

Isiac lamps from Alexandria and other provinces: some comparisons



Abstract: This research examines representations of deities on lamps that reflect Hellenistic syncretic processes that led to the refashioning of Pharaonic gods by the addition of Greek attributes. The different rendering of deities representing specifically the “Isiac cults” on Roman lamps produced in Egypt is discussed in an effort to outline the major differences between how the homeland gods were depicted as compared to deities privileged in other parts of the Roman Empire. The article is a synthesis of the exhaustive work of Tran tam Tinh on the lamps from Alexandria and the present author’s recent monograph on Isiac scenes on lamp discs from outside Egypt.

Keywords: Roman lamps, Isiac cult, Isis, Sarapis, iconography, Egypt vs Roman provinces, comparative studies, Alexandria

In 1993, Vincent Tran tam Tinh published (with Marie-Odile Jentel) a catalogue of all the lamps with Isiac decor preserved in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria (Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993; Tran tam Tinh 1995). Having devoted his life to Isiac studies, Tran tam Tinh was particularly capable of carrying out this synthesis. His book on the cult of Isis in Pompeii quickly became a landmark (Tran tam Tinh 1964), completed by his broader studies on Oriental deities in Herculaneum and Campania (Tran tam Tinh 1971; 1972). Without ever abandoning his vision,

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now widely questioned, that Eastern religions should be approached in their entirety, he nevertheless refocused his work on Isiac studies, working in particular on iconographic aspects, first in the form of a general article (Tran tam Tinh 1984a) and then in specific monographs on Isis nursing Harpokrates or Isis *lactans* (Tran tam Tinh 1973; 1978) as well as on Sarapis standing (Tran tam Tinh 1983). In this perspective, he actively participated, along with Jean Leclant, considered as the founder of Isiac studies, in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (LIMC), for which he wrote the entries devoted to Harpokrates (Tran tam Tinh, Jaeger, and Poulin 1988) and Isis (Tran tam Tinh 1990b).¹

In doing so, he naturally approached the decoration adorning oil lamps, publishing several thematic articles on the subject that dealt with specific iconographic types, for which he tried to find the origin by setting them within the context of other arts, whether numismatic, gemological, ceramic (applied medallions adorning terracotta vases) or statuary. This approach allowed him to consider the motif of the busts of Isis and Sarapis *radiatus* looking at each other as a motif born outside Egypt, in this case in North Africa, even if inspired by Alexandrian numismatic sources (Tran tam Tinh 1970). In fact, he addressed more than just the busts of Isis and Sarapis-Helios, since he also studied Isis and Sarapis kissing on plastic handles, and Isis and Sarapis in the form of busts

paired on the lamp discus. In another study focusing on Campania, which is particularly rich in Isiac discoveries, he looked at lamps decorated with the holy triad, Isis, Harpokrates and Anubis (Tran tam Tinh 1990a). He distinguished two discus decorations based on the robes and on the iconography of Isis and Anubis, the first belonging to Campanian workshops, the second to Roman ones.

Besides studying motifs born outside Egypt, the Canadian scholar researched specifically Egyptian motifs, such as Sarapis embraced by Helios on the discuses of Egyptian lamps (Tran tam Tinh 1984b). For the latter, he demonstrated a link with the ingenious configuration of the architecture of the Sarapeion of Alexandria, where at a specific time of the year the illumination of the statue of the god simulated symbolically a kiss, as the rays of the rising sun fell on the lips of his statue. Despite a disappointing illustrative side and some lychnological weaknesses, pointed out by Carlo Pavolini (1995), the study on Isiac decoration on discuses and handles of Roman-time lamps preserved at the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria is an indispensable starting point for anyone wishing to approach this type of iconography on lighting devices.

However, a number of "Alexandrian" motifs do not appear in the corpus, either because they were unknown at the time of the publication or simply because they were not represented in the museum's collections.

1 Not limited to Isis alone, Isiac studies concern other deities from the goddess' milieu, that is, Sarapis, Harpokrates, Anubis, to mention only the most important ones (Malaise 2005).

