

## The Torches in Graeco-Roman Egypt The Ritual and Practical uses

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### Abstract :

Torches were widely used in Pharaonic Egypt both as a source of light and also in different rituals in temples and tombs .In Graeco-Roman period , while torch appeared as an attribute of many divinities ,other miniature terracotta torches indicated , with their figural decoration of heads and busts of different deities,other cult associations especially during feasts with nocturnal rites .

The objective of this research is to clarify the ritual usage of these torches through understanding the connection between these deities represented on them and their different divine nocturnal rituals ,besides the other uses of torches in both wedding and funeral that had parallel rituals and overlapping rites which took place in darkness amid flickering light of torches .

### Key words:

**torches,light,feast,nocturnal,luchnapsia,rituals,wedding,funeral**

In ancient Egypt,torches were widely used ,both for daily life uses and also for different rituals .


The word *tk* refers to "torch" in Hieroglyphs than lamp or candle,Webster's Dictionary,which agrees with the Oxford Dictionary, defines"torch" as"A light or luminary formed of

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some combustible substance, as resinous wood, twisted tow soaked in tallow, generally carried in the hand.<sup>1</sup>

Torches or tapers are known from the representations on the walls of New Kingdom tombs and temples, the commonest type was made of a strip of linen folded double at half its length and twisted, like the hieroglyph

□ , then soaked in fat, such a torch could be held in the hand, loop downward or mounted on ritual holders which sometimes took the form of Nile god or *n*□ emblems.

In the second half of Dynasty 18 (Thotmosis IV onward), this form was supplemented by a sort of cresset<sup>2</sup>, a large rhomboidal lump of fat moulded around the top of a stick, with the lower end of the stick serving as a handle, the lump of fat acquired a flat-based conical shape before the end of the dynasty, retained that form throughout the Ramesside period, and both forms of torches were called *tk*□.<sup>3</sup>

Flames of lamps and torches dissipating darkness threatens, playing also the role of purifier and protector, so they were widely used in the funerary cult. In the mortuary contracts of Djefaihapi of Assiut, dated to the reign of Sesostri I, it is stipulated that the provision must be made for lighting torches along with presentation of offerings during *wg* feast (mentioned below), and the emplacement of the torches must coincide with the registered formulas invoking "The Eye of Horus that guides gods in the obscurity".<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the statue of the deceased was stationed in a limestone naos like one dated back to the very end of dynasty 12

<sup>1</sup> Nelson H.H., Certain Reliefs at Karnak and Medinet Habu and the ritual of Amenophis I, JNES 8, No.4, 1949, p.321.

<sup>2</sup> Fischer H.G., Fackeln und Kerzen, in LÄ II, col.79.

For more information about the using of torches during Pharaonic period, see La Torche en Egypte Ancienne, jusque'à la fin du Nouvel Empire, unpublished thesis, faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University, 2007

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, col.80; Davies G., A peculiar Form of New Kingdom Lamp, JEA 10 No.1, 1924, pp.9-14

<sup>4</sup> Fischer, op.cit, col.80; Montet P., Siut I, in Kemi 3, 1930, p.55.

or slightly later , the top of which has an emplacement for torches with adjacent texts invoking the “ eye of Horus “ which guides the gods in darkness .<sup>5</sup>

In the cult of Osiris in the Middle Kingdom , the goddess in the form of a hippo holding a torch , protecting the god against malevolent forces , is called “ The bearer of torch in the house of torch “ .<sup>6</sup>

In the tomb of Amenmhat , the scribe of the New Kingdom , it is written :

*“ A light for everyday use ,illuminates the road of darkness for the scribe who counts the the grain , Amenemhat, every where he goes “.*<sup>7</sup>

On the coffin of Khonsuhtep ,that is dated back to the Third Intermediate( 950-900 B.C ) , torches in the form of small horns are represented ,being held by two goddesses , Neith and another goddess in front of Anubis, god of Abydos .<sup>8</sup>

In the book of the dead , chapter 137 A and 137 B , are written protective formulas of the torch and the four torches ,with the protection and safeguard of god Osiris to the deceased.<sup>9</sup>

During the Graeco-Roman period , torches and sulphur were often attested as elements of purification ceremonies , since fire had a widespread use in such connections .<sup>10</sup>

Torches transform darkness into light with a better distribution of light , they allow people to see and be seen The

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<sup>5</sup> Fischer , op.cit , col.80 .

<sup>6</sup> Schott S, Das lösen von Fackeln in Milch ,ZÄS 73,1973,P.7

<sup>7</sup> Nelson , op.cit , p.325 .

<sup>8</sup> Jorgensen M.,Catalogue Egypt III,Coffins ,Mummy Adornments and Mummies from the Third Intermediate period ,late,Ptolemaic and the Roman periods (1080 BC-AD 400) ,Copenhagen,2001,no.2:10,fig.p.111 and no.2:13,fig.p.119

<sup>9</sup> Barguet P.,Le Livre des morts des anciens Egyptiens , Paris ,1967,pp.180-183

<sup>10</sup> Griffiths J.G.,Apuleius of Madauros ,The Isis Book ,Metamorphoses ,Book XI ,Leiden ,1975,p.278

Greek word  $\delta\alpha\delta\omicron\ \square\ \phi\omicron\rho\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  means “to carry torches “ , and  $\delta\alpha\delta\omicron\ \square\ \nu\chi\ \square\ s$  signifies “torch-bearer” .<sup>11</sup>

In the excavations made at Saqqara, in the level dated back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. , many terracotta objects were found in analogous shape, they have cavity in their superior parts, where there are traces of black smoke referring to their use for illumination , their dimensions vary from 20-30 cm, one can define them as torches , taking the form of tube with a hole that was filled with oil or grease with a wick .<sup>12</sup>

Many moulded torches or portable torches were found in Antinoe, Karmous<sup>13</sup>, Faiyum and Memphis now displayed in Guimet museum and Graeco-Roman museum , made of terracotta taking the shape of flared tubes, with two holes , their heights range from 19 to 20 c.m , and dated back to the second and third centuries A.D.<sup>14</sup>

These torches are decorated with different motives in raised relief, human male and female heads , divine heads and busts like that of the Alexandrian triad ( Serapis –Isis –Harpocrates ), god Bes with his consort Beset, and others, besides different vegetal and geometric designs , with no traces of use. **Table 1( plates from 1- 13 )**

It must be noted that the great majority of these torches are decorated from the upper part (mouth) to the lower part (base) according to the right sequence , but others are decorated as if they were held with mouth down .<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon , Oxford, 1994, Seventh Edition , p.171,  $\delta\alpha\delta\omicron\ \square\ \nu\chi\ \square\ s$  was an office at the mysteries of Eleusinian Demeter ; Danet p., A complete dictionary of the Greek and Roman Antiquities , The university of Michigan , 1817, p.Ii.

