

## *Figurines of Harpocrates the Horseman and Isis-Aphrodite in Egyptian Cultural Heritage*

تماثيل حربوقراط الفارس وإيزيس-أفروديت فى التراث الثقافى المصرى

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### **Abstract:**

The fame of Harpocrates was spread all over Egypt during the Graeco-roman period. He was the third member of the Alexandrian triad. As a child deity, he was represented being suckled by his mother Isis or as a child with the traditional Egyptian side hair lock holding a finger to his mouth. Sometimes he is represented with a goose, a dolphin or a riding a horse. The latter is one of his famous forms in which he is represented in different attitudes: victorious wearing military costumes carrying attributes like a knife or a sword and an armor.

Figurines of Isis-Aphrodite were also famous in Graeco-roman Egypt. She was a combination of the Egyptian Isis and the Greek Aphrodite. Isis-Aphrodite took the functions of both, represented in a standing attitude nude, or wore a dress she lifts up to reveal her lower feminine aspects as a symbol of fertility. She is usually represented with the corkscrew tresses hairstyle and wearing an elaborate headdress with the Hathoric-crown.

Many of our thoughts and beliefs in modern Egypt have been linked with the ancient Egyptian traditions. The figurines of Harpocrates the horseman and Isis-Aphrodite are a good example of how the Egyptian cultural heritage has been inherited from one generation to another. Their forms were kept in the Egyptian mind and developed into the forms of sugar dolls (*Aroset Elmouled*) and horseman (*Hosan*), which have been part of the Egyptian religious ceremonies of *El-Mouled* or Birth of Prophet Mohamed (peace upon him).

### **Keywords:**

Figurines, Graeco-roman, Harpocrates, Isis-Aphrodite, cultural heritage.

### **المخلص:**

كانت لعبادة حربوقراط أو حورس الطفل وتماثيله الصغيرة شهرة واسعة في جميع أنحاء مصر القديمة وبالأخص فى العصر اليونانى الرومانى. كان حربوقراط العضو الثالث فى ثلاث الاسكندرية الذى ضم أيضاً سيرابيس وإيزيس. ويوصفه إليها للطفولة، كان يُمَثَل كمولود يرضع من أمه إيزيس أو كطفل بخصلة الشعر الجانبية واضعاً أصبعه أمام فمه. أحياناً أيضاً كان يمثل برفقة أوزة أو دلفين أو فيل. ومن أشهر الأشكال الذى ظهر بها حربوقراط هو شكل الفارس الذى يمتطى حصانه وظهر فى هذه التماثيل بأشكال مختلفة: فكان يمثل كفارس منتصباً يرتدى الملابس العسكرية، أو أحياناً يرتدى الخيتون والهيمايون،

وقد يرتدى التاج المزوج أو إكليل من الزهور أو غطاء للرأس على شكل براعم اللوتس، وقد يحمل في يده بعض الرموز مثل سيف أو سكين ودرع .

اشتهرت أيضاً التماثيل الصغيرة للإلهة إيزيس-أفروديت في مصر اليونانية الرومانية. كانت تلك الإلهة مزجاً بين الإلهة المصرية إيزيس واليونانية أفروديت، وأخذت وظائف كلاً من الإلهتين. وظهرت في كل تماثيلها كامرأة عارية، أو ترتدي ثوباً ترفعه بيديها لتكشف عن أعضائها كأنثى كرمز لوظيفتها كالهة للخصوبة. وعادة ما يتم تمثيل الشعر في شكل خصلات ملفوفة يعلوه غطاء رأس غني بالزينة يميزه شكل قرص الشمس بين قرني البقرة (التاج الحثوري).

ترتبط كثير من تقاليدنا الآن في مصر بالتقاليد المصرية القديمة المتوارثة. وتمثل التماثيل الصغيرة لحربوقراط الفارس وإيزيس-أفروديت مثلاً واضحاً لتوارث الأفكار في مصر من جيل إلى آخر. ويبدو لأهمية حربوقراط وإيزيس-أفروديت في مصر قديماً ظلت أشكالهما مقدرة في وجدان المصري على مدار التاريخ وتطورت حتى وصلت إلى فكرة العروسة والحسان المصنوعين من الحلوى وهما جزءاً أساسياً من تراث المصريين في الاحتفال بالمولد النبوي الشريف.

#### الكلمات الدالة:

تماثيل صغيرة؛ اليوناني الروماني؛ حربوقراط، إيزيس-أفروديت؛ التراث الثقافي.

## 1. Introduction

The cults of Harpocrates and Isis Aphrodite were prevalent during the Graeco-roman period. Although they are originally the Egyptian Horus and Isis, in the Ptolemaic period, they were identified with Greek divinities; Horus the child was identified with Eros the son of Aphrodite and Heracles the son of Zeus. Isis was also identified with many Greek goddesses like Aphrodite and Demeter; and even new forms of Isis were integrated with other deities, like in our case Isis-Aphrodite.

