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Patera in Græco-Roman Egypt; Religious Symbolism and Artistic Representation

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Abstract

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The patera was a circular, shallow dish used by the Romans, who borrowed it from the Etruscans, to use it during their religious ceremonies. It was used for offering wine libations to the deities. A number of these vessels were intended for religious worship, though the nature of this worship remains obscure. Some of these vessels were offered as gifts without any explanation of the purpose behind their offering. Furthermore, the patera was associated with certain celebrations of the gods such as; the cult of the Apis bull and was presented as a votive object. The aim of this research is to explore the religious functions of the patera and its association with gods and goddesses, whether Egyptian or Greek. Moreover, this paper investigates and traces the religious as well as the funerary symbolism of this sacrificial bowl according to its artistic context. Furthermore, the research throws the light on the iconography of the paterae on various artistic pieces in Egypt including funerary stelae, divine statues and coins as well as surviving paterae objects.

1. Introduction

The word “patera” (φιάλη) comes from Latin, but it is originally driven from the Greek word *patane* “Πατανη” and *phiale* (Whiter,1822–1825,1825,113) meaning “a flat, circular dish” (Murray, 1875, 871) featuring a subtle central bulge that rose from its base. Some of which have the form of a shell on one side whilst otherwise copying features and decoration of standard patera designs (Thomas,2019,8). This sacrificial bowl is considered one of the libation vases (Brunner,1980, col. 1078 & Van Haarlem, 1998, 183). In ancient times, this sacred vessel, was particularly used for religious rituals as it was employed to pour the libation, or drink offering, which was often sprinkled on the head of the sacrificial animal before making offerings (Thompson, 2007, 30).

The blood of the sacrificed animal was also collected in the bowl (Harvey, 2011,203). Paterae were originally crafted from baked clay. Later on, they were made from other metals

such as; bronze, a metal closely associated with the gods. Over time, gold and silver became common materials used for manufacturing paterae. They were often adorned with intricate designs in high relief (**Stevenson& Smith,1889,606**). Gold and silver bowls were used to hold libation which was usually wine poured in honor of the gods (**Ovid.Met.IX.160, Fast.II634& Athen. XI,482**), either by priests or temple visitors in religious ceremonies (**Pinch, 1883, 302**). By the Greek and Roman times, the patera was manufactured in Egypt and became a symbol of the Ptolemaic ruling couple and their blessing function (**Thompson, 1973, 32-33**).

2. The Patera as a Remarkable Libation Bowl

The patera was used for religious purposes, offered as a gift to gods, and frequently depicted in the hands of deities. Starting from the late fifth century BC and continuing through the Hellenistic and Roman eras, gods, goddesses, and heroes were commonly shown holding a patera. These divine figures are often illustrated either holding the bowl in a gesture of receiving liquid offerings or depicted in the context of making libations (**Gaifman, 2018, 445 & Thompson, 2007, 97& Abd El-Hamid, 2010, 391**).

The patera played a crucial role in public ceremonies conducted by emperors, highlighting their piety and their relationship with the gods. The Roman emperor Augustus is frequently depicted holding the patera in his portraits, revealing his role as an intermediary between the deities and common people. A number of these vessels were intended for religious worship, though the nature of this worship remains obscure. Some of these vessels were offered as gifts without any explanation of the purpose behind their offering (**Karaman, 2018, 137**).

The patera, as a symbol of religious devotion, was associated with various deities whether Greek or Egyptian deities. For example, Zeus, Apollo (**Fig.1**), Serapis, Harpocrates, Demeter, Isis and Hera were depicted holding this sacrificial vessel (**Fraser, 1972, I, 240-241& RRC, 343/1a, 385/4, 449/1a, 460/4**). Indeed, deities were depicted holding the patera and performing libations. In this iconography, the deities reveal their role as models of divine behavior for human piety and reflecting their mythological stories. The patera was held by deities to convey concepts of divine self-sufficiency, and, more recently, embody a form of divine reflexivity (**Gaifman, 2018, 445**).



