elephant. These animals further reflected the diverse aspects of his worship, linking him to themes of hunting, solar power, and prophecy. This array of animal mounts illustrates how the cult of Harpocrates absorbed and integrated different religious ideas during the Græco-Roman period³⁴.

4.1. Camel κάμηλοι³⁵

There is no Egyptian word that refers to the camel in the ancient Egyptian language³⁶, although it was known in Egyptian civilization since the Pre-dynastic Period. The camel figure appeared as an artistic work for the first time in Egypt during the Predynastic Period, as is known so far. Excavations by Cairo University in Maadi uncovered a piece of terracotta that likely represents an incomplete camel head. This head is preserved in the Cairo University Museum (fig. 1). However, its depiction is considered rare in art. These scenes appeared as a result of establishing relations with Egypt's neighbours, especially the Asiatic peoples of northwest Arabia island³⁷. During the Ptolemaic Period, trade routes were established across the desert, linking Qift on the Nile with Red Sea ports, and camels were used as a mean of transport³⁸. During the Roman Period, the use of camels as a mean of transportation was not

²⁸ محمد عبدالوهاب رجب (2020) *الحيوان في مصر القديمة "دراسة لغوية تحليلية مقارنة مع العلم في العصر الحديث"*، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، كلية البنات للعلوم والآداب والتربية، جامعة عين شمس، القاهرة، ص ن

²⁹ أشرف عبدالرؤف راغب (2002) *الأسد في الفن المصري القديم*، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، كلية الآداب، جامعة طنطا، ص أ.

³⁰ فرنسواز ديناند & روجيه لشتنبرج (2012) *الحيوانات والبشر تناغم مصري قديم*، ترجمة فاطمة عبدالله محمود، مراجعة وتقديم محمود ماهر طه، الطبعة الأولى، القاهرة، ص 7.

³¹ تامر فهم (2014) *المناظر غير التقليدية للحيوانات في مصر القديمة*، مجلة اتحاد الجامعات العربية للسياحة والضيافة، المجلد 11، ديسمبر "الجزء الثاني" ص 1-16.

³² إيناس بهي الدين عبدالنجم (2002) *المعبودات المصرية القديمة التي اتخذت هيئة الكباش "منذ بداية العصور التاريخية وحتى نهاية النولة الحديثة"*، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، كلية الآثار – جامعة القاهرة، ص 6.

³³ Leitz 2002, Band I, 305.

³⁴ Abdelwahed 2019, 5.

³⁵ Halim, et.al. 2020, 284.

³⁶ Halim, et.al. 2020, 292; Guadard, F. (2017) *The Camel as a Sethian Creature, Essays for The Library of Seshat*, The University of Chicago, pp. 41-52.

³⁷ حسنى عمار (2012)، "أضواء جديدة على الجمل في الفن المصري القديم"، مجلة الاتحاد العام للآثاريين العرب، المجلد 13، العدد 1، 122: 145.

³⁸ Saber, A., (1998), "The Camel in Ancient Egypt", *Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting for Animal Production Under Arid Conditions*, Vol. 1, United Arab Emirates University, 208-215

limited to desert areas only but was also employed within the Nile Valley regions. This was reflected in the art, as camels were frequently depicted in sculpture, engraving, and minor arts during the Græco-Roman Period³⁹, especially from the beginning of the 3rd century AD, when they were widely portrayed on terracotta⁴⁰. Therefore, the use of camels as a means of transport only became clearly evident at the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period due to increased trade relations with the East, while the ancient Egyptians relied on donkeys for their trade.⁴¹ The god Horus of Edfu was considered as the lord of the desert⁴².



Fig. 1: A piece of terracotta that likely represents an incomplete camel head, Pre-dynastic Period, currently housed in the Cairo University Museum. **Source:**

حسنى عمار (2012)، "أضواء جديدة على الجمل في الفن المصري القديم"، مجلة الاتحاد العام للآثار بين العرب، المجلد 13، العدد 1، لوحة رقم (1)، ص 139.