<sup>12</sup> French P., Pottery chiefly of the Late Dynastic period, "Cahiers de la Céramique égyptienne 2" , 1991, p.95, cat.No.112-115 (fouilles de mars 2003, par le Département des Antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Louvre)

<sup>13</sup> Pagenstecher R., Die Griechisch-Ägyptische Sammlung Ernst von Sieglin I, Malerie und Plastik, Leipzig, 1923, figs 109-110.

<sup>14</sup> Dunand F., Musée du Louvre, Département des Antiquités égyptiennes , catalogue des Terres Cuites gréco-romaines d'Égypte , Paris, 1990, pls 968-969-970-971-972-973-974

<sup>15</sup> Torok L., Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas from Egypt, Rome , 1995, p.184

These torches probably were presented as offerings, in different feasts, for different divinities who are represented on them, like many other terracotta torches were found, among various objects and small lamps, in many other places outside Egypt like Troizen, it was suggested that they were probably offerings for gods<sup>16</sup>, probably most of these terracotta torches, found in Egypt, were also used in various cults and rituals of these divinities like the night processions of cult statues and with cult assemblies held at night, and may have been also luck-bringing souvenirs taking home from such occasions.<sup>17</sup>

### I- The Divine association of the torch

While the torch appeared as an attribute of some divinities, other miniature torches indicated, with their figural decoration, other cult associations as well.

Torches had great role in **Isis** cult, she is represented sitting on a dog on the coins dated back to the reign of Trajan (109-110 and 112-113 A.D.) holding in her right hand a torch.<sup>18</sup>

Several examples of nocturnal festivities in the frame of Isis cult, involving the burning of torches and lamps, are known such as *Νοκτελιον*, *Λοχναψια* and *Λαμπαδεια*

The task of torch lighting in the temple of Isis and Sarapis was assured each day by special auxiliary staff, the "λοχναπται", who as in the grand Sarapeion of Memphis, could even be stationed in a special chapel, called *λοχναπιον*.<sup>19</sup>

An inscription of Athena about 120 A.D., referring to a woman of the Ision of the city bears the title of "λοχναπτρια και νειρικριτις" "lamp-carrier and dream interpreter". It was

<sup>16</sup> Legrand Ph., Antiquities de Trezene, notes topographic, BCH 29, 1905, P. 302, Troizen is a small town in Greece, southwest of Athens, it has a temple dedicated to Isis

<sup>17</sup> Torok., op.cit, p.184; Perdrizet P., Les terres Cuites grecques d'Egypte de la collection Fouquet, Paris, 1921, cat.No.281-282-283-284-285

<sup>18</sup> Metcalf W., The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Coinage, Oxford, 2011, p.405-408

<sup>19</sup> Christopoulos M., Light and Darkness in ancient Greek Myth and Religion, Lexington Books, United Kingdom, 2010, p. 278

said that she explained dreams of the people who were encouraged by goddess to come to sleep in her sanctuary .

In another inscription of the same temple, there are dedications of torches , or rather of flares , that were used in illumination ritual . Another inscription from Delos , actually a list of subscribers in the Isiaque cult, names three females as light-bearers  $\lambda\alpha\mu\pi\tau\eta\rho\ \phi\ \rho\ \iota$  .<sup>20</sup>

There were priestesses of Isis who carried lamps and torches in the processions , Apuleius counted the torch-bearers among the principal priests in charge of the sacrifices<sup>21</sup>. In addition, an Isiac altar from Rome depicts in relief on one of its sides two priests , one holding and reading a scroll , the other holding a lighted torch .<sup>22</sup>

On other hand, in Isiaque religion, there was a celebration of the dead every year, which is the burial and resurrection of Osiris , this feast was celebrated in winter at night because of its funerary nature :” it was  $\pi\alpha\nu\nu\chi\iota\varsigma$  ( a night festival ) which gave place for illuminations  $\lambda\upsilon\chi\nu\ \kappa\alpha\iota\alpha\iota$  ,  $\lambda\upsilon\chi\nu\alpha\psi\iota\alpha\iota$  ( lighting of lamps ), and has processions of torches ,  $\lambda\alpha\mu\pi\alpha\delta\epsilon\iota\alpha\iota$ ”. Flaubert mentioned that Isis had many other feasts during the Graeco-Roman period that were held on lakes with a lot of illumination in Delta .<sup>23</sup>

Isis was assimilated with many Greek goddesses like **Aphrodite** in the form of Isis-Aphrodite who was always represented standing carrying a torch.<sup>24</sup> (pl.14 )

The association of Isis –Aphrodite with the torch and the lamp is clear, as one of her titles was “The fire of Hades “ and her function was to protect the houses through fire.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Perdrizet ,op.cit, p.107 ,( IG ,III,162) , ( IG ,III,204); Roussel P.,Les Cultes égyptiens á Delos :du IIIe au Ier siècle av.j.c., Paris ,1916,no.175 b,col.I,1,7,22,27,

<sup>21</sup> Griffiths ,op.cit,p.278

<sup>22</sup> Heyob Sh.K., The cult of Isis among women in the Graeco-Roman world , Netherland,1975,p.104 .

<sup>23</sup> Perdrizet ,op.cit ,p.107-108; Sourdille C.,Herodote et la religion de l’Egypte,Leroux,1910,p.87

<sup>24</sup> Perdrizet,op.cit,cat.no.281;Dunand,op.cit.,cat.no.40.

<sup>25</sup> Witt R.E., Isis in the ancient world, New York ,1971,p. 127

The Greeks identified Isis also with **Demeter**, the goddess of the harvest, who presided over grains and the fertility of the earth .

**Demeter** is always represented holding one or two torches (pl .15 ), in this case, there are different aspects which might be suggested by the use of the torch , on one hand the darkness of Hades , on the other hand the rites of initiation of the Eleusinian Mysteries and the ritual of the wedding and the funeral (Persephone's wedding with Hades and her relationship with the world of the dead ) . According to the legend Demeter used the torch to look for Persephone , and when she found her the whole ritual ended with celebration and waving of torches .<sup>26</sup>

A gold necklace with torches (pl.16a), probably was made in Alexandria ( 220-100 B.C. ) ,owned by a noble of Ptolemaic dynasty , besides a ring engraved with a torch (pl .16b), probably were worn by the priestesses of Isis-Demeter during the nocturnal rites.<sup>27</sup>On a shroud, probably from Antinoe , the deceased woman is represented as Isis-Demeter holding a torch<sup>28</sup> , Demeter was assimilated with Renenuetet , the goddess of nourishment and the harvest in ancient Egyptian religion .<sup>29</sup>The torch became the attribute of **Isis-Renenuetet (Thermouthis )** ,the serpent goddess,the protectress of crops who was venerated in Faiyum .

