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A Harpocrates Figurine in the Hierapolis Collection: The Iconographic Reflection of Cultural Syncretism

Hierapolis Koleksiyonunda Bir Harpokrates Figürini: Kültürel Senkretizmin İkonografik Yansıması

Esma İVRENDİ ŞENOL*

Abstract: This study examines the iconographic and cultural transformation of Harpocrates, the late manifestation of Horus, in the Greco-Roman world, based on a bronze figurine housed in the Hierapolis Archaeology Museum. Through this example, the article explores how Harpocrates iconography, which spread throughout the Mediterranean, acquired a syncretic character in Anatolia and evaluates its significance within the cultural and religious environment of Roman Anatolia. The figurine is analyzed using typological and iconographic approaches, supported by comparative material, stylistic assessment, and detailed visual examination. The gesture of placing a finger to the mouth, symbolizing silence, together with the cornucopia held in the other hand, reflects a hybrid representation associated with fertility and mystery cults of the Greco-Roman world. While the *pschent*-like headdress preserves Egyptian tradition, the modeling of the body and compositional stance demonstrate clear influences of Greek sculpture. Stylistic analysis suggests a date in the 1st–3rd centuries CE, during the Roman Imperial Period. The findings indicate that such portable figurines may have served functions related to individual piety, apotropaic protection, and the dissemination of the Isis cults in and around the Lykos Valley, thereby contributing to processes of cultural interaction and iconographic transformation.

Keywords: Harpocrates • Iconography • Greco-Roman Syncretism • Hierapolis Figurine

Öz: Bu çalışma, Hierapolis Arkeoloji Müzesi'nde bulunan bronz bir heykelcik üzerinden, Horus'un geç dönem tezahürü olan Harpokrates'in Greko-Romen dünyasındaki ikonografik ve kültürel dönüşümünü incelemektedir. Bu örnek üzerinden makale, Akdeniz'e yayılan Harpokrates ikonografisinin Anadolu'da nasıl senkretik bir karakter kazandığını araştırmakta ve Roma Anadolu'sunun kültürel ve dini ortamı içindeki önemini değerlendirmektedir. Figürin; tipolojik ve ikonografik yöntemler çerçevesinde, karşılaştırmalı materyal, üslup özellikleri ve ayrıntılı görsel incelemelerle analiz edilmiştir. Parmağın ağıza götürülmesiyle ifade edilen sessizlik jesti ile diğer elde tutulan *cornucopia*, Greko-Romen dünyaya özgü bereket ve gizem kültürleriyle ilişkili melez bir temsili yansıtmaktadır. *Pschent* benzeri başlık Mısır geleneğini korurken, figürün plastik işlenişi ve kompozisyonel duruşu Hellen heykel sanatının etkilerini açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. Üslup değerlendirmesi, eserin Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi'nde MS 1–3. yüzyıllar arasına tarihlenebileceğini göstermektedir. Bulgular, bu tür taşınabilir figürinlerin bireysel dindarlık, apotropaik koruma ve Isis kültlerinin Lykos Vadisi ve çevresindeki yayılımıyla ilişkili işlevler görmüş olabileceğini göstermekte; böylece kültürel etkileşim ve ikonografik dönüşüm süreçlerinin anlaşılmasına katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Harpokrates • İkonografi • Greko-Romen Senkretizmi • Hierapolis Figürini

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Introduction

Harpocrates is a deity who acquired new iconographic and theological meanings within the cultural circulation of the Mediterranean world during the Hellenistic and Roman periods¹. The tradition of “Child Horus” (Harpocrates), while rooted in the symbolism of childhood expressed in Egypt through the gesture of bringing the finger to the mouth, became one of the most prominent examples of Greco-Egyptian syncretism from the Ptolemaic period onward². During this period, the god was reinterpreted in different regions of the Mediterranean, particularly through the spread of the cults of Isis and Serapis, acquiring a multilayered identity associated with fertility, renewal, and mystery cults within the dynamism of the Greco-Roman world³.

