

## The Eleusinian Mysteries in Egypt

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### Abstract

The Eleusinian mysteries are one of the mysteries appeared in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period and continued in the Roman Era. They were performed in honor of goddesses Demeter and Persephone who were among the most famous prominent, and elegant deities of Greek mystery cults. These mysteries had been celebrated in a specific place, at Eleusis, a significant town in Attica about twenty-one kilometers northwest of Athens. As a result, Eleusis became an important religious center in Greek culture. There are a variety of stories and legends to be found around the theme of these mysteries in Egypt. There is a set of archaeological evidence for the existence of such mysteries inside Egypt. This paper aims to explore the evidence of practicing these mysteries in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period through both literary texts and various artefacts.

**Keywords:** Eleusinian, Demeter, Persephone, Egypt, Mystery cult.

### Introduction

With Alexander's invasion of Egypt and the subsequent foundation of the Ptolemaic dynasty, large-scale migrations of people from all over the Greek world occurred. As a result, Greek culture was spread<sup>1</sup>. into Egyptian civilization following the death of Alexander the Great and under the Ptolemies' subsequent Roman domination of Egypt (323 B.C.–640 A.D.). One of the major changes instituted during this period was in the religion. A group of religious initiatory cults, which scholars have often referred to as mystery cults or mystery religions, emerged as a new sort of religion at this time.<sup>2</sup> The Mystery cults are a type of private religion centered on personal choice that seeks some kind of salvation by establishing a connection with the god. According to scholars, the two main advantages promised by mystery cults were guarantees of eternal happiness and protections against mortality. The mysteries were responsible for introducing ideas like salvation, soul immortality, and soul transmigration to Greek culture<sup>3</sup>. They were referred to as Mysteries ("Mysteria") by the ancient Greeks and offered a unique chance to interact personally with the gods of the polies. As these cults dealt with a person's inner self, secrecy was required and was protected by an initiation process, a private rite that elevated the person to a new spiritual level and increased awareness of their relationship with

<sup>1</sup> There was already a significant racial mix. Greek trade relations with Egypt were established. The Saite dynasty's monarchs, the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, used Greek mercenaries, and at the same time, Greek traders from Ionia constructed Naucratis, a Greek city in the Delta; Dunand, F. & Zivie-Coche, Ch. (2004), Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE, Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Bernes, E. M. (2009), The Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome, Metalibri, Amsterdam, p.166.

<sup>3</sup> Cosmopoulos, M. B. (2003), Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults, Routledge, London, p. XII.

the gods. Once initiated, the person had the right to reveal the eternal reality in Greece and to impart the everlasting knowledge<sup>4</sup>.

They were mysteries, which had no connection to a particular sanctuary but they were instead promoted and disseminated by religious entrepreneurs, such as of the Korybantes, Isis, Mithras and the Orphic-Bacchic mysteries. There were other mysteries connected to a particular location, such as those of Aegina, Eleusis, Lemnos, Samothrace, and the Peloponnesian mysteries<sup>5</sup>.

The Eleusinian mysteries are the oldest in all of Hellas, and they have deep roots in the Neolithic era and the agrarian revolution, sharing rites and beliefs with Egypt, Crete, Anatolia, and Thrace<sup>6</sup>. They appeared in Greece in the seventh century B.C. and continued through the Hellenistic and Roman ages until their demise in the fourth century A.D. Those who were initiated into the mysteries were instructed not to reveal their secrets. They provided their initiates with a vision of the divine and a way to cope with death<sup>7</sup>.

These mysteries were celebrated in honor of Demeter, the goddess of grains, and her daughter Persephone, often referred to as Pherephatta or simply "the Maiden Kore". and Persephone<sup>8</sup> at Eleusis. It was thought that the deities favored humans by providing grain for food since ancient times, and an early agricultural cult at Eleusis marked the yearly sowing of grain around the time of the Greek month Boedromion (September/October)<sup>9</sup>. Eleusis' position as a centre of barley and wheat cultivation undoubtedly inspired this religion, which honors the goddess's gift of food to mortals. Celebrants travelled from all over Greece to Eleusis in order to participate in these mysteries.

### **The Myth of the Eleusinian Mysteries**

As many different mystery-cults in the Ancient World, each of the cults provided initiation ceremonies and was based on its own set of myths. Those mysteries as well, were open to all, young and old, male and female, slave and free as long as could speak Greek.<sup>10</sup> Those rites of ancient Greece, and later under the Romans, a universal worship, of which there is historical evidence dating back to the seventh century B.C., the Homeric Hymn to Demeter<sup>11</sup>. The myth also figures in the Orphic Hymns, and was picked up by Euripides. Then in Alexandrian poetry

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<sup>4</sup> Keller, M. L. (2009). The Ritual Path of Initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries(c). Rosicrucian Digest, no. 2, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Bremmer, J. N. (2014). Initiation into the Mysteries, de Gruyter, p. XII; Burkert, W. (1987), Ancient Mystery Cults, Cambridge, p. 37: 38.

<sup>6</sup> Roy, K. (2019). Education and the ontological question: addressing a missing dimension. Springer, p. 54: 55.

<sup>7</sup> Poulkouras, I., trans. By: Chaitow, S. (2008). The Eleusinian Mysteries. Paper Presented at the 7th Esoteric Quest Conference on The Mysteries and Philosophies of Antiquity, Samothrace, September 2008, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Demeter is Earth-Mother or Corn-Mother, and her daughter Persephone the Corn Maiden the only daughter of Zeus and Demeter. Persephone represents spring, everlasting youth, innocence and pureness. For more; <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Demeter#ref112832> on June 4, 2020; Bernes, E. M., (2009). p. 21; Nilsson, M. P. (1940). Greek Popular Religion: Lectures on The History of Religions, The American Council of Learned Societies, Global Grey Ebooks, p. 21; Bernes, E. M. (2009), The Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome. MetaLibri, Amsterdam. p. 166; Poulkouras, I. (2008). The Eleusinian Mysteries. Paper Presented at the 7th Esoteric Quest Conference on The Mysteries and Philosophies of Antiquity, Samothrace, trans. By: Chaitow, S., p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Meyer, M. W. (1987). The Ancient Mysteries, Harper & Row, San Francisco, p. 4: 17.

<sup>10</sup> Keller, M. L. (2009). The Ritual Path of Initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries(c). Rosicrucian Digest, no. 2, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>The Homeric Hymns are a collection of thirty-three Greek poetry written in the manner of the old Epic. for more: Evelyn-White, H G. (1914). Hesiod, Homeric, vol. 57; Nilsson, M. P. (1940). Greek Religion. p. 37; Richardson. N. J. (1976). The Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Oxford, p. 74: 86; White, V. G. (2017). A Study of Female Agency, p. 50; Keller. M. L. (1988). The Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 27: 54.

as evidenced by the *Hymn to Demeter* by Callimachus<sup>12</sup>. The myth was one way to be expressed and it articulates the mystery's goals and participation<sup>13</sup>.

The rape of Persephone is the central theme of the Eleusinian mysteries myth. While Persephone, Demeter's daughter, was collecting flowers with Aphrodite, Athena, and Artemis, the Oceanids, in the presence of Athena and Artemis. She reached for a lovely narcissus, which Zeus, Persephone's father, had magically grown<sup>14</sup>. As she tried to tickle the blossom, Plouton (the deity of the underworld, Hades) sprang from the ground. Plouton and Persephone went down a cave through a gap<sup>15</sup>. He dragged Persephone away in his chariot, driven by black horses, to the underworld of Hades, where he ruled as master. Persephone cried out for aid, but cries were only heard by Helios, Hekate<sup>16</sup> and her mother, Demeter, who heard her but could not find her<sup>17</sup>. Demeter took her grief out on Zeus and left Olympus, dressed as an elderly woman, and travelled to Eleusis<sup>18</sup>. Depending on the Roman version, an old woman or nurse, called Baubo (*Βαυβώ*, *Βαβώ*) or Iambe<sup>19</sup>, she claimed to be a lame servant of King Celeus of Eleusis, Baubo observed the grieving of Demeter and tried to help her by cheering her up obscene jokes.