The Louvre Museum preserves a statuette dating back to the Ptolemaic period of the deity Harpocrates depicted as a child riding a camel, sitting in a niche beneath which are a cluster of grapes, jars and amphorae (fig. 2). These amphorae were used during the Græco-Roman Period for shipping wine, liquid and dry products. These amphorae are characterized by their thick walls to protect against breakage or leakage during the journey⁴³. Grapes were associated with one of the most important types of offerings presented to the god Horus only; he is the hero in the battlefield who defeats evil. The offering is known as the "Elixir of Courage" and appeared only in the temples of the Græco-Roman Period. It consists of a vessel containing grapes mixed with a sugary beverage. This beverage quenches the warrior's thirst and grants him strength and perseverance, removing any fear from his heart⁴⁴. Meanwhile, the Louvre Museum also holds a statuette dating back to the Roman Period of the deity Harpocrates depicted as a child riding a camel, leaning on a vessel, and wearing the double crown

³⁹ حسنى عمار، المرجع السابق، 122-145.

⁴⁰ Halim, et.al 2020, 285.

⁴¹ Guadard 2017, 43.

⁴² Elsayed, M. (2019) Lion as an Epithet of Horus of Behdety at Edfu, *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies "EJARS"*, 9 (2), pp. 207-218

⁴³ Madkour, F. (2014) Identification and Restoration of Late Roman Amphora, 4TH – 6TH Centuries AD. From Bahnasa Site, Minia, Egypt, *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies "EJARS"*, 4 (1), pp. 13-23.

⁴⁴ سيلفى كوفيل (2010) قرابين الآلهة في مصر القديمة، ترجمة سهير لطف الله، القاهرة، ص 38.

(fig. 3), which was considered one of the symbols of authority related to gods and rulers⁴⁵.

Analysis: The depiction of Harpocrates riding a camel represents one of his attributes that he is a protective deity. Accordingly, he is shown in this form to symbolize his protection of the trade caravans; the camel was a crucial animal for desert travel and trade during this period. Its ability to traverse long, arid distances made it indispensable for the expanding trade routes that connected Egypt to the wider Roman world. As the god of silence, childhood, and secrets, Harpocrates was already seen as a protector. By depicting him on a camel, his protective qualities were extended to a new and economically vital aspect of life: trade caravans. This would have made him an appealing deity for merchants and travellers who needed divine protection from the dangers of the desert.

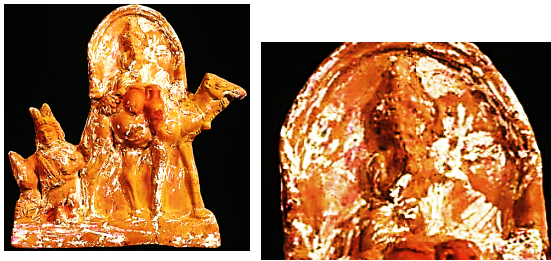


Fig. 2: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a camel in the Louvre Museum (E 32783), Ptolemaic Period.

Source:

<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010038558> (accessed 1/8/2025 8 pm)



Fig. 3: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a camel in the Louvre Museum (E 2975), Roman Period.

Source:

<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010004993> (accessed 1/8/2025 9 pm)

4.2. Elephant (𓏏𓏏𓏏𓏏 3bw)⁴⁶

The oldest depiction of the elephant in ancient Egypt dates back to the Prehistoric Period⁴⁷. In Tomb 12 of Hierakonpolis, an elephant was found among other creatures. This tomb appears to have been built during Naqada III. A carved drawing of an African elephant and other animals, presumably from Naqada I, may be found close to Silwa Bahari, between Edfu and Kom Ombo⁴⁸ (fig. 4).

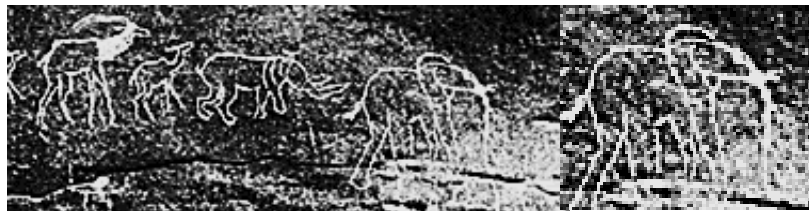


Fig. 4: A carved drawing depicting an elephant among other animals, Prehistoric Period, Naqada I, Silwa Bahari between Edfu and Kom Ombo.

⁴⁵ Strauss, C. (1980) "Kronen", *LA* III, col. 811

⁴⁶ Hannig, R. (2000), *Die Sprache der Pharaonen*, Band 86, Mainz, p. 330.

⁴⁷ جيهان رشدي محمد (2009) نماذج للحيوانات والطيور المجلوبة إلى مصر القديمة منذ عصور ما قبل التاريخ حتى نهاية الدولة الحديثة دراسة حضارية، دراسات في آثار الوطن العربي، المجلد 12، العدد 1، ص 28-78.