Fig.1 Apollo pouring a libation, Interior of white-ground cup, ca. 480-470 B.C Delphi
Archaeological Museum 8140

After: (**Gaifman, 2013, fig.1**)

In Egypt, the patera was depicted in the hands of various deities, both major and minor, symbolizing the divine honors given to them (**Stevenson& Smith 1889,478**). The gods depicted on the patera or those holding a patera include Serapis, Isis, and Harpocrates, among

others. During the Greco-Roman period, the patera was closely linked to the Thracian god Heron, whose cult was particularly prominent in Egypt, especially in the Fayoum region (Kaper & Klaas, 1999, 246-248). In Egypt, Heron is commonly shown either on horseback or standing before an altar, holding a patera designed for making a libation (Omran, 2015, 207).

The painting portrays Heron (Fig.2), a god of Thracian origin, standing next to an altar. While it is significantly damaged, years of careful conservation have revealed several previously obscured features. Heron is shown standing, with a large, curved cornucopia to his left, likely supported by his left arm. In his right hand, he might have once held a patera (now lost) intended for pouring a libation onto a high altar (Czerner, Grażyna, 2020, 328).

The sides of the funerary altar are carved with a patera "libation bowl", which reference the practice of pouring liquids in memory of the deceased. These vessels are commonly depicted on funerary altars as they symbolize the act of offering libations during rituals intended to honor and commemorate the dead (Macmullen, 2017, 127 & Thompson, 2007, 120).



Fig.2 Painting depicting Heron from Room 5c of House H10

After: (Czerner, Grażyna, 2020, Fig.10)

On an oinochoe (Fig.3) (i.e. a type of ancient Greek wine jug), Arsinoe is depicted standing and holding a patera in her right hand, from which she is pouring a libation, while her left hand grasps a double cornucopia, symbolizing abundance (Fraser, 1972, 240-241 & Thompson, 1973, 126 & Ashton, 2001, 160-161, no. 160; 166- 167, no.166 & Van Oppen de Ruiter 2007, 427)



Fig.3 An oinochoe of Arsinoe II, Faience, Ptolemaic period, British Museum, Inv., No., 1873,0820.389.

After: [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1873-0820-\(accessed 23/7/2024 6pm\)](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1873-0820-(accessed%2023/7/2024%206pm)).

In addition to its main sacrificial symbolism, the patera had a significant priestly concept when it carried by Roman emperors (**BMCRE I, 20, no.98**). Thus, Augustus, Tiberius, and the Roman empress Livia Drusilla (59 BC – AD 29) wife of Augustus were depicted holding the patera in sculpture as well as coins, revealing their sacred responsibilities (**Harvey, 2011, 204 & RIC I2, no. 48**).

In art, Livia Drusilla was depicted, most frequently in the seated pose, and holding the patera in her right hand. This iconography reveals her divine associations particularly with Vesta and Ceres. Additionally, the patera symbolized Livia's religious role as the priestess of her deified husband Augustus. These divine and priestly connotations are further emphasized by the presence of the scepter in many of her representations (**Harvey, 2011, 204**). Based on its sacrificial role, gods, priests as well as emperors are commonly seen next to an altar, where they appear to be pouring libations from a patera (**Stevenson, Smith, 1889,478**).

3. The Votive Patera

The patera was associated with certain celebrations of the gods such as; the cult of the Apis bull and was presented as a votive object. This was confirmed by both Pliny and Plutarch who confirmed using votive paterae in the Nile festivals of Memphis as follows (**Wilkinson, 1878,93**) *“During the seven days when his birth was celebrated at Memphis in the processions in honour of the divine Bull. On this celebration, a votive patera of gold and silver was annually thrown into the Nile, at a spot called from its form ' the Bottle:' and while this festival was held, no one was in danger of being attacked by crocodiles, though bathing carelessly in the river. But it could no longer be done with impunity after the sixth hour of the eighth day. The hostility of that animal to man was then observed invariably to return, as if permitted by the deity to resume its habits”* (**Pliny. lib. viii. c. 48, Plut. de Isid. s. 5.**). Despite of using gold and silver patera as votive objects, ancient sources indicate that pottery paterae were offered as votives to gods such as; Apollo in Delos. Thus, it can be said that pottery paterae were offered as votives in the shrines of Greek gods in Egypt (**Török,1995,180**).

