

From Aphrodite to Isis ‘of the Sea’ Connecting conceptions of a saving sea goddess

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Declaration

I, Joanne Elizabeth Court, certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

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Date: 9 November 2017

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Abbreviations

All texts and inscriptions are abbreviated according to *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, eds. S. Hornblower, Antony Spawforth and Esther Eidinow, 4th ed. (Oxford: OUP, 2012), the secondary source from which they are cited, or as defined below:

RICIS *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques*

SNRIS *Sylloge nummorum religionis isiacae et sarapiacae*

Summary

This thesis concerns processes of change. It addresses the argument that the idea of Isis as a protective sea-goddess was the creation of the Greek rulers of Egypt early in the third century BC, through the syncretism of Arsinoe II, Aphrodite and Isis. It asks whether the emergence of marine Isis may be better understood as an outcome of a largely undirected dynamic of religious persistence and change in Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean over the long term. The heuristic of ‘network thinking’ is used to identify and analyse evidence for the dynamic interaction of divine powers, for syncretic processes and certain crystallising ‘syncretic’ moments. It will be argued that it is not sufficient to simply locate apparent evidence of assimilation and draw conclusions that neatly fit within a narrative; an interrogation of syncretic processes and the workings of power, agency and context is needed. Isis in her marine aspect was not entirely new nor wholly ‘Greek’ or ‘Egyptian’. The key driver of change was not directed political power, rather change was brought about by the shared semantic dimension of polytheistic religion, the broader interacting conception of Isis as a saviour goddess, the needs of worshippers, and the cumulative effect of their individual acts of worship.

Chapter 1

Introduction

*.....just as great Odysseus thrashed things out,
Poseidon god of the earthquake launched a colossal wave,
terrible, murderous, arching over him, pounding down on him,
hard as a windstorm blasting piles of dry parched chaff,
scattering flying husks – so the long planks of his boat were scattered far and wide.....*

*....but the bright-eyed one inspired him again.
Fighting out from the breakers, pounding towards the coast,
out of danger he swam on.....
As the current flowed he felt the river's god and
prayed to him in spirit: Hear me, lord, whoever you are,
rescue me from the sea, the Sea-lord's curse!.....¹*

Travel on the Mediterranean Sea in ancient times was a dangerous but vital activity.² Fearful seafarers in a raging storm called upon their gods to save them. Shipwrecks reveal to us unanswered prayers and the work of vengeful gods, destructive currents, winds, storms and pirates.³ Cicero was certainly justified in being a reluctant traveller by sea⁴; yet the Mediterranean could not be easily avoided. The Mediterranean connected people from different lands and islands between the Bosphorus and Gibraltar and from North Africa to the Black Sea and was the principal conduit of cultural and economic exchange.⁵ States and traders relied on the Mediterranean for transport of food, resources and wealth. When ships sank, valuable cargo and

¹ Hom. *Od.*, 402-407, 482-484, 489-492, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1997).

² H. Driessen. 'A Janus-faced sea: Contrasting perceptions and experiences of the Mediterranean', *MAST Maritime Studies* 3 no.1 (2004), 41. Mediterranean Sea is not a single sea but actually a succession of small seas connected by straits. Indeed, the sea was simply 'the Sea' until defined as the 'Mediterranean' by Isidorus of Seville (*Etym.* 13.16.1) and the name was not widely used until the 12th century. Brent. D. Shaw, 'Challenging Braudel: a new vision of the Mediterranean', in *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, (2001), 419-453, 421-22, note 13.

³ Nicholas K. Rauh. *Merchants, Sailors and Pirates in the Roman World*, (Stroud: Tempus, 2003), 105-113.

⁴ 'Travelling by sea is no light matter, even in July.' Cic. *Att.* 105 (V.12). 1

⁵ Rauh, *Merchants, Sailors and Pirates*, 17-18, F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 108-62.

lives were lost. States connected on the sea in combat; the Mediterranean was a regular theatre of war. There were many reasons for prayers to saving and beneficent sea gods.

Sea deities of the Mediterranean region were numerous and diverse. In the biblical account of the storm-affected voyage of Jonah, frightened sailors ‘each cried out to his own god’.⁶ The centrality and risky nature of seafaring encouraged diversification and ‘cultural borrowing’, indeed a ‘market for protecting powers’.⁷ Aphrodite, born of the sea, was long a pre-eminent marine goddess among Greek-speakers.⁸ In Ancient Egyptian tradition Isis was the wife of Osiris, the mother of Horus, and goddess of winds and river navigation, but the sea did not form part of her dominion.⁹ By the Roman imperial period, however, Isis had become the pre-eminent saviour goddess and a sea-goddess of choice throughout the Mediterranean.¹⁰ Various named including as *Eupolia*, *Pelagia*, *Soteiria*, *Isis-Tyche/Fortuna* and *Pharia*, Isis was worshipped and called upon in hymns and temples; she was represented in statues, figurines, coins and lamps; ships bore her name; and her marine nature was celebrated in annual festivals and processions.¹¹ Hellenistic Egypt was the crucial intervening period.

⁶ Jonah 1:4-5, NIV.

⁷ Robert Parker, ‘The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia at Cos’, in *Kykeon: Studies in Honour of H.S. Versnel*, eds. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff et.al (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 152.

⁸ Hes. *Theog.* 188-206. Her many epithets included *Pontia* (of the sea), *Euploia* (of fair sailing), *Pelagia* (of the open sea) and *Nauarchis* (‘commander of the ships’) and her cults were prominent on promontories, in ports such as Athens’ Piraeus in the fourth and fifth centuries, and on islands such as Cyprus and Cos. Chryssanthi Papadopoulou, ‘Aphrodite and the Fleet in Classical Athens’, in *Brill’s Companion to Aphrodite*, eds. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 217-218. Robert Parker, ‘The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia at Cos’ 146.

⁹ Françoise Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*: 3 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), I, 94-95.

¹⁰ Bommas refers to two waves of the diffusion of the cults of Isis, Sarapis and other Egyptian gods occurring in the third and second centuries; the first to harbour cities in the Eastern Mediterranean and to the far reaches of the Aegean and Asia Minor and the second principally from the island Delos to Italian harbour cities such as Puteoli and then on to Pompeii, Ostia and Rome. Martin Bommas. ‘Isis, Osiris and Sarapis’ in the *Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, ed. Christina Riggs, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 428-429.

¹¹ Sources for the epithets, cult practise and material evidence for Isis have been identified, collated and mapped by Dunand and Bricault. Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis*; Laurent Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*. (Liège: Centre Informatique de Philosophie et Lettres, 2006); *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques/ RICIS* (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 2005); Laurent Bricault *Sylloge nummorum religionis isiacae et sarapiacae (SNRIS)*/ sous la direction de Laurent Bricault; avec la collaboration de Richard Ashton et al. (Paris: Diffusion de Bocard, 2008); *Atlas de la diffusion des cultes isiaques IV^e s. av. J.-C.-IV^e s. apr. J.-C* (Paris: Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 2001). A Roman grain ship named the Isis was described by Lucian, *The Ship or the Wishes*, 6.

Egypt was re-oriented toward the Mediterranean by the Ptolemies, the Greek Dynasty succeeding Alexander the Great in the rule of Egypt in the later fourth century BC.¹² The new coastal city of Alexandria was the seat of government, a major trading port and pre-eminent centre of cultural and intellectual activity.¹³ While for most Egyptians life continued as it always had, people travelled from all over the Greek-speaking world to settle in Egypt, particularly in Alexandria and the Delta region. Greeks were prominent in the military and the administration of the empire.¹⁴ In the third century Egypt expanded its territory and wielded considerable extra-territorial influence as a naval power.¹⁵ Queens were a prominent public face of the dynasty and its navy, particularly Arsinoe II, the sister-wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Arsinoe was associated with Aphrodite, Isis and other goddesses and after her death was deified and worshipped in her own right.¹⁶

Impetus and research question

The impetus for this research was speculative statement by the Italian scholar Barbantani:

*Possibly Isis as a sea-goddess is an Alexandrian creation, due to syncretism with Aphrodite and her association with early Ptolemaic queens, mistresses of naval activities: this could have happened under the reign of Arsinoe II, divinised both as Isis and Aphrodite.*¹⁷

¹² Alexander the Great selected the site and participated in its design. Arr: *Anab.* 3:2. All further dates specified are B.C unless otherwise indicated.

¹³ Gunther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 26-27, 63-65.

¹⁴ Höbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 25-26, 58-61.

¹⁵ The high point of the Ptolemaic empire was under Ptolemy III *Euergetes* in the third century BC when it encompassed almost the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean from Libya to Thrace and was described by Callimachus and then Catullus as the ‘conquest of Asia’, Catull. 66, 35ff, Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 50-51, note 91, 72.

¹⁶ For further detail and references see chapter 2.

¹⁷ S. Barbantani, ‘Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea: Notes on a Hellenistic Hymn to Arsinoe-Aphrodite’ (P. Lit. Goodsp. 2, I-IV). *Ancient Society*, 35 (2005): 135-165, 152.

This statement points to: historical causation in a specific time and place; the exercise of state power and a directed religious policy; and Hellenising syncretism, a traditional preoccupation of scholars of the Hellenistic period.¹⁸ This statement prompted my principal research question:

Was the idea of Isis as a protective sea-goddess the creation of the Greek rulers of Egypt in the third century BC, or is the development better understood as an outcome of a largely undirected dynamic of religious persistence and change in Egypt and other areas of the Eastern Mediterranean over the long term?

Scholarship context

The evolution of the marine aspects of Isis is an understudied subject. However, evidence for such evolution has been identified and analysed by Laurent Bricault.¹⁹ His argument is clear: Isis' marine aspects were essentially 'Greek', and principally originated in the actions of the admiral Callicrates, the divinity of Arsinoe and her assimilation to Isis; 'from Arsinoe-Aphrodite – Euploia, Isis Euploia was born'.²⁰ Isis' sea-function, Bricault contends, was theorised and developed by authors of aretalogies to Isis and other maritime-related insertions into traditional Osirian-Isis mythology²¹ and was made manifest in representations of Isis with a sail from the beginning of the second century BC in later iconography, in epithets and cult practise.²²

¹⁸ 'Hellenism' is a historiographical tradition originating with Johann Gustav Dryson's *Geschichte des Hellenismus* first published in 1836-43. Implicit in the concept is the superiority and civilising influence of Greek culture and language. Ian S. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11-24.

¹⁹ Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*. Bricault is prominent in the field of Isis scholarship and is one of a number of eminent French scholars who have made invaluable contributions to the identification, cataloguing, translation and analysis of archaeological, numismatic and epigraphic evidence relating to the diffusion of cults of Isis in the ancient Mediterranean, including Pierre Roussel, *Les cultes égyptiens à Delos du III^e siècle au 1^{er} siècle av. J.C.* (Paris-Nancy, 1916); Phillipe Bruneau, 'Isis Pelagia a Delos' *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 85 (1961) :435-446; V. Tam Tinh Tran, *Essai sur Le Culte D'Isis à Pompéi* (Paris: Editions E. de Boccard, 1964), Michel Malaise, as listed in 'Michel Malaise: Bibliographie Isiaque', in *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, Proceedings of the IVth International Conference of Isis Studies, Liège, November 27-29, 2008*, eds. Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (Liège: Brill, 2010); See note 11 above for Francoise Dunand's and Bricault's significant contributions.

²⁰ Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 18, 33.

²¹ Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 177.

²² Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 177-178.

Certain re-conceptions of culture and syncretism are useful in critically assessing both Barbantani's speculations, and Bricault's reasoned assumptions about the assimilation of Isis and Arsinoe/Aphrodite and the birth of 'Isis Euploia'. Culture and religion are not pure, stable structures; change, whether through cultural borrowing, contest, accommodation, 'indigenisation' or other cultural interactions, is inherent and constant.²³ J.Z. Smith, who inspired the second part of my research question, wrote that the study of Hellenistic religion is essentially the study of the dynamics of continuity and change.²⁴ 'Syncretism' has been usefully rehabilitated by scholars of religion to describe and draw attention to such processes.²⁵ An oft-loaded and much debated concept, critics have argued that the term is meaningless, when change is an inevitable feature of religion.²⁶ Others have objected to the effects of syncretism being celebrated or to the agency of participants not being recognised, including the agency of encountering or colonised cultures.²⁷ The rehabilitators argue that the answer is to focus on syncretism as a process, paying particular attention to the actions and thinking of those involved, and for scholars to be aware of their part in the meta-discourse.²⁸

²³ Charles Stewart, 'Syncretism and Its Synonyms: Reflections on Cultural Mixture', *Diacritics*, Vol. 29 (3: 1999), 41, 55. According to Naerebout, '... change there always is, both from internal dynamism and from external influences—an unchanging religion would be a dead religion, a mere museum'. Frederick G. Naerebout, 'Cuius regio, eius religio? Rulers and Religious Change in Greco-Roman Egypt' in *Power, Politics and the Cults of Isis: Proceedings of the Vth International Conference of Isis Studies, Boulogne-sur-Mer, October 13-15, 2011*, Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys (eds.) (Leiden; Boston: Brill 2014), 37.

²⁴ I borrowed the words 'the dynamic of religious persistence and change' for my research question from J.Z. Smith which I now acknowledge. Jonathan Z. Smith, 'Native Cults in the Hellenistic Period', *History of Religions* 11, no.2 (Nov. 1971), 239.

²⁵ The term was first taken from a political context (Cretans unifying against a common enemy, Plut. *Mor. De frat. Amor.* 5: 19), used in relation to Christian theology, and the reconciliation of different Christian groups in the early sixteenth century. It came to be used in the sense of mixing of religions and developed a pejorative usage, meaning a watering down or 'bastardisation' of the 'true' Christian tradition. Caitlín E. Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines from Delos. A Study in Hellenistic Religion* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 31- 32.

²⁶ Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 31- 32. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 151.

²⁷ Some scholars have rejected syncretism as an object of study or explanatory tool altogether, defending the separateness or purity of a tradition. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 151-152.

²⁸ Moyer, 'Isidorus at the Gates of the Temple', in *Greco-Egyptian Interactions: Literature Translation and Culture, 500 BCE -300 CE*, ed. Ian Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2016), 209-210. Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart, 'Introduction: Problematizing syncretism', in *Syncretism/ Anti-Syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis*, (eds.) Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (London: Routledge: 1994), 1-26.

I will adopt this approach and will argue that it is not sufficient to simply locate apparent evidence ‘of assimilation’ and draw conclusions that neatly fit within a narrative. An interrogation of the process relating to the assumed assimilation is essential, and as syncretism is ‘discourse’, attention must be paid ‘to the workings of power and agency’.²⁹

My analysis will be informed by a number of scholarly perspectives on power, religion and agency. The state may exercise power purposefully to produce and influence religious ideas and practise, yet another insight of Foucault is that power is not ‘owned’ or purely located in rulers or civic authorities. Rather power refers to, and comprises, a whole series of relationships that exist between individuals or groups of individuals in a society.³⁰ A king is only a king if he has subjects.³¹ And a religion is only a religion if there are worshippers. The extent and success of the imperial cult in the Roman East was not, as Price first explained, due to directives from Emperors, but originated in the needs of groups of worshippers who used imperial cult and the honours exchange system to negotiate their place in a new world order.³² In a case study of how the power relationship between ruler and subjects affected religious life in Roman Egypt, Naerebout concluded that the ruler did not cause change but created ‘preconditions under which change can take place’. ‘Empire’, he states, ‘increases choice—and people choose for their own reasons’.³³

Another structural factor affecting religious choice is the conceived presence and availability of gods and their divine power(s).³⁴ Recent studies of the workings of polytheism, the nature of

²⁹ Shaw and Stewart, ‘Problematizing syncretism’, 7.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’: Interviewers: Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (eds), H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, eds. (New York, The Harvester Press, 1982), power produces knowledge and discourse, 118; on the State and the nature of power, 122.

³¹ Clare O’Farrell, *Michel Foucault* (London: Sage: 2005), 3.

³² S.R.F., Price, *Rituals and Power, The Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 247-248.

³³ Naerebout, ‘Cuius regio, eius religio?...’, 61.

³⁴ Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys, ‘Isis and Empires’, *Power, Politics and the Cults of Isis: Proceedings of the Vth*

Greek deities and the dynamic interaction of their attributes will also be employed in my analysis.³⁵

Relevant to the interrogation of processes of change and its context are de-centred studies of the society, economy and culture of Ptolemaic Egypt that include Egyptians in their analysis. In an approach that I will follow, scholars such as Moyer, Stephens and others eschew traditional or rigid paradigms to consider interactions and overlaps between Greeks and Egyptians, and the impact of Egyptian influences on Greek life and culture.³⁶ Studies have shown Egyptians present at court and in the Ptolemaic government in the third century, Greeks using both Greek and Egyptian names in different contexts and adopting dual Greek-Egyptian identity where they had formal Greek status.³⁷ Literacy in the Greek language may have been a greater differentiator of status than ethnicity.³⁸ The interaction of Greek and Egyptian social networks has been demonstrated as influential in the development of the Ptolemaic economy, while Stephens in *Seeing Double* emphasises the context of the creation of Alexandrian poetry and its potential to speak to both Greek and Egyptian audiences.³⁹ Egyptian influences on historical and religious discourse in the Ptolemaic period has been addressed by Moyer, including most relevantly, through inter-cultural mediation by Egyptian priests in Narmouthis and on Delos.⁴⁰

International Conference of Isis Studies, Boulogne-sur-Mer, October 13-15, 2011, (eds.) Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys. (Leiden; Boston: Brill 2014), 8.

³⁵ Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge 'Flourishing Aphrodite: An Overview', in Smith et al. *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, 311-323; Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge and Gabriella Pironti, 'Many vs One' *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*. eds. Esther Eidinow and Julia Kindt (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2015) 1-11; H. S. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011).

³⁶ See Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 2-36, regarding the traditional 'syncretistic-Hellenism' model and the post-colonial 'subjugation' or 'separatism' models.

³⁷ Studies of Derchain (2000), Thompson (1987, 1988), Clarysse (1992), Clarysse and Thompson (2006) cited and discussed in Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 29-31.

³⁸ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 30-31.

³⁹ J. G. Manning, 'Hellenistic Egypt', in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World*, ed. W. Schiedel, I. Morris, and R. Saller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 435; Susan A. Stephens, *Seeing Double. Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria*. (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 6-7

⁴⁰ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 34, 142-207. Moyer, 'Isidorus at the Gates of the Temple', 209-244.

Further questions, frame and aim

Recent scholarship raises a number of open questions which inform this study: how were conceptions of Aphrodite and Isis related; how did their maritime powers relate to their divine powers generally; in relation to Barbantani's assumed 'syncretisms', what was the nature and effect of the interplay between power and religion, and between Greeks and Egyptians; what can we learn of Isis' worshippers and their role in the creation and diffusion of her sea dimension?

Attracted by Irad Malkin's description of networks as a 'new framework of postmodern and postcolonial observation'⁴¹, the different strands of my inquiry will be drawn together and organised within a broad network interpretative frame.

This thesis uses the heuristic of 'network thinking' to ask how a religious idea may be connected to an earlier conception; how the idea developed and spread; and the role of state power in those processes. Specifically, I aim to identify and analyse syncretic processes and crystallising moments⁴² in the emergence of the idea of Isis 'of the sea' in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Hellenistic and early Roman period, ultimately departing from and taking a broader view than Barbantani's speculations of its origins in the historical and divine figure of Arsinoe.

Network thinking

Scholars of the Ancient Mediterranean are increasingly looking beyond power centres and temporal and geographic boundaries to connectivity and the concept of networks both as a

⁴¹ Malkin, *Small Worlds*, 13.

⁴² This term is adopted from Thomas M. Dousa, 'Imagining Isis: On some Continuities and Discontinuities in the Image of Isis in Greek Hymns and Demotic Texts', in *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies, Copenhagen, 23-27 August 1999*, edited by Kim Ryholt (Copenhagen: The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2002), 151.

metaphor and explanatory heuristic tool, building on Braudel and the *Annales* school.⁴³ Braudel emphasised geographical ‘connectivity’ established by cabotage, small boats transporting goods and people in a series of short journeys from port to port around the Mediterranean Sea. For Braudel, cabotage created networks that enduringly unified the Mediterranean economically and culturally.⁴⁴ Horden and Purcell more recently revisited the importance of cabotage, emphasising its role in the mobility of human agents of change, and the creation of volatile networks that connected but also fragmented Mediterranean micro-regions.⁴⁵ And more recently still, networks are being conceptualised as more than representations of connections or conduits of information and change.⁴⁶ Since the publication of *The Corrupting Sea*, there have been further developments in understandings of the nature and power of networks in the fields of physics, mathematics and sociology. These developments have directed attention to the dynamic evolution of networks through the ‘making and breaking of network ties’⁴⁷ Networks are not simply the static result of social forces, rather it is the *interactions* between nodes on networks that dynamically bring about change.⁴⁸

A network is essentially a collection of nodes, links and flows.⁴⁹ A node is a ‘connection point’; a distinct point in a network in which pathways intersect or diverge. Nodes are connected by links

⁴³ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Malden and London: Blackwell Publishing, 2000); Irad Malkin, *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Cavan W. Concannon ‘Introduction: A New Connectivity for the Twenty-first Century’ in *Across the Corrupting Sea*, eds. C.W.Concannon Cavan and Lindsey A. Mazurek (Abingdon: Oxon; New York: Routledge 2016), 2-3; Anna Collar, *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire: The Spread of New Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lindsey Mazurek, ‘Material and Textual Narratives of Authenticity? Creating Cabotage and Memory in the Hellenistic Eastern Mediterranean’ in *Across the Corrupting Sea*. eds. Concannon and Mazurek, 39-58.

⁴⁴ Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, 161.

⁴⁵ Horden and Purcell, ‘The Corrupting Sea’ 141-52, 445-9 .

⁴⁶ Malkin, *Small Worlds*, 4.

⁴⁷ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 6. Duncan J. Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (New York: Norton, 2003), 50, 54.

⁴⁸ Malkin, *Small Worlds*, 46-47 and note 123, 79; Collar, *Religious Networks*, 6, 10.

⁴⁹ Carl Knappett, ‘Introduction: Why Networks?’, in *Network Analysis in Archaeology: New Approaches to Regional Interaction*, ed. Carl Knappett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-20, 2.

or ties, sites or means of exchange of information and interactions ('flows').⁵⁰ A network may be geographical, comprising, for example, cult centres in places around the Mediterranean linked by the sea, ships, sailors and travellers; social, where the nodes are generally individuals and the links are relational; or cognitive - schemas, mentalities or memory - at the individual and societal level, connected and shaped by narrative ties. A multiplicity of networks of all different kinds and sizes may be envisioned as co-existing at any one time or across time, and crucially as interacting to share and spread information and bring about change.

Social networks have been conceived as dynamic facilitators of the transfer of ideas - instrumental, for example, in the formation of Greek identity in the archaic period⁵¹, in the spread and success of Christianity⁵², and in the diffusion of new religious ideas in the Roman Empire⁵³. Social network analysis has been used to explain how new ideas may emerge and spread in the absence of centralised control and why they may be accepted by one community or group but not another.⁵⁴ Collar points to the network viewpoint of change as multi-causal and the aggregated outcome of many individual actions.⁵⁵ Undirected change may 'emerge' when a series of small changes or shocks along a network coalesce and that coalesced innovation is accepted by the number of people sufficient to attract more and more followers.⁵⁶ An 'idea does not just impose itself', however; an innovative idea must arrive in an environment where individuals and the groups to which they are most connected are vulnerable to change.⁵⁷ Clearly

⁵⁰ Malkin, *Small Worlds*, 26 citing Darin David Barney, *The Network Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 2.

⁵¹ Malkin, *Small Worlds*.

⁵² Collar, *Religious Networks*.

⁵³ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁵⁴ Anna Collar, 'Network Theory and Religious Innovation' *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 22:1, (June 2007) 152-157.

⁵⁵ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 6, 13-16. Emergence is a concept drawn from the diverse domains of physics and sociology.

⁵⁶ This phenomenon is known as a 'information cascade', and relates to humankind's herd instinct. Duncan J. Watts, *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age* (New York: Norton, 2003), 206; Malkin, *Small Worlds*, 39.

⁵⁷ Collar, *Network Theory*, 157. Stark, for example, partly attributes the success of Christianity in the Roman Empire to vulnerabilities caused by the disease epidemics of the second and third centuries, the decimation of social networks

this approach is different to an approach that attributes change to the intentional actions of a few powerful individuals; therefore network theory is both a theory of change and an empirical guide to looking for evidence of drivers of change.

Other relevant network approaches that have been usefully employed in historical or archaeological study are actor network theory⁵⁸ and the ‘third wave’ of conceptual or cognitive networks.⁵⁹ The principal relevance of sociology’s actor network theory is the focus on the assembling of all elements that comprise and potentially shape a network without regard to hierarchies or distinctions between humans and non-human elements.⁶⁰ Ideas, traditions, technologies and a range of material objects have been recognised as having a constitutive role in processes involving the creation and sharing of cultural memory and networks of meaning.⁶¹ Particularly relevant to the current analysis is Eidinow’s emphasis on the importance of narratives and stories as links between individual cognition, society and culture.⁶²

and the re-building of networks that brought non-Christian Romans into contact with Christians, influencing their conversion. Stark, *Rise of Christianity*, 91-93.

⁵⁸ J Law, ‘On the Methods of Long Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation and the Portuguese Route to India’, in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?* ed. J. Law, *Sociological Review Monograph* 32, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986) 234-263; Fiona Coward ‘Grounding the Net: Social Networks, Material Culture and Geography in the Epipalaeolithic and Early Neolithic of the Near East (21,000-6,00 cal bce)’ in *Network Analysis in Archaeology: New Approaches to Regional Interaction*. ed. Carl Knappett. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 247-280.

⁵⁹ Claire Taylor and Kostas Vlassopoulos, ‘Introduction: An Agenda for the Study of Greek History’, *Communities and Networks in the Ancient Greek World*. eds. Claire Taylor and Kostas Vlassopoulos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1-37; Esther Eidinow, ‘Ancient Greek Religion: Embedded...and Embodied’, in *Communities and Networks in the Ancient Greek World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 54-87.