⁴⁸ Kitat, S. (2011) The Elephant as a Sacred Animal of the Egyptian God Seth during the Graeco-Roman Period, *Annal of Arab Archaeologists*, 14, No. 1, pp. 161-178.

Source: Kitat, S (2011) The Elephant as a Sacred Animal of the Egyptian God Seth during the Græco-Roman Period, *Annals of Arab Archaeologists* 14, No. 1, fig. 1, p. 173.

Elephants settled in Upper Egypt, in the area extending from Qena to El Quseir, then they settled in the southern part of Nubia⁴⁹, before becoming extinct in Egypt prior to the beginning of the dynastic period⁵⁰; because of the fauna changed as a result of the rising desertification, the elephant vanished from Egypt as aridity expanded⁵¹, also the continuous human disturbance and hunting⁵².

The Ptolemaic kings utilized elephants in their wars⁵³; to match the Indian – Asian elephants used by rival Seleucids. In pursuit of military elephants, Ptolemy II dispatched a number of expeditions to North Africa, as well as to areas that are known as Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea. Elephants were discovered in large numbers here, and in 280 BCE, a port was established at Ptolemais Theron (Ptolemais of the Hunts) for their export. The elephants were then driven to the coast and sailed up the Red Sea to the port of Berenice, from where they marched across the desert to their new home in the Nile Valley. During the Roman Empire, the demand for elephants and ivory exceeded all bounds. The main source was Africa, but there were also Indian overland supplies⁵⁴.

The ancient Egyptians used elephant tusks in ivory crafts⁵⁵; this is due to their durability and shine⁵⁶. Most of these tusks were brought to Egypt from abroad through tribute or foreign expeditions. The elephant symbolized royalty, power, and control due to its physical characteristics⁵⁷. Additionally, shields were made from light wood covered with a layer of elephant skin or other animal hides, which made the shield strong⁵⁸. Elephants were hardly referenced in ancient Egyptian religion. According to scholars, the elephant was associated with the Egyptian deity Seth, who represented evil, darkness, violence, illness, and disorder; thus, Horus was portrayed in ancient Egyptian religion as crushing and spearing numerous malevolent creatures associated with the god Seth. So Harpocrates is shown riding over the elephant in Græco-Roman terracotta figurines to declare his triumph over Seth⁵⁹.

The Louvre Museum preserves a statuette dating back to the Roman Period of the deity Harpocrates depicted as a child riding an elephant, holding a jar, and crowned with the double crown (fig. 5), while the Michael C. Carlos Museum in Atlanta preserves a statuette dating back to the Roman Period of the deity Harpocrates depicted as a child riding an elephant (fig. 6).

⁴⁹ جيهان رشدي محمد، المرجع السابق، ص 29.

⁵⁰ Farid, M. & Fekri, M. & Abd-elaal, M. & Zaki, H. (2018) Archeological Study of Wild Animals in the New Kingdom, *Journal of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels-University of Sadat City*, 2(2), 58-77.

⁵¹ Lobban, R. & Liedekerke, V. (2000) Elephants in Ancient Egypt and Nubia, *Anthrozoös*, 13(4), 232-244.

⁵² Kitat 2011, 162.

⁵³ فرنسواز ديناند واخرون، المرجع السابق، ص 127.

⁵⁴ Lobban, et.al. 2000, 237, 240.

⁵⁵ Störk, L. (1975), "Elephant", *LA I*, col. 1214: 1216.

⁵⁶ Lobban, et.al., 2000, 233

⁵⁷ هالة مصطفى منصور (2015) رموز الحيوانات والطيور المقدسة بمراكب الحضارة المصرية القديمة حتى نهاية الدولة الحديثة، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، كلية الاداب – جامعة عين شمس، ص 28-30.

⁵⁸ Farid et.al. 2018, 71.

⁵⁹ Kitat 2011, 165, 171.

Analysis:

Depicting the god Harpocrates riding an elephant during the Græco-Roman Period highlights his reinterpretation as a warrior deity. While elephants were not traditionally associated with Egyptian gods, their use as a powerful and intimidating force in warfare— particularly by Hellenistic armies—made them an ideal symbol to express this new aspect of Harpocrates. This representation links the deity to military might and conquest, a departure from his more traditional role as a protector child-god. He is not necessarily dressed as a warrior, but the act of riding such an animal is, in itself, a powerful statement of authority and combat prowess. This imagery reflects the cultural syncretism of the era, as the Greek and Roman fascination with the use of war elephants influenced how they depicted and understood foreign deities.