On a stela , displayed now in the museum of bibliotheca Alexandria , Demeter is represented standing holding a big torch between Agathodaimon and Isis-Thermouthis as a serpent .(pl.17)<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Christopoulos ,op.cit.,p.136

<sup>27</sup> Plantzos D.,Hellenistic engraved gems,Oxford,1999,pl.80,no.647-648

<sup>28</sup> Gasser M.P.,Catalogue de l'exposition Egypte ,moments d'eternite ,Geneve,1997,no.215

<sup>29</sup> Remler P.,Egyptian Mythology A to Z ,USA,2006,P.164

<sup>30</sup> Bayer-Niemeier E.,Griechisch-RömischeTerrakotten,Gutenberg,1988,Kat.Nr.112

In another example , terracotta figure of Isis-Thermuthis represented in a shrine surmounted by sun disc between two horns , with a cobra's body and the torch of Demeter (pl. 18 ).<sup>31</sup>

In some cases the torch appears connected with the underworld , such in the case of **Hekate** ,the Greek goddess who was associated with crossroads ,entrance-ways,fire and light , she is always represented holding a torch (pl .19 ) guiding Hades' chariot in the scene of the abduction of Persephone .

The torch was the attribute of **Artemis** the goddess of light whose divine duty was to illuminate the darkness, that's why she was often represented holding a torch .

The torch used also as a weapon appears in some images of Artemis represented as hunteress , in which Artemis is killing a deer using a torch as a weapon , possibly using it because of the destructive power of fire and also frightening aspect of the bright light .

At the same time , the idea of nocturnal hunting could be considered , if we think that Artemis is a goddess who shares some traits with Hekate – as nocturnal goddess – and also her association with Selene , we can deduce her nocturnal activities , which could be highlighted by the use of a torch .<sup>32</sup>

As for **Serapis** whose bust is represented on many terracotta torches ,he was the principal member of the Alexandrian triad , always represented as an old bearded man crowned with modius .

<sup>31</sup> Schmidt S.,Katalog der Ptolemäischen und Kaiserzeitlichen Objekte aus Ägypten im Akedemischen Kunstmuseum Bonn mit einem beitrage von Barbara Borg ,Mü nchen , 1997,Kat.no.83

<sup>32</sup> Christopoulos ,op.cit.,p.139-140

**Selene** , the goddess of the moon, the nocturnal sun , who was identified with Isis , represented as a woman holding a piglet in her right hand , and her left arm enclosing a monumental torchlight bears the same decorations of those in Dunand's catalogue , she had a feast held once every year , Perpillou-Thomas Fr.,Fêtes d'Égypte Ptolemaïque et Romaine d'après la documentation Papyrologique Grecque,Studia Hellenistica31,Louvain,1993,pp.203 - 209;Dunand,op.cit,no.971



This modius headdress is represented on some coins of Alexandria between two torches .<sup>33</sup> ( pl .20 )

Many attempts were made to etymologize the word “Serapis” ,several ancient authors including Macrobius , have affirmed that Serapis was a name for the sun , because his image so often had a halo of light around its head .<sup>34</sup>

Under the temple of Serapis in Alexandria that was destroyed by Theodosius , were found many subterranean crypts and caverns where many secret rites of Serapis were celebrated using torches.<sup>35</sup>

Serapis had many feasts in his temples in Alexandria and Canopus , Achilles Tatius who was a native Alexandrian gave us an impression of the city of Alexandria in the second century A.D. in the romantic novel “ Leucippe and Clitophon “ .He went to Serapis temple , and informed us that Serapis was the Egyptian equivalent to Zeus , for whome there were impressive torch-bearing processions.<sup>36</sup>

The third member of the Alexandrian triad who is represented on the terracotta torches is **Harpocrates** , the protector of children who was associated with the magical powers of his mother Isis. His birthday was celebrated with a lamp festival ,and many terracotta statuettes of Harpocrates,carrying a large torch with two ample grape clusters at the top, were frequently placed in temples as votive offerings.<sup>37</sup> ( pl. 21 ) .

The torch was also the attribute of god **Eros** in his Graeco-Egyptian form as a torchlight divinity,protector of the house

<sup>33</sup> Emmett K.,Alexandrian coins ,Lodi,2001 ,pl.XXX,no.29

<sup>34</sup> Hall M.P.,The Secret Teachings of all Ages ,San Francisco,1928,p.44;Ferguson J.,The Religion of the Roman Empire,Cornell university press,1985,p.36

<sup>35</sup> Ibid,p.47

<sup>36</sup> Mckenzie J.,The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt (300BC. to AD.700),Oxford University ,2011,V.63,P.188

<sup>37</sup> Griffiths ,op.cit,p.183

( pl.22 ).According to the Greek legend ,Eros the god of love used the torch to burn the hearts , and to take care of the illumination of the room of love .<sup>38</sup>

**Athena** is always represented holding spear and shield , armed with bow and arrows .On the other hand , during the Graeco-Roman period , Athena was identified with Neith , the Mistress of Sais, as Athena-Neith , she reinforces the protective power of the war goddess .

**Athena-Neith** was also the image of the nocturnal illumination of Sais and all Egypt , characterizing the feast that was dedicated to her .<sup>39</sup>(mentioned below)

Some terracotta torches are decorated with Dionysiac figures like the heads of Sileus and Satyrs , besides the bunches of grapes and vine leaves. (see table 1 ,pls.12-13 )

**Silenus** , according to Greek mythology ,was a companion and tutor of wine god Dionysos, as for Satyr , he was one of the male companions of Pan and Dionysos with goat-like features .