⁶⁰ John Law ‘Actor Network Theory and Material Semiotics.’ *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, (ed.) Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing; Blackwell Reference Online), 2009, 1, 4-5.

⁶¹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press; ACLS Humanities E-Book, 2005) <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heh.32135.0001.001.16>, 21-25. While Latour’s empirical work has been pursued mostly in the arena of modern science and technology, the approach has been adapted now to many eras and social domains, including ancient religions.

⁶² Eidinow, ‘Ancient Greek Religion: Embedded...and Embodied’, 62-63.

The advantages of ‘network thinking’ are many. It is a way of asking ‘new questions of old data’ and viewing historical change through a ‘broader lens’.⁶³ A network approach does not deny the importance or role of individuals and power in a particular time or place but conceives of them as forming part of broader processes beyond and across those boundaries. Social and cognitive networks are truly historical, as interactions within and across networks are strongly influenced by the past and ‘pre-existing ties forged in earlier interactions’.⁶⁴ Network thinking encompasses different scales of inquiry and envisages connections and developments that are diverse and multi-directional.⁶⁵ Furthermore, network concepts may be usefully and flexibly applied, metaphorically, descriptively or as a heuristic, as outlined above. I will not be mapping or creating diagrams of networks or undertaking any modelling or statistical analysis. Following the lead of Malkin, I will often ground my arguments in the ‘probable’ where firm evidence is lacking.⁶⁶ Finally, a network approach and perspectives that attribute agency to material objects are of interpretative and explanatory value, especially where there is an absence of direct written testimony and narrative history.

Scope, methodology and structure

The idea of the protective sea goddess has a broader temporal and spatial history than can be addressed here. My interest is understanding processes of change, not the impossible task of establishing origins. Accordingly, only select times and specific networks, nodes, ties, interactions and contexts will be considered, most particularly in Alexandria and Delos, but also in and between Naucratis in the seventh century, Classical Athens, Cos and other parts of Egypt to about AD 100. The nature and patchiness of evidence means that some aspects and periods are

⁶³ Collar, *Religious Networks*, 2.

⁶⁴ Coward, ‘Grounding the Net’, 249.

⁶⁵ Coward ‘Grounding the Net’, 249; Taylor and Vlassopoulos, ‘Introduction: An Agenda for the Study of Greek History’, 12.

⁶⁶ Malkin, *Small Worlds*, 18.

only able to be considered briefly.

In this thesis I apply the typical historical method of gathering, analysing and interpreting evidence, and synthesise sometimes fragmentary evidence within the framework of a network analysis. I anticipate that this approach will allow new insights and the making of new connections between the available sources. In relation to limitations, in the Hellenistic period narrative history, testimonies of religious practice or thought and sources identifying and providing information about individuals, even elite individuals, are scarce or absent. A few key individuals are known, otherwise categories of individuals necessarily make up human elements of networks; such as priests, traders and seafarers. Epigraphic and material evidence is unevenly distributed. While there is a significant amount of published epigraphic evidence relating to the worship of Isis in Delos, for example, such evidence from Alexandria is rare.⁶⁷ Where there is evidence of representations, worship or cult practise relating to Isis (and Arsinoe) it less commonly relates to marine aspects, and in Isis' case, evidence is more plentiful from the later Roman period. Although some of these non-marine and later period sources will provide useful information, care will be taken not to misapply or anachronistically use such sources. Until recently, Egyptologists appear to have been little interested in studying the Ptolemaic period or the changing nature of the goddess Isis and intercultural interaction from the Late period.⁶⁸ The active scholarship on demotic texts in the Hellenistic period is a welcome but relatively recent development.⁶⁹ This means that much Egyptian material that could also inform this study is currently inaccessible. Despite these limitations, there is a sufficient evidentiary basis to proceed, and the following outline of the chapter organisation of the thesis briefly identifies the principle

⁶⁷ Bommas, 'Isis in Alexandria', *Biblische Notize*, no. 147 (2010), 30.

⁶⁸ Bommas. 'Isis, Osiris and Sarapis', 426. The intercultural interaction and development of Isis in the Hellenistic and Roman period is increasingly an area of study of scholars of ancient Egypt. For example, Svenja Nagel, 'The cult of Isis and Sarapis in North Africa. Local shifts of an Egyptian cult under the influences of different cultural traditions.' in *Egyptian gods in the Hellenistic and Roman Mediterranean: Image and reality between local and global*, eds. Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys, *Supplemento a Mythos* 3 (Caltanissetta, 2012), 67-92.

⁶⁹ Jacco Dieleman and Ian S. Moyer, 'Egyptian Literature', in *A Companion to Hellenistic Literature*, ed. James J. Clauss and Martine Cuypers (Chichester, West Sussex, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2010) 429-447

sources of evidence.

I divide my inquiry areas and chapters by network themes: the virtual network of the gods; Arsinoe II and royal networks; and worshippers: ties, nodes and networks.

Necessarily, I will commence by ascertaining ancient understandings of their gods and their interactions. Indeed, the notions of gods as ‘ideas’ and as ‘evolving’ is an outsider perspective.⁷⁰ There was no Isis ‘of the sea’, which is simply a convenient summary label. A deity was part of a complex polytheistic system; Isis must be considered in relation to other gods, in relation to her other domains and in particular contexts. Accordingly, I will compare conceptions and attributes of Aphrodite as a protective marine goddess to those of Isis in Egypt, before and from the Ptolemaic era, and identify relevant interactions of Isis with other deities. Networks of gods existed at the ‘national’ or Pan-Hellenic level and at the local level – in the minds of followers, in their religious practise and their daily lives. Ancient texts and visual and material sources will be used to seek to ascertain or reconstruct religious ideas and mentalities such as *‘interpretatio graeca’* and its equivalents.

The *nodes* making up royal networks include Arsinoe II (in both her human and divine forms), Ptolemy II, later pharaohs and queens, *philoi* or friends of the Court and poets attached to the Court such as Callimachus and Posidippus. The role and influence of the deified Arsinoe II (including as a model for later queens), the intersection of religion and royal power, and Arsinoe’s links with a range of other key actors that interact to shape conceptions of the divine Arsinoe, Aphrodite and Isis in Egypt and other parts of the Ptolemaic empire will be considered. Ties include poetry, dedications, ritual, temples, imagery, altars, and the interesting case of the

⁷⁰ Irene Polinskaya, *A Local History of Greek Polytheism: gods, people and the land of Aigina, 800-400 bce.* (Leiden: Brill: 2013), 73 and note 6.

Nymphonian fresco. I aim to examine the evidence for syncretistic processes, and explore how cult worship of Arsinoe, and interactions with power, portraits and other visual representations of Arsinoe and later queens, may have initiated a network ‘shock’ that influenced or prepared the way for forms of marine Isis.

In relation to worshippers, I will commence with the role and dynamic effect of Isis’ aretalogies,⁷¹ including the hymns of the worshipper, Isidorus of Narmouthis. Then the focus will shift to the evidence of worship of marine Isis in Alexandria and Delos, the nodal role of those cities and the interactions between them, and to the syncretic offerings and agency of worshippers on Delos as they decide what they want their goddess to be. I will seek to identify why individuals and networks of worshippers chose their marine Isis, and finally will make some observations on the contributions that individuals and worshipper networks made to the form and diffusion of Isis ‘of the sea’ by the first century AD. Relevant evidence here includes the aretalogies, inscriptions, dedications, terracotta figurines, temples, statues, temple inventories and literary evidence.

I will end by drawing together and summarising the main conclusions.

⁷¹ For convenience, the term aretalogy and hymn is used interchangeably in this thesis to refer to works of poetry or prose that describe and praise Isis’ miraculous powers in a specific or a general sense. Scholars have debated the changed and particular meaning of *arête* and ‘aretalogy’ in the Hellenistic period and the applicability and appropriateness of the term for the different forms of praises of Isis. It is not necessary to form a view on those issues here. Andrea Jördens, ‘Aretalogies’, in *Shifting Social Imaginaries in the Hellenistic Period Narrations, Practices, and Images*, ed. Eftychia Stavrianopoulou (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 144-153.

Chapter 2

Networks of the Gods

*Isis and the gods related to her belong to all men and are known to them; even though they have not long since learnt to call some of them by their Egyptian names, they have understood and honoured the power of each god from the beginning.*⁷²

*‘And as many as sail on the Great Sea in winter
When men may be destroyed and their ships wrecked and sunk ...
All (these) are saved if they pray that You be present to help.’*⁷³

First, to the cognitive or invisible realm of the gods. Conceptions of Isis and the divine were imagined and realised in myth, art, ritual, hymns and in the minds of believers. Isis was recognised in Egypt for over two thousand years before she appeared in Hellenic guise and as an expressly acknowledged sea goddess. In *Isis and Osiris*, early in the second century AD, the philosopher Plutarch claims Egypt’s Isis for all of mankind. A century earlier, Isidorus declared his devotion to Isis praising her saving powers exercised for endangered seafarers and others in peril in hymns inscribed on temple gates for all to see.⁷⁴ In the same century a relief was carved in Delos showing a female figure in a striding stance rendered in Greek style swathed in robes and holding a sail. She resembled Greek images of Aphrodite *Euploia* but has generally been identified as Isis with a sail.⁷⁵ In Delos from the second century worshippers recognised and made dedications to different incarnations of goddesses with marine aspects including Isis-Aphrodite

⁷² Plut. *De Is. Et Os.* 66 377D, trans. J. G. Griffiths (Cambridge: University of Wales Press, 1970).

⁷³ Isidorus, Hymn I: 32-34, Vera F. Vanderlip, *Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis*, (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert Ltd: 1972).

⁷⁴ The Temple was the Temple of Hermouthis and Isis in Narmouthis in the Fayum Narmouthis is modern Medinet Madi. Moyer, ‘Isidorus at the Gates of the Temple’, 210.

⁷⁵ Bruneau, ‘Isis Pelagia à Délos’, 442.

and most ‘syncretistically’, *Isis Soteira Astarte Aphrodite Euploia Epekeos*.⁷⁶ How were these conceptions of Isis linked?

Networks of many gods with many powers

Different forms of Isis ‘of the sea’ emerged out of a religious and cultural context of many gods, with many powers. Did her worshippers understand her as a new god or the same god with a new power? In what way was she connected to Aphrodite and other sea deities? Did worshippers of marine Isis consider her Greek, Egyptian or something else? Would these questions even make sense to them? I seek, here, and throughout the thesis, to make sense of ancient (principally ancient Greek) viewpoints through a network frame. So the pantheons of the many gods in the Eastern Mediterranean are conceived as divine networks, and, indeed, each polyvalent deity, as its own separate network.⁷⁷ Names, myths, imagery and ritual were key ties shaping societal and worshipper understandings of the role and powers of gods.⁷⁸ Epithets were particularly important and interacted with collective and personal needs to shape conceptions of the gods. Divine networks and deities interacted and changed in accordance with shifting mental and geographic horizons of worshippers. The most important of these mentalities were the ability to cope with religious complexity, shared religious understanding, openness to deities of other traditions and *interpretatio*. These mentalities were enhanced by travel or movement around the Mediterranean and settlement in new places.

Crucially, it will be clear from my discussion of conceptions of Aphrodite and pre-Ptolemaic Isis below, that neither goddess had an essential nature, and her personality and functions were dynamically open to change. Indeed, each goddess both moved across networks and operated

⁷⁶ *RICIS* 202/0365

⁷⁷ Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti ‘Many vs One’, 40.

⁷⁸ Walter Burkert. *Greek Religion. Archaic and Classical*. trans. John Raffan. (Oxford: Basil Blackwood and Harvard University Press, 1985), 119; Bremmer, ‘Introduction: The Greek Gods in the Twentieth Century’, 6.

individually as a self-contained network; a cluster of interacting attributes and powers.⁷⁹ In each case, the goddesses' sea domain was propelled by, or was part of, a larger persona. The effect of syncretic processes will be seen in relation to Pharaonic-era ties connecting Isis to the sea; and physical manifestations of sailing Isis from the second century.

Epithets

The many Greek gods and goddesses of cult and poetry had an infinite number of epithets that indicated function, qualities, genealogy, honours, or place of origin or worship.⁸⁰ Gods worshipped in local cults were given double or even triple names.⁸¹ Aphrodite had perhaps three hundred epithets by Late Antiquity.⁸² Indeed many names were indicia of divine greatness, as they were in the Egyptian tradition.⁸³

It is generally assumed that epithets created different manifestations or aspects of the same god.⁸⁴ However, the sources are contradictory and unclear.⁸⁵ Arguably some epithets denoted separate gods with the same principal divine name.⁸⁶ Xenophon has Socrates referring to the issue:

Whether there is one Aphrodite or two, Ourania and Pandemos, I do not know. For even Zeus, who is believed

⁷⁹ Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 'Many vs One', 40.

⁸⁰ Jenny Wallenstein, 'Personal protection and tailor-made deities: the use of individual epithets', *Kernos*, 21 2008, 1-12, 1; Robert Parker, 'The Problem of the Greek Cult Epithet', *Opuscula Atheniensia* (28: 2003), 176-177; Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 60-61.

⁸¹ Parker 'Greek Cult Epithet', 173.

⁸² John Lydian identified 300 epithets for Aphrodite. Lydus. *Mens.* 4.44. Parker, 'The Problem of the Greek Cult Epithet', 174.

⁸³ Hes. *Theog.* 785; Later in the Hellenistic and Roman period, Isis, was celebrated for having many names. Apul. *Met.* 11.2. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 55-56. See discussion on the Hymns of Isidorus in Chapter 3 below. The multiplicity of names and combinations of gods was also a major feature of Egyptian religion, however, this brief discussion of names relates only to the Greek tradition. Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many* (New York: Cornell University Press: 1971), 86.

⁸⁴ Herodotus indicates this when he says that Croesus 'called on Zeus Protector of the Hearth and Zeus Protectors of the Hearth and Zeus Protector of Friendship, invoking the god in both roles at once.' Herod. 1.44. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 62 note 145, 70, note 177.

⁸⁵ Versnel discusses a range of sources in some detail. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 62-82.

⁸⁶ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 62ff and Parker, 'Greek Cult Epithet', 182.

to be one and the same god, nonetheless has many epithets.⁸⁷

In general, the religious practise of the ancient Greeks over many centuries demonstrates that the Greeks ‘coped’ with the confusion and the complexity of their religious milieu.⁸⁸ Versnel persuasively argues that in the minds of the Greeks, a god may be either a single multi-purpose power or a god that exists separately in multiple forms, depending on the specific context.⁸⁹ Ancient worshippers selected and focused on the deity or aspect of the deity that was known and met their need at a particular time and circumstance, closing their minds to alternatives and contradictions.⁹⁰ The interaction of epithets and need is significant. According to Sourvinou-Inwood, divine personalities were first defined by the specific realities and needs of the societies that comprise the worshipping group and ‘develop with them’ over time.⁹¹ Such meaning-making is done at both the societal or structural level and at the personal level.⁹² The very ambiguity in the epithet system, Parker points out, allowed a worshipper to appeal to a god with a specialised function relevant to his or her need and that epithet was usually attached to a figure ‘who has all the power and dignity of one of the great Olympians’.⁹³ Later, an omnipotent Isis would be called upon to serve as such a figure.

⁸⁷ Xen. *Symp.* 8.9. However, he goes on to distinguish between Aphrodite *Pandemos* and *Ourania*, on the basis ‘of their different altars, temples and sacrifices’. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 71. Callimachus adopted a unitary perspective in his *Hymn to Apollo* but in *Iambos 10* directly acknowledged ‘All the Aphrodites – for the goddess is not one...’. Callim. *Iambos 10. The poems of Callimachus*, trans. Frank Nisetich (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Ambiguity is not just found in philosophy or literary works, a manifest god may have owed its identity to a place, but the deity both may, or may not be, recognised by a worshipper as identical to same name god of another place. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 78.

⁸⁸ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 72-73.

⁸⁹ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 83.

⁹⁰ They did this in the same way we now cope with information overload and the force of marketing messages through selective perception. Versnel draws on the authority of the linguist Wallace Chafe to make this point concerning human cognitive capacities and behaviours. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 83-84. note 22, 83.

⁹¹ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Reading Greek Culture: Texts and Images, Rituals and Myths* (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1991), 147.

⁹² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc: 1973) 5. Geertz famously referred to humans as ‘suspended in webs of significance they themselves have spun’, the ‘webs’ referring to the structure and outcome of individual agency.

⁹³ Parker ‘Greek Cult Epithet’, 182.

Shared mentalities

Although the commitment of Greeks to the traditions of their *polis* should not be underestimated, it is significant that Greeks were familiar with different religious horizons and were open to religious difference. Dedications could be made to gods or a particular aspect of a god at a sanctuary dedicated to another⁹⁴; in a reminder that gods are attached to place, the Delphic Oracle advised the Athenians to pray to Zeus and to the deities of the Plataean pantheon before the Battle of Plataea⁹⁵; the Athenians permitted an Egyptian sanctuary to Isis and a Citium sanctuary to Aphrodite *Ourania* to be established in the Piraeus in the fourth century⁹⁶; a survivor of a dangerous sea journey may give thanks to a sea god of his own tradition in a foreign country⁹⁷ or as regularly occurred, a seafarer or soldier would make offerings to a god of a particular place out of respect or thanks, even bringing the foreign god home, if it gave him protection.⁹⁸ In relating the acts of the ‘mad’ Cambyses, Herodotus expresses a principle of Greek interaction and the dynamic of the network of the gods across the Eastern Mediterranean, that men should respect the gods and customs of others.⁹⁹

Beyond the *polis* and the Greek gods were the inter-Mediterranean networks of the gods; the ‘polytheistic’ religions and cults of most Mediterranean cultures and areas shared essential features that linked them together. What we categorise as ‘religion’ in the Ancient Mediterranean

⁹⁴ Burket, *Greek Religion*, 217.

⁹⁵ Plut. *Vit. Arist.* 11.3-4.

⁹⁶ There is no evidence that Athenians worshipped in either sanctuary. Merchants of Citium (in Phoenicia) were permitted to establish the sanctuary to Aphrodite Ourania in 333BC on the motion of Lycurgus ‘as the Egyptians have founded a shrine of Isis’. *IG II.2.337* Robert Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History*. Oxford: Clarendon. 1997, 160-161, note 29.

⁹⁷ The Great Gods of Samothrace, often associated with the Discouri, were maritime gods known to the people of the Aegean. The following dedication was made in Coptos, Egypt by a Thera, Appollonios, who survived a dangerous journey on the Red Sea while serving in the army of the Ptolemies, ‘Apollonios, Son of Sosibos from Thera, officer of the external units made [this dedication] to the Great Samothracian gods, in fulfilment of a vow, having been saved from great dangers after he had sailed out from the Red Sea’ *OGIS* 69. Angelos Chaniotis, *War in The Hellenistic World: A Social and Cultural History*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 149.

⁹⁸ For example, on a votive altar at Tel Dan, a Canaanite/Israelite site is the inscription in Greek and Aramaic ‘To the god, the god (that exists) at Dan, Zoilus’ (gives this) votive tablet.’ The inscription is dated to the second century BC. Keith. N. Schoville, ‘Digging Dan’- 1976 Season’, *Hebrew Studies*, Vol. 8 (1977), 174.

⁹⁹ Herod. 3.37-38.

essentially encompassed mythology, ritual and belief in the powers and efficacy of a plurality of gods.¹⁰⁰ Customs and the presence of a controlling institution such as *polis* or priesthood may differ, but broadly across cultures, ritual or the practise of cult included prayer, sacrifice, the making of libations, participation in festivals and processions and the making of votive gifts. Such rituals may have been performed collectively on a public occasion or individually and typically occurred on or before altars, temples, statues or other images of gods.¹⁰¹ Thus, as conquerors, traders, seafarers, the military or travellers arrived in or moved around the Eastern Mediterranean they would be able to generally recognise and relate to the nature of local religious practise. Most significantly, shared ‘semantic dimensions’ of polytheistic religion, particularly the differentiation of gods and goddesses by name and function, made the gods ‘translatable’, so that deities were able to be equated with one another.¹⁰²

Herodotus tells us that he discovered that the names of the gods came to Greece from the barbarians, specifically Egyptians, ‘for the names of the gods have been known in Egypt since the earliest times’, and they were innovators in religious practise.¹⁰³ Herodotus was *prima facie* expressing Greek openness to an ancient culture although close contextual reading of his comments may suggest a subtle construction of an ‘Egypt-has-had-its day’ otherness.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Assmann, ‘Montheism and Polytheism’ in *Ancient Religions*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston, (Cambridge MA; London: Belknap Press: 2007): 17-20; Fritz Graf, ‘What Is Ancient Mediterranean Religion?’, in *Ancient Religions*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston, 11-12. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 143. Belief in the power of the gods was not expressed in a coherent or official creed but demonstrated through ritual practise and innumably attested in the reported acts of gods and surviving dedications. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 552-553, Heinrichs, ‘What is a Greek God?’, 36.

¹⁰¹ Graf, ‘What Is Ancient Mediterranean Religion?’, 11-12.

¹⁰² Assmann, ‘Montheism and Polytheism’, 24.

¹⁰³ Herod. 2.4.2. However, Herodotus goes on to say, the Egyptians did not know of Poseidon, the Dioscouri, Hera, Hestia, Themis, the Graces, and the Nereids, Herod. 2.50.1-2. Egyptians, Herodotus says, were also the first to establish the tradition of identifying names for the twelve gods and the first to dedicate altars, statues and temples to the gods and to represent them in stone reliefs. Herod. 2.4.2.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Harrison, ‘Upside Down and Back to Front: Herodotus and the Greek Encounter with Egypt’, in *Ancient Perspectives on Egypt*, London: Taylor and Francis, 2003, 153. Herodotus’ ‘twist’, Harrison suggests, is to highlight that ‘... by Herodotus’ own day, as a result of receiving gods from other people (Poseidon from the Libyans, other gods from the Pelasgians and so on), the Greeks have clearly overtaken the Egyptians in their knowledge of the gods, if they have not indeed discovered all the gods worth discovering’. Assman suggests another reading; that the *interpretatio Graeca* of the Egyptian gods was actually an achievement of Egyptian priests who answered Herodotus inquiries using Greek god names and advising of their Egyptian origins, seeking to impress upon Herodotus, as their predecessors had with earlier Greek visitors, the greater antiquity of Egyptian culture. Assmann, ‘Translating Gods’:

Nevertheless, the comments of Herodotus stand as evidence of *interpretatio*, and Greek recognition and renaming of Egyptian gods was widely practised in Alexandria and elsewhere, generally on the basis of an understood function or characteristic.¹⁰⁵ According to Herodotus, all people understand the gods equally.¹⁰⁶ Herodotus applied Greek names to non-Greek gods; Isis and Osiris he equated with Demeter and Dionysus, Aphrodite with Hathor, Zeus with Amun, and he refers to the naming of Horus as Apollo.¹⁰⁷ Isis and Osiris are unusual in that they did generally retain the Greek versions of their Egyptian names throughout the Graeco-Roman period¹⁰⁸ but the identity of Isis was translated in other ways. *Interpretatio* was not simply the re-naming of a god; it also applies to the active translation of a deity, and cult practise, in a way that was meaningful or familiar to an adopting or changing culture or worshipper, whether through language, iconography or other symbolism. However, the labelling of religious change and form is problematic.

Interpretatio may be considered the simplest and first stage of ‘syncretism’. Attempts have been made to define different categories of syncretism more clearly: *interpretatio* as parallelism; ‘amalgam’ where elements of two or more gods are combined within or between different pantheons to create a new deity; ‘henotheism syncretism’, where several deities of the same gender in one or more pantheons are viewed as the same god or goddess;¹⁰⁹ and ‘eclipse’ where

Religion as Factor of Cultural (Un)Translatability’, in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, eds. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996):35. For earlier Greek visitors to Egypt see below.

¹⁰⁵ For *interpretatio* in Alexandria: P. M Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1972), I, 192. Modern scholars adopted the term ‘interpretatio’ from Tacitus for the ancient people’s practise of identifying a foreign god with a member of their own cultural pantheon through the re-naming of the god (Tac., *Germania*, 43.4). Clifford Ando, ‘Interpretatio Romana’, *Classical Philology*, 100 (2005), 4.

¹⁰⁶ Herod. 2.3.2.

¹⁰⁷ Herod. 2.59.2; 2.42.2; 2.42.5; 2.41.5; 2.44.2.

¹⁰⁸ Alexandra von Lieven, ‘Translating Gods, Interpreting Gods: On the Mechanisms behind the Interpretation Graeca of Egyptian Gods’ in *Graeco-Egyptian Interactions: Literature, Translation, and Culture*, 500 BCE-300 CE, ed. Ian Rutherford (Oxford: OUP, 2016), 75.

¹⁰⁹ These categories are proposed by Motte and Pirenne-Delforge. Stephanie L. Budin, ‘A Reconsideration of the Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism’, *Numen*, 51 (2: 2004), 97.

one deity subsumes another deity that then ceases to exist.¹¹⁰ Motte and Pirenne-Delforge claim that to be true syncretism, you need a combination of ‘foreign’ elements that created a ‘new deity with distinctive characteristics’ and where the outcome was greater than its component parts.¹¹¹ Another perspective is that syncretism is a staged process, where double deities may, for example, over time become amalgam deities.¹¹² Each outsider, writing on or seeking to make sense of syncretism, will use and define their own terminology.¹¹³ However, the usefulness of syncretism as a phenomenological concept relies, ultimately, on an understanding of syncretism as an ongoing dynamic process, having regard to the agency and mentalities of the participants in particular contexts.¹¹⁴ Significantly, the only mentality we have explicit evidence for is *interpretatio* and that alone is sufficient to cast doubt on the idea that ‘new’ gods were self-consciously ‘created’ by the Greeks in Egypt, even as they participated in processes of change.

