

**Two Unpublished Figurines of Women Purifying themselves
in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria**

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Abstract: The Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria has two female figurines, unpublished. According to the register of the museum, they came from Fayyum, are made in alluvial Nile silt clay, reddish-brown color, and fabricated by using two moulds, one for the front side and the other for the backside. These figurines seem similar; each one represents a sitting naked woman, holding a pot. But there are some differences between them in the details. It is possible that each woman is purifying herself. The pot which women hold is associated with baths and purification. This article publishes these two figurines with a descriptive and analytical study, in addition to a discussion of women's purification in inscriptions and papyri documents of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. The research also tries to identify these women; were these women associated with a cult? Or particular gods? Was purification necessary in the rituals of this worship?

Keywords: Naked Women, Fertility, Baubo, Demeter, Chamber Pots, Purification, Thesmophoria, Purification Room.

نشر تمثالين لسيدتين تطهرا نفسيهما بالمتحف اليوناني الروماني بالإسكندرية

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المخلص: يحتوي المتحف اليوناني الروماني بالإسكندرية على قطعتين من التراكوتا لسيدتين لم تنتشر بعد ووفقا للتسجيل الخاص بهما فهما من الفيوم، ومصنوعان من طينة طمي النيل البنية وصنعا عن طريق قالبين أحدهما للجزء الأمامي والآخر للجزء الخلفي. ويبدو أن القطعتان متشابهتان حيث أن كل قطعة تصور سيدة جالسة وعارية تماما، تمسك في يدها إناء. وعلى الرغم من هذا التشابه إلا أنه يوجد بعض الأختلافات في التفاصيل. ومن الممكن القول أن كل سيدة تنتظر؛ حيث ارتبط الإناء الذي تمسكه كل سيدة بالحمامات والتطهير. تهدف هذه المقالة إلى نشر تلك القطعتين من خلال دراسة وصفية وتحليلية، بالإضافة إلى التطرق لعملية التطهير من خلال وثائق البردي والنقوش في مصر خلال العصرين البطلمي والروماني. كما يحاول البحث الإجابة على العديد من التساؤلات في محاولة معرفة ماهية هذه السيدات؟ وهل هذه السيدات ارتبطت بعبادة معينة أو آلهة معينة؟ وهل التطهير كان جزءا أساسيا من طقوس عبادة هذه الآلهة؟ .

الكلمات الدالة: السيدات العارية، الخصوبة، البايو، ديمتر، أناني الحجرات، التطهير، التيسمفوريا، حجرة التطهير.

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[FIG. 1A, B, C,D]

Greco-Roman Museum, inv. 10019

Height: 10cm

Nile silt clay, reddish-brown color.

Provenance: Fayyum

Description: A completely naked woman. Head and neck are broken. She depicts in squatting posture with both legs wide apart from each other to expose deliberately her vulva. She has fat thighs, puts the left hand on the upper part of the thigh, and holds a small pot in the right hand. It has a conical body and straight handle. Traces of the ending of ribbons descending on each shoulder are visible. She is adorned with armlets on both arms, a bracelet on her left wrist. She wears short boots. A small vase is beneath her at the middle, with a wide mouth, and a circular body. The figurine is placed on a base.

[FIG. 2A, B,C,D]

Greco-Roman Museum, inv. 31161

Height: 12cm

Nile silt clay, reddish-brown color.

Provenance: Fayyum

Description: The Head and feet as well as a great part of the vase at the back side are missing. The back side is modeled and provided with a vent hole in the middle. A completely naked female represents in a frontal pose sits on a round vase. She leans slightly to the left side; her legs are wide apart from each other to expose her vulva. She holds a small pot in her right hand, with a conical body, circular base, and straight handle. She puts the left hand on her thigh.

The naked female figures were depicted in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman eras, whether standing or sitting. Despite the numerous examples of this, I will focus on the naked female figures that are squatting and holding pots that reveal their vulva such as: A terracotta figurine of woman¹ **[FIG. 3A]** from Naukratis, dates back to the

This research displayed at the 2nd Egyptological Conference: The Cosmic Hypostasis and Earthy/ Social Function of Women during Antiquity in Egypt and in the Mediterranean Organized by The Hellenic Institute of Egyptology, the Writing & Scripts Center of the Bibliotheca Alexandria, the University of Lisbon and the Universidade Aberta of Lisbon, under the Auspices of the Association of Greek Women Scientists. The conference took place at the premises of Hotel Titania in Athens from Monday 10th February until Friday 14th February 2020, but it wasn't published.

