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SACRAL INVENTORIES
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL REALITY
IN THE ISIS SANCTUARIES
OUSTIDE EGYPT (LATE HELLENISTIC
AND ROMAN PERIODS)

Abstract: What kind of material can be found in Isiac sanctuaries, that is, those devoted to Isis, and her companion Sarapis, as well as the *synnaoi theoi*, Anubis and Harpocrates? To answer this question, we can study the sacral inventories, but they are few. Sundry information is also to be found in literary and epigraphical texts (especially dedications) and iconography, but all these sources have to be linked with the material discovered in sanctuaries.

Three main groups of material can be identified: first of all, the statue and everything connected to it (such as garments and jewels); then, the material used to worship the god or goddess during everyday worship or on different feasts; finally, objects used to create a special atmosphere peculiar to a mystery cult.

Keywords: Isis; Sarapis; Harpocrates; sanctuaries; cult furniture; mystery cult

What kind of material can be found in Isiac sanctuaries outside Egypt, that is, those devoted to Isis, and her companion Sarapis, as well as the *synnaoi theoi*, Anubis and Harpocrates? (Malaise 2005) What are the different sources at our disposal to answer this question? First of all, we can study the sacral inventories. Unfortunately, there are not many of them. The main inventories concern the *Sarapieion C* at Delos in the Cyclades: we have different inventories from the middle of the 2nd century

to the beginning of the 1st century BC, which give us the opportunity to study the evolution of the sacred material.¹

The question is: Why these inventories? And why are they so rare? In great sanctuaries, it was necessary to have an overview of the whole cult equipment and of all the votive offerings dedicated to the deities. Thanks to this yearly practice, it is possible to determine whether the same object is always there the year after or if it had disappeared, either destroyed or stolen. It is also possible to see that new objects have entered the sacral sphere. Unfortunately, outside Delos and its *Sarapieion C*, we don't have other inventories, although there are sometimes lists of different offerings, such as in Nemi in Italy, in the 1st century CE. Elsewhere, it is possible to use the archaeological finds, even if most of them were looted after the closing of the temples or at the end of polytheism.

Literary texts depicting these artefacts or relating ceremonies also give us some information, and so do epigraphical texts: when a donator offers an object to the god(dess), it seems to him necessary to carve the nature of his gift and his own name in the stone. Of course, the finds in the Isis temple in Pompeii constitute the most interesting example because it looks like a polaroid of a temple in action. All these sources constitute the basis of our knowledge concerning the objects, sacral or other, that can be found in Isiac sanctuaries.²

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1. The Statues and Their Equipment

1.1. *The statues*

Apart from the building, the first kind of 'objects' recurrent in the sanctuary is the statue. It symbolizes the presence of the god in the sacred area. Many dedications testify the gift of statues or statuettes. In Delos, for instance, we find many statues or statuettes in the *Sarapieion C* inventories (for instance *RICIS* 202/0424; 156/5 BCE): some of them are made of silver

¹ In Egypt, such inventories sometimes exist. See, e.g., Burkhalter 1985, 127, for the temple of Isis Nephremmis (Soknopaios, Arsinoite nome).

² For the different sanctuaries of Isis and her companions, see Wild 1984; Bricault 2004; Kleibl 2009; Nagel 2019.

(two of Anubis); others are of bronze (Sarapis, Isis, Anubis, Bubastis as well as Zeus, Apollo, Hermes, Eros...), wood (Isis), or marble (Anubis and many others not specified). During the times of the Roman Empire, we find other samples in Phaina for Isis (Phoenicia; *RICIS* 402/0901; 161-169 CE), in Rome for Sarapis (*RICIS* 501/0147; Caracalla), Isis (*RICIS* 501/0150; Imperial Period), Isis and Sarapis (*RICIS* 501/0146; Caracalla); in Tarracina for Isis (Latium; *RICIS* 502/0701). Sometimes, statues of Harpocrates are dedicated to Isis (Verona; *RICIS* 508/0808 and 508/0809; 2nd century CE).³