The association of **Dionysos** with the nocturnal dances and blazing torches is a persistent motif of Athenian drama.He was the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine,born by the fire of Zeus “lightening “ that strikes his mother Semele,and was also described as “ holding up the blazing flame of the pine-torch“ .<sup>40</sup>

Dionysos’ cult epithets include *νοκτελιϋς* , *φαστηριϋς* ,and his festivals were being held in the darkness of night amid the flickering and uncertain light of torches .<sup>41</sup>

One of the most repeated figures on the terracotta torches is **Bes** and his consort **Beset** .(see table 1 ,pls.3-5 )

<sup>38</sup> Graindor P.,Terres Cuites de l’Egypte Greco-Romaine ,Antwerpen,1939,cat.no.11; Breccia,op.cit,cat.no.108

<sup>39</sup> Dunand F.,Religion Populaire en Égypte Romaine ,EPRO 76,Leiden,1979,no.342

<sup>40</sup> Christopoulos ,op.cit.,p.237

Pine tree was associated with Dionysos /Bachus mythology as a symbol of fertility , Otto W.F.,Dionysus ,Myth and cult,U.S.A,1965,P.49

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.,p.238

Bes was the guardian of maternity and childhood, protector of house, and the distributor of fertile forces who encourages sexual intercourse. From the earliest time, he was connected with Hathor or Isis-Hathor, the goddess of fecundity and love who is represented on some amulets holding a torch.<sup>42</sup>

Bes was always represented on cosmetic items and household objects like mirrors and beds. May be the terracotta torches decorated with Bes were placed in bed rooms against nightmares, to ward off demons and diseases, and to invoke the sexual forces of Bes.<sup>43</sup>

One of the unique figures that is represented on the terracotta torches, is **Priapus**, the son of Aphrodite and Dionysus, who was the god of fertility, protector of livestock, fruit plants, gardens and male genitalia. He is always depicted as a bearded man holding his garment up to show his huge penis, which symbolizes garden fertility, and his head is crowned with calathus.<sup>44</sup>

His sacrificial animal was the ass, but agricultural offerings, such as fruit, flowers, vegetables and fish, were also very common. That's why he is represented on the terracotta torch

(**table 1, pl.8**) holding plants, and the lower part is decorated with engraved ears, probably to help the god to listen to the prayers of his worshippers, the same function as the ear stelae.

There are also terracotta lanterns in the shape of Greek lamps, flanked by two torches framing the heads of some Greek divinities like: (**pl.23 A-B-C-D**)

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<sup>42</sup> Dasen V., *Dwarfs in ancient Egypt and Greece*, Oxford, 1993, p.81

<sup>43</sup> Romano F., *The Origin of Bes image*, *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar* 2, 1980, pp.39-56

<sup>44</sup> Torok, *op.cit.* p.92; Graves R., *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, New York, 1963, p.160, for similar figures of Priapus, see Torok, *op.cit.* pl.LIX; Perdrizet, *op.cit.* pl.XLVI, XLVII

Dionysos , Silenus , Satyre , Aphrodite , Artemis , Ares , and Greek-Egyptian divinities like Harpocrates , Sarapis , Athena-Neith ,and Isis .<sup>45</sup>

## II- The Ritual uses of the torch

**The ignition of the torches** was part of the daily rituals of the temple , incantations were made with torches illumination to make them last for long time ,then they were distinguished by diving them in a basin of milk prefiguring the dawn announcing the new year .<sup>46</sup>

The *λυχναψια* “ illumination of the temple “ of Jupiter Capitolinus at Arsinoe ,is mentioned in the third century A.D.(215 A.D.) papyrus that records the accounts of the temple including oil for lighting lamps and torches along with other items for polishing and garlanding statues and other expenses for the procession and temple maintenance .<sup>47</sup>

During the Graeco-Roman period , the supplying of the temples with oil for the ignition of the god lamps is perpetuated , mentioned in the accounts of the temple of Soknopaios at Soknopaiou Nesos about 150 B.C. <sup>48</sup>

καὶ εἰς τὴν κατ' [ἔτος λυχναψίαν τῶν θεῶν]  
ἐκάστης ἡμέ[ρας μετρηταὶ ἔξ]  
συγχρισμὸς τοῖς α[(ὑποῖς)] ἱερεῦσι [ταῖς κω]μα[σίαις]  
τῶν προκειμένων θεῶν ἐλ(αίου) μ[(ετρηταὶ)] ζ̄.

<sup>45</sup> Bailey D.M., A catalogue of the lamps in the British Museum I,Greek,Hellenistic and early Roman Pottery Lamps ,Londres,1975,cat.no.Q609;Dunand F.,Lanternes Gréco-Romaines d'Égypte,in Dialogues d'histoire ancienn 2,Universite de Besancon,1976,pp.71-85,pls.III-XVI

<sup>46</sup> Gutbub A.,Un emprunt aux Textes des Pyramides dans l'Hymne a Hathor ,Dame de l'universe,MIFA0 66,Le Caire,1961,pp.41-50 ;Dümichen J.,Die Ceremonie des Lichtanzündens ,ZÄS 21,1883,PP.11-15;schott S.,op.cit,PP.1-25;Altenmüller H.,Löschchen der Fackeln in Milch, in LÄ III,col.1078

<sup>47</sup> Christopoulos ,op.cit.p.278;MacMullen R.,Pagnism and Christianity,100-425 AD.,A sourcebook,U.S.A.,1992,P.36

<sup>48</sup> Hombert M.,Les Papyrus de la Fondation Egyptologique Reine Élisabeth ,CD'E 15,1940,P.135

Metretes is an ancient Greek unit of liquid measurement equivalent to 37.4 liters

“ And for ( the ignition of god lamps) , during the year ( six metretes of oil ) per day, unction for the same priests ( on occasion ) of the processional feasts of the so-called gods ,six metretes of oil“

In the calendar of Esna temple , there is “ the Feast of Khnum “ on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the fourth month of summer , it was celebrated when the 12<sup>th</sup> hour of night comes , making the procession appear with lighting of numerous torches in it carried by all the men .<sup>49</sup>

Alongside the presence of the ritual of lighting torches in grand sanctuaries,torches and lamps were used extensively at small local sanctuaries , private chapels and domestic niches. Domestic usage of torches and lamps,in religiose context ,gained importance during the Roman occupation , since the financial difficulties plaguing Egyptian priests and sanctuaries more or less contributed to centrifugal tendencies toward village sanctuaries and domestic altars .<sup>50</sup>

### **A-The using of torches during feasts**

The *luchnapsia* or “ Ignition of lamps “ was one of the characteristic features in the ancient Egyptian liturgy , because light was considered to be the source of life .