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¹ It made of brown Nile silt, height 11.8 cm and width 12.1 cm, is currently preserved in the British Museum, inv. 1965,0930.974.

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Ptolemaic era, 3rd or 2nd century BC¹. The woman is naked, except for the long and narrow sleeves at the forearms, in a frontal position, squatting, and raises her hands up at the level of the head. Her face is largely broken away. She holds in her left hand a small pot with a circular body and a wide and circular mouth. She is depicted with a large breast and a flabby abdomen. As for the head, she wears a wreath with two buds with a phallic appearance rising on the top and short boots². A naked female figure [FIG. 3B] made of brown silt, from Alexandria and is preserved in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, inv. 7510. She sits cross-legged to show her vulva. She wears a wreath, big earring, and bracelets, holds a circular pot, and puts her hand inside it³. Additionally, a naked female figurine [FIG.3C] from Benha and preserved within the Fouquet collection, dates back to the Ptolemaic Period, 2nd or 1st century BC. It represents a drunk female seated with legs wide apart to show her vulva. She holds a Kantharos. Perdrizet stated that the head suggests that she is a girl while the way of depicting the breast indicates that she is an old woman⁴. Another terracotta figurine⁵ [FIG. 3D] dates back to the Roman era. It represents a naked female, opening her legs and putting one hand in her vulva and holding a pot in the other⁶. Another example⁷ dates back to the Roman era. It depicts a naked squatting female, but she does not hold a pot. The right leg is missing. She sits in the squatting position to show her genitals

¹ Donald Bailey, *Catalogue of the Terracottas in the British Museum, IV, Ptolemaic and Roman Terracottas from Egypt* (England: BMP, 2008), 51, Pl. 23, No. 3131; Ross Thomas, "Ptolemaic and Roman figures, models and coffin-fittings in terracotta", in *Naukratis: Greeks in Egypt*, edited by Villing A, et al, (London: BMP, 2018), 4, FIG. 6.

² Bailey, *Catalogue of the Terracottas*, 51, Pl. 23, No. 3131.

There is another example from Naukratis, it depicts a nude woman figurine and is currently preserved in Cambridge, the Fitzwilliam Museum, inv. no. E.104.1914. It dates back to the Ptolemaic era – 3rd or 2nd century BC. She is sitting in the squatting position and holding a vessel in her left hand while placing the other hand in her genitals. One more example of a woman figurine is similar to the previous one, but some parts are broken, Paris, Guimet Museum inv. E20762. It dates back to the Hellenistic era. She is naked, squatting and puts her hand in her vulva. The hair is carried out in locks bound upwards, in the Greek hairstyle. See e.g.: Thomas, "Ptolemaic and Roman figures", 7, FIG. 17; Françoise Dunand, *Catalogue des terres cuites gréco-romaines d'Égypte* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1990), 206, FIG. 56.

³ EV. Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine*. Tome deuxième. II. Terre-cotte figurate greche e greco-egizie del Museo di Alessandria (Bergamo: Officine Dell' Istituto Italiano D' Arti Grafiche, 1934), Pl. LIII, No. 262.

⁴ Paul Perdrizet, *les terres cuites grecques d'Égypte de la collection fouquet*, II (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1921), 124, Pl. LXXXIV, No. 343.

⁵ H. 14.5, B. 12.6, T. 4.8, made in brown Nile silt, preserved in collection of Sieglin und Schreiber, Tübingen, inv. 4996/25.

⁶ Jutta Fischer, *Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten Aus Ägypten, Die Sammlungen Sieglin und Schreiber Dresden, Leipzig, Stuttgart* (Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 1994), 339, taf. 88, n. 839. One more example is similar to this example, dates back to the Roman Period, is preserved in Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. E 382. See: Simone Besques, *Catalogue raisonné des figurines et reliefs en terre-cuite, grecs, étrusques et romains* (Paris: Musée du Louvre, 1992), Pl. 72.

⁷ H. 7.7 cm, and it made of reddish-brown silt, Paris, the Louvre Museum inv. AF1299.