In the Roman Imperial Period, the acceptance of Egyptian deities became more visible through the diversification of individual religious practices. Miniature figurines of Isis, Serapis, and Harpocrates gained popularity in both domestic cults and votive contexts⁴. The depiction of Harpocrates with iconographic elements such as the cornucopia, the sidelock of youth, and the *pschent* provides important visual evidence of the integration of Egyptian traditions into the Greco-Roman world. Indeed, recent studies have demonstrated that Egyptian deities in the Roman world were not merely preserved but were also reinterpreted, adapted to local cultural contexts, and endowed with new meanings⁵. Within this framework, Harpocrates may be regarded as a syncretic deity that acquired new functions and meanings in the Greco-Roman world.

This study aims to examine the bronze Harpocrates figurine preserved in the Hierapolis Archaeology Museum through its iconographic and stylistic features. The artifact, which has not previously been subjected to a detailed scholarly evaluation, is significant for contributing to our understanding of the Anatolian manifestations of Harpocrates iconography. Evaluated in light of comparative examples, the figurine is considered an important find that sheds light on the cultural and iconographic transformation of Egyptian religious traditions within the Greco-Roman world.

The Hierapolis figurine represents a distinctive Anatolian manifestation of this cultural and iconographic transformation. Despite its small size, the figurine successfully reflects both the continuity of Egyptian-derived iconographic elements and the increasing prominence of Greco-Roman stylistic features. For this reason, the artifact is not merely an object of typological assessment, but also a tangible cultural document demonstrating how Egyptian-origin deities were adapted and reinterpreted in Anatolia.

The Origins of Harpocrates in Ancient Sources and the Spread of His Cult in the Greco-Roman World

Among ancient authors, accounts concerning the genealogy of Harpocrates are highly complex and varied. According to the generally accepted view, Osiris and Isis had a son named Horus, from whom Harpocrates subsequently emerged. In another account, it is stated that Isis and Osiris were a pair who fell in love while still in their mother’s womb

¹ Ljubić 1887, 33; Johnston 2007, 160.

² Tran Tam Tinh 1971, 18-21; Cristea 2013, 74.

³ Civelek 2013, 103-104.

⁴ Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 415-416; Johnston 2007, 160.

⁵ Versluys 2017, 283; Gasparini & Gordon 2018, 571-572.

and gave birth to Horus; consequently, Harpocrates is emphasized as a distinct identity separate from “Elder Horus”⁶. In his works, Herodotus refers only to Horus and makes no mention of Harpocrates. This is generally explained by the fact that the cult of Harpocrates had, in Herodotus’ time, a predominantly local presence confined mainly to Upper Egypt⁷. Plutarch⁸ further characterizes Harpocrates as a form of “Child Horus,” born from the union of Isis and Osiris, described as an imperfect infant with weak limbs, often associated with lunar symbolism. In this interpretation, Harpocrates is placed within a distinct mythological framework that differentiates him from “Elder Horus,” thereby clearly reflecting his differentiated status within Greco-Roman religious thought. The first author to mention Harpocrates is Eratosthenes, who served as the librarian of Ptolemy III Euergetes in Alexandria in the mid-IIIrd century BCE. In the catalogue of Theban kings attributed to Eratosthenes, a ruler named “*Semphrocrates*” appears in the twenty-sixth position of the list. Late antique sources, through a syncretic interpretation, have identified this figure with the composite identity of “Heracles-Harpocrates”⁹. The name Harpocrates is essentially the form of the Egyptian god Horus as rendered in Greek and Latin sources; it constitutes a Hellenistic adaptation of the expression meaning “Horus the Child”¹⁰ in the ancient Egyptian language. Indeed, in Phoenician and Aramaic texts¹¹, this term appears in the forms “Har-pa-khered”¹² or “Haru-pa-khered”¹³.

