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## Two silver skyphoi with Nilotic scenes revisited<sup>1</sup>

Robert Steven Bianchi

**I**N THE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION, the four sides of each cup have been designated A-i, A-ii, A-iii, A-iv and B-i, B-ii, B-iii, and B-iv respectively and so labeled in the illustrations for ease of reference [fig. 1-8]. The punched Greek inscription on the bottom of the foot of Cup B is labeled B-v [fig. 9]. All of the illustrations of Cup A have been provided by the owner; all of the illustrations for Cup B have been provided by Christie's. The illustration of the vignette (C-i) from the Great Columbarium of the Villa Doria Pamphilj is from ALEA, the archive of late Egyptian art, a photographic and bibliographic archive maintained by Dr. Robert Steven Bianchi of Holiday, Florida [fig. 10].

### Cup A

Parcel silver gilt with chasing

Height: 10.5 cm (4 1/8 inches); 323.5 grams (10.44 ounces)

4 5/8 inches), with handles 17 cm. (6 11/16 inches)

There are hairline fractures throughout and apparent restorations, particularly in the handle zones in the area behind both the hippopotamus and crocodile.

Published: Bianchi 1992a; Christie's 2013; Spier 2018: 278.

### Cup B

Parcel silver gilt with chasing

Height: 10.8 cm (4 1/4 inches); 327.2 grams (10.52 ounces)

Hairline fissures throughout.

Published: Christie's 2004.

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<sup>1</sup> I thank the owner of Cup A for granting me its publication rights and providing me with its illustrations and am indebted to Jeffrey Spier for introducing me to that individual. In like manner I thank Max Bernheimer of Christie's for contacting the owner of Cup B who granted me its publication rights. I wish to thank the following individuals: Edmund Meltzer for discussing with me aspects of *The Tale of the Doomed Prince* and for providing me with pdf-files of several articles on that subject which would have been otherwise inaccessible to me due to the act of self-imposed isolation during the pandemic; Kyriakos Savvopoulos for discussing aspects of the Greek inscription with me; and Caroline Delucé.

Although the academic consensus recognizes the Nilotic, Egyptian references of the imagery on both of these cups, virtually no attention has been paid to the possible genesis of their motifs within the broader framework of the culture of Egypt during the Hellenistic Period. In a thought-provoking dissertation, Arika Yatsunami characterized the intellectual climate of the Alexandrian “Mouseion-Library” as one which fostered the development of a *poeta doctus*, whose encyclopedic knowledge transformed him into a living archivist.<sup>2</sup> He further comments that a command of arcane, obscure references often accompanied by an antiquated vocabulary resulted in a radical redefinition of “Greekness.”<sup>3</sup> His assessment is confirmed by the observations of Marquis Berrey who discusses the content of performance pieces attended by members of the elite Alexandrian intelligentsia.<sup>4</sup> To those discussions must be added the growing body of evidence which links visual representations with literary treatises. Achille Adriani had suggested, for example, that Classical representations of skeletons in a *carpe diem* context, exemplified by the episode of Trimalchio in Petronius’ *Satyricon* (34.8), have their origins in similar themes preserved in pharaonic literary treatises which were furthered by individuals actively working in Hellenistic Alexandria.<sup>5</sup> The concept of *enargeia*, creating a mental evocation via the written word of a visual image, was a particular predilection of the Alexandrians,<sup>6</sup> which has been studied in greater detail in the analyses of the poems of both Pindar and Bacchylides.<sup>7</sup>

Such mental gymnastics were not the sole province of Alexandrian intellectuals. During the Hellenistic Period highly educated Egyptians, mostly anonymous priests, developed profoundly intellectual metalinguistic compositions.<sup>8</sup> Just as the compositions of an Alexandrian *poeta doctus* redefined one’s “Greekness,” so, too, such complex Egyptian systems contributed to the manner in which those prelates more narrowly defined their own social status.<sup>9</sup> And just as the concept of *enargeia* informed literary works in Hellenistic Greek centers, so, too, did the intersection of art and hieroglyphs likewise inform contemporary Egyptian works.<sup>10</sup> The ancient Egyptian prelates involved in such intellectual pursuits were not ensconced in their local nomes, because their activities were geographically wide-spread which resulted in the development of

<sup>2</sup> Paraphrasing A. YATSUNAMI, *In the bird cage of the Muses: Archiving, erudition, and empire in Ptolemaic Egypt*, PhD thesis, Duke University, 2010, p. 132. Online at <http://hdl.handle.net/10161/3043> (viewed 2020.10.21).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> M. BERREY, *Hellenistic Science at Court. Science, Technology and Medicine in Ancient Cultures* 5, 2017, p. 141, 169-190.

<sup>5</sup> A. ADRIANI, “Appunti su alcuni aspetti del grottesco alessandrino,” in *Gli Archeologi Italiani in Onore di Amedeo Maiuri*, Naples, 1965, p. 37-62.

<sup>6</sup> P. LINANT DE BELLEFONDS, É. PRIoux, *Voir les mythes : Poésie hellénistique et arts figurés*, Paris, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> D. FEARN, *Pindar’s Eyes: Visual and Material Culture in Epinician Poetry*, Oxford, 2017; and T. MAURO, *Lirica, epigramma, e critica letteraria, Seminari* 3, Pisa, Roma, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> M. BROZE, R. PREYS, “Les ‘noms cachés’ d’Amon : jeux de signes et rituels sur la porte ptolémaïque du deuxième pylône du temple de Karnak,” in C. Zivie-Coche, I. Guernier (eds), “*Parcourir l’éternité*”, *hommages à Jean Yoyotte* I, Turnhout, 2012, p. 193.

<sup>9</sup> D. KURTH, “Zur Definition des Ptolemäischen,” *GM* 229, 2011, p. 65; so, too, D. KLOTZ, “Two hymns to Isis from Philae revisited (Žabkar, Hymns 1-2),” *BSEG* 30, 2014-2015, p. 99, 107.