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while placing her right hand in her vulva. The abdomen is flabby, and she is putting her left hand on the knee. The head bends slightly to the right¹.

The interpretation of these Figurines:

Regarding the interpretation of these naked females, sitting squatting or legs wide apart to show the vulva, there are several opinions: Bailey and Thomas² mentioned that they are female examples representing fertility and that they can be pregnant as they are depicted with flabby abdomens. As for Fischer³, he sees these naked figures only as a representation of Baubo⁴, and Török⁵ agrees, stating that these naked squatting females females placing hands in the vulva are nothing but a representation of Baubo. While Murray⁶ explains that Baubo is one of the representations of fertility and hence the reproductive organs must be an essential part of their depiction. These female figures are represented from the front to express fertility while beauty or facial features and lack of interest in the breast were ignored⁷. Perdrizet⁸ believes that these figures may have been presented as votives by women wishing to give birth to females, or to request

¹ Dunand, *Catalogue des terres cuites*, 206, FIG. 561.

² Bailey, *Catalogue of the Terracottas*, 51-52, Pls. 3134- 3141; Thomas, "Ptolemaic and Roman figures", 4.

³ Fischer, *Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten*, taf. 87, nr. 832, 834.

⁴ Baubo is known in the Greek language as Βαυβώ or Βαβώ in the Eleusinian Mysteries and also known as Iambe the maid at Homer, the hymn of Orpheus. It was also said that she was lame servant of the king Celeus in Eleusis who met Demeter when she was sad about kidnapping her daughter, who cheered the mournful goddess with her indulged jokes in front of the goddess Demeter. Baubo made a kind of entertainment including dancing, rising her skirt, and exposing her body to the goddess Demeter. Some mentioned that a boy's face was drawn on her abdomen when she was rising up her skirt; such surprising sight of the face replacing the sexual organs alleviated the goddess from her sadness. She also managed to sit squatting in a position like that of the ancient childbirth position (frog position), by which she was able to cheer the goddess and break her fast by drinking Kykeon, which made fertility return to Earth again. Some also see that the legend of Baubo was not limited to the Greeks only, but rather had an Egyptian origin. When Isis mourned her husband, Osiris, Baubo was embodied in several forms and made Isis stop crying and laugh. She was called Isis' «nursing mother». Meanwhile, others consider Baubo a goddess like Isis, Ishtar, Demeter and Aphrodite but she was a goddess of females only as she belonged to some goddesses such as Bona Dea whose rituals necessitated the absence of men. See e.g.: LIMC, s.v. « Baubo»; Morris Silver, *Sacred Prostitution in the Ancient Greek World. From Aphrodite to Baubo to Cassandra and Beyond*, (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2019),42; John Winkler, and David Halperin, *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 84; Miroslav Marcovich, "Demeter, Baubo, Iacchus, and a Redactor", *Vigiliae Christianae* 40, 3, (1986): 294; M.A. Murray, "Female Fertility Figures", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 64, (1934): 95; Noha Shalaby, "Graeco-Roman Fertility Figurines from Gayer-Anderson Museum, Cairo", *International Academic Journal Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management*, 5 ,1, (2019): 56.

⁵ László Török, *Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas from Egypt* (Roma: L' Erma di Bretschneider, 1995), 1995), Pl, C, Nos. 186-190.

⁶ Murray, " Female Fertility Figures", 93.

⁷ Murray, " Female Fertility Figures", 94.

⁸ Perdrizet, *les terres cuites grecques d' égypte*, 122.

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healing for their daughters¹. In pharaonic Egypt these fertility figurines appeared through standing nude women as: **(FIG. 4A)** Figurine of woman², made in faience, dating back to Middle Kingdom, preserved in Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, inv. 44.226³.

Another example 4B) Terracotta figurine of woman⁴, from Upper Egypt, Thebes, New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE), the Antiquities Museum of Bibliotheca Alexandrina, inv. 1056, Flat pottery fertility figurine. The face is not carefully modeled as the artist's main concern was to place emphasis on the sexual parts of the body: the slight breasts and the large and heavily marked pubic area⁵.