Intercultural contact

Greek interest in, and interaction with Egyptian culture, particularly from the seventh century prepared the way for religious change in the Ptolemaic period.¹¹⁵ Engagement occurred in the intellectual or literary sphere and through social networks; travel and military assistance and co-operation, through trade and settlements. Educated Greeks were presented with representations of Egypt through the writings of Solon, Herodotus, Hecataeus of Miletus and Plato, and with a

¹¹⁰ Budin, ‘Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism’, 100-101.

¹¹¹ The elements ‘could be iconographical, conceptual or other’. Jenny Wallenstein, ‘Dedications to Double Deities: Syncretism or simply syntax?’, *Kernos*, 27 (2014) 2 para: 2.

¹¹² This is argued by Pakkenen. Wallenstein, ‘Dedications to Double Deities’, 1-2. Budin, ‘Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism’, 97-98. Wallenstein, ‘Dedications to Double Deities’, 1-2. Erik Hornung emphasises that although Egyptian gods were known by a multiplicity of combination-names, gods such as Amun-Re, were not syncretised in the sense of being fused or mixed rather they ‘inhabited each other’, while keeping their own identity. Even inhabiting was often a transitory stage. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, 91.

¹¹³ I have mostly used the terms ‘identify’ and ‘associate’, meaning linked or paralleled, and ‘assimilation’ where there is apparent intention to amalgamate deities or one deity has obtained attributes from another.

¹¹⁴ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 152, note 38 citing, in particular the study of Stewart and Shaw (1994).

¹¹⁵ Csaba A. La’da, ‘Encounters with Ancient Egypt: The Hellenistic Greek Experience’, in *Ancient Perspectives on Egypt*, eds. Roger Matthews and Cornelia Roemer (London: UCL Press, 2003), 158. There is evidence of contact as early as the Minoan and Mycenaean periods.

wider group of Greeks, through Homer and theatre.¹¹⁶ Graffiti indicate that Greeks were among the foreign visitors to the temple of Osiris at Abydos¹¹⁷ and Herodotus wrote that the ‘huge’ sanctuary of Isis at Memphis was ‘very much worth seeing’.¹¹⁸ Greeks had a history of service as mercenaries of Egyptian pharaohs, commemorated in graffiti by Greeks serving in the Nubian campaign under Psammetichos¹¹⁹, and as military support to Egyptian rebels and pharaohs of the 29th and 30th dynasties who fought unsuccessfully against the Persians¹²⁰. Some Greek fighters remained and formed early Greek communities in Egypt.¹²¹ Such communities and contact through Naucratis and other trade centres provided the most opportunity for cross-cultural interaction. Descendants of the settlers in Memphis had their own Greek or Carian sanctuaries but also made dedications to Egyptian gods such as Osiris-Apis and blended their funeral rites with local tradition.¹²² These settlers were Carians from Asia Minor and Ionians and their descendants became known as Caromemphites and Hellenomemphites and were early ‘translators’ of Egyptian culture for themselves and the Greeks that followed them.¹²³ A further example of an early engagement with Egyptian religions and Isis, in particular, is a bronze Egyptian statuette of Isis suckling Horus which Edgar dates to the late sixth or early fifth century, which bears the inscription in Ionian lettering ‘offered in fulfilment of a vow’ from a

¹¹⁶ La’da, ‘Encounters with Ancient Egypt’, 158.

¹¹⁷ Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World*, 151.

¹¹⁸ Herod. 2.176. trans. Andrea L. Purvis, *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, ed. Robert B. Strassler (New York: Anchor House, 2009), 201.

¹¹⁹ Herod. 2.152. Soldiers from Rhodes and other Greek cities in a unit made up of non-Egyptians inscribed their names on the legs of a colossal statue of Ramses II at Abu Simbel in c. 591 BC Meiggs and Lewis no. 7, eds. R. Meiggs and D. M. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek historical inscriptions to the end of the fifth century B.C.* Oxford, Clarendon, 1989.

¹²⁰ Thuc. 1.104-112, Diod. Sic. 11.71;74-75;77.

¹²¹ Herod.2.154.

¹²² Hölbl. *Ptolemaic Empire*, 99, note 126, 119. The blending of funeral rites is attested by a tombstone of a Carian woman buried in Saqqara that shows scenes of Greek, Carian and Egyptian funeral rituals, the latter including the winged Isis. The tombstone is also carved in mixed Ionian and Egyptian style. *Tombstone of a Carian woman*. C. 540/530 BC Saqqara/Memphis Limestone H.63 cm. W.31 cm D. 10 cm. British Museum EA 67235, Aurélia Masson-Berghoff and Alexandra Villing, ‘Egypt and Greece: early encounters’, in *The BP exhibition: Sunken cities Egypt’s lost worlds*. Eds. Franck Goddio and Aurélia Masson-Berghoff (London: Thames & Hudson, 2016), 57

¹²³ This is how Herodotus refers to them. Herod. 2.154.2; 2.154.4. Malkin points out that the groups may have had a range of identities. Malkin, *A Small Greek World*, 89. For the naming of the Carians and the endurance of their dedicated temple until at least the fourth century BC, Dorothy J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 2nd Edition, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 93–95. Malkin, *A Small Greek World*, 89.

person named Pythermos, perhaps a resident of the Greek sector of Memphis or of Naucratis.¹²⁴

Naucratis was established as a Greek trading settlement on the Nile Delta in the late seventh century.¹²⁵ The sanctuaries¹²⁶ of the cosmopolitan port city were visited by Cypriots, Phoenicians, 'Italians', and it seems some Egyptians or Greek-Egyptians.¹²⁷ Recent excavations have drawn attention to the Egyptian presence in Naucratis and to a possible Greek-Egyptian population from the sixth or fifth centuries.¹²⁸ Many terracotta and stone figurines of Egyptian gods relating to domestic religious rituals for protection, family, fertility and the inundation have been found in the port's residential areas including hybrids styles.¹²⁹ From its early days, Aphrodite was a popular deity in the port, where she was associated with protecting seafarers and the in-port service of prostitution.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ The statuette is in the collection of the Cairo Museum. C.C. Edgar, 'An Ionian Dedication to Isis', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* (24: 1904), 337.

¹²⁵ Herodotus refers to the authorisation of the settlement by Pharaoh Amasis. Herod. 2.178. The foundation date is now thought to be about a century before the time specified by Herodotus, under the reign of Psammetichos I, on the basis of dating of pottery finds and a passage of Strabo (17.1.18). Alexandra Villing, 'Naucratis, Egypt and the Mediterranean world: a port and trading city' in *Naucratis: Greeks in Egypt*, eds. Alexandra Villing et al. (The British Museum: 2017) http://www.britishmuseum.org/PDF/Naucratis_ORC_Port_Trading_City_Villing.pdf Accessed: 1 August 2017, 8.

¹²⁶ *Hellenes* were granted land by the Pharaoh in which to reside and to build altars and sanctuaries to their gods. The most famous of these was 'the *Hellenion*', founded jointly by nine cities. Three others Herodotus tells us each dedicated their own *temenos*. Herod. 2.178.

¹²⁷ Evidence for the presence of Cypriots were numerous Cypriot figurines including of Aphrodite. Phoenicians were identified by cosmetic containers made from Red sea shells and people from the Italian regions by pottery. A few Egyptian style votive items have been found such as an offering spoon at the sanctuary of Aphrodite and several Egyptian figurines of the child-Horus on horseback, one bearing a Greek inscription referring to a nymph. A large amount of Egyptian pottery from the sixth century BC has also been found at the sanctuary of the Dioscuri. Masson-Berghoff and Villing, 'Egypt and Greece: early encounters', 43-44.

¹²⁸ Villing, 'Naucratis, Egypt and the Mediterranean world', 12-15. There was a large Egyptian temple to Amun in Naucratis and that cult may date from the 26th Dynasty. The existence of the temple is known from architectural and inscription evidence. Francoise Dunand and Chistiane, Zivie-Coche. *Gods and Men in Egypt 3000 BCE to 395 CE* trans. David Lorton (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 241. Villing, 'Naucratis, Egypt and the Mediterranean world', 14. Other important evidence of the Egyptian religious presence in Naucratis are the terracotta figurines and evidence of their production and bronze votive offerings. Ross Iain Thomas, 'Stone and terracotta figures – an introduction', in *Naucratis: Greeks in Egypt*, eds. Villing et al, 5. https://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/Thomas_Greek_Figures.pdf [accessed July 2017].

¹²⁹ Villing, 'Naucratis, Egypt and the Mediterranean world', 14-15 There is a notable continuity of subject matter and popularity of these figurines from the seventh century BC to the third century AD. Thomas, 'Stone and terracotta figures', 10.

¹³⁰ Discussed further below.

The oldest terracotta item found at Naucratis dated to the seventh century is a relief of a nude Aphrodite between two columns, a ‘typically Egyptian’ setting, shown in *Figure. 1*.¹³¹



Figure 1: Egyptian terracotta figure plaque of Aphrodite-Isis-Hathor? Naucratis. 630-400BC.
British Museum: Reg. No. 1886,0401.1543
Image: © Trustees of the British Museum.

Aphrodite, Möller contends, is in the form of Astarte,¹³² a Phoenician goddess, with whom Aphrodite was identified, while another suggestion is that the goddess is Isis-Hathor,¹³³ both ties highlighting the commonalities of deities of different traditions and Naucratis as an early nodal meeting place.

Conceptions of Aphrodite

Polycharmus tells a tale in the third century of the trader, Herostratus, who purchased a small statue of Aphrodite on Paphos, Cyprus¹³⁴ before travelling home to Naucratis. When a violent

¹³¹ Astrid Möller, *Naucratis: Trade in Archaic Greece*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 148.

¹³² Möller, *Naucratis*, 148.

¹³³ British Museum,

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=425065&partId=1&searchText=Isis-Hathor&page=1. [accessed 28 July 2017] The Curator's notes refer to the possibility of the relief representing Isis-Hathor. The findspot was Naucratis, although the relief may have been produced elsewhere in the Nile Delta.

¹³⁴ Cyprus was Aphrodite's original home according to myth, and according to Herodotus and Pausanias, as a matter of historical fact. Herodotus says that Aphrodite *Ouranía* arrived in Cyprus from Ashkalon (1.103), while Pausanias says she came from Assyria (1.14.7). Determining precise origins as far back as the Bronze age is problematic. Many

storm hit, all on board the ship, fearful for their lives, rushed to the statue and begged Aphrodite to save them. Polycharmus relates that the goddess ‘was well-disposed to the inhabitants of Naucratis’, and so filled the ship with myrtle and pleasant scents. The sea calmed; they recovered from their violent seasickness and survived the journey. Herostratus dedicated myrtle branches and the statue at ‘Aphrodite’s temple’.¹³⁵

The association of Aphrodite with the sea is well attested in the literary and visual evidence.¹³⁶ The argument I wish to advance here is the importance of the interaction of a deity’s powers, both to strengthen a single aspect and to attract followers to the deity. In relation to the specific contexts of Athens and Cos, it was Aphrodite’s network of powers that made her an available and attractive choice as a sea deity. She was the bringer of calm and harmony in a range of spheres.¹³⁷ In Naucratis, Aphrodite’s power as protector of seafarers and her other aspects were drawn together under her power as *Pandemos*, just as later divine powers of Isis will be encompassed in her role as ‘saviour’.

In Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries, Aphrodite was associated with the ships of state in civic cult, her marine cult and associated imagery becoming prominent when seafaring became vital to Athens security and prosperity.¹³⁸ The images of the fourth century period more directly

modern scholars identify the Canaanite/Phoenician goddesses Ashtart or Ishtar as progenitors of Greek Aphrodite. Burket, 152-153, Budin, ‘Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism’, 95-96.

¹³⁵ Ath.675F-676C = Polycharmus *FGrHist* 640 F 1

¹³⁶ Hes. *Theog.* 188-206. Homer referred to alternative parentage for Aphrodite as Dione and Zeus, *Il.*5:370-7; 14.198. However, the Homeric epithet for the goddess of *philommeides* (laughter-loving) [*Il.* 5.375] is said to be a play on a similar Greek word used by Hesiod meaning ‘to her belong male genitals’, so this may be an implicit acknowledgement of the other (older) tradition possibly from Cyprian cult myth which Hesiod drew upon. Burket, *Greek Religion*, 154-5. Theseus sea voyage to Athens: Plut. *Thes.* 18.

¹³⁷ Pirenne-Delforge ‘Flourishing Aphrodite’, 16.

¹³⁸ Papadopoulou, ‘Aphrodite and the Fleet’, 228-231. Aphrodite’s sea birth and marine imagery on Attic pottery became common for periods in both the fifth and fourth centuries, periods that coincided with the rise of Athens sea power. Papadopoulou states that there are seven known examples of the birth scene for the period 460-430 BC. Other images include Aphrodite riding on a swan, a symbol of Aphrodite *Ourania*. There are five examples of the swan scene for the period 470 to 410BC. Evidence for the birth scene in the fifth century ceases from 430 and there are no examples of the swan image from 410. From early in the fourth century, Aphrodite’s birth scene and swan-riding imagery reappear on ceramics, together with a range of other associated marine imagery of sea-life and Nereids. Papadopoulou, ‘Aphrodite and the Fleet’, 227-232.

reference the goddess' marine connection, such as the image of Aphrodite sailing over the sea on a shell as shown on the bell krater of c. 370 (fig. 2).¹³⁹ The fifth century images are generally considered to reference Hesiod's Aphrodite *Ourania*, while the image on the krater has been specifically identified as depicting Aphrodite *Enploia* (of 'fair sailing').¹⁴⁰ The popularity of the sailing imagery appears to coincide with the establishment of a specific cult of marine Aphrodite in the Piraeus.



Figure 2. Red attic Bell Krater with image of Aphrodite sailing on a shell. Skulpturensammlung/Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. ZV 1517. Image: © Skulpturensammlung / Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

¹³⁹ Claude Bérard identifies the goddess as Aphrodite and discusses modes of identification, a discussion also relevant to identifications of sailing Isis, considered below. Claude Bérard, 'Modes de formation et modes de lecture des images divines: Aphrodite et Isis à la voile': *Actes du colloque sur les problèmes de l'image dans le monde Méditerranéen classique: Château de Lourmarin En Provence: 2-3 Septembre 1982*, ed. Henri Metzger. *Archaeologica* 61, ed. Henri Metzger (Rome, 1985), 165-166. Papadopoulou, 'Aphrodite and the Fleet', 231.

¹⁴⁰ Ehud Herbert Loeb, *Die Geburt der Götter*, 84-85 cited by Papadopoulou, 'Aphrodite and the Fleet', 231.

From early in the fifth century, the Athenians successfully employed naval power to develop a trading economy and its fleet was instrumental in the defeat of the Persians at the Battle of Salamis in 480.¹⁴¹ Sea-power was the basis of Athens' power and wealth in the period up to the outbreak of the second Peloponnesian War in 431.¹⁴² Sources attribute the development of the Piraeus and the allocation of the proceeds from silver mines towards the building of ships to Themistocles' foresight.¹⁴³ Themistocles is also said to have founded a sanctuary to Aphrodite in the Piraeus to give thanks for Athens' victory in the Battle of Salamis.¹⁴⁴ The accuracy of this is suggested by an inscription of the first century that refers to an Aphrodision at the Piraeus in Themistocles' time, and by a more contemporaneous mention of the sanctuary in 394/393 in an inscription found on the Ectioneia Gate.¹⁴⁵ The position of the Aphrodision on the Ectioneian promontory suggests it was purposefully located for access and visibility from the sea by seafarers and supports an interpretation of the specific worship of Aphrodite in a marine capacity.¹⁴⁶ It is likely that a sanctuary built by Conon at the Piraeus, after a re-surgent Athens' victory over the Spartans off Cnidos in 394/393, was similarly dedicated to *Euploia*, and may have been built as an expansion of the sanctuary founded by Themistocles.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ Herod: 7.139; 8.61.2; 8.82.2.

¹⁴² Through its hegemony over the Delian League and reflected in the political might of the *demos*. The relationship of the navy to the thetes, and power of the *demos*, Pseud.-Xen. *AP* 1.2; Plut, *Them.* 19.4, Robert Garland, *The Piraeus from the Fifth to the First Century BC*. (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1987), 18-19.

¹⁴³ Thuc. 1.93.3-7; Paus. 1.1.2.

¹⁴⁴ Ammonios Lamptreus (First century AD) recounts in his book on altars that after the Salamis victory a dove (associated with Aphrodite) appeared on his trireme. Ammonios is quoted by Hermogenes in FGrH 361f and by Joannes Siceliote in the eleventh century AD. Papadopoulou, 'Aphrodite and the Fleet', 219.

¹⁴⁵ The purpose of which was to define the gate district in connection with harbour fortification works. *IG* II 2 1035.45-48; *IG* II 2 1657. Papadopoulou, 'Aphrodite and the Fleet', 219-220, note 13 and note 14.

¹⁴⁶ Papadopoulou, 'Aphrodite and the Fleet', 222.

¹⁴⁷ Paus., 1.1.3. The Cnidians, Pausanias says, held the goddess in high esteem and he recounts that they had recently built a sanctuary to her as *Euploia*. Following the Athenian navy's decline and restriction on its power after the Peloponnesian war, the navy strengthened again in the fourth century. Xen.*Hell.*, 2:2, 20. M Armit, *Athens and the Sea: A Study in Athenian Sea Power* (Brussels: Latomus, 1965), 24-26. Consistently with the location of Themistocles' Aphrodision, Pausanias states that the sanctuary was constructed adjacent to the sea (Paus. 1.1.3). Whether there were one or two sanctuaries is unclear. A dedication to Aphrodite *Euploia* by a strategos of the Piraeus of 97/6 BC found in another area of the Piraeus has been interpreted as supporting the view that there were two sanctuaries, although, Garland citing the argument of Culley says, it is just as possible that the dedication was not found in its original context, and there was only one sanctuary. Robert Garland. *The Piraeus from the Fifth to the First Century BC*. (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1987) 112, 150.

Aphrodite was always an important deity in Athens, even if her marine aspect lay fallow until times of need. Aphrodite's strong Athenian cult presence and her other powers, relating to *mixis* or union, contributed to her recognition and worship as a sea deity in the context referred to.¹⁴⁸

Her powers were highlighted by Euripides:

I am called the Goddess Cypris:

I am mighty among men and they honour me by many names.

All those that live and see the light of the sun

from Atlas' Pillars to the tide of Pontus

*are mine to rule.*¹⁴⁹

The dramatist also wrote that her strength is that she unites the earth and sky through desire and brings forth and protects life.¹⁵⁰ Born of violence, Aphrodite also shared the characteristic of *mixis*, the child Eros, and a military function in Athens (in her case in the nautical sphere) with Ares.¹⁵¹ Aphrodite was embedded in Athenian civic life through her many cults, festivals, appearance in drama and comedies, and her visual representations, including prominently, together with other sea gods and bringers of victory, on the East frieze of the Parthenon.¹⁵²

Legend has it that the sanctuary to Aphrodite *Ourania* in the Agora was established by King Aegeus and that his son, the hero Theseus, established the cult to Aphrodite *Pandemos* (meaning 'belonging to all the people').¹⁵³ It was customary to honour Ouranus and Gaia at the beginning of

¹⁴⁸ Gabriella Pironti, 'Rethinking Aphrodite as a Goddess at Work', in *Brill's Companion to Aphrodite*, eds. Amy C. Smith and Sadie Pickup (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 118. *Mixis* in the sense of sexual union was a principal theme of the Fifth *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, eg. 5.2.39; 46; 250, 263. trans. Michael Crudden, *The Homeric Hymns* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

¹⁴⁹ Eur. *Hipp.*, 1-4.

¹⁵⁰ Eur., *Fragment* 898, cited in Rachel Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite: Art and Cult in Classical Athens* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), 80, note 116, 132, 'I will show you by deed, the strength of the goddess. On the one hand, earth desires rain when the dry barren ground is in need of moisture on account of drought; and on the other hand, the revered sky, when it is filled with rain by Aphrodite, desires that it fall on the earth; and when the two mingle into the same thing, they beget everything for us, and at the same time, they nurture everything through which the mortal race lives and grows'.

¹⁵¹ Pironti, 'Rethinking Aphrodite', 128. Pironti refers to the words *eros* and the name Aphrodite being in some contexts synonyms for 'warrior fury' citing Thuc. 6.24.2; Aesch. *Ag.* 341.

¹⁵² In the fifth century Aphrodite had at least five cult sites in the city, three sanctuaries in the Acropolis and an altar and possibly a temple in the Agora. Papadopoulou, 'Aphrodite and the Fleet', 218. Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite*, 96-97.

¹⁵³ Paus. 1.14.7.

a marriage.¹⁵⁴ The Agora sanctuary and another sanctuary on the Acropolis were places where such offerings were made to Aphrodite *Ourania*.¹⁵⁵ The latter sanctuary was also dedicated to Aphrodite *en Kepois* (of the Gardens), fittingly, as both aspects of the goddess were concerned with fertility and procreation as the fruit of the marriage union.¹⁵⁶ As *Pandemos*, Aphrodite was worshipped together with Peitho; as Theseus used the power of persuasion to bring all the people together.¹⁵⁷ This was a civic cult representing the unity and cohesion of the Athenian people, however *Pandemos* was also associated in other contexts with male sexual drive, prostitution and physical union.¹⁵⁸ Aphrodite strikingly spans both the public and private spheres by her ability to bring both the state and couples together.¹⁵⁹ Consistently with her unifying nature, Athenians could call upon Aphrodite at any sanctuary, regardless of its specific cult purpose – including the sanctuary of *Euploia* in the Piraeus.¹⁶⁰

Aphrodite's sea powers also strikingly interacted with her other domains on the island of Cos. These interactions are indicated by archaeological and epigraphic evidence, particularly, two related inscriptions that date from the end and the beginning of the second century respectively, for the cults of Aphrodite *Pandemos* and Aphrodite *Pontia* (of the sea).¹⁶¹ Unusually the goddess of each cult seems to have been worshipped on an equal footing in a unique twin-temple complex by the sea uncovered by excavations in 1933.¹⁶² All of the demes of Cos were required to

¹⁵⁴ Proclus, Commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* 40, 316; a fragment of Aeschylus fr. 44 TrGF 9 cited in Pirenne-Delforge. 'Something to do with Aphrodite', 314 refers to the connection, 'The sacred Sky feels desire to penetrate the Earth and the Earth is possessed to by the desire to enjoy marriage'.

¹⁵⁵ A treasure box bears an inscription of an offering made of one drachma for the goddess (*SEG* 41.182.) This was found at a sanctuary dedicated to both Aphrodite *Ourania* and Aphrodite of the Gardens. Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge. 'Something to do with Aphrodite' In *A Companion to Greek Religion*, ed. Daniel Ogden (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 311-323, 315.

¹⁵⁶ Aegeus honoured Aphrodite *Ourania* in order that she may remedy his infertility and childless state. Paus. 1.14.6.

¹⁵⁷ Paus. 1.22.3; Plut. *Thes.*, 24.2, 25.1.

¹⁵⁸ The fragment preserved in Nicander FGrH 271 states that Solon established brothels of female slaves 'because of the vigour of young men'. Pirenne-Delforge. 'Something to do with Aphrodite...', 316.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 408.

¹⁶⁰ Rosenzweig, *Worshipping Aphrodite*, 102.

¹⁶¹ Segre 1993, ED 178(A) [c198BC] and Robert Parker and Dirk Obbink., 'Aus der Arbeit der "Inscriptiones Graeca" VI. Sales of Priesthoods on Cos I', *Chiron* 30 (2000) 415-447 [dated to late second century BC], Robert Parker, 'The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia at Cos' 143-144. These inscriptions set out the terms for the sale of a single priesthood for both cults. Parker and Obbink, 'Sales of Priesthoods on Cos', 429.

¹⁶² Parker, 'The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia at Cos', 144-6, note 4, 146.

worship *Pandemos* on the same month and day which may have been connected to the *synoecism* that had taken place on the island in 366/5.¹⁶³ The inscriptions also refer to the obligation of all women of Cos to sacrifice to the goddess within one year of their marriage, and to payment and cult obligations of range of Coans who worked the sea; sailors on warships, ship-owners, merchants and fishermen.¹⁶⁴ The earlier inscription makes clear that sailors serving on warships must sacrifice to Aphrodite *Pontia* at the end of their campaign.¹⁶⁵ So, at a single cult site, Aphrodite was appealed to and thanked for the unified political state, for marital unions, and the protection of seafarers and ships. ‘Were the Aphrodites *Pandamos* and *Pontia* brought together’, Parker asks, as standard-bearers of a new unified Cos that was to turn its face towards the sea?¹⁶⁶ Evidence suggests the unified state had sea-power ambitions and *stasis*, hence a need for divine intervention.¹⁶⁷ Although we cannot be sure of the motivation or date for the establishment of the joint-cult, it is significant that Aphrodite was already conceived in myth and other cult personas as a bringer of harmony in each of these spheres of human activity. She can calm the seas and unify the body politic, just as she can ‘tame’ and calm humans through sexual union.¹⁶⁸ Importantly, Aphrodite’s power over the sea at Athens and Cos overlapped with, and should be seen in relation to, her broader role as *Pandemos*. This was first seen, in a different way, at Naucratis.

Herodotus does not refer to a dedicated precinct for Aphrodite in Naucratis, however, excavations from the late nineteenth century have uncovered within the *Hellenion* an important

¹⁶³ Pirenne-Delforge. ‘Something to do with Aphrodite’, 317. Susan M. Sherwin-White, *Ancient Cos: an historical study from the Dorian settlement to the imperial period* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978), 304. On *synoecism*: Diod. Sic. 15.76.2.

¹⁶⁴ SEGRE 1993: demes 178.26-30; women 178.15-19; merchants/ship captains 178.21-25. Parker, ‘The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia at Cos’, 157. Pirenne-Delforge. ‘Something to do with Aphrodite’, 317.