<sup>10</sup> A.H. PRIES, “Ἐμψυχα ἱερογλυφικά I: Eine Annäherung an Wesen und Wirkmacht ägyptischer Hieroglyphen nach dem indigenen Zeugnis,” in S. Lippert, M. Schentuleit, M.A. Stadler (eds), *Sapientia Felicitas: Festschrift für Günter Vittmann zum 29. Februar 2016*, *CENiM* 14, Montpellier, 2016, p. 449-488.

what one might term a unified koine, the transmission of which was often bilingual.<sup>11</sup> The identification of Cleopatra VII as the Egyptian goddess *r'.t-t3wy* at Armant may serve as an noteworthy example<sup>12</sup> of a process in which the Egyptian intelligentsia were the primary movers.<sup>13</sup> Evidence of such intensive, intellectual cooperation has been shown to have been in the best interests of the Ptolemaic state.<sup>14</sup> That interaction contributed to the development of a translocal elite culture,<sup>15</sup> in which the intersection of literary and visual motifs could be mutually exchanged.<sup>16</sup> The primacy of Alexandria as a privileged think-tank continued into the Roman Imperial Period, but a corresponding pharaonic, intellectual ambience thrived as well at Egyptian Thebes, where the same archivist mentality so prevailed<sup>17</sup> that even as late as the 3rd century AD the erudite Egyptian Abammon could still lucidly expounded the mysteries of pharaonic Theban theologies in terms which even Porphyry could comprehend.<sup>18</sup> The person of Abammon could not have been nurtured if it had not been for the demonstrable, uninterrupted interaction between the intelligentsia of those two think-tanks. Intellectual exegeses knows no boundaries.<sup>19</sup> The following discussion of the imagery on these two silver cups smacks of a profound intellectual bi-cultural exchange which combines the visual with the literary in a seamless manner. The fact that these two cups are so similar in every respect suggests that they were originally created as an intentional pair, which inexplicably appears to conform to the ancient practice that skyphoi were often intentionally paired. How these two cups then became separated only to turn up separately almost two millennia later within a decade or so of each other remains an insoluble enigma.

<sup>11</sup> L. COULON, "Quand Amon parle à Platon (la statue Caire JE 38033)," *RdE* 52, 2001, p. 85-125.

<sup>12</sup> J. RAY, "Cleopatra in the temples of Upper Egypt: the evidence of Dendera and Armant," in S. Walker, S.-A. Ashton (eds), *Cleopatra reassessed*, London, 2003, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> A. BLASIUS, "'It was Greek to me ...' - Die lokalen Eliten im ptolemäischen Ägypten," in B. Dreyer, P.F. Mittag (eds), *Lokale Eliten und hellenistische Könige: zwischen Kooperation und Konfrontation*, Berlin, 2011, p. 155; so, too, C. FISCHER-BOVET, "Toward a Translocal Elite Culture in the Ptolemaic Empire," in L. Myles Lavan, R.E. Payne, J. Weisweiler, *Cosmopolitanism and Empire: Universal Rulers, Local Elites, and Cultural Integration in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, New York, 2016, p. 103-128; and F. HOFFMANN, M. MINAS-NERPPEL, S. PFEIFFER, *Die dreisprachige Stele des C. Cornelius Gallus: Übersetzung und Kommentar, Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 9, Berlin, New York, 2009, p. 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> S. PFEIFFER, "Herrscherlegitimität und Herrscherkult in den ägyptischen Tempeln griechisch-römischer Zeit," in D. von Recklinghausen, M.A. Stadler (eds), *KulOrte: Mythen, Wissenschaft und Alltag in den Tempeln Ägyptens*, Berlin, 2011, p. 125.

<sup>15</sup> C. FISCHER-BOVET, *loc. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> P.G.P. MEYBOOM, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy*, Leiden, Boston, 2016, p. 164-166.

<sup>17</sup> D. KLOTZ, *Caesar in the City of Amun: Egyptian temple construction and theology in Roman Thebes*, *MRE* 15, Turnhout, 2012, p. 403-405; and F. COPPENS, "Ptolemaic and Roman Thebes," in J. Mynárová, P. Onderka (eds), *Thebes: city of gods and pharaohs*, Prague, 2007, p. 203, while in disagreement with Klotz on many issues, nevertheless concurs on the persistent and tenacious pharaonic, intellectualism of that city's learned elite.

<sup>18</sup> D. KLOTZ, "Elements of Theban theology in Plutarch and his contemporaries," in M. Erler, M.A. Stadler (eds), *Platonismus und spätägyptische Religion: Plutarch und die Ägyptenrezeption in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Berlin, Boston, 2017, p. 127-148.

<sup>19</sup> M. ESCOLANO-POVEDA, *The Egyptian Priests of the Graeco-Roman Period: An Analysis on the Basis of the Egyptian and Graeco-Roman Literary and Paraliterary Sources, Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion* 29, Wiesbaden, 2020, p. 311-326.

The subject matter, style, material, and dimensions of both skyphoi suggest that they were created in the same atelier, perhaps by the same silversmiths. Each consists of four component parts—the bowl, its two handles, and a foot—which were separately made and then joined. The manner in which the handles have been added seems to indicate that they were not part of the original figural design because their terminals ending in palmettes have simply been attached to the cups in such a way that they cover some of the scenes' integral floral elements, unlike the purposeful design of similar cups in which negative space is introduced between the floral elements so that the handles can be attached without covering them.<sup>20</sup> It is, therefore, entirely possible that both cups were repurposed at different times, the first with the additions of handles and feet. A further repurposing is indicated by the presence of an indistinct Greek inscription punched into the bottom of the base of Cup B (B-v).

If this suggestion obtains, then perhaps the two cups were even originally designed as handleless,<sup>21</sup> for which compare a gold, hemispherical cup with raised relief decoration of fishermen in Geneva.<sup>22</sup>

It has been generally assumed that the figural decoration of the four scenes on these two cups is to be understood within the Egyptianizing tendencies of the art of the Roman Imperial Period.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the principal figure in all four scenes is a nude male in what can only be understood as a Nilotic landscape, although the principal figures stand on ground lines that represent a terrestrial rather than a riverine setting. The orientation of nude figure in three of four of those scenes is to the right; he faces left only in Scene Ai. In Scene A-i and B-ii, the nude holds the same attributes, despite the fact that he is paired with a crocodile<sup>24</sup> and a hippopotamus, respectively. The avian appearing in two scenes, on the back of a hippopotamus in Scene A-ii and apparently in the act of pecking at the nude's genitalia in Scene B-ii, is undoubtedly an ibis, represented by the hieroglyph G26,<sup>25</sup> to judge by its characteristic curved bill and long legs. In order to place the

<sup>20</sup> Paris, Musée du Louvre Bj 1908, a cup from the Boscoreale Treasure:

[http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=obj\\_view\\_obj&objet=cartel\\_9209\\_11901\\_gv012439.001.jpg\\_obj.html&flag=false](http://cartelfr.louvre.fr/cartelfr/visite?srv=obj_view_obj&objet=cartel_9209_11901_gv012439.001.jpg_obj.html&flag=false) (viewed 2020.10.12).

<sup>21</sup> S.I. ROTROFF, "Drinking without handles in the age of Alexander," in I. Kamenjarin, M. Ugarković (eds.), *Exploring the Neighborhood: The Role of Ceramics in Understanding Place in the Hellenistic World, Proceedings of the 3rd Conference of the International Association for Research on Pottery of the Hellenistic Period, Kaštela, Croatia 1-4 June 2017*, Vienna, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Geneva, Fondation Gandur pour l'Art FGA-ARCH-GR-0057: R.S. BIANCHI, "Bol hémisphérique représentant des pêcheurs," in C. Méla, F. Möri, S. Aufrère, G. Dorival, A. Le Boulluec (eds.), *Alexandrie la Divine*, Geneva, 2014, p. 1057 with figure 70.