Demeter sequestered herself away from gods and mortals once the temple was finished in Eleusis. As, she was the goddess of fertility, and in her grief, she barred the soil from allowing seed to sprout, resulting in infertility and a year-long famine. Finally, Zeus sent Hermes to Hades with the message that unless Persephone is returned to her mother, Demeter will deny mankind food and the gods dignity; So, Plouton yielded. But before Persephone went, she had plucked four pomegranate pips<sup>20</sup> from Pluto's hand, which he provided her as sustenance for her voyage. Persephone was told by Demeter that "*eating the pomegranate meant she would have to spend a third of the year in Hades (for four months each year, one month for each pip consumed) and returning to the upper world of gods and humans in the spring*".

The Hymn concludes with Demeter's presented to the Eleusinians grain farming wisdom. She not only taught them agricultural skills, but she also taught them "orgia", secret ceremonies, and solemn mysteries, about which no one is permitted to inquire or reveal, and about which a solemn warning from the gods shuts their tongues and which promise happiness after death<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Anne- Maria Guimier- Sorbets, André Pelle, Mervat Seif el- Din. (2017). The painted Greco- Roman Tombs of Kom al- Shuqafa: Resurrection in Alexandria. AUC Press, Cairo, New York,

Anne-Marie Guimier-Sorbets, André Pelle, Mervat Seif el-Din. (2017). Resurrection in Alexandria: The Painted Greco-Roman Tombs of Kom al-Shuqafa. Centre d'Études Alexandrines Publication, Cairo, AUC Press, p.116.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, D. (1919). The Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Anne- Maria Guimier- Sorbets, André Pelle, Mervat Seif El- Din. (2017). The painted Greco- Roman Tombs, p.116.

<sup>15</sup> Alderink, L. J. *Numen*, vol. 29, Fasc. 1, p. 1: 16; Wright, D. The Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 11; Robertson, N. (1997). *GRBS*. 37, p. 309: 379.

<sup>16</sup> The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (1: 39).

<sup>17</sup> Alderink, L. J. *Numen*. 29, Fasc. 1, p. 1: 16; Wright, D. The Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> The Homeric Hymn to Demeter 90: 299.

<sup>19</sup> Ibrahim I. (2020). Two Unpublished Figurines of Women Purifying themselves in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria. the 2<sup>nd</sup> Egyptological Conference: The Cosmic Hypostasis and Earthy/ Social Function of Women during Antiquity in Egypt and in the Mediterranean Organized by The Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, the Writing & Scripts Center of the Bibliotheca Alexandria, the University of Lisbon and the Universidade Aberta of Lisbon, under the Auspices of the Association of Greek Women Scientists, p. 645: 664.

<sup>20</sup> According to some legends, it was a persimmon seed: Sailors, C., L. (2007). The function of mythology, p. 46.

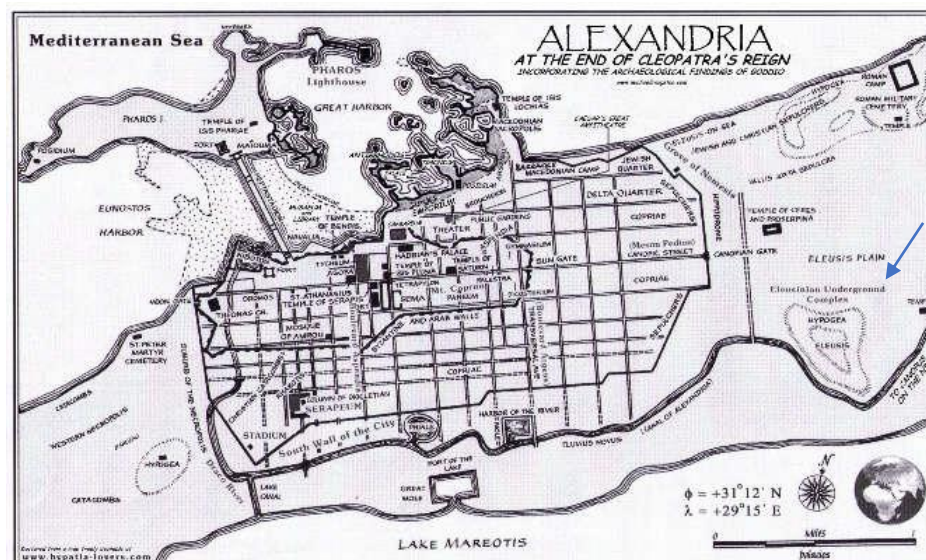
<sup>21</sup> Richardson. N. J. (1976). The Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Oxford, p. 74: 86; White, V. G. (2017). *A Study of Female Agency*, under the advisement of Catherine Gilhuly; Wright, D. *The Eleusinian Mysteries*, p. 20; Foss, M. (2014). *Gods and heroes: the story of Greek mythology*, ch. 6, Michael O'Mara Books. Great Britain. On line on [https://books.google.com eg/books?hl=ar&lr=&id=UB7dAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT4&dq=Unshrouding+the+Eleusinian+Mysteries&ots=-tzZosO3L2&sig=J7Tihf- jZvUKLFqsnjXxD6Wg6VU&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com eg/books?hl=ar&lr=&id=UB7dAgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT4&dq=Unshrouding+the+Eleusinian+Mysteries&ots=-tzZosO3L2&sig=J7Tihf- jZvUKLFqsnjXxD6Wg6VU&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false); Bernes, E. M. (2009). *The Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome*, MetaLibri, Amsterdam. p. 166.

## Evidence of The Eleusinian Mysteries in Egypt

There are many of evidence from Ptolemaic Egypt that the Eleusinian mysteries were celebrated in Egypt by the Greeks in some form or another and continued during late Roman period<sup>22</sup>.

### Textual Evidence<sup>23</sup>.

Strabo



**Fig.1.** plan of Ancient Alexandria, representing Eleusis in the east of the ancient city. After; Abdel-Aleem, *A. Traditions of Children's Portrait in the Art of Alexandrian Sculpture. A Comparative Study between the Egyptian Direction, the Greek Direction and the Mixed Direction*, Studies in the Antiquities of the Arab World 18, p. 18.

### Description

Strabo<sup>24</sup>, the geographer who visited Alexandria in the first century A.D. and gave the vivid description of the town in this era<sup>25</sup>. He mentioned that there was a suburb with the name of Eleusis; as a place for the cult of Demeter and Persephone, based on the name Eleusis in Attica<sup>26</sup>, a place where the goddess Demeter had spent time and bestowed two magnificent gifts on humanity; knowledge of the cultivation of crops, as well as knowledge of a happy afterlife, where the people came from all over the Classical world to be initiated in Eleusis in Attica<sup>27</sup>.

Strabo made a brief mention to Alexandrian Eleusis, focusing mostly on its physical position, he mentioned that "*Eleusis is a village near Alexandria and Necropolis, located on the Canopic canal, in the city's south-eastern outskirts, with housing and impressive views for those who seek to engage in celebration, both men and women, and serves as a sort of Canopic beginning*". Because one of Alexandria's areas was named Eleusis; It was speculated that the Eleusinian mysteries was most probably celebrated at Alexandria<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Otto rejects it, but his explanations fall short of being convincing. For more: Otto W., *Priester und Tempel II. W. Chr. 111*, p. 265.

<sup>23</sup> The researcher divided the evidences according to their places where they were found. Starting with the north of Egypt.