However, the question that arises then is: "Do these figures represent Baubo? Baubo connected with festivals of Demeter. She had a role in the Eleusinian secrets and Thesmophoria festival⁶. These ceremonies depended on the legend of Demeter and the actions of Iambe or Baubo who played an important role in these ceremonies⁷. The word Baubo was connected with two styles as follows: **Priene Style:** The head is directly above the lower body and the chin is the female organ **[FIG. 4C]** such as a terracotta figurine from excavations of sanctuary of Demeter and her daughter Kore in Priene, is now preserved in the Berlin, Staatliche Museum. It depicts Baubo as naked in a frontal position, the head is placed directly on the lower part, the chin is the vulva and is holding a flame in her hand⁸. **The Egyptian Style:** It is divided into many types, the most famous of which are two types: the first depicts a naked female with a chubby dwarf-like body, and legs wide apart, sitting on a big pig **[FIG. 4D]**, putting her hand in her the vulva, while holding a musical instrument in the other hand⁹. The second figure portrays a naked woman with a chubby dwarf-like body, in a squatting posture, sits on the ground. She puts her hand in vulva or with legs wide apart to expose her genitals¹⁰.

¹ It is worth noting that the representation of fertility was common in Egyptian art as it was depicted before through standing nude women as terracotta figurine of woman, H:17 cm, W:7cm, Upper Egypt, Thebes, New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE), the Antiquities Museum of Bibliotheca Alexandrina, inv. 1056, The face is not carefully modeled as the artist's main concern was to place emphasis on the sexual parts of the body: the breasts are small, while the pubic area is big. In Pharaonic Egypt, these figures used to ensure fertility in the home. They were believed to enhance a wife's fertilization and a husband's power by invoking Hathor, the goddess of sexual love. They were placed in the tomb, to ensure the dead's sexual power in the afterlife. See: <http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=1056>.

² 5.1 x 13.1 cm.

³ <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3481>.

⁴ H:17 cm; W:7 cm.

⁵ <http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=1056>.

⁶ Murray, "Female Fertility Figures", 95.

⁷ Silver, *Sacred Prostitution*, 42; Jennifer Larson, *Greek and Roman Sexualities: A Sourcebook* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 23.

⁸ Theodor Wiegand, & Hans Schrader, *Priene* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1904), 161, No. 153.

⁹ LIMC, s.v. « Baubo », 3.

¹⁰ There are many examples of this style. See. e.g.: Cornelia Ewigleben, and Jochen Von Grumbkow, *Götter, Gäber & Grottesken, Tonfiguren aus dem Alltagsleben im römischen Ägypten* (Hamburg: Museum Für Kunst und Gewerbe, 1991), FIG. 111. In addition to many other types of Egyptian style, including

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Considering the figures of Baubo, the Egyptian style depicts her naked, whether she sits squatting or with wide open legs, with a chubby dwarf-like body, placing her hand in her vulva. However, there are some examples that depict Baubo without putting her hand in her vulva but had described as Baubo. Comparing our two examples in this study with the Egyptian style of Baubo, it can be found that there is a kind of similarity as the females were depicted naked in the frontal position with wide open legs [FIG. 2A] or squatting with chubby dwarf-like bodies, but with no reference to the vulva or hand in it [FIG. 1A]. This may raise doubts whether these examples depict Baubo or not. In addition, the presence of this type of pots which carried by the woman and the mouth as if in pouring position raises controversy and questions whether she is pouring water from it? Or any other liquid? To answer these questions, these pots and their function have to be known.

The Pot:

When comparing the pot that each woman holds in our two examples [FIG. 1A, 2A] it can be found that this pot differs from those in the other examples [FIG. 3A, B, C, D]. As for this pot, it has one straight hand and a conical body. It is similar to an Askos pot (FIG. 4E) made of brown Nile silt, H. 68 cm, from kom firin, is preserved in Egyptian Museum¹. It has a conical body and a straight handle. Another example [FIG. 4F] made of brown silt from Egypt and is preserved in Berlin, Staatliche Museum, inv. 5834, in the form of a slave sleeping on an Askos pot with a straight hand². The Askos pot appeared on a mosaic that came from the Palaces area of Alexandria and is preserved in the Museum of the Library of Alexandria. It dates back to the Hellenistic era and represents a circular medallion with a sitting dog inside it and next to the dog, there is a metal pot inverted on its side³, made of gold or plated with gold handles and it is an Askos pot from the shower equipment⁴. Franken mentioned that the Askos pot found in the bath may not only contain oil; it may also contain the water of the bath, as the slaves of the baths were responsible for carrying this pot to pour its water on the hot stones in the steam room⁵, for example a mosaic from Pompeii House of Menander Caldarium Mosaic [FIG. 5A], the Upper part showing a black servant carrying Askos pots, executed in tesserae in gilded brown to indicate the copper color. He wears a short