<sup>23</sup> J. SPIER, in J. Spier, T. Potts, S.E. Cole (eds.), *Beyond the Nile: Egypt and the Classical World*, Los Angeles, 2018, p. 278, no. 175.

<sup>24</sup> E.R. HEKKALA, M.L. AARDEMA, A. NARECHANIA, G. AMATO, S. IKRAM, M.H. SHIRLEY, K.A. VLIET, S.W. CUMMINGHAM, M.T.P. GILBERT, O. SMITH, "The Secrets of Sobek. A Crocodile Mummy Mitogenome from Ancient Egypt," *JAS Reports* 33, 2020, 102483. for a discussion of the two distinct species of crocodile, *Crocodyles niloticus* and *Crocodylus suchis*, found in ancient Egypt, but their representation in Scenes A-i and B-i are so subjected to artistic license as to preclude a precise identification.

<sup>25</sup> A.H. GARDINER, *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford, 1957 (= *GEG*), p. 471, G26; identified as *Threskiornis aethiopicus*, for which see S. WASEF, S. SUBRAMANIAN, R. O'RORKE, L. HUYNEN, S. EL-MARGHANI, C. CURTIS, A. POPINGA, B. HOLLAND, S. IKRAM, C. MILLAR, E. WILLERSLEV, D. LAMBERT, "Mitogenomic diversity in sacred ibis mummies

figural decoration of these two cups into an art historical perspective from which one can then suggest an interpretation of the scenes, it is important to discuss each of its motifs in turn.

All four scenes are littered with a profusion of floral motifs, the designs of which are often not botanically exacting. The species represented by the wispy branches on relatively tall trunks are plausibly identifiable as [date-]palm trees.<sup>26</sup> The rushes behind the hippopotami are presumably intended to represent a papyrus marsh.<sup>27</sup> The floral forms partially hidden by the handles' palmette-shaped terminals on each side of both cups and in the field above the crocodile in B-ii appear to be depictions of the lotus, in which, perhaps, the forms of the blue lotus<sup>28</sup> are conflated with those of the white lotus.<sup>29</sup> In this regard one has to emphasize that even the most accomplished pharaonic craftsmen often confused the two which resulted in hybrid designs.<sup>30</sup>

There are two representations of architectural structures. The first is a hut of reed lattice-work, depicted only once between the buttocks of the hippopotamus and the handle in Scene B-ii. This structure finds its closest parallel in the Nilotic Mosaic from Palestrina, a detail of which is presently in Berlin,<sup>31</sup> but in Scene B-ii its openwork lattice is not employed as a trellis for vines and it has no inhabitants, for which compare a variant design in a wall painting in Naples.<sup>32</sup> It has been cogently argued that such reed huts belong to local Egyptian architectural traditions<sup>33</sup> which can be traced back to the Predynastic Period.<sup>34</sup>

Evocations of those wattle-and-daub shrines are preserved in monumental reflections, the best preserved example of which is the "petrified" Per-nu, more popularly known as the so-called Maison du Sud within the funerary complex of Pharaoh Djoser at Saqqara dated to Dynasty III. Its design continued to be evoked in architecture of the Late Period and may very well have served as the antecedent here.<sup>35</sup> The second architectural structure is a portico, its two flanks designed at angles to one another in both Scene A-ii and B-iii. Its design is ubiquitously depicted

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sheds light on early Egyptian practices." *PLoS One* 14 (11), 2019, e0223964. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0223964, on line at:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0223964> (viewed 2020.10.21).

<sup>26</sup> J. SPIER, *op. cit.*, p. 278; and C. Tietze (ed.), *Ägyptische Gärten*, Weimar, 2011, p. 147-149, Date palms (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.).

<sup>27</sup> A. Wiese, C. Jacquat (eds.), *Blumenreich: Wiedergeburt in Pharaonengräbern*, Basel, 2014, p. 194 (*Cyperus papyrus*); and Tietze, *op. cit.*, p. 95, fig. 111.

<sup>28</sup> C. Tietze (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 122-123 (*Nymphaea caerulea* Savig.).

<sup>29</sup> *Loc. cit.*; and A. Wiese, C. Jacquat (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 123 (*Nymphaea lotus* L.).

<sup>30</sup> L. MANNICHE, *The ornamental calcite vessels from the tomb of Tutankhamun*, Leuven, 2019, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antikensammlung, Mosaic 3: S.E. COLE, in J. Spier, T. Potts, S.E. Cole (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 250-253, no. 152; and more specifically M. HINTERHÖLLER-KLEIN, *Varietates topiorum*, OAPEN (Open Access Publishing in European Networks), 2015), p. 73-74, *passim* with plates 24-27, online at <http://oapen.org/download?type=document&docid=594190> (viewed 2020.07.10).

<sup>32</sup> Naples, National Archaeological Museum 8561, from Herculaneum but without context: M. HINTERHÖLLER-KLEIN, *op. cit.*, p. 108, 205, and 264 with plate 38, fig. 207.

<sup>33</sup> J. MCKENZIE, *The architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 700*, New Haven, 2010, p. 93-94, 179, and 187.

<sup>34</sup> D. ARNOLD, *Lexikon der ägyptischen Baukunst*, Zürich, 1994, p. 189, for the Per-nu shrine; and p. 190, for the Per-wer shrine.

<sup>35</sup> J.-P. LAUER, *Saqqarah la nécropole royale de Memphis ; quarante siècles d'histoire, cent vingt-cinq ans de recherches*, Paris, 1977, p. 90, with fig. 93.

in Pompeian wall paintings as an element in both sacro-idyllic<sup>36</sup> as well as villa landscapes.<sup>37</sup> Those depictions would seem to have their architectural antecedents in the Hellenistic Period during which time porticos were an unmistakable feature of the cityscape of Alexandria.<sup>38</sup> Placed within the floral Nilotic landscape, the reed hut and porticos serve as syncopated symbols of the Egyptian chora, or countryside, and the metropolis of Alexandria, respectively, and as such may have been intended to represent the Two Lands, Upper and Lower Egypt. The issue which remains unresolved with regard to these landscapes is an understanding of the process by which an “imaginative narrative [was transformed] into a vivid presence,”<sup>39</sup> attested by the statistical dominance of Nilotic scenes in the wall painting of Campania.