From a religious perspective, the elephant was associated with the god of evil, Seth. The artist may have intended to depict the god Harpocrates (one of the forms of the god Horus) riding the elephant, which symbolizes the god Seth, to represent Horus's dominance over Seth and thus the eradication of evil embodied by the malevolent spirits of the god Seth manifested in the elephant.



Fig. 5: Figurine of Harpocrates riding an elephant in the Louvre Museum (E 27423), Roman Period.

Source:

<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010034432> (accessed 1/8/2025 10 pm)



Fig. 6: Figurine of Harpocrates riding an elephant in the Michael C. Carlos Museum (2010.024.001), Roman Period.

Source:


<https://collections.carlos.emory.edu/objects/27184/harpocrates-riding-an-elephant?ctx=fbbcddec499c6d98335b52d52b804b735cdc49d6&idx=1> (accessed 10/8/2025 10 pm)


4.3. Lion (*m3i*)⁶⁰

Lions were tamed in ancient Egypt; some were depicted wearing ornate collars, and only kings could own a lion. Kings hunted lions as a display of power and courage⁶¹. Lions have been portrayed in ancient Egyptian art since the Prehistoric Period, and the

⁶⁰ Hannig 2000, 815.

⁶¹ Farid et.al. 2018, 61, 62.

symbolism of the lion signifies the king's authority and capability⁶². The ancient Egyptians observed the lion's life cycle of strength and speed, likening it to the king who crushes his enemies in a demonstration of dominance and power⁶³. The lion was also commonly associated with the king as a victorious ruler, which is why the king's head was depicted attached to the body of a lion in what is known as the Sphinx⁶⁴; an ideal representation of divine power and royalty⁶⁵. During celebrations, the lion's tail was attached to the king's garments. In art, lion heads adorned altars, funerary beds, and thrones; lions were used as guardian statues. The king was sometimes given the title "the living lion." The importance of the lion continued until the end of the Græco-Roman Period⁶⁶. The ancient Egyptians adopted the lion as a symbol for many gods, such as Amun⁶⁷. many deities in Egyptian mythology were described as lions, like the god ⁶⁸, according to the Book of the Dead, chapter 62: "*I am the lion Re*"⁶⁹. In fact, the sun itself could be depicted in the form of a lion⁷⁰. The lion often represents an Epithet of Horus at Edfu and signifies his victory over the forces of evil and chaos that threaten security and order, affirming royal legitimacy. The king is sometimes depicted as a lion trampling his enemies⁷¹.

On the Jasper intaglio from the Roman Period preserved in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the god Harpocrates is depicted riding a lion, with the lion's tail taking the shape of a serpent. A sun disc surrounds his head, taking the form of a radiant halo (fig. 7), which is the same form taken by the god Tithoes ⁷², considered one of the protective deities who seeks to eliminate the forces of evil. The earliest appearance of his worship dates back to the Saite Period and continued until the end of the Roman Period. His worship also spread throughout Egypt, especially in the oases, Esna, and Saïs, and it appeared outside Egypt since the 2nd century BCE⁷³.

Analysis:

The God Harpocrates appeared with Roman features, crowned with a solar disc as a clue to one of his roles as a sun god. He rides the lion, one of the symbols of the sun, around whose head appears a halo resembling sun ray. It is the same form of the god Tithoes, who is regarded as one of the guardian gods who aims to get rid of the evil. This confirms the role of the god Harpocrates as a solar protective god.

⁶² فرنسواز ديناند واخرون، المرجع السابق، ص 69-71.

⁶³ أشرف عبدالرؤف راغب، المرجع السابق، ص أ.

⁶⁴ Magdy, H., (2013) The Guardian lion statues in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman Period, *Journal of The General Union of Arab Archaeologists*, Conference 16th, Cairo, pp. 57-73.

⁶⁵ Farid et.al. 2018, 61.

⁶⁶ Magdy 2013, 57-73.

⁶⁷ أشرف عبدالرؤف راغب، المرجع السابق، ص أ.

⁶⁸ Leitz 2002, Band IV, 612.

⁶⁹ Magdy 2013, 57.

⁷⁰ Farid et.al. 2018, 62.

⁷¹ Elsayed 2019, 207-208

⁷² Leitz 2002, Band VII, 380.

⁷³ Quaegebeur, J. (1985) "Tithoes", *LA* VI, col. 602-606.

Harpocrates was represented in military form in addition to being a child; this kind of portrayal of him was much more prevalent.