Accounts concerning the origin of Harpocrates provide an important background for understanding how his cult acquired its distinctive identity. The cults of Isis, Osiris (Serapis), Horus, and Harpocrates spread into the Greek world through Phoenicia and Asia Minor during the Ptolemaic period¹⁴. Following the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, the region first came under Macedonian Greek rule and later, by the end of the 1st century BCE, became part of the Roman Empire. This political transformation affected not only the administrative structure but also religious and cultural interactions, while the settlement of Greco-Roman populations in Egypt increased interest in local religious practices¹⁵. These cults were adopted by both the indigenous population and newly arriving groups. The significance of Harpocrates within the cult is clearly evident during the Ptolemaic period. Indeed, during the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator, it is known that, alongside a sanctuary dedicated to Isis in Alexandria, there was also a separate sanctuary dedicated to Harpocrates¹⁶. This suggests that Harpocrates was revered not only as the son of Isis but also, in certain centers, as a deity possessing an independent cult identity. The worship of Isis and her son Harpocrates continued to exert influence throughout Egypt and the Mediterranean

⁶ Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 415.

⁷ Jablonski 1750, 244.

⁸ Plut. *Mor. Is. Os.* 378 B-C.

⁹ Synk. *Chron.* I. 205.

¹⁰ Wolf 1957, 130, 150; Swan Hall 1977, 56; Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 415.

¹¹ Muchiki 1994, 127.

¹² For comparative examples of Harpocrates see *LIMC* IV-2, 242–265; IV, 415–445.

¹³ Prichard 1819, 60–62.

¹⁴ Preller 1851, 196.

¹⁵ Cooney 1972, 284.

¹⁶ Bricault 1999, 336.

world until the rise of Christianity¹⁷. As a result, the cult of Harpocrates spread across a wide geographical area extending from Greece to Malta, Sicily, Southern Italy, and ultimately Rome¹⁸.

In the mid-1st century BCE, the presence in Rome of a priestly association affiliated with the cult of Serapis, known as the "*Collegium Pastophorum Serapidis*" is recorded. Nevertheless, the Roman authorities sought to curb the spread of these foreign cults; accordingly, in 58 BCE, despite objections from democratic factions, the altars dedicated to Serapis, Isis, Harpocrates, and Anubis on the Capitoline were destroyed¹⁹.

As a result of Iulius Caesar's close relationship with Cleopatra, these restrictions were temporarily relaxed, and in 42 BCE. Caesar commissioned the construction of a temple in honor of Isis and Serapis. Although Augustus prohibited the practice of these cults within the boundaries of the city of Rome, he did not object to the dedication of an altar to these deities²⁰. In 19 CE, Tiberius reimposed restrictions on the practices associated with these cults. Nevertheless, under subsequent emperors, the worship of Isis increasingly came to be regarded as a form of religious practice shaped by personal preference and social acceptance²¹. By contrast, Egyptian deities regained prominence during the Flavian period, and their cults became increasingly widespread. In particular, the cult of Serapis served as an important ideological instrument in Vespasian's efforts to legitimize his rule. During this period, the iconography of Isis, Serapis, and related deities became more visible in imperial propaganda and on coinage²². Under the Antonines, these cults were initially tolerated and later gained considerable popularity²³, while Caracalla dedicated multiple temples to these deities²⁴. Against this background, Harpocrates became known in Greek and Roman culture primarily through his association with Isis and Serapis; however, he formally functioned only as a *synnaos theos*, that is, a deity worshipped jointly within the same temple. Consequently, Harpocrates was often represented and worshipped not as an independent deity, but as an integral member of the Isiac cult²⁵. His iconography as a child figure placing his finger to his lips led many Greek and Latin authors to regard him as a symbol of silence and caution in the face of sacred mysteries²⁶. This characteristic indicates that Harpocrates assumed not only the role of a deity but also a broader symbolic function within religious and ritual contexts.

The Iconography of Harpocrates and Cultural Syncretism

The iconography of Harpocrates is fundamentally shaped around themes such as a protective function, familial and individual devotion, fertility, silence, patience, hope, and mystery²⁷, while his influence in the realms of magic and divination is also

¹⁷ Johnston 2007, 160.