<sup>24</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, vol. VIII (Book XVII), p. 61.

<sup>25</sup> Delia, D. *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt*, p. 41: 55.

<sup>26</sup> Dunand, F. & Zivie-Coche, Ch. (2004), *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, p. 244; Abd El- Hefnawy, F. E. *Religious Festivals*, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Duff, P. *Eleusis*, p.38: 44.

<sup>28</sup> Nilsson, M. N., (1940). *Greek Popular Religion*, p. 22.



The Suda lists the 'village of Eleusis' as the location where Callimachus taught as a schoolmaster when he first arrived in Egypt, whereas Livy recalls a river at Eleusis and the distance between Alexandria and Eleusis approximately four miles<sup>29</sup>.

Papyri contain certain instances of the demotic 'Ἐλευσίνιος', which most likely correspond to the appropriate Alexandrian suburb. Overall, the aforementioned sources<sup>30</sup> indicate to the presence of a location called Eleusis in Alexandria, but they offer no evidence of Demeter worship<sup>31</sup>. As a result, the scholarly debate over the Alexandrian Eleusis celebrations and their likely connection to Attic Eleusis has centered on three different witnesses.

The first evidence is Callimachus' Poem to Demeter, in which claims that the procession of Demeter was founded in Alexandria in imitation of Athenian customs, likely the Eleusinian mysteries, in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus hinting that this was the ceremony depicted in the hymn<sup>32</sup>.

### **P.Oxy. XXVII**

**Date:** second century A.D.

**Material:** papyrus

**Provenance** Egypt, Middle Egypt, Oxyrhynchus<sup>33</sup>.

**Place of Preservation** London, British Library.

**Inv. No.** 3048

**Description**<sup>34</sup>.



**Fig.2.** Satyrus, P.Oxy. XXVII, [London, British Library Pap 3048](#). After; Digital Corpus of Literary Papyri. On [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](#).

Fragmentary columns preserving portions of Satyrus' treatise 'On the demes of Alexandria'. Explanations of the names of tribes and demes are given and directions for a procession in honour of Arsinoe Philadelphus are provided, with instructions about the route and the dignitaries involved and about places where personal sacrifices may be offered.

According to this papyrus, Satyrus is the only author who mentions celebrations in Alexandrian Eleusis. Reporting that near the holy place, it was named after Eleusis in Athens where a *panegyris πανήγυρις* (Gathering) once a year, which included a musical and potentially theatrical contest. This papyrus supports that there was a place in Alexandria called Eleusis where the Eleusinian mysteries were performed.

### **P.Oxy. XXXVI. 2782**

**Date** Roman era. 217 A.D.

**Provenance** Egypt, from the Oxyrhynchite nome, Bahnasa.

<sup>29</sup> Constantinou, M. (2014). *Demeter in Hellenistic Poetry: Religion and Poetics*. A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to Classics Department, School of History, Classics and Archaeology, The University of Edinburgh, p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Fraser, P. M. (1972). *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, Oxford, vol. I, p. 200: 201, vol. II, p. 338: 339, vol. III, n. 80: 88.

<sup>31</sup> Constantinou, M. (2014). *Demeter in Hellenistic Poetry*, p. 16; Skowronek, S., & Tkaczow, B. (1981). *Le culte de la déesse Déméter à Alexandrie*. Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, p. 134.

<sup>32</sup> Fraser, P. M. (1972). *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, vol. II, p. 339, n. 87.

<sup>33</sup> Egypt, 19th Upper Egyptian nome, Oxyrynchites (El-Bahnasa). <https://www.trismegistos.org/place/1524>

<sup>34</sup> *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Vol. XXVII, (1962), London, Egypt Exploration Society, p. 118: 133, no. 2465; West, S. (1974). Peripatetic or Alexandrian? *GRBS* 15, p. 279: 287.

**Place of preservation** Oxford, Sackler Library,  
Papyrology Rooms.

**Material** papyrus

**Inv. No.** P. Oxy. 2782

**Description**<sup>35</sup>

[Μ]άρκος Αὐρήλιος Ἀπολλώνιος [ἱ]εροφάντης καλατηφόρῳ(\*) [Νε]σμείμεως  
χαίρειν.

[κ]αλῶς ποιήσεις ἀπελθοῦσα 5[ε]ῖς Σινκέφα εἰς τὸ τῆς Δή- [μ]ητρος ἱ(\*)ερὸν καὶ  
ἐπιτε- [λο]υμέν[η] τὰς συνή[θε]ις [θ]υσίας ὑ(\*)π[έ]ρ τῶν [κυρί]ων [ή]μῶν  
αὐτοκρατόρ[ω]ν καὶ

10[ν]ίκης αὐτῶν καὶ Νείλου ἀ[ν]αβ[ά]σεως καὶ καρπῶν αὐ- ξήσεως καὶ ἀέρων  
εὐκρασίας.

ἐ[ρ]ρωσ<sup>θ</sup>(αι) εὐχο<sup>μ</sup>(αι)

This papyrus is a letter from a priest to a priestess. It was mentioned the name of the *hierophant*, named Marcus Aurelius Apollonius, addresses the priestess-kalathephoros of the Oxyrhynchite nome, asking her to go to the temple of Demeter in Sinkepha, a village in Upper Egypt<sup>36</sup>, to perform sacrifices on behalf of the emperors and their victory, as well as for the rise of the Nile, the growth of the crops, and a good climate.

In an Egyptian village Demeter might be expected to stand for the Egyptian Isis, but the title *εροφάντης*, *hierophantes* is that of the main priest of the mystery cult of Demeter at Eleusis near Athens, and the title *kanephoros* *κανηφόρος*, bearer of the basket, kalathos, the priestess' title which was used in the cult of Demeter. Suggesting that this cult was modelled on that of Eleusis in mainland Greece. Earlier references to priestesses of Demeter in Demotic texts (e.g. *P.Oxf.* Griffith 16, of 132 B.C.) also strongly suggest that the Greek

cult of this goddess was adopted in the chora of Egypt.

### Archaeological Evidence

**Tomb 1 and 2, Hall of Caracalla, cata- comb- Kom El Shuqafa, Alexandria**

**Provenance** Egypt,  
Alexandria, Catacombs  
of Kom el-Shuqafa.

**Date** The Roman  
period, may be the end  
of the first to the middle  
of the second century  
A.D.



<sup>35</sup> Lewis, N. (1983). *Life in Egypt under Roman rule*. Oxford University Press, USA; Rowlandson, J. (1998). *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*. *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, 20(2), p. 163: 165; Bowman, A. K., & Clarysse, W. (1998). *Women and society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A sourcebook*. Cambridge University Press, p. 62, no. 36; Constantinou, M. (2014). *Demeter in Hellenistic Poetry*, p. 28; Fraser, P. M. (1972). *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, vol. I, p. 221: 244; vol. II, p. 279, n. 436; <https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.oxy;36;2782>

<sup>36</sup> A village of the Oxyrhynchite nome: Thompson, D. J. (1988). *Demeter in Graeco Roman Egypt*. *Egyptian Religion. The Last Thousand Years Part I. Oriental Lovaniesia Analecta*, 84.

**State of the Scene** The tomb is in good condition, but their painted ornamentation, which has been mostly obscured by time, has only lately been revealed by using the ultraviolet light.



**Fig. 3.** The Rape of Persephone by the god Hades, watching by goddesses Artimes and Aphrodite. After; Shipley, R. (2018). *A Phenomenological Approach to The Kom El-Shuqafa*. Master of Arts in Archaeology, Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University, p. iii.

### Dimension

**Tomb 1.** *central wall:* upper register: 21 5 χ 72 cm. lower register: 215 χ 54 cm. *left & right-side wall:* upper register: 122 χ 71/72 cm. lower register: 122 χ 48 cm.