Numerous festivals were celebrated in ancient Egypt by lighting lamps and torches as follows :-

### **1-Feast of the beginning of the year ( New Year )**

This feast is attested in the fifth dynasty , but it's probably much older . The beginning of the year is determined by Sirius star rises in the horizon before the sun , about 18-19<sup>th</sup> of July in our calendar .It is also was the moment that the water of the Nile changes its colour as the beginning of the flood .<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> El-Sabban Sh, Temple Festival Calendars of ancient Egypt ,Liverpool Monographs in Archaeology, 2000,p. 168

<sup>50</sup> Frankfurter D. ,Religion in Roman Egypt:Assimilation and Resistance,Princeton University,1998,p.133

<sup>51</sup> Daumas F.,Neujahr,in LÄ IV,.,col.466 =

The night preceding the rising of star Sirius was called “The overnight of Re”, and considered like a lapse of full-time of dangers during which the hostile force could threaten the working order of the cosmos, that’s why many ceremonies should be performed that night including illumination of torches continued during the first day of the New Year.<sup>52</sup>

## 2- The Five Epagomenal days

The ancient Egyptian year consists of 360 days, divided into 12 months, every of 30 days, plus five additional days.

Since the Old Kingdom, according to the Pyramid Texts, these five days inserted between the finishing year and the beginning year, and were considered the days of the successive birth of Osiris, Horus, Seth, Isis, and Nephthys.<sup>53</sup>

During this transient period ( five days ), and to prevent ominous powers to disrupt the cosmic order, proceeded rituals were made including incantations and torches were lit in tombs.

## 3- Wg feast or the feast of the deceased

It is the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> of July and the day of the 18<sup>th</sup> of July in our calendar, considered to be one of the most important feasts in the funeral tradition, mysterious with regard to its significance and the progress of ceremonies.<sup>54</sup>

In the mortuary contracts between Djef-Hapi and the staff of Anubis temple and Wepwawet temple, it is stipulated that the staff has to lit torches for his statue during this night and the day of wg feast, besides carrying his statue to the temple of

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=Sirius, the most leminouse star of China, it is named in Egypt Sopedet which is transcribed in Greek Sothis, It was identified by many goddesses such as Bastet holding a torch and was also represented as dog in the popular religion during the Graeco-Roman period

<sup>52</sup> Fairman M.A., Worship and Festivals in an Egyptian Temple, Bulletin of the John Rylands Library 37, Manchester, 1954, pp. 165-203

<sup>53</sup> Helck W., Epagomenen, in LÄ II, col. 1231

<sup>54</sup> Kaplony P., Wag-Fest, in LÄ VI, col. 1135

Wepwawet , and this was an attested well in the funeral literature until the Roman period .<sup>55</sup>

#### 4-Feast of Khoiak

This feast revolves around the myth of the god Osiris, who murdered by his brother Seth, and revived by his sister-wife Isis to the point where she could conceive their son Horus. Osiris withdrew to rule the underworld, while Isis protected Horus until he was old enough to avenge his father in battle with Seth, and win the throne.<sup>56</sup>

Khoiak is the name of the fourth month after inundation , on 25<sup>th</sup> of it , which became 26<sup>th</sup> in the late period , was the “ feast of Sokar “ .

Sokar was the main god of Memphis, assimilated with Osiris in the Old Kingdom , and was the guarantor of the nocturnal metamorphoses of the deads to be born again as Osiris.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike the localized Opet or Decade festivals which were celebrated only in Thebes ,the Khoiak festival was celebrated throughout the country and not restricted to the sites originally linked to the myth .<sup>58</sup>

The timing of the festival in the official year placed it in the fourth month of flood, just as the water receded to expose silt-covered fields fresh for sowing.

During the Graeco-Roman period , many feasts were dedicated to Osiris and Sokar ,they lasted from 12<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> of Khoiak .<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Beinlich H.,Djef-hapi I,in IÄ I , col.1105

<sup>56</sup> Chassinat E.,Les Mysteres d'Osiris au mois de Khoiak ,I,le Caire ,1966,pp.41-45

<sup>57</sup> Dumas F.,Choiakfeste , in IÄ I , col.958

The name of **Khoiak** was ka-her-ka 'ka upon ka' (or 'sustenance upon sustenance'), it survived into Christian times as the name of the fourth month of the season of flood, rendered in Coptic as Khoiak, Eaton K.J.,The Festivals of Osiris and Sokar in the month of Khoiak,SAK 35,2006,p.77

<sup>58</sup> Teeter E.,Religion and Ritual in ancient Egypt,CambridgeUniversity,2011,p.58

<sup>59</sup> Eaton K.J.,op.cit,PP.75-101,pls.5-6

They had many rituals consisting of a procession on the lake in the 8<sup>th</sup> hour of the day , on 34 boats of papyrus of about 58 cm long , 34 divinities were placed , among them were Horus , Thot ,Anubis , Isis , and Nephthys escorting semblance consecrations with an effigy of Osiris made of barley called “ vegetant Osiris “ , the boats carried 365 torches .<sup>60</sup>

according to a decree that marked the Battle of Raphia in 217 BC. ,a major festival of lights occurred for the rites of Osiris on the 22nd day of the month of Khoiak (December), when 365 lamps were lit.<sup>61</sup>

### 5- Panegyrie of Neith-Athena in Sais

Neith *nt* “ the unique “ is a very old goddess , attested since the early dynasties . she is the origin of the world , primordial water , who came first to the existence , proceeded all creatures, giving birth to the sun god Re, protecting the deceased and assuring his resurrection .

Neith was the celestial arch , protector goddess armed with bow and arrows , that’s why she was identified with the Greek goddess Athena .<sup>62</sup>

Her cult center was Sais which had a great importance with the kings of Saite period till the end of the Graeco-Roman period . In this period Sais (Sa el-Hagar ) was paired with Esna which was called “ Sais of the south “.

There were many feasts in her honour , but the biggest feast is that mentioned by Herodotus , probably took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Epeiph , corresponding to the month of July in our calendar .