4. Patera in Art in Græco-Roman Egypt

In art, the paterae were attested in many aspects in Egypt during the Greek and Roman times as follows;

4.1 Patera Objects

Many votive paterae were discovered in Egypt. For instance, there is a black steatite votive patera (**Fig.4**) which was discovered in Thebes and dates back to the Roman period (3rd century-4th century AD). This remarkable votive object (Height 2 cm, Width 13 cm, Depth 12 cm), is a shallow bowl revealing the bust of three deities in high relief, namely Serapis, Isis, and another figure with a tall headdress. Below them are two winged figures, and the scene is framed by six clusters of grapes. The rim is decorated with scroll-like patterns (some of which are damaged), and the bottom shows a rosette surrounded by leafy designs (**Evans,1909, 89-102**).



Fig.4 Votive patera made of steatite, 3rd-4th Century, Thebes, EA 38517

After: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA38517(accessed 27/7/2024 6pm)

Another bronze patera (**Fig.5**) (height 29.10 cm, diameter 15.70 cm) was discovered in Qasr Ibrim in the Nubian region. It dates back to the Roman period (4th century – 6th century AD) and is preserved now in the British Museum. The two-tiered patera with a beaded rim, a cast animal mask at the front. The handle is intricately designed with an openwork structure, ending in a mask-shaped terminal (**strudwick,2006, 322-323& Maillot Frened ,1974, 45**).



Fig.5 Votive patera, , 4th Century, British museum,EA67163

After: <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/14391001>((accessed 15/2/2024 7pm).

As for this circular black steatite votive patera (**Fig.6**), it displays a raised relief of Harpocrates, depicted sitting on the back of a goose, with papyrus plants in the background. The underside is adorned with a rosette, while the rim shows some chipping. Like the

previous examples, this well-preserved patera (depth: 1.93 cm, Diameter: 9.50 cm) (Evans,1908,89-102).



Fig.6 Patera used as a votive offering, British museum, EA38516

After: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA38516 (accessed 19/2/2024 11pm)

This Roman votive patera (**Fig.7**) (Length: 10.21 cm, Width: 8.25 cm, Depth: 1.50 cm) displays the figure of Isis seated on the back of a wolf. The Egyptian goddess is flanked with two erotes (winged figures) positioned below. The rim is adorned with a plant motif, though much of it is now worn away. The underside is decorated with a rosette surrounded by bands of foliate patterns (BM EA 32255, Louvre MA 2734).



Fig.7 A votive patera, Roman period, Egypt, British Museum, EA69182

After: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA69182 (accessed 25/2/2024 9pm)

Fragments of paterae were excavated in Egypt. For example, this fragment of a steatite votive patera (**Fig.8**) (Length: 8 cm, Width: 4.22 cm, Depth: 1.67cm) is preserved now in the British Museum. It displays the busts of a ram-headed Osiris, Isis, and another goddess in high relief. The underside is decorated with a rosette (Louvre MA 2734, BM EA 32255).



Fig.8 Votive patera, Graeco-Roman period, Egypt, British museum, EA38513

After: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA38513 (accessed 15/2/2024 7pm).

Another fragment of a green steatite votive patera (**Fig.9**) was discovered and preserved now in the British Museum. The remaining part of the patera (height 5.78 cm, width 0.97 cm, depth 12 cm) displays the figure of Harpocrates in high relief. On the underside, there is a rosette design (**Louvre MA 2734, BM EA 32255**).