In certain cases, we know where these statues were placed. In Praeneste (Latium; *RICIS* 503/0602; Antoninus), the Isityches statue donated by Faustus Consularis was placed in the pronaos of the temple of Fortuna Primigenia; in Italica (Spain; *RICIS* 602/0201; end of 2nd to beginning of the 3rd c.), the bust of Isis was in the temple of Victoria Augusta. Conversely, statues of other deities were sometimes placed in an Isis temple or one dedicated to Isis, as in Tibur for a statuette depicting Diana (Latium; *RICIS* 503/0702), or in Ostia, for Venus and Mars statues (Latium; *RICIS* 503/1113 and 1118; mid-2nd c. for the first one, 2nd or 3rd c. for the second). In the Isis temple at Stobi, different fragmentary marble statues were discovered: some of them were statues of a god and goddess(?), others depict humans (Blaževska and Radnjanski 2015, 227-229, 252). Of course, statues of the deity were sometimes directly connected with the owner of the temple, as in Ostia (Latium; *RICIS* 503/1204; mid 2nd to beginning of the 3rd c.) for an Isis statue, but we don't often know who the main deity of a given temple was (Portus Ostiae, for Sarapis and Isis; *RICIS* 503/1212; 2nd to 3rd c.).

Unfortunately, it is very scarcely that we have an opportunity to discover a cult statue in its context (Van Andringa 2012). Even in Pompeii, one of the rare cases where this link could potentially be traced because the temple – along with the whole town – disappeared very quickly in 79 CE, no cult statue was found inside the Isis naos, but a marble statue of Isis was discovered in the portico (*RICIS* 504/0205), with another one of Dionysos with a panther, whereas other fragments were unearthed in the rooms around: they can be considered subsidiary statues. We often don't know the exact localization of the statues, as in the *Serapeum* of Carthage recently published (Laporte and Bricault 2020). In Alexandria, the *Serapeum* was famous all over the Roman world for its Sarapis statue, and that's why its destruction in the 390s CE also marks the official end of polytheism (Thélamon 1981).

³ Other examples, see Beaurin 2013, 239.

1.2. Garments

These statues were dressed, and this custom was already attested in Pharaonic Egypt for everyday worship (Moret 1902). A polychrome statue of Isis discovered in the Isis sanctuary on the Acropolis of Cyrene (Cyrenaica; late Hellenistic–early Roman) and currently in the local museum highlights the importance of these garments outside Egypt (Nagel 2019, 909-916; Pl. IV), even if this statue seems to be almost unusual. A fibula mentioned in the Delian *Sarapieion C* inventories indicates the presence of pieces of clothes for the statues (*RICIS* 202/0423 A I₃, 424 A II₁₆₁; mid-2nd c. BCE). In Pergamum (Asia Minor; *RICIS* 301/1202; 1st c. CE), two dedicators offered different statues (Sarapis, Isis, Anubis, Osiris, Harpocrates, Apis, Helios, Ares, Dioscuri) together with fine cloth and three garments of white linen. In Nemi (Latium; *RICIS* 503/0301; 1st c. CE or before), the list of objects delivered to the Isis temple includes 17 statues and two garments of linen (tunic, pallium, dress, belt); the same kind of garments, made of silk or linen, is also delivered to the Bubastis temple in Nemi. In Luni (Etruria; *RICIS* 511/0701), Vettia Pasipila offers a dress and a coat to Isis: in this case, a rare mummy-shaped bronze lamp was discovered nearby the inscription; the lamp was probably used for the cult of the goddess (Podvin 2011, 95-96, after Gallo 1994). Besides, Apuleius (*Met.* XI, 23-29) mentions the importance of the garments for Isis and during the initiation of Lucius.