¹⁸ Ljubić 1887, 33.

¹⁹ Tert. *Ad Nat.* I. 10; Tert. *Apol.* 6; Arnob. *Adv. Nat.* 2. 73.

²⁰ Cass. Dio 51. 11. 2; 54. 6.

²¹ Suet. *Otho* 12.

²² Versluys 2017, 282.

²³ Tac. *Hist.* 3. 74

²⁴ Hist. Aug. *Carac.* 9. 10.

²⁵ Bricault 1999, 340; Versluys 2002, 11-12.

²⁶ Ov. *Met.* 9. 692; Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 415-416.

²⁷ Sandri 2006, 97-123.

noteworthy²⁸. Moreover, he has been regarded as a guardian of the wild and of life itself²⁹.

In ancient Egyptian representations, the child Horus is identifiable by his shaven head, the sidelock of hair falling to the right, and the finger extended to his mouth.³⁰ This appearance was adopted by the Greeks who settled in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period and, through the dissemination of the Isis cult, became rapidly recognized throughout the Mediterranean world³¹. Another frequently encountered theme in the iconography of Harpocrates depicts him being nursed in the lap of his mother, Isis³². These scenes, which became widespread from the Ptolemaic period between the fourth and first centuries BCE, emphasize the maternal and protective qualities of Isis while conveying strong ideological messages such as dynastic continuity, familial protection, and divine fertility³³.

Harpocrates was not only a component of traditional Egyptian iconography but also a divine figure reinterpreted in new forms within the Greco-Roman artistic tradition. He is generally depicted either nude or draped with a loosely hanging *himation* over one shoulder. His curly hair, often tied with a ribbon, emphasizes his youthful character. He frequently holds a *cornucopia*, a symbol of prosperity and abundance³⁴. In some representations, additional attributes such as wings, grape clusters, lotus-leaf motifs, a club, or an animal skin are also present³⁵. The iconographic diversity of Harpocrates is further reflected in his depictions alongside Isis and Serapis, where he appears in various poses and with different attributes. Examples include the positioning of the hands at chest or waist level, the carrying of a cornucopia or vessel, the holding of a bird or snake, and representations accompanied by animals such as crocodiles, gazelles, scorpions, or lions³⁶. Furthermore, through the iconographic and theological associations he established with different deities, Harpocrates became an important cult figure in both Egypt and the wider Mediterranean world³⁷. The widespread distribution of his representations indicates that Harpocrates gained broad acceptance not only in Egypt but throughout the Mediterranean basin. This also suggests that the deity occupied a significant place in both public religious practices and expressions of individual piety³⁸.

Description and Technical Characteristics of the Harpocrates Figurine

This artifact, incorporated into the inventory of the Hierapolis Archaeology Museum through confiscation, is a figurine cast in copper alloy (Fig. 1). Measuring 7 cm in height and 2.2 cm in width, the object is recorded in the inventory registers simply as a

²⁸ Hdt. 2. 83.

²⁹ Milne 1945, 90.

³⁰ Ovid. *Met.* 9. 688; Plut. *Mor. Is. Os.* 68.

³¹ Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 415.

³² Cristea 2013, 74.

³³ Tran Tam Tinh, 1971, 18-21; Cristea 2013, 74.

³⁴ Lecuyot 2001, 113-114; Cristea 2014, 117-118.

³⁵ Arslan & Yeğin 2020, 457.

³⁶ Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 415-445; Johnston 2007, 160; Cristea 2014, 117-118.

³⁷ Lecuyot 2001, 114-115. For further examples of Harpocrates depicted together with various deities, see *LIMC* IV, 415-445.

³⁸ Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 416.

“figurine.” This small-scale male figurine, heavily affected by corrosion, is depicted nude and standing in a frontal pose, rendered with proportionate and diminutive morphological features characteristic of child anatomy. The right leg of the figure is slightly bent at the knee, rendered in a forward-stepping stance, while both feet are set upon a flat base. The composition achieves a striking plastic effect through both its figurative simplicity and the subtle dynamism of its posture.