**Tomb 2.** *central wall:* upper register: 213 χ 66-62 cm. lower register: 213 x 57 cm. *left side wall:* upper register: 95 χ 61.5 cm. lower register: 95 χ 50/51 cm. *right side wall:* upper register: 105.5 χ 61.5 cm lower register: 105.5 χ 51 cm

Because the graves are dug, there are variations in the measurements

### Description<sup>37</sup>.

The Necropolis is made up of two huge hypogea<sup>38</sup> layout The first, known as the major tomb or Hypogaeum I, is remarkable for its architecture and sculpted adornment. It is

<sup>37</sup> Strabo, 17.8-10; Shipley, R. (2018). *A Phenomenological Approach to The Kom El-Shuqafa*. Master of Arts in Archaeology, Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University, p. iii; Bianchi, R. S. (2003). *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria. The Theater of the Dead.*; Guimier- Sorbets, A., André P., Seif El- Din, M. (2017). *The painted Greco- Roman Tombs*, p. 95: 96, pl. 138: 139; Venit, M. S., (2016). *Visualizing the Afterlife in the Tombs of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 63: 65.

<sup>38</sup> Hypogea are chamber areas underground. They are often associated with ancient burials: Shipley, R. (2018). *Kom El-Shuqafa Catacombs*, endnote p. 1.

well renowned for its decorative motifs that combine Egyptian, Greek, and Roman influences. The second, a little to the east, was named the Hall of Caracalla by Giuseppe Botti<sup>39</sup>, but it was also known as "Nebengrab" in early publications.

These two hypogea were once independent, with different entrances, although presently, one enters the Hall of Caracalla from the Principal tomb through an entry that is actually an expanded hole dug by a tomb robber. There are four tombs in Caracalla's Hall: "tomb 1, 2, tomb h, and tomb i. The Painting of Persephone Kidnapped represented on the walls of tombs 1 and 2.

The two graves, like others in the necropolis, are carved out of the rock and belong to the "sarcophagus niche" style. The lower section is a sarcophagus with an attached lid consisting of many stone slabs plastered and painted in a bold red color.

The same scenes can be found on tomb 2's left wall, and very definitely on tomb 1's right wall as the lower half was destroyed by the robbers' cut. The painted décor of the same type is distributed across the three walls above the sarcophagi of both tombs, which are themselves divided horizontally into two registers, resulting in an ensemble of six panels per niche. The top register's paintings depicted scenes in Egyptian style, while the lower register's paintings depicted scenes in Greek style. The upper register is dedicated to the myth of Osiris, while the bottom register is dedicated to the myth of Persephone.

#### **The Eleusinian mysteries in the tomb**

The myth is split into three sections in both tombs and should be read as a continuous sequence from left to right. Because the panels of the tomb 2 are in a better state of preservation, the researcher will explain them.

**Tomb 2's left-hand wall Decorations** are mostly destroyed. Represented Hades snatching an unwilling Persephone and taking her away in his chariot with her arms flailing. This is considered a late addition to the visual description of the abduction. Early fifth-century Attic vases frequently depict a god-pursuing-women theme on foot, and later fourth-century Italic vases sometimes depict Persephone as a willing accomplice in her kidnapping.

Looking to the right Persephone plucking flowers, a clump of plants over which a kneeling female figure is leaning may be seen. A long, sleeveless tunic with a rounded collar is worn by the Woman. The right arm is placed against the body, the hand holding a long vertical scepter that can terminate in a lily, while the left arm is placed against the body as if grasping a stem. Her hair is covered with a kalathos<sup>40</sup>.

Persephone is separated from a standing female character by a tussock of greenery. She's dressed in a long tunic with a cloak that wraps over her hips and falls the length of her body. She raises the thin veil that covers the upper half of the round-necked tunic with her right hand. Above the woman's left shoulder, the upper part of a small naked *Eros* with barely visible wings may be observed. His two arms are stretched out in front of him, as if drawing a bow and arrow that points to the right of the panel. The woman and the nude one are *Aphrodite* and his son *Eros*, who looks at her closely as he prepares to carry out his mother's command.

To the goddess's right, a tuft of greenery sprouts, and a kneeling female figure picks from it. This woman is *Athena*. She is dressed in a long, sleeveless tunic and an aegis with distinguishable fringes. A crested helmet with a plume trailing behind her is worn

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<sup>39</sup> Botti, G. (1901). *Catalogue des monuments exposés au Musée gréco-romain d'Alexandrie*. Imprimerie générale A. Mourès & cie.; Empereur, J. Y. (1997). La nécropolis d'Alexandrie. *Archéologia*, p-4.; Venit, M. S. (2016). *Visualizing the Afterlife*, p. 63.

<sup>40</sup> Malaise, M. (2014). Le Calathos Sur La Tête d'Isis: Une Enquête. *Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 43. p. 223: 265. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44160277>.



on her head. Her right hand grasps the plant stalks, and her left arm, albeit the hand is no longer visible, is directed forward. The rounded outline of a shield may be seen behind her left shoulder.

A woman stands among the reeds on the far-right side of the panel, represented *Artemis*. She's dressed in a short, belted, fold-over tunic that exposes her legs all the way to her boots. The edges of the veil may be seen behind the woman, above to the left and below to the right. A quiver is fastened to a strap that passes over her chest. The curve of the composite bow may be seen in her lowered left hand, which holds a bow on the horizontal. She pulls an arrow from her quiver with her uplifted right hand.

### **The central wall, tomb 2**

The Scenes on this wall representing the abduction of Persephone on Hades' chariot in the presence of Artemis, Athena, and Aphrodite, as well as Eros. A tree with rather heavy foliage leans to the right on the far left of the panel.

Artemis stands with her back to the viewer, her head turned to the right, and her hair knotted in two bunches on the top of her head. She is dressed in a sleeveless, pleated, fold-over tunic with a V-shaped neckline and a high belt. Her legs are naked all the way down to her mid-calf boots. The deity also wears a veil with the ends dangling down on both sides. Her right arm is bent up, plucking an arrow from the quiver, while her left arm is extended forward, holding her bow.

Athena is standing upright in a three-quarters profile, bending forward as if about to attack the scene's right-hand side. She is dressed in a long, sleeveless, belted dress with a fringed aegis and gorgoneion, as well as a raised helmet with the crest's plume hanging down the back of her neck. She has a spear in her right hand, which she has lowered, and a circular shield in her left. The shield's outside surface is visible. In front of the shield, the spear slants upward.

Aphrodite stands face on, weight on her right leg in a contrapposto position, separated from Athena by a tussock. She wears a necklace and a bracelet. She is dressed in a sleeveless, round-necked tunic with a transparent veil that she holds up with her right hand. Her left shoulder is covered by a cloak that wraps around her waist and drapes down on both sides. In her left hand, she wields a slim rod (scepter?) that spans from the ground to Eros' level. Her brows are slanted to the right. Her hair is parted in the front, and she wears a crown of greenery on her head. A tiny Eros hovers above her left shoulder, partially hidden. His bare torso is three-quarters twisted to the right, with wings spread to either side. Though his arms stretch to the right to draw his bow, he turns his head to Aphrodite. Although the arrow is scarcely visible, it points to Hades. The right-hand third of the panel is occupied by Hades on his chariot. Hades is bare-chested and staring directly ahead, with just a cloak fold over his left shoulder. He stands tall in his chariot, which is drawn by four galloping horses who are heading to the panel's right-hand edge. His eyes are visible through his face turned three-quarters to the left, and he has a short beard and wavy hair. Persephone and Eros are the subjects of his gaze. In his left hand, the god controls the quadriga's reins and a rod or scepter, while his right arm encircles Persephone and drags her away.