The figurines of both divinities were subjects to many studies due to the great number being excavated in many parts of Egypt and now displayed in museums all over the world. However, this study takes a new vision of studying these figurines from the cultural heritage perspective . The research is divided mainly into three parts; the first deals with Harpocrates the horseman indicating the emergence of horsemen in ancient Egypt and tracing back the existence of the idea of horsemen divinities in the Graeco-roman period, and then interpret examples of Horus Harpocrates the horseman in Graeco-roman period and how it became a concept and a motif in the Coptic art. The second part of the research is concerned with Isis-Aphrodite; her importance, functions and representation and interpreting examples of her figurines. The third part studies how the forms of these two deities from Graeco-roman Egypt remained as a mark in the Egyptian mind and cultural heritage throughout the different historical periods and throughout the ages to be used as two

forms of the famous sugar doll of *Aroset Elmouled* and the horseman (*Hosan Elmouled*). Finally, the research ends with a conclusion which focuses on the main results of the research.

## 2. Horseman Divinities in Graeco-roman Egypt:

It is widely known that horses were introduced into Egypt after the Hyksos invasion in the late second Intermediate Period. However, the earliest remains of horses are dated to the Middle Kingdom besides a carving of a horse that dates to the early second Intermediate period (before the Hyksos' invasion) to indicate that it was introduced earlier. Other early horse bones from the time of Hyksos come from Buhen Fortress at Tell Eddabaa in the eastern Delta (map 1)<sup>1</sup>. The Hyksos introduced the horse-drawn metal chariot to be used in the New Kingdom in battles and royal ceremonies. Horses were imported during the New Kingdom; therefore they were very expensive and considered luxury<sup>2</sup>. The horse-chariot is well depicted by Ramesses II (1279-1213 B.C) in his famous battle of Kadesh (1274 B.C.) in which he called his two horses as 'Victory in Thebes' and 'Mut is content'<sup>3</sup>, which indicates how important horses were in warfare then. Horses and chariots were also used in the New Kingdom by noblemen for desert hunting, sporting games and transportation<sup>4</sup>. They were also important in the twenty-fifth Nubian dynasty in Kush, where the king Piye (747-716 B.C) was buried with his four chariot horses<sup>5</sup>.

Horse riding was rare as horses were used mostly to draw chariots in the New Kingdom. One of the very few scenes of horse riding is found in the tomb of Horemheb (1319-1292 B.C) from the eighteenth dynasty at Saqqara where a mounted rider is represented, and in the funerary temple of Ramesses III (1187-1156 B.C) at Medinet Habu where soldiers are depicted mounting horses<sup>6</sup>. Horse riding developed only in late period<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> BARD, K. A., *Encyclopedia of Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, London and New York, 1999, 305.

<sup>2</sup> RUIZ, A., *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, New York, 2001, 76, 80.

<sup>3</sup> LICHTHEIM, M., *Ancient Egyptian Literature; The New kingdom*, vol. II, Los Angeles and London, 1976, 70.

<sup>4</sup> RUIZ, *The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*, 64, 206.

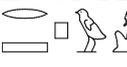
<sup>5</sup> BREIDLID, A., SAID, A. A. and BREIDLID, A. K. (eds.), *A Concise History of South Sudan*, Oxford, 2014, 25; Török, L., *The Kingdom of Kush: Handbook of the Napatan-Meroitic Civilization*, Leiden, New York and Köln, 1997, 158.

<sup>6</sup> PARTRIDGE, R.B., "Transport in Ancient Egypt", LLOYDD, A. B. (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Egypt*, vol.1, Oxford, 2010, 384.

<sup>7</sup> BARD, *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, 305.

Horseman is known in the inscriptions of the battle of Kadesh as  *ḥ3pitw* "scout"<sup>8</sup>. Most of the scenes and fragments of horse riders from the New Kingdom are shown in military activity, meaning that the horsemen were actually soldiers<sup>9</sup>. There are examples of representations of horse riders dated to the eighteenth dynasty. One of these is the wooden statuette<sup>10</sup> (fig.1). The rider wears a striped kilt, a collar and a cap<sup>11</sup>.

During the Ptolemaic Period, Ptolemy I Soter (as a satrap 323-306 B.C, as a king 306-284 B.C) used a group of Egyptian soldiers in the army, known as *machimoi*. According to Diodorus Siculus (D.S.19.80.14) the *machimoi* fought in the famous battle of Gaza in 312 B.C. (between Egypt and Macedon) and some of them were fully armed<sup>12</sup>. There are many other representations of horsemen dated from the early Ptolemaic period that are painted on limestone funerary stelae from the fourth-third centuries B.C.<sup>13</sup> These were made either by the Greeks who settled in Egypt or brought in by trade<sup>14</sup>. A good example of these stelae is that from the cemetery of Shatbi in Alexandria<sup>15</sup>(fig.2). Horse riders were also depicted on tomb friezes like in the example of tomb no.1 in the cemetery of Mostapha Kamel in Alexandria (fig.3), which is dated from the third century B.C. and shows three men riding horses wearing military costumes along with two ladies flanking the central one<sup>16</sup>.

The cult of Horsemen divinity can be traced back to ancient Egypt. Resheph, , *ršp* or *ršpw*<sup>17</sup> was originally a warlike Syro-Canaanite god, who became an official divinity under Amenhotep II (1427-1401 B. C) who took the title of "beloved of Resheph" in the Middle Kingdom cult was. His cult was so popular during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties. Most of the monuments bearing this god's name and

<sup>8</sup> Wb III, 31, N<sup>o</sup>.10.