On the head of the figure is a conical, upward-tapering headdress representing the *pschent*³⁹. This headdress is integrated with a long braid extending toward the nape, reflecting the tradition of the “sidelock of youth” characteristic of Harpocrates iconography⁴⁰.



Fig. 1 Hierapolis Figurine front -rear view*

Immediately beneath the *pschent*, the hair, rendered in orderly wave-like curls framing the frontal part of the face, terminates at the level of the neck in a blunt and undulating form. Although the facial details are partially worn, the triangular forehead, the eyebrows meeting above the nose, the deeply carved eye sockets, the full and smoothly modeled cheeks, the slightly parted lips, and the rounded, full chin are noteworthy. The overall facial form emphasizes the divine identity of the figure.

The right arm is bent at the elbow, with the right hand raised to the level of the mouth. The positioning of the index finger toward the lips constitutes a clear indication of the characteristic “gesture of silence” associated with Harpocrates. This gesture not only emphasizes Harpocrates’ identity as a child god but, within Greco-Roman iconography, is generally regarded as a symbol of silence and mystery⁴¹. The left arm is slightly bent downward, and in the left hand there is held an object of elongated form with a slender body that widens toward the tip, most likely a

cornucopia (horn of plenty). This element indicates that the figure was reinterpreted in accordance with the syncretic dynamics of the Roman Period and reveals a mode of representation in which Harpocrates is associated with the theme of abundance. The

³⁹ The “double crown of Egypt” (*pschent*) is defined as a composite headdress formed by the superimposition of two separate regional crowns (the white *hedjet* and the red *deshret*). Varying in form according to material and period, it appears in pharaonic statues, funerary reliefs, and other works of art. This crown constitutes an important symbol representing the political unity of Upper and Lower Egypt and the pharaoh’s sovereignty over the land (Kawai 2013, 1).

⁴⁰ Swan Hall 1977, 56-57.

⁴¹ Aglan 2024, 204.

presence of the *cornucopia* as a symbol of abundance may be considered a tangible indicator of the reinterpretation of Harpocrates within the Greco-Roman world and his association with local religious traditions⁴².

Comparative Examples

The Hierapolis Harpocrates may be considered a syncretic example, as it combines Egyptian Harpocrates iconography with formal features characteristic of Greco-Roman traditions. The small dimensions of the object (7 cm) and its production by means of bronze casting indicate that representations of Harpocrates in antiquity were largely produced as portable cult objects and functioned in daily life, particularly within the context of domestic or individual piety. Indeed, it is known that representations of Harpocrates were employed not only in figurines but also on ring stones, gems, lamps, pendants, coins, and wall paintings⁴³.

The Hierapolis example is characterized by the “gesture of silence,” formed by the right hand brought to the mouth, and by the *cornucopia* held in the left hand. This composition shows a direct parallel with bronze Harpocrates figurines preserved in the Louvre Museum (Fig. 2). In the example registered under inventory number Br 335 and dated to the IInd–IIIrd centuries CE, the figure similarly holds its right finger to the mouth while carrying a *cornucopia*, encircled by a serpent, on the left arm. In both examples, the *cornucopia* functions as a key symbol in associating the deity with abundance and fertility. However, in the Hierapolis figurine, the *cornucopia* is rendered in a simple and slender elongated form, whereas in the Louvre example it is more elaborately executed, accompanied by a serpent and further depicted with a necklace or amulet chain around the neck. This may indicate workshop variations or suggest differing contexts of use for the figurines.