Persephone, nearly three-quarters turned, leans backward and throws her arms wide as if pleading for assistance. Her tunic has a V-shaped neckline and is sleeveless. She casts a glance to the left, toward the flowers she's selecting and the agitated basket she's carrying. Her dishevelled hair is set upon by a tall, thin Kalathos. A large band marks the ground; however, any detailing is now obscure.

### **Right hand wall of tomb 2**

The Greek scene on this wall is only preserved. Hermes stands frontally to the left of the panel, his weight on his right leg. Except for a dark chlamys that descends down

his back and covers his shoulder and left arm, he is completely naked. His head is angled three-quarters to the right, and his frizzy hair is adorned with an erect pointed leaf. He wields a short-stemmed caduceus with two interwoven serpents in his right arm, which is bent at his side. A dark arching scene stands out against the bright background of the panel, refers to the entrance of the afterworld. Out from the black background stands a seated four-legged beast. This beast, Cerberus, the three-headed dog who guards the entrance to the underworld, has three heads, two of which are turned to the right and one to the left. To the right of the entrance of the afterworld sit on a dark high-backed throne with no armrests a couple. On the left side of the throne, a bare-chested man sits. His cloak hangs over the lower half of his torso and covers his left shoulder. This bearded man figure, with his curly hair plainly visible. He looks to the left, in the direction of the libation, His right arm is extended to the side, and he is holding a phial at an angle. A line of liquid streaming downward represents the libation. His left hand, which is resting on his thigh, is holding a long scepter. A woman in a long, sleeveless, round-necked tunic sits to his left. She appears to be wearing a cloak wrapped over the bottom half of her body, despite the poor preservation of the photograph. A kalathos, or tall vegetable crown, is worn. Her left arm is folded, and she is holding a torch that is angled toward the panel's top right corner. Her right arm is resting on her knee, and it is impossible to tell what she is holding (a phial? Identified as Hades and Persephone, the rulers of the underworld. This divine greeting denotes that he will pay as much attention to all the dead as he does to Persephone. The once-terrifying underworld will no longer be so frightening to the initiated, who will be gathered around Persephone in close proximity.

Persephone is shown emerging from the underworld in the cave of Eleusis on the right wall, aided by her mother Demeter (left), Hermes (middle), and Hecate (right). Only the decoration of tomb 2 is still visible (right).

#### **Eleusinian cult vase from Alexandria.**

**Provenance** Egypt, Alexandria.

**Material** Clay.

**Date of Discovery** 1912 and 1913.

**Place of Discovery** Egypt, Alexandria, Chatby cemetery<sup>41</sup> in 1912. Evaristo Breccia published it as a thurible with lid.

**Place of Preservation** Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria.

**Inv. No.** 155580.

**Date of the vase** Ptolemaic period. The third quarter of the fourth century B.C.

**State of the vases** The vase is nearly intact, with only a handle missing.

**Dimensions** Preserved height: ca.11.60 cm.



<sup>41</sup> Chatby is still regarded Alexandria's earliest known cemetery, having been occupied by the city's first generation of Greek residents after its founding in 331.

**Description**<sup>42</sup> The base is large, stepped, sculpted, and open in appearance. The lid is plainly made of dark brown clay, and it has a thick coat of white wash over it, with vestiges of other painted banded artwork that are now hardly visible. It has a high, bell-shaped appearance and is topped by a flat knob. There are triangular incisions on the upper half; the rim is not modelled, and the wall is straight.



**Fig.4.** Eleusinian vase, Chatby, Graeco-Roman Museum, no. 15580. After; Mitsopoulou, Chr. (2016). *Two Eleusinian Vases from Alexandria*, p. 161, pls. 1, 2a-b, fig. 1.

### Eleusinian mysteries in this vase

During the Classical and early Hellenistic periods, a unique vase shape was devised and manufactured in Attica specifically for the Eleusinian mysteries' ritual needs. This cult vase termed Plemochoai that was used at the Eleusinian mysteries' closing ceremony on the ninth (and final) day (22<sup>nd</sup> of Boedromion). On the sixth day of the Massive mysteries, it was most likely used for the great procession of initiates towards Eleusis (19<sup>th</sup> of Boedromion). It is considered to have been attached to the pilgrims' heads, at least during their entrance at the sanctuary, for the transportation and drinking of the kykeon, the ritual potion ingested by the initiates upon arrival. So; these two Eleusinian vases, (figs. 4, 5) were known as plemochoai or kernoi. Eleusinian ritual vases were largely made in Athens, including some production in other areas of Attica. Such vases have rarely been discovered and reported in Greece outside of Attica. They can be found in large numbers at Eleusis, almost primarily in deposits close to the Telesterion area. According to Mitsopoulou “*Beyond Athens and Attica, Alexandria in Egypt was the only place where similar vases were discovered*”<sup>43</sup>

### Eleusinian Cult Vase from Alexandria.

**Place of Discovery** Egypt, Alexandria.

**Material** Dark gray to brownish-yellow clay.

**Date of Discovery** in 1912 and 1913.

**Provenance** Egypt, Unknown exactly. However, it is said to have been discovered in Alexandria.



<sup>42</sup> Mitsopoulou Chr. (2016). Two Eleusinian Vases from Alexandria, Egypt. 9th Scientific Meeting on Hellenistic Pottery. Thessaloniki, 2012, 5-9 December 2012, p. 154: 194; Breccia, E. (1912) Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes (Musée d'Alexandrie). *La necropolis di Sciathi*, vols I: II. Cairo, p. 84, no. 248, pl. 58, no. 131; Pagaenstecher, R. (1913). *Die griechisch- ägyptische Sammlung Ernst von Sieglin* herausgegeben von Ernst von Sieglin. 3. Teil: Die Gefässe in stein und Ton, Leipzig, p. 12, fig. 17.

<sup>43</sup> The shape is found in other Agora deposits, but mostly fragmentarily, *Agora XXXI* (*supra*, n. 5), p. 98 and note 14, p. 105: 185; Clinton, K. (2002). The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis. *In Greek Sanctuaries*, p. 101: 111, Routledge.

Since it was discovered in 1913, it was appropriately identified as an Eleusinian vase. It's also considered to have come from a burial site.

**Place of Preservation**

Albertinum, Dresden, Germany.

**Inv. No.** ZV 2600 G 249.

**Date** Ptolemaic period. The third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C



**Fig.5.** Eleusinian vase, Chatby, in the Graeco-Roman Museum, no. 15580. after; Mitsopoulou Chr. Two Eleusinian Vases from Alexandria, p. 161, fig.2.

**State of the vases** nearly intact. While the foot is modern.

**Dimensions** 11.7-10.2 cm.

**Description**<sup>44</sup>

There is no intact decoration; however, because the vase was covered in white slip, it could have had coloured painted embellishment, as shown on the Attic parallels and the vase from Chatby (**fig.4**). The rim is narrow, with the flat shoulder and broad antyx dominating the upper perspective. The lip is tiny and turned slightly up and outward, while the upper half of the body is shallow. The shoulder is low, with an gentle transition to the antyx, which is particularly wide (2 cm). The lower half of the body narrows as it approaches the now disappearing base. On either side of the antyx, the vase has two small, slightly upturned petal-shaped handles with S-shaped spurred projections. A big hole is located in the centre of each of these projections (0.6 cm dm). One of the handles is broken. This cult vase termed Plemochoai that was used at the Eleusinian mysteries' closing ceremony on the ninth (and final) day (22<sup>nd</sup> of Boedromion).

<sup>44</sup> Mitsopoulou Chr. (2016). Two Eleusinian Vases, p. 154: 194; Breccia, E. (1912). *Catalogue general*, p. 84, no. 248, pl. 58, no. 131; Pagaensteher, R. (1913). *Die griechisch- ägyptische*, p. 12, fig. 17.



