

The Presence of Gods and Goddess in People's Life in Greco-Roman Egypt

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Abstract

The different circumstances that people faced in Greco-Roman Egypt, made them refuge to gods as they believed that their fortune was depended on the divine will. The presence of gods was appeared in domestic sphere, in objects used to perform religious rites, religious statues, and figurines used for fertility, in private letters and manuscripts as oxyrhynchus papyri. It was very common to mention gods in letters, regardless the purpose of it. People used to ask the protection of gods and pray for gaining their blessing. On other hand in case of any crisis people refuged to gods to solve it. Material evidence indicates that each household constructed its own collection of deities to worship, depending on its specific requirements. Many gods were connected to the domestic life; as Aphrodite goddess of love, god Bes who linked with domestic protection, maternity. Asklepius, Imhotep and Amenhotep who were gods of curing. God Zeus who was responsible for justice, Heron the warrior god, Harpocrates the patron deity of childhood. This thesis tries to recognize how people made a connection with gods in their daily life; it explores different popular gods connected to domestic life.

Key words: love goddess, fertility gods, maternity, domestic protection, healing.

Introduction

Ritual Interactions Between people and Different Gods inside Houses:

The presence of many gods and goddesses in the daily life of people during Greco – Roman era, indicates to the vital role which was believed to be played by these deities, and reflects how these deities were involved in every sector of the people's life (Frankfurter, 1998). The Ancient Greek historian Herodotus described the Egyptians as “*religious beyond measure, more than any other people*” (Herodotus. 11.37). The peasants depended on the power of these religious figures and spirits in many aspects of their life. They may have painful and cruel role or they may act positively to get more profits and benefits (Frankfurter, 1998).

Gods as Mediation inside the House

According to Hodge (2010), one of the main features of Roman era is that religious practices were melted into daily household activities. People used to worship gods who were in charge of specific sector of life, as gods of fertility, gods of protection, gods of love and gods of health. Householders worshipped the gods of the particular household, in order to prevent illness, ensure the production of crops, give birth to the pregnant women and give her healthy child.

Frankfurter (1998), indicated to an important phenomenon that used to transform the threat of the supernatural power into a force against the other harmful dangers. We can touch this phenomenon in the depiction of some figures beside Tutu, Bes, and Harpocrates on many stelae and on temples' walls. Frankfurter (1998), argued that the ordinary people had a deep faith that such figures involved in their life, which can be seen clearly in a divorce contract that dates back to the fourth-century according to the contract evil demon could ruin the marriage and leads to divorce as in that contract case. Besides that there was a name of " *abaskantos*", it was very common name among children, actually this name means secure from supernatural harm, there were also names come from a host of apotropaic genii: Terouterou, Pechytes.

The presence of gods in the people's life had appeared in most of private letters where the senders used to commence their letters by greeting and praying to all gods to protect the recipients. In P.Tebt. 2.583 "*Aurelius Polion, soldier of legio II Adiutrix, to Heron his brother and Ploutou his sister and his mother Seinouphis the bread seller and lady(?), very many greetings. I pray that you are in good health night and day, and I always make obeisance before all the gods on your behalf*" (Adamson, 2012).

Bagnall and Cribiore (2015), indicated to P. Oxy. 14.176, as it was a private letter " *Kallirhoe to Sarapis her lady, greeting. I make your obeisance each day before the lord Sarapis*". Bagnall argues that this letter reflects how it was important being obedience to the god. Bagnall and Cribiore (2015), agreed with Bell (1948) as he mentions that the divine will was very essential to be happy as it mentioned in BGU II, 615 "*learning that by the will of the gods you were saved I rejoiced greatly*", (figure 1). Bell adds that people used to make refuge to gods in case of facing any crisis, as it was shown in P. Giss. 68 "*After God I have no one but you.*" Bell states that in this letter a mother was in a great problem as she has lost her son, applying for help to the strategus Apollonius and before him to god.

Bagnall and Cribiore (2015), refer to Papyrus. Ryl.2. 243, where two farmers wrote a letter to their steward about the lack of water, they were hoping the aid from the god to overcome their crisis: "*Demarion and Eirene to their dearest Syros, many greetings. We know that you are distressed about the deficiency of water; this has happened not only to us but too many, and we know that nothing has occurred through any fault of yours. Even now we know your zeal and attentiveness to the work of the allotment, and we hope that with god's help the field has been sown*".

Bagnall and Cribiore (2015), asserted that the role of god as a protector and the refuge of people in case of danger were shown in many letters. In P. Abinn. 34, a mother appeals for military leave for her son. "*To my lord and patron the praepositus, (from) the mother of Moses. You sent for Heron, lord patron, so he went with the barbarians. After God we have no help other than you*".