Baubo is carried by Satyr or Silenos and connected with Dionysus cult, also she is carried by Heracles. As well as depicting with hairstyle of Isis. See: LIMC, s.v. « Baubo»; Perdrizet, *les terres cuites grecques d'Égypte*, 124, LXXXIV, 342; Török, *Hellenistic and Roman Terracottas*, 132; Hanna Szymanska, "Les terres cuites d'edfou", in *Tell-Edfou, soixante ans après: actes du colloque franco-polonais, Le Caire, 15 octobre 1996*, edited by Monin, M., (Cairo: IFAO Press, 1996), 78, FIG. 8.

¹ Perdrizet, *les terres cuites grecques d'Égypte*, 88, fig. 219, LXV.

² Norbert Franken, "Bädersklaven. Ein neuer Benennungsvorschlag für zwei hellenistische Bronzestatuetten", *Antike Kunst* 61, (2018): 47.

³ François Queyrel, "Le chien au conge d'Alexandrie", *ET* 25, (2012): 320.

⁴ Queyrel, "Le chien au conge", 326, 328.

⁵ Franken, "Bädersklaven", 48.

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chiton with an evident penis. Lower part showing an oil container framed by strigiles, the order suggesting female genitalia¹.

The base or the pot below each woman:

In the case of the woman in the first figurine [FIG.1A] it can be a small pot, as it has a wide circular mouth, an oval body, and a small base. It is clear that the woman does not sit directly on it, but squats and there is a distance between her and the pot to allow water to be spilled down from the Askos pot that she holds to pour water on her vulva so that it can be washed in this pot. For the second figurine [FIG. 2A] the woman sits directly on the base with legs wide open apart. The base is a solid circular shape from the top, then it takes a cylindrical shape followed by the base on which water is poured. These pots were known in ancient Greece under different names: ἀμίσ², οὐράνη and οὐρητρίς and were using as portable toilets, after using these containers, one can empty them either in a manure pile or just in the street. They were called chamber pots³. In Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt there were chamber pots were used as containers called λουτήρ- λουτήρον, λούτριον, λουτρίδιον, Χαλκίον, μάκτρα, σκάφιον, τρούλλιον, ὕδρῖα and ὕδρεῖον⁴. They mentioned in papyri date back to Greek and Roman periods and were well known because they were often included in marriage contracts⁵, also were used by women in domestic religious purification in a private room in the house⁶. Some Egyptian houses in the Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine period contain private rooms used for bathing⁷. In P. Mich. Zen, 38, the house of Diotimos had a bathroom, and the house of PSI 5.547 had a bathroom and Loutron «λουτρών»⁸. The Greeks considered the baths in private houses to be religious duties⁹. In the louvre papyri from Thebes two Hellenistic and Roman houses had a room connected with the purification

¹ There is also a bronze statue of a slave who works in the baths, holding in each hand the handle of the Askos pot, and placing his left foot on a bird that is likely to be used as a gutter. See. Franken, "Bädersklaven", 4.

² LSJ, s.v. "ἀμίσ, οὐράνη, οὐρητρίς".

³ Don Nardo, *Life in Ancient Greece* (California: Lucent Books, 1996), 29; Barry Powell, and Ian Morris, *The Greeks: History, Culture, and Society* (London: Pearson, 2010), 24;

<https://quatr.us/science/whats-chamber-pot-bathroom-history.htm>.

There is an example from Athenian Agora to a portable toilet, known as a child toilet seat, it dates back to 6th century BC. See: K.M . Lych, and J.K . Papadopoulos, "Sella Cacatoria: A Study of the Potty in Archaic and Classical Athens", *Hesp* 75, (2006): FIG. 1A, B, C. Also, the chamber pots were known in Pharaonic Egypt, for example a toilet seat from Amarna, Egypt, Cairo Museum, it dates back to 18th Dynasty. See: Ada Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother in Greco-Roman Egypt: Women's Bodies, Society and Domestic Space* (London: Routledge, 2019), 203.