¹⁶⁵ Parker and Obbink: 5-9, Parker and Obbink, ‘Sales of Priesthoods on Cos’, 418.

¹⁶⁶ Parker, ‘The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia at Cos’, 155.

¹⁶⁷ Diodorus refers to the building of a new harbour at Cos at the time, to *synoecism* and to a subsequent growth in public and private wealth. Diod. Sic. 15.76.2; Strabo 14.2.19.

¹⁶⁸ Parker, ‘The Cult of Aphrodite Pandamos and Pontia at Cos’, citing Pirenne-Delforge, 151. For Aphrodite’s taming powers, see the Fifth *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*: 5.2.3, 17, 251. Pironti, ‘Rethinking Aphrodite as a Goddess at Work’, 118.

Temenos of Aphrodite rich in finds including pottery that reveals the site to be as old as the first Greek settlement on the site.¹⁶⁹ There were no specific epithets referring to Aphrodite relating to seafaring, but as the tale of Polycharmus indicates, the worship of Aphrodite at Naukratis had much to do with seafaring. As the oldest sanctuary on the site, the *Aphrodision* was situated on the Canopic branch of the Nile adjacent to the probable original landing area of the ships.¹⁷⁰ Offerings of statuettes to the goddess were made on arrival, presumably in gratitude for the safe journey.¹⁷¹ Three *in situ* inscriptions are dated from the late archaic period and are the earliest known instances of the epithet *Pandemos*.¹⁷² It is unlikely that the goddess was introduced to Naukratis by Athenians in this form¹⁷³ and the centre was not a typical self-governing Greek *polis* so a civic meaning of *Pandemos* as in Athens and in Cos is unlikely.¹⁷⁴ Scholtz persuasively contends, using etymological arguments, that *Pandemos* in Naukratis had a non-civic meaning of open or ‘common to all’.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, the evidence suggests that there were no limitations on anyone leaving dedications or at the *Hellenion* including the *Aphrodisian* or sanctuaries.¹⁷⁶ The sanctuary was popular with visitors from those cities that worshipped Aphrodite in their home city, such as the Cnidians, and other visitors from around the Eastern Mediterranean.¹⁷⁷ As ‘Pandemos’, Aphrodite served all people and purposes of the emporium including traders, its

¹⁶⁹ Ernest Gardner found the site of the *Temenos* of Aphrodite in 1885. Astrid Möller, *Naukratis*, 102-104.

¹⁷⁰ Möller, *Naukratis*, 118, Andrew Scholtz, ‘Aphrodite Pandemos at Naukratis’, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 43 (2002/3), 231-242.

¹⁷¹ *Naukr.* II 66 no. 795; *Naukr.* II 63 no. 717, the first was inscribed ‘upon arrival in Naukratis’ by or on behalf of the dedicator Kaikos. Scholtz, ‘Aphrodite Pandemos’ 239, notes 37 and 38.

¹⁷² Ionian cup ostrakon: *Naukr.* II 66 no. 818; Ionian cup sherd: *Naukr.* II 66 no. 821; *Naukr.* Attic volute krater [inscribed Aphrodite Pandemos] Möller, *Naukratis*, 237 no. 22 (London BM 1900.2-14.6). Scholtz, ‘Aphrodite Pandemos’, 231-232, note 1, 231. On the basis of the script, the inscriptions date to the late archaic early classical periods, Scholtz, ‘Aphrodite Pandemos’, 232.

¹⁷³ There is little evidence of Athenian participation in Naukratis in the late Archaic period. Möller, *Naukratis*, 47, 123.

¹⁷⁴ There is limited evidence of statehood indicators such as laws, coinage, political assemblies, indeed the trade centre was subject to the laws and tax regulations of Egyptian pharaohs until at least the early fourth century (the Stela of Nektanebis I, 380 BC), Möller, *Naukratis*, 185ff, 2007. Scholtz, ‘Aphrodite Pandemos at Naukratis’, 233. Excavation have not revealed any public buildings generally associated with a polis, a gymnasium, palaestra or agora. Möller, *Naukratis*, 118.

¹⁷⁵ On the etymology of *Pandemos*: Scholtz, ‘Aphrodite Pandemos’, 234, 238-239.

¹⁷⁶ Scholtz, ‘Aphrodite Pandemos’, 235-236. Möller states that pottery and inscriptions on vases reveal that over time even *polis*-based sanctuaries were used by all. Möller, *Naukratis*, 215.

¹⁷⁷ On the worship of Aphrodite Euploia: Elena Miranda, ‘Osservazioni sul culto di Euploia’, *Miscellanea greca e romana*, 14 (1989), 128ff.

famous prostitutes¹⁷⁸ and seafarers; each worshipper of Aphrodite in Naucratis could call upon or thank that aspect of Aphrodite relevant to their needs and activities.

Isis before the Ptolemies

The dynamic evolution of the goddess Isis commenced long before the arrival of Alexander in Egypt and the rule of the Ptolemies. Only the effects, not the specifics, of the continuous syncretistic processes are accessible. Isis' early place in the Egyptian pantheon is known principally through many scattered references in the Pyramid Texts and other funerary literature from about the middle of the third millennium.¹⁷⁹ There is no coherent Ancient Egyptian mythical tradition or at least no such tradition apparent in extant evidence. It was left to Plutarch in the second century AD, over two and half thousand years later, to draw on Egyptian and earlier Greek sources to reconstruct, largely through Greek eyes, a sequential back story for Isis and Osiris.¹⁸⁰

Isis was a temple sharing deity, principally associated with Osiris and other gods in her family,

¹⁷⁸ Such as the woman, Rhodopis, Herod. 2.134-135; Strab.17.1.33.

¹⁷⁹ Unusually for Egyptian deities, no Egyptian centre claimed that it was the birth place or place of burial of Isis. Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 149. The Pyramid Texts are a body of religious texts found on the walls of the tombs of the pyramids at Saqqara outside Memphis, the capital of Egypt in the Old Kingdom period. The tombs belonged to the kings and queens of the Fifth and Sixth dynasties. From the end of the Old Kingdom period, the texts were reproduced often in new or corrupted forms on tombs, sarcophagi, canopic chests, papyri, stelae and other formats for non-Royal Egyptians, and then in Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom, and the Book of the Dead and other religious texts of the New Kingdom. The texts describe spells to assist the deceased in life after death and this purpose explains the incidental and unconnected nature of the mythological references. J. G. Griffiths, 'Introduction' in Plutarch's *De Iside Et Osiride*, ed., trans and commentary, J. G. Griffiths (Cambridge: University of Wales Press, 1970), 33. Peter Der Manuelian, ed. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts*, trans, intro and notes, James P. Allen, (Atlanta Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 1.

¹⁸⁰ Witt refers to the possibility of an oral tradition for the mythology that was recorded by earlier Greek writers that Plutarch used as sources. Plutarch refers to a range of sources, including Homer, Simonides, Plato, other fourth and fifth century and earlier philosophers, playwrights, poets, and importantly, Eudoxus of Cnidos, Hecataeus of Abdera and Hellanicus of Lesbos, together with Timotheus and the Egyptian Manetho (who wrote in Greek). He also refers to evidence given to him by Egyptians, using such phrases as 'the priests say' (Plut. *De Is. Et Os.*; 29, 362c). However, it is believed Plutarch neither spoke or read 'Egyptian' (whether demotic or hieroglyphics) Griffiths, 'Introduction', *De Is. Et Os.* 75-102.

and she had no stand-alone cult until late in the Pharaonic era¹⁸¹ She appears in the early Pyramid texts in various supporting roles; as sister to Osiris, as mourner with her sister Nephthys of the deceased Osiris and the king (who lives through the spirit of Osiris)¹⁸²; as ceremonially attending to Osiris or the Osiris-king with other deities to revive the deceased and give new life.¹⁸³ Her shared role as mourner and protector of the deceased was also represented on the wall of Theban temples where her winged arms were extended in a protective gesture.¹⁸⁴ In later New Kingdom funerary texts Isis appears as the pre-eminent protector and carer of the deceased, royal and non-royal alike, a role fundamentally linked to the elevation of her role as mother of Horus.¹⁸⁵

The Pyramid Texts refer to Osiris becoming the father of Horus through Isis as *Sothis*, to Isis nurturing the foundling Horus and, importantly, to the king drinking milk from the breasts of his mother Isis.¹⁸⁶ In the Ennead of Heliopolis, Isis is identified as the wife of her brother Osiris and as assisting him with his ‘mythological kingship on earth’.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, her hieroglyphic name *Aset*, representing seat or throne, symbolised this royal dimension.¹⁸⁸ Through her magical and life-giving powers, Isis restored Osiris’ manhood, became pregnant with Horus and protected him until he was old enough to avenge his father and regain the throne of Egypt that was rightfully his.¹⁸⁹ As her role developed Isis was conceived as a goddess of the family, at the divine centre of royal power, as both wife of Osiris and mother of Horus incarnated on earth through the living pharaoh. The New Kingdom tomb of Tuthmosis III at Thebes shows the king suckled by Isis

¹⁸¹ R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Baltimore and London, John Hopkins University Press, 1971) 36. Griffiths, *De Iside Et Osiride* 35. In relation to temple-sharing, there are some minor exceptions such as the chapel of Isis ‘Mistress of the Pyramid’ built at Giza in the 21st Dynasty. Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 149

¹⁸² ‘As Osiris lives, as the spirit who is Nedit lives, so this King lives’. *Pyr.* 899, trans. R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 157. Griffiths, *De Is. Et Os.* 35.

¹⁸³ Griffiths, *De Is. Et Os.* 35.

¹⁸⁴ Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 8.

¹⁸⁵ Wilkinson: *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 146 and 148. Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 8

¹⁸⁶ *Pyr.* 632; *Pyr.* 2089

¹⁸⁷ *Pyr.* 1154a. Witt, *Isis*, 15, note 6, 284. Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 146.

¹⁸⁸ Witt, *Isis*, 15.

¹⁸⁹ Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 146.

who, through syncretism with Hathor, is represented as a sycamore tree.¹⁹⁰ The iconography of a seated Isis suckling Horus referenced both the throne and her life-giving mothering and became a popular image of Isis in statues and protective amulets from the Late Period.

Indeed, by the Late Period, Isis, the ‘mother of the gods’ achieved the status of a universally recognised goddess throughout Egypt through acquiring the names, powers and centres of worship of many other female deities such as Renenutet (good fortune, harvest, fertility), Astarte (love, fertility), Neith and Sothis (inundation), Maat (Justice) and particularly Hathor, in the constant pairings and syncretisms of the Egyptian pantheon.¹⁹¹ The key point is that Isis’ assumption of many different divine forms was not an invention of the Ptolemaic period; like all Egyptian deities, Isis was ever changing.¹⁹² Such acquisitions are richly attested at Dendara, Philae and in later hymns, although many pre-dated the Hellenistic period.¹⁹³ Hathor was an early and important deity whose many powers and roles included goddess of women, female sexuality, motherhood, mother and wife of Horus, a solar goddess and ‘goddess of the primeval sky-waters’ connected to Re.¹⁹⁴ Hathor was originally represented in bovine form and cow references remained an important aspect of her iconography. Isis came to share or assume these functions from Hathor and important features of her iconography such as a crown with curving cow’s horns with a solar sun disk between, the *menat* necklace and the sistrum (rattle).¹⁹⁵ While Hathor and her sanctuary at Dendara were important in the Late and Ptolemaic periods, in representations Isis and Hathor frequently became indistinguishable, with the particular goddess

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 149. Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I* 13, note 2. The painting is from the 18th dynasty.

¹⁹¹ Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 146. The term ‘mother of the gods’ dates from the New Kingdom. Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God*, 147. Hornung cites M. Munster *Isis Untersuchungen zur Göttin Isis (MAS 11, 1968)* for an example for ‘mother of the gods’ from the Ramessid era (205). For non-exhaustive lists of goddesses syncretised with Isis, Hornung, *Conceptions of God*, note 8, 148 and 126, note 53 and Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 17-26.

¹⁹² Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 22.

¹⁹³ Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 20-26. Louis V. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England: 1988), 109-110. Holger Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess* (Berlin; New York: Walter de Gruyter: 2008), 53. Dunand *Le culte d’Isis I* 23.

¹⁹⁴ Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 139-143. Dunand *Le culte d’Isis I*, 19-20, 94.

¹⁹⁵ Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 148.

often only identifiable from an accompanying inscription.¹⁹⁶

The dynamic evolution of Isis' powers had her conceived as operating in the cosmic dimension, in the public sphere as kingmaker and maternal protector of royal order, and importantly also as a protective deity, helping in life as well as after death. The tradition of calling on Isis for help in times of need is attested in the New Kingdom. A Ramesside stela bears the inscription, '[Isis] who ... evil, dispels storms, makes distant ..., rescues the weak from the fierces [sic.]'.¹⁹⁷ An interesting source is the 'ear-stela' shown at (Fig. 3), part of a category of votive offering and stelae popular in this period – arguably symbolising a listening god.¹⁹⁸ A number of the sources in the corpus examined by Sadek refer to the relevant god as one 'who hears prayers'¹⁹⁹. Such appeals and prayers suggest gods, including Isis, were accessible to ordinary people, and attest to the widespread practise of personal religion in the New Kingdom period,²⁰⁰ a practise that would continue and grow among Egyptians and Greeks alike in the Hellenistic era.

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Figure 3. Ear Stela dedicated to Isis, New Kingdom. Reproduction of Ear Stela from Birmingham City Museums and Art gallery 1969V72, drawn by Kockelmann after a photograph published by Sadek, *Popular Religion*, pl. XIII and 252.

¹⁹⁶ Wilkinson, *Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt*, 143.

¹⁹⁷ The stela is presently in the collection of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Translation by S Gohary, 'The Remarkable Career of a Police Officer', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* (1987), 97. H. Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess*, 64.

¹⁹⁸ Ashraf Iskander Sadek, *Popular religion in Egypt during the New Kingdom* (Heildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1987), 265-266

¹⁹⁹ Sadek, *Popular religion in Egypt*, 266.

²⁰⁰ Sadek, *Popular religion in Egypt*, 266, 293.

Ties to the sea

There is no reliable direct evidence that Isis was conceived as a goddess of the sea or of seafarers in Egypt earlier than the Ptolemaic period. Ancient authors seem to suggest that Egyptians feared the sea and knew no sea deity.²⁰¹ Yet in relation to the Nile and Egyptian cosmology, Isis had long been associated with boats. Isis standing at the prow of the funerary boat that transports Osiris and through him all deceased to the West, often with Nepythys and other gods, is a recurring image in Ancient Egypt.²⁰² Both Isis and Hathor are also attested and represented as the ‘eye’ and pilot of the ship of Re as it travels on the celestial ocean (Fig. 4).²⁰³



Figure 4. Ship of Re with Isis at the front of the boat. Papyrus of Nu, BD 100 and 129, Vignette in Budge, *Book of the Dead*, 302.

²⁰¹ Priests in particular feared the sea and avoided or rejected anything to do with it because the sea was associated with Seth-Typhon and violent forces. Plut: *De Is. et Os.* 32:363D ff; 33:36E; 7.353B ff. For not knowing gods of the sea: Herod. 2.43.

²⁰² J. G. Griffiths, ‘Introduction’, in Apuleius Madauros, *The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)*, ed. trans. J. G. Griffiths (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 37.

²⁰³ Vignette in E. A Wallis Budge, *Book of the Dead* (London: British Museum: 1929/1958), 302. Also the tomb of Onurkh’awy from the Ramesside period, which shows Isis at the front of the solar barque, with Thoth, Khepri and Hu following. Griffiths, ‘Introduction’ - *The Isis Book*, 34.

In the *Amduat*, seventh hour, Isis standing forward in the solar barque summons the enemy of the gods, Apopsis, and uses magic to destroy him.²⁰⁴ The imagery of Isis on sacred boats continues into the Ptolemaic period including on temple walls in Philae where Hymn V attests to her ascendancy in the pantheon when it proclaims she ‘gives orders in the barque of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt’.²⁰⁵ Egyptian cult ritual recalling the funerary procession of Osiris on the sacred barque may also have played its part in embedding an association between Isis and ships.²⁰⁶

Additionally, there is evidence suggestive of Amun and Hathor having waterway associations beyond the Nile, to the open sea.²⁰⁷ New Kingdom texts describe Amun as the Pilot, ‘who knows water, saves the one he loves in the storm, discovers the sandbanks and brings good wind to those in his favour’.²⁰⁸ A demotic papyrus refers to Amun of the sea and then to ‘the lady Isis of the sea’. However, it is not clear that this attests to Amun’s function being transferred to Isis because the word *t3 p3 ym* in demotic may also mean the Fayum.²⁰⁹ There is also a possible reference to Isis as lady of the sea at Dendera.²¹⁰

Stronger evidence connecting Isis to the sea is the power Isis acquired over navigation from Hathor, who was associated with the sea through her status as ‘Mistress of Byblos’. This role is thought to have arisen from Egypt’s early maritime contact with Byblos; Spell 61 of the Coffin

²⁰⁴ Erik Hornung, *Conceptions of God*; Hornung, *Das Amduat*, 505 (seventh hour, middle register) cited in Griffiths, ‘Introduction’ - *The Isis Book*, 34.

²⁰⁵ Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, Hymn V: 18, 58, Hymn VII: 11-12 also attests that she is the most prominent of the deities that govern the sun-barque, 107, 108 and note 13, 179.

²⁰⁶ Griffiths, ‘Introduction’, in *The Isis-Book*. Griffiths concludes, however, that the rituals at the festivals of Cicellia and Khoiak are unlikely to be direct antecedents of the later Isis launching of the ships ceremony at the *Ploiaphesia* or *Navigium Isidis*, particularly as they were held at different times of the year. 40-41.

²⁰⁷ See Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 95.

²⁰⁸ Bricault *Isis, dame des flots* 14 and note 7, 14. Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 95. Both cite E. Drioton, *Medamoud*, Cairo, 1927, 38, 343.

²⁰⁹ Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 95 note 4 citing W. Spiegelberg, *Die demot. Denkmäl.*, II (Die demot Pap.) 276 and D. Müller, *Ägypten*, 66.

²¹⁰ Kockelmann states that an inscription at Dendara refers to Isis as the ‘lady of the *w3d-wr*’ a term which can sometimes refer to the sea but which is even vaguer than *ym*. Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess*, 58 n. 202.

Texts states ‘*Hathor, the Mistress of Byblos, will steer your boat*’.²¹¹ Trading relations between Byblos extend back to the Old Kingdom and to the establishment of an Egyptian trading colony.²¹² A cult of Hathor in Byblos is attested as early as the third millennium.²¹³ Scholars debate the date of the establishment of a cult of Osiris in Byblos, however, evidence of Osirian statues found in excavations indicate that the cult may be dated reliably to the New Kingdom.²¹⁴ The early existence of Hathor’s and Osiris’ cult would have provided opportunities for early syncretism of Isis with Astarte and other local deities, and an Isis cult in Byblos is known from the seventh century.²¹⁵ There is evidence of Isis being worshipped as Hathor-Isis, and this may have been the origin of Plutarch’s Byblos episode.²¹⁶ Plutarch tells of Isis setting sail from Byblos with Osiris’ wooden coffin and later searching for Osiris’ scattered body parts, ‘in a papyrus boat sailing through the marshes’.²¹⁷ Some scholars argue that Plutarch’s Byblos episode is based on ancient myth relating to the Osirian cult in Byblos, while others view it as a Hellenistic embellishment perhaps based on or alluding to the story of Demeter’s search for Kore.²¹⁸ No extant source refers to the story that Plutarch relates. However, Griffiths contends that the episode though ‘decorated’ ‘must have its origins’ in the Byblite cults of Osiris and Isis, as retold in a Hellenistic source.²¹⁹

²¹¹ Griffiths ‘Introduction’. *The Isis Book*, 38. A further source, referred to by Griffiths, is the offering of an oar adorned with two *wedjat* eyes, symbolising safe voyaging, to Hathor on a scene on the wall of the Hathor chapel of Deir el Bahari (in Naville, *The Temple of Deir el Bahari*, IV, London, 1901, plates. 92-93).

²¹² Griffiths, commentary *De.Is. et. Os.* 319.

²¹³ A sixth dynasty alabaster offering plate of Pepy I refers to ‘Hathor, Mistress of Dendara’ and a bas-relief of the Hyksos period (c 1630-1520) is further evidence of the cult. Dunand *Le culte d’Isis* II pl. 155, no. 11673 and 467. Susan Tower Hollis, ‘Hathor and Isis in Byblos in the Second and First Millennia BCE’, *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections*, 1 no. 2 (2009), 1.

²¹⁴ by Dunand, *Le culte d’ Isis I*, 319-21 note 3.

²¹⁵ Griffiths, commentary *De.Is. et. Os.* 322, 54.

²¹⁶ Stele of the fifth century BC of the Byblite ruler Yehawmilk depicts an offering to Hathor-Isis. Lipinski contends that this pairing prompted Plutarch’s Byblos story. Hollis, ‘Hathor and Isis in Byblos’, 4.

²¹⁷ Plutarch, commentary, *De.Is. et. Os.* 16, 16; 18.

²¹⁸ Griffiths, commentary *De.Is. et. Os.* 54. Griffiths refers to Weill, Breasted and Sethe supporting the Egyptian mythical basis, while Helck sees it as a later invention. However, Helck accepts Byblos connections in the Osiris myth on the basis of references in the Pyramid Texts.

²¹⁹ Griffiths, commentary *De.Is. et. Os.* 320- 321. Although it is possible that Manetho was his source, Griffiths believes it would more likely be Hecataeus of Abdera or Eudoxus. Griffiths, commentary *De.Is. et. Os.*, 98.

Isis' connection to navigation also relates to her association with the star Sirius through her manifestation as Isis-Sothis²²⁰ Müller refers to the associative significance of Isis-Sothis having power over the Nile, as the river was also conceived of as Nun, the 'primal ocean'.²²¹ In this capacity she was mistress of the floods.²²² In relation to power over elements relevant to sea travel, Hathor and Isis are conceived as deities of the North Wind²²³ and Isis was also conceived as lunar deity in the Late Period and as such had dominion over the tides.²²⁴ Such cosmological characteristics were possessed by sea deities of seafaring people of the Mediterranean including Astarte and Aphrodite, deities with whom Isis had already crossed paths or came to be identified with on trading networks.²²⁵

The network ties cognitively linking Isis to the sea before the coming of the Ptolemies are slight but significantly embryonic.²²⁶ The mythological links and cosmological functions and imagery of Isis and Hathor relating to boats and the elements, interacting with the conceptions of Isis' protective and maternal functions, contributed to mind maps from which an Isis with saving powers in respect of the sea could be recognised in an *interpretatio* or 'theorising' process. But when did this occur, and through whom?

²²⁰ Identified with Sothis in the Pyramid texts *Pyr.* 632. Bricault *Isis, dame des flots*, 17. Sothis was the bringer of the inundation. Hornung, *Conceptions of God*, 80.

²²¹ D. Müller, *Isis-Aret*, 61ff cited by Griffiths, 'Introduction', *The Isis Book*, 32-33.

²²² Bricault *Isis, dame des flots*, 17. Witt, *Isis*, 15.

²²³ Hathor is depicted in scenes on her Chapel at Deir el Behari as the north wind and both Hathor and Isis are referred to as the 'good north wind' in temple texts. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots* 15, note 21, 18, note 52 (Dendara VII 84). Kockleemann, *Praising the Goddess*, 61-62 notes 244 and 245.

²²⁴ Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis I*, 94. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 18.

²²⁵ Assimilation with Astarte goes back at least to the New Kingdom. A cult to Astarte is attested in Herod: 2.112; Strabo: 26. 907c. There is a statue of Isis in Memphis dated to the fourth century BC with a dedication addressed to Astarte in Phoenician (*RES* 535). There is also a later stele in Memphis of the second or first century BC dedicated to Isis-Astarte (*KAI* 48). Bricault, *Dames des flots* citing Leclant. 20. The Phoenician goddess also had a temple in Memphis in the second century BC. The first *Hymn of Isidorus* (1.18) tells us that the Syrians called Isis Astarte. Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 18, 28. Griffiths, commentary *De.Is. et. Os.* 326. Budin, 'Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism', 96.

²²⁶ For the term 'embryonic', Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis I*, 98.

Isis of the Sail

Conceptions of Isis ‘of the sea’ were made manifest from the second century in dedications, in hymns and, to a much lesser extent, in visual representations. Dedications and hymns will be a main focus of Chapter Four. I will show here that Isis’ sea image was not distinctly formed until the Roman period and that the early visual conceptions of marine Isis interacted or overlapped with images of other goddesses. There is no extant iconographic or visual evidence from Alexandria or elsewhere in Egypt under Ptolemaic rule that directly or reliably represents Isis as a sea goddess. Interesting but speculative theories associate images of Isis sailing with a lost monumental statue or painting from early Alexandria, but evidence from iconographical comparisons alone are insufficient to support these theories.²²⁷

The first image comes from Byblos and may indicate an interaction of Isis and Nike, and a connection with the Isis/Byblos narrative, in the minds of its creator or commissioners. The image appears on a coin issued during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanies, ruler of the Seleucid Kingdom (175-164 BC) (Fig. 5) and it is believed to be the first known representation of Isis with a sail.²²⁸ The coin shows a female figure with Greek dress, standing with one foot forward, turning to the left and holding a sail with two hands. The figure is identified as Isis from the distinctive crown on her head and through what appears to be a sistrum clutched in her right hand. Isis stands on a roughly drawn boat.²²⁹ The motivation for the issuing of the coin is unknown. Antiochus IV attacked, and sought to add Egypt to his Empire, so a political

²²⁷ Ladilas Castliogne, ‘Isis Pharia remarque sur la statue de Budapest’, *Bulletin: de Musée Hoïngrois des beaux-Arts*, 34-35 (1970) 37-55. Ellen Reeder Williams, ‘Isis Pelagia and a Roman Marble Matrix from the Athenian Agora’, *Hesperia* 54 (2: 1985), 116.

²²⁸ Barbantani, ‘Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea’ 152. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 62.