Bagnall and Rowelndson (1998), agreed that presence of gods can also be traced in a binding spell, where the people turn to them in order to gain love or to do the binding. Sometimes the lover calls on the spirit of the dead person besides the power of different gods to achieve his goal. A jar that has been found in Antinoopolis and dating back to the third-fourth century AD, it is made out of clay and it contains a statuette of woman holed with needles with a wrapped up lead slab, inscribing with text. Usually these kinds of jars were being put on the lover grave (figure 2).

It was revealed in SEG XXVI 1717 " *I entrust to you this binding, gods of the underworld, Plouton and Kore Persephone Ereschigal and Adondis alias Barbaritha and Hermes Thoth of the underworld Phokensepseu Erektathou Misonktaik and to Anoubis the strong Pseriphtha who holds the keys of the (gates)of Hades, and demon-gods of the underworld, youth and maidens(dead) before their time, year by year, month by month, day by day, hour by hour, night by night. I adjure all the demons in this place to stand by this demon Antinoos. Rouse yourself for me and go off into every place, into every quarter, into, every house and bind Ptolemis, whom Aias bore, the daughter of Origenes, so that she is not fucked or bugged".(BIFAO 76 (1976) 213-223)*

Bagnall and Criore (2015), indicated to a letter from Tarem to her father SB 5.8027, where she confessed the grace of god as a healer "*Tarem ...to Chairemon to her father, very many greetings and before everything I pray for your health and I am well myself with my relatives and I do the obeisance for you before the local gods. He is repentant for what he did; this did not happen to him alone. We are thankful to the gods that he has recovered his mind and his health"*.

The Influences of Some Gods in People' Life than the Others:

Bagnall and Criore (2015), explained the needs of people as they were varied, but their most important desire was being healthy so almost all the houses contained shrines dedicated to healing gods as Sarapis, Asklepios. But there was also healing shrines for other gods as the healing shrine of Apollonios and Aline that dedicated to Dioskouroi. It was mentioned in P. Giss 20, it was in a letter from Aline to her husband Apollonios:

"Aline to Apollonios her brother, greetings. We give thanks to all the gods because of your safety....You wrote about your health ..You are building..builders and carpenters....I am working at the wool as you wrote...tell me by letter which color please you or send me a small sample of it. If you want your light, white garment to fall down, give heed to the purple. I was given a response by the Dioscuri of your estate, and a shrine has been built for them. Areios the maker of votive limbs provides the service for them; he was saying," If Apollonios writes to me about it, I will serve free of charge". You really ought to write him a couple of lines, in order for him to come forward promptly in a manner worthy of you and the gods. Your children are in good health and salute you. Write to us continuously about your health. Send what you have of Diskas.

The Important Influence of Gods in People's Life

I- Aphrodite Goddess of Love and Beauty

Aphrodite was the significant Greek goddess of fertility and love. During Roman era she had the role of maritime goddess, who was in charge of protecting the sailors and seafaring (Christenson and Hammer, 2014). Many dedication of a statue to goddess Aphrodite were found as a statue which was found at Alexandria, dating back to 80 AD. The base of statue has inscription made by Roman widow woman who might had pleased marriage, or she might be a freedwoman who had got a relationship with her ex master " *To the most great goddess Aphrodite, Claudia Athenarion according to her will, through Claudia Polla her daughter and heiress. Year 3 of Emperor Titus Caesar Vespasianus Augustus* (Bagnall and Rowelndson, 1998).

Bell (1948), argued that the importance of Aphrodite was depicted in marriage contract dated back to 190 A.D, where the statue of Aphrodite was an essential element of the bride's dowry (figure 3). Another marriage contract dated back to 149 A.D, it involved also a bronze statue in the bride's stuffs (figure 4). Yandek (2013), spots light on a head of goddess Aphrodite Anadyomene made of marble which had been found at one of Karanis's house (figure 5).

This depiction of Aphrodite as goddess rising up from the sea, it based on a Hellenistic prototype which had become very common during Roman era. The presence of Aphrodite reflects the caring of inhabitants of fertility (figure 6).

II. Taweret (Thoeris) Goddess of Maternity

Frankfurter (1998), stated that Taweret was having a popular cult; her presence was visible in domestic field with amulets and domestic shrines, the women were seeking for her help especially the pregnant one. The worship of Taweret has been flourished during Ptolemaic era; there was a beautiful jug of Taweret represented with a hole in one of her breast where it waters, which indicates to the goddess's power. On other side the local goddess "Isis of Sheta" represented in a stela with the body of Taweret, grants her holding snakes and scorpions surmounted on a crocodile, it was similar to Horus- cippi, and it refers to the impact of Taweret in the life of ordinary people and how they believe in her strength.