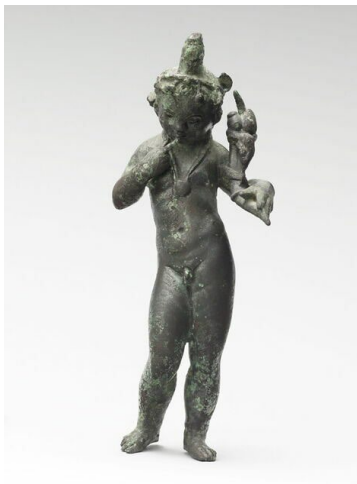


Fig. 2 Louvre Museum Harpocrates Statuette; Br 335 (front view – rear view), (Lecuyot 2001, 116, fig 3)

Similarly, a bronze figurine formerly part of the Davillier Collection and now housed in the Louvre Museum in Paris, registered under inventory number Br 632 and dated to the Roman Imperial Period, also depicts Harpocrates with a *cornucopia* on the left arm (Fig. 3). Like the Hierapolis statuette, the Davillier example was produced on a small scale (7.3 cm) and appears suited to portability and personal use. However, the quiver and serpent motif observed in the Davillier figurine are not present in the Hierapolis example. This demonstrates the extent to which the iconography of Harpocrates possesses rich variations. Another noteworthy feature of the Hierapolis statuette is the presence of a pointed headdress in the form of the *pschent* on its head. This iconographic element not only emphasizes

the Egyptian origin of Harpocrates but also functioned as a symbol of divine status within the Greco-Roman context. Similarly, in the Br 335 example in the Louvre

⁴² Soslu 2023, 521.

⁴³ Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 415.

collection, the *pschent*, combined with the hair braid, alludes to the cultural origins of the deity. Therefore, the Hierapolis figurine simultaneously presents both the continuation of the Egyptian-derived iconographic tradition and a concrete reflection of Roman Period syncretism.



Fig. 3 Louvre Museum bronze Harpocrates statuette (Lecuyot 2001, 116, Fig 4)

In antiquity, the *cornucopia* was considered one of the most widespread iconographic symbols of abundance, prosperity, and wealth. It is generally depicted filled with vegetables, fruits, and grain products. This feature symbolizes the belief that vital food resources were bestowed upon humanity by the gods and existed under divine protection⁴⁴. From an iconographic perspective, the depiction of the *cornucopia* as either full or empty does not alter its fundamental meaning, as both forms are associated with abundance and prosperity⁴⁵. During the Ptolemaic Period, the *cornucopia* emerged as an important iconographic element in conveying concepts of abundance and prosperity associated with both Egyptian mythology and the Eleusinian Mysteries⁴⁶. In this context, the *cornucopia* held in the left hand of the Hierapolis figurine is significant in demonstrating that Harpocrates was associated

not only with his identity as a child god but also with the concepts of abundance, prosperity, and wealth.

In 2021, the Louvre Museum added to its collection a life-size (1.36 m) marble statue of Harpocrates, belonging to the Greco-Egyptian cult that had gained great popularity in Rome and originating from the Barberini Collection (Fig. 4). The marble statue is considerably larger in scale than the Hierapolis example. Nevertheless, shared iconographic features such as the cornucopia and the standing nude child figure highlight the similarities between the two works. This comparison is significant in demonstrating that Harpocrates was represented with similar iconographic conventions in both small portable objects and monumental sculpture. Therefore, the Hierapolis example, despite its small size, may be evaluated as an important find that reflects the flexible and multilayered character of Harpocrates' representation in the Greco-Roman world.

⁴⁴ Yılmaz Kolancı 2018, 372.

⁴⁵ Civelek 2013, 111.

⁴⁶ The Eleusinian Mysteries, one of the most deeply rooted initiation rituals of the ancient world, possess a universal character centered on the cult of Demeter and Persephone, addressing the seasonal cycle, the life-death dichotomy, and the promise of post-mortem bliss. This cult, whose origins date back to the 7th century BCE, was transmitted to Egypt during the Ptolemaic period, where it was adopted by local communities and maintained a broad geographical and chronological sphere of influence extending into the Late Roman Period. For detailed information, see Civelek 2013, 103-104; Kaya 2023, 263-270.



Fig. 4 Harpocrates statue from the Louvre Museum collection

When all comparative examples are taken into consideration, the headdress on the figure, while showing parallels with similar iconographic traditions in formal terms, does not exhibit identical characteristics. Nevertheless, the Hierapolis figurine may be associated with Egyptian-derived iconographic features and may also be regarded as an indicator of divine identity within the Greco-Roman world. In this respect, the headdress can be regarded as an iconographic element that reflects a synthesis of different cultural influences.