Fig.9 Patera used as a votive offering, steatite, Graeco-Roman period, Egypt, British museum, EA36135

After: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA36135 (accessed 15/2/2024 7pm).

Ultimately, there is a remarkable handle of a patera (**Fig.10**) (length 12.6 cm) that reveals the head of Meduza in high relief. This remarkable object is made of red Nile clay and was crafted using a pottery wheel. The handle ends in the head of Medusa, with her features clearly visible, including her furrowed brow, bulging eyes, and the typical marks of fury on her face (**Abd El-Hamid, 2010,391**).



Fig.10 Patera Handle

After: (Török,1995, PL. CLIX).

4.2 Divine Statues and Paterae

During the Græco- Roman period, the patera became a common attribute which was not only held by gods but also by priests, Roman emperors and their wives. Sculptural examples of Serapis show the god carrying this sacrificial bowl in his hands. In the majority of these depictions, Serapis is shown holding a cornucopia in his left hand and a patera in his right hand, as though performing a libation. He is often shown positioned above an altar, reinforcing the ritualistic context of the scene. Serapis is frequently shown holding a patera in

various statues and reliefs. For instance, a bronze statue (**Fig.11**) depicts the patron god of commerce and travelers were popular over the ancient world particularly in the north-western Roman provinces. It is dates back to the 1st century BC and was excavated in Egypt. This statuette used as a votive object in a Roman domestic shrine or religious sanctuary (**Török,1995,181**).



Fig.11 Statuette of Dionysos holding a patera, Bronze, Hellenistic period, 1st century BC, Egypt, The Met Museum, Accession Number.2021.40.57

After: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/330042> (accessed 23/12/2024 11pm).

A figurine (**Fig.12**) from the second half of the 2nd century BC, housed in the von Bissing collection at the Allard Pierson Museum (**Vincent, 1983, 58-59, no. III. 9**).

This statuette of Serapis was discovered in Alexandria, depicts the god with a high *modius* on his head. He is dressed in a short-sleeved chiton and a himation that drapes across his back and hangs over his left shoulder. He holds a *cornucopia* in his left hand and a *patera* in his right hand (**Vincent,1983,58-59, no. III.9**).



Fig.12 A statuette of Serapis, Alexandria, 2nd Century, Von Bissing collection at Allard Pierson Museum.

After: (Vincent,1983, fig. 98).

A bronze statuette from Gadara depicts Serapis (**Fig.13**) seated on a throne. He is dressed in a long, short-sleeved chiton and a himation that drapes across his back and hangs over his left shoulder. His right arm is slightly raised, though now missing; it likely once held a patera and was not lowered to the Kerberos dog, while his left hand is raised, holding a scepter. The hairstyle is intricately detailed, with fringe on the forehead and corkscrew curls on the chin

beard, and he wears the Kalathos on his head. The positioning of the legs and the direction of the drapery folds differ significantly from other representations (Nematallah,2024 ,116 & Vaelske, 2011, 432- 433, no. D9, Abb. d- 15).



Fig.13 Bronze Statuette of Serapis from Gadara

After: Nematallah,2024 ,116, Fig. 8C

Moreover, there is white marble statue that depicts Priest of Serapis (**Fig.14**) and dates back to the Roman Period (3rd century AD) and was excavated in Alexandria. The exact location where this headless, draped male figure was found is uncertain. Botti believed that the statue was discovered by Bedouins near Ramleh before it was acquired by Antoniades, who later donated it to the Graeco-Roman Museum between 1899 and 1901. In contrast, Breccia identified the discovery site as the “legionary cemetery,” located between the western wall of the castrum and the modern cemetery of Sidi Gaber. Breccia also proposed that statue (3902) was found in the same area (Savvopoulos& Bianchi,2012,76& Botti,1900, XI,23& Breccia,1914a, 232, no.58).