Bagnall and Rowelndson(1998), agreed that Taweret was linked with the Greek goddess Athena, becoming the patron deity of Oxyrhynchos. It had a wide reputation as a goddess of marriage, childbirth and infancy. But we can say that the main role of Thoeris which has been confirmed by many oracles was as a guardian of women. *PSI Cong. XVII 14* is a letter which found at Oxyrhynchos and dates, back to the second-first century BC. "*To our Lady Thoeris, and to Thonis and Harpebekis and Harpokrates: if Tausorapis will become healthy in her present malady, bring back this (slip) to me*".

III. God Bes:

God Bes was one of the most important gods who were connected with the domestic life. The variety of evidences indicates to its presence in popular life. We found him in small domestic figurines, domestic murals and also in the coffins of children and babies. Among his titles was protector of female, keeper of the maternity of women, therapist of the maternity of women During Greco-Roman era, god Bes connected with ever more divinities in the Greco-Roman world. God Bes depicted in many terra-cottas with sword and shields and also with Roman armor (figure 7) and most of magical gems bear its image. We can say that Bes became the main factor for domestic protection, maternity, and healing (Frankfurter, 1998). It was common to find some terra-cotta Bes figurines (figure 8),(figure 9) some coupled with a feminine consort "Beset", and they were believed to ease conception, to protect pregnancies, and also to protect children. So they have been put by beds, and it was very popular during Roman era to find small faience amulet for Bes represented in shrine or small niche and in stela Bes depicted next to the traditional household offerings; bread loaves and jugs of water or wine. The excavation in Khaun, which located east of the Fayyum, a large Bes mask of painted canvas had been found (Frankfurter, 1998).

Charvet (1980), stated that during the Greco-Roman period god Bes still played an important role and many temples were erected to him in many different places as at Saqqra, Abydos, and at Bahria oasis. We can notice the importance of him from the graffito which dates back to the Greco-Roman era reading "*the whole land acknowledge the power of Bes*". The good reputation of Bes continued even after the spread of Christianity, for many amulets for god Bes has been used. Pinch (1983), said that during the Greco-Roman era god Bes was more associated to male sexuality and with childbirth. According to many evidences like papyrus shows his role as a protector, where many spells recommends women in childbirth to wear a "dwarf of clay". It is also common to see Bes amulet or tattoo worn by women to guard them in childbirth.

IV. Goddess Isis

Isis She was the goddess of fertility and birth, the protector of the female roles, the women always refuges to her asking for aid. She was the patroness of women (Heyob, 1975). According to P. Oxy. 1380 "*she was the adornment of the female sex, and it was her will that men and women should anchor together*". She was identified with Hathor, the Greeks considered Isis- Hathor their traditional goddess Aphrodite, which also leads to the appearance of cult of Isis- Aphrodite, it began at Alexandria and spread among different villages of Egypt. In P.Oxy. 1380 Isis was referred as Aphrodite at Aphroditopolis, Hermopolis and Heliopolis. As a patron of everlasting relationship between man and woman, Isis appealed to have founded marriage contracts, and also in Greek romances might be found as a witness to marriage vows (Heyob, 1975). Cotter (2003), argued that the importance of Isis during Greco-Roman era was not decreased; it still held a great position among the different deities, as it was believed to control the fate.

V. Artemis (Diana) Goddess of Fertility

Artemis is a Greek goddess who played a vital role as the goddess of motherhood, fertility, childbearing and childrearing. And as these stuffs had the priority in the lives of the ordinary people, we can extract the essential role of such goddess. During Roman era it was known as the goddess responsible for motherhood, fertility, taking care of children. In fact these things were fundamental to the lives of all women (Engles, 2015). Ionescu (2016), mentioned that the main role of Artemis is helping women in one of the most critical moment, the childbirth. So it deserved some epithets assistant of childbirth and nurse of children as But the cult of Artemis was characterized with unique features; it was not just connected to a part of human's life, otherwise it involved in all stages of his life started from his birth, childhood, adulthood, matrimonial, reproduction and it also had a role in the other life.