Each of the motifs on these two cups – crocodile,<sup>40</sup> hippopotamus,<sup>41</sup> ibis,<sup>42</sup> the flora<sup>43</sup> [date-palm trees, reeds/papyrus marsh, lotus], and the reed hut and porticos – are clearly intended to reinforce the Nilotic nature of the environment depicted. One must emphasize that each one of those motifs is indebted to a pharaonic, Egyptian tradition.

The attributes held in the hands of the nude in Scenes A-i and B-ii are an askos and a basket. The design of the askos in both scenes conforms to the profile of examples dated to the Hellenistic Period as comparisons with a bronze example from Tarentum in New York<sup>44</sup> reveals. The askos appears to have held a privileged position in Alexandrian art to judge from its depiction in a Hellenistic mosaic<sup>45</sup> from the palace area of Alexandria, Egypt. The vessel also figures prominently in the royal iconography of the Meroitic Period,<sup>46</sup> and those associations were arguably in circulation among the learned priests of the period. The basket in these scenes is hemispherical in profile and ornamented with parallel, horizontal striations in imitation of wicker work. The shape is that of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph V30,<sup>47</sup> but with a strap-handle. Numerous bronze statuettes of cat-headed female figures, identified as Bastet which are dated to

<sup>36</sup> Rome, Palazzo Massimo MN 1230: M. HINTERHÖLLER-KLEIN, *op. cit.*, p. 60, 66, 68, passim with plate 42, fig. 226a.

<sup>37</sup> M. HINTERHÖLLER-KLEIN, *op. cit.*, p. 342-347.

<sup>38</sup> H. FRAGAKI, *Un édifice inachevé du quartier royal à Alexandrie*. Étude suivie de H. FRAGAKI, A.-M. GUIMIER-SORBETS, *Un fragment de corniche peinte hellénistique à Alexandrie*, Alexandria, 2013; furthered by R.S. Bianchi, review of *ibid.*, in *JARCE* 53, 2017, p. 345-347.

<sup>39</sup> Following the discussion of the process by which the city of Corinth became synonymous with prostitution, K. GILHULY, “Corinth, courtesans, and the politics of place,” in K. Gilhuly, N. Worman, *Space, Place, and Landscape in Ancient Greek Literature and Culture*, Cambridge, New York, 2014, p. 173-174.

<sup>40</sup> M.J. VERSLUYS, *Aegyptiaca Romana: Nilotic scenes and the Roman views of Egypt, Religions in the Graeco-Roman world* 144, Leiden, Boston, 2002, p. 265.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 266.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263-265.

<sup>44</sup> New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art 97.22.19: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/246695> <viewed 2020.10.07>.

<sup>45</sup> Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Antiquities Museum 32044 [serial 0859]: <http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=859> <viewed 2020.10.07>.

<sup>46</sup> I. HOFMANN, “Der Askos in der meroitischen Kultur,” in S. Wenig, (ed.), *Studien zum antiken Sudan: Akten der 7. internationalen Tagung für meroitische Forschungen vom 14. bis 19. September 1992 in Gosen/bei Berlin*, Wiesbaden, 1999, p. 572-584.

<sup>47</sup> *GEG*, p. 525 (V30).

the Late Period, are often depicted holding such a basket, the details on a bronze example in Cairo corresponding closely with those carried by the nude in these two scenes.<sup>48</sup> This type of basket is also employed as the design for small open-work amulets, again dated to the Late Period.<sup>49</sup> The Meroitic royal associations of the askos would seem to suggest that its pairing with a wicker basket might possibly allude to the duality explicit in ancient Egyptian kingship, but this suggestion requires further investigation. The attribute held by the nude in Scene B-i cannot be identified as a pair of clappers<sup>50</sup> because its design is neither curvilinear nor represented as a pair,<sup>51</sup> one of which is traditionally held in each of the musician's hands.<sup>52</sup> This attribute is clearly to be regarded as a forked stick, perhaps to be identified as wooden *abw.t*-staff, possessed of magical properties employed to ward off malevolent creatures.<sup>53</sup> The type exhibits numerous variations including a parallel in metal which also exhibits a V-shaped ending.<sup>54</sup>

It is significant to note that in Scene A-i, the nude places his hand into the mouth of the hippopotamus, but he is not bitten, because he is feeding the ungulate in a gesture which must have been well-known. That very gesture is repeated in a vignette from a mosaic found in Rome's Region VI where an attendant apparently has supplied a feeder with food from a jar. The hand of the feeder holding that food has been placed directly into the mammal's mouth.<sup>55</sup> One can suggest that the gesture of feeding an animal by placing a hand holding food directly into the mouth of the animal is ultimately indebted to ancient pharaonic norms, as comparison with a depiction of an individual feeding a bovine in Brooklyn so clearly demonstrates.<sup>56</sup> In Scene B-ii the nude approaches the hippopotamus but is being harassed by the ibis pecking at this genitalia. Although the ibis was often considered a hypostasis of the god Thoth and as such was possessed of benevolent characteristics, that god was also possessed of an aggressive side accompanied by demoniacal traits.<sup>57</sup> Consequently, this depiction sited within ancient Egyptian pharaonic

<sup>48</sup> Cairo, The Egyptian Museum CG 38991: K. WEIB, *Ägyptische Tier- und Götterbronzen aus Unterägypten: Untersuchungen zu Typus, Ikonographie und Funktion sowie der Bedeutung innerhalb der Kulturkontakte zu Griechenland II*, *ÄAT* 81, Wiesbaden 2012, p. 681, nr. 584 with plate 32 c. This is a particularly fine example with its base inscribed in hieroglyphs specifically identifying this image as *B3st.t*, Bastet.

<sup>49</sup> Cleveland, The Cleveland Museum of Art 1978.90: L.M. BERMAN, M. LAWRENCE, K.J. BOHAČ, *Catalogue of Egyptian art: the Cleveland Museum of Art*, New York, 1999, p. 532-533, no. 450.

<sup>50</sup> J. SPIER, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

<sup>51</sup> E.F. MORRIS, "Paddle dolls and performance," *JARCE* 47, 2011, p. 71-103; and *id.*, "Middle Kingdom clappers, dancers, birth magic, and the reinvention of ritual," in G. Miniaci, M. Betrò, S. Quirke (eds), *Company of images: modelling the imaginary world of Middle Kingdom Egypt (2000-15000 BC)*. *Proceedings of the International Conference of the EPOCHS Project held 18th-20th September 2014 at UCL, London*, Leuven, 2017, p. 285-335.

<sup>52</sup> R. NYORD, *Breathing flesh: conceptions of the body in the ancient Egyptian Coffin Texts*, *CNI Publications* 37, Copenhagen, 2009, p. 264, suggesting that the Egyptian noun for clapper, *h<sub>n</sub>w (n)* ', may have originated as a descriptive for "clapping hands."

<sup>53</sup> W.J. CHERF, "The function of the Egyptian forked staff and the forked bronze butt: a proposal," *ZÄS* 109, 1982, p. 86-97.