A very interesting text by Herodotus reports that torches and lamps , corresponding to the light sources used in the temple , were lit in all city around private houses after the reinstallation of the goddess in her temple “ *Ες Σαιν δε πολιν επεαν*

<sup>60</sup> Teeter,op.cit,p.58

<sup>61</sup> Griffiths ,op.cit,p.184

<sup>62</sup> El-Sayed R.,La Déesse Neith de Sais ,Bibliothèque d’Etude 86,1 et 2,Le Caire,IFAO,1982



*συλλεχθεωσι της θυσης εν τη νυκτι λοχνα καιουσι παντες πολλα υπαιθρια περιτα δωματα κυκλω (.....)Και τη ορτη σουνομα κειται Λυχνοκαιη”* , and this was happening not only in Sais but everywhere in Egypt , this rendering remote participations possible for the physical absence .<sup>63</sup>

### **B-At funerals**

With both the Greeks and the Romans, burial was considered a religious duty to be performed,even in the case of executed criminals, by the nearest relative, otherwise the ghost of the dead man would wander about with a baneful influence on the lives of those who had denied his due reception to the underworld.<sup>64</sup>

Traditionally , it was the ancient Roman custom for funerals to be conducted at night by the light of torches which were still carried before the body, but in historical times , the funerals of all,but children and poor,took place by day .<sup>65</sup>

The general practice of *luchnapsia* was part of rites for the care of the dead, in which context the torch flames might be considered perpetuating the soul of the deceased and light the way for him.<sup>66</sup>

Torches, candles, and lamps were placed about the couch of the deceased ,the funeral procession of body bearers, was also accompanied by musicians and bearers of torches, then the body was placed on the pyre ,and one of the near relatives of the deceased held the torch to kindle the pyre .<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Herodotus , II ,62 ;Christopoulos,op.cit,p.278

<sup>64</sup> Toynbee J.M.C ,Death and burials in the Roman world , Johns Hopkins University ,1996,p. 57

<sup>65</sup> Ibid,p.46

<sup>66</sup> Heller J.L.,Burial Customs of the Romans ,The Classical Weekly 25,no.24,1932,p.193

Although the purifying power of the torches is not clearly attested , other interpretations of their use pertain to purifying qualities attributed to fire ,the gesture of shaking torches has been interpreted as a means of purification, Parisinou,op.cit,p.124

<sup>67</sup> Ibid,pp.195-196

On the day in AD 20 on which Germanicus ashes were buried in the same place , the Campus Maritus blazed with torches and the streets were packed with mourning soldiers,Toynbee,op.cit,p.57

The torches accompanied the deceased till the tomb, it is mentioned also that an amulet representing flaming wick was placed on a magic brick in the south wall of the vault of the tomb with a protective formula preventing the sand to bury the vault .<sup>68</sup>

One of the most preserved limestone funerary stela from Abydos, dated back to the Roman period , flanked by Anubis and Osiris are four figures identified by the Greek inscription : "two adults, Pekysis, son of Aruotes, and his brother Pachoumis; two children, "Tbaikis the elder and Tbaikis the younger."<sup>69</sup>

Pekysis is probably the individual holding a big torch (pl.24 ), as an attribute associated with the underworld in Graeco-Roman mythology.

Moreover ,on a certain stucco mummy casting of the Roman period , the deceased woman is represented holding a lighted candle to illuminate her road in the underworld .<sup>70</sup> (pl. 25 )

### C- At Weddings

Both wedding and funeral had parallel rituals and overlapping rites which took place at night . They both involve a night journey accompanied by people carrying torches , to light the way, and perhaps , to express also the ideal protection .<sup>71</sup>

The wedding torches were accompanied wedding processions as part of the ceremony, the most important of these was carried by the bride's mother to light the fire in the groom's household . This was an important and characteristic feature of wedding ritual that illegitimate marriage was described as "nuptials without torches "<sup>72</sup>

The torch of wedding is mentioned in the Roman Epithalamia ( wedding songs ) , the bridal procession was preceded by a boy

<sup>68</sup> De Cenival J.L.,Le Livre pour sortir le jour ,Le Livre des morts Égyptiens ,Paris,1992,p.98

<sup>69</sup> Wypustek A.,Images of Eternal Beauty in Funerary verse Inscriptions of the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman periods,Greece,2012,p.100

<sup>70</sup> Corcoran L.H., Portrait Mummies from Roman Egypt( I-IV centuries A.D.) , Chicago,1995,p.64,pl.25; Toynbee ,op.cit,p.50

<sup>71</sup> Christopoulos,op.cit,p.137

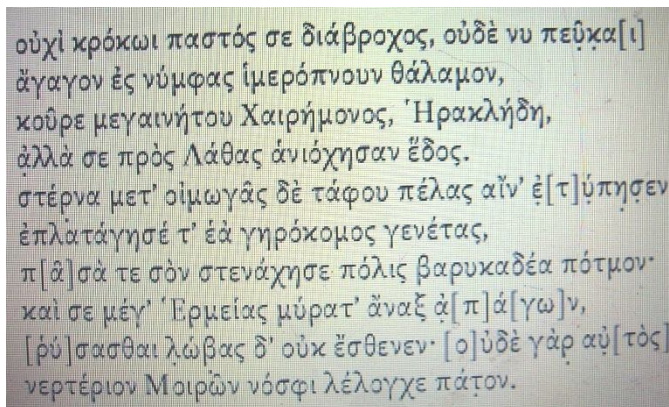
<sup>72</sup> Wypustek,op.cit,P.101

holding a torch made of pine for good luck , and the whole procession was illuminated with five torches that were extinguished on the arrival of the bride's home for long age .<sup>73</sup>

The pine torches are always mentioned carried by bride's friends who are waving with them to announce the arrival of the bride .In some cases the torches are held , one upright and the other lowered toward the ground , this up-and-down gesture was performed by Hekate ,Persephone , and Demeter , could be connected to the prosperity of the earth .<sup>74</sup>

The wedding torch is also mentioned in funerary Epigrams referring to the myth closely associated with the idea of wedding in Hades or with Hades , particularly appeared on the tombs of those who had died unmarried .

On the funerary limestone stela of Herakleides<sup>75</sup> ,who died before marriage, placed by his father Chaerenon , from the Greek city of Naukratis , dated back to the second century A.D,is inscribed :



<sup>73</sup> For more information about The Roman Epithalamia, see "The Roman Epithalamia until the end of the first century AD., unpublished thesis, faculty of Arts, Alexandria University, 2007

<sup>74</sup> Parisinou E., The Light of Gods: The Role of Light in Archaic and classical Greek culture, Bristol, 2000, p.62

<sup>75</sup> Montserrat D. , Sex and Society in Graeco-Roman Egypt, Routledge, 1996, p.97; Exhibited now in Museum of Fine Arts, Boston , no.037

“ *Nor saffron tapestries or **wedding torch** led to the wedding chamber where desire breathes ,Herakleides son of renowned Chairemon but to home of the Lethe.....* “<sup>76</sup>