²²⁹ Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 62

motivation is probable.²³⁰ It follows then that a form of Nike, derived either from Nike of Samothrace or Nike represented on a coin issued at Salamis by Demetrious Poliorcetes in 295BC, has been identified as possible prototype for the sailing Isis image.²³¹ In referencing the religious connection of Isis with Byblos,²³² the coin may establish the tradition of Isis' voyage to Byblos, as recounted by Plutarch, to at least as early as the second century BC.²³³ The importance of the narrative (and creative aetiology) as a network tie, shaping Hellenistic conceptions of Isis, is attested by later sources. According to Hyginus: *'Isis first invented sails, for while seeking her son Harpocrates, she sailed on a ship.'*²³⁴



Figure 5. Coin issued in Byblos during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, showing Isis holding a sail. Image from Bricault, *SNRIS*, Byblos 1, 30.

²³⁰ His bid for Egypt, through what is known the Sixth Syrian War, finally failed after the intervention of Rome on 'the day of Eleusius' in July 168BC. Diod. Sic. 31.2, Gunther Hölbl. *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 147.

²³¹ Williams, 'Roman Marble Matrix', 115.

²³² Isis and Harpocrates are frequently represented on coins issued from the mint of Byblos from this time well into the Roman period. Bricault and Versluys, 'Isis and Empires', 16.

²³³ Williams, 'Isis Pelagia and a Roman Marble Matrix', 115.

²³⁴ Hyginus, *Fab.* 277.



Figure 6. Relief from Delos – ‘Isis Pelagia’?
Agora of the Italians, First century BC
Delos, A 3187
Image: Bruneau, ‘Isis Pelagia à Délos’, 437.

Is the sail holding figure (Fig. 6) on a first century relief from Delos Isis ‘*Pelagia*’, Nike, Aphrodite *Euploia* or Isis-Aphrodite? It is not clear. Any are possible.²³⁵ Bruneau identified the image as Isis *Pelagia* on the basis of its similarity with other evidence much of which dates to a later period.²³⁶ However, the image lacks some of the iconography that would allow a straight-forward identification of Isis. There is no clear prototype for Isis holding a large sail on the prow of a ship in Greek art, although Bruneau refers to ‘corrupted’ motifs of Aphrodite Myrina and Nike as possible models.²³⁷ Bérard refers to some iconographical connections between the image of

²³⁵ Claude Bérard. ‘Modes de formation’ 169. Bruneau, ‘Isis Pelagia à Délos’, 442. On the naming of the image ‘Pelagia’ see note 529 below.

²³⁶ The Antiochus IV coin is the oldest of a large body of evidence that represents Isis (or an apparent Isis) sailing. The corpus consists of coins, seals, lamps, intaglios, engraved glass, reliefs and possibly, statues from a range of areas in the Mediterranean. Much of this evidence comes from the second century A.D. and later in the Roman period. Evidence falls into two broad groups, those images of the sailing Isis that have a billowing cloak behind her figure and those that do not. The first group is the older and smaller corpus and includes five coins struck in Byblos from Antiochus IV to the time of Claudius and a seal from Delos dated to 69BC or before. Bricault *Isis, dame des flots*, 43-66. Bruneau, ‘Isis Pelagia à Délos’, 438-441.

²³⁷ Griffiths, Introduction’ *Isis-Book*, 33-34. Bruneau, ‘Isis Pelagia à Délos’, 442. As referred to above, Williams identifies Nike of Samothrace (ca. 180-160 BC) or the form of Nike on a third century coin of Demetrius Poliorcetes as possible prototypes of Isis ‘Pelagia’. Williams, ‘Roman Marble Matrix’, 115.

Aphrodite on the Athenian Bell Krater (Fig. 2) referred to earlier, such as the stance and the holding of the sail.²³⁸ There was no religious or *polis* authority directing the form of the goddess, and the creative ambiguity of the craftsmen, deliberate or not, leaves the conception of the goddess to the beholder.²³⁹

In contrast, images of the sailing figure on officially issued Roman coins in Alexandria are intentionally images of Isis. The first known appearance of the sailing Isis with her cloak billowing behind was a coin minted in AD 90-91 under the reign of Emperor Domitian, and this broad type was to endure until at least the end of the fifth century AD.²⁴⁰ This coin like a number of later Alexandrian coins (Figs. 7 and 8) also shows the Pharos lighthouse. The goddess is typically shown striding forward and steadying the sail with one or two upraised hands.²⁴¹



Figure 7.



Figure 8.

Figures 7 and 8 are coins issued during the reign of Emperor Hadrian in the years 12 and 17 AD respectively. Each shows Isis holding a sail (and a sistrum) and the Pharos lighthouse. Images from Bricault, *Isis, dames des flots* 71. Bricault, *SNRIS* 30

²³⁸ Bérard, 'Modes de formation', 169. However, the Aphrodite Krater has distinctive iconography, such as nudity, the shell and the presence of Eros, while the Delos relief lacks distinctive markers.

²³⁹ Bricault *Isis, dame des flots* 69. Bérard, 'Modes de formation' 168-169.

²⁴⁰ Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 67 Variations in the later coins include the dress and stance of Isis, some have Isis wearing an elaborate crown and/or holding the sistrum, others do not; some include the Pharos lighthouse, some a ship with Isis on the prow. Williams, 'Roman Marble Matrix', 110-111. Susan Handler. 'Architecture on the Roman Coins of Alexandria' *American Journal of Archaeology*, 75 (1:1971), 58-61.

²⁴¹ Handler. 'Architecture on the Roman Coins', 60.

Evidence that there was a monumental statue of Isis that once stood on the Pharos as shown in the Alexandrian coins would support the story that some scholars want to tell of Isis watching over Alexandria as a harbour goddess from early in the Ptolemaic period. Szilagy identified a headless statue found in a villa near Naples and brought to Budapest as Isis *Pharia* (Fig. 9).²⁴²



Figure 9. Headless statue of draped striding figure identified as 'Isis Pharia'. Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

Image: Castiglione, 'Isis Pharia', 39, © Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.

Originally identified as a fleeing Niobid,²⁴³ the pose and drapery of the statue are similar to Isis' pose and dress on the Alexandrian coins and the pose of the Delos relief. However, the billowing back drapery as shown on the coins is not apparent. Attachment holes and fragments indicate that the statue once had one raised arm and one lowered, consistent with the sail steadying poses of other images. The bottom of the garment has a fringed mantle often associated with Isis'

²⁴² J. G. Szilagy, 'Un problème iconographique', *Bulletin de Musée Hongrois des beaux-Arts*, 32-33 (1969) 25. The statue is 1.45 metres tall.

²⁴³ The statue was interpreted as a Roman copy of the work created in c. 300 BC Handler, 'Architecture on Roman Coins', 60.

dress.²⁴⁴ Could this statue or its prototype once have stood on the island of Pharos or within a sanctuary of Pharos and been the work of a Hellenistic master attached to the court, as Castiglione claims?²⁴⁵ Evidence for the identification and place of original display of the Budapest statue is unavailable or inconclusive.²⁴⁶ Castiglione's interpretation could only be sustained if there was a plausible way of accounting for the lack of billowing back drapery²⁴⁷ or other plausible interpretations could be overcome,²⁴⁸ and the display of such a statue can be shown to be consistent with the historical and religious processes and context in Alexandria in the third century. At this apt point, I move to Arsinoe II and royal networks.

²⁴⁴ Handler, 'Architecture on Roman Coins', 60-62.

²⁴⁵ Castiglione, 'Isis Pharia', 50. Handler is also of the view that the Budapest statue establishes that there was an actual monumental statue of Isis on the Pharos in the same form as generally represented on the Alexandrian coins. Handler, 'Architecture on Roman Coins', 60.

²⁴⁶ Other statues have been interpreted as Isis Pelagia such as the statues at Mariemont and Beneventum. A consideration of these works is beyond the scope of this paper. They are considered in Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 86-99.

²⁴⁷ Castiglione contends that the Delos relief and the earlier group of coins were based on a statue (of the Budapest statue type) of the third century that was destroyed along with other parts of the island of Pharos in Julius Caesar's Alexandrian war, and that the later coins are based on a replacement statue. Castiglione, 'Isis Pharia', 53.

²⁴⁸ Sealing holes at the back of the Budapest statue suggest another interpretation that the statue was once a bronze-winged Nike. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 94.

Chapter 3

Royal networks

*On both sea and land make offerings to this temple
of Philadelphus Cypris Arsinoe,
whom the fleet-commander Callicrates was first to
Establish
as queen upon the Zephyrian coast.
She will grant easy sailing, and even in mid-storm,
will calm the broad sea for those who beseech her.*²⁴⁹

*‘... of the Good Fortune of Arsinoe Philadelphos/Isis’*²⁵⁰

Power and religion interacted to legitimise the rule of the early Ptolemies in Egypt and their Eastern Mediterranean maritime empire.²⁵¹ Following the lead of their dynastic founder, Alexander, the Ptolemies performed cultic duties as the living Horus, to ensure the restoration, and then the maintenance, of *Ma’at* throughout Kingdom. The new rulers of Egypt made clear their respect towards Egyptian gods, priests and subjects by the recovery of cult objects taken by the Persians and a large-scale temple building program.²⁵² With the co-operation of priests, the Ptolemies also instituted ruler cult in Egyptian temples.²⁵³ For the Greeks in Egypt and in the wider Greek world, rightful succession and the supreme power as *basileus* was demonstrated through pomp and festivals, dynastic imagery, the building of sanctuaries in Greek cities, the

²⁴⁹ Posidippus, *AB* 119, *Ath.* 7:318D. trans. S. Douglas Olsen, Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters* Books IV-VII, (Cambridge MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2008).

²⁵⁰ Inscription on oenochoe. Dorothy Burr Thompson, *Ptolemaic Oinochoai and Portraits in Faience. Aspects of the Ruler Cult*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), no(s). 142, 144, 146, 147; 171-173; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 241.

²⁵¹ The early Ptolemies refers to Ptolemy I Soter (r.306/4-283/2), Ptolemy II Philadelphus II (282-246) and Ptolemy III Eurgetes (236-222), Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204). Dates are from Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 21, 35, 46, 127. The Ptolemaic maritime empire in the Eastern Mediterranean reached its fullest extent under Ptolemy Eugertes III Hans Hauben, ‘Callicrates of Samos and Patroclus of Macedon, champions of Ptolemaic thalassocracy’ in *The Ptolemies, the Sea and the Nile: Studies in Waterborne Power*, eds. Kostas Buraselis et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 40.

²⁵² Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 77-90. The return of statues and cult objects from earlier occupiers became standardised praise in priestly decrees following Syrian campaigns. 81.

²⁵³ Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 110-111.

development and promotion of the cult of Sarapis, dynastic ruler cult and the deification of Arsinoe II and her divine patronage of the Ptolemaic fleet and port cities.²⁵⁴ That the latter two aspects form part of Ptolemaic *Religionspolitik* in the third century is uncontroversial. Less clear is whether Arsinoe's status as a sea-goddess (via Aphrodite) on the one hand, and Arsinoe's assimilation to Isis on the other, may be connected and assumed to be the genesis of Isis as a sea deity. Barbantani's speculation as to the Alexandrian creation of Isis of the sea pointed to three 'syncretisms' leading to that creation: Arsinoe assimilated to Aphrodite; Arsinoe assimilated to Isis and Isis syncretised to Aphrodite. However, such syncretism is not a given because the goddesses share attributes or temples; syncretism is never a passive process.²⁵⁵ A network lens pays attention to interactions and relationships, so, in relation to actions or ties relevant to the possible syncretisms, it will be asked: who or what was involved; what was probable intention or purpose of the tie; who was its audience or target group; and where and when did it occur? These questions will assist in understanding the nature and effect of the power exercised by or on behalf of the early Ptolemies, the nature of any syncretisms, and the role of Arsinoe in causing the emergence of marine Isis.

Arsinoe the queen

Arsinoe II (316-c.270) was a visible and powerful figure in life, and even more so after death. She was a model for future Ptolemaic queens and goddesses. In the Hellenistic period there was a close relationship between visible power and the divinity of rulers, so it is relevant to consider the actions and nature of Arsinoe as an earthly node.²⁵⁶ Arsinoe survived the political intrigues of two earlier marriages before replacing Arsinoe I and marrying her brother Ptolemy II Philadelphus in

²⁵⁴ Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 90-104. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 197-198, 202-276.

²⁵⁵ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 152.

²⁵⁶ Angelos Chaniotis, 'The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers.' in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. A. Erskine. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 431-445. As stated in the Hymn of King Demetrius Poliorcetes, 'For the other gods are either far away, or they do not have ears, or they do not exist, or do not take any notice of us, but you we can present here; they are made of wood or stone, you are real.' Duris of Samos FGrH 76 F13 in *Ath.* 6.253e-f.

273/72.²⁵⁷ The many honours she received from Ptolemy and his *philoi* effectively presented her as co-regent to her Egyptian subjects. Following her marriage she was given a distinctive Egyptian throne-name²⁵⁸ and a special crown,²⁵⁹ she assumed the counterpart name of her brother Philadelphus, ‘brother-loving’²⁶⁰, was widely represented to her subjects including alone or with Ptolemy on coins²⁶¹ and was honoured by her subjects.²⁶² In the tradition of Greek heroes and other Macedonian royal women²⁶³ she displayed her *aretê* and entitlement to share in familial power through winning three Olympic victories in chariot races in 272.²⁶⁴ Given the extent of the honours given to Arsinoe and her political ability demonstrated during her marriage to Lysimachus, Arsinoe must have wielded considerable influence at court.²⁶⁵ Arsinoe was active as a patron of the arts and the poets attached to the court vividly shaped her image to a Hellenistic audience.²⁶⁶ The queen accompanied Ptolemy II to inspect the defences on the Syrian border and to oversee the return of the Egyptian gods.²⁶⁷ The Decree of Chremonides concerning the war

²⁵⁷ Arsinoe I was exiled to Coptos for allegedly plotting against her husband by Ptolemy II. The dates are uncertain. Carney contends that the evidence suggests that Arsinoe I’s removal may have occurred before Arsinoe II returned to Egypt (in c. 276). Elizabeth Donnelly Carney, *Arsinoe of Egypt and Macedon: A Royal Life*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 68-69. The marriage date is estimated from references on the Pithom Stele. Carney, *Arsinoe* 70; n32 158.

²⁵⁸ ‘King of Upper and Lower Egypt’, Pithom Stele, U Wilcken, ‘Arsinoe II’. RE 2 (1896) 1284, cited in S. Burstein, ‘Arsinoe II Philadelphos: A Revisionist View’, in *Philip II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage* eds. W. L. Adams and E. N. Borza, (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982) 201. This title was previously exclusive to the king, Carney, *Arsinoe*, 85.

²⁵⁹ Carney, *Arsinoe*, 113. Arsinoe’s crown combined the red crown, a vulture cap, a ram’s horizontal horns, and the sun disk and horns of the crown of Hathor and Isis. P. E. Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies: Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 37.

²⁶⁰ Burstein, ‘Arsinoe...A Revisionist View’, 201.

²⁶¹ Burstein, ‘Arsinoe...A Revisionist View’, 201.

²⁶² Arsinoe was honoured, together with Philadelphus, by the erection of statues on adjacent columns and statues in Olympia and with a statue in the Agora at Athens. The columns and statues were erected by Callicrates. Paus.1.8.6. OGIS 26, 27. Burstein, ‘Arsinoe...A Revisionist View’, 201.

²⁶³ Susan Stephens, ‘For You, Arsinoe . . .’ in *Labored in Papyrus Leaves: Perspectives on an Epigram Collection Attributed to Posidippus (P.Mil.Vogl. VIII 309)*, eds. Benjamin Acosta-Hughes et al. (Washington: Harvard University Press: 2004), 169-170.

²⁶⁴ Posidippus AB 78, trans. Frank Nisetich, ‘The Poems of Posidippus’, in *The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book*, ed. Kathryn Gutzwiller, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 34. Carney, *Arsinoe*, 89.

²⁶⁵ Burstein, ‘Arsinoe...A Revisionist View’, 202-203.

²⁶⁶ Her patronage may be alluded to in Posidippus epigram of the journey of Arion’s lyre by sea on the back of a dolphin to its final destiny of dedication in Arsinoe’s temple at Zephyrium, AB 37. Stephens, ‘For You, Arsinoe . . .’ 162-163, 173-174. Callimachus more directly appears to refer to Arsinoe as ‘the tenth muse’ (Pf. i, p7; ii, p.102) and as his ‘Queen’ and ‘Muse’ (*Ait.* 2. 146-7). Nisetich, commentary in *Poems of Callimachus*, 64.

²⁶⁷ Inspection of defences: Pithom Stele I. Cair. 22183 *I.Cair.* 22183 = *Urk.* II: 94, l16 ‘[The King planned] with his Wife and Sister to protect Egypt there [at Pithom] against foreign countries.’ cited in B.F. Van Oppen de Ruiter, ‘The Religious Identification of Ptolemaic Queens with Aphrodite, Demeter, Hathor and Isis’, PhD. diss. (City University of New York, 2007). ProQuest (UMI 3245073), 20, n. 6. Return of the native Egyptian gods from Persia:

against Antigonos Gonatas refers to King Ptolemy ‘following the policies of his ancestors *and sister...*’.²⁶⁸ Even if it cannot be established that Arsinoe had a major influence over foreign policy, reference to a female consort in a decree of this kind is unusual; the decree recognises and makes known the unique and visible regal role of Arsinoe²⁶⁹. Such status, her personal sponsorship of the festival of the *Adonia* and her likely close relationship to the *philos* Callicrates²⁷⁰ suggests that Arsinoe had a personal role in shaping religious ideology while she was still alive, most particularly her identification with Aphrodite²⁷¹ and the dynastic cult innovation of the living gods, the *Theoi Adelphoi*.²⁷² Arsinoe was the first queen to be deified in her lifetime, and on an equal basis with her King, Ptolemy II.

Divine Arsinoe

More significantly, Arsinoe became divine in her own right. Following her death, Ptolemy Philadelphus established the separate cult of Arsinoe Philadelphus, for both his Greek and Egyptian subjects.²⁷³ Callimachus declared that Arsinoe’s soul was seized and taken to heaven by the *Dioscouri* and, in recognition of her *apotheosis*, an altar and sanctuary were established near the Emporium.²⁷⁴ According to Pliny the *Arsinoeion* was lavish, planned to feature an iron statute of a flying Arsinoe suspended from the roof using magnetic force to accompany the cult statue of

Canopus Decree, OGIS 56, in Michael Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 470-474.

²⁶⁸ IG II2 687 cited in Burstein, ‘Arsinoe...A Revisionist View’, 207-210.

²⁶⁹ The careful analysis of Burstein does not support an interpretation that Arsinoe had major influence over foreign policy in giving support to a coalition of Greek-States against Macedonia. The decree made in 268 BC is believed to have been issued shortly after her death. Burstein, ‘Arsinoe...A Revisionist View’, 207-210.

²⁷⁰ See below.

²⁷¹ In Theocritus’ *Adoniazusae*, concerning the love of Adonis and Aphrodite, there are explicit references to Arsinoe as the patron of the performance and to her intention to stage the performance ‘for the delight of Aphrodite’. Theoc. *Id.* XV. 22-24. P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, I 197. Fraser, contends that the reference to Arsinoe as queen, in a Posidippus epigram AB 116 suggests Arsinoe was still alive when Callicrates dedicated the temple at Zephyrium. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, I 239, II n 393 (line 5). Carney, *Arsinoe*, 99-100.

²⁷² Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 229.

²⁷³ It is generally accepted that this cult was posthumous. Carney, *Arsinoe*, 106 but cf. scholars referred to in Carney, *Arsinoe*, note 2 169.

²⁷⁴ Callimachus, *Iambi*, 16 ‘Arsinoe Deified’ (Diegesis), trans. Nisetich, *Poems of Callimachus*, 123-124.

Arsinoe made of peridot.²⁷⁵ The entrance to her temple was given an Egyptian gloss by the placing of an obelisk before it.²⁷⁶ Another *Arsinoeion* was established at Philadelphia in the Fayum²⁷⁷. Arsinoe received an eponymous priestess, *kanephoros* or ‘basket carrier’, and a festival, the *Arsinoeia*.²⁷⁸ At the request of Ptolemy II Arsinoe was also proclaimed an Egyptian goddess in the Mendes Stele and given the cult names ‘the brother-loving goddess’ and ‘beloved of the ram’. Henceforth she was to be worshipped throughout Egypt with local gods as a temple sharing goddess.²⁷⁹ A new tax was levied on the produce of vineyards and orchards to finance the cult.²⁸⁰ Ptolemy also had temples constructed for Arsinoe as an independent Egyptian goddess.²⁸¹ Her Egyptian cult was enduringly popular among the priestly elite, who benefited from, but were not subject to, the *apomoira*, and more broadly with ordinary Egyptians.²⁸² Arsinoe’s cult co-existed with local deities in at least forty-four Egyptian temples and her priesthood continued until the reign of Cleopatra VII.²⁸³

Ptolemy II ensured that the divine Arsinoe remained highly visible to her people. To emphasise Arsinoe’s divine lineage with Zeus-Ammon and Alexander, the king had gold and silver coins issued in which she is shown with a ram’s horn encircling her ear.²⁸⁴ Numerous towns in Egypt

²⁷⁵ Plin. *HN*. 34.42.149; 37.32.108. According to Pliny the architect died before the completed of the vaulted roof from which the statue was to be suspended, so the project may not have been completed. Carney, *Arsinoe*, 108.

²⁷⁶ Plin. *HN*. 36.14.67-69.

²⁷⁷ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 228.

²⁷⁸ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 232.

²⁷⁹ Both the Mendes Stele lines 11-14 (*Urk.* II 28-54) and the Sais Stele (*Urk.* II 75-80) make clear that Arsinoe’s statues were installed in the temples at the request of Ptolemy II, cited in S. G. Caneva, ‘Queens and Ruler Cults in Early Hellenism. Festivals, Administration, and Ideology’ *Kernos. Revue internationale et pluridisciplinaire de religion grecque antique*, (25), 2012, para 23. Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 101.

²⁸⁰ *Revenue Laws Papyrus*, col. -24-37, in M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World ... Selection of Ancient Sources*, 518-524.

²⁸¹ There was a sanctuary to Arsinoe in each of Memphis and Berenike, for example. The foundation rites for the latter are attested in the Pithom Stele lines 20-21 (*Urk.* II.100,) cited in Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 120.

²⁸² The religious tax or *apomoira* was first introduced in 263. In 259 the law was reformed, so that it was not levied on land owned by the temples. Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 103. Caneva, ‘Queens and Ruler Cults in Early Hellenism’ para 23.

²⁸³ Caneva cites Jan Quaegebeur (1998) who gathered 83 documents to support the identification of 44 locations for Arsinoe’s Egyptian cult, Caneva, ‘Queens and Ruler Cults in Early Hellenism’ para 21; n 52. The name Arsinoe (and Berenice) appear regularly among the families of Egyptian priests in the second century BC and, notably, among workers on the necropolis in Memphis in the second and first centuries. Dorothy J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 122-123. The priesthood of the Egyptian cult of Arsinoe Philadelphus outlived the *kanephorate* in Alexandria. Carney, *Arsinoe*, 108. Caneva, ‘Queens and Ruler Cults in Early Hellenism’, para 22 and n.52.

²⁸⁴ Stephens, ‘For You, Arsinoe’, 169.

and elsewhere in the Empire were named after Arsinoe, an area of the Fayum was re-named the Arsinoite nome and its villages were named after her cult names.²⁸⁵ Arsinoe's image was portrayed in different ways to her Greek and Egyptian subjects in coins, statues and reliefs and she was given distinctive iconography, such as the symbol of abundance, the *dikēria* (double cornucopia), which may have been designed by Ptolemy II himself.²⁸⁶

Arsinoe-Aphrodite

Callicrates' dedications, remembered and celebrated in the words of Alexandrian poets,²⁸⁷ and the actions of other *philoi* or elite Greeks outside of Egypt clearly connected Arsinoe to Aphrodite in her sea dimension, both as an idea and in cult practise. Callicrates of Samos was prominent among the *philoi* of the court and is believed to have been close to Arsinoe.²⁸⁸ He was *nanarch* or admiral of the Ptolemaic fleet for over twenty years from the 270s and was one of the first eponymous priests of the cults of Alexander and the *Theoi Adelphoi*.²⁸⁹

Callicrates dedicated a temple to Arsinoe *Euploia* at Cape Zephyrium, between Alexandria and Canopus, shortly before or just after Arsinoe's death c. 270 to 268 BC.²⁹⁰ Posidippus refers to Arsinoe variously as Arsinoe Philadelphus *Cypris* and as *Euploia*.²⁹¹ The use of these epithets and the absence of a reference to Aphrodite makes Arsinoe's divine status as a protector of seafarers

²⁸⁵ Such as villages termed Philadelphia and Theadelphia. K. Vandorpe, 'Arsinoe II Philadelphos', *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, (eds), Roger S. Bagnall, et al. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013, 764.

²⁸⁶ Carney, *Arsinoe of Egypt*, 111-119. Dikeras and Ptolemy: *Ath.*11.497c

²⁸⁷ Posidippus, AB 116 and 119 = *Ath.*7.318D; AB 36, 37, 38 (P.Mil.Vogl.VIII 309) trans Nisetich, *The Poems of Posidippus*, 25; Callimachus frg 5 Pf [*Ath.*7.318B] = Ep.14, trans Nisetich, *Poems of Callimachus* 176; frg 110 Pf. = *Aitia* 4.17, *Ibid.*, 163-167; Hedylus (*Ath.* 11.497D).

²⁸⁸ He was described as such by Philadelphus in c. 261 BC. RC 14.9 <http://www.attalus.org/docs/rc/s14.html> [accessed 11 September 2017]. Callicrates also arrived in Alexandria from Samos around the same time as the returning Arsinoe, and may have been part of her travelling party. Carney, *Arsinoe*, 99. Arsinoe's first husband Lysimachus had controlled Samos before the Ptolemies took control in 280, so, Carney explains, it is possible that Arsinoe knew Callicrates from this time.