<sup>54</sup> W.M.F. PETRIE, *Tools and weapons*, Warminster, 1974, p. 33, no. 182.

<sup>55</sup> Rome, Antiquarium Communale [inventory number not given], M.J. VERSLUYS, *op. cit.*, p. 65-67, no. 013, with figure 19.

<sup>56</sup> Brooklyn, The Brooklyn Museum of Art 60.197.4, dated to the Amarna Period of Dynasty XVIII <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3697> <viewed on 2020.10.10>.

<sup>57</sup> L. BAQUÉ-MANZANO, "Thot in PT [218] 163d and PT [219] 175a: from the shadows of power," *SAK* 46, 2017, p. 15-31.



traditions is not unexpected. To this observation must be added a second, namely the juxtaposition of the bill of that ibis and the buttocks of the male nude, evoking a rather fanciful comments by Pliny the Elder, regarding the invention of the enema:

Simile quiddam et volucris in eadem Aegypto monstravit, quae vocatur ibis, rostri aduncitate per eam partem se perluens, qua reddi ciborum onera maxime salubre est (NH XVIII, 41).<sup>58</sup>

The bird also, which is called the ibis, a native of the same country of Egypt, has shewn us some things of a similar nature. By means of its hooked beak, it laves the body through that part, by which it is especially necessary for health that the residuous food should be discharged (NH 8.41).<sup>59</sup>

François Chabas attributes that assertion to Pliny's misunderstanding of the Egyptian hieroglyph for Thoth.<sup>60</sup> Be that as it may, this vignette can be sited within the Alexandrian literary tradition for savage, ad hominem attacks, for which see the poem of Sotades<sup>61</sup> targeting the consanguineous marriage<sup>62</sup> of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe II, for which he was unceremoniously drowned, as cited by Athenaeus (14.13):

εἰς οὐχ ὀσίην τρυμαλιὴν τὸ κέντρον ὠθεῖς.<sup>63</sup>

He pierced forbidden fruit with deadly sting.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>58</sup> PLINY THE ELDER, *Natural History* VIII:

[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Pliny\\_the\\_Elder/8\\*.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Pliny_the_Elder/8*.html) <viewed 2020.10.13>.

<sup>59</sup> <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=PerseusLatinTexts&getid=1&query=Plin.%20Nat.%208.41> <viewed 2020.10.13>; similarly, AELIAN, *De Natura Animalium* II, 35:

[https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Aelian/de\\_Natura\\_Animalium/2\\*.html](https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Aelian/de_Natura_Animalium/2*.html) <viewed 2020.10.21>; and PLUTARCH, *Moralia* V, 381 C-E [*De Iside et Osiride* 75], and *Moralia* XII, 974 C:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0239%3Asection%3D75> <viewed 2020.10.21>.

<sup>60</sup> F. CHABAS, "La médecine des anciens Égyptiens - Antiquité des clystères - Signes de la grossesse," in *Mélanges égyptologiques* 1, Châlon-sur-Saône, 1862, p. 66.

<sup>61</sup> K. HOPKINS, "Brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (3), 1980, p. 311; and D. OGDEN, "Bilistiche and the Prominence of Courtesans in the Ptolemaic Tradition," in P. McKechnie, P. Guillaume, *Ptolemy II Philadelphus and His World*, Leiden, Boston 2008, p. 372-373.

<sup>62</sup> But see M. GKIKAKI, "The royal sibling marriage of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II - incestuous and yet holy." *Hephaistos* 31, 2014, p. 116, for another interpretation, one that interprets the action as religiously unholy, οὐχ ὀσίην.

<sup>63</sup> ATHENAEUS, *The Deipnosophists* XIV, 13:

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0405%3Abook%3D14%3Achapter%3D13> <viewed 2020.10.21>.

<sup>64</sup> *Loc. cit.*:

<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2013.01.0003%3Abook%3D14%3Achapter%3D13> <viewed 2020.10.13>.

Examples such as this are further evidence that a fuller understanding of the Egyptianizing motifs in Roman, Nilotic scenes can only be attained by a careful consideration of the literary testimonia. This vignette of the ibis attacking one's genitalia must also have been a well-known trope because it is reflected twice, once in a rather crudely executed relief from El Djem which depicts a crane, an Egyptian bird here replacing an ibis, pecking at the outsized phallus of an individual identified as a dwarf,<sup>65</sup> and again in a mosaic in a private collection.<sup>66</sup>

Two details of the nude in Scene B-i deserve additional comment. The first is the design of his spinal column rendered as a ladder-like motif, which appears to be a hallmark of a particularly Alexandrian penchant for the representation of human bones as seen in the backbone of a terracotta figurine in Alexandria<sup>67</sup> and in the ribcage of a large, genre figure of a hunchback in Brooklyn.<sup>68</sup> This artistic convention may very well have developed from the ladder-like representations of the rib cage of emaciated individuals as seen in the so-called Famine Relief from the Causeway of Pharaoh Unas of Dynasty V<sup>69</sup> and in vignettes of the herdsmen leading cattle common in Middle Kingdom tombs.<sup>70</sup>

The second involves the conical caps worn by the nudes. Their design would tend to support their identifications as royals inasmuch as a detail of that cap worn by the nude in Scene B-i seems to suggest the presence of a curvilinear projection. If that suggestion obtains, the conical cap may be a rendition of the White Crown of Upper Egypt which is habitually fronted by a uraeus, or sacred cobra. If this suggestion is supportable, one would be inclined to identify each such conical cap in Egyptianizing, Nilotic scenes as abstractions or stylizations of that crown.

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, the motifs which have been combined in these four scenes have their antecedents in pharaonic Egypt. The nude male figures are, therefore, unquestionably intended to be understood within an Egyptianizing context that exploits the significance of that imagery. However, these male nudes, as principal actors in those environments, find no close parallels in any of the inventoried Egyptianizing, Nilotic scene,<sup>71</sup> because they are involved neither in combat with the animals they encounter nor engaged in identifiable sexual activities. Their intended meaning(s) must be divorced from the traditional interpretations assigned to such scenes and their motifs.

<sup>65</sup> Tunis, Bardo Museum 2513: M.J. VERSLUYS, *op. cit.*, p. 468, 29 with fig. 166.

<sup>66</sup> In an anonymous private collection: *Ibid.*, p. 477, no. 54 (not illustrated).

<sup>67</sup> Alexandria, Graeco-Roman Museum 25825: A. ADRIANI, *op. cit.*, p. 52, note 41 with fig. 20.

<sup>68</sup> Brooklyn, The Brooklyn Museum of Art 48.9: <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/60980> <viewed 2020.10.12>.

<sup>69</sup> J.-P. LAUER, *op. cit.*, figure 126.