Fig. 8: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a horse in the British Museum (EA 24372), Ptolemaic Period.

Source:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA24372(accessed 4/8/2025 9 pm)



Fig. 9: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a horse in the Louvre Museum (E 20858), Roman Period.

Source:

<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010004833>(accessed 2/8/2025 5 pm)

4.5. Ram (𓆎𓅓 sr)⁸⁰

The ram has been known in ancient Egypt since the Prehistoric Period⁸¹. Sheep held great importance in Egyptian civilization due to their exceptional abilities in fertility and reproduction. The ram was also associated with creation and resurrection. Consequently, deities with the form of a ram embodied these traits and powers⁸².

Among the most famous of these deities were the god Amun⁸³ and Khnum (𓆎𓅓𓆎𓅓 *hnmw*)⁸⁴. The ram was worshipped in many places⁸⁵ and was linked to the god Re⁸⁶. During the Ptolemaic Period, the practice of raising rams increased widely to benefit from their meat, wool for making clothes and carpets, and their hides, which were used as containers for drinking water⁸⁷. The god Harpocrates was depicted riding a ram⁸⁸. Usually, the deity Re was depicted in his night journey with the head of a ram⁸⁹.

⁸⁰ Hannig 2000, 1524.

⁸¹ فرنسواز ديناند واخرون، المرجع السابق، ص 123.

⁸² صفاء سمير درويش، المرجع السابق، ص 368.

⁸³ هالة مصطفى منصور، المرجع السابق، ص 85، 86.

⁸⁴ Leitz 2002, Band VI, 25.

⁸⁵ Ali, M, (2020) God Heryshef, *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality (JAAUTH)*, Vol.18, N.2, pp.27:40.

⁸⁶ ايناس بهي الدين عبدالنعيم، المرجع السابق، ص 104.

⁸⁷ Thompson 2011, 399.

⁸⁸ Erman 1907, 225.

⁸⁹ عبدالحليم نورالدين، المرجع السابق، ص 229، 230.

The British Museum contain a statuette dating back to the Ptolemaic Period, depicting Harpocrates riding a ram, wearing a necklace and a long jacket with short sleeves, a wreath of flowers, a double crown, and holding cornucopia (fig. 10). Meanwhile, the Museum of Antiquities of the Library of Alexandria preserves a statuette of the deity Harpocrates riding a ram and holding cornucopia (fig. 11).

The cornucopia is one of the cultural and social symbols that signify abundance. It is depicted as a horn filled with fruits, flowers, plants, and nuts, and is considered one of the most important symbols portrayed in artworks⁹⁰.

Analysis: The deity Harpocrates riding a ram, one of the forms of the god Re, was depicted to emphasize Harpocrates' role as the sun god by embodying the early hours of the day, and during the Roman Period, he became a god of the dawn; also holding a Cornucopia as one of his traits was a god of plenty. This is considered one of the new features added to the god Harpocrates during the Græco-Roman Period. Ram was an attribute of Amun, and the Harpocrates cult was associated in the Late Period with Amun himself. Ram was also connected with Khnum, who was responsible for the Nile flood, and for this was regarded as the god of fertility.



Fig. 10: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a ram in the British Museum (1928,0612.1), Ptolemaic Period.

Source:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1928-0612-1(accessed 1/8/2025 10 pm)



Fig. 11: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a ram in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum (0312), Roman Period.

Source:

<https://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=312>(accessed 5/8/2025 11 pm)

4.6. Dog (⁹¹)


Dogs held a prominent position in ancient Egyptian civilization and continued to do so until the end of the Græco-Roman Period⁹². Dogs were domesticated since the Prehistoric Period to assist humans in hunting practices and to guard herds, as well as to aid the police⁹³. Dogs enjoyed a sacred status from the Prehistoric Period until the end of the Roman Period, where dog mummies served as guardians and companions

⁹⁰ داليا محمد جودة (2021) إيزيس عبر العصور، المجلة الدولية للدراسات المتقدمة في علم الآثار العالمي، المجلد 4 ، العدد 2 ، 71-103.

⁹¹ Hannig 2000, 654.

⁹² Ikram, S. (2013) Man's best friend for eternity: dog and human burials in ancient Egypt, *Anthropozoologica*, 48 (2): 299-307.