²⁸⁹ Peter Bing, 'Posidippus and the Admiral: Kallikrates of Samos in the Milan epigrams', *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 43, 2002/3, 244.

²⁹⁰ Bing, 'Posidippus and the Admiral', 245, note 6. Arsinoe's date of death is much debated. Bing is persuaded by arguments in favour of 268. See note 273 above.

²⁹¹ As *Cypris*, AB 116 and 119 and as *Euploia*, AB 39.

explicit and indicates amalgam or total assimilation to Aphrodite.²⁹² Two of Posidippus' epigrams open with an exhortation that travellers pray in the temple, and they are assured that their prayers for safe passage will be received.²⁹³ Another suggests that Callicrates dedicated the temple for the benefit of Greeks in Egypt, as it addresses the 'chaste daughters of the Greeks' and men who work the sea.²⁹⁴ Poems of Callimachus also refer to Arsinoe's temple at Cape Zephyrium and dedications of a nautilus shell and Berenice II's famous lock of hair.²⁹⁵ Callimachus refers to both Aphrodite and Arsinoe separately, not to an assimilated goddess like Posidippus.²⁹⁶ Fraser suggests that an anonymous hymn to Arsinoe-Aphrodite, praising the deity as 'mistress of the sea' and 'guardian angel' of the mariners, was composed for the occasion of the dedication of the temple at Cape Zephyrium.²⁹⁷ Barbantani suggests alternatively that the hymn was composed for a civic festival to honour the goddess at one of the three cities named *Arsinoe* in Cyprus.²⁹⁸

Arsinoe's divine patronage of the fleet and sailors was reinforced by the eponymous naming of port cities throughout Ptolemaic empire and by the establishment of her cult in those and other cities, including establishments by Ptolemy II (in Crete, Lycia and Pamphylia) or by military officers or loyal subjects including Aetius (in Cilicia) Patroclus (in Argolis) and Hermias (in Delos).²⁹⁹ The Athenian general Epichares dedicated a temple to Arsinoe at Rhamnous in 268 in thanks for the support of the Ptolemaic navy during the Chremonidean War.³⁰⁰

²⁹² Bing, 'Posidippus and the Admiral', 256.

²⁹³ AB 39; AB 119 (*Ath.* 7. 319D).

²⁹⁴ AB 116. Bing, 'Posidippus and the Admiral', 246.

²⁹⁵ Ep. 14, lines 1-3. *Aitia* 4, lines 56-60. trans. Nisetich, *Poems of Callimachus*, 176, 166.

²⁹⁶ Cypris and Zephyritis are referred to as separate goddesses, *Aitia* 4 lines 56-59, trans. Nisetich, *Poems of Callimachus* 166. Susan Stephens 'Battle of the Books' in *Posidippus. The New Posidippus: A Hellenistic Poetry Book*, (ed.) Kathryn Guztwiller. (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2005) 246.

²⁹⁷ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 239; II n. 389. The extant version of the hymn was copied on papyri in the second century A.D. An originating third century date is likely given the subject and style of the hymn and the consistency of the themes with third century Alexandrian poetry. The cult of Arsinoe Philadelphus endured for several centuries, including in Hermoupolis Magna (the papyri findspot) which would explain the transcription of the hymn in the second century. Barbantani, 'Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea', 135-136.

²⁹⁸ Strabo 14.6.3. Barbantani, 'Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea', 155-156.

²⁹⁹ Barbantani, 'Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea' 146 -147. Barbantani details the sources in notes 36-42, 146-147. Ports and attesting sources are also comprehensively summarised by Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 28.

³⁰⁰ *IRhann.* 3, ll. 15-16 cited in Shane Wallace 'Adeimantus of Lampsacus and the Development of the Early Hellenistic Philos', in *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323-281 BC)* ed. Victor Alonso Troncoso and Edward

Callicrates and other friends of the Ptolemies were instrumental in spreading the reach of Arsinoe's cult in Egyptian controlled or allied territories and there is considerable evidence for the popularity of the cult throughout the Mediterranean.³⁰¹ In Cyprus, for example, the cult endured for at least a century as attested by about twenty altars, two *Arsinoeia*, a *canephoros*, dedications, marble portraits and locally minted coins.³⁰² Strabo's brief reference to the temple at Zephyrium attests to the longevity of the cult,³⁰³ however, we have only one extant dedication that may have come from the site.³⁰⁴ No archaeological evidence of a specific cult of Arsinoe as Aphrodite has been found; extant dedications are made to Arsinoe Philadelphus or to Arsinoe Thea Philadelphus.³⁰⁵ However, as discussed, in Greek religion no strict boundaries between domains or forms of cult were observed.³⁰⁶

The martial power and protector role of the divine queen was also conveyed in the poetic image of Arsinoe as a 'sweating' spear - and shield - laden goddess recalling martial Aphrodite or Athena, even, Stephens suggests, the conquering founder of the dynasty, Alexander.³⁰⁷ Consistent with this imagery are the naval warrior queens that stare out from two mosaics, known as the Thmouis mosaics (Figs. 10 and 11). The queens form the central part of floor mosaics found in

M. Anson, (Oxford; Oakville, CT: Oxbow Books, 2013) 145-146, Wallace states that Ptolemaic military support is specifically praised within Epichares' honorary decree (*IRhann* 3, ll. 21-25) note 12, 156.

³⁰¹ Bricault *Isis, dame des flots*, 28 and notes, 125-127. Strabo. 14.6.3.

³⁰² Barbantani, 'Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea' 154-157. Other altars and dedication plaques have been found in Eretria, Miletus, Delos, Cos and Egypt. S. G. Caneva. 'Ruler Cults in Practice: Sacrifices and Libations. For Arsinoe Philadelphos, From Alexandria and Beyond', in *Divinizzazione, culto del sovrano e apoteosi Tra Antichità e Medioevo*, (eds.) Tommaso Gnoli and Federicommia Muccioli, (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2014) 95 and Appendix: 'A geographical catalogue of inscribed altars, stones, and vessels pertaining to the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphos' 109-115. Barbantani, 'Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea' 154.

³⁰³ Strabo 14.6.3 S. Stephens, 'Battle of the Books', 246.

Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, I 239-240, II notes 395, 390.

³⁰⁴ A dedication by Philocrates and Hellagion to Aphrodite Akraia Arsinoe estimated from the time of the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator. The epithet Akraia refers to a promontory, associated both with Aphrodite and the promontory at Zephyrion. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 240.

³⁰⁵ Caneva, 'Ruler Cults in Practice', 95.

³⁰⁶ Carney, *Arsinoe*, 99.

³⁰⁷ Posidippus, *AB* 36. which Stephens says should be read together with *AB* 30 and *AB* 31 Stephens, 'For You, Arsinoe'. 164-167; Carney, *Arsinoe*, 91.

grand houses in Alexandria. They likely date from late in the third century but are believed to be based on an earlier work.³⁰⁸



Figure 10. Berenice II
Mosaic of Thoumis I
Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria
Image: eternalegypt.org.



Figure 11. Arsinoe II
Mosaic of Thoumis II
Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria
Image: eternalegypt.org.

³⁰⁸ Stephens, 'Battle of the Books', 242 and Bricault *Isis, dame des flots*, 29

Each mosaic image features a female wearing armour with a shield and spear, crowned by a warship; one of a younger woman is more skilfully executed. The other shows an older less attractively rendered woman. Using portraits and iconography on coins, the women have been identified as Berenice II ‘mistress of the Mediterranean’ and the other as a ‘fat-jowled’, Arsinoe II.³⁰⁹ Comparable shields, diadems and allusions to ‘spear - won lands’ appear in the coinage of the Ptolemies, and, as Stephens emphasises, in the first poem of the epigram of the *Anathematika* discussed above.³¹⁰ The ship headwear is particularly distinctive. Kuttner makes a well-reasoned case that the images are a ‘dynastic pair’; its commission, she contends, emphasising ‘that Berenice II reincarnated her [notional] mother Arsinoe II’s naval *numen*’.³¹¹

Arsinoe and Aphrodite were also linked in the promotion of the dynastic marriage - as the basis of the unifying and protective power of Ptolemaic rule. Poetry conceived of the divine Arsinoe, like Aphrodite, operating in multiple overlapping domains. Greek women venturing on ‘the sea of love and marriage’ were addressed in the first epigram of the *Anathematika*.³¹² The epigram refers to a young Macedonian girl dedicating an offering of cloth from Naucratis to Arsinoe Philadelphus, whose very epithet, meaning brother-loving connects her to love and her marriage to her brother-husband Ptolemy Philadelphus.³¹³ Similarly, the hymn of the Goodspeed papyri refers to Arsinoe-Aphrodite as ‘mistress of the sea’ *and* as ‘goddess of marriage’.³¹⁴ Theocritus’ *Adoniazysae*, concerning the love and re-union of Adonis and Aphrodite, contains references to Zeus and Hera which may have been intended or understood by the Greek audience as an

³⁰⁹ Daszewski identified the younger portrait as Berenice II and the other as a clumsily rendered copy while Kuttner persuasively argues the case for separate representation of Berenice II and Arsinoe II. Stephens, ‘Battle of the Books’, 242. Ann Kuttner, ‘Hellenistic Images of Spectacle, from Alexander to Augustus’, *Studies in the History of Art: Symposium Papers XXXIV: The Art of Ancient Spectacle*. 56 (1999), 111-112

³¹⁰ Stephens, ‘Battle of the Books’, 242-243. Kuttner, ‘Hellenistic Images of Spectacle’, 111-112.

³¹¹ Kuttner, ‘Hellenistic Images of Spectacle’, 112.

³¹² Bing, ‘Posidippus and the Admiral’, 259. These were the ‘chaste daughters of the Greeks’ referred to in *AB* 116

³¹³ Bing, ‘Posidippus and the Admiral’, 258.

³¹⁴ Barbantani, ‘Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea’ 141.

analogy to the brother-sister coupling of Philadelphus and Arsinoe.³¹⁵ Theocritus *Idyll* 17 makes further comparative allusions to the Olympian couple – emphasising the extraordinary status of the royal intra-family marriage.³¹⁶ Traditionally in Egyptian religion, queens were not connected to Isis, however, Isis too became closely associated with Arsinoe and later queens, as part of another divine parallel coupling.³¹⁷ This first occurred with Ptolemy II and the divine Arsinoe.

Isis and her connections to divine Arsinoe

Ptolemy II honoured Isis and Egypt with the monumental temple of Isis at Philae. Through the temple, its imagery and its texts, Ptolemy II, Arsinoe and the dynasty were connected to the national religious narrative. The prominence and universality of the goddess Isis, the coronation and priestly role of Ptolemy II, and the deification and divine temple-sharing status of Arsinoe were clearly displayed and honoured. Arsinoe is represented multiple times with or without Isis in the rooms of the temple and on the temple gates receiving divine offerings from her brother-husband.³¹⁸ Osiris also appears in reliefs and in texts honouring the king and his sister-wife.³¹⁹ Zabkar rightly states that such representations could have evoked in the minds of Egyptians and Greeks familiar with the story of Isis and Osiris, ‘yet another divine prototype of the marriage of Philadelphus and Arsinoe’ at a site that was to become the most important centre of worship of Isis.³²⁰ Visiting Greeks may have been aware of the opinion of Hecataeus of Abdera, writing in Alexandria at the time of Ptolemy I, that Osiris and Isis were the first royal couple of Egypt.³²¹

Through her connection with Osiris, Isis was also linked to Sarapis as his spouse.³²² According to

³¹⁵ Theoc. *Id.* 15. 64 – ‘Women know everything, even how Zeus married Hera’. Joseph D. Reed ‘Arsinoe’s Adonis and the Poetics of Ptolemaic Imperialism’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 130, 2000, 337.

³¹⁶ Theoc. 17.128-30; Carney, *Arsinoe*, 79; Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 12.

³¹⁷ D.B. Thompson. *Ptolemaic Oinochoai*, 59.

³¹⁸ Arsinoe is shown receiving offerings from Ptolemy on five relief images either alone ((Room V) or with Isis (Rooms I, VII and X). The queen is also depicted on pylons of the Gates of Philadelphus receiving her king’s offering with Nephthys on the north side, and with Isis on the south side. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 12.

³¹⁹ Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 12.

³²⁰ Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 12-15, 89-90.

³²¹ Diod. Sic. 1.27.4-5. Daniel L. Selden, ‘*Alibis*’, in *Classical Antiquity*, No. 2 17 (1998), 337.

³²² Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 259.

Fraser, in the third century, for Greeks, Isis was above all else the wife of Sarapis regardless of her identifications with Aphrodite and other deities.³²³ Sarapis and Isis formed another divine parallel for the ruler and his queen. A sacred area and altar dedicated to Ptolemy II and Arsinoe has been discovered in the area of the Serapeum built by Ptolemy III and predates that sanctuary.³²⁴ Other dedications to the royal couple were made by the *dioecetes* Apollonius.³²⁵ Rulers of the third century are also linked with Isis and Sarapis by means of a dedicatory formula most usually expressed in temples where the royal couple were temple sharing deities with Isis and Sarapis.³²⁶ The royal oath, from the time of Ptolemy III, also contained the names of both divine couples.³²⁷

There is no clear evidence of first three Ptolemies supporting a public cult of Isis in Alexandria, either alone or jointly with Sarapis, although Alexander directed that a temple of Isis be built there.³²⁸ The Serapeum was solely dedicated to Sarapis by Ptolemy III. Nor did the early Ptolemies directly found sanctuaries to the Egyptian gods overseas.³²⁹ From the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator, however, there was an increased official interest in Isis and the Osirian circle.³³⁰ Most notably, Cleopatra III established a cult naming herself ‘Sacred Foal of Isis, the Great

³²³ Most dedications in the early period are to Sarapis and Isis together, with Sarapis’ name appearing first. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 260-261.

³²⁴ OGIS 725. Caneva, ‘Queens and Ruler Cults in Early Hellenism’ para. 14.

³²⁵ Apollonius refers in letters to a statue or shrine to the royal couple and orders Zenon to construct a Temple of Sarapis, adjacent to an existing Temple of Isis and a sanctuary of the Discouri, a cult associated with Arsinoe. *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59169; *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59168. Caneva, ‘Queens and Ruler Cults in Early Hellenism...’ para 14.

³²⁶ For example, ‘Taurinus, the son of Heraclide, [makes this dedication] to King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, the Theoi Euergetai, and Isis and Sarapis and Harpocrates’ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 263

³²⁷ ‘I swear by King Ptolemy, son of king Ptolemy, Arsinoe, the sibling gods, and by Queen Berenike, the sister and consort of the king, and by the sibling gods and the saviour gods, by their saviour gods, by their ancestors and by Isis and Serapis.’ *P.Eleph.* 23, 8–12; *P.Tebt.* III 1,815, col.IV21–23, in Stefan Pfeiffer, ‘The God Serapis, His Cult and the Beginnings of the Ruler Cult in Ptolemaic Egypt’, in *Ptolemy II Philadelphus and His World*, (eds.) Paul McKechnie and Philippe Guillaume (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 395.

³²⁸ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 260, 265. Arr. *Anab.* 3.1.10-13.5.

³²⁹ Rather cults of traditional Greek deities and festivals were the beneficiaries of Ptolemaic patronage. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 275. Festivals for the gods on Delos were instituted in 249 and 246 in festivals named Ptolemaia II and Ptolemaia III (*IG* XI.4.1038.17; 1043.14). Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 98 note 94. Ptolemaic disinterest in patronising Egyptian cults is particularly clear on Delos. Only one late dedication from Delos refers to a Ptolemaic ruler (*RICIS* 202/0338). Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 173.

³³⁰ Philopator made many dedications at shrines of Isis, Hathor and Harpocrates and he dedicated a temple to the latter. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 203, 261. He took the title ‘beloved of Isis’ and his son was acknowledged as the ‘new Horus’. The Rosetta Stone: decree of the Egyptian priests in honour of King Ptolemy V (27 March 196), 11-13 in Austin, *The Hellenistic World* 492. Dunand, *Le culte d’ Isis I*, 39.

Mother of the Gods’, and finally, complete identification when Cleopatra VII termed herself ‘Nea Isis’.³³¹

In Egyptian cult, Arsinoe Philadelphus and Isis were assimilated. In a scene in Room VII of the Temple of Philae (Fig. 12), Arsinoe stands behind Isis, shares the same stance, height and insignia, and also receives offerings from the king. She is only distinguishable from Isis through her unique crown. Several of the titles given to Arsinoe in the accompanying legend are also given to Isis in Hymn III. Both deities have double roles ‘as queen and as High Priestess and Divine Spouse of Amun’.³³²

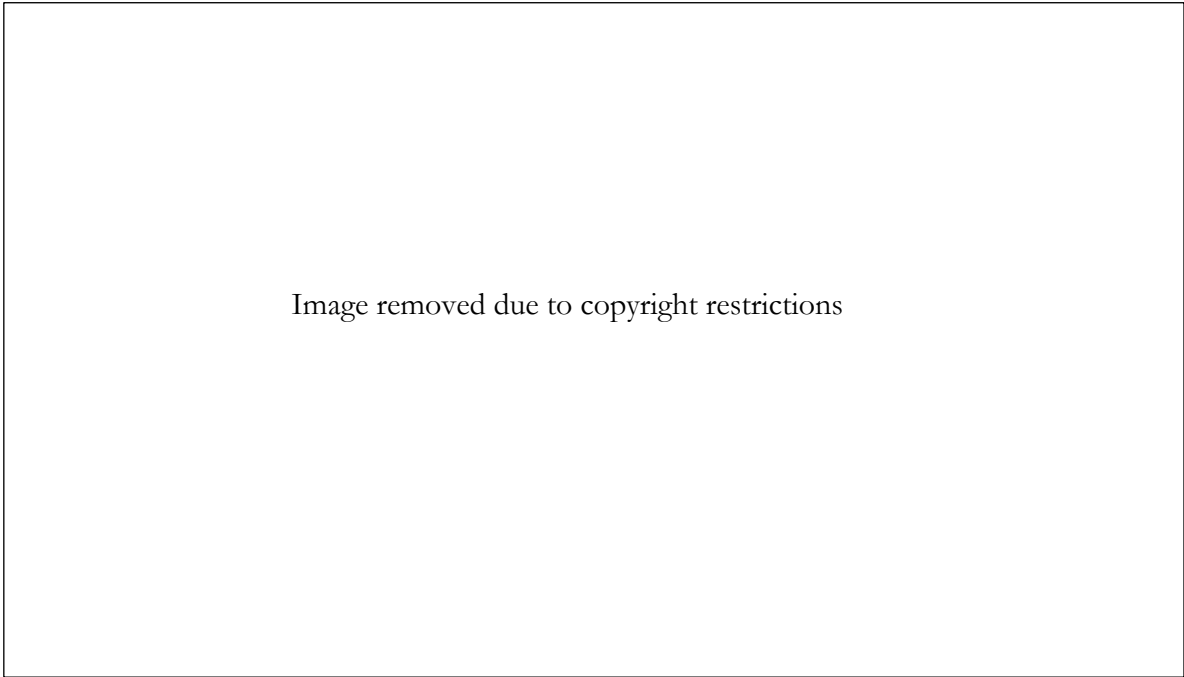


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Figure 12. Temple of Isis, Philae, Room VII. Scene on the right, lowest register
Image: Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 14.

³³¹ Cleopatra VII's title as Nea Isis is referred to by Plutarch in *Ant.* 54.6 but is not otherwise attested. In relation to the cult of the sacred Foal, it is notable that Cleopatra's own name is not used, nor the names of the goddesses Demeter and Cybele who, Fraser states, are likely to have been wholly assimilated to Isis. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 221, 244-5.

³³² The legend, inscribed on the North wall of the Sanctuary, reads, ‘The King's wife, the King's daughter, the King's sister, Daughter of Amun, Mistress of the Two Lands, the goddess who loves her brother, Arsinoe, Princess, great of praises, Lady of charm, sweet of love, Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt, great queen of Egypt, Mistress of the Two Lands, Arsinoe, living forever.’ The shared titles are ‘Princess, great of praises, Lady of charm, sweet of love, Mistress of Upper and Lower Egypt’. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 89- 90.

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Figure 13. Pithom Stele (Upper register)

Image: E. Naville, in Plantzos, 'The Iconography of Assimilation', 414.

The upper register of the Pithom Stele shows Ptolemy making offerings to Atum, Osiris, Horus, Isis and the deified Arsinoe, who appears in the centre in two places behind Isis (Fig. 13).³³³ She is depicted wearing her crown, and ceremonial Egyptian dress.³³⁴ Significantly, her image is accompanied by the titulary inscription; 'Arsinoe, image of Isis and Hathor'. Nilsson contends that this both describes her cultic role as 'high priestess' and her 'role as co-founder of the dynasty through the connection with Isis'.³³⁵ This is consistent with the stele's presentation of Arsinoe as co-regent during her lifetime.³³⁶ Other hieroglyphic inscriptions on the 'Vatican statue' (Fig 16.), a lost relief from Masara, and a stele from Saqqara similarly designate Arsinoe Isis.³³⁷

³³³ According to Nilsson, on one side of the image Arsinoe appears as Queen Arsinoe and on the other as a goddess. Nilsson, Maria, 'The Crown of Arsinoe II: The Creation and Development of an Imagery of Authority' (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 2010) <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/23417> [accessed 29 August, 2017], 385-386.

³³⁴ The knotted garment and fringed mantle is dress typically worn by Isis in imagery but not only Isis. See p. 69 below. The fringe of the mantle is not shown on the drawing reproduced in figure 13. Plantzos states that it was most likely omitted by the draftsman because of the damage to this part of the stele. Dimitris Plantzos, 'The Iconography of Assimilation: Isis and Royal Imagery on Ptolemaic Seal Impressions', in *More than Men, Less Than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organised by the Belgian School at Athens (November 1-2, 2007)*, (eds.) Panagiotis P. Iossif, et.al. (Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2011), 391.

³³⁵ Nilsson, 'Crown of Arsinoe II', 388.

³³⁶ Nilsson, 'Crown of Arsinoe II', 388.

³³⁷ Nilsson, 'Crown of Arsinoe II': Vatican statue: Inv. no. 22681 (419 note 1113). The inscription on the Vatican statue reads 'Image of Isis, Beloved of Hathor'; the relief that had been recorded in the quarries of Masara bore the inscription, 'Arsinoe as King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Isis-Arsinoe' (419 note 1114); The stele of Saqqara is preserved in the British Museum. Inv. no. 124, the inscription on the stela reads 'King's daughter, sister, and wife, Daughter of Amon, Lady of the Two Lands, Arsinoë the divine Philadelphos, Isis'. (420 note 1117).

In relation to cults established by and for Greeks, Isis was worshipped together with Arsinoe on a temple sharing basis, and queens were linked to Isis through cult titles and poetic imagery. Callicrates honoured Arsinoe and Ptolemy II with a sanctuary of Isis and Anubis at Canopus³³⁸ and Chairemon founded a sanctuary of Sarapis, Isis [and] Arsinoe [Philadelphus] at Halicarnassus.³³⁹ Although the ‘and’ is uncertain, Malaise insists that this latter dedication was to a syncretised ‘Isis-Arsinoe’.³⁴⁰ Bricault translated a dedication by a priest at Perinthos as being to ‘Isis Aphrodite’ and dated it to 245 when Egypt had political control in Thrace.³⁴¹ He asks, ‘in this early assimilation’ must we see an allusion to the deification of Arsinoe II, herself identified with Aphrodite?³⁴² I respond: not necessarily, nor is the assimilation of Isis and Aphrodite a given. Wallenstein comments that although there is no ‘and’ between the deities, each deity was inscribed on a different line, which would be more consistent with separate identities.³⁴³ Perhaps Chairemon and Artemidoros were ‘early adopters’ of a marine Isis through Arsinoe; the interpretations equally reveal the tale the historians wish to tell. In any event, the dedications were made by individuals and are not evidence for a royal policy of syncretism. More pertinent is the possible establishment by Philopator of a coastal cult to his mother Berenice II under the names *sozusa* or *soteira*, meaning saviour, a title which later was seen to encompass saving at sea.³⁴⁴ *Soteira* is assumed to be a cult title of Isis, one of many cult titles given to Arsinoe II,³⁴⁵ and Berenice was poetically tied to her predecessor and Isis through Callimachus’ Lock of Bernice’.³⁴⁶

³³⁸ SB I 429 cited in Carney, *Arsinoe of Egypt* 97.

³³⁹ RICIS 305/1702 = OGIS 16.

³⁴⁰ Malaise cited in Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 35. This reading is also made by Brady (following Wilcker). Thomas A. Brady. *The Reception of the Egyptian Cults by the Greeks (330-30 BC)*, (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1935), 13, note 14.

³⁴¹ RICIS 114/0601 - ‘Artemidoros, son of Heraiskos, priest in charge, to Isis Aphrodite.’ Bricault also refers to the significance of existing cults of Sarapis, Isis and Anubis. Commentary in RICIS, 18 and Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 35.

³⁴² Bricault, commentary in RICIS, 18.

³⁴³ Wallenstein, ‘Dedications to Double Deities’, note 25, 12.

³⁴⁴ Zen.III.94 = Paroem. I, 81 cited in Hölbl. *Ptolemaic Empire*, 170.

³⁴⁵ Cult titles derived from other deities were given to Arsinoe II both before and after her death. These are largely known through papyri sources that refer to street names of Alexandria. A few examples are Basileia (Hera, royal), Eleemon (Aphrodite, pity), Nike (Athena, victory) and, most relevantly Souzousa (Isis, ‘the saving-one’). Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I 237-238.

³⁴⁶ Berenice’s dedication for Eurgetes at Arsinoe’s sanctuary paralleled Isis’ dedication of a lock of hair, at Coptos for Osiris. frg 110 Pf. = *Aitia* 4.17. 56-60. trans Nisetich, *Poems of Callimachus* 176, 163-167 Plut. *De Is. Et. Os.* 14.