<sup>70</sup> *Inter alia*, N. KANAWATI, L. EVANS, 2017. *The cemetery of Meir IV. The tombs of Senbi I and Wekhotep I*, ARCE Reports 41, Oxford, 2017 (with contributions by L. Donovan, M. Lashien, A.-L. Mourad, R. Parker, S. Shafik, A. Suleiman and N. Victor), p. 32, with pl. 31b, 78; and A. DIEGO ESPINEL, “‘Unusual herders’: iconographic development, diffusion and meanings of dwarves, boys and lame and emaciated people as drovers from the Old Kingdom to the early Middle Kingdom,” in P. Piacentini, A. Delli Castelli (eds), *Old Kingdom art and archaeology 7: Proceedings of the international conference; Università degli studi di Milano 3-7 July 2017*, Milan, 2019, p. 422 with note 21.

<sup>71</sup> M.J. VERSLUYS, *op. cit.*, p. 278-293.

Identifying the nudes as royals, supported by the identification of their conical cap as an evocation of the pharaonic Egyptian White Crown, would then link them to the literary testimonia in which the crocodile and the hippopotamus would seem to provide fundamental clues about the interpretation of four scenes under discussion. Pascal Vernus<sup>72</sup> has ingeniously discussed two passages attributed to Manetho,<sup>73</sup> an Egyptian priest regarded as the author<sup>74</sup> of a history of Egypt written in Greek during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

Manetho, FR. 6, 1:<sup>75</sup>

...ὄν πρῶτος Μηνῆς Θινιτικῆς βασιλευσεν ἐτη ξβ' ὅς ὑπο ἵπποποταμοῦ διαρπαγείς διεφάρη.

...the first of whom Menes of [the city of] This reigned for 62 years. He was carried off by a hippopotamus and perished.

Manetho FR. 27 (from Syncellus). According to Africanus:<sup>76</sup>

...ὄν ὁ ἐβασίλευσαν ὁ πρῶτος Ἀχθοῆς, τοῖς ἐν πάσῃ Αἰγύπτῳ κακὰ εἰργασατο, ὕστερον δὲ μανία περιέπεσε ὑπὸ κροκόδειλου διεφάρη.

...The first of these, King Achthoes, behaving more cruelly than his predecessors, wrought woes for the people of all Egypt, but afterwards he was smitten with madness, and was killed by a crocodile.

Vernus persuasively argues that the crocodile represents malevolent forces and is the antithesis of the benevolent forces associated with the hippopotamus. Despite the fact that Manetho claims that both Achthoes and Menes met their demise as a result of being devoured by their respective animal, Vernus emphasizes the fact that Menes's death resulted in his resurrection, whereas that of Achthoes resulted in his total annihilation.<sup>77</sup>

However, one must always remember that literary motifs such as these are polyvalent. One can certainly argue that Manetho's work was known to his contemporaries, as were other posthumous accounts of the life of Menes, as Edmund Meltzer<sup>78</sup> so forcefully argued when he endorsed

<sup>72</sup> P. VERNUS, "Ménès, Achthoès, l'hippopotame et le crocodile: lecture structurale de l'historiographie égyptienne," in U. Verhoeven, E. Graefe (eds.), *Religion und Philosophie im alten Ägypten: Festgabe für Philippe Derchain zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Juli 1991*, Leuven, 1991, p. 331-340; endorsed by [R.S. Bianchi] 1992. "18. Roman gilded silver skyphos decorated with a Nilotic Scene," in Robin Beningson and Joseph Coplin, *Myth and Majesty. Deities and dignitaries of the ancient world*, New York, 1992.

<sup>73</sup> On the name, compare the competing suggested etymologies of D.B. REDFORD, "The name Manetho," in L.H. Lesko (ed.), *Egyptological studies in honor of Richard A. Parker: presented on the occasion of his 78th birthday December 10, 1983*, Hanover, London, 1986, p. 118-121; with that of H.J. THISSEN, "Ägyptologische Beiträge zu den griechischen magischen Papyri," in U. Verhoeven, E. Graefe (eds.), *Religion und Philosophie im alten Ägypten: Festgabe für Philippe Derchain zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Juli 1991*, Leuven, 1991, p. 295.

<sup>74</sup> A. YATSUHASHI, *op. cit.*, p. 61-62; and J. DILLERY, "Literary interaction between Greece and Egypt: Manetho and synchronism," in I. Rutherford (ed.), *Greco-Egyptian interactions: literature, translation, and culture, 500 BCE-300 CE*, Oxford, 2016, p. 107-137.

<sup>75</sup> W.G. WADDELL, *Manetho*. Cambridge, 2004, p. 27-29.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60-61.

<sup>77</sup> P. VERNUS, *op. cit.*, p. 337-339.

<sup>78</sup> E. MELTZER, "The ancient Egyptian contribution to fantastic literature," *BAKKA Magazine* 6, 1977, p. 36.

Georges Posener's suggestion that *The Tale of the Doomed Prince* is taken from the life of Menes.<sup>79</sup> In that tale, the Prince encounters a crocodile, representing his fate, who is allied with a demon. The tale is incomplete and ends abruptly after recounting the crocodile's release of the Prince after a prolonged combat of three months. Edmund Meltzer recognizes the resonances between the two passages of Manetho just cited with that tale, but in each Menes remains unharmed. His comments are furthered by Sally L.D. Katary† who argues that the allusions to Menes in *The Tale of the Doomed Prince* are also to be found in Diodorus (1:89) who again links Menes with a crocodile.<sup>80</sup> The design of the legs and feet of the nudes suggest that they are not walking; they have been described as dancing. And whereas the polyvalence inherent in all visual motifs cannot exclude understanding those poses as relating to dance, such an interpretation is but one possibility. A second, more cogent one relies on the acceptance of the suggestion that the scenes are evocative of the ultimate fate of Menes and Achthoes. If this suggestion obtains, then their depiction on tippy-toes might rather suggest that they are treading lightly in the presence of the agents of their ultimate demise. Indeed the position of their legs and feet seem to be echoed in a vignette from the Great Columbarium of the Villa Doria Pamphilj [Fig. C-1].<sup>81</sup> There is neither visual nor inscriptional evidence that the three figures there represented are dancing; they appear to be slipping away from the approaching crocodile.