Important collections of lamp finds from Alexandria, most of them private, were constituted by several more or less official “excavation directors” digging within the perimeter of ancient Alexandria since the 19th century. Too few have been published, despite being particularly rich, like the Benaki collection, now in Athens. One should acknowledge, however, an early effort made by the owner to publish the Osborne collection (Osborne 1924), or, more recently, the Bouvier collection, studied by Laurent Chrzanovski (2015 and the exhaustive Chrzanovski 2019). Alexandrian artifacts from large public collections have also been published, and their catalogues should be consulted, *in primis* those of the University of Tübingen (Cahn-Klaiber 1977), the Royal Ontario Museum (Hayes 1980) and the British Museum (Bailey 1988: especially 216–275). Excavation reports supply interesting source material, e.g., studies published by the French team from the Centre d’Études Alexandrines, Camélia Georges’s publications on lighting equipment,² and regular reports from the excavations of Polish colleagues in the *PAM* journal, but in these lamps with Isiac motifs are usually interspersed with other material and need to be sorted out.

Tran tam Tinh and Jentel’s choice was to classify the lamps by divinities: Sarapis first, then Isis, then Har-

pokrates, while the last group, “Isiaca”, seems to this author irrelevant and particularly subjective. Sarapis is definitely the most frequently represented deity on lighting devices from Alexandrian collections (251), way ahead of Isis (142) and Harpokrates (40 or better said 27, if one rejects the 13 representations of a child sitting on an animal skin).³ The author’s research on lamps with Isiac decoration found outside Egypt (Podvin 2011) revealed the same trend, which is also consistent with the mentions of these deities in inscriptions, where the great god comes first in front of his feminine companion. A god appearing regularly outside the Greco-Roman environment of Alexandria and Egypt is Anubis.

The Alexandrian Isiac sample represented by the Greco-Roman Museum collection studied by Tran tam Tinh and Jentel is here compared to the entire non-Egyptian production of lamps decorated with Isiac motifs (Podvin 2011; 2020 complements the earlier study) [Table 1]. The order of presentation starts with single deities and continues with divinities represented in pairs, threesomes, foursomes and as a group of five. It closes with the boat-shaped and mummiform types. For the functionalities of these lamps, readers are referred to the author’s publications (see in particular Podvin 2015; 2018).

2 Lamps with Isiac decoration constitute only a tiny part of the corpus of lighting devices discovered in Alexandria, and they are absent from some sectors (Georges 2003a). Georges’ doctoral thesis, *Étude comparative de lampes provenant des sites d’habitat et de la Necropolis d’Alexandrie*, defended in 2007 at the Lumière University Lyon 2, has not been published.

3 Hence the total numbers differ slightly when compared to those in Tran tam Tinh 1995.

Table 1. Isiac deities represented on lamps from Alexandrian collections

The 2019 additions appear after the "+"; thus, "4 + 1" means "4" in Podvin 2011, + "1" in Podvin 2020
 Abbreviations: I (Isis), S (Sarapis), SR (Radiated Sarapis or Heliosarapis), A (Anubis), H (Harpokrates)

SINGLE DEITIES

Alexandrian lamps adorned with SARAPIS alone (After Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993)

	Discus	Delta handle- ornament	Plastic handle- ornament	Other	Total
S standing	23	3		1 SR	27
S enthroned	10	3	12		25
S bust/head facing	12	9	39		60
S on eagle	24	1	2		27
S on acanthus	1	31			32
S on globe	13	33			46
SR bust/head facing		2			2
S bust/head right	1				1
Total Sarapis	84	82	53	1	220

Lamps adorned with SARAPIS alone **outside Egypt** (After Podvin 2011; 2020)

	Discus	Delta handle- ornament	Plastic handle- ornament	Other	Total
S standing	4 + 1				5
S enthroned	29	8	3		40
S bust/head facing	22 + 3	4	31 + 1	48	109
S on eagle	8		1		9
S on acanthus	5	2	10	1	18
S on pedestal	1				1
S on globe		3			3
SR bust/head facing	1				1
SR on pedestal	1				1
S bust/head left	101 + 7		1 + 1		110
SR bust/head left	54 + 6				60
S bust/head right	22 + 15				37
SR bust/head right	1				1
<i>S agathodaimon</i>	1				1
Foot of S	1				1
Total Sarapis	283	17	48	49	397