Faience *oenochoe* also portray Arsinoe being worshipped at the same altar as other goddesses.³⁴⁷

The production of the ‘highly standardised’ vessels were most likely officially regulated given their probable function as libation vessels in ruler cult ritual in the third century.³⁴⁸ The vessel shown in Figure 14 is a well-preserved example.



Figure 14: Faience oenochoe showing Arsinoe II pouring libation. 270-240BC. British Museum.
Image: © Trustees of the British Museum.

³⁴⁷ A corpus of these vessels featuring images and inscriptions of Arsinoe II and other royal subjects of cult have been studied by D.B. Thompson, *Ptolemaic Oinochoai*.

³⁴⁸ The precise function of the vessels and the extent and nature of the official regulation is unknown. A large number of oenochoe have been found in graves, so the vessels may have also been used in funeral ritual, where offerings could have been made to deceased rulers. D.B. Thompson in *Ptolemaic Oinochoai*. 69-71, 75, 117-119.

Arsinoe appears in front of a decorated sacred pillar holding a double cornucopia under one arm and using a bowl in her other hand to pour a libation onto an altar. On the shoulder of the vase is the inscription ‘*of the Good Fortune of Arsinoe*’.³⁴⁹ There are also four vessels in the extant corpus that bear the inscription of the ‘*Good Fortune of Arsinoe Philadelphos/Isis*’.³⁵⁰ Four deities are thereby referenced; Arsinoe, Demeter, Tyche and Isis. Demeter, the bringer of prosperity and abundance is suggested by the cornucopia or horn of plenty. That symbol later became associated with ‘good fortune’, personified as Tyche.³⁵¹ Arsinoe is portrayed as welcoming her worshippers and pouring a libation to all the deities represented including herself.³⁵² At this early stage of divine interaction, the reference to ‘good fortune’ is more likely to represent the personal *tyche* of the divine queen, rather than a syncretism between Arsinoe and the personified Tyche.³⁵³

Oenochoe may have been used in rituals relating to the *Arsinoeia*, linking Arsinoe, Aphrodite and Isis in a number of other ways. The festival was held at the beginning of the annual inundation, a period traditionally associated with Isis, as Sothis.³⁵⁴ Worshippers were directed by an official decree that they may make sacrifice on sand covered altars in front of their homes or on a street adjacent to the procession.³⁵⁵ The sand may have been intended to symbolically evoke the sea, appropriately for a sea-goddess identified with Aphrodite.³⁵⁶ Another directive permitted the

³⁴⁹ A.C. Smith ‘Queens and Empresses as Goddesses: The Public Role of the Personal Tyche in the Graeco-Roman World’, *Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, 86-105, 1994, 89.

³⁵⁰ See note 250 above.

³⁵¹ It is a symbol of agricultural abundance, associated with the Eleusinian and Dionysiac cycles. D.B. Thompson, *Ptolemaic Oinochoai* 31. For the later association with Tyche, the inventory of the Temple of Agathe Tyche in Delos dated to 166, refers to a statue of Agathe Tyche holding a gilded double cornucopia. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 241; II note 415, 392 *RICIS* 202/0424 = *ID* 1417 A, II, Lines 26ff (the inventory of Kallistratos 156/5).

³⁵² D.B. Thompson, *Ptolemaic Oinochoai* 74. Carney, *Arsinoe*, 109.

³⁵³ D.B. Thompson, *Ptolemaic Oinochoai*. 52-54. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 241-2.

³⁵⁴ Carney, *Arsinoe*, 109; note 30, 170. D.B. Thompson, *Ptolemaic Oinochoai* 73-74.

³⁵⁵ Fragment from Satyrus, *On the Demes of Alexandria*, *P.Oxy.* 27, 2465, fr.2 Lines 12-15, 18-23.

³⁵⁶ As contended by L.Robert (1966) and accepted by Caneva and other scholars. Caneva, ‘Ruler Cults in Practice ...’, 97, n.44, 97. cf. P. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* II 379 note 318 who argues that given the general availability of sand in Egypt, it may have just served a practical purpose.

sacrifice of birds but prohibited the sacrifice of goats and sheep, suggesting an accommodation to the cult of Mendes³⁵⁷ and/or the distancing of Arsinoe from Aphrodite's sexual persona.³⁵⁸

Ships named Isis, common in the Roman period, directly connect Isis to the sea. There is evidence of two Ptolemaic ships with this name in the third century, although one of those may have only been involved in the transportation of grain on the Nile. Excavations at ancient Nymphaion, a Greek settlement on the Black Sea, uncovered a fresco on the walls of a cult centre of Aphrodite and among many images and names³⁵⁹ a detailed *sgraffito* image of a large vessel was uncovered and reliably identified as a warship of Ptolemy II. The ship has the name 'Isis' inscribed on its bow, above an image of one of the Dioscouri with a horse.³⁶⁰ Although opinions differ on the nature of the ship, scholars generally agree the ship was present in the region on a state mission to King Pairisades in the mid third century. This was possibly to secure or flex Egyptian sea power in a region in which Egypt had strategic interests.³⁶¹ The presence of the image of the warship in the sanctuary of Aphrodite may be explained by the grant of cult worship to Arsinoe either by the King or the priests. Scholars debate whether the name 'Isis' originally given to the ship or whether it was a latter addition. Some argue that the image of one of the Dioscouri alone would have given the ship its name. Against this there is cogent evidence

³⁵⁷ A prohibition on goat sacrifice was also shared by Egyptians in Mendes, where the Ram-god was worshipped. Strabo 17.1. 40 Caneva, 'Ruler Cults in Practice ...', 102. Arsinoe had a particular association with the ram of Mendes. Holbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 101. Caneva speculates that the nature of the animal to be sacrificed was negotiated between Greek officials and Egyptian priests, and that the goat and sheep interdiction was put in place for the benefit of Egyptians in Alexandria and the *chora* who may have wished to sacrifice to Arsinoe in accordance with their own tradition. Caneva, 'Ruler Cults in Practice ...', 101-103.

³⁵⁸ Satyrus, *On the Demes of Alexandria*, P.Oxy. 27, 2465, fr.2 Lines 15-18. Goat was an animal connected with *eros* and the cult of Aphrodite *Pandemos*. This cult regulation would more align Arsinoe with *Ourania* and the image of marital union that the court wished to project. Caneva, 'Ruler Cults in Practice ...', 98, 101-103. Roberts cited by Fraser pointed to scholia on Lucian that said that the cult of Aphrodite *Pandemos* prohibited goat sacrifice because, when eaten, it promoted an 'excessive sexual appetite'. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* II, 379, note 318.

³⁵⁹ Such as images of about eighty ships, animals, people, the name of Pairisades king of the region from 284/3 to 245, references to Aphrodite and to the god Apollo, a brother of the king named Satyrus and a number of other men. SEG 34. 756; 38. 752; 39. 701. W. M Murray, 'A trireme named Isis: the sgraffito from Nymphaion', *The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 30, no. 2 (2001), 250.

³⁶⁰ Murray, 'A trireme named Isis', 250. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 22-24

³⁶¹ This was interpretation of N. Grac, the original excavator and Y. L. Vinogradov (1999) discussed in Murray, 'A trireme named Isis' 250-252 and Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 22-23.

that the naming of ships was practised by Greeks from the fifth century, and that the name was part of the original design.³⁶² In either case some sort of link is being made between Isis, the ship and the sea. According to Bricault, the fresco is the earliest evidence we have of ‘the marine aspect of Isis in the Hellenistic period’.³⁶³ A ship carrying grain from the Arsinoe to Alexandria, connected to the dioecetes Apollonius, was also named Isis.³⁶⁴ Isis-named ships early in the Ptolemaic period, particularly, those that traverse the Nile, may be a continuation of an existing practise and could equally support the view that the association between Isis and navigation predates the Ptolemaic period.³⁶⁵

A royal face for Isis

How did imagery tie Arsinoe, and later queens, to Isis? Arsinoe wore both a Greek and Egyptian face for her subjects, with an emphasis on the latter in large scale portraits to emphasise continuity with the pharaonic tradition³⁶⁶ (Fig. 15 and Figs 16).³⁶⁷

³⁶² Murray relies on the Themistocles Decree and epigraphical evidence to conclude that naming of the ships was practised from the fifth century. He also carefully argues that the quality of the lettering and the placement of the inscribed letters indicates that the name of Isis was part of the original decoration on the image, rather than a later addition, perhaps by a priest of the sanctuary. Murray ‘A trireme named Isis’, 252-253.

³⁶³ Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 22, 34.

³⁶⁴ *P. Cair. Zen.* III, 59320 29 January 249. Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I* 95, n.5, 95.

³⁶⁵ Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis I*, 95.

³⁶⁶ Sally-Ann Ashton, ‘Ptolemaic Royal Sculpture from Egypt: the Greek and Egyptian traditions and their interaction’. PhD diss., King’s College London, 1999. King’s Research Portal at <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/>, 28-28 P. E. Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies*, 2002, xv.

³⁶⁷ Figure 15 is an example of a Greek portrait. It presents Arsinoe to her Greek subjects, as Aphrodite in an Egyptian pose, with knotted shawl and sensual drapery, in the style of Venus Genetrix. Aurélia Masson-Berghoff in Goddio and Masson-Berghoff, *Sunken Cities...*, 93. Venus Genetrix: Plin. *HN*. 35.156. See below in relation to the knotted mantle. Figure 16 is an example of an Egyptian portrait. It is a standing statue inscribed with the name Arsinoe II. Rome. Vatican, *Museo Gregoriano Egizio* 22682. Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies*, [4-5 A4], 158. The two *uraei*, are unique to Arsinoe, and may be another symbol of a representation of her shared power with Ptolemy II. The statue of Arsinoe II accompanies a matching statue of Ptolemy II. Carney, *Arsinoe* 111. See also figure 12 where Arsinoe is depicted on reliefs at Philae. There, and in other Egyptian representations, Arsinoe is shown wearing her unique crown that contains elements of, but is distinct from, that worn by Isis.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 15. Statue of Arsinoe II 3rd century BC.
Canopus. Black granodiorite.
Bibliotheca Antiquities Museum SCA 208.
Image: in Goddio and Masson-Berghoff,
Sunken Cities, 93.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions

Figure 16. Standing statue inscribed 'Arsinoe II'. Rome, Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Egizio 22681 (Room V Statuary Group with Ptolemy II)
Image: Vatican Museums. <http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-gregoriano-egizio/sala-v--statuario/gruppo-con-tolomeo-ii.html#&gid=1&pid=3>

It cannot be easily determined how decisions about styles and forms were made but both official direction, and some agency of craftsmen working within, and across, their respective traditions, and of priests in relation to temple images, is assumed.³⁶⁸ There is no evidence, however, that a Hellenic form of Isis was officially commissioned until at least the reign of Philopator in the late third century, and then only partial head portraits on a seal and coins.³⁶⁹

From Arsinoe, Isis eventually acquired the *dikeras*, but otherwise in the Hellenistic period, queens and Isis shared iconography, making identification and differentiation difficult; both wore the same Hathoric crown and knotted fringed garment that later became a designating symbol of Isis. The garment was worn by goddesses and queens in pharaonic art and had a ceremonial purpose, so it cannot necessarily be assumed that when a queen was shown wearing the garment in the Ptolemaic period that the intention was to convey the queen was assimilated to Isis.³⁷⁰ A second century mixed style statue shows Arsinoe with each of the attributes mentioned (Fig. 17), however, the accompanying inscription on the statue makes it clear that she is not shown as Isis.³⁷¹ Arsinoe is shown with Libyan locks, a hair style then popular with Ptolemaic queens, that, like the *dikeras* became identified with Isis in the Roman period.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ Indeed, Stanwick's study shows that decrees that expressed the relationship between priests and king made roles and decisions about the creation and placement of visual representations explicit. Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies*, 6-12.

³⁶⁹ A seal showing the heads of Isis and Sarapis is dated by Bricault to 217 and is assumed to be issued to celebrate the victory at Raphia. L. Bricault, *Sarapis et Isis Sauveurs de Ptolémée IV à Raphia*, CE 74 (1999), 334-343. Walters refers to coins issued by Ptolemy V (221-204) as the first securely dated portrayals of a Hellenised Isis. The coin shows head portraits of Isis and Sarapis. In her description of the coin Walter states that Sarapis' head overlaps Isis and only her profile, her parted hair and the small headdress emblem can be seen. Walters, 'Attic Grave Reliefs', 12. This was one form of the varied Hellenistic imagery for Isis in the Ptolemaic period, there were also close adaptations of the Egyptian Isis Lactans images, and popular late Ptolemaic terra-cotta figures of Isis-Aphrodite, that developed independently from the temples and the court. Dunand and Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men*, 272-275.

³⁷⁰ Elizabeth J. Walters, 'Attic Grave Reliefs That Represent Women in the Dress of Isis', in *Hesperia Supplements* 22, (1988) 9-11; Ashton, *Ptolemaic Royal Sculpture*, 50-51; Plantzos, 'The Iconography of Assimilation', 392, Robert Bianchi, 'Not the Isis Knot', *Bulletin of the Egyptological Seminar*, 2 (1980) 9-31.

³⁷¹ Standing limestone statue inscribed for Arsinoe II, dated to second half of the second century. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 20.2.21, Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies*, 116 [C28], 190. The inscription on the statue gives Arsinoe a range of divine titles, including the daughter of Amun but does not refer to Isis. Similarly, the Hellenised ceremonial garb for queens and royal deities on *oenochos* denoted only their Greek cultic purpose, not assimilation.

³⁷² Ashton, 'Ptolemaic Royal Sculpture', 8 and 1. Often considered to be a Greek attribute, it may be that this hairstyle too had Egyptian antecedents. Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines* 149-150.



Figure 17. Statue of Arsinoe II, inscribed with her name.
Limestone, paint and gold leaf. ca 150-100BC. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Image: © Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. www.metmuseum.org

The mixed style portrait in Figure 18 is possibly Cleopatra III (142-101) as Isis.³⁷³ Paralleling Isis' presentation in the near-contemporaneous praises of Isidorus,³⁷⁴ the Queen as Isis, is both Greek and Egyptian; Egyptian in stone, pose and attributes, but Greek faced and coiffed.³⁷⁵ Isis was sometimes given the individualised Greek styled face of a queen, as in the gold ring shown at Figure 19.³⁷⁶ Although Isis' iconographical form was not fixed in the Ptolemaic period, I surmise that when a follower in Alexandria or the Fayum closed his or her eyes and imagined Isis, she was imagined as a queen, a powerful queen like Arsinoe.

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Figure 18. Queen
(Cleopatra III?)
as Isis
Second Century
Thonis-
Heracleion.
Granodiorite
National
Museum of
Alexandria
SCA 283
Image: in Goddio
and Masson-
Berghoff, 95



Figure 19. Gold ring. Isis and Sarapis.
Second century.
British Museum.
GR 1865.7-12.55
Image: © Trustees of the British Museum

³⁷³ Royal portraits were more Greek in style in the second century than the third century, often displaying a mixture of Greek and Egyptian features. Damian Robinson, 'Queens and goddess', in *Sunken cities...* (eds.) Goddio and Masson-Berghoff, 95.

³⁷⁴ See Chapter 4 below.

³⁷⁵ The Egyptian elements are the diadem the royal uraeus, the sistrum, ankh and the knotted garment. In Egyptian style royal portraits of the second century, subjects were given fuller fleshed Greek faces and Greek hair. Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies*, 43, 47-52.

³⁷⁶ Plantzos, 'The Iconography of Assimilation', 402. Plantzos says that although queens may appear to be depicted like Isis, ...it is Isis who is influenced by the queens rather than the other way around: looking for a face to put on Isis, (Greek?) cutters naturally looked at their queens for inspiration, not actually implying that the person portrayed was the queen herself in the guise of the goddess'.

Analysis: power and syncretism

Agency, audience, intent and network processes can be generally discerned for Arsinoë's deification and assimilation to Aphrodite. A combination of people in positions of power, Ptolemy II, Arsinoë, Callicrates and other advisers acted to deify Arsinoë and to associate Arsinoë with Aphrodite in connection with the sea, marriage and family. *Philoi* and wealthy Greeks instituted and spread the cult, and poets and visual artists created the imagery. Tradition and cultural memory played its part – a network connection with the old Greek world of the fifth and fourth century is apparent, and would have been understood by educated Greeks. As Bing states, 'Callicrates forged a link between Arsinoë and such celebrated world exemplars of Aphrodite *Euploia* as the Knidian Aphrodite of Praxiteles and Conon's temple in the Piraeus'.³⁷⁷ Alexandria was being fashioned as a new Athens; Arsinoë a new Aphrodite. Just as Aphrodite was protector and martial patron of Conon's fleet, and unifying deity of the Athenians, Arsinoë was protector and patron of the Ptolemaic navy and its ports, and through her marriage with Ptolemy II, patron of all their people.³⁷⁸

Power was exercised in different but productive ways; relationships and processes of exchange were particularly important. The deification of Arsinoë was a 'political act', part of the embedding of Ptolemaic dynastic rule, and an expression of maritime dominance.³⁷⁹ A deliberate exercise of power is not inconsistent with the concept of religious change being brought about by network processes – it is part of the dynamic.³⁸⁰ There were deliberate decisions to deify Arsinoë and to connect her to Aphrodite and there was official regulation of cult practise. However, religious

³⁷⁷ Bing, 'Posidippus and the Admiral', 256, note 28: 256.

³⁷⁸ Elizabeth D. Carney, 'Being Royal and Female in the Early Hellenistic Period', in *Creating a Hellenistic World*, eds. Andrew Erskine and Lloyd Llewellyn Jones (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010) citing Savalli-Lestrade (1994) in note 58, 213.

³⁷⁹ D.J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 118.

³⁸⁰ Collar, 'Religious Networks', 37.

policy was not fully or coherently evolved nor necessarily implemented or controlled by the ruler. The connections between Arsinoe and Aphrodite occurred early in the Ptolemaic period when the rulers and others were experimenting with the range of royal imagery, religious associations and a newly recognised Sarapis. No *oenochoe* bears the inscribed name Aphrodite.³⁸¹ Even in relation to sea deities, a colossus of Zeus *Soter* was placed at the top of the Pharos lighthouse,³⁸² and the cult of the Dioscuri was established in Alexandria, possibly with the support of Arsinoe.³⁸³ Aphrodite was just one, albeit an important, royal association made for Greek subjects.

Callicrates established the cult of Arsinoe/Aphrodite at Cape Zephyrium. as a ‘private’ cult’.³⁸⁴ In implementing the decision to found the cult, he was participating in processes of mutual exchange; Callicrates honoured his ruler and queen in exchange for continued patronage and display of his status. Indeed, there was an established tradition of *philoi* establishing private cults of royal women in Athens and Macedonia.³⁸⁵ In network terms, Callicrates was an innovator and influencer in a small world network.³⁸⁶ *Philoi*, including officers connected to Callicrates and the

³⁸¹ Stephens, ‘Battle of the Books’, 247.

³⁸² The statue of the deity and its sponsor is attested in an epigram of Posidippus: ‘*The Greeks’ saviour god—O mighty Proteus—shines from Pharos thanks to Sostratus of Cnidos, son of Dexiphanes*’. The statue must have been colossal, as the epigrams more poetically says that the great fire of the lighthouse and the statue of the deity can be seen from afar. AB 115, trans. Nisetich, *Poems of Posidippus*, 42-43. Francoise. Dunand, ‘The Religious System at Alexandria’, *A Companion to Greek Religion*, Edited by Daniel Ogden, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 255.

³⁸³ Public temple of Poseiden in Alexandria: Satyrus, *POxy.* 2465, fr. 12, col. li, line 5. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 207; II, note 145, 352. Dunand, ‘Religious System at Alexandria’, 255.

³⁸⁴ The boundaries between ‘private’ and ‘public’ cult may be difficult to determine. It is doubtful that this cult is ‘private’ in the sense that it was established solely at Callicrates’ private initiative given he was a close friend of the court and the admiral charged with implementing the regime’s naval policy. However, he was named as the dedicator of the cult and presumably financed it. Cults of *philoi* and others will be considered private on that basis. Carney assumes a cult established by a *philos* is a private cult. Carney, *Arsinoe* 99.

³⁸⁵ Adeimantus of Lampsacus dedicated a temple and statues to Phila-Aphrodite, wife of Demetrius Poliorcetes in Athens in c. 330. (Ath. 6.225c). Later Ptolemy II Philadelphus in Alexandria dedicated a temple and shrine to his mistress, Bilitsche-Aphrodite (before 246) (Plu.*Mor.*753e). Carney, *Arsinoe*. 95-96. Wallace, ‘Adeimantus of Lampsacus’ 143-144.

³⁸⁶ Individuals or groups have strong ties within their own families and directly connected social groups, known as ‘clusters’. They also have loose or weak ties (as between acquaintances), and these ‘long-distance’ ties connect clusters together and form what is termed a ‘small-world’ network. Small world networks may span vast geographical distances, yet operate efficiently to spread new ideas, as ‘weak ties’ are short cuts to clustered networks. Elite Greeks from Alexandria and those under their charge in military or other service for the Empire comprised such a network. Collar, *Religious Networks*, 10-13. On the role of Callicrates: Stephens, ‘Battle of the Books’, 248.

navy and others seeking recognition at the Ptolemaic court, spread the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphus throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. The effect of their influence was the embedding of the cult among a broader worshipper network. Power was exercised, and religion was diffused, through relationships and exchange rather than royal directive.

Poets were attached to and supported by the court but they should not be viewed simplistically as directed agents of court policy or ‘spin’. They worked within the mores and evolving religious and ideological frames of the time, which they assisted in shaping. Stephens says it well; the poets ‘articulate the experiments in Ptolemaic self-fashioning’ and each does so in his own way, competing for the attention and favour of the monarch and their audience.³⁸⁷ Posidippus and Callimachus view the divine status of Aphrodite and Arsinoe differently; to Posidippus the divinities were wholly assimilated while Callimachus portrays them as associated but separate goddesses, showing that an official view was not settled or prescribed and that the poets had wide scope to present their own image of the divine queen.³⁸⁸ The only evidence we have of the cult at Cape Zephyrium is in the epigrams and the brief reference in Strabo.³⁸⁹ The only evidence of the total assimilation of Arsinoe and Aphrodite is in the poetry of one poet, and possibly the sand altars prescribed for the altars used in the *Arsinoeion*, Arsinoe is worshipped as Arsinoe Philadelphus without reference to Aphrodite, and Aphrodite is not referred to on the oenochoe. This could be interpreted in two ways; first, that the assimilation was only poetic, or it was so complete and understood that cult reference to Aphrodite was redundant. Whatever the nature of the syncretism; whether assimilation or adoption of attributes of a parallel deity, the Greek audience of Alexandrian poetry would be well aware of divine Arsinoe’s connection to the sea. This may have been a sizable network if it is the case that poetry of this period was widely

³⁸⁷ Stephens, ‘Battle of the Books’, 243.

³⁸⁸ Stephens, ‘Battle of the Books’, 244-46. See pp. 53-54 above and notes 292 and 296.

³⁸⁹ Stephens, ‘Battle of the Books’, 246.

recited.³⁹⁰ The naval and warrior imagery of Arsinoe and Bernice II in the mosaic of a private home also attests to wide knowledge of the queens' sea connection under the first few generations of Ptolemaic leaders.

In the early Ptolemaic period Isis and Arsinoe Philadelphus were assimilated in Egyptian cult but there was no such syncretism in the Greek context including in connection with the sea, with the possible exception of a few private dedications outside of Egypt. Egyptian and Greek religious tradition and social networks, at this early stage, were largely distinct, so it follows that their respective interactions with the court and religious exchanges were distinct.³⁹¹ Isis was an important Egyptian deity and was honoured and associated with Arsinoe as such. The representations and honouring of the divine Arsinoe on the walls of Isis' Temple at Philae, Arsinoe's Egyptian cult and her introduction into Egyptian sanctuaries as a temple-sharing deity were innovations of Ptolemy II and his advisers that could have only been done successfully with the co-operation of Egyptian priests.³⁹² Again the relational nature of power is evident. Reciprocity is a feature of each of the synodal decrees, although the balance of power between rulers and priests shifted over time.³⁹³ Arsinoe was assimilated to Isis in this Egyptian context and became a popular member of the Egyptian pantheon at least in Memphis and Lower Egypt. In the Greek sphere, Isis and Arsinoe were temple sharing deities or the deities appeared together on oenochoe, or in dedications or royal oaths with their consorts. The establishment of sanctuaries and making of dedications were private acts. The principal intention was to honour the deities and the king, to pray to the deities and to win the king's favour.³⁹⁴ Isis, in the early

³⁹⁰ as argued by Alan Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 30.

³⁹¹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 70-71.

³⁹² Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 90.

³⁹³ Dorothy J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 2nd, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 124

³⁹⁴ The worship of Sarapis and his spouse, not only honoured the deity and the king, it was understood that it may also aid career advancement. Zoilus urged Apollonius to build a sanctuary of Sarapis on the basis that it would enhance his reputation and allow him to gain even more favour with the king. *P. Cairo Zeno*. 59034. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 258.

period, was most important as the wife of Sarapis and wifely model for the queen. There were no hymns to Isis from Theocritus or Callimachus, no state sponsored sanctuary to her in Alexandria. There is no discernible official intention in the third century to assimilate Isis to Arsinoe or Aphrodite in Greek cult. Even the honouring of Arsinoe at the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Nymphaion and the naming of the ship Isis, were, it is contended, separate acts. A syncretism of Isis and marine Arsinoe/Aphrodite was not likely to be conceived or intended by the court at this early stage. Arsinoe was the Ptolemaic patron of the navy, ports and seafarers. Why would Isis need to be created additionally as a sea goddess? If that was the intention, why would Ptolemy Philopator, who honoured the Egyptian gods more fully than his predecessors, have an impressive altar to Aphrodite on his luxurious royal barge, rather than Isis?³⁹⁵ The naming of the 'Nymphaion' ship may have followed Egyptian practice or it was part of the sometimes *ad hoc* hermeneutic experimentation of the early period. I ended the last chapter with a discussion of whether a Hellenistic-style colossus of Isis stood on Pharos Island to send off and welcome seafarers. I now conclude that the existence of such statue in the early Ptolemaic period is highly improbable.