<sup>9</sup> SCHULMAN, «Egyptian Representations of Horsemen and Riding in the New Kingdom», JNES 16 N<sup>o</sup>.4, 1957, 270.

<sup>10</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art (Acc. N<sup>o</sup>.55.167.3)

<sup>11</sup> SCHULMAN, Egyptian Representations of Horsemen, 264.

<sup>12</sup> JeDRASZEK, S., "Egyptian Warriors: Machimoi, in Corplastic Art-Selected Examples", In Ulanowski, K., *The Religious Aspects of War in the Ancient Near East, Greece, and Rome*, Brill, 2016, 272-73.

<sup>13</sup> COLE, S. E., «Ptolemaic Cavalrymen on Painted Alexandrian Funerary Monuments», *Arts*. Vol. 8. No. 2. Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2019., 1.

<sup>14</sup> SCHULMAN, Egyptian Representations of Horsemen, 270-271.

<sup>15</sup> Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, N<sup>o</sup>.10228

<sup>16</sup> COLE, Ptolemaic Cavalrymen, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Wb II, 455, N<sup>os</sup>.17-18.

dated from this period come from Deir El-Medinah. He is represented as a military man riding on horseback while holding a shield and a spear in his one hand. It seems that the cult of Resheph came to an end during the Graeco-roman period<sup>18</sup>.

Cults of horseman divinities also existed in the Graeco-roman period, like Heron from Thrace, whose cult became very popular in Egypt. He is represented man standing next to a horse or as a horseman wearing a military costume (a tunic, a breastplate *lorica squamata*<sup>19</sup>, a *paludamentum*<sup>(20)</sup> attached to his chest with a *gorgoneion*<sup>21</sup>, boots and a painted aureole crown with a nimbus. As a solar divinity, his head is surrounded by sun rays (fig.4). A good example of his representation dated from the third century A.D. can be found in a mural in Room E of House B50 at Karanis (map 2). Here he is represented in a military-style on a horse back<sup>22</sup>.

Heron's cult was centred in Fayoum, and temples were dedicated to him, like in Theadelphia (map 2) (fig.5), where he was connected with the cleruchic settlement of Thracian mercenaries from the second half of the fourth century B.C. The Thracians of Fayoum were low-ranking soldiers who came to Fayoum during the reign of Ptolemy I. Heron also had a funerary function as the deceased was represented on funeral stelae as a horseman to be identified with Heron to be under the god's protection<sup>(23)</sup>. Heron as a horseman was identified with Harpocrates and Harpocrates-Herakles. Even in the niche of Karanis, Heron is depicted adjacent to the

<sup>18</sup> SIEBECK, M., «The God Resheph in the Ancient Near East», *Orientalische Religionen in der Antike* 11, Tübingen, 2013, 101-114; MÜNNICH, M. M., "Two Faces of Resheph in Egyptian Sources of the New Kingdom", In I. de Hulster-R. Schmitt (Hgg.), *Iconography and Biblical Studies: Proceedings of the Iconography Sessions at the Joint EABS/SBL Conference*, 2007, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Roman Metal scale Armor: FERRARA, A. "A Leather Cuirass Discovered at Karanis, Fayum, Egypt from the Late 3<sup>rd</sup> and Early 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD125.", In *Karanis Revealed: Discovering the Past and the Present of Michigan Excavation in Egypt*, edited by T.G. Wilfong, Michigan, 2014, 125.

<sup>20</sup> Roman cloak fastened at one shoulder with a clasp and used to be worn by military commanders: SAUER, H., "Paludamentum", In *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 1949, 18.3.

<sup>21</sup> It is an apotropaic motif representing the found-faced Gorgon: GRANDJOUAN, C., MARKSON, E. and ROTROFF, S., «Hellenistic Relief Molds from the Athenian Agora», *Hesperia: Supplement XXIII*, Princeton, 1989, 15.

<sup>22</sup> OMRAN, W.: «The Cult of Heron in Egypt», *Journal of Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Fayoum University* 9, N<sup>o</sup>. 1, 206-207, 212.

<sup>23</sup> OMRAN, The Cult of Heron in Egypt, 208, 212.

representation of Isis who is suckling her son Harpocrates<sup>24</sup>. Heron is in fact a fusion of Harpocrates of Greek-Thracian origins<sup>25</sup>.

Among other horse riders, divinities whose cult became very popular during the Roman period in Egypt are the Dioskouroi, the two sons of Zeus who actually represent the two stars of Gaster and Polydeukes and therefore they are represented as twin brothers wearing military costumes, holding a lance, and riding on horsebacks and identified with a star on their heads (fig.6)<sup>26</sup>.

### 3- Harpocrates the Horseman in Graeco-roman Egypt

The most popular cult of a horseman divinity was that of Harpocrates in the Graeco-roman period. Harpocrates Ἄρποκράτης in Greek, or *hr-p3-hrd*, Horus the child in ancient Egyptian, was the son of Osiris and Isis who had a particular part in the hearts of the ancient Egyptian throughout the dynastic and the Graeco-roman period. As a beloved child god, he was represented in various forms and attributes related to his many functions, especially in terracotta. In Alexandria, he became a member of the Alexandrian triad starting from the Ptolemaic period, along with his father Serapis and his mother Isis<sup>27</sup>.