VI. God Harpocrates

Torok (2011), stated that Harpocrates was the son of Isis and Osiris (figure 10), his popularity in agrarian communities as in Karanis was due to his association with fertility. In addition to, he also knew as a patron deity of childhood and a helpful model to children (figure 11). We couldn't ignore here that he was linked with yearly agricultural cycle, birth and death. He was considered one of the important gods of domestic cult (figure 12); it was believed that he was guarding the living as domestic cult status and when the person died he was also accompanying him. Mastrocinque (2016), mentioned that Harpocrates plays also the role of defender of children so he often represented with the club of Heracles as a sign of protection. Many gems were depicted Harpocrates as riding a goose or a duck, but what was the significant of such bird? In fact many Egyptian connected between the duck and goose and the son, as in Hieroglyph the son depicted as duck.

Hall (1977), agreed with Torok that Harpocrates became the preferred domestic god among the ordinary people during Roman era; many terra cottas of Harpocrates were used as votive offerings with different styles. Harpocrates is depicted riding on an animal (figure 13); such as a goose, a horse or as a fat baby (figure 14). But Hall argues that during Ptolemaic era Harpocrates was preferred by the rich people, the presence of many bronze statuettes of Harpocrates as that one exposed in Cleveland museum asserts his opinion.

VII. God Tutu

According to Frankfurter (1998), Tutu was a protective god, who had been admired as vanquisher of Apophis, the classical enemy of the sun. But god Tutu gained enormous popularity during Roman era thanks to a myth of his chieftom over the "genii" of Sekhmet, the dangerous and unpredictable forces that could be harnessed by particular gods. Tutu was represented on amulets and coins as a sphinx that either stands upon or is accompanied by these same dangerous forces. It was common to find many personal names during Roman era incorporating "Tutu" especially in the province of the Delta, which refers to his presence as a local god and his influence over maternal fertility.

Yandek(2013), refers to the presence of stone sphinx at one of Karanis's house, although the style is pure Egyptian, sphinx was linked to god Tutu who had a great fame as a protective god during Roman era.

VIII. The Samothrace deities

They were known as "the Great Gods". They had a super power to provide protection to sailors in sea storms. Diodorus Siculus mentioned that the Samothrace Deities save a ship because of the prayers of Orpheus, a sailor who had been initiated into their Mysteries (Diodorus Siculus,. 4.43.1-2) *"But there came on a great storm and the chieftains had given up hope of being saved, when Orpheus, they say, who was the only one on shipboard who had ever been initiated in the mysteries of the deities of Samothrace, offered to these deities they prayers for their salvation. And immediately the wind died down and two stars fell over the heads of the Diosori [Castor and Polydeuce], and the whole company was amazed at the marvel which had taken place and conclude that they had been rescued from their perils by an act of Providence of the gods. For this reason...sailors when caught in storms always direct their prayers to the deities of Samothrace and attribute the appearance of the two stars to the epiphany of the Dioscori".* (Diodorus Siculus,. 4.43.1-2).

IX. The Agathos Diamon and Shai

During Ptolemaic period Agathos Daimon "καὶ Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων" appeared in Egypt. But is it was a new cult or there was a connection between the Greek thought of the Agathos Diamon which had been recognized since the fourth century BCE in Greece or it has a relation with the Egyptian god Shai? Actually Shai was synonym to Agathos Daimon, both of them are protective gods, and they have a linking with snakes. They became shields and guards of a house. The most important text where Agathos Diamon has been appeared was the tale of Potter's Oracle. It tells of the prediction of a potter about the ruin of Alexandria and the return of its Agathos Diamon to Memphis (Greenbaum, 2016). Barrett (2011), argued that Agathos Diamon didn't take much time to spread not only in Alexandria but also it became important domestic cult as it was associated to the most important need of the ordinary people which was the protection. The serpent deities were presented in many figures; with a head of normal man, or as a serpentine with double crown and a beard.

X. Shai God of Fortune and Welfare

God Shai was known also among the Egyptian as god of civic fortune; its various depictions refer to fortune. Shenoute indicates to the domestic practices which used to be performed in the late fourth century. Shenoute of Atripe cited that "any man or woman who gives thanks to demons, saying that "Today is the worship of Shai, or Shai of the village or Shai of the home, while burning lamps for the empty things and offering incense in the name of phantoms (Shenoute of Atripe, I, 379). Barrett (2011), argued that god shai was similar to Agathos Daimon, as both of them were represented a challenge against the fate and destiny; on other word they organized the personal life. The cult of Shai was very popular among the Egyptian cities as they were defended the house and its inhabitants.