⁴ Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 203.

⁵ P.kru 104; P.bacch 2; P.cair.zen 4; P.ryl 2 127, 154.

⁶ Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 203.

⁷ Geneviève Husson, *Oikia: le vocabulaire de la maison privée en Egypte d'après les papyrus grecs* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1983),57.

⁸ Husson, *Oikia*, 57.

⁹ Abd El- Mohsen El-Khashab, *Ptolemaic and Roman Baths of Kom el Ahmar* (le Caire: Supp. aux ASAE ASAE 10, 1949), 4.

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rite for menstruation¹, not only that, but this room had more than one function specially the period of the menstruation is limited to 5-6 days a month². Through the way of depicting the women in our two examples with the same characteristics of the women representing fertility, it is clear that these women symbolize the fertility as Baubo was associating with the cult of Demeter. Therefore, our two examples maybe were offering as votives or were showing in a local festival for Demeter in Fayyum and they reflect the purification process; especially purification from menstrual blood that women used to do before participating in a local festival of Demeter, more than the purification from sexual intercourse; because the purification from sexual intercourse before entering the temple or participating in the festivals required cutting the relationship before participating in the festivals for three days, as well as taking a shower several times and spraying water on their bodies with water to ensure purity³ such as a terracotta figurine [FIG.5B] from Tell Atrib, inv. TA92/94, dates back to the Ptolemaic Period, it shows a female in a basin, she sprinkles water on her body⁴. She depicts with the same attributes attributes of the bodies of fertility figurines in our examples, so, maybe she reflects the purification of the body from sexual intercourse. Literary sources, mainly papyri state that Demeter worshiped in Egypt, where the festivals of Thesmophoria and Dimitria were held in Alexandria and the villages of Fayyum⁵, which is the place of finding these these figurines. There is a papyrus from Arsinoe in Fayyum dates back to 299- 200 BC about a taxation account from Alexandrou Nesos in the Arsinoite. It mentions a temple of Demeter situated in the vineyards around the village⁶. Also, two papyri date back to 3rd century BC record the existence of a Thesmophorion near the village Berenikis in the Arsinoite⁷. Additionally, a letter from Oxyrhynchus, dates back to 2nd century AD confirms the continuation of the cult of Demeter in Fayyum through the Roman period⁸. period⁸.

It is possible that there was purification in the room under the stairs in the house by pouring water from Askos pots on their genitals and water flows in chamber pots. The Fayyum houses in Bakchias, Soknopaïou Nesos, and Tebtynis contain rooms under the stairs, were used by women in general for purification or purification from

¹ P. Louvre 2443, line 4. See also. Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 201.

² Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 201.

³ Larson, *Greek and Roman Sexualities*, 11.

⁴ Pascale Ballet, *Figurines et société de l'Égypte ptolémaïque et romaine* (Paris: Picard, 2020), FIG. 18.

⁵ P. Cair. Zen. I 59028.7; P. Col. III 19; P. Cair. Zen. 3.59350v.

See: Peter Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 199; Françoise Dunand, and Ch. Zivie-Coche, *Hommes et Dieux En Égypte 3000a.C –395 P.C* (Paris: Librairie Cybèle, 2006), 317; Maria Constantinou, *Demeter in Hellenistic Poetry: Religion and Poetics*, A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Edinburgh: The University of Edinburgh Press, 2014), 19.

⁶ P. Petr. II 43 a-b. 14.

See: Constantinou, *Demeter in Hellenistic Poetry*, 21.

⁷ P. Petr. III 41.5-6.

See: Constantinou, *Demeter in Hellenistic Poetry*, 21.

⁸ P. Oxy. XXXVI 2782.

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menstruation¹. There are three shapes of this room [FIG. 5C] the third shape which accessed through a door used in purification². The Greeks in Egypt believed that there are several reasons for purification: birth, death, sexual intercourse, menstruation, and the like, and that the person contaminated with these reasons can't enter the sanctuaries or participate in a ceremony until getting purified³. There was also a difference in the way of purification for the person who had sex with his wife or another woman, or the person who died by accident or intentionally at war⁴. In addition, impurity can be invisible as a result of insanity or diseases, such as skin diseases and epilepsy. The rules of purification were significant in the well-known rites of worship⁵.