### Stela of Kom Abou Billou.

**Provenance** Egypt, Menufiya, Kom Apollo, at the Roman necropolis of Kom Abou Billou<sup>45</sup>.

**Date of the scene:** From the end of the second to third century A.D.

**Date of Discovery** 1930.

**Place of Preservation** The Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

**Inv. No.** J.E. 87533.



**Fig.6.** Kom Apollo Stela represented the Rape of kore. After; Ali, Z. (1953). More Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Billou. *Bulletin de la Société royale d'archéologie d'Alexandrie* 40, p. 101: 150.

### Description<sup>46</sup>

The stela represents the Rape of Persephone by the god Hades. In the Left corner from the stela, at the bottom, there are two baskets referred to the baskets used by Persephone in collecting the Narcissus. One of these baskets is upturned, as if to indicate that it was thrown out of the hand of the goddess when Hades came out of the earth and raped her.

In the center of the scene, there is the quadriga of Hades, forelegs lifted and hind legs pushing off the ground. Hades, wrapped with himation that falls off his right shoulder to reveal his breast, serves as charioteer, holding the reins casually in his hand. while his other hand around the waist of Persephone who is dressed in a chiton, her arms upraised and her hair spilling out behind her.

In the right corner of the stela, Anubis, replacing god Hermes who was seen in the rape of Persephone while opening the gate of the underworld, The emergence of Anubis playing the role of Hermes occurred at the end of the second century A.D. as a result of the increasing influence of Egyptian thought on Greek art and thought. Anubis is holding something may be a kerykeion? in his right hand, naked except for a *Shindyt*, Egyptian Skirt, in the lower part of his body, stands in front the entrance of the underworld.

### A terracotta statue of goddess Baubo<sup>47</sup>.

**Provenance** Egypt, Delta, Naukratis.

**Material.** Terracotta.

**Place of Preservation.** The British museum.

**Inv. No.** 1886,0401.1452

<sup>45</sup> Terenouthis (Pharaonic Mefkat, modern Kom Abou Billou). It is two kilometres from the western boundary of the Nile Delta (fig.12). There are archaeological relics dating back to the Old Testament. Kingdom, and even into the Fatimid era. For more: Le Roy, M., Picavet, P. & Dhennin, S. (2019). La dernière phase d'occupation de la Nécropole de Kôm Abou Billou. *BIFAO* 118, p. 269: 282; Wagdy Abd el-Ghafar m. & El-Ebiary Hassan A. (2011). New Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Bellou. *BIFAO* 111, p. 371: 384; Al-Sawy, A. (no date). New Lights on Abu Bello Al-Athari. *The Scientific Journal of the Arab Archaeologists Association* 1, p. 7: 32.

<sup>46</sup> Ali, Z. (1949). Some Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Billou. *S.A.A.* 38, p. 55: 88; Ali, Z. (1953). More Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Billou. *Bulletin de la Société royale d'archéologie d'Alexandrie* 40, p. 101: 150; Hooper, F. (1961). *Funerary Stelae from Kom Abou Billou*, no. 1, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology.

<sup>47</sup> Villing, A., et al. (2013). *Naukratis Greeks in Egypt*. British Museum Online Research Catalogue. <http://www.britishmuseum.org/naukratis>; Walters, H. B. (1903). *Catalogue of the Terracottas in the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities: British Museum*. order of the Trustees. Online on google books; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G\\_1886-0401-1452](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1886-0401-1452) accessed on 30/11/2022

**Date** Ptolemaic period. 3<sup>rd</sup> B.C.: 2<sup>nd</sup> B.C.

**Dimensions** 11.20 c.m. w., 2 c.m h.

**Description**



**Fig.7.** A terracotta statue of goddess Baubo, British Museum, 1. 886,0401.1452. After; <http://www.britishmuseum.org/naukratis> 30/11/2022.

A woman in a crouching position. Sitting with her legs spread wide. She is covered only by a sleeveless dress with tightly fitting cuffs that, presumably, crossed her shoulders. Both hands are lifted just over her shoulders, the arms are bowed at the elbows, and the left hand is holding a little pot while the right hand is palm outward. It has been suggested that this and similar types have been connection with the Eleusinian mysteries and the story of the goddess Baubo and Demeter. According to the legend of Demeter, Baubo claimed to be a lame servant of King Celeus of Eleusis, observed the grieving goddess and tried to help her with cheering the goddess with raising her skirt, and exposed her body to the goddess Demeter. According to the *Iambe* story, *Iambe* was the first Demeter's priestess.

There are many examples were discovered in Egypt, for example Faience Amulet of goddess Baubo now in St James's Ancient Art, London. Another example is kept among the Graeco-Roman Fertility Figurines from Gayer-Anderson Museum, Cairo. GA 829. Glass pendant with a loop for hanging at the top; deep dark blue; cast, having mould seams along each side; depicts a fully clothed woman named Baubo in a crouching masturbating position; finished. The acquisition of Baubo pendants in all colours from various museums and collections is typically attributed to Egypt.<sup>48</sup>

### **Figurine of a woman purifying herself or may be represent Baubo**

**Provenance** Egypt, Fayoum.

**Material** Terracotta.

**Place of Discovery** Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, Egypt.

**Inv. No.** 10019

**Date** Roman Period around the first century AD.

**State of Preservation** Good, However, the head and neck have been broken.

**Dimensions** 10 cm.

**Description**<sup>49</sup>.



**Fig.8.** Figurine of a Woman Purifying herself, may be represented Baubo. After; Ibrahim, N., (2020). Two unpublished figurines, p. 645: 664, Fig.1.

<sup>48</sup> for more see: Beer, C. (2015). Baubo amulets around the Mediterranean. Some remarks. *Cahiers du Centre d'Études Chypriotes*, 45(1), p. 339: 349; Shalaby, N. (2019). Graeco-Roman Fertility Figurines from Gayer-Anderson Museum, Cairo. *International Academic Journal Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management*, 5(1), p. 52: 75, pl. 1 figs. d,e; [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G\\_1868-0501-6](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1868-0501-6) accessed on 30/11/20

<sup>49</sup> Ibrahim, N. (2020). Two Unpublished Figurines of Women Purifying themselves in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria. *2<sup>nd</sup> Egyptological Conference*, Athena, p. 645: 664.

A woman is entirely naked. She is depicted in a sitting position with both legs spread wide apart to purposefully expose her vulva. She has chubby thighs and rests her left hand on the upper thigh while holding a tiny pot in her right hand. It has a straight handle and a conical body. The ends of the ribbons descending on each shoulder may be seen. Armlets decorate both arms, and a bracelet adorns her left wrist. She is dressed in short boots. A little vase with a large mouth and a circular body sits in the middle of the table underneath her. A base is used to support the figure.

#### **Eleusinian mysteries in the figure**

According to Fischer<sup>50</sup> regards this naked figure as nothing more than a portrayal of *Baubo*, associated with the cult of Demeter. While Nagoua considered these figures were offered as votives or displayed at a local festival in Fayyum in honour of the goddess Demeter. There are many similarities figures from different places in Egypt, date back to Ptolemaic Roman Period<sup>51</sup>. There is another representation for Baubo said it derived from Egypt.

#### **A woman purifying herself may be represent Baubo**

**Provenance** Egypt, Fayoum.

**Material** Terracotta.

**Place of Discovery** Graeco-Roman  
Museum of Alexandria, Egypt.

**Inv. No.** 31161

**Date** Roman Period around the first  
century AD.

**State of Preservation** The head and  
feet, as well as a large portion of the  
back side of the vase, are missing.

**Dimensions** 12 cm.



**Fig.9.** A woman Figurine Purifying herself, may be represented Baubo. After; Ibrahim, N. (2020). Two Unpublished Figurines, p. 645: 664, Fig. 2.