Among the most popular are the figurines that show him in Egyptian style as a nude child characterized by his side hair lock with his index finger to his mouth, wearing a cap with an uraeus, the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt, the *Atef*-crown, the *Hemhem*-crown. Sometimes, he is depicted sitting on his mother's lap and suckling or squatting on a lotus flower. In the Ptolemaic period, he took a Hellenistic style with the same characteristics of the Egyptian Horus the child, but adding new attributes like the Cornucopia as a god of plenty<sup>28</sup>. In Roman time, Harpocrates became more like a domestic divinity, and his cult had a social conception, being much connected with the family and children<sup>29</sup>. Many manifestations of Harpocrates dating from the Graeco-roman period show

<sup>24</sup> OMRAN, The Cult of Heron in Egypt, 215.

<sup>25</sup> BARRETT, C., *Egyptianizing Figurines from Delos: A Study in Hellenistic Religion*, Leiden and Boston, 2011, 277.

<sup>26</sup> OMRAN, The Cult of Heron in Egypt, 213.

<sup>27</sup> ABDELWAHED, Y. E., «The Harpokratia in Graeco-roman Egypt», *Rosetta* 23, 2019, 7.

<sup>28</sup> HALL, E. S., «Harpocrates and Other Child Deities in Ancient Egyptian Sculpture», *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 14, 1977, 56.

<sup>29</sup> FRANKFURTER, D., *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance*, Princeton, 1998, 133.

the child-god riding on an animal like a goose, an elephant or a horse<sup>30</sup>. An example is a terracotta figurine of Harpocrates in the British Museum dated from the Ptolemaic period<sup>31</sup>(fig.7). It shows Harpocrates riding a horse wearing a large wreath with the double crown with his finger to his mouth, his famous character of a child deity<sup>32</sup>. Another example from the Roman period is in Louvre Museum<sup>33</sup>(fig.8), which shows Harpocrates in the same attitude wearing the Roman costumes<sup>34</sup>.

Figurines of Harpocrates on horseback holding the sword, or the spear and the shield are very common starting from the Ptolemaic period represented as a Macedonian soldier wearing the flat cap *kausia* of Macedonia to indicate the Ptolemaic king's power to defeat the enemies<sup>35</sup>. This type of representation of Harpocrates was even more common in the Roman period when Harpocrates took military manifestation besides being a child. A good example is a terracotta figurine of Harpocrates in the Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon<sup>36</sup>, in which he is represented as a nude child except ?? the military cap, riding a horse holding the sword in his right hand and the shield in his left <sup>37</sup> (fig.9).

The conception of the depiction of the horseman remained in use during the Byzantine period in the Coptic art, where the horseman became one of the most popular motives symbolizing protection against evil and immortality. A good example of the Coptic horseman can be found in the depiction of a mural of the St. Sisinnios in the monastery of Bawit dating from the sixth or seventh century A.D. (fig.10), where the saint is represented as a horseman riding his horse spearing a female demon with a lance he holds in his right hand and the shield in the left<sup>38</sup>.

The horseman in Coptic art is certainly influenced by the depiction of Harpocrates the Horseman. This is well proved by the representation of a Coptic sandstone relief in Louvre Museum dated from the fifth century

<sup>30</sup> HALL, Harpocrates and Other Child Deities, 57.

<sup>31</sup> British Museum, EA24372

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA24372](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA24372)

<sup>33</sup> Louvre Museum, CA 658.

<sup>34</sup> [http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car\\_not\\_frame&idNotice=7492](http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=7492)

<sup>35</sup> DUNAND, F. and ZIVIE-COCHE, C., translated by David, *Gods and Men in Egypt: 300BCE to 395 CE*, Lortont, Ithaca and London, 2002, 273; BARRETT, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 277.

<sup>36</sup> Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon, H 2349.

<sup>37</sup> [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harpocrates\\_riding\\_MBA\\_Lyon\\_H2349.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harpocrates_riding_MBA_Lyon_H2349.jpg)

<sup>38</sup> Lewis, S., «The Iconography of the Coptic Horseman in Byzantine Egypt», *Journal of the American Research in Egypt* 10, 1973, 51.

A.D. The relief shows the falcon-headed soldier riding a horse wearing the Roman military cuirass and spearing a crocodile with a lance in his right hand<sup>39</sup>.

#### 4- Isis-Aphrodite

Isis was the most popular goddess throughout ancient Egyptian history, whose worship reached its peak in the Graeco-roman period when it outspread in all the Graeco-roman world. Her fame is turned to the role she played in the myth of Osiris, whom she resurrected and begot his child Horus<sup>40</sup>. She had many functions, as she was a mother goddess, goddess of inundation and fertility, magic and medicine, and goddess of rain and wind. During the Graeco-roman period, she became the second member of the Alexandrian triad along with her husband Serapis and their son Harpocrates, or Horus the child. She is represented as a lady with the sign of her name (𐩎𐩣𐩀) or the “throne” on her head<sup>41</sup>. In other cases, she is portrayed wearing the Hathoric crown, which is composed of a sun disk between two cow’s horns<sup>42</sup>.