Alexandrian lamps adorned with Isis alone (After Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
I bust/head facing	10	4	19		33
I bust on acanthus		7	2		9
I bust on globe	2	17			19
I bust on eagle	4	4			8
Total Isis	16	32	21		69

Lamps adorned with Isis alone outside Egypt (After Podvin 2011; 2020)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
I standing	5 + 1				6
I enthroned			1		1
I bust/head facing	9 + 1	6	21 + 2		39
I bust/head left	2				2
I bust/head right	12 + 2				14
I Panthea	16 + 2			1	19
Total Isis	50	6	24	1	81

Lamps adorned with ANUBIS alone outside Egypt (After Podvin 2005; 2011)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
A in a chlamys	7				7
A in a tunic	14			2	16
A bust?	1				1
Total Anubis	22			2	24

Alexandrian lamps adorned with HARPOKRATES alone (After Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
H standing	11			2 lanterns	13
H sitting				1 <i>lampadophore</i>	1
H bust				1	1
Total Harpokrates	11			4	15

Lamps adorned with HARPOKRATES alone **outside Egypt** (After Podvin 2011; 2020)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
H standing	46 + 2	2	+ 1	7	58
				<i>lampadophores</i>	
Head of H	2	1			3
Total Harpokrates	50	3	1	7	61

DEITIES IN COMBINATIONS OF TWO AND MORE**Alexandrian lamps** adorned with two deities (After Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
I and S facing busts				1	1
I and SR facing	1				1
S and Helios	16				16
I <i>lactans</i> on throne	10	6	13		29
I <i>lactans</i> on acanthus			42		42
I and H standing	1				1
Total	28	6	56		90

Lamps adorned with two deities **outside Egypt** (After Podvin 2011; 2020)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
I and S standing	2				2
I standing and S enthroned	1				1
I and S facing busts	20		49		69
I and S together	28				28
I and S embracing			14 + 1		15
S and I looking at each other	71 + 8				79
I and SR looking at each other	130 + 16				146
I and A	10		1		11
S and Helios	1				1
A and H	1				1
Athena and H		1			1
I <i>lactans</i> enthroned	1		2		3
I <i>lactans</i> on acanthus			2 + 1		3
I and H standing	4		1		5
Total	293	1	71		365

Alexandrian lamps with THREE deities (After Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
S and two erotes	2				2
S, I and Demeter	2				2
S and Dioscouri			1		1
SR and two erotes	2				2
I, H and Demeter			1		1
H, I-Thermouthis and S-Agathodaimon	9				9
Total	15		2		17

Lamps with THREE deities **outside Egypt** (After Podvin 2011)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
I, H and S	13				13
I, H and A	68				68
S and Dioscouri	2				2
Total	83				83

Lamps with FOUR deities **outside Egypt** (After Podvin 2011)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
H, Demeter, I and S	2				2
S, H, I and A	1				1
I-Thermouthis, S, S-Agathodaimon and H	5				5
Total	8				8

Alexandrian lamps with FIVE deities (After Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
Hermanubis, Demeter, I, H, S				1	1
Total				1	1

Lamps with FIVE deities **outside Egypt** (After Podvin 2011)

	Discus	Delta handle-ornament	Plastic handle-ornament	Other	Total
Hermanubis, Demeter, I, H, S			11		11
Total			11		11

SARAPIS

The comparison of the two sections of the table concerning Sarapis underlines the god's numerical importance. However, the models prevailing in Alexandria and outside Egypt are not the same. While Sarapis standing or Sarapis on a globe is prized in Egypt, it is totally marginal elsewhere. Sarapis on an eagle or on acanthus is again not very frequent outside Egypt. On the contrary, some iconographies are more specifically spread outside Egypt: this is the case of the bust of the god on the left, and that of Sarapis radiated, both motifs being very popular in Africa, from where it is likely that they issued (Pod-

vin 2008a). Other representations reach approximately the same level in both regions (Egypt and the Provinces): this is the case of Sarapis enthroned (10%) and a facing head or bust of the god (27%).

Sarapis appears very often on the ornamental handles in the collection of the Alexandria Museum, where these ornaments (*delta*-shaped or plastic) constitute 62% of the occurrences, against roughly 16% outside Egypt. The collections would have favored handle attachments over decorated discs, hence these numbers may not be reliable, but in general handle attachments constitute a feature particularly appreciated among the potters of Alexandria and its hinterland (Chrzanovski 2015: 33), especially for lamps with a minimum of two nozzles.