#### **Description<sup>52</sup>.**

In a frontal position, a completely naked woman sits on a spherical vase. Her legs are spread wide apart to show her vulva, and she leans slightly to the left. In her right hand, she holds a tiny pot with a conical body, round base, and straight handle. Her left-hand rests on her thigh.

#### **Eleusinian mysteries in these figures**

Fischer<sup>53</sup> regards this naked figure as nothing more than a portrayal of *Baubo*, associated with the cult of Demeter.

<sup>50</sup> Fischer, J. (1994). *Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten Aus Ägypten. Die Sammlungen Sieglin und Schreiber Dresden*. Leipzig, Stuttgart, Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, taf. 87, nr. 832: 834.

<sup>51</sup> for more Bailey, D. (2008). *Catalogue of the Terracottas in the British Museum, IV, Ptolemaic and Roman Terracottas from Egypt*. England, BMP; Thomas, R. (2018). *Ptolemaic and Roman figures, models and coffin-fittings in terracotta*. in *Naukratis Greeks in Egypt*, edited by Villing A, *et al*, London, BMP.

<sup>52</sup> Ibrahim, N. (2020). Two Unpublished Figurines of Women Purifying themselves in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria. *2<sup>nd</sup> Egyptological Conference*, Athena, p. 645: 664.

<sup>53</sup> Fischer, J. (1994). *Griechisch-Römische*, taf. 87, nr. 832: 834.

### House-tomb 3, Tuna El Gebel (The House of the abduction of Persephone)

**Place of Discovery** Egypt, Upper Egypt, Tuna El- Gebel, Hermopolis Magna<sup>54</sup>.

**Date of The Tomb** before the second century A.D.

**State of the Scene** Much of the image had broken and collapsed almost shortly after its discovery, but Youssef Khafaga had photographed it and recreated it in watercolour.<sup>55</sup>

#### Description<sup>56</sup>



**Fig.10.** Second room of the house tomb M3, Tuna El-Gebel. The back wall depicts the rape of Persephone. After: Lembke, K. (2014). *City of the Dead: The Necropolis of Tuna el-Gebel during the Roman Period. Egypt in the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from New Fieldwork.*, British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 2, p. 83, pl. 7.

The funerary house no. M3<sup>57</sup> consists of two chambers. The second chamber in this House tomb dominates a funeral niche. This niche houses a brick-built klinè with a different conception from the one in the House of the Dionysiac Krater. Simple legs are engraved on a structure that is otherwise painted to appear as if it were made of bricks, with dark lines defining the mortar, elaborating on itself and other brick-built banquettes at Tuna el-Gebel in a postmodern manner. Two columns flank the klinè niche, each painted to seem like green, variegated grass. A vaulted roof is supported by marble columns.

On the back wall of the niche, about a half-meter above the funerary bed is shown the abduction of Persephone by Hades. The Tuna el-Gebel Abduction of Persephone is both a canonical and unique representation of the scene. The quadriga of Hades, led by Hermes and accompanied by Eros, is centered within the painting and dominates the

<sup>54</sup> Tuna El- Gebel was the necropolis of Hermopolis which was established during the Old Kingdom at the latest, and was given the Greek name Hermopolis. It was one of the few Greek-style Ptolemaic sanctuaries. Hermopolis lost its role in the area, notably commercially, when Hadrian founded Antinoupolis in AD 130 A.D; Saad, I. (2006). *Tuna El- Gabel, Faculty of Arts*, Minya University.

<sup>55</sup> Venit, M. S. (2016). *Visualizing the Afterlife in the Tombs of Graeco-Roman Egypt*, p. 198.

<sup>56</sup> Gabra, S., & Drioton, E. (1954). *Peintures à fresques et scènes peintes à Hermoupolis-Ouest (Touna el-Gebel)*. Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire., pl. 14; Gabra, S. (1932). Rapport préliminaire sur les fouilles de l'Université égyptienne à Touna (Hermoupolis Ouest). *ASAE* 32, p. 56: 77; Lembke, K. (2014). *City of the Dead. The Necropolis of Tuna el-Gebel during the Roman Period. Egypt in the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from New Fieldwork.*, British Museum Publications on Egypt and Sudan 2, p. 83, pl. 7; O'CONNELL, E. R. (2014). *EGYPT IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM AD. BNPEs*, 2., p. 83: 93; Venit, M. S. (2016). *Visualizing the Afterlife*, p. 96: 98.

<sup>57</sup> Another House-tomb M 4, known as the House of the Dionysiac Krater for its Dionysiac imagery; Lembke, K. (2012). *City of the Dead: Tuna el-Gebel. In The Oxford handbook of Roman Egypt*, C. Riggs (ed.). Oxford, p. 205: 222.



composition as it rotates from left to right. Hermes, holding a kerykeion in his left hand and naked except for a chlamys draped over his left shoulder, leads the way into the underworld realm's cavern. The quadriga's horses, painted dark brown or black, push forward behind him, forelegs lifted and hind legs pushing off the ground, in the position that the team assumes in practically every Roman portrayal of the action. Hades, clad in a deep yellow himation that falls off his right shoulder to reveal his breast, serves as charioteer, holding the reins casually in his hand. while his other hand around the waist of Persephone who is dressed in the saffron-colored (κροκίνο) bride's robe, her arms upraised in agony and her cloak spilling out behind her. Eros flies behind the chariot, his bow strung but his arrow not yet ready to be released, pointing towards the scene. Despite Persephone's misery, the scene is should be viewed as one charged with Hades' love, according to Ovid<sup>58</sup>

The tale depicted at Tuna el-Gebel is unique among existing visual representations of the episode in that it depicts an underground cavern as the chariot's destination, while another interesting rendition can be seen on a fresco in a modest royal tomb in Vergina<sup>59</sup>, Greece as well as on a mosaic showing Hermes, carrying his caduceus and wearing the same petasos helmet and robe, once again guides the chariot horses to its destination beneath the earth. Hades, who is bearded, pilots the chariot and grasps a distraught Persephone. Hence; they share few similarities, while the scene of Vergina represents one of Persephone's playmates, Kyane, was still crouched near the flowers she had been gathering.

Other versions of Persephone's abduction can be found on Greek vases from the same time period. One depicts Hades leading Persephone in a chariot with Hermes walking alongside and Hecate, guiding Hades' chariot, she is always depicted with a torch<sup>60</sup>. Although this painting is from the late fourth century B.C., it may show Persephone's emergence from the Underworld rather than her kidnapping, as Hades wears a radiating crown or halo here. Persephone is unafraid in this situation. She is composed, elegantly attired, her head covered, and she opens her himation in the gesture of uncovering, the anakalypsis, to demonstrate that she is married. Her poise, majesty, and the floral scepter on her left hand all reflect her new role as queen of the underworld alongside her royal husband.

Another depiction has Persephone standing beside Hades in his chariot, a braceleted arm holding the front rail, and Hermes marching ahead of the horses as *Psychopompos*<sup>61</sup>.

### **Plaque depicting Thermouthis, Demeter, Serapis, Isis, Agathodaimon.**

**Provenance** Egypt.

**Material** Blue glass.

**Place of preservation**

Metropolitan

Museum

**Accessory** no.

1976.52

<sup>58</sup> *Metamorphoses* V. 392: 396.

<sup>59</sup> Stefanakis, M. I., & Vlavogilakis, A. (2014). Reproducing the Wall Painting of the Abduction of Persephone. Vergina-Macedonia. *EXARC I*, p. 1: 18, fig. 1; Andronikos, M. (1994). Tombs at Vergina, *Macedonia from Philip II to the Roman Conquest*, p. 35: 39.