The cult of Isis flourished greatly in Ptolemaic and later in Roman periods. Her cult diffused into the Graeco-roman world and the Mediterranean basin along with her husband Serapis. She took over the attributes and functions of other goddesses in Greek and Roman mythologies<sup>43</sup>. Her cult remained long after introducing Christianity into Egypt; it was only in the sixth century did the emperor Justinian close the temple of Isis on the island of Philae, her most important cult center<sup>(44)</sup>.

Isis-Aphrodite is one of the forms Isis took in the Graeco-roman period. This form obviously combines the characters of the two divinities

<sup>39</sup> LEWIS, The Iconography of the Coptic Horseman, 55; <https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/horus-horseback>

<sup>40</sup> COONEY, K. M., «Gender Transformation in Death: A Case Study of Coffins from Ramesside Period Egypt», *Near Eastern Archaeology* 73.4, 2010, 227.

<sup>41</sup> HEYOB, S. K., *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-roman World*, Leiden, 1975, 1-2; WITT, R. E., *Isis in the Ancient World*, Baltimore and London, 1971, 13-16.

<sup>42</sup> RIGGS, C., *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, Oxford, 2012, 419.

<sup>43</sup> DUNAND, F., “Culte d’Isis ou Religion Isiaque?”, In BRICAULT, L., VERSLUYS, M., HART, G., *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London and New York, 2005, 83. J.(eds.), Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Proceedings of the IV<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Isis Studies, Liège, November 27–29, 2008, Brill, 2011, 41-42; VANDERLIP, V. F., «The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis», *American Studies in Papyrology*, vol.12, Toronto, 1972, 83.

<sup>44</sup> BAGNALL, R. S. and Rathbone, D. W., *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians: An Archaeological and Historical Guide*, Los Angeles, 2004, 36.

all together in one, Isis the Egyptian and the Greek Aphrodite, the daughter of Zeus and the goddess of love and beauty. Isis-Aphrodite was related more with fertility, and thus marriage, and protector of childbirth and motherhood<sup>45</sup>. Isis-Aphrodite was a popular deity during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods in art, including statuary, stelae, amulets, bronze, and terracotta figurines<sup>46</sup>, which made her popular in domestic cults. Her figurines, like those of Harpocrates were placed in niches in houses or used in rituals<sup>47</sup> and may also have been presented as wedding gifts specially that Aphrodite statuettes are mentioned in marriage contracts and list of valuables in Roman Egypt<sup>48</sup>.

She is represented as a nude lady with two protecting bands across her breasts (fig.12) and which connects her with the  $\triangle \square$ <sup>49</sup> *hnr*<sup>50</sup> in dances to Hathor. In other cases, she is represented wearing a dress raised in a way to reveal her vulva. The later type is known as Isis-Aphrodite Anasyrmene. In both types of representations, she is distinguished by her hairstyle and hair dress. The hair is represented wavy and long hands to the shoulder, with a composite crown that consists of the typical crown of Isis, the Hathoric with the sun disk between two cow's horns, a very high *Kalathos* and a large wreath of flowers and grapes (as the wife of Osiris-Dionysus)<sup>51</sup>. In some cases, flat- halos appear behind the head of the figurines, and sometimes the entire upper part of the figurines are encircled by a sizeable wavy-edged halo identified as stars or sun rays<sup>52</sup>.

There are many examples to be found of the two types of Isis-Aphrodite. Two of these are in the Antiquities Museum of Bibliotheca Alexandrina<sup>53</sup> (fig.13). The goddess is represented in both examples as

<sup>45</sup> WILLIAMS, E. R., «A Bronze Statuette of Isis-Aphrodite», *Journal of the American Research in Egypt* 16, 1979, 98.

<sup>46</sup> DUNAND and ZIVIE-COCHE, *Gods and Men*, 272.

<sup>47</sup> NIFOSI, A., *Becoming a Woman and Mother in Greco-roman Egypt: Women's bodies, Society, and Domestic Space*, London and New York, 2019, 93-94.

<sup>48</sup> WILLIAMS, A Bronze Statuette of Isis-Aphrodite, 99.

<sup>49</sup> *Wb* III, 296, N<sup>o</sup>.19.

<sup>50</sup> *hnr* is a title given to a group of nude female dancers: MEYER-DIETRICH, R., «Dance», *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, Edited by Wendrich, W., Dieleman, J. and Froom, E., Oxford, 2009, 6 (Accessed January 23, 2021, <https://escholarship.org/content/qt5142h0db/qt5142h0db.pdf>).

<sup>51</sup> NIFOSI, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 93-94; WILLIAMS, A Bronze Statuette of Isis-Aphrodite, 98.

<sup>52</sup> BARRETT, *Egyptianizing Figurines from Delos*, 143.