1.3. Jewels

The statues were also adorned. In the Delian *Sarapieion C* (*RICIS* 202/0424 and 428), different golden crowns (*stephanon*) are quoted, sometimes diadems (*basileion*), earrings, arm ring (*brachionion*). In Nemi, we find a diadem (*basileum*), armllets, collars, earrings, most of them ornamented with precious stones (the precise number of these gems is quoted), probably for the different statues. In Italica (*RICIS* 602/0201), a silver-made statue is dedicated to Victoria Augusta, with earrings, gems, a golden crown; the same temple also features a golden bust of Isis and another one of Ceres, with their silver-made armllets. In Acci (Cadix, Spain; *RICIS* 603/0101; second half of the 2nd c.), a diadem (*basilum*) with pearls, a collar, earrings, and armllets as well as gems for rings (for the fingers, the legs, the sandals) are given for Isis. In the naos of the *Iseum* of Pompeii, a golden bulla was unearthed, whose presence was regularly attested on statues of the young Harpocrates. Finally, silver- or gold-made eyes, probably used to enhance the verisimilitude of the statue, are also regularly quoted

in these inventories. Unfortunately, we scarcely have the chance to find any jewels in temple areas, because they have been looted for a long time!

2. The Cult Equipment

2.1. Clocks

In the cult of Isis, the hours were counted: Martial (X, 48) mentions the importance of the eighth hour for the devotees of the ‘cow of Pharos,’ and Apuleius of Madauros (*Met.* XI, 20, 5) quotes the first hour of the day and the comeback of the sun for Isis ceremonies.

In the Delian *Sarapieion* C (*RICIS* 202/0428_{,75}; 145/4 BCE), an *horologion* consecrated by Posidonios, from Rhamnonte, belongs to the material described in the inventory of the *Isideion*; in Delos (*RICIS* 202/0342 and 0343; 95/4 BCE), 50 years later, Demetrios, who is a priest of Isis (*melanephoros*) coming from Alexandria, dedicates altars, the ground floor, a sphinx, and an *horologion* to the tetrad Isis, Sarapis, Anubis, and Harpocrates. During the Imperial Period, at Helvia Ricina (Picenum; *RICIS* 509/0201), a man offers a solar-clock (*horologium*) to Isis Regina(?); in Durostorum (or Sillistra, in Moesia Inferior; 3rd c. CE), a solar-clock is decorated with representations of Isis and Sarapis (Tacheva-Hitova 1983, 6 n° 8 and Pl. IV; Arslan 1997, VI.25); an Egyptian water-clock was found near the *Sarapieion* in Ephesus (Ionia; 1st c. CE) (Langmann *et al.* 1984, col. 4-68) and two fragments of the same type in Rome (*Iseum campense*) (Arslan 1997, V.12 and V.13. cf. Quack 2003). Probably the *horologos*, a high priest whose function is attested in literary texts (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromates*, 4), was in charge of this material, because rites had to be undertaken at specific hours according to Egyptian customs.

2.2. Altars

Altars (*βωμός*) are so numerous that it is impossible to list all of them. They are a sign of the Greco-Roman character of this cult, so different from what existed in Pharaonic Egypt during the earlier centuries. Thanks to the inscriptions often carved on these altars we have the opportunity to discover the name and function of the dedicator, the divinity concerned, and sometimes the reason of its erection (‘good health,’ ‘fortuitous travel’...).

Somewhat different are the portable altars, used in Isis processions (Gasparini 2008)⁴: Apuleius (*Met.* XI, 10,4) says that the second priest holds two *altaria*, *id est auxilia*. In Modena, a dedication concerns *auxilia* (*RICIS*

⁴ Even if we think that some of the ‘altaria’ he depicts are actually ‘candelabra.’

512/0601; 2nd c. CE), and in Pergamum, an inscription (*RICIS* 301/1205) mentions a *βωμοφόρος*: this word is unique, and it has been connected to the cult of Isis. This type of priest belongs to the group of *ἱεραφόροι*, such as an *ἀγιαφόρος* in Athens (*RICIS* 101/0221), or a *κωμαστής* – a priest carrying a statue (of Osiris in that case) – in Tyr (*RICIS* 402/0802; this term also appears in different papyri in Egypt, e.g., *P.Oxy.* X 1265 and XII 1449). In Lambaesis (Numidia), a fragmentary bronze altar adorned with Isiac deities was found in a private domus: unfortunately we don't know whether it was related to this domus or to the Isis temple nearby (Le Glay 1994; Nagel 2019, 1005-1009).