The figure, standing on an integrated plinth, is portrayed in a contrapposto pose, with the weight of his body supported by his straightened right leg, which rests against a decorative container for scrolls. He wears sandals, likely of the calcei type, and holds a papyrus scroll in his left hand and a patera in his right, with a ring on one of his fingers. The presence of the patera and papyrus suggests that the figure represents a high-ranking cleric in the priesthood of Serapis, with his elevated status further indicated by the ring. Based on the style of the drapery, this statue can be dated to the 3rd century (Breccia, 1922, 219, no. 58& Graindor,1939,104-105, no.48, PIXLib& Castiglione,1968,116 & Tkaczow ,1933, no.194).



Fig.14 Priest of the cult of Sarapis, Roman Period, Graeco-Roman Museum.

After: (Savvopoulos, & Bianchi ,2012, fig.21).

4.3 The Iconography of Patera on Funerary Slabs

On funerary stelae, paterae were associated with the ritual of pouring libations¹ for the deceased aiming to bring benefits to them in the afterlife.

Religious rituals were a prominent theme in Greek art during the Archaic and Hellenistic periods. Scenes often depicted official processions where devoted followers took part in sacrificial ceremonies to honor or give thanks to the gods. When such themes appeared on funerary monuments, they symbolized the deceased's piety and deep devotion to the divine (Aglan, 2013,143).

The depiction of sacrificial acts is a common theme on certain Funerary stelae. In such representations, a figure is often shown standing near an altar, either sprinkling incense or pouring a libation. The deceased is typically portrayed standing beside an altar, holding a patera to perform a libation or scatter incense, symbolizing their participation in sacred rituals. This attitude was a design frequently on Roman coins (Soleiman, 1999,44&Aglan, 2013,143).

The reliefs from Kom Abou Bellou illustrate the form of an altar used in ancient Egypt, functioning as a site for libations, fire rituals, or as an offering table. A notable feature common to all the stelae is the portrayal of the deceased in a frontal view and rarely in side views, set against an architectural backdrop. The standing figure is often depicted with a patera in their right hand, representing the act of performing a libation (Soleiman, 1999, 44 & Vitali, 1987, 252& Aglan, 2013,143).

For example, this square limestone stele (Fig.15) has an irregular shape, with uneven edges and damage on the left side and bottom, where a portion has broken off. Within a black-painted frame with a rounded top, there is an image of a woman shown in low relief, facing forward. She is lying on a mattress atop a couch, with her right arm raised, holding a patera. Her left elbow rests on two round pillows. The woman has a typical hairstyle and is dressed in a chiton and himation. One end of the himation is wrapped around her left arm. Her right leg is crossed over the left, with only the toes of the left leg showing and the knee slightly elevated. A stele design appears near the figure, but it bears no inscription (Wagdy,2011,372).

Beneath the carved couch, which features a decorative motif and two stands painted black, several objects are shown in red with black outlines. On the right, there is a semi-oval three-legged table, empty of any dish. Two amphorae are depicted, one on the left and the other in the middle, placed on a stand with a ladle. The bottom portion of the slab, which likely originally held a funerary inscription, is damaged and broken off (Wagdy,2011,372).



¹ Libation rites involved pouring water and wine over altars in home shrines as a form of offering to the gods or the deceased. see: (Abdel Hameed, Abdalla, Soliman, 2020,65)

Fig.15 An Irregular limestone stele depicted the patera which hold by women, Kom Abou Bellou.

After: (Wagdy,2011,380, Fig.1).

Another limestone stele (**Fig.16**) form Kom Abou Bellou depicts a patera in a funerary context. This slab dates back to the Roman period (2nd -4th century AD). The rectangular slab displays the main scene being enclosed within a framed composition, flanked by two columns with lotiform capitals supporting around top pediment (**Soleiman, 1999,193**). The stele depicts a deceased standing in a frontal pose. In his right hand, he holds a libation dish (patera), while a garland rests in his left. Beside him stands an altar, and a reclining jackal is shown on a shelf nearby, adding symbolic significance to the scene (**Aglan, 2013,171**).