<sup>60</sup> For more: Tinkoff-Utechin, T.A.S. (2019). Ancient Painting From South Russia. The Rape of Persephone. At Kerch. *BICS* 26, p. 13: 23; Parlasca, K. (2005). MS Venit, Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria, The Theater of the Dead, 2002. *Topoi. Orient-Occident*, 12(2), p. 763: 771.

<sup>61</sup> *August, Is the Mother of Alexander the Great in the Tomb at Amphipolis?* Part 4: An Explanation of the Mosaic, Greek Reporter, 15 oct 2016. Accessed on 4 March 4, 2021.

**Date of Discovery**

Purchased from Mathias Komor, New York, 1976.

**Date of the scene**  
Ptolemaic or Roman Period, second century B.C. to second century A.D.

**Dimensions** 3 x 3.5 cm



**Fig.11.** Plaque depicting Thermouthis, Demeter, Serapis, Isis, Agathodaimon, Metropolitan Museum, 1976.52. After; <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/547872> accessed on 3/6/2021.

**Description<sup>62</sup>**

Serapis is flanked by Isis who appears to hold a cornucopia, with her cloak tight on the chest in the typical knot of Isis and goddess Demeter with her torch, as she is always represented holding one or two torches<sup>63</sup>. Behind Demeter is Thermouthis<sup>64</sup>, an old goddess from the Old Kingdom who was represented as a cobra serpent wearing Hathor's crown.

Behind Isis is Agathodaimon, the "Good Spirit" who was originally the family's male ancestor and was responsible for fertility and wealth, He wears a white crown and a beard. He was received a cult in Egypt during the Greco-Roman and associated with Serapis.

**Limestone relief depicting a divine triad (Serapis- Isis- Demeter).**

**Provenance** Egypt.

**Material** Limestone.

**Place of Preservation**

Boston Museum.

**Date of the Scene** Roman

Period. 2<sup>nd</sup>: 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.

**Dimensions** 27.5x 38.5 cm.

**Description<sup>65</sup>**



**Fig.12.** A Relief representing a divine triad, Boston Museum. After; <https://www.numisbids.com/n.php?p=lot&sid=4684&lot=1099> on Classical Numismatic Group, LLC

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/547872> accessed on 3/6/2021

<sup>63</sup> In the Eleusinian Mysteries Demeter used the torch to search for Persephone, and when she found her, the entire process ended in rejoicing and torch-waving; Abdel Hamid, M. M. p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> Sometimes depicted as snake-bodied deity with a woman's visage. a Hellenistic goddess, is depicted as a snake-legged. She was created in the Ptolemaic era in the city of Narmouthis by uniting Isis with Renenutet. An inscription in the vestibule of the great sanctuary at Medinet Madi mentioned that Terenuthis and Narmouthis, in the Fayum, were the two most important places of her cult. Mazzuca, V. (2015). Isis Thermouthis in the Roman world. some data from the Italian peninsula. JILA, p. 123: 131.

<sup>65</sup> Herrmann J. J. (1999). Demeter-Isis or the Egyptian Demeter? A Greco-Roman Sculpture from an Egyptian Workshop in Boston. JDAI 114. p. 65: 124, fig. 16.

A bearded male figure with a *polos*, possibly Serapis, sits facing on a high openwork throne flanked by standing female figures on moulded pedestals. The goddess on his left (the viewer's right) is a wavy-haired goddess wearing a diaphanous, short-sleeved chiton wrapped in an Isis knot between her breasts; she cradles a cornucopia full of grain and fruits in her left arm and rests her right hand on a tiller, identifying her as Isis-Fortuna. The female figure on the right is dressed in a thicker stola with a palla wrapped around it and pulled up over her head, and she is holding a pair of grain ears in her lowered left hand, indicating that she is Demeter. Serapis is flanked on the left by a smiling animal that looks like a panther or lioness.

There are many representations for Serapis between Demeter and Isis. Isis normally appears to the god's left, and Demeter to his right, the same goddesses in two cultures. In his article, Hermann argues that scenes like this are more of a declaration of this duality than true triads. Although the strange animal seated next to Serapis appears to be panther, it could be Cerberus, the underworld's dog guardian, who is often depicted with only one head rather than the normal two or three. A panther, Dionysus' companion.

### Conclusions

Eleusis in, Greece was not the only place where the Eleusinian mysteries were held. There are a lot of evidence ensured existence of Eleusis at Alexandria where the Eleusinian mysteries were practiced.

Strabo<sup>66</sup> mentioned that there was a suburb with the name of Eleusis in Alexandria.

Satyrus of Alexandria, third century A.D., in his work *On the Demes of Alexandria*, (**fig.2**)<sup>67</sup> adds that Eleusis of Alexandria is named after Eleusis in Athens and the region once possessed a sacred site called Eleusinius.

A letter found in the temple archives of Soknopaiou Nesos in the Arsinoite mentions the Greek name of Demeter, *εροφοάντης* the high priest of the secret cult of Demeter and mentions the title *kanephoros κανηφόρος*, bearer of the basket<sup>68</sup>.

In addition to several impressive instances of Eleusinian iconography may be found in later examples of funerary art. A) The Hall of Caracalla hypogeum in the Kôm el-Chougafa necropolis contains murals on the central walls of tombs 1 and 2, Hall of Caracalla (**fig.3**). b) the Stela of Kom Apollo at El- Delta (**EL.6**) c) the painting of the House- tomb 3 at Tuna El-Gebel (**EL.10**) show the subject of Persephone's kidnapping by Hades. The Theme which was played an important role in the mysteries of Eleusis and attest more clearly and convincingly that the tomb's inhabitants' initiate to the mysteries of Demeter and Kore. In comparing this theme with similarities which were found outside Egypt concludes that these representations of legendary scenes are similar to painted and mosaic ornamentation found in villas, tombs and vases outside Egypt which suggested practicing of these owners in the cult of Demeter and Persephone. Such funerary pictures have been viewed as evidence of practicing the worship of Demeter in Egypt during the Hellenistic and Roman period. Addition to there are number of statues for Demeter elements associated with her, like as Demeter with Egyptian gods (Isis, Sarapis, and Harpokrates) (**figs.11, 12**), glass amulets and statues of Baubo (**figs. 7,8,9**) (the first priestess of goddess Demeter), vases of Eleusinian cult (**figs.4,5**) which is thought that they were created in Alexandria which are considered another sort of evidence throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman period.

<sup>66</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, vol. VIII, p. 61.

<sup>67</sup> P.Oxy. XXVII.

<sup>68</sup> P.Oxy. XXXVI. 2782.

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### المستخلص

الألغاز الإليوسينية هي إحدى الألغاز التي ظهرت في مصر خلال العصر البطلمي واستمرت في العصر الروماني. تم أداؤها تكريماً للإلهة اليونانية ديميتير وإينتها بيرسيفوني، وكانت من بين الأحداث الأكثر شهرة في العبادات السرية اليونانية. على الرغم من أن هذه الأسرار قد تم الاحتفال بها في مكان محدد، في إليوسيس، وهي مدينة مهمة في أتيكا على بعد حوالي واحد وعشرين كيلومتراً شمال غرب أثينا، من العصر الميسيني إلى العصور الرومانية المتأخرة، إلا أن هناك مجموعة متنوعة من القصص والأساطير التي يمكن العثور عليها حول موضوع هذه الألغاز في مصر، حيث توجد مجموعة من الأدلة الأثرية على وجود مكان في الإسكندرية باسم إليوسيس، بالإضافة إلى وجود أدلة أثرية أخرى؛ وعلى ذلك هدف هذا البحث هو استكشاف الأدلة على ممارسة هذه الألغاز في مصر من خلال النصوص الأدبية والأدلة الأثرية المختلفة.

**الكلمات الدالة:** الإليوسينية، ديميتير، بيرسيفوني، مصر، العبادات السرية