General Evaluation

Although the Harpocrates figurine represents a deity originating from Egyptian mythology, its depiction reflects the aesthetic characteristics of the Greco-Roman artistic tradition rather than the hieratic and symbolic conventions typical of Egyptian art. The figure is distinguished by its naturalistic body proportions,

careful treatment of anatomy, subtle sense of movement, and the idealized expression evident in the rendering of the hair and facial features. These characteristics suggest that Harpocrates was perceived not only as an Egyptian deity but also as a figure reinterpreted in accordance with the artistic and cultural values of the Greek and Roman worlds. Recent studies have demonstrated that Egyptian deities in the Roman world were not merely preserved but were also adapted to local cultural environments and endowed with new meanings⁴⁷. In this respect, the Hierapolis Harpocrates figurine may be regarded as a tangible example of this process of cultural and iconographic transformation.

Since the provenance, findspot, and archaeological context of the Hierapolis Archaeology Museum figurine are unknown, this artifact alone cannot be considered conclusive evidence for the presence of Egyptian cults in the region. However, the marble statues of Isis⁴⁸ discovered in the ancient cities of Tripolis and Laodicea provide important archaeological evidence for the presence of Egyptian cult elements in the area. Furthermore, the bronze bust of Isis⁴⁹ and the terracotta Isis figurine⁵⁰ preserved

⁴⁷ Versluys 2017, 11-12.

⁴⁸ The statue of Isis, which was discovered among the finds from the Monumental Fountain of the ancient city of Tripolis and dated to the mid-IInd century CE, is currently exhibited as part of the temporary exhibition "The Ancient Faces of the Lykos" organized by the Denizli Museum Directorate. For detailed information on this statue, see Deniz Duman 2024, 109-111. The statue of Isis, discovered in the ancient city of Laodicea and considered to have been associated with the Nymphaeum or its immediate surroundings, is dated to the IInd-IIIrd centuries CE and is currently exhibited in Hall A of the Hierapolis Archaeology Museum. For detailed information on this statue, see Kahil 1969, 190.

⁴⁹ The bronze bust of Isis (H. 5.4 cm), dated to the Roman Period, was recovered during the excavations conducted in 2012 at the South Portico of the North (Sacred) Agora of ancient Laodicea.

⁵⁰ The terracotta Isis figurine, recovered during the 2013 excavations at the South Portico of the North Agora in the ancient city of Laodicea and dated to the Roman Period, consists of a fragment

in the Hierapolis Archaeology Museum and recovered during excavations at Laodicea demonstrate that Egyptian cults in the region were represented not only through monumental sculpture but also through small-scale portable objects. Indeed, numismatic evidence from the cities of Hierapolis, Laodicea, Tripolis, and Colossae likewise suggests that the cult of Isis was adopted in the region⁵¹.

Representations of Harpocrates are widely known throughout the Roman world, particularly on small-scale figurines, amulets, and other portable objects. However, the number of finds associated with Harpocrates recovered from the Lykos Valley remains limited. The Hierapolis figurine is noteworthy in that it is one of only two Harpocrates figurines preserved in the museum collection⁵². The Isis-related finds discussed above provide various archaeological indications for the presence of Egyptian cults in the region. In this context, the Harpocrates figurine should be evaluated within the local religious environment. The presence of Harpocrates figurines in regions where the cult of Isis was adopted may be interpreted in connection with the god's close mythological and theological relationship with Isis. Indeed, coins depicting Harpocrates, minted in Alexandria during the first to third centuries CE, constitute numismatic evidence for the inclusion of the deity in official iconography, particularly within the context of the Isis cult⁵³.

The Hierapolis figurine departs from the traditional Egyptian style and displays clear influences of Greco-Roman aesthetics. These stylistic features support its attribution to the Roman Imperial Period. Indeed, as in the case of the Hierapolis example, the

belonging to the head of the figure.