The Date:

It is possible to compare our two figurines and a terracotta figurine [FIG.3 E], H.6.6, B. 6.3, T. 3.0, Dresden, 2600, C. 441, dates back to the 1st century BC- 1ST century AD⁶. It depicts a woman sitting on the ground, her legs are wide apart from each other to show her vulva and putting her hand in her vulva. This figurine is similar to our examples [FIG.1A,2A] through a way of depicting the body, fat thighs, abdomen, and raised breast not flabby [FIG.1A, 2A]. As well as the armlets, bracelets and short boots [FIG.1A]. So, it can date our two figurines to the Roman era, specifically the beginning of The Roman Period around the first century AD. In addition to Nifosi mentions that Baubo or woman symbols to fertility when depicted as a woman washing her genitals through a pot that dates back to the second century AD⁷.

¹ Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 200.

² Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 200.

³ Larson, *Greek and Roman Sexualities*, 10; Andreas Bendlin, "Purity and Pollution", in *Acompanion to Greek Religion*, edited by Ogden, D, 178-189. (UK: Wiley- Blackwell, 2010), 181; Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 28.

⁴ Larson, *Greek and Roman Sexualities*, 10f.

Purification in Pharaonic Egypt is not different from that in Greece as the ancient Egyptian believed in the necessity of purification and was purified for several reasons, including intercourse, so he had to wash several times to ensure purity. Hence, he managed to wash his genitals very carefully before wearing clean clothes, spraying perfumes and incense, and reciting various supplications so that he can perform daily prayers and rituals after purification. See. Joachim Quack, "Conception of Purity in Egyptian Religion", in *Purity and the Forming of Religious Traditions in the ancient Mediterranean world and ancient Judaism*, edited by Frevel, CH and CH. Nihan, Dynamics in the history of religion 3, (Boston: 2013), 115- 158.

⁵ Angelos Chaniotis, "Greek Ritual Purity from Automatism to Moral Distinctions", in *Offprint from How Purity Is Made*, edited by Rösch, P, & U. Simon, (Wiesbaden: 2012), 125. There were several ways for washing or purification e.g.: Purification by pig blood to purify the killer- by pouring it on the killer. It was believed that blood washes blood. Purification with fire and purification with water. See Larson, *Greek and Roman Sexualities*, 11, 22; Sarah Georgoudi, "Reflections on Sacrifice and Purification in Greek World", *Animal Sacrifice in the Ancient Greek World*, edited by Rutherford, I., and S. Hitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 128; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 76.

⁶ Fischer, *Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten*, 337, Taf. 87, No. 831.

⁷ Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 105.

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Conclusion:

The figures of naked squatting females or naked females with legs wide apart to show their vulva representing fertility or Baubo, which is one of the representations of fertility, and the reproductive organs must be an essential part of their depiction. These female figures are represented from the front to express fertility while beauty or facial features and lack of interest in the breast were ignored. Baubo was associating with the cult of Demeter. Our figurines are similar to Baubo and have the same attributes; as the bodies of fertility figurines, hence our figurines are connected with the goddess Demeter. But our figurines depict women are purifying themselves, maybe in the room under the stairs in the house by pouring water from Askos pots on their genitals and water flows in chamber pots. These figurines were offering as votives or showing in a local festival for the goddess Demeter in Fayyum. They reflect the purification process; especially purification from menstrual blood that women used to do before participating in a local festival of Demeter. The Fayyum houses in Bakchias, Soknopaiou Nesos, and Tebtynis contain rooms under the stairs, were used by women in general for purification or purification from menstruation.