XI. Heron God of War

God Heron "Ἡρωνό " was a warrior Karian god, whose cult emerged in Egypt during Ptolemaic era, it was centering at Fayoum. His worship was wide spread among the Greek mercenaries who immigrated to Fayum under the rule of Ptolemy I. Many shrines inside houses depicted god Heron, as his cult seemed as a domestic cult at Fayum, in Karanis, Soknopaiou Neos and Dionysius. Heron always represented in military clothing beside a horse or riding it, looking towards the watcher, he depicted presented shallow libation dish to a serpent which always twisted around the tree. The serpent presence reflects the relation between Heron and both of Egyptian god Shai and Greek snake god Agathodaimon, whom were considered as humanitarian donors. In fact, serpent was associated with domestic cult. God heron represented also with solar rays enclosed his head which reflects that he was also a solar god (Omran, 2015).

Gods of Healing

Retief (2005), indicated to another important god who had been flourished in that era, who was Asclepius the god of healing of Greeks since 5th century BC, Asclepian emblem has been associated with the health care. It is obvious that Asclepius's snake and staff symbol was still the sign of health care in Greco-Roman eras. Actually domestic snakes were believed by households as providers of good fortune, serpents also linked with wisdom. It was seen as the protector of travellers, shepherds and merchants.

Omran (2014), indicated to P.Oxy . XI 1381 where it mentions the god Imutes, Imouthes son of Ptah or Asklepios son of Hephaistos. Actually the Greeks connected between Imutes and Asklepios and their cult had been appeared in Egypt since the third century B.C. Many shrines were visited by people who seeking for healing. The papyrus tells a story of a dream-cure which happened to a son and his mother whom suffered from fever for three years and both of them prayed for Imoutes, who suitably represented to mother in dreams, describing cures. Then the matter repeated to the son and he was treated by Imoutes, but later their demands weren't achieved, they knew through the priest that the god was not pleased by their way of appreciation. Therefore the son replaced his praising to Imothes- Asklepios.

Omran (2014), indicated to the Asklepieion which was functioned as a remedy region that was visited by the worshippers for asking the blessing of god and his sacred cure. The Asklepieion of Saqqara, sanctuary of Deir el-Bahari and the temple at Phila are the most famous. Many women used to visit the Asklepieion of Memphis, seeking for pregnancy, so it was normal to find many children called Asklepios as their parents hoped to have a baby. An important letter from Zenon's archive to the Asklepieion seeking for divine cure directions. The patient was not obliged to attend by himself to the Asklepieion, he might send one of his relative.

The Appreciation of the Worshippers for Gods:

Omran (2014), indicated to two methods: the first was a traditional Egyptian method known as Anatomical dedications; as every part of human body was believed to have divine nature. So we find offerings as a pair of golden or silver eyes were dedicated to the god. There were also what we may call ex-voto; it was a way to encourage and persuade the god to heal the worshiper, many figurines and sacrifices were presented to gods. Among them also are ears that were devoted to Asklepieion. The second method to acknowledge the favor of the god was inscriptional thank-offering, that were tales carved on the walls of Asklepieion, where the worshippers recited how the god cured them and help them to overcome the suffer of sicknesses.

I- Imhotep and Amenhotep

Lang (2013), stated that Imhotep and Amenhotep were gods connected to curing from diseases and infertility, according to many inscriptions in different temples, it is very obvious the great position of these gods. As in the birth house at Philae which contained inscriptions dates back to the reign of Ptolemy VIII that acknowledged Imhotep to be: *'Master of life, giving life, lord of health, bringer of life to the dead...'*. There is also a demotic letter dates back to the end of the third century. Another important example is the shrine at Philea which dedicated by Ptolemy V and Cleopatra I with their son Philometor, actually this shrine was a thank-offering for Imhotep's aid as Philometor was born after seven years of their marriage. Omran (2014), indicated to a funerary stele dates back to the first century B.C; it is for a woman who was married to a prophet of Ptah. They had three daughters and were wishing to have a boy, they were praising to Imhotep who appeared in the husband's dream, telling him some orders and when he had done it, the wife became pregnant in a boy and she duly named him Imhotep.

"I prayed together with the high priest to the majesty of the great god great in wonders, effective in needs, who gives a son to him who has none: Imhotep son of Ptah. He heard our pleas, he hearkened to his prayers. The majesty of this god came to the head of the high priest in a revelation. He said "let a great work be done in the holy of holies of Anchtawy, the place where my body is hidden. As reward for it I shall give you a male child"

But why Imhotep was acknowledged as Asklepios?

Lang (2013), justified that due to the similar characteristics between Asklepios who was known as a healer and he had a special ability to help people. And Imhotep had the same capacity to benefit the sick and the dead. On other side there are suggestions that Hellenizing identifications of Imhotep, it created opposite direction which support the unique Egyptian character of Imhotep and discriminate him from Asklepios. Imhotep had been mentioned in a Greek text dates back to the second century CE, P. Oxy. XI 1381(TM 63689), it is a perfect example for the traditional dream-cure relating Imhotep. It is type that legitimizing a specific cult through the recitation of a service exchange between god and mortal, achieved through the medium of dreams.