⁵¹ It is known that depictions of Isis were used on the coins of the ancient cities of Laodicea, Tripolis, and Colossae located in and around Hierapolis, particularly during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. In these centuries, the cult of Isis became widespread in the cities of the Roman Empire in Anatolia and was also adopted in major centers of trade and culture. Particularly on coins issued in the 1st century CE, the iconographic elements of Isis are prominently represented, indicating the activity of the cult in the cities. In the 2nd–3rd centuries CE, although the cult of Isis and related symbols continue to appear on coins, the intensity of these representations began to decrease relatively, in parallel with the diversification of syncretic beliefs and changes in the religious structures of the Roman Period. For Isis-cult coins of the ancient city of Hierapolis, see *BMC* 29–31; *SNG Cop* 426–427. For coin examples from Laodicea, see *RPC* I 1278; *RPC* 2903; 2909. For Isis-cult coin examples of Tripolis ad Lydia, see *BMC* 33; *SNG von Aulock* 3312. For Isis-cult coin examples of the ancient city of Colossae, see *BMC* 6–7; *SNG von Aulock* 3767; *SNG Cop* 311; *BMC* 8; *SNG von Aulock* 519.

⁵² The museum collection also contains a bronze Harpocrates figurine, acquired through purchase, dated to the Roman Period, depicted in a seated position, and measuring 5,1 cm in height. Due to its differing iconographic features, this artifact has been excluded from the scope of the present study.

⁵³ Coins minted in Alexandria, Egypt, between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE include iconographic representations of Harpocrates; the deity is generally depicted in child form, with his finger brought to his mouth and sometimes with a *cornucopia* on his left arm. These coins show that Harpocrates was incorporated into official iconography within the context of the Isis cult and that he was recognized in both local and Greco-Roman environments. Moreover, the different representational variations provide important information on how the deity was adapted within cultural and artistic contexts. Alexandrian coins constitute fundamental numismatic sources for evaluating the iconographic and cultural role of Harpocrates. For examples, see *RPC* 4439; 5419; (for detailed information, see Harl & Howgego 2012; Howgego 2023).

majority of Harpocrates representations belong to the Roman Imperial Period. Among these, bronze examples are generally dated to the Ist–IIIrd centuries CE, while terracotta examples are usually assigned to the IInd–IIIrd centuries CE. The uncertainty surrounding these dates often stems from the lack of archaeological contexts and the difficulty of establishing a precise chronology based solely on stylistic criteria⁵⁴. During this period, the cult of Harpocrates functioned within the sphere of individual religious practice, serving purposes related to domestic worship, votive offerings, and apotropaic protection. Pliny reports that men carried small statuettes of Egyptian deities⁵⁵. Archaeological evidence supports this observation, and the numerous figurines of Egyptian deities preserved in museum collections today demonstrate that this practice was indeed a historical reality.

In conclusion, the Hierapolis figurine reflects the combination of the deity's Egyptian identity with the Greco-Roman aesthetic tradition. It may therefore be regarded as one of the complementary elements associated with the cult of Isis, whose presence in the region has been documented. Furthermore, the artifact provides important insight into the iconographic transformation of Harpocrates in the Greco-Roman world. In this respect, it may be considered an indicator of cultural interaction and religious syncretism in Roman Anatolia. Nevertheless, the absence of a known archaeological context limits interpretations concerning the figurine's function and its place within regional cult practices. Future discoveries of Harpocrates in the Lykos Valley and its surrounding region, recovered from secure archaeological contexts, will allow a more reliable assessment of the deity's presence and function in this area.

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⁵⁴ Tran Tam Tinh et al. 1988, 416.

⁵⁵ Plin. *Nat.* 34, 82–83.

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* Abbreviations of epigraphical editions and reference works follow the "Liste des abréviations des éditions et ouvrages de référence pour l'épigraphie grecque alphabétique (GrEpiAbbr – Version 03, Septembre 2024)" developed by the Association Internationale d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine.

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