<sup>53</sup> The first (fig.12): Antiquities Museum, BAAM serial 0127, Inv. (Greco-roman Museum) 26613. The second (fig.13): BAAM serial 0451, CG 26963 SR 547.

standing nude lady with her arms attached to the body in the traditional Egyptian style with a large wreath encircling the head from behind in a way resembling the rays of the sun disk. For Isis-Aphrodite Anasyrmene, there is an example in the British Museum<sup>54</sup>(fig.14). It is a terracotta figurine that shows Isis-Aphrodite holding the front of her dress up with her usual hairstyle and the locks hanging on the shoulder while wearing a huge wreath and a *kalathos*<sup>55</sup>.

Isis-Aphrodite gained her popularity in the Graeco-roman period because she possessed all-important attributes of all Egyptian and Greek goddesses: Isis with all her functions, specially as a goddess of fertility; Aphrodite goddess of beauty and love; Hathor, the mother goddess, represented by her crown with the sun disk between two cow's horns; Bastet represented by the act of uncovering her vagina, a ritual that was undertaken by women during the festival of Bastet; and Demeter the Greeks goddess of corps and agriculture represented by the huge *kalathos* worn by the divinity<sup>56</sup>.

As many pagan themes remained in Coptic art to decorate different objects, Isis-Aphrodite's representations can be found in Coptic objects. An example is a Coptic square textile in Louvre Museum from the eighth century A.D. (fig.15). The piece represents the marriage of Aphrodite and Adonis<sup>57</sup>. However, the goddess represented here is certainly Isis-Aphrodite distinguished by her nudity, hairstyle, , and wreath surmounted by the Hathoric crown.

Both goddesses Isis and Aphrodite were used in Coptic art, as both were identified with the Virgin Mary. This is highly accepted as both divinities played the role of the mother goddess. The former was the mother of Horus and the latter was the mother of Ares, who was also identified with Horus<sup>58</sup>. Thus, as Isis carries and suckles her infant Harpocrates or Horus the child, Virgin Mary also is represented carrying and suckling Jesus the Child<sup>59</sup>. Aphrodite Anadyomene is a form of the

<sup>54</sup> British Museum Asset No. 1006385001.

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1006385001>

<sup>56</sup> NIFOSI, A., *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 94-95.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/square-fabric-illustrating-aphrodite-s-marriage>

<sup>58</sup> KAPER, O. E., «*The Egyptian God Tutu: A Study of Sphinx God and Master of Demons with a Corpus of Monuments*», *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, Leuven, 119, 2003, 222.

<sup>59</sup> MURDOCK, D. M., *Christ in Egypt: The Horus-Jesus Connection*, Venice, 2009, 120,132.

goddess linked to her myth being borne from a conch shell in the foam of the sea. This form was used in Coptic art as a symbol of Christian baptism and became connected with the rebirth of the soul. Thus, she, or her conch shell was a popular motif in Coptic for a long time even in the Islamic period<sup>60</sup>.

## 5- Forms of Harpocrates the Horseman and Isis-Aphrodite as an Egyptian Cultural Heritage

Linguistically "heritage" means "that which has been or may be inherited"<sup>61</sup>. Thus, cultural heritage is simply identified as the legacy inherited from ancestors, maintained by the present generation and can pass on to future descendants<sup>62</sup>. Generally speaking, cultural heritage incorporates two principal categories; tangible and intangible heritages. The former is the physical and material legacy, including monuments, groups of buildings, archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, manuscripts, etc., which are worthy of preservation<sup>63</sup>. Egypt owns a great legacy of tangible and intangible cultural heritage throughout the ages. In our daily life, we practice a lot of traditions and customs of the ancestors; many of them turn back to the Pharaonic times; like for instance, the feast of Sham Elnessim (Smelling the Breez), which is originally the ancient Egyptian feast of  *smw*<sup>64</sup> or  *wp-rnpt*<sup>65</sup>, the feast of the harvest (or feast of Renutet, the goddess of the harvest)<sup>67</sup>, in which salted fish and onion were served as offerings. This festival has long-lived as a celebration of the beginning of the spring season according to the Coptic calender (the month of Barmuudah), and the modern Egyptians still serve the same ancient diet on that day. In language, modern Egyptians still use words rooted in ancient Egyptian; in addition to many other traditions inherited

<sup>60</sup> DU BOURGUET, P., «Aphrodite», *Mythological Subjects in Coptic Art*, 6, Accessed January 20, 2021.

<https://ccdl.claremont.edu/digital/collection/cce/id/1447>

<sup>61</sup> CORMACK, P., *Heritage in Danger*, London, 1976, 14.

<sup>62</sup> OCAL, T., «Necessity of Cultural Historical Heritage Education in Social Studies Teaching», *Creative Education* 7, (03), 2016, 397.

<sup>63</sup> Vecco, M.: «A Definition of Cultural Heritage: From the Tangible to the Intangible», *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 11, 2010, N<sup>o</sup>.3, 322.

<sup>64</sup> *Wb IV*, 466, N<sup>o</sup>.10

<sup>65</sup> *Wb I*, 300, N<sup>o</sup>.13

<sup>66</sup> BELMONTE, J. A., "The Egyptian Calendar: Keeping Ma'at on Earth", In Slatout, Mosalam and Belmont J. A. (eds.), *In Search of Cosmic Order: Selected Essays on Egyptian Archaeoastronomy*, Cairo, 2009, 96.