⁹³ فرنسواز ديناند واخرون، المرجع السابق، ص 32، 62.

for the deceased on their journey to the afterlife. The dog was associated with Anubis *Inpw*  ⁹⁴, who led the dead to the Hall of the Truths, where Osiris evaluated the soul. The dog was considered the personal guardian of Osiris and Isis. According to the Osirian myth, dogs helped Isis during her search for Osiris and protected her from ferocious beasts. In the Greek mythology, dogs were associated with the deities Artemis and Hecate, who played important roles in the underworld⁹⁵. Dogs were offered as sacrifices to the goddess Hecate, the demonic deity linked to magic and the otherworld, to ensure the safety of the deceased on their journey to the afterlife⁹⁶. Since ancient times, dogs have also been related to the star Sothis⁹⁷. The Greeks referred this star as the "dog-star"⁹⁸. In the Louvre Museum, the deity Harpocrates is shown wearing a cloak and riding a dog with a collar. The figurine is dated to the Roman Period (fig. 12).

Analysis:

The depiction of Harpocrates riding a dog is significant because it highlights his role as a protective and guiding deity. The dog had a strong symbolic association with the Egyptian god Anubis, who was a guardian of cemeteries and a guide of souls through the afterlife. According to the Osirian myth, the dog gained the role of protection by guarding the goddess Isis during her search for Osiris.



Fig. 12: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a dog in the Louvre Museum (E 30272), Roman Period.

Source:

<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010023844> (accessed 2/8/2025 6 pm)

4.7. Serpent (*h3w*)⁹⁹

The depiction of the serpent in ancient Egypt dates back to the Prehistoric Period. The serpent was associated with the sun god because it absorbs heat from the sun and

⁹⁴ Leitz 2002, Band I, 390.

⁹⁵ Abdelwahed, Y. (2017) More the Pets: Dogs in Graeco-Roman Egypt, *Journal of Faculty of Tourism and Hotels -University of Sadat City* 1(1), pp. 1-22.

⁹⁶ Ikram 2013, 306.


⁹⁷ The Southern Dog of Isis was associated with the Dog Star Sirius, where its solar rising marked the first day of the year and the arrival of the annual Nile flood. For more details, see

صفاء سمير درويش، المرجع السابق، ص 330.

⁹⁸ Erman 1907, 226.

⁹⁹ Hannig 2000, 1115.

bright light, stretching its body in the sun's rays to gain warmth and vitality. The ancient Egyptians believed that a snake coils around the sun disk and burns the enemies of the sun with its breath. Additionally, the snake symbolizes resurrection and the renewal of life due to its ability to shed its skin. Therefore, the ancient Egyptians considered it a symbol of continuity and a representation of the past and the future, or death and renewed life¹⁰⁰. Isis also represented as a serpent, the ancient guardian of Re¹⁰¹. She was considered one of the most important protective goddesses in ancient Egypt due to her significant role in the Osirian myth¹⁰².

The goddess Isis took that form as a result of being combined with the goddess Renenutet *Rnn-wtt* ¹⁰³, whose name means "food of the serpent" the goddess of harvest in ancient Egypt. Isis was depicted as a serpent with the sun disk between the horns on her head, which is one of the crowns associated with the goddess Isis¹⁰⁴.

The Louvre Museum preserves a statuette of the deity Harpocrates dating back to the Roman Period, riding a serpent that symbolizes the goddess Isis, holding cornucopia and wearing the double crown, the image of the serpent has a sun disc above its head between two horns (fig. 13).

Analysis: The Depiction of Harpocrates riding the serpent with the sun disk between the horns above her head, which symbolizes the goddess Isis, confirms his connection to the solar god and Isis, as the goddess Isis took this form to protect the sun god and eliminate his enemies. The act of Harpocrates riding a serpent demonstrates his control over these forces or represents Isis protecting him from any evil forces.



Fig. 13: Figurine of Harpocrates riding an Isis serpent figurine in the Louvre Museum (E 29758), Roman Period.

Source: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010005162> (accessed 7/8/2025 5 pm)

¹⁰¹ Erman 1907, 226.

¹⁰³ Leitz 2002, Band IV, 686.

¹⁰⁰ هالة مصطفى منصور، المرجع السابق، ص 160، 161، 169.

¹⁰² عبدالحليم نور الدين، المرجع السابق، ص 115.

¹⁰⁴ داليا محمد جودة، المرجع السابق، ص 75، 94.

