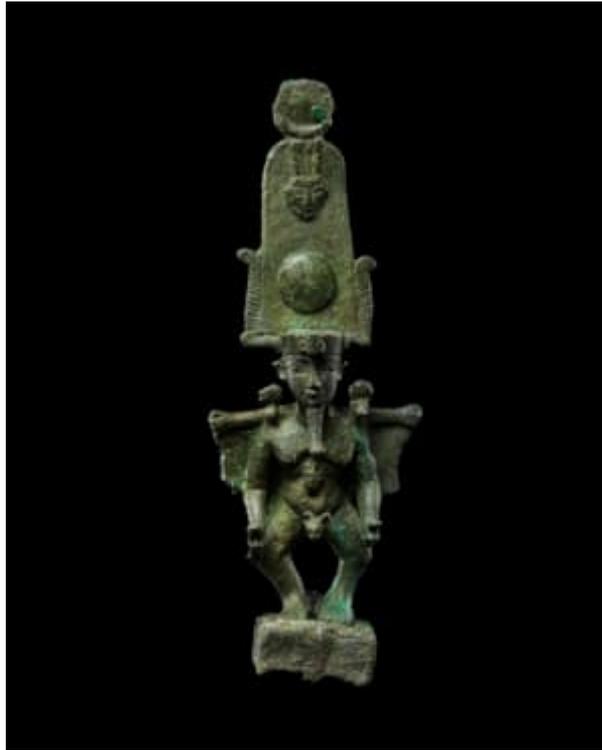


DAVID AARON



Polytheistic Figure

664-343 B.C., 26th-30th Dynasty, Late Period, Egypt

Bronze

H: 22.9 cm

A bronze figure of an ancient Egyptian syncretic deity. The god is largely humanoid in form, standing naked with dramatically bowed legs, and large, bat-like wings held aloft by the arms of Nut on either side of his back. In his right hand he originally held a snake, which is now damaged. The god's body is adorned by a series of animal heads: a hawk wearing the solar disc on the true right shoulder; a lion with solar disc on the left shoulder; a scarab in the centre of the ribs; and a cat head at the end of the erect phallus. He wears a long false beard and a very large headdress, which is roughly as tall as the rest of the figure. The basis of the headdress is the plumed Atef crown, with horizontal ram horns at the base and a central uraeus. The solar disc sits between the long ostrich plumes, and the crown is surmounted by the lunar disc. The crown is incised with the jackal head of Anubis on the front, between the discs. The head of the Apis bull projects from the back of the god's human head. The figure's feet rest on the backs of two crocodiles embedded in the top of the pedestal, while two long serpents coil around them. The head of a jackal is modelled in relief on the rear of the pedestal. The figure appears to have originally been gilded.

This figure fuses the attributes of many different gods into one polytheistic deity. Earlier descriptions have identified the statuette with Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, a powerful triad of Sokar, god of the Mephite necropolis, Ptah, the creator god of Memphis and god of craftsmen, and Osiris, the king of the underworld. Other allusions to the chthonic deities of Anubis and Apis are also incorporated. The figure also features certain elements of the bow-legged dwarf god Bes, and the child-god Horus-Shed ('Horus the Saviour'), who is commonly depicted standing atop two crocodiles and holding serpents by their tails. This fusion of attributes suggests that the figure was meant to hold strong

apotropaic properties, with dominion over both the land of the living and the dead.

Literature:

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