<sup>67</sup> PARKER, R. A. «*The Calendars of Ancient Egypt*», *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization*, N<sup>o</sup>. 26, Chicago, 1950, 33, 39.

from ancient Egyptians, some of which we may practice without being aware of its ancestry.

Among the old traditions owe use today as a cultural heritage is producing the the sugar doll (*Aroset Elmouled*) and horseman (*Hosan*), which have been part of the Egyptian religious celebrations of *El-Mouled* or Birth of Prophet Mohamed (peace upon him). They are presented to children as gifts to celebrate the event only in Egypt, as they are not to be found in other Islamic countries to celebrate the *Mouled*. The origins of this tradition are not precisely known, nor why these sweat-meats take these two forms (the doll and the horseman) in particular. In addition, they both have traditional manifestations by which they are distinguished. The traditional form of the sweat doll is simply represented as a lady wearing a long dress with the arms bent and hands to the waist, and the most important distinguishable feature is what-so-called fan, or *Marouaha*, made of paper and richly decorated and colored around the head. As for the sweat horseman, it is represented in white or red color simply as a military horseman sometimes holding a sword.

The idea that the sugar doll and the horseman might be originated from the figurines of Harpocrates the horseman and Aphrodite-Isis is not far from truth. A simple comparison between their forms in ancient and modern times can prove that. In the case of Harpocrates the horseman and the modern *Hosan*, in both models, he is represented riding on a horseback wearing military costumes and holding a sword (figs.8 and 15). On the other hand, both Aphrodite -Isis and *Aroset Elmouled*, are distinguished by the huge richly decorated wreath around the head (figs. 13 and 16).

The resemblance between the ancient and the modern manifestations are clear except for a few details that might have vanished throughout the ages. If that is true, why were the manifestations of these two divinities in particular kept in the Egyptian mind? The answer is simply because these two divinities are forms of the most famous Egyptian Isis and her son Horus who remained in Egyptian practices even after introducing Christianity to symbolize the Virgin Mary, and Jesus the child. In addition, both deities Harpocrates the horseman and Isis-Aphrodite received domestic cult and were closely connected with the household, childbirth and children, and motherhood. In some cases, they were even represented together in one figurine, like the bronze statuette in Brooklyn Museum

from the Roman Period<sup>68</sup> (fig.17). The goddess is represented in Hellenistic style, nude with her huge wreath distinguished by the Hathoric crown of the sun disk between two horns, while on her left hand is a manifestation of a small Harpocrates represented as a child with his finger to the mouth while wearing the double crown and sitting on a lotus. Moreover, the two deities were popular motives in Coptic art (figs.11 and 15) through Byzantine and Islamic eras, including the Fatimid Period to which the two sugar dolls<sup>69</sup> (*Aroset Elmouled* and *Hosan*) most probably are dated to<sup>70</sup>, specially that in this period the rulers depended greatly on Christian artisans<sup>71</sup> who transferred Coptic motives into Islamic art and architecture and vice versa. In the same manner, the Coptic artisans could have transferred the two motives of Harpocrates, the horseman and Isis-Aphrodite into the sugar doll of *Aroset Elmouled* and *Hosan* as an aspect of celebration of *Mouled*, and remained as a tradition and part of Egyptian cultural heritage.

## 6- Conclusion

Harpocrates the horseman and Isis-Aphrodite both gained great importance in Graeco-roman Egypt. Despite the fact that they were originally the Egyptian Isis and her son Horus, but starting from the Ptolemaic period taking characteristics of other Greek divinities with whom they were identified, they became even more popular.

Moreover, during the Graeco-roman period, both were more connected with the household matters and domestic cult; their figurines and statuettes were placed in houses and used as votives. Besides being two members of the Alexandrian triad consisting of Serapis, Isis and Harpocrates, the cults of which widely spread outside Egypt in the whole Graeco-roman and Mediterranean worlds; particularly that of Isis who took over the functions and attributes of the most important and famous goddesses then, integrating them all in one divinity. Isis-Aphrodite is a clear example of this integration and how this form assembled the most

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<sup>68</sup> Brooklyn Museum, Roman period, Acc.44.224.

<sup>69</sup> SANDERS, P., *Ritual, Politics, and the City in Fatimid Cairo*, New York, 1994,135.

<sup>70</sup> There is no cultural heritage study of this type of sugar objects has been conducted to indicate the exact date of this tradition.

<sup>71</sup> AREF, E. A., «The Contribution of the Coptic and Islamic Arts in Preserving the Analytical (14-15 AH/20-21 AD (Egyptian National Character:) Vision of Some Plastic Paintings during the Centuries», *Historical Research Letter* 41, 2017, 56.

favourable functions and attributes to the common people. Horus the child on the other hand in addition to the functions and importance he gained as a popular Egyptian deity, he was also assimilated with Graeco-roman gods and heroes who played great roles in the Graeco-roman mythology.