No.of plate	Material	Place of finding	Decoration items	Bibliography
Pl.1	Red Terracotta H.20 c.m	Antinopolis	Male and Female heads with basket of Fruits	Dunand F., Catalogue des teres cuites ge-co-romaines d’Egypte, paris , 1990, pl. 968
PL.2	Grey rose Terracotta H.20 c.m	Antinopolis	Busts of Alexandrian triad (Sarapis-Isis-Harpocrates)	Dunand F., Catalogue des teres cuites ge-co-romaines d’Egypte, paris , 1990, pl. 969
PL.3 A-B	Red Terracotta A 19.9 c.m B 26.5 c.m	Faiyum	God Bes ,Bunches of grapes,Female head (Beset)	Dunand F., Catalogue des teres cuites ge-co-romaines d’Egypte, paris , 1990, pl. 970-973
PL.4	Red Terracotta 29.7 c.m	Unknown	Divided into five parts decorated with vertical lines,lozenges,and zigzag decoration	Dunand F., Catalogue des teres cuites ge-co-romaines d’Egypte, paris , 1990, pl. 971
Pl.5	Red Terracotta A 24.4 c.m	Unknown	Head of Bes at its base with tall plumes decorated with dots	A-Dunand F., Catalogue des teres cuites ge-co-romaines d’Egypte, paris , 1990, pl. 972
Pl.6 A-B	Red and brown Terracotta A 20.7 c.m B 22.4 c.m	Unknown	Horizontal lines ,interlacing garlands with the bust of Sarapis crowned with calathos	A-Dunand F., Catalogue des teres cuites ge-co-romaines d’Egypte, paris , 1990, pl. 974 B-Breccia E.Monuments de l’Egypte Greco-Romaine,1926,Tome Deuxieme,pl.CXIX.no.693
Pl.7	Red and brown Terracotta 15.7 c.m (broken )	Unknown	Bust of Isis-Thermouthis crowned with sun disc with a big serpent in the upper	Breccia E.Monuments de l’Egypte Greco-Romaine,1926,Tome Deuxieme,pl.CXIX.no.694

<sup>76</sup> Bernard E.,Inscriptions métriques de l’Égypte gréco-romaine,Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte,Paris,1969,no.67

			part between two opened ends	
Pl.8	Red Terracotta A 27.4 c.m	Unknown	Figure of Priapus in the upper part, and representation of engraved ears in the lower part	Breccia E.Monuments de l'Egypte Greco-Romaine,1926,Tome Deuxieme,pl.CXIX.no.696
Pl.9	Red Terracotta 22.5 c.m	Unknown	Bust of Sarapis in the upper part , and a bust of an unknown Egyptian king with <i>nemes</i> ,encircled with wreathes ,placed on a pedestal ,in the lower part	Bayer-Niemeier E.,Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten ,Liebiegehaus-Museum Alter Plastik,Sammlung der Kaufmann,Band 1,Gutenberg,1988,Taf.122.3
Pl.10	Red and brown Terracotta 15.6 c.m (broken )	Unknown	Incised lines in the lower part with two interlacing wreathes with bunches of grapes and a flower in the upper part	Bayer-Niemeier E.,Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten ,Liebiegehaus-Museum Alter Plastik,Sammlung der Kaufmann,Band 1,Gutenberg,1988,Taf.122.6

No.of plate	Material	Place of finding	Decoration items	Bibliography
PL.11	Red Terracotta H.20.4 c.m	Unknown	Satyr head in the upper part and bunches of grapes with vine leaves	Bayer-Niemeier E.,Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten ,Liebiegehaus-Museum Alter Plastik,Sammlung der Kaufmann,Band 1,Gutenberg,1988,Taf.123.4
PL.12 A-B	Red Terracotta A 19.9 c.m B 13.1 c.m	Unknown	A-Silenus mask in upper and in lower part are bunches of grapes inside medallions B-The mask of Satyr in the upper part , and the mask of Silenus in the lower part	A-Bayer-Niemeier E.,Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten ,Liebiegehaus-Museum Alter Plastik,Sammlung der Kaufmann,Band 1,Gutenberg,1988,Taf.123.5 B- Bayer-Niemeier E.,Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten , Taf.124.2
PL.13	Brown Terracotta 13.4 c.m	Unknown	Bust of Isis on sun disc , crowned with Isiaque crown , holding in her left hand unclear object ,probably a torch or sistrum	Bayer-Niemeier E.,Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten ,Liebiegehaus-Museum Alter Plastik,Sammlung der Kaufmann,Band 1,Gutenberg,1988,Taf.124.1



**Pl.1 Terracotta torch  
with male and female heads**  
After, Dunand F., *Catalogue des terres cuites*  
,1990,Pl.968



**Pl.2 Terracotta torch  
with busts of Sarapis ,Isis and Harpocrates**  
After Dunand F.,*op.cit*, 1990, pl. 969



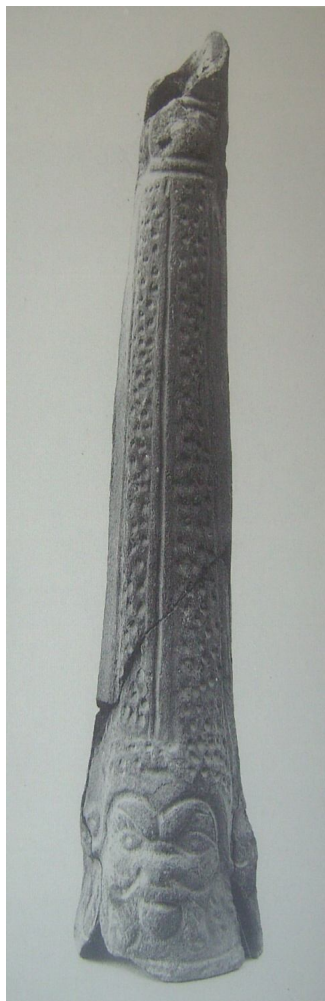
A

B

Pl.3 (A-B) Terracotta torches decorated with Bes and Beset with grapes  
After, Dunand F., *op.cit*, 1990., pl. 970-973



**Pl.4 Terracotta torch**  
with vertical lines,lozenges,and zigzag  
After, Dunand F.,*op.cit*, 1990,, pl .971  
1990,, pl.972



**Pl.5 Terracotta torch**  
with Bes head and tall plumes  
After, Dunand F., *op.cit*,  
1990,, pl.972





A

B

Pl.6 (A-B) Terracotta torches with garlands and bust of Sarapis crownrd with calathos

After, Dunand F., *op.cit*, 1990,, pl .974 ; Breccia E.*Monuments de l'Egypte Greco-Romaine*,1926,Tome Deuxieme,pl.CXIX.no.693