2.3. *Material for the Libations of Water, Milk and Wine*

2.3.1. Hydriae

The use of water, whose importance is attested in Ancient Egypt (Vitr. *De arch.* VIII, *Praef* 4; Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 365), is now well known in the cult of Isis (Apul. *Met.* XI, 20, 4; Wild 1981; Koemoth 1999). In Thessaloniki (Macedonia; *RICIS* 113/0521; 37/6 BCE), a white marble slab found inside the *Sarapieion* bears the inscription of a priest of Sarapis and Isis who offers an *ὕδρηον* (*hydreion*) to the goddess. An *hydria Hypsiana* appears among the different objects of the list of Nemi (*RICIS* 503/0301_{,19}). In Nomentum (Latium; *RICIS* 503/0801_{,4-5}), a golden hydria is ornamented with gems. A real hydria was found in the temple of Isis un Pompeii, bearing the name of its dedicator, Popidius Nealtis (*RICIS* 504/0211). These sacred hydriae are regularly painted on frescoes or mentioned in the course of an Isiac procession (Apul. *Met.* XI, 10,6; XI, 11, 3-4), and they are considered a form of the Osiris cult, but in an hellenized version in the Roman area.

We must keep in mind the existence of a *lacus* in Lambaesis for Isis (Numidia; *RICIS* 704/0303; 250-260 CE) and in Panóias for Isis and Sarapis (Baetica; *RICIS* 602/0503; 2nd-3rd c. CE), of a *labrum* in Ostia for Sarapis (*RICIS* 503/1111), of a *labellum marmoreum cum columella* for Bubastis in Nemi (*RICIS* 503/0301_{,18-19}). In this last case, the written mention of a *labellum* is made just before that of the hydria. The use of water was recently suggested in relation to an initiation in the *Serapeum* of Sarmizegetusa on the basis of the fragments of an inscription concerning a *fons* (Piso 2019).

2.3.2. Situlae (Krauskopf 2005)

Parallel to the sistrum, which will be discussed later, the situla is often carved on funerary steles in Athens, on Roman altars, or on coins representing

Isis (especially in the 2nd c. CE). In Pharaonic Egypt, during the Late Period, situlae were used in different cults, and are sometimes found in tombs. In the Greco-Roman world, Isis is often depicted as holding it by her left hand on her statues. It is probably the breast-shaped vase for libations of milk that Apuleius describes during the ceremony of the *Navigium Isidis* (*Met.* XI, 10,6; XI, 16,9), and that is already quoted in Delos at the beginning of the 2nd century BCE with the Greek word *μαστός* (*mastos*, *RICIS* 202/0191_{9, 21}). The importance of milk can also be seen on many Isis statuettes or on handles of lamps, where the goddess breastfeeds her young son, Harpocrates. In Late Antiquity, Servius considers that it is linked to the flood of the River Nile (*Serv. Dan.* VIII, 698).⁵ The discovery of a situla in Pompeii is particularly interesting, even if it is outside the area of the Isis temple (however the triangular forum is not far from it) (Tran tam Tinh 1964, 174 n° 142, pl. XII, 4). In Egypt, this kind of object was discovered in the waters of Thônis-Heracleion, too. Isis has yet a situla in her left hand on her statue of Ras el-Soda, and was probably brandishing a sistrum in the right raised hand, now broken (Nagel 2019, Taf. 3).

2.3.3. *Phiales* and *Pateriae*

Phiales in the Greek world, and *pateriae* in the Roman one, are frequently represented in the hand of the goddess, and they were suitable for different sacrifices. These shallow dishes were used in ancient Rome for pouring libations.