4.8. Birds (Goose 3pd^{105} - Duck 3pd^{106} . Rooster)

Birds played an important role in ancient Egyptian civilization, both in secular and religious lives¹⁰⁷. The ancient Egyptians raised birds such as geese and ducks since the Prehistoric Period, and they were depicted on the walls of mastabas since the Old Kingdom. The oldest depiction of the rooster dates back to the New Kingdom. It is depicted on an ostrakon dated to the 19th Dynasty from the Valley of the Kings and is currently preserved in the British Museum. It was depicted with a red junglefowl rooster (fig. 14). However, with the beginning of the Græco-Roman Period, poultry (rooster–hen) spread, coming from Asia¹⁰⁸.



Fig. 14: Ostrakon depicting a red junglefowl rooster in the British Museum (EA 68539), the 19th Dynasty.

Source: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA68539 (accessed 15/8/2025 5 pm)

Birds, in general, were a preferred food for the ancient Egyptians, especially geese and ducks¹⁰⁹. On the religious side, the ancient Egyptians believed that the deceased would be resurrected and ascend to the sky in the form of a bird, so as to join the deities and live an eternal life. They also believed that birds symbolized resurrection and served as a means to revive the deceased.¹¹⁰

The ancient Egyptians associated the rooster with sun worship because it is the bird heard at sunrise. Since it was linked to the beginning of a new day and the announcement of the sun's rising, it became a symbol of resurrection. At the beginning of the Ptolemaic Period, it was associated with the sun god Helios, as the bird that crows to signal his rise; thus, it became a sacred bird to him¹¹¹. The rooster was considered rare during the Ptolemaic Period, prompting the Ptolemies to develop its breeding¹¹². It was known in Greek as *ἀλεκτρούων*. Among the Greeks, the rooster

¹⁰⁵ Hannig 2000, 464.

¹⁰⁶ Hannig 2000, 337.

¹⁰⁷ عبده زكريا رشدي (2024) الصعود للسماء في هينات الطيور، *المجلة العلمية بكلية الاداب*، العدد 54، ص 883-861.

¹⁰⁸ فرنسواز ديناند واخرون، المرجع السابق، ص 52.

¹⁰⁹ أيمن محمد أحمد (2020) دراسة لمصادر نصية وفنية لطائر دجاج الغابة الأحمر في مصر القديمة، *المجلة الدولية للتراث والسياحة والضيافة، كلية السياحة والفنادق – جامعة الفيوم*، المجلد 14، العدد 1، ص 423-402.

¹¹⁰ عبده زكريا رشدي، المرجع السابق، ص 863.

¹¹¹ أيمن محمد أحمد، المرجع السابق، ص 415، 414.

¹¹² فرنسواز ديناند واخرون، المرجع السابق، ص 52، 126.

symbolized victory over the night with its loud morning crowing and was considered a symbol of solar energy. It was one of the sacred symbols of many deities such as Apollo, Zeus, and Eros.¹¹³

The goose was considered one of the symbols of resurrection in ancient Egypt. Additionally, young geese and ducks symbolized the beginning of the first creation. The goose was also associated with the sun, as it crows in the morning at sunrise, signifying the renewal of life and resurrection¹¹⁴. Due to the goose's nature of being easily startled and emitting loud noises at the slightest threat, it played a role in protecting or warning of any danger that the deceased might face during their journey. Therefore, the goose was depicted flying above the boat heading to Abydos in pilgrimage scenes from the Middle Kingdom. This scene is depicted on the walls of the tomb of Antefoker (no. 60) in the Theban Necropolis (fig. 15). The goose also symbolized fertility, reproductive power, and resurrection¹¹⁵, which led it to become a symbol for many deities, including the god Harpocrates¹¹⁶ and the god Amun. The god Harpocrates was depicted riding the goose.¹¹⁷

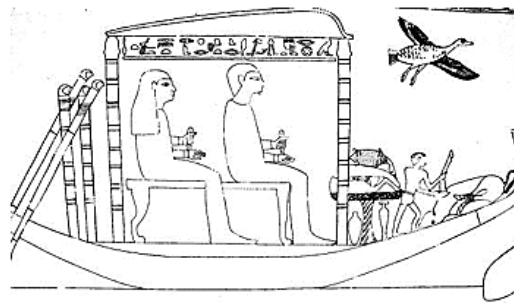


Fig. 15: The goose flying over the boat heading to Abydos from the tomb of Antefoker (no. 60) in the Theban Necropolis, the Middle Kingdom.

Source:

هالة مصطفى منصور (2015) رموز الحيوانات والطيور المقدسة بمراكب الحضارة المصرية القديمة حتى نهاية الدولة الحديثة، رسالة ماجستير غير منشورة، كلية الاداب – جامعة عين شمس، شكل رقم 135، ص 304.