The position of the legs of the nude males in the scenes on those two cups as well as in the vignette just cited may themselves have connoted "Egyptianness." This observation would seem to gain further support from the depictions of competing athletes in scenes from two different locations, which appear to be based on a common model. In a black and white mosaic from Ostia<sup>82</sup> one sees two stick fighters with their legs in positions analogous to those of the figures now under discussion. However, there is neither an inscriptional nor a visual reference to music. One can reasonably suggest, therefore, that that pair of stick fighters are gracefully avoiding their opponents' blows, in ways that are not unlike those of modern fencers. It is also interesting to note that stick fighting was developed in ancient Egypt during the course of the New Kingdom and anthropologists still recorded its survival in Egyptian rural villages.<sup>83</sup> The mosaic from Ostia finds its parallel in a second black and white mosaic from Puteoli where three of the two pairs of pancratists<sup>84</sup> have their legs raised in similar positions, again without any indication of music

<sup>79</sup> G. POSENER, "On the Tale of the Doomed Prince," *JEA* 39 (1953), p. 107; and *id.*, "Literature," in J.R. Harris (ed.), *The legacy of Egypt*, Oxford, 1971, p. 242.

<sup>80</sup> S.L.D. KATARY†, "Concerning Bata and The Doomed Prince: Their "Afterlives" in classical literature," *JSSEA* 45, 2015-2016, p. 25-41. She prefers to title the tale, *The Story of the Prince Threatened by Three Fates*, one of which is the crocodile.

<sup>81</sup> Rome, Museo nazionale romano 517351: C. GASPARI, R. PARIS, *Palazzo Massimo alle Terme: le collezioni*, Milan, 2013, p. 388-391, no. 279.

<sup>82</sup> Ostia IV, vii, 4 the so-called caupona di Alexander Helix: M.J. VERSLUYS, *op. cit.*, p. 457, 06, with fig. 159.

<sup>83</sup> J. BECK, "Fencing in ancient Egypt," *BACE* 11, 2000, p.7-15; A. FAKHRY, "A note on the tomb of Kheruef at Thebes," *ASAE* 42, 1943, p. 449-508; and R.A. FAZZINI, "Four unpublished ancient Egyptian objects in faience in the Brooklyn Museum of Art," *JSSEA* 28, 2001, p. 55-66.

<sup>84</sup> On the popularity of pancratists in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, see F. QUEYREL, *La sculpture hellénistique I. Formes, thèmes et fonctions*, Paris, 2016, p. 183; and J.-Y. STRASSER, "Les Olympia d'Alexandrie et le pancratiaste M. Aur. Asklepiades," *BCH* 128-129, 2004-2005, p. 421-468, for the commemoration of an Alexandrian pancratist in the Severid Period.

accompanying their contest.<sup>85</sup> The captions identifying the figures in the mosaic from Puteoli name three of the four combatants with the very same names as those inscribed on the mosaic from Ostia. The mosaic from Puteoli also features a tabula ansata which is inscribed *Iseo Eusebia*, which doubtless refers to games<sup>86</sup> organized as part of the Eusebia taking place within the Iseum of Puteoli. Taken together, these depictions would seem to indicate a common origin with Egyptian overtones for the position of the legs of the figures there depicted. It is, therefore, entirely possible that the silversmiths who designed these cups were intimately familiar not only with a wide range of the literature concerning the *Nachleben* of Menes but also with the stock, visual themes from various sources which they have seamlessly combined into each of the four vignettes.

Accordingly, two interpretations suggest themselves. Scenes A-i and B-i which pair a nude male, holding a basket and askos and a forked stick, respectively, in the company of a crocodile may represent Achthoes, whereas Scenes A-ii and B-ii which depicts the nude male without attributes and with an askos and a basket, respectively, may represent Menes and the hippopotamus. On the other hand, the literary testimony linking Menes with both animals may have been intended to understand the scenes on those cups as illustrations of two separate chapters of that king's *Nachleben*. A dogmatic insistence upon an either or interpretation must be set aside because of the known polyvalence that informs such classical works of art.

In keeping with classical conventions, the outsized genitalia of the nudes would connote the other, appropriate for individuals regarded a rulers of the hoary past. Their nudity would be emblematic of their elevated, one might suggest, divine status accorded to Hellenic gods and heroes. In each of his depictions, the size of the nude's genitalia is exaggerated in a manner which was abhorrent to traditional Hellenic sensibilities,<sup>87</sup> but his nudity would not have been considered shameful because he is not being observed by the viewer against his will.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, the avoidance of depicting those genitalia in a frontal view is consistent with several depictions of overly endowed male figures in Graeco-Roman art in which those genitalia are generally only visible in profile or rear views, as depicted in these scenes. This same convention is also employed for depictions of Hellenized images of the god Bes.<sup>89</sup> This reliance on such views strongly suggests that there was an archetypal antecedent upon which such a chosen view was based. Its apparent ubiquity argues in favor of the existence of a well-known type, familiar to a larger audience which was aware of its significant meanings, polyvalence

<sup>85</sup> L. Bricault (ed), *Bibliotheca Isiaca* I, Bordeaux, 2008, p. 116, no. 504/0407, with two figures; and C. GIALANELLA, "Il mosaic con lottatori de una villa del suburbio orientale di Puteoloi," in F. Guidobaldi, A. Paribeni (ed.), *AISCOM. Atti dell'VIII Colloquio dell'Associazione Italiana per lo studio et la conservazione de Mosaico, Firenze 21-23 febbraio 2001* I, Ravenna, 2001, p. 599-608.

<sup>86</sup> W. DECKER, "Zu Schauer bei Altägyptischen Sport," *CASAE* 42, 2011, p. 119-126, for the location at Medinet Habu of the only space identified to date at which Egyptians and foreigners alike could view wrestling matches and stick fighting.

<sup>87</sup> L. REMPELAKOS, C. TSAMIS, E. POULAKU-REBELAKOU, "Penile representations in ancient Greek Art," *Archivos españoles de urología*, 2013), p. 912; and L.B. STONER, "A Bronze Hellenistic Dwarf in the Metropolitan Museum," *MMJ* 50, 2015, p. 98, with additional references in note 35.

<sup>88</sup> C.L.C.E. WITCOMBE, *Eye and Art in Ancient Greece: A Study in Archaeoaesthetics*, Turnhout, 2018, p. 31-32.

<sup>89</sup> Amsterdam, Allard Pierson Museum 7967: B. VAN OPPEN, "Dancing Bes," in J. Spier, T. Potts, S.E. Cole (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 246, no. 149.

being a hallmark of such archetypal antecedents.<sup>90</sup> Although one commentator associates these male figures with obscene entertainers known as *kinaidoi*,<sup>91</sup> each figure on these four scenes is depicted as a full-grown adult, rather than either as a dwarf or a pygmy. Significantly in all of those representations, the nudes are not depicted sexually aroused because their penises are flaccid, not erect. Moreover, they are not engaged in any immediately recognizable sexual activity. Consequently, one calls into question any erotic interpretation of those four Nilotic scenes on those cups and opts in favor of interpreting them in accordance with literary testimonia, described above, with which the imagery is consistently congruent. One must, therefore, consider that those four scenes are the result of a synergy between visual and literary compositions ultimately derived from pharaonic, Egyptian sources.