The importance of god Amenhotep was not less than god Imhotep, Amenhotep was known as the god doctor who guards the folks of his city, and had the ability to overcome any demons and sicknesses. While Imhotep the clever physician (Lang, 2013).

Under the king Ptolemaios son of Ptolemaios, and Ptolemaios the son, in the 25th year, in the month Khoiak, Polyaratos set up this in order to make known the arête of Amenothos [Amenhotep]. I became the victim of a serious and dangerous illness that lasted for eight years. [[Starting with the glands, my muscles were constricted along the whole body and I was paralyzed and I suffered pains that were difficult to withstand]]. I thought about salvation for a long time, but without result. I had also recourse to physicians, but they were unable to make me healthy. Since I have heard from many people that Amenothos has accomplished numerous aretai, that he is merciful and that many desperate people have found salvation through him, so I [...], also being desperate, came, fleeing for protection, as a suppliant to the sanctuary of Amenothos [[with the supplication of which I have written a copy]]. Amenothos appeared to me and I was cured by him manifestly and I have been healthy. For that reason I would like to praise him and the gods worshipped together with him on the same altars and in the same temple, making known their arête in the form of an inscription for all those who, affected by an illness, come to the sacred precinct of Amenothos in order that [[they know the power of the god who appeared manifestly]] they know [...] manifestly by the god who [...].

Actually Polyaratos' ostrakon could be written archive in the possession of the cult officials, in order to be exposed to visitors. It might be comparable to the famous papyrus tale of Oxyrhynchos, P. Oxy. XI 1381, the problem was the disease for a long time and exhausted other remedies before his ultimate therapy (Lang, 2013).

II-Serapis

Knowing in literature as a "creation" of Ptolemy Soter, who aimed to gather the Egyptians and Greeks in the worship of a composite god. Plutarch, Tacitus and Clement of Alexandria agreed in their description to Sarapis depicting him as Hellenized figure, he was represented with a figure looks like Zeus, Hades or Asklepios in their hair and beard style (figure 15). Although his name was transcription of the Egyptian (Osiris- Apis), the worship was reserved to the Greek population of Alexandria (Orlin et al., 2016). On the other side, Ulmer (2009), argued that Serapis was not only honored in Alexandria but also in Memphis, he was considered not only as the god of salvation after death, but also he involved in the life of people as a healer god who healed people following the custom of remaining overnight in his sanctuary. According to Cotterall (2012), Sarapis was the state god of Ptolemaic Egypt, the ptolemies developed the cult of Sarapis, and it progressively rendered double role as the Greek ruler of the underworld, Hades. Sarapis was being known with his super power of healing the diseases. He presented at the Serapeum in Alexandria, where many patients seeking for cure. They used to sleep there and if Sarapis appeared to them in their dreams, they would recovery.

Yandek (2013), refers to the presence of a limestone inscription of god Serapis at one of Karanis's house, the style and features of Serapis followed the Greco-Egyptian style. Serapis was believed to bless the home as he was a god connected to agricultural fecundity. Campbell (2006), refers to important role of Serapis as a protector of sailors. As it was shown in P. BGU II 423, it was a letter from a soldier to his father, where he was admitting the favor of god Serapis as he guarded him during his journey in the sea.: *“Apion to his father and lord, Epimachos, very many greetings. Before all else, I pray that you are healthy and that you may have continual good fortune along with my sister and her daughter and my brother. I give thanks to Lord Sarapis because, when I was endangered from the sea he saved me immediately. When I arrived at Misenum I received three gold pieces as a viaticum from”*.

Bagnall and Cribiore (2015), agreed with Campbell (2006), about the importance of god Serapis to the sailors, in addition, . Bagnall (2015), indicated to a letter where a woman wrote to her brother to express her thanks to Serapis as he helped him in his journey. In BGU 3.843 " *Takalis to Serenos her brother, many greetings. Before everything I pray that you are well, and I make your obeisance before the lord Sarapis. I want you to know that thanks to the gods I arrived in Alexandria in six days”*.