In the Delian *Sarapieion C*, the different inventories mention several phiales, such as the six among the objects coming from the *Sarapieion* and stored in the temple of Artemis (*RICIS* 202/0424₁₂₂); or a silver phiale in the temple of Anubis (*RICIS* 202/0423 A I₁₃; 156/5 BC). We also find such objects in Rhodes, where a silver phiale is dedicated by priests of Sarapis (*RICIS* 204/0110; 3rd-2nd c. BCE). In Iasos (Caria; *RICIS* 305/1401; ca. 50 CE), the magistrates of the city dedicate a phiale to Isis and Sarapis; in Ephesus, a man offers a phiale and a spondeion to Isis and Sarapis (*RICIS* 304/0609; mid-2nd c. CE). In Nîmes (Narbonnaise; *RICIS* 605/0101), someone offers statues of Isis(?), Sarapis, Vesta, Somnis and two golden *phiales*. *Pateriae* are also mentioned twice in the list of Nemi. Concerning the patera of Egyed, it might have belonged to the *Iseum* of Savaria, or of Scarbantia (Giumlia-Mair and Mráv 2014, 77).

⁵ *per situlam, quam sinistra manu retinet ostendit fluentiam omnium lacunarum.*

A *simpulum* is represented on one of the sides of an Isiac altar in Ostia, and a patera on the other (*RICIS* 503/1114). Several *simpula* were also found in Thônis-Heracleion, with other bowls.

2.3.4. Other Vases

In the Delian inventories, we also find the words *καδίσκος* (*kadiskos*; *RICIS* 202/0424, A₁₃₄; mid 2nd c. BCE), *κάδος* (*kados*; *RICIS* 202/0191₁₈; 202/0424, A_{139;152}; B₅₄; ca. 182 BC), and *κύαθος* (*kyathos*, *RICIS* 202/0191₁₂; 202/0424, A₁₃₇), which were vases used to draw water or wine.

Different vases for libations (*spondeion*) are also mentioned in literary texts (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromates*, 36, 2) and in epigraphic texts: in Kyme, Apollonides offers a *spondeion* to Sarapis (Aeolid; *RICIS* 302/0205; end of the 1st–beginning of the 2nd c. CE), and so does a dedicator to Isis and Sarapis in Ephesus (Ionia; *RICIS* 304/0609; AD 145-161). The same word in Latin is used in the inscription of Nemi, for one in gold and the other in silver, and in the procession described by Apuleius (*Met.* XI, 20, 4).

3. Creating a Religious Atmosphere

Around the temple, steles insisted on the power of gods (goddesses) to listen to the devotees (ear-steles, as in Stobi (Blaževska and Radnjanski 2015, 235), Thessaloniki (Bricault 2013, 247), Pozzuoli (De Caro 2006, II.9 and II. 10)), or to accompany them (steles with feet) (Arslan 1997, VI.3 from Italic; VI.10 from Germany). In these different cases, mainly found in Greece and Spain, the footprint perhaps means that the pilgrims went there and left a trace of their presence, but we can also consider that they represent an epiphany of the god. Although they were not compulsory, their presence underlines their attachment to the divinity, as for an ex-voto.

Inside the temple, in order to create a religious atmosphere and to bring devotees to appropriate mental state for the mysteries, the different senses were solicited, as can be seen on paintings discovered in Herculaneum, which depict cult scenes in front of a temple (Tran tam Tinh 1964, Pl. XXIII-XXIV; Arslan 1997, 447, V.77), or as we can read in the novel of Apuleius.

3.1. Incense and Perfume for the Nose

In many religions, the offering of incense is a sign of respect towards the god. This product was scarce in Antiquity and was imported from faraway countries. In Pharaonic Egypt, expeditions were organized to fetch incense from Punt, in black Africa, such as during the reign of Queen Hatshepsut,

who had this expedition related on the walls of her funerary temple in Deir el-Bahari. In Christianity, the Gospel according to Matthew (2, 11) recounts the gift of incense to Jesus by one of the three Wise Men: incense is put on the same level with gold and myrrh.