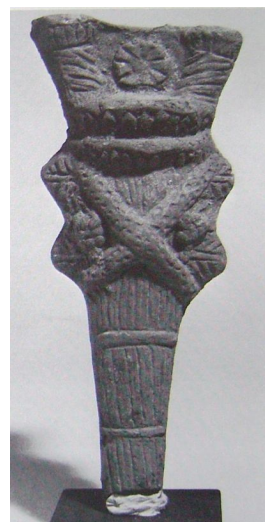
Pl.7 Terracotta torch with bust of Isis-Thermouthis and a serpent  
After, Breccia E.,  
*op.cit*,1926,PL.CXIX,no.694



Pl.8 Terracotta torch decorated with figure of Priapus and engraved ears  
After,Breccia E.,  
*op.cit*,1926,PL.CXIX,no.696



Pl.9 Terracotta torch decorated with busts of Sarapis and an Egyptian king  
After, Bayer-Niemeier E.,*Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten*  
1988,Taf.122.3



Pl.10 Terracotta torch decorated with wreathes ,a flower and bunches of grapes  
After,Bayer-Niemeier,*op.cit*,Taf.122.6



**Pl.11 Terracotta torch  
decorated with Satyr head in the upper part  
and bunches of grapes with vine leaves  
After, Bayer-Niemeier E.,*op.cit*,1988,Taf.123.4**



A

B

Pl.12 A-Terracotta torch decorated with Silenus mask and bunches of grapes

B- Terracotta torch decorated with masks of Satyr and Silenus

After, Bayer-Niemeier E.,*op.cit*,1988,Taf.123.5 ,124.2



Pl.13 Terracotta torch decorated with bust of Isis on sun disc

After, Bayer-Niemeier E.,*op.cit*,1988,Taf.124.1



Pl.14 Isis-Aphrodite carrying a torch  
After , Bayer-Niemeier  
E.,op.cit,1988,Taf. 119.1



Pl.15 Demeter holding a torch  
After , Breccia  
E.op.cit,1926,pl.XLVIII.no.226-229



A



B

PL.16 , ( A ) A gold necklace with torches

(B) Ring engraved with a torch

After , Plantzos D.,*Hellenistic engraved gems*,Oxford,1999,pl.80,no.647-648



Pl.17 Demeter is standing holding a big torch between Agathodaimon and Isis-Thermouthis as a serpent

After, <http://antiquities.bibalex.org/home/index.aspx?lang=en,registration>

Registration No,BAAM serial T0016 , Graeco-Roman Museum Inv.3180



Pl.18 Isis-Thermouthis represented in a shrine with a cobra's body and the torch of Demeter

After, Schmidt S.,*Katalog der Ptolemäischen und Kaiserzeitlichen Objekte*, 1997,Kat.no.83

- 104 -



Pl.19 Hekate holding a torch

After, Kaufmann C.M., *Ägyptische Terrakotten der Griechische-Römischen und Koptische Epoche*, Kairo, 1913, Taf. 56



Pl.20 Modius headdress between two torches

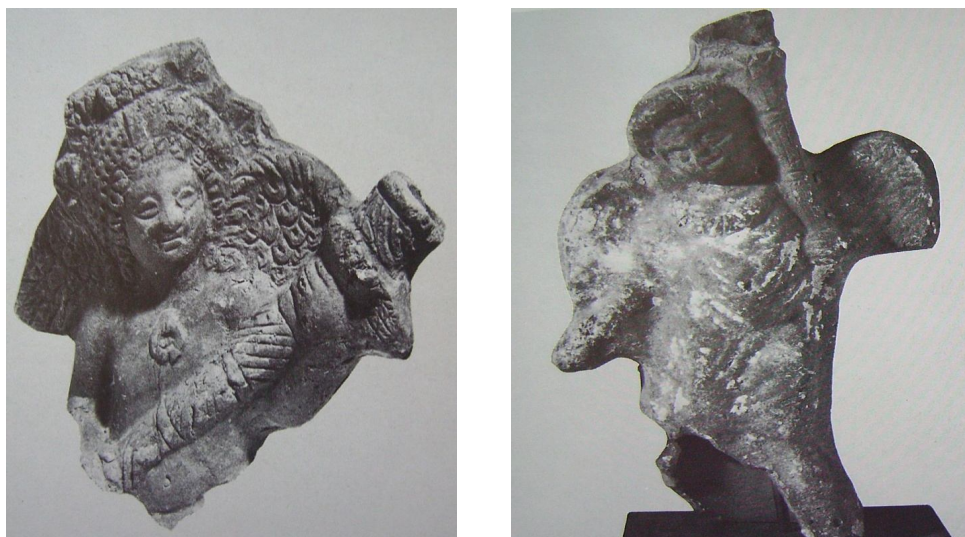
After, Emmett K., *Alexandrian coins*, Lodi, 2001, pl. XXX, no. 29





Pl.21 Harpocrates carrying a large torch

After, After, Kaufmann C.M., *op.cit.*, 1913, p.91; After , Breccia  
E.*op.cit.*, 1926, pl.LXVI.no.344



Pl.22 Eros carrying a torch

After, Kaufmann C.M., *op.cit.*, 1913, Taf.365,361,362



Pl.23 lanterns in the shape of Greek lamps , flanked by two torches framing the heads of Greek divinities

A-Harpocrates B-Isis-Thermouthis C-Silenus D-Dionysus or Satyr

After , Dunand F., *Lanternes Gréco-Romaines d'Égypte*, in *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*, Université de Besançon, pp.71-85, pls.I-IV



Pl.24 limestone funerary stela of Pekysis holding a torch  
After, Wypustek A., *Images of Eternal Beauty*, 2012, p.100



Pl.25 A stucco mummy casting , the deceased woman is represented holding a lighted candle

After, Corcoran L.H., *Portrait Mummies from Roman Egypt ( I-IV centuries A.D.)* ,  
Chicago, p.64, pl.25

### ملخص البحث :

استخدمت المشاعل في مصر الفرعونية كمصدر للضوء وكذلك في الطقوس المختلفه داخل المعابد والمقابر . وفي العصر اليونانى الرومانى أصبح المشعل من العلامات المميزه لعدد من الآلهه ، هذا بالاضافه الى استخداماته فى العديد من الطقوس الليله خاصة فى الأعياد .

يهدف هذا البحث الى توضيح الاستخدامات الطقسيه للمشاعل المصنوعه من التراكوتا من خلال فهم علاقه بين الآلهه المصوره عليها وطقوسهم الدينيه الليله ، بالاضافه الى الاستخدامات الأخرى لها فى الجنازات والأعراس التى كانت تضم عددا من الطقوس التى تتم ليلا على أضواء المشاعل .