All these mentioned indications resulted in one fact that the two divinities Harpocrates the horseman and Isis-Aphrodite were the most endearing deities to the heart of the Egyptians. This a fact that is easily proved by the way the Egyptian artists kept on using the them as symbols and motives in the Coptic art for long time even after eliminating paganism to be important motives even after the Islamic conquest to be transferred even to into Islamic motives most probably during the Fatimid Period to re-appear once again as two figurines, but this time as an aspect of the celebration of *El-Mouled* or "Birth of Prophet Mohamed" (peace upon him). The sugar doll and horseman became at a certain point part of the Egyptian cultural heritage which the Egyptian Muslims inherited without knowing why the sweetmeat of their feast took these two forms in particular and what are the origins of these images, which are not to be found in other Islamic world, and thus has become a special mark of the Egyptian way of celebrating the feast of "Birth of Prophet Mohamed" (peace upon him).

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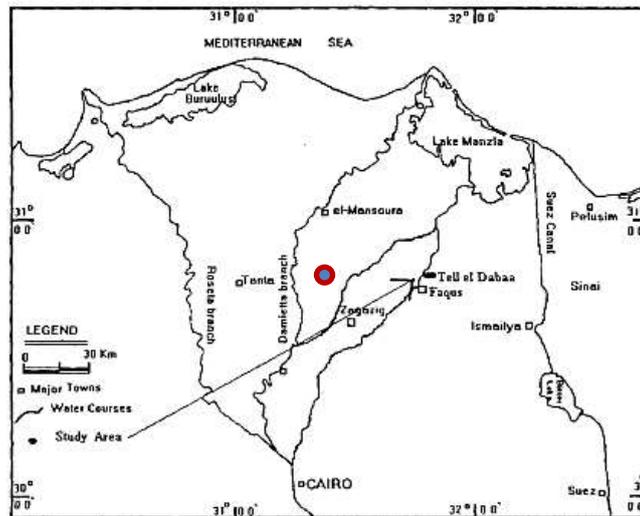
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Map 1 map of Tell Eddabaa in the eastern Delta

El-BEALY, S., EDWARDS, J. and ELMAHMOUDI, A., «Geophysical and Palynological Investigations of the Tell El Dabaa Archaeological site, Nile Delta, Egypt», *Antiquity*, December 2001, 736.



Map 2 map of ancient Fayoum showing locations of Karania and Theadelphia  
<http://www.desheret.org/Fayoum.htm> (Access April 15, 2021)



Fig.1 Wooden statuette of a horseman from the New Kingdom, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Acc. N<sup>o</sup>.55.167.3.

SCHULMAN, Egyptian Representations of Horsemen, Pl., XXXVIII, FIG.2



Fig.2 Funerary Stela from Shatbi Cemetery, late 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C  
COLE, Ptolemaic Cavalrymen, 7.



Fig.3 Frieze in tomb 1 in Mostaha Kamel, 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.  
Cole, Ptolemaic Cavalrymen, 7.



Fig.4 Mural painting of Heron at the niche of House B50, Karanis  
Criore, Trimithis in the Culture of the Eastern Roman Empire, 347, FIG.144  
<http://dlib.nyu.edu/awdl/isaw/oasis-city/>.



Fig.5 Stela from the temple of Heron at Thedalephia 76 B.C,  
LEWIS, The Iconography of the Coptic Horseman, FIG.35.



Fig.6 A sandstone stela represented with Dioskouroi the two twin brothers, from the Roman Period, Turin Museum Inv. N<sup>o</sup>. S. 01321.

<https://collezioni.museoegizio.it/asp01321>



Fig.7 Terracotta figurine of Harpocrates wearing the double crown and riding a horse, Ptolemaic Period, British Museum, EA24372

[https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA24372](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA24372)



Fig.8 Terracotta figurine of Harpocrates wearing Roman military costumes, Roman period, Louvre Museum, CA 658,

[http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car\\_not\\_frame&idNotice=7492](http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=7492)



Fig.9 Terracotta figurine of Harpocrates represented as a Macedonian soldier, Roman Period, 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D., Museum of Fine Arts of Lyon, H 2349.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harpocrates\\_riding\\_MBA\\_Lyon\\_H2349.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harpocrates_riding_MBA_Lyon_H2349.jpg)



Fig. 10 Painted mural from the Monestary of St. Apollo, 6<sup>th</sup>/ 7<sup>th</sup> Century.  
LEWIS, The Iconography of the Coptic Horseman, FIG.27.



Fig. 11 Coptic sandstone relief, 5<sup>th</sup> century, Museum of Louvre

<https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/horus-horseback>



Fig.12 Terracotta figurine of Isis Aphrodite from the Roman period, Metropolitan Museum, Acc.1991.76

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/544919>



Fig.13 Terracotta figurines of Isis-Aphrodite in Antiquities Museum

<http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=451>

<http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=127>



Fig.14 Terracotta figurine of Isis-Aphrodite Anasyrmene, British Museum

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1006385001>



Fig.15 Coptic square of fabric from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, Louvre Museum  
<https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/square-fabric-illustrating-aphrodite-s-marriage>



Fig.16 The modern sugar doll (*Aroset Elmouled*) and horseman (*Hosan*)  
 Taken by the researcher



Fig.17 Bronze statuette, Brooklyn Museum, Roman period, Acc.44.224  
<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/57407>