Concerning the cult of Isis, in Delos (beginning of the 2nd c. BC), several incense-burners (*λιβανοτίδα*) were offered (*RICIS* 202/0191₁₄₋₁₅; 202/0424₁₃₂₋₁₃₃) and a *λιβανοκαθαρτής* – the man preparing incense – is mentioned a century later. Incense is also represented on some funerary steles, as in Rome (*RICIS* 501/0171; 130-140 CE).

Concerning perfume, we also find several *θυμιατήρια* in Delos, often bronze-made; in Chersonesos, a man dedicates a marble thymiaterion to Sarapis (*RICIS* 203/0101; 2nd c. BCE), and so does another one during the Roman period in Iasos, to Isis Pelagia, Isis Bubastis, and Anubis. Bringing the *θυμιατήριον* belongs to the sacred duties in the temple of Isis-Aphrodite in Epidaurus (2nd-3rd c. CE; *RICIS* 102/0405). In Portus Ostiae, a neokoros of Sarapis devotes a thymiaterion, three altars, and several lamps to Sarapis (*RICIS* 503/1205; 2nd c. CE), and such thymiateria were found out in Ephesus.

3.2. *Light and Lamps for the Eyes*

The lighting device is an important part of the cult equipment. Scholars (for instance, Bruneau 1975, 136) sometimes wonder whether it is there because of the necessity to light a dark room, or if it had a genuinely religious purpose. I think the answer is clear: of course, it was necessary to light the temple for the cult, but many objects quoted in the inventories or inscribed on stone were also used for a cult purpose; the case of lighting devices is similar. Different scenes painted on the walls of the Isis temple in Pompeii should provide a good clue. On one of them, a priest is holding a lamp (probably during a procession), whereas other priests or devotees close by carry a scroll of papyrus, palms, a situla and a crown with a cobra: all these elements were used in the cult of the goddess. On another scene, a priest is bringing two candelabra in front of a statue of the god Harpocrates (Podvin 2011, 176-177, 2016).

Different objects were used for lighting. Torches (*δαίδια*, *λαμπάδα*, *λαμπάδια*) are quoted in some lists, such as in Delos, and are also carved on steles or altars. Unfortunately, there are scarcely any traces of their existence, even if a *λαμπαδεία* is attested in Priene (*RICIS* 304/0802; 2nd c. BCE). Eleven *λυχνουρέοντες* in Delos (*RICIS* 202/0424₃₆₋₃₇) may be identified to bronze lanterns (Palaiokrassa 2007; Podvin 2018), or at least

they were used to receive lamps (*λύχνοι*); one bronze lamp (*λύχνος*) has ten nozzles; a lampstand (*λυχνία*) is also attested, and three women called *λαμπτηροφόροι* (*RICIS* 202/0209; 95/4 BCER) were in charge of bearing lamps; the same function appears later in Athens (*λυχνάπτρια*; *RICIS* 101/0220; ca 120 CE). All these objects remind us what was discovered in a sanctuary of Egyptian gods in Marathon, especially 70 oversized lamps depicting Isis and Sarapis, or in the west part of Europe, in Mainz, two centuries later, with many lamps discovered in the sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater. In Pompeii, a double bronze lamp and two bronze candlesticks were hidden inside the naos of the *Iseum*, whereas a bronze candelabra was discovered in the peribolium. The terracotta lamps found nearby seem less interesting, but their number (58 in a room), and a dozen spread all over the temple, testify to the importance of the light in the ceremonies (Podvin 2011, 174-179, 2015, 2019b). In Egypt, several lamps, in bronze or in terracotta, were also found in Thônis-Heracleion, for instance, in the area of the temple (Goddio and Fabre 2015, 105-107). Even if they did not bear images of the Isiac deities, they could have been used in the cult.⁶

In Epidaurus (2nd-3rd c. CE), one of the sacral duties of the priest was to light lamps (*λύχνοι*) at different places; one lampstand (*λυχνία*) was static. We have already mentioned an inscription in Portus Ostiae, where the dedicator offers a silver lampada, and a multinozzled lamp to Sarapis (*RICIS* 503/1205). In Rome, other lampstands were discovered in the *Iseum campense* and elsewhere.