Fig. 1. Sarapis enthroned: top, facing, Rome; bottom, turned leftwards, Marina el-Alamein (After Podvin 2011: Stf.m(5), Pl. 7 [top]; Daszewski 1991: 103, Fig. 5 [bottom])



Fig. 2. Isis in bust form on a *delta*-shaped handle attachment of a two-nozzled lamp, Alexandria (After Georges 2003b: 505)

An interesting type has been found in Marina el-Alamein, about 100 km west of Alexandria (Daszewski 1991: 101–103, Fig. 6). The motif is not *a priori* very original, since we observe Sarapis enthroned; however, the god is not to front, as is usually the case in Alexandria (Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993: 35–42, Pls 1–3) or in Rome, but is turned to the left [Fig. 1].

Several plastic lamp handles featuring the frontal bust of Sarapis come from the excavations at Marina el-Alamein (for three of them, Zych 2004: 83–85). From Alexandria there is a lamp adorned with a frontal bust of Isis on the discus and two plastic handles, one with Sarapis enthroned (Majcherek and Kucharczyk 2014: 35), and another one with the bust of Sarapis (Majcherek 2016: 37).

ISIS

In the Alexandrian corpus, Isis is systematically represented as a frontal bust, either placed on a support (bunch of acanthus, globe or eagle) or without. Ornamental handles are the most frequent (77%), generally broken at the base, yet the few intact lamps that have been preserved with an ornamental handle [Fig. 2] leave no doubt that they they used to adorn double-nozzled lamps at first (Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993: 276, No. 368; another example is Georges 2003b: 494 and 505). There is more variety in the rest of the

Mediterranean world, while the handles are half as frequent as in Egypt, representing only 37% of the specimens. Similarly, the goddess may stand, sit on her throne or appear in a *Panthea* rendering; in the latter representation, she is depicted with attributes that have led to her assimilation to Minerva or Fortuna, and sometimes even a misleading interpretation by some scholars in the case of a *sistrum*, cornucopia, cist, patera or torch. Nonetheless, upon closer examination she is always identified as Isis (Podvin 2011: 45–46).

ANUBIS



Fig. 3. Anubis: left, wearing a chlamys; right, in a tunica, from Lurs (After Podvin 2011: Adg1.m(1), Pl. 28 [left]; Adg2.m(7), Pl. 29 [right])

The motif of Anubis alone is typically born outside Egypt. It has been demonstrated (Podvin 2011: 66–68) to be closely linked to the representation of the triad Harpocrates, Isis and Anubis, en vogue in Italy (Rome and Campania) during the 1st century AD. Representations of Anubis alone, first attested in Italy, enjoyed considerable success, spreading to southern Gaul, the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, and even Brittany, which may look *a priori* as a surprise considering that this god was not particularly known to non-Egyptian populations.

Many deities, such as Isis, Sarapis and Harpokrates, may appear in Hellenized form, like Anubis, but keeping his Egyptian character, in this case the head of a jackal, for which he was criticized first by several traditional Roman authors and then by Christian ones (Anubis *latrator*). This could explain why lamps bearing images of this god were discovered in funeral contexts, Anubis being *par excellence* a god of the necropolis in ancient Egypt. While keeping this zoocephalic aspect, Anubis is nevertheless dressed in Graeco-Roman style, alternately wearing a chlamys or tunic [Fig. 3], as is also typical of his depictions as part of the triad of gods adorning lamp discuses (see below).