Also Bagnall and Cribiore (2015), refer to BGU 7. I 680 it was a letter from a daughter to her mother, where it clear that she used to perform religious practices before the god Sarapis and the associated gods: *"Isis to Thermouthion her mother greetings. I make obeisance for you each day before the lord Sarapis and the associated gods"*

Question to an oracle

The gods also involved in the life of the people, as the people usually consulted them. Actually there were many methods to ask the gods and to get the answer. The written oracle questions were displayed on two snips of papyrus; one of them has positive and the other has a negative structure. The gods usually replied by returning the proper snip. The next example P.Oxy VIII that has been found at Oxyrhynchos dating back to the second century A D. *"To Zeus Helios, great Serapis, and the gods of the same shrine, Nike asks if it is to my advantage to buy from Tasarapion the slave she has, Sarapion alias Gaion, give me this back* (Bagnall and Rowelndson, 1998). Kuiper (2010), argued that one of religious traditional practice which was spread among people was the oracle of the gods. People directed to oracles to consult them about different issues, often on civil matters as if someone could cultivate a particular field in a given year. The priests usually address oracular questions to gods within their sanctuaries, without waiting for a festival to present them.

Omran (2015), indicated to the role of oracles as a healing practice that occurred at the temple as the Asklepieion of Deir el- Bahari. Sometimes the god appeared by himself to the sleeping worshipper, or through vocal oracles where the priest plays the role of mediator between the god and the worshipper. He also refers to a demotic papyrus where a direct conversation between Asklepios and his worshippers.

The god states: *“O you call me, you sit in the dark, you hope for a look, and I’m sitting in the middle of the great gods, you receive the rays of Helios, and receive the light of Nebutosualeth (the moon goddess).* Omran (2014), adds that sometimes the oracles might have been conveyed in written form, he indicates to Demotic ostracon which discusses the disease of a person called Teos son of Psenamunis.

Did the oracle served only for medical purpose?

Actually the role of oracle for healing purpose was very common, but we can't ignore many oracles that were deal with many issues concerning different aspects of daily life (Omran, 2014).

Conclusion

From the previous we can conclude the following results:-

I- In all ancient civilization Egyptian or Greco-Roman, there was only way to survive; the divine will, so people seek to gain the satisfaction of gods by performing religious rituals, dedicating offerings and praying. Material evidences of religious and sacred activity, supply us with a clear image of religious life. The presence of gods could be traced in any occasion whatever god or bad, the people used to refuge to gods, asking for his help and aid.

II- It can be conclude from examining many evidences as letters, manuscripts, and ostraca that people used to worship gods whom was in charge of specific sector of life, as gods of fertility, gods of protection, gods of love, gods of health , gods of maternity and god of war.

III- Material evidence indicates that each household constructed its own collection of deities to worship, depending on its specific requirements. Many gods were connected to the domestic life; among them god Bes who depicted in many terra-cottas with sword and shields and also with Roman armor and most of magical gems bear its image. We can say that Bes became the main factor for domestic protection, maternity, and healing. God Asklepius, Imhotep and Amenhotep were gods connected to curing from diseases and infertility.

IV- Aphrodite the god of love and beauty became essential element in any bride's house, Taweret (Thoeris) was a goddess connected also with the Greek goddess Athena, becoming the patron deity of Oxyrhynchos. It had a wide reputation as a goddess of maternity, childbirth and infancy.

V- Artimes or Diana Roman goddess, known as the goddess responsible for motherhood, fertility, taking care of children. In fact these things were fundamental to the lives of all women. Tutu was also a protective local god; he had a great influence over maternal fertility, many personal names during Roman era incorporating "Tutu".

VI- God Harpocrates knew as a patron deity of childhood and a helpful model to children. He was linked with yearly agricultural cycle, birth and death. He was considered one of the important gods of domestic cult.

VII- God Heron was a warrior Karian god; his cult seemed as a domestic cult at Fayum, many shrines inside houses depicted god Heron. God Agathos Daimon was protective god; he became shield and guard of a house. The Samothrace deities were known as "the Great Gods". They had a super power to provide protection to sailors.

VIII- Another involvement of gods in people's life was shown in question to an oracle was one of religious traditional practice which was spread among people. People directed to oracles to consult them about different aspects of daily life, besides the role of oracles as a healing practice.