Among the terracotta statuette models depicting the god Harpocrates is a statuette in the British Museum dating back to the Ptolemaic Period. It shows Harpocrates riding a goose, naked except for a piece of cloth covering the lower part of his right leg, with lotus buds on his head, and holding the staff (fig. 16). In the Louvre Museum, there is a statuette of the god Harpocrates riding a duck, dating to the Roman Period, wearing the double crown and holding a vessel (fig. 17). In the same museum, there is a statuette of the god Harpocrates with the head missing, dating to the Roman Period, riding a rooster (fig. 18).

Analysis: The depiction of Harpocrates riding ducks, geese, and roosters is significant because it connects the deity to powerful solar and creation myths, as well as themes of rebirth and prophecy. While the exact meaning could vary, these birds shared

¹¹³ صفاء سمير أبوالبزید (2012) دراسة لمجموعة من الاواني الفخارية ذات الهيئة الحيوانية من العصرين البطلمي والروماني في المتحف المصري بالقاهرة، دراسات في آثار الوطن العربي، المجلد 15، العدد 1، ص 616- 647.

¹¹⁴ عبده زكريا رشدي، المرجع السابق، ص 867، 870.

¹¹⁵ هالة مصطفى منصور، المرجع السابق، ص 136، 137.

¹¹⁶ Wilkinson 2003, 213.

¹¹⁷ Erman 1907, 225.

common symbolism in both Egyptian and Græco-Roman cultures. Ducks and geese were strongly associated with the Egyptian sun god, Amun-Re, and other creator deities. The sound of the goose was believed to be the voice of the creator at the beginning of the world. In this context, Harpocrates riding these birds links him to the divine act of creation and the solar cycle. It also reinforces his connection to Amun, a deity often represented by the goose. The rooster was a symbol of the sun, light, and new beginnings. Its morning call announced the dawn, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness. By depicting Harpocrates on a rooster, artists underscored his role as a solar deity and a bringer of new life.



Fig. 16: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a goose in the British Museum (1972,0125.6), Ptolemaic Period.

Source:

https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1972-0125-6 (accessed 12/8/2025 5 pm)



Fig. 17: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a duck in the Louvre Museum (E 29756), Roman Period.

Source:

<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010004998> (accessed 11/8/2025 5pm)



Fig. 18: Figurine of Harpocrates riding a rooster in the Louvre Museum (E 32782), Roman Period.

Source:

<https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010038557> (accessed 11/8/2025 5 pm)

Conclusion

Figurines of the god Harpocrates riding animals gained widespread fame and popularity during the Græco-Roman Period and became essential votive statuettes found in homes and buried with the deceased. Through the study of the figurines presented in the research, a close relationship was revealed between the deity Harpocrates and all the animals he rode, both from religious and secular perspectives. The study also showed that some of the animals mentioned in the research were associated with certain cosmic phenomena, such as the dog, which refers to the Sirius star. Depicting the deity Harpocrates riding the dog symbolizes protection and guidance in the afterlife, due to the dog's association with many deities related to the other world. Similarly, these animals were linked to resurrection, the renewal of life, and various manifestations of the sun, such as the ram, rooster, goose, and duck, confirming the role of the deity Harpocrates as a sun god and also a god of dawn. Considering Harpocrates as a sun god, one of the models in the research portrays him crowned with the sun disk, riding a lion with a tail shaped like a serpent, and a halo resembling sun rays surrounding the lion's head. This symbolizes the deity Tithoes and confirms the symbolism of protection and the pursuit of eradicating the forces of evil.

The study also clarified that some animals represent the forces of evil, such as the elephant, which was associated with the deity Seth. Depictions of the deity Harpocrates riding the elephant symbolize dominance and the defeat of evil, which is one of Harpocrates's attributes and duties. Additionally, portraying Harpocrates in this manner emphasizes his role as a warrior, reflecting the Greek's reliance on elephants in warfare. He is also depicted riding a camel, symbolizing the protection of trade caravans, as camels were used as transportation during the Græco-Roman Period. This also affirms the role of the deity Horus as the lord and protector of the desert and the travelers of those caravans. Among the models mentioned in the research is the depiction of the deity Harpocrates riding a horse, to portray him as a strong knight and warrior carrying a shield and sword to deter the forces of evil. It also depicts the deity riding a snake, which symbolizes the goddess Isis, representing her role in vanquishing the forces of evil and protecting Harpocrates from those evil forces.

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