Fig. 4. Harpokrates, Carthage (After Podvin 2011: Hdf.m.C(1), Pl. 30)

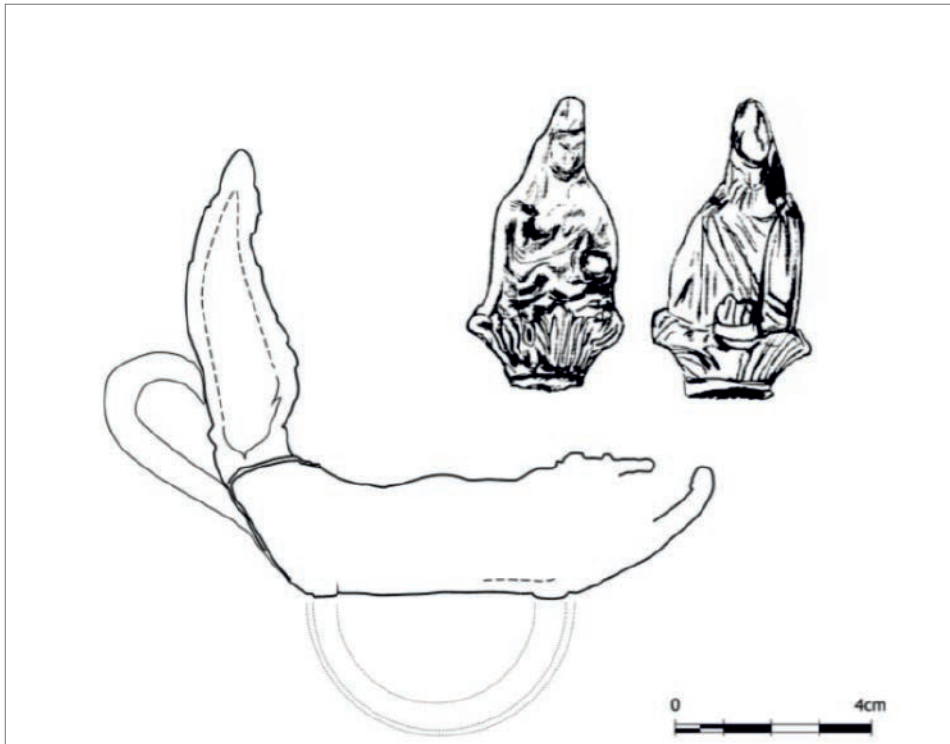


Fig. 5. Isis *lactans* on an ornamental handle, Marina el-Alamein (After Zych 2004: 84, Fig. 5)

HARPOKRATES

Representations of Harpokrates alone are perhaps the closest to being common to both the studied areas: he is depicted nude, standing to front, holding a cornucopia in his left hand and crowned with a lotus flower, that is, following the principles of his Hellenized iconography [Fig. 4]. In Alexandria, he is shown more commonly standing by

a pillar (see also Georges 2001: 454 and 492). However, there are some representations of the god on a *delta*-shaped or plastic handle also made outside Egypt, and in several instances, the god appears on a vertical support bearing a lamp (*lampadophoros*). His nudity can be reduced by a towel carelessly placed on the left side.

DEITIES REPRESENTED IN PAIRS

When two deities appear, it is usually Isis nursing Harpokrates on lamps from Alexandria, and Isis and Sarapis on lamps from outside Egypt. The goddess nursing her son is present both on handle attachments (*delta*-shaped or plastic) and on discuses, but only on plastic handles she is shown emerging from a basketful of acanthus leaves [Fig. 5]. In Marina el-Alamein, Iwona Zych found two plastic ornamental

handles, one of which had the particularity of still being attached to a lamp (2004: 83–85): they depict Isis nursing Harpokrates, in one case enthroned, in the other as a bust set in a basket of acanthus leaves (see another example in Zych, Obłuski, and Wicenciak 2008: 93–94), the latter still attached to its lamp. Here again, in the case of Alexandria, ornamental handles form the bulk of the collection (69%).