Fig.16 Limestone stele depicted the patera which hold by man, Pyramids , Archeology stores of E.D.A. T.S1431

After: (El-Nassery ,1978, 246 Pl. LXXV No. 24& Soleiman, 1999,193, Cat, No,55)

This limestone stele comes also form Kom Abou Billou and dates back to the Severian Period (**Fig.17**). It depicts a raised relief in a rectangular shape, framed by two columns with papyrus capitals supporting a pediment. The scene depicts a woman standing frontally. Her hairstyle, characteristic of the Severian period. In her right hand, she holds a libation dish (patera), while a garland rests in her left hand. Beside her stands an altar with a jackal. On the shelves are a falcon and a vessel (**Soleiman, 1999,191&Aglan, 2013,173**).



Fig.17 Limestone stele depicted the patera which hold by a woman, Severian Period, Archeology stores of E.D.A. T.S1393

After: (El-Nassery, 1978, 246 Pl. LXXVI, No. 27& Soleiman, 1999, cat, no, 52)

4.4 The Iconography of Paterae on Egyptian Coins during the Græco-Roman Period

Numerous examples of the patera iconography appeared on Roman coins (**Labacco, Ant. di Roma, 16, 17.**). It was associated with the divine representation of Pietas, symbolizing devotion to the gods and the state, as depicted on a sestertius of Caligula minted in AD 37/38 to mark the dedication of the Temple of the Deified Augustus (**Harvey ,2011, 204&RIC I2, 36**).

As a symbol of religious devotion, it was also associated with numerous gods as evident on Roman Republican coins. It often appears on it, not just held by the worshipper, but also the god or symbol being honored (**Barrett,2000,67**).

It is shown in the hands of rulers and priests as a symbol of their religious duties, and in the hands of deities as a representation of the divine honors bestowed upon them. The inclusion of the patera in the visual representation of seated emperors and their wife's are particularly prominent on coins. Similar to the patera's iconography on coins depicting seated emperors was widely circulated across the empire (**Harvey ,2011, 204**).

On coins, a figure is frequently shown next to an altar, pouring the contents of the patera (**Stevenson, Smith,1889,478& Harper, 1871,471**). Nearly all deities are depicted holding a patera, the following figures showcase some examples. The representation of Serapis holding a patera and cornucopia has appeared on Alexandrian coins (**Michaelis,1885,300-301**). In all these coins, Serapis is depicted to the left wearing a modius. He holds the cornucopia in his left hand and performing a sacrifice with a patera over an altar in his right hand (**Michaelis, 1885, 295**).

DOC.1 Tetradrachm of Alexandria, Egypt, imperial period, Thrace, Anchialos, 241-244 AD

Obverse represents laureate, draped and cuirassed bust of Gordian, right, facing diademed and draped bust of Tranquillina, left; **reverse** god Serapis is depicted standing on the left, wearing kalathos and holding patera and cornucopia (**Fig.18**).



Fig. 18 Alexandrian coin represents Serapis holding a patera and cornucopia

After: <https://www.cointalk.com/threads/depictions-of-serapis-in-antiquity.332760/>
(accessed 30/7/2024 6pm).

DOC.2: Tetradrachm of Alexandria, Oxyrhynchus, AD 1- A.D. 300.

Obverse represents Serapis (**Fig.19**) stands to the left, wearing modius a radiate crown, a chiton, and a himation holding a cornucopia in his left hand, and performing a sacrifice with a patera over an altar in his right hand; **reverse** Nike advances to the left, holding a wreath in her right hand and a palm in her left hand on the reverse (**Milne, 1933,& Wilding,2020, 336,no.130**).



Fig.19 Serapis sacrificing with patera over altar , A.D. 1 - A.D. 300, Egypt, Ashmolean Museum.