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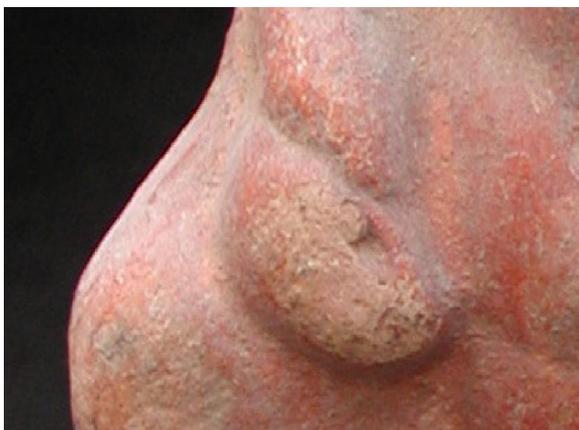
FIGURE 1



A

B

A, B) The face and back of unpublished woman figurine, H. 10cm, brown Nile silt, found in Fayyum, preserved in Greco-Roman Museum, inv. 10019.



C



D

C, D) Details in the motifs.

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FIGURE. 2



A, B) The face and back of unpublished woman figurine, H. 12cm, brown Nile silt, found in Fayyum, preserved in Greco-Roman Museum, inv. 31161.



C, D) Details in the motifs.

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FIGURE. 3



- A) A terracotta female figurine, H. 11.8cm, from Naucratis, British museum, inv. 1965.9-30.974. Ptolemaic Period.
Bailey, *Catalogue of the Terracottas*, 51, Pl. 23, No. 3131.
- B) A terracotta female figurine from Alexandria, Alexandria, Helleno-Roman Museum, inv.7510. Ptolemaic period.
Breccia, *Monuments de l'Égypte gréco-romaine*, Pl. LIII, No. 262.
- C) A terracotta female figurine, H. 45, from Benha, Fouquet collection, Hellenistic period.
Perdrizet, *les terres cuites grecques d'égypte*, 124, Pl. LXXXIV, No. 343.



D



E

- D) A terracotta female figurine, H. 14.5, B. 12.6, T. 4.8, preserved in Aus slg. Schreiber Tübingen, 4996/25.
Fischer, *Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten*, 339, Taf. 88, N. 839.
- E) A terracotta female figurine, H.6.6, B. 6.3, T. 3.0, Dresden, 2600, C. 441. 1st century BC- 1st Century AD.
Fischer, *Griechisch-Römische Terrakotten*, 337, Taf. 87, No. 831.

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FIGURE. 4



A



B



C



D



E

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F

- A) A faience Figurine of woman, dating back to Middle Kingdom, preserved in Brooklyn Museum, Charles Edwin Wilbour Fund, inv. 44.226

<https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3481>.

- B) A Terracotta figurine of woman from Thebes, New Kingdom (1550-1069 BCE), the Antiquities Museum of Bibliotheca Alexandrina, inv. 1056.

<http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=1056>.

- C) A terracotta figurine, Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Priene, Berlin, Staatliche Museum. Baubo in Priene style.

Wiegand, and Schrader, *Priene*, 161, No. 153.

- D) A terracotta figurine from Egypt, preserved in Berlin, Staatliche. Museum, inv. TC4875. Baubo in Egyptian style.

LIMC, s.v. «Baubo».

- E) A terracotta Askos pot, H. 68 cm, from kom firin, is preserved in Egyptian Museum.

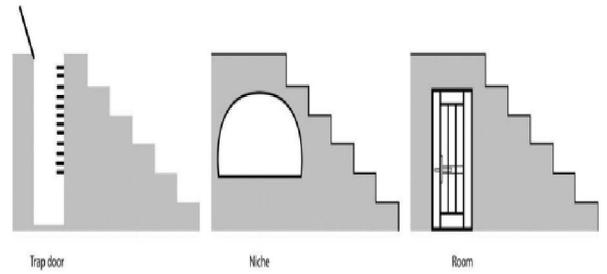
Perdrizet, *les terres cuites grecques d' égypte*, 88, fig. 219, LXV.

- F) A terracotta vessel from Egypt, Berlin, Staatliche Museum inv. V.I.5834, Hellenistic Period. A sleeping slave on Askos vase.

Franken, "Bädersklaven", 47.

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FIGURE. 5



A

B

C

A) A Roman Mosaic from the entrance of caldarium in the House of Menander in Pompeii. Black servant carrying the Askos pots.

Franken, "Bädersklaven", 4.

B) A terracotta figurine from Tell Atrib, inv. TA92/94, dates back to the Ptolemaic Period.

Ballet, *Figurines et société de l'Egypte*, FIG. 18.

C) Three shapes of room under the stairs.

Nifosi, *Becoming a Woman and Mother*, 200.