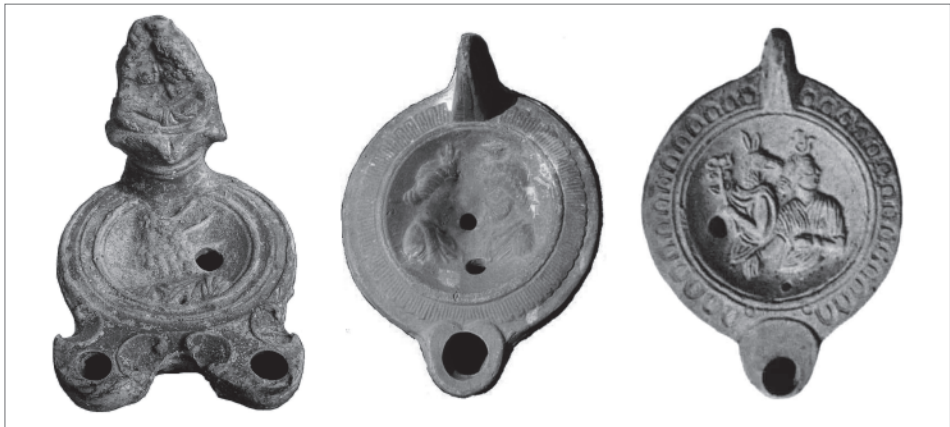


Fig. 6. Isis and Sarapis: left, kissing on an ornamental handle, Sarapis *radiatus* on the discus, Ostia; center, Sarapis *radiatus* looking at Isis, North Africa; right, Isis and Anubis looking back, Carthage (After Podvin 2011: Ibd-Sbg.ap(1), Pl. 42 [left]; Ibd-SRbg.m.Bb(55), Pl. 49 [center]; Abd-Ibd.m(3), Pl. 54 [right])

Among pairs of deities represented on lamp discuses there is the image of Helios kissing Sarapis, a typically Egyptian representation (only one example known from the West) studied exhaustively by Tran tam Tinh (1984b).

In the Mediterranean world, there is a tendency to favor Isis and Sarapis, the latter being often rendered as *radiatus* in Africa. Two areas, Italy and North Africa, are particularly rich, both in the quantity and the iconographic diversity of the lamps found there. The association of the two deities as a couple seems to reflect union and fidelity, in life but also in death, since many African copies have been found in burials (Podvin 2011: 152–156). Isis and Sarapis in bust form, side by side, or kissing [Fig. 6 left], always on a plastic ornamental handle, are well known from Italy (while we know only one Alexandrian specimen of the first type).

Most of the time, the two embrace (a unique representation attested in at least 30 copies found in North Africa) or look at each other (Tran tam Tinh 1970), Sarapis rendered as either *radiatus* or not. The non-*radiatus* representation is Greek, known only from Marathon, but more than 70 specimens are of exceptional size, reaching a width of 30 cm and length of 40 cm (Fortiadi 2011), while the *radiatus* type is African, attested on nearly 150 artifacts (Podvin 2011: 77–79, 244–251; additional in Podvin 2020) from many African sites [Fig. 6 center], but also exported to the Western Mediterranean world (Italy, Gaul, Spain).

As for Isis and Anubis looking back, this motif seems to be associated with others to be found on different pottery vessels [Fig. 6 right]; it has been proved that it was an African invention, created by the C HEL IAN workshop (Podvin 2001).

THREE DEITIES REPRESENTED TOGETHER

The Museum of Alexandria holds only 17 lamps with three deities on the discus: nine of them depicting Harpokrates flanked by Sarapis and Isis, both rendered as anguipeds, while the others favor Sarapis in the company of Eroses (4), Demeter (2), the Dioscouri (1) or Isis (1). Isis, even though present 12 times, is clearly in secondary position.

The panorama is very different in the rest of the Mediterranean world. There, Isis is the central figure, whether she is accompanied by Sarapis and Harpokrates, or by Anubis and Harpokrates. In the first case, we are dealing with a motif known in the Iberian Peninsula, where it was most probably created (Podvin 2006; 2011: 254–255); the god-

child is small in size, and it is clearly the busts of his two parents that are highlighted in this “family” composition, which could have drawn its inspiration from the scenes of banquets widely beloved in Alexandria.

For the others, the most numerous at nearly 70 (Tran tam Tinh 1990a; Podvin 2008b), their origin is Italian, Roman or Campanian depending on the case, even if as exports or copies they enjoyed widespread popularity in the Iberian Peninsula and in southern Gaul. The three deities are shown standing [Fig. 7 left], following an iconographic tradition known from Egypt for Harpokrates, but not at all for Isis or for Anubis (see above, page 111, and Podvin 2005).

FOUR DEITIES REPRESENTED TOGETHER

Lamps depicting four Isiac deities, mostly on the discus, are rare: eight from the Mediterranean region and none from the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. Sarapis flanked by the two anguiped deities, in the presence of Harpokrates standing in the lower right corner, resembles in style the Alexandrian group of Harpokrates and the anguiped gods.