After: (Milne,1933, nos.5422-5425: <https://zenon.dainst.org/Record/000160175> (accessed 22/7/2024 6pm))

DOC.3 there are only four-coin (**Fig.20**) issues specifically dedicated to Serapis: issued in the 16th and 17th years of Trajan's reign and in the 9th and 11th years of Hadrian (**Michaelis, 1885,301-302**). These coins were discovered not only in Egypt but also in other regions (**Michaelis, 1885,301-302 & Vincent, 1983,57-58, no. III. 25-31**)



Fig.20 Serapis is depicted holding the cornucopia in his left hand and performing a sacrifice with a patera over an altar in his right hand

After: (Michaelis, 1885, Pl.E 9,10,11& Vincent, 1983, figs. 112,113, 115-117).

DOC.4 Billon tetradrachm, Egypt, Alexandria. Aelius ,137 BC.

Obverse represents bare headed figure (**Fig.21**) facing right; **reverse** shows Homonoia standing left, holding a cornucopia and a patera over an altar. on the reverse side, Egypt, Alexandria. Aelius. Caesar, AD 136-138 (**Köln 1271; Milne 1539; Emmett 1350.2**).



Fig.21 Homonoia is depicted holding the cornucopia in his left hand and performing a sacrifice with a patera over an altar in his right hand

After: (<https://www.cointalk.com/threads/the-roman-patera-challenge.337956/> (accessed 22/7/2024 6pm)).

DOC.5 Nero Billon Tetradrachm of Alexandria, 56-57AD.

Obverse represents Laureate head of Nero (**Fig.22**) facing right; **reverse** shows the emperor seated on a throne to the left, radiate crown, holding a patera and scepter (**Milne ,139**).



Fig.22 The emperor is depicted holding a patera and scepter, Egypt, Alexandria, Nero.

After: https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/ric/nero/milne_139.jpg (accessed 22/8/2024 8pm)

DOC.6 Hadrian Billon Tetradrachm, minted in Alexandria. 123-124 AD

Obverse represents Laureate head of Hadrian facing right; **reverse** shows Dikaiosyne (personification of Justice) standing left, holding a patera and a cornucopia (**Fig.23**) (**Milne 872; RPC 4992; Emmett 833**).



Fig.23. Dikaiosyne is depicted holding a patera and a cornucopia, Alexandria, Hadrian.

After: <https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/egypt/alexandria/t.html>(accessed 14/8/2024 6pm)

DOC.7 AE Tetradrachm, Roman Provincial, Alexandria, Severus Alexander as Augustus, 234/235(Year 14).

Obverse shows Laureate, draped, and cuirassed bust of Gordian III facing right; **reverse** represents Zeus seating left on a throne, holding a patera in his right hand and a vertical scepter in his left. An eagle is positioned on the ground to the left, looking back. A decennalia palm is placed vertically behind the throne (**Fig.24; Emmett 3146**)



Fig.24 Zeus is depicted holding a patera in his right hand and a scepter in his left.

After: <https://www.beastcoins.com/RomanProvincial/Egypt-Alexandria/Egypt-Alexandria.htm>

DOC.9 Alexandrian drachma bronze coins, Denarius, A.D. 98-99.

Obverse (Fig.25) shows Concordia is depicted seated, holding patera and double cornucopia; before her an altar on the reverse side; **reverse** shows the bust of Trajan who is represented wearing the royal diadem over his curly hair. (Barrett,2000,67).



Fig.25 Concordia is depicted holding patera and double cornucopiae

After: (Barrett,2000,67).

DOC.10 Silver Coin, Hadrian, Denarius, AD 134-138

Obverse (Fig.26) represents the bust of Hadrian, bareheaded (134-138 A.D) wearing a royal diadem from the second century A.D. The reverse side appears Salus (Health) standing, feeding a snake from a patera which she holds in her extended hand. The snake raises itself on its tail from an altar on the reverse side, Denarius, A.D. 134-138; **reverse** indicates that the emperor was suffering from illness. Thus, sacred rites were apparently been performed for his recovery (Barrett, 2000,75 & RIC 267).



