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REGIONE AUTONOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Necropolis of Is Pirixeddus

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ Amulets depicting Egyptian gods

The amulet was found in the Phoenician-Punic necropolis of Sulky, in an unknown grave. According to other comparisons it can be dated between the fourth and third centuries B.C. It is a small glass paste amulet representing Isis nursing her son Horus (figs. 1-2), an iconography which may also be found in bronzes and engraved gems (figs. 3-3b). An amulet of this kind had to address the protection of both deities.



**Fig. 1-2** - The amulet depicting the goddess Isis nursing Horus.  
Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



**Fig. 3** - Bronze figurine from Tharros representing Isis nursing Horus. IV-III century B.C. National Archaeological Museum of Cagliari (from BARRECA 1988, p. 151, fig. 111).



**Fig. 3b** - Scarab from Tharros with iconography of Isis nursing Horus on her lap (from <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/Gems/Scarabs/Images/Images%20Extra%205/11.95m.jpg>)

Amulets are the most common category of objects among grave goods in Sardinia and in other Phoenician-Punic sites in the Mediterranean: among these the record may be claimed by Carthage. Many of them were also found in the tombs of the necropolis and Tophet of ancient Sulky: as scholars say, in most cases, they were actually manufactured in the workshops of Sulky, although we cannot exclude that some of these small objects may have originated from Egypt, as occurred for the scarabs.

Amulets were often mounted in necklaces (as is evidenced by the hole that was made in them such as in the Sulky exemplar), together with glass paste necklace beads and other beads made of precious metal or hard stones.

An object which can be placed in this particular class of materials is the so-called amulet case, a small cylindrical container with the head of an Egyptian god, such as the lioness goddess Sekhmet for example, whose interior contained a rolled and very thin foil, engraved with images relating to the funeral rites: the judgment of the deceased or the journey to the afterlife (fig. 4).





**Fig. 4** - Gold amulet case in the shape of Sekhmet, from the Sulky Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

As occurred for the amulets from Carthage, those from Sardinia also show an inclination towards subjects like Bes, Horus, Ptah-Pateco, the uraeus, other animals, body parts and various apotropaic symbols (figs. 5-7).



**Fig. 5** - Amulet with the figure of Ptah-Pateco. Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).





**Fig. 6** - Amulet with the image of Horus-Harpocrates.  
Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).





**Fig. 7** - Amulets in various shapes. Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by M. Murgia).

What then were amulets representing an Egyptian deity used for? They had a protective role, given by the same deity which was represented and which would cast out the evil forces which the deceased might have met along his journey to his eternal home.

## ■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Cinzia Olianas

## ■ Bibliographic abbreviations

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- BARTOLONI 2007        P. BARTOLONI, *Il museo archeologico comunale "F. Barreca" di Sant'Antioco*, Sassari 2007
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