Two copies, at least one of which has been found in Rome, show on the right side of the discus the twin busts of Isis and Sarapis (the latter on the left), and, on the left side, Harpokrates in front of a bust of a divinity that has been identified as Demeter (at the right end) (Podvin 2011: 259–260). This representation from the West [Fig. 7 center] can be compared to a model recently discovered in Alexandria (Majcherek 2011: 44–45, Fig. 9) where Isis and Sarapis can be seen

as a bust twinned on the right side of the discus, while on the left side, the very well preserved Alexandrian example shows the bust of a divinity, behind Harpokrates, probably Hermanubis, wearing a *kalathos* like Sarapis [Fig. 7 right].

On western examples, it was difficult to decide between Hermanubis and Demeter, the characteristic veil pointing rather to the goddess. It may be that ancient mold makers in the West tried to copy this model and also had difficulty in identifying the divinity in question, eventually opting for another one they knew better, in this case Demeter. This phenomenon of having difficulties in understanding and consequently reinterpreting a scene is not, in itself, unique and has already been encountered elsewhere, for example, in the case of the *basileion* of Isis (Podvin 2012).



Fig. 7. Deities shown in threes and fours: left, Harpokrates, Isis and Anubis, Capua; center, Harpokrates, Demeter, Isis, and Sarapis *radiatus*, Rome; right, Harpokrates, Hermanubis, Isis, and Sarapis, Alexandria (After Podvin 2011: Hdf-Idf-Adg1.m.B(2), Pl. 57 [left]; Hbd-DEbd-lbg-SRbg.m(1), Pl. 62 [center]; Majcherek 2011: 44, Fig. 9 [right])

FIVE DEITIES REPRESENTED TOGETHER

Surprisingly, the same representations of *lectisternia* can be found in both Alexandria and Rome [Fig. 8], following an iconography common to coins, gems, moneyboxes and lighting devices (Bricault 2013: 118–126), whether depicted on the lamp itself, as it is the case of the Alexandria lamp (Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993: 55–56, No. 33: two canopies also appear in the lower part of the *kline*),

or on the ornamental handles of Roman specimens (Pavolini and Tomei 1990: 107–109).⁴ This clearly shows that exchanges could exist between the Roman and Alexandrian cultural milieus, contrary to what has been asserted (Tran tam Tinh and Jentel 1993: 1–34; Młynarczyk 1998), but perhaps more with regard to themes and decorative motifs than the lamps themselves.

BOAT-SHAPED LAMPS

Several boat-shaped lamps are present in the collections of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. There are five examples of Sarapis enthroned on the stern. On three, he is flanked, on each railing, by one of the Dioscouri carrying a lance (see another example in Chrzanowski 2015: 41 and 127); on the other two, Isis-Thermouthis and Sarapis-Agathodaimon are depicted on the railings (see other examples in Bailey 1988: 243, Q 1990 for the first type and Q 1991 for the second). On a sixth copy, a bust of Isis(?) is accompanied by Sarapis and by another figure. Other boat-shaped lamps have been found in Alexandria and this may be the case of the eight-wick lamp [Fig. 9 left] preserved in the collection of the Berlin Museum (Weber 1914: 31, No. 12 and Pl. I).

Opposed to these simple models from Alexandria are those from outside Egypt, some of which are more elaborate from an iconographic point of view

(Bricault 2006: 126–134; Podvin 2012), although they share several characteristics with the Alexandrian models, such as a mark on the base: for the Alexandrian-made one it is *Kataplous*, emphasizing the idea of a good sea journey; *Euploia* is for a good trip on lamps from Pozzuoli and, if they are really Isiacs, from Athens; *Helioserapis* is found on a lamp from Pozzuoli and another one from Kato Paphos in Cyprus. Similarly, one of the Dioscouri appears on a Pozzuoli lamp, but it is Sarapis who is represented more often than his companion.

However, non-Alexandrian lamps are larger and probably intended to be placed in sanctuaries. A mention inviting Helioserapis to take the offered lamp (Pozzuoli) is in line with Callimachus' epigram 55, dedicating a 20 wick lamp to the god of Canope. A lamp found at Ascalon (Podvin 2019) can now be added to these specimens (Podvin 2011: 91–95).