Fig.26 Salus is depicted feeding a snake from a patera

After: (Barrett,2000,75)

5. Conclusion

The patera was a flat circular dish used by the Romans during their religious ceremonies. It was used for religious purposes, offered as a gift to gods, and frequently depicted in the hands of deities. The divine figures are often illustrated either holding the patera in a gesture of receiving liquid offerings or actively involved in the act of making libations.

Paterae were offered as votives in the shrines of Greek gods in Egypt. It is associated with certain celebrations of the gods, such as the cult of the Apis bull.

The patera, as a symbol of religious devotion, was also associated with various gods including the Greek deities, Zeus, Apollo, Serapis, Harpocrates, Demeter, Isis and Hera. The patera also served as a symbol of priestly roles, particularly the execution of ritual duties linked to them.

During the Græco- Roman period, the patera was also a common attribute not only held by gods but also by priests, Roman emperors and their wife's. On different monuments, the patera is shown in the hands of various deities, symbolizing the divine honors given to them.

Despite of its Greek origin, the patera was particularly represented with many Egyptian deities including Serapis, Isis, and Harpocrates and Heron.

In funerary stelae, these vessels were associated with the ritual of pouring libations. On the steles, the decorations include scenes that together form a unified composition. At the beginning, we often find an image of a deity, priest, or emperor depicted facing to the right, extending their hand with a patera to pour wine. The altar of the deity is depicted in the center of the panel, rectangular or conical in shape, adorned with flowers and plants. It usually bears an inscription on its lower part.

As a symbol of religious devotion, it was also associated with numerous gods as evident on Roman Republican coins. It often appears on it, not just held by the worshipper, but also the god or symbol being honored.

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الباتيرا فى مصر اليونانية الرومانية: الرمزية الدينية والتمثيل الفنى

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المخلص	معلومات المقالة
<p>الباتيرا هي اوانى معدنية دائرية مجوفة، وأحيانا صنعت من مواد أجود من المعدن. أستخدمت من قبل الرومان أثناء احتفالاتهم الدينية. كانت تستخدم في العبادات اليونانية الرومانية في اراقة الخمر الذى يسكب تكريما للالهة اما بواسطة الكهنة او زوار المعبد وأرتبطت هذه الأوانى بموائد القرابين. عدد من هذه الأوانى كان لها غرض فى العبادة ولكن طبيعة هذه العبادة غير معروف. وبعض هذه الأوانى كانت تهدى دون توضيح الغرض من تقديمها. يهدف هذا البحث الى التعرف على وظائف الباتيرا الدينية ومدى ارتباطها بالالهة والالهات والكهنة والأشخاص المؤهلة. أرتبطت الباتيرا ببعض أحتفالات الالهة مثل ميلاد الاله أبيس حيث كانت تقدم كمنور أثناء الأحتفالات المقدسة. وكانت تقدم كأوانى نذرية فى مقاصير الالهة اليونانية فى مصر. يهدف هذا البحث الى تتبع الرمزية الجنائزية والدينية لأوانى صب القرابين من خلال سياقهم الفنى. علاوة على ذلك، يلقي البحث الضوء على تصوير الباتيرا فى مختلف المجالات الفنية فى مصر بما فى ذلك اللوحات الجنائزية والتمائيل الإلهية والعملات المعدنية الرومانية وأيضاً بعض القطع النحتية التى ارتبطت بالباتيرا.</p>	<p>الكلمات المفتاحية باتيرا ؛ انية اراقة القرابين؛ أضحية؛ نذرية.</p> <p>(JAAUTH) المجلد ٢٧، العدد ٢، (٢٠٢٤)، ص ٢٣١-٢٤٩.</p>