The indistinct Greek inscription punched into the bottom of the foot of Cup B appears to be so intractable as to defy efforts of translation. Moreover, it cannot be used as a dating criterion because punched inscriptions are datable to the period between the third century BC and the second century AD. Nevertheless, the dating of these two cups into the first century AD might be supportable by the design of their profiled lip, but the possibility that they are late Hellenistic works of art cannot be ruled out. The location of the atelier in which these cups were created remains an open question, although one must note that silversmiths of Alexandria had established a tradition of mastering the consummate creation of none-native vessel types.<sup>92</sup>

Furthermore, the decoration of those cups betrays an intimate familiarity with a variety of pharaonic Egyptian visual imagery, rendered in a Hellenistic visual vocabulary, and an equally profound understanding of apparent arcane literary allusions. Their conception must be understood within the Alexandrian penchant for clothing pharaonic ideas in classical garb, the image of the god Sarapis<sup>93</sup> being a case in point.<sup>94</sup> That deity<sup>95</sup> was initially presented as Hades yet his cult embodied concepts associated with the pharaonic deity Osiris. The scenes on these two silver cups represent a visual biography, as it were, of episodes in the lives of either Menes or Menes and Achthoes, rendered in a Classical rather than in a pharaonic visual idiom. Those episodes are known only from sources directly derived from the ancient Egyptian literary testimonia. Those episodes are informed neither by an *interpretatio graeca* nor by an *interpretatio romana*. Their significance can only be understood within the context of the ancient

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<sup>90</sup> This dichotomy is well-illustrated in a black and white floor mosaic from Ostia in which two nude males are engaged in a stick fight, one represented as an ideal, classical nude whereas his nude opponent is depicted with his outsized phallus visible from behind: Ostia IV, vii, 4, the so-called caupona di Alexander Helix: M.J. VERSLUYS, *op. cit.*, p. 457, 06, with fig. 159.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275-277.

<sup>92</sup> M. PFROMMER, "Roots and contacts: aspects of Alexandrian craftsmanship," in *Alexandria and Alexandrianism: papers delivered at a symposium organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and held at the Museum April 22-25, 1993*, Malibu, 1996, p. 173 and 185.

<sup>93</sup> L. BRICAULT, "Retour à Sinope, ou l'appropriation d'une tradition inventée," in A. Bassir (ed), *Migrations et mobilité religieuse. Espaces, contacts, dynamiques et interférences*, Besançon, 2020, p. 75-105.

<sup>94</sup> R.S. BIANCHI, "The cultural transformation of Egypt as suggested by a group of enthroned male figures from the Faiyum," in J.H. Johnson (ed.), *Life in a multi-cultural society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and beyond*, Chicago, 1992, p. 23-24.

<sup>95</sup> S.G. CANEVA, "Ptolemy I: politics, religion and the transition to Hellenistic Egypt," in T. Howe (ed.), *Ptolemy I Soter: a self-made man*, Oxford, Philadelphia, 2018, p. 88-127.

Egyptian, pharaonic milieu upon which they are based. As a result, one must call into question any interpretation of Aegyptiaca of the Roman Imperial Period that focuses exclusively on a Roman perspective, as M[ichel] M[alaise]'s critique of Maria R. Swetnam-Burland's PhD dissertation so forcefully argues.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Michel Malaise's comments are echoed by Joachim F. Quack's critique of and dismissal of Katya Lembke's suggestion that the architectural program of Rome's Iseum Campense is to be understood in terms of Roman "exoticism." He argues, rather, that that program can only be understood within the context of a pharaonic, Egyptian milieu.<sup>97</sup> And pointedly, the prominence of so many original, Egyptian monuments, dated to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, which Caligula is suggested to have moved into Rome's Gardens of Sallust, unequivocally demonstrates that the Romans had an intimate knowledge of those monuments which they appropriated for specific purposes. As Christophe Thiers so persuasively argues, the selection of those monuments of Ptolemy II accords with Caligula's marriage to his sister, Drusilla, with all of the intended overtones of the *Adelphi Philadelphoi*.<sup>98</sup> One is, consequently, forced to reexamine Roman Nilotic, Egyptianizing scenes as reflections of Lagid-pharaonic visual and literary antecedents. Attempting to examine such representations solely through the lens of the Classical World fails to recognize the genesis and significance of the motifs depicted, and that failure oftentimes leads to erroneous conclusions.

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<sup>96</sup> M. MALAISE, in L. Bricault, *op. cit.*, p. 216-217.

<sup>97</sup> J.F. QUACK, "Zum ägyptischen Ritual im Iseum Campense in Rom," in C. Metzner-Nebelsick (ed.), *Rituale in der Vorgeschichte, Antike und Gegenwart. Interdisziplinäre Tagung, Berlin 2002*, Leidorf, 2003, p. 57-66.

<sup>98</sup> C. THIERS, "De Saïs aux 'Jardins de Salute.' À propos d'un document reconsidéré," in S.H. Aufrère, J.-Cl. Grenier, B. Mathieu (ed.), *La Vallée du Nil et la Méditerranée. Voies de communication et vecteurs culturels, OrMonsp 12*, Montpellier, 2001, p. 155-166.



Fig. 1. Cup A (side i).



Fig. 2. Cup B (side i).





Fig. 3. Cup A (side ii).



Fig. 4. Cup B (side ii).



Fig. 5. Cup A (side iii).



Fig. 6. Cup B (side iii).



Fig. 7. Cup A (side iv).



Fig. 8. Cup B (side iv).





Fig. 9. Cup B (bottom of the foot [v]).



Fig. 10. Part of the Great Columbarium of the Villa Doria Pamphilj (C-i) (the Archive of Late Egyptian Art, ALEA).

## Résumé :

Deux skyphoi en argent, sur lesquels sont représentées des scènes rappelant l'Égypte et représentant un nu masculin en compagnie d'un crocodile ou d'un hippopotame, sont analysés en relation avec les milieux intellectuels du musée-bibliothèque d'Alexandrie et des temples égyptiens pharaoniques. Les scènes sont ensuite interprétées sur la base de témoignages littéraires qui laissent également entendre que de telles scènes ne peuvent être pleinement comprises que dans le contexte du milieu pharaonique égyptien antique sur lequel elles sont basées.

## Abstract:

Two silver skyphoi with Egyptianizing scenes depicting a nude male in the company of either a crocodile or a hippopotamus are discussed within the intellectual milieu of both the Alexandrian Library-Museion and pharaonic Egyptian temples. After the pharaonic, Egyptian origins of the motifs is suggested, the scenes are interpreted on the basis of the literary testimonia which suggest that such scenes can only be fully understood within the context of the ancient Egyptian pharaonic milieu on which they are based.

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