4 Pavolini and Tomei published two handles, indicating the existence of eight others, similar but of lesser quality, a reference omitted in Podvin 2011: 90–91; added to the artifacts known to Montfaucon, these make for 11 lamps found in Rome.



Fig. 8. Hermanubis, Demeter, Isis, Harpokrates and Sarapis on a *klinè*, ornamental handle, Rome (After Podvin 2011: Hbd-DEbd-lbg-SRbg.m(1), Pl. 62)



Fig. 9. Plastic lamps: left, boat-shaped lamp, Alexandria(?); right, mummiform lamp, Alexandria (After Weber 1914: 31, No. 12 and Pl. I [left]; Gallo 1998: 154, Fig. 2 [right])

MUMMIFORM LAMPS

Mummiform lamps are few and Tran tam Tinh and Jentel did not see any in the collections of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria, while Paolo Gallo (1998) published an Osiriform lamp discovered in Alexandria (Graeco-Roman Museum, Inv. 30183). It is rendered as a swaddled god, both hands on his chest holding unidentifiable scepters, an *atef* crown on the head. Part of the lamp is missing [Fig. 9 right], and it measures 15 cm (probably 25 cm with the missing nozzle end).

Outside Alexandria, only five mummiform lamps have been recorded, two made of terracotta and three made of bronze (Podvin 2011: 95–96). On the clay items, there is a woman (Isis?) on the lamp from Athens and Harpokrates on that from Palestine (Podvin 2016: 315–316). As far as the bronzes are concerned, Osiris(?) was identified on the lamps from Luni, Canosa and Cambridge. Rectangular lamps, even if they are absent from the Tran tam Tinh and Jentel publication (with the exception of some square-shaped lamps, 222–223, No. 263; 297, No. 402), they are an Alexandrine reality, shared by some other geographical regions, such as Dacia, but without an Isiac occurrence in the latter case (Chrzanovski 2011).

This quick comparison of lamps with Isiac decorations from the museum in the great Mediterranean port of Alexandria and throughout the Roman world highlights a number of characteristics, some of which had already been suggested by Tran tam Tinh (1995).

When a deity is shown alone, Sarapis is by far the most frequently represented god, Isis ranking second, whether at the Alexandria Museum (ratio of 1 to 3) or elsewhere (1 to 5). Harpokrates is almost equal to Isis outside Egypt, while he is five times less frequent in Alexandria. As for Anubis, he does not appear in Alexandria at all.

Isis and Harpokrates, otherwise the loving mother nursing her son, top the list of paired deities in Alexandria. Elsewhere, it is the Isis and Sarapis couple that is predominant, and therefore the male and female entities that embody a couple's fidelity beyond death (as assumed based on a regular presence in graves in Africa). On scenes with three deities, Sarapis is almost unavoidable in Alexandria (16/17, against 12/17 for Isis), while this is the case of Isis and Harpokrates in the Mediterranean world (81/83), Sarapis occurring only marginally (15/83). On scenes representing more than three gods, the main deities (Isis, Sarapis, Harpokrates) appear concurrently, the others being Demeter or Hermanubis.

Despite these differences, there is a real permeability between the two areas. While it is true that Egyptian or

Alexandrian lamps were not widely exported, some motifs may have been suitable for the followers of Isiac cults in the Mediterranean world (for example, the image of Harpokrates, or the five gods on a couch). And the opposite, some Isiac themes created outside Egypt were able to return to their cradle and be copied, both in decoration and the lamp type (ornamental handles with the Isis and Sarapis couple side by side).

It is undoubtedly between the two megapolises of Rome and Alexandria that these transfers took place. It could explain why the motif of Sarapis *radiatus* and Isis depicted facing one another, which was a North African creation, did not gain popularity in Alexandria. The same is true if we look at the triad of Isis, Sarapis and Harpokrates, which is typically Iberian. However, in other cases—for example, the Anubis, Isis and Harpokrates triad—the origin and influences of such motifs remain to be discovered.

Finally, the production of lamps with Isiac decoration lasted in Alexandria probably longer than Tran tam Tinh and Jentel (Młynarczyk 1995) initially thought and its decline was almost certainly linked to the closing of the Sarapeion of Alexandria in AD 391.

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