Large boat-shaped lamps found in different places may have belonged to temples (Fig. 1): in Nea Paphos, Carthage, Pozzuoli, and Ostia (Bricault 2006, 126-134; Podvin 2011, 91-95; 260-261; Pl. 63). These different boat-shaped and multinozzled lamps are so large they couldn't be borne by priests or devotees for fear of severely burning them. They were generally ex-votos offered in thanksgiving to the god(dess).

3.3. Music for the Ears

Inscriptions quote sometimes sistrums, as in Nemi (*sistrum argentum inauratum*), or in Nida (Germany Superior; *RICIS* 609/0401). This religious instrument is often carved on funerary steles of devout women (Athens), with the situla, but it is sometimes brandished by priests of the goddess (Demetrias in Thessaly, Paros, Pompeii...), and also present on many coin issues with the figure of Isis, especially in Asia Minor. The image of a sistrum is also represented on frescoes, as in the Savarian *Iseum* (Fig. 2),

⁶ For a discussion about this, see Podvin 2011, 157-162, 2019a.

and this instrument often occurs on different objects, such as lamps. Isis holds a bronze sistrum when she appears to Lucius (Apul. *Met.* XI, 4,2), as on many statues of the goddess (Gortyna, Napoli (Arslan 1997, III.20; IV.11)); in the *Satyricon* (CLIV), the famous novel of Petronius, a sistrum and a veil (*vestis*) are the two objects stolen by Encolpius to the goddess statue; finally at the end of polytheism, Isis is depicted as a sistrum holder in the *Carmen contra paganos*. The metallic sound of the sistrum created a very particular atmosphere (Saura-Ziegelmeier 2019) and it was used by the priests in Pompei (Arslan 1997, 345).

Other music instruments were also used in the cult, such as flutes, tambourines and wind harps (cf. the Ariccia relief and the columns of the *Iseum campense*) whereas singers were chanting and devotees were dancing (Bricault and Veymiers 2018).

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that all these objects constituted a certain basis, however the cult of Isis, Sarapis and the *synnaoi theoi* also needed other things, such as books, food (chicken, for instance, found in great quantity in the sanctuary of Isis and Magna Mater in Mainz). In order to prepare them, it was necessary to collect money (moneyboxes existed, at least in Egypt) and some dedicators could offer silver to the goddess in Rome (*RICIS* 501/0149; Imperial Period), in Acci, 112 pounds and a half, two ounces and a half and five scrupules (*RICIS* 603/0101) and in Nîmes, ten thousand sesterces (*RICIS* 605/0101), for the organization of the cult.

This overview reveals the difficulty to determine precisely what could belong to a temple of Isis or Sarapis during the Late Hellenistic Period and the Roman Empire. The recent research on the Isis temple in Belo (Dardaine *et al.* 2008) or the Serapeum of Carthage (Laporte and Bricault 2020), both concerning the Roman Period, are particularly interesting. Their authors analyze many details of the precise place of discovery of each object in order to identify the exact composition of the furniture. Nevertheless, they are dependent on the imprecision of the ancient excavation reports, or of the many clandestine discoveries in the case of Carthage.

Further research in the field of Isiac cults and new discoveries, especially in Eastern Europe, should give us the opportunity of learning more about the arrangement of these sanctuaries in the coming decades.

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Pl. 1: 1 – Boat-shaped lamp. Reproduced from J.-L. Podvin 2011. *Luminaire et cultes isiaques*, pl. 63. Montagnac

Pl. 1: 2 – Hand of Isis (or a priestess of Isis), Savaria. Photo by Claudie Podvin