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Figures



Figure 1. BGU II, 615, letter between two women.

https://www.academia.edu/8378792/A_Letter_Between_Two_Women_With_a_Courier_About_to_Depart



Figure 2. Love doll

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/89/Voodoo_doll_Louvre_E2_7145b.jpg

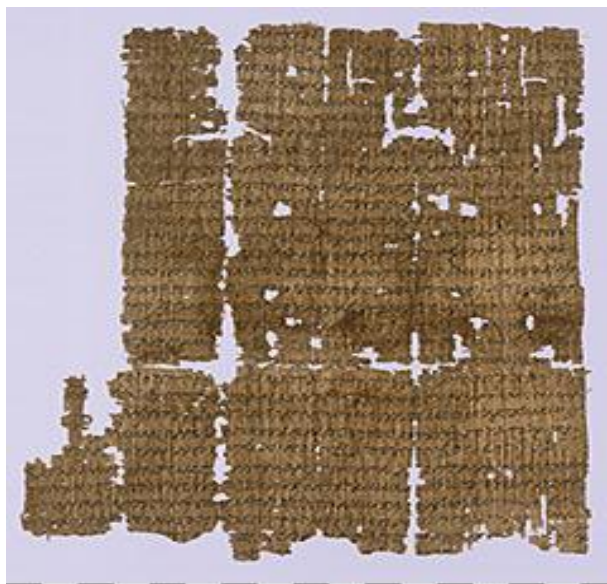


Figure 3. BGU III 717, marriage contract
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Figure 4. Aphrodite bronze statue found at house 418 Karanis. after Elaine K. Gazda. ed, Guardians of The Nile, 1978.



Figure 5. Head of Aphrodite Anadyomene after Amy C. Yandek " Pagan Roman Religious Acculturation"(2013)



Figure 6 – Aphrodite Anadyomene found at house 514 Karanis. after Elaine K. Gazda. ed, Guardians of The Nile, 1978.



Figure 7. Ceramic figure of the god Bes in military form (KM 1971.02.0208). <http://exhibitions.kelsey.lsa.umich.edu/archaeologies-of-childhood/protection.php>



Figure 8. Terracotta figurine of Bes. Roman Egypt (Fayum), 1st–2nd century CE. Height: 21.7 cm. Museum purchase (David Askren, 1925). KM 4960.



Figure 9. Faience Bes figurine. 1st–3rd century AD. University of Michigan excavations at Karanis, Egypt. KM 25979.

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Figure 10. Seated Harpocrates, after Elaine K. Gazda. ed, *Guardians of The Nile*, 1978.



Figure 11. Bust of Harpocrates, after Elaine K. Gazda. ed, *Guardians of The Nile*, 1978.



Figure 12. Mural of child Harpocrate found in structure C65 at Karanis, after Wahid Omran, "The Cult of Heron in Egypt" 2015



Figure 13. Harpocrates riding a ram in 1st - 2nd centuries A.D (KM3231).

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Figure 14. God Harpocrate, after Elaine K. Gazda. Ed. Karanis An Egyptian Town of Roman Times, 2004



Figure 15. Wooden bust of Serapis decorated with gesso, bole, and gold leaf. H: 10.2 cm. Roman period, late 2nd to early 3rd century CE. KM 4655.

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وجود الآلهة والآلهات في حياة الناس في مصر اليونانية والرومانية

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الملخص العربي

إن الظروف المختلفة التي عاشها الناس في مصر اليونانية الرومانية، جعلتهم يلجئون للآلهة لأنهم كانوا على يقين أن راحتهم ورخائهم يتوقف على الإرادة الإلهية. كان هناك وجود الآلهة على الصعيد المحلي، حيث ربط الناس الآلهة بحياتهم اليومية؛ في الأشياء المستخدمة لأداء الطقوس الدينية والتماثيل الدينية والتماثيل المستخدمة في الخصوبة، في الرسائل والبرديات مثل مجموعة أوكسيرينخوس. لقد كان من الشائع جدًا ذكر الآلهة في معظم الخطابات، بغض النظر عن الغرض منها. حيث اعتاد الناس أن يطلبوا حماية الآلهة والصلاة من أجل الحصول على بركاتهم ومساعدتهم. ومن ناحية أخرى في حالة حدوث أي أزمة يلجأ الناس إلى الآلهة بحثًا عن حل لديهم. وتشير الأدلة المادية إلى أن كل أسرة شيدت مجموعتها الخاصة من الآلهة للعبادة، حسب متطلباتها التي تحتاجها. وقد ارتبطت العديد من الآلهة بالحياة المنزلية؛ من بينهم أفروديت إلهة الحب والجمال، إله بيس الذي ارتبط بالحماية المنزلية والأمومة. أسكليبيوس، إله المحارب، حربوقراط راعي الطفولة. لذلك يهدف البحث إلى التعرف على طبيعة العلاقة بين الناس والآلهة في الحياة اليومية، كما يكشف الآلهة الشعبية المختلفة التي ارتبطت بالحياة في المنزل.

الكلمات الدالة: آلهة الحب، آلهة الخصوبة، الأمومة، الحماية المنزلية، الصحة.