If there was no 'Alexandrian creation' of Isis of the sea under or following the reign of Arsinoe II in the third century, what, then, was the importance of Arsinoe? The presentation and following of the powerful and divine Arsinoe brought about a network 'shock' that would, in time, assist in causing the developments discussed in this and the previous chapter to coalesce.

Through the network processes discussed, there was syncretism of Aphrodite and Arsinoe, and for Egyptians an assimilation of Isis and Arsinoe. Fraser refers to Arsinoe obtaining a divine personality through assimilation or association with Aphrodite, Tyche, Demeter and others³⁹⁶ and

³⁹⁵ Ath. 5.205 d.

³⁹⁶ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 237, 246.

ties such as oenochoae and statues were significant in presenting and linking ideas and iconography of these goddesses together.³⁹⁷; but Arsinoe was no ordinary avatar.

In the Hellenistic world the divinity of rulers was related to the ‘visibility of power’ and the ability to offer protection for their subjects.³⁹⁸ Paradoxically, the recognised divinity of the ruler diminished after death as the ruler was no longer able to fulfil his protective function.³⁹⁹ This was not the case with Arsinoe II. Arsinoe was highly visible as queen in Egypt and elsewhere and she was powerfully presented to her subjects as co-regent, which underpinned her divinity and protective function after death.⁴⁰⁰ The extent and variation in her public imagery and her cult practice, made her present to her Greek and Egyptian subjects, and parts of the wider Greek world, after her death. Bejewelled or colossal images in Alexandria would have particularly impressive to the gaze of subjects. Repeated participation in her cult and festival, and consistency of cult objects such as altars and oenochoae, would have had a socially integrative effect, even if officially required.⁴⁰¹ It can be reasonably speculated that such experiential ties were meaning-making nodes in their own right, eliciting responses of awe, hope, comfort or belonging.⁴⁰² Arsinoe’s cult endured because it met the needs of worshippers and was meaningful to them. Indeed, its ‘striking success’ is rightly said to have paralleled ‘the contemporary popularity of the cult of Isis.’⁴⁰³ Isis was the pre-eminent female Egyptian deity, while Arsinoe and the queens that followed her were the female embodiment of Ptolemaic power. The opinion of Diodorus is

³⁹⁷ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 241-3.

³⁹⁸ Chaniotis, ‘Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers’, 431-433.

³⁹⁹ Chaniotis, ‘Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers’, 432-433.

⁴⁰⁰ Through her earlier marriages, Arsinoe was also known in other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean including Thrace, Macedonia Asia Minor and Samothrace, K. Vandorpe, ‘Arsinoe II Philadelphos’, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, eds. Roger S. Bagnall, et al. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013), 763. Her first husband Lysimachus, renamed the city of Ephesus, *Arsinoeia*, Strabo 14 1.21, Barbantani, ‘Goddess of Love and Mistress of the Sea’ 154.

⁴⁰¹ Caneva, ‘Ruler Cults in Practice’, 93-94.

⁴⁰² Caroline Van Eck. ‘Living Statues: Alfred Gell’s Art and Agency, Living Presence Response and the Sublime’ *Art History* 33 no.4 (2010): 643-659. Morgan, David. ‘The material culture of lived religion: visibility and embodiment’: in *Mind and Matter: Selected Papers of Nordic Conference*, ed. J. Vakkari (Helsinki: Society of Art History: 2009), 14-31.

Sociological approaches to the meaning making power of interactions with visual and material culture and of lived religion merit further study in this regard.

⁴⁰³ D.J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 123.

relevant in this regard; perhaps influenced by the apparent power wielded by such queens as Cleopatra II and III, he associates a powerful Isis with an ordination that a Ptolemaic queen 'should have greater power and honour than the king...'.⁴⁰⁴ From the second century, queens and Isis could appear the same. Both Isis and Arsinoe (and some of her successors) were saviour goddesses. The parallel intersected in the minds of worshippers. Most significantly, the parallel intersected in the minds of the composers and audience of her hymns of praise from the second century.

⁴⁰⁴ Diod. Sic. 1.27.

Chapter 4

Worshippers: Ties, Nodes and Networks

*Mighty One, I shall not cease to sing of Your great Power,
Deathless Saviour, many-named, mightiest Isis...
Prove Yourself merciful to me and free me from all distress.*
Isidorus
*wrote (it)*⁴⁰⁵

The idea of a marine Isis was an element of, and was propelled by, the larger conception of Isis as a pre-eminent saviour goddess and goddess of good fortune for all mankind. This is clear in the praises, and the dedications, of her worshippers. Isidorus' Isis will hear the prayers of many supplicants including those of distressed sailors and 'men of commerce'⁴⁰⁶, while among the many mighty powers and deeds that another extoller, Demetrius, has Isis declare in her own voice, five directly relate to the sea:

*I devised the activities of seamanship ...
I am mistress of rivers and winds and sea ...
I calm the sea and make it surge ...
I am the Mistress of seamanship
I make the navigable unnavigable, whenever I so decide.*⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ Isidorus, *Hymn* I: 25-26, 36-37.

⁴⁰⁶ Isidorus, *Hymn* I, 33-34; *Hymn* II, 5.

⁴⁰⁷ The aretalogy of Cyme: *RICIS* 302/0204, 15, 39, 43, 49, 50. trans., Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 140-141.

Aretalogies as ties

The Isis aretalogies, and the fuller expression of Isis as a saviour goddess and ‘wealth-giver’⁴⁰⁸, were plausibly the products of an initial two-way *interpretatio* process in Egypt early in the second century. Hymns found in Cyme, Thessalonica, Ios, the text of Diodorus Siculus, and Andros are termed ‘the M-Group’, as they are believed to have a common origin in an (unknown) prototype text probably originating in Memphis (the ‘M-Text’).⁴⁰⁹ Hymns with similar content such as Isidorus’ first hymn are also ‘Isis aretalogies’⁴¹⁰ The Cyme hymn is the most complete aretalogy and although distant in time and place from a third or second century Memphis proto-type, the use of typically Egyptian or Near Eastern first-person proclamations and expressions of ‘oppositional omnipotence’ link it most closely to an Egyptian original.⁴¹¹ The preamble to the Cyme aretalogy clearly states that ‘the text was copied from the inscription in Memphis which is positioned in front of the temple of Hephaistos’.⁴¹² The introduction of the Andros hymn also refers to a Memphis origin.⁴¹³ The common content of the M-Group texts, Memphis as a place of worship of Isis,⁴¹⁴ and the historical factors discussed below are sufficient to overcome the

⁴⁰⁸ Isidorus *Hymn* I, 1

⁴⁰⁹ Cyme: *RICIS* 302/0204; Thessalonica: *RICIS* 113/0545; Ios: *RICIS* 202/1101; Diod. Sic. 1.27; 3-5; Andros: *RICIS* 202/1801. Each of these hymns has very similar content, with some instances of ‘literal correspondence’, ‘that cannot be ascribed to mere chance’. Jördens, ‘Aretalogies’, 158. The texts of the first four hymns are in prose, the Andros hymn is in hexameter. Harder collated the texts of the first four prose hymns into the M-Text and assumed an original common prototype in Memphis early in the Ptolemaic period. Peek analysed the Andros hymn and determined that despite stylistic differences, it too derived from the same source as Cyme. Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 85.

⁴¹⁰ The Maronea hymn (*RICIS* 114/0202) and parts of Isidorus’ Hymns II and III also fit within the broader ‘Isis aretalogy’ category. The origin of the aretalogies has been much debated. A brief overview is provided in Versnel, *Ter Unus*, 41-44 and in Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 135-137. Many scholars agree on the common origin thesis and that the aretalogies combine Egyptian and Greek elements and traditions. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 285, note 153. Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, ‘The Hellenistic Face of Isis: Cosmic and Saviour Goddess.’, in *Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World* ... eds. Laurent Bricault et al. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 58-62.

⁴¹¹ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 284 and note 150, 284. For this reason, it is generally used as the M-text in comparative analysis. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 137, 146-147.

⁴¹² *RICIS* 302/0204, 2.

⁴¹³ *RICIS* 202/1801, 3-6. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 158.

⁴¹⁴ Herodotus attests to a temple of Isis at Memphis. Herod. 2.176 A temple to Isis, the mother of Apis, was established on the necropolis in the fourth century in the reign of Nectanebo II. D.J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 27-28. Thompson also refers to a separate Isieion of the Memphite nome that had the right of asylum, *P. Cair. Zen* 59245.2 (252 BC), note 128, 28. Diodorus refers to a tomb in a temenos at Hephaistos as a burial place of

objection that the claims of Memphite origin were a fictional trope.⁴¹⁵

The aretalogies are a combination of Egyptian and Greek ideas and traditions but recent scholarship has moved away from an either/or categorisation and the notion of the hymns being wholly ‘Hellenistic creations’.⁴¹⁶ Such thinking downplays the active role of Egyptians and Egyptian tradition in syncretic processes leading to the M-text, the fluidity of the boundaries between what may be considered Greek and Egyptian, and the differing syncretic processes and contexts for the creation of each hymn or set of hymns.⁴¹⁷ There are parallels between statements in the Cyme hymn and Egyptian conceptions of Isis recorded in Hymns at Philae including Isis’ rule over heaven and earth and her power over life, destiny and prosperity.⁴¹⁸ Demotic praises and prayers of the second century and late Ptolemaic period also laud the rule, the universality and greatness of Isis and her protective powers – indicating that these

Isis. Diod. Sic. 1.22.2. Inconsistently he also refers to the deity’s burial place at Nysa, Arabia. Indeed, unknown sources told Diodorus of a stele bearing the hymnal inscription composed in hieroglyphs that stood at Nysa, Arabia, although the reliability of this may be doubted. Diod. Sic. 1.27.3-4. The hymn that Diodorus recounts is similar in content to other M-Group Texts, and he must have read or had access to a copy of such a text. However, Nysa Arabia as a burial place of Isis and Osiris and as a site of a hieroglyphic stele is not supported by any other extant Greek or Egyptian source. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 158.

⁴¹⁵ Henrichs refers to the stele at Memphis as a fiction, claiming that such fictitious religious texts ‘were a common form of religious propaganda in the Hellenistic and Roman periods’. Albert Henrichs, ‘The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion: Prodicus as the Spiritual Father of the Isis Aretalogies’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 88 (1984), 152, note 57.

⁴¹⁶ Categorisation: Major studies that highlight either the Egyptian or Greek aspects of the aretalogies are summarised in Thomas M. Dousa, ‘Imagining Isis: On some Continuities and Discontinuities in the Image of Isis in Greek Hymns and Demotic Texts’, in *Acts of the Seventh International Conference of Demotic Studies, Copenhagen, 23-27 August 1999*, ed. Kim Ryholt (Copenhagen: The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, University of Copenhagen, 2002), note 9, 151. Using the Cyme hymn as the M-text, the Egyptologist Müller identified fifteen ‘aretalogical statements’ as Egyptian ideas or elements, while Zabkar’s comparative analysis of the Philae hymns extended this class to twenty-three. Müller identified twenty-six Greek concepts. Zabkar, *Hymns of Isis*, 146-156. The notion of ‘Hellenistic creations’: Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 285. Recent scholarship advocates a new approach: Dieleman and Moyer, ‘Egyptian Literature’; Andrea Jördens, ‘Aretalogies’, 143-44. Gasparro, ‘The Hellenistic Face of Isis’, 45-48.

⁴¹⁷ Dielman and Moyer contend that earlier scholarship, that championed the Greek or Egyptian case, may be criticised on the grounds of ‘cultural essentialism’. Dielman and Moyer, ‘Egyptian Literature’, 444. Dousa considers the ‘interpretative perils’ of distinguishing between the ‘Egyptian’ and ‘Hellenistic’ elements of the Isis hymns. Dousa, ‘Imagining Isis’, 152.

⁴¹⁸ Zabkar, *Hymns of Isis*, 93, 144-145; 154-155. In an inscription in Room X of the sanctuary, Isis is termed ‘Isis, Giver of life, Lady of life’, Zabkar, *Hymns of Isis*, 93. Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 94-95. Dousa, ‘Imagining Isis’, 178.

conceptions of Isis were and became more broadly shared in Egypt.⁴¹⁹ The careful analysis of the presentation of certain aspects Isis in the Isis hymns and Demotic sources by Dousa reveals the complexity of thinking behind the continuing and innovative conceptions of Isis.⁴²⁰ In some instances what appears to be an innovation may be better understood as a different way of presenting a traditional characteristic of Isis to a new or alternate audience.⁴²¹

Interactions at Memphis

Who participated in the creation of the M-text at Memphis, when and why? Only reasoned speculation is possible, despite the confidence of some scholars who write of ‘undoubtedly propagandistic intentions’⁴²² and a ‘deliberate cultural project undertaken under the auspices of the Ptolemaic monarchy, probably at Memphis in the early years of the third century BC, to re-fashion Isis.’⁴²³ Isis was ‘re-fashioned’ only in the sense that she was extended and translated: and,

⁴¹⁹ Parallels with the Cyme hymn are also apparent in various demotic hymns, on papyri and ostrakon dating from the second century BC. Ostrakon (169 BC): *O. Hor* 10. 7 ... *Isis the great (?), god's mother, great goddess of the whole land!*; Theban Graffito 34621 (Late Ptolemaic/Roman).1-5; ‘*O you of all lands! Call to Isis, the great goddess! She listens at every moment, she does never abandon the one who invokes her in the road! I prayed to Isis and she heard my voice and (the voice of) my companions.*’ Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess*, 2, 13, 26, 65.

⁴²⁰ Dousa illustrates this with a discussion of Isis’ proclamation that she is the discoverer of agriculture (Cyme hymn: RICIS 302:0204, 7). Inventions and discoveries have been categorised as Greek elements, consistent with ‘Prodician’ thinking of the early Hellenistic period. Dousa is responding to interpretations such as Heinrich’s; ‘The very notion of Isis as inventress and benefactress is essentially Greek and the result of her equation with Demeter.’ (Henrichs, ‘The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion’, 154) Dousa explains that while Greeks equated Isis with Demeter and derived Isis’ association agriculture from that, the Egyptian perspective was an association of Isis with agriculture through Isis’ identification with Renenutet/Hermouthis, and Sothis, bringer of the floods. These associations are shown in passages of the hymns of Isidorus. (Hymns I.1, 11-13; II.3, 16-20). Furthermore, Dousa says the Greek epithet meaning inventor or discoverer (Hymns 1.3; 2.3) can also be understood as ‘creator’ in line with Egyptian understandings of the concept of creation. He contends that Isidorus uses the language of *interpretatio Graeca*, but the language carries a double-meaning ‘and conceals deeper continuities between the Egyptian and Hellenistic images of Isis’. Dousa, ‘Imagining Isis’, 152-156. Dieleman and Moyer point out that Dousa is building on the work of J. D. Ray, *The Archive of Hor*, (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976) who pioneered the comparative analysis of portrayals of Isis in Greek language hymns and demotic sources. Dieleman and Moyer, ‘Egyptian Literature’, 444; Dousa, ‘Imagining Isis’: 157.

⁴²¹ Such as the example discussed in the above note. See also Dousa’s discussion of the presentation of the universality and uniqueness of Isis. The Egyptian conception of henotheism is compared to associating pantheism with uniqueness in Isidorus hymns and later aretalogies, to aid understanding, and the appeal of the goddess in non-Egyptian contexts. Dousa, *Imagining Isis*, 169-175, 183.

⁴²² Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, ‘The Hellenistic Face of Isis: Cosmic and Saviour Goddess’, 61. The anachronistic and pejorative term ‘propaganda’ appears repeatedly in the scholarship. Jordens, *Aretalogies*, 158, note 66 and note 91, 164.

⁴²³ G. Woolf ‘Isis and the Evolution of Religions’, 77. Woolfe acknowledges in a footnote ‘that where the initiative came from is unknowable’. note 45, 77.

I argue, this occurred later in time. The content of the M-Text indicates that it was created through interactions between Egyptian priests, Greek intellectuals, and their respective religious traditions and texts such as the Hymns of Philae.⁴²⁴ Copies of those texts may have been viewed and copied *in situ* by travelling priests or were available through the temple libraries.⁴²⁵ Henrich questions how Egyptian priests may have ‘acquired their Hellenic thought patterns’.⁴²⁶ It could be equally asked how Greeks could have obtained their knowledge of Egyptian theology. It has already been contended that Egyptian priests may well have demonstrated their understanding of the Greek gods to Herodotus and past contact and religious interactions would make learned Egyptian priests, as well as learned Greeks, more than capable participants in a mediated *interpretatio* process.⁴²⁷ The Serapeum of Memphis was an active centre of learning from the second century and a Greek style chapel facing the sanctuary’s *dromos* had already introduced a close Greek religious presence in the third century.⁴²⁸ The original language of the M-text or the Greek language of the later aretalogies is not a decisive factor. Demotic literature and praises with parallel concepts were to be produced from the same cultural environment.⁴²⁹ Perhaps the M-text stele that stood outside the temple was in multiple languages, like the Rosetta decree and other decrees of the period.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁴ Zabkar is strongly of the view that the Philae hymns were sources for the M-text. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 157. The term ‘Egyptian priests’ also encompasses Greek speaking or ‘Hellenised’ Egyptian priests. Gasparro draws a parallel between the nature of this Memphis process and its participants with the interaction of the Egyptian Manetho, the Greek Timotheus and others in relation to the development of Sarapis, as attested by Plutarch *De Is. et. Os.* 28, 161 and see Griffith’s commentary 395-398. Gasparro, ‘The Hellenistic Face of Isis’, 65.

⁴²⁵ Egyptian theology and ritual was developed, recorded and stored in writing and held in libraries within the temple or in adjacent buildings. Dunand and Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt*, 102.

⁴²⁶ Henrichs, ‘The Sophists and Hellenistic Religion’, 156, note 79.

⁴²⁷ See p.21 above, particularly note 104.

⁴²⁸ Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Egypt*, 281.

⁴²⁹ Dieleman and Moyer, ‘Egyptian Literature’, 434. The demotic text, *The Dream of Nectanebos*, for example, portrays the supremacy of Isis, including as saviour of all the gods. Gasparro, ‘Hellenistic Face of Isis’, 69, note 88.

⁴³⁰ Later aretalogies were in Greek, the earliest the Hymn of Maronea of c 100BC, was the most Hellenistic in style and nature, perhaps as a reaction against, and thereby attesting to, Isis’ Egyptian-style presentation in the source text. It is the only extant aretalogy that refers to Isis as the spouse of Sarapis, rather than Osiris. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 136-137; Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 181; Jördens, ‘Aretalogies’, 153, 162.

The M-text was another outcome of the ongoing dynamic of religious continuity and change, a response to new socio-political circumstances. I speculate that the M-text is best understood as both a theological exercise and a political act, likely welcomed by Egypt's rulers, but initiated by the Memphite priesthood to assert the relevance of a powerful Egyptian deity to a broader audience, and by association, their authority and importance. Several socio-political factors make this and a second century date likely: the renewal of the power of the Memphite priesthood vis-à-vis the Macedonian kings in the more unstable times following the Battle of Raphia,⁴³¹ official recognition of Isis and Sarapis as saviour gods⁴³², the introduction of more Greeks as priests/administrators in the temples and Egyptian scribes competent in Greek at court, widening the class of educated dual-identity Egyptians,⁴³³ and the increasing size of the Graeco-Egyptian community generally. Given that first image of sailing Isis was on a coin of Antiochus IV, the Syrian King who had spent some time occupying Memphis, it is reasonable to surmise that the M-Text (which clearly connected Isis to marine activities) was composed and known by at least the end of his reign in 164.⁴³⁴ These circumstances explain why some point in the early

⁴³¹ There was a gradual shift in the nature of the status of ruler from Hellenistic king to pharaoh, akin to that of the former Egyptian monarchs, from the time of the Raphia victory. An emphasised status as pharaoh associated the ruler more closely to the ancient religious capital. The status shift was evident in the terms and the concessions obtained by priests set out in Raphia decree 217, the Rosetta decree of 196 and the Philae decrees of 186 and 185. Memphite priests led the many priestly synods held in Memphis in the first half of the second century and royal visits to the city for religious, ceremonial or political/strategic purposes became more frequent. For example, Thompson states that the visit of young king Ptolemy V Epiphanes to Memphis for victory celebrations and his coronation, the synod of priests, and the negotiated Rosetta decree served both political and religious interests. D.J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 138-142; Höbl, *Ptolemaic Empire*, 106.

⁴³² Through the issuing of a seal showing the heads of Isis and Sarapis as saviour gods after the victory at Raphia (c.217). L. Bricault, *Sarapis et Isis Sauveurs*, 334-343. Gasparro, 'Hellenistic Face of Isis', 63, note 71.

⁴³³ Gilles Gorre, 'A Religious Continuity Between the Dynastic and Ptolemaic Periods? Self-Representation and Identity of Egyptian Priests in the Ptolemaic Period' (332-30 BC), in *Shifting Social Imaginaries in the Hellenistic Period Narrations, Practices, and Images*, (ed.) Stavrianopoulou, 106-108; D.J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 103-106. Gorre explains that this social change increased the following of Egyptian gods and that temples were 'promoted and patronised' by Hellenised Egyptians. Gorre, 'Egyptian Priests in the Ptolemaic Period', 106.

⁴³⁴ Following his invasion in 168 BC, Antiochus had himself proclaimed king of Egypt and crowned in Memphis and he installed a governor of the city. O. Hor. 2 recto. 9; verso.7-8; 3 verso.11, Ray *The Archive of Hor*, 125-29 D. J. Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*, 140.

decades of the second century was the opportune moment for an *interpretatio* process that explained and widened Isis' sphere of influence.⁴³⁵

Isis extended: ruler, saviour and controller of destiny

In what sense was Isis' nature and reach extended by the M-text and subsequently? Isis was presented as 'queen' or 'ruler of all the land', for all her subject worshippers.⁴³⁶ In later aretalogies, Isis was clearly ruler of every land and her universal nature was evident and achieved through Isis' identification with range of Greek and eastern goddesses.⁴³⁷ Isis' 'divine absolutism', Versnel states, 'in many respects imitates the model of the worldly autocracy so typical of Hellenistic kingship'⁴³⁸ – or, to draw the parallel with Arsinoe - 'queenship'. Isis' saving powers were unlimited but key categories were specifically stated.⁴³⁹ Isis 'embryonic' Egyptian connections to the sea; navigation, rivers and wind, are added to and, significantly, are related more closely to human and commercial activities, rather than just the celestial realm.⁴⁴⁰ It was at this point that marine Aphrodite or Aphrodite/Arsinoe was the likely exemplar. Like Aphrodite and the divine Arsinoe, Isis' saving remit was broad. Isis' powers and her control over destiny, in life as well as death, were not new but were now officially proclaimed, by Isidorus early in the first century, as being available to all people who sought her aid.⁴⁴¹ In her capacity as 'fate' and ruler over destiny,

⁴³⁵ Fraser asserts that to the extent that the aretalogies are Egyptian, 'they are undoubtedly the product of the Greco-Egyptian milieu of the second and first centuries'. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 670. Bricault also favours an early second century date. Bricault *Isis, dame des flots*, 37

⁴³⁶ *RICIS* 302/0204, 3a., trans., Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 140. Versnel translates the line 'Isis I am, the *queen* of all the land'. Versnel, *Ter Unus*, 50. Versnel contends that Egyptians would understand 'all the land' as Egypt, while Greeks would interpret it as all of the 'civilised world'. Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 287. By the second century AD, this was definitely the case as attested by Isis' title in *P. Oxy.* 1390 121, 'mistress of the civilised world', Dousa, 'Imagining Isis', 160.

⁴³⁷ Isidorus, *Hymn I*, 14-24. Also recognised and proclaimed by Apuleius in the Latin aretalogy of in the second century AD. Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, 11.5. ed. and trans. Griffiths, *The Isis-Book* 75

⁴³⁸ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 28

⁴³⁹ The first hymn of Isidorus refers to the saving of all people and possessions from war, prisoners, those facing death, those that are ill and in pain, travellers in foreign lands and those that experience the dangers of the sea. Isidorus, *Hymn I*, 26-34.

⁴⁴⁰ Bricault *Isis, dame des flots*, 39. Cyme: *RICIS* 302/0204, 15, 49 [

⁴⁴¹ Isidorus, *Hymn I*, 34, 36-37; *Hymn II*, 5-6; 7-8, 15-16. Isis already exercised power over men's fate through her control over Shai (fate) and syncretism with Renenutet (Good Fortune) and the determiner of fate each year, Sothis. Dousa 'Imagining Isis', 177. Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 94-95. Previously under official Egyptian theology, as stated

Isis was identified with Agathe Tyche: 'By virtue of her victory over fate she could take on the function of fate for her devotees but in the guise of a benevolent, providential fortune.'⁴⁴² The express assimilation of Isis with Tyche was important for the attractiveness and future following of marine Isis in the Mediterranean, as traders that were pious and prayed to the goddess were not only protected from misfortune on the sea, they were promised material reward.⁴⁴³

Isidorus as a node

The hymns inscribed at the entrance of the Temple to Isis-Hermouthis illustrate and attest to the spread of the idea of Isis as divine saviour and benefactor, through an individual, by early in the first century.⁴⁴⁴ Accordingly, their relevance extends beyond the attestation of the spread of the idea and belief of Isis' protection of seafarers in Hymn 1. They also demonstrate continuity with Egyptian tradition and overlapping syncretic discourses, involving possibly even memory of the golden age of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe.⁴⁴⁵ The temple was originally founded for Renenutet in the twelfth dynasty and a wall inscription to that deity anticipates aspects and praises of Isis over 1,800 years later: *I give all life and happiness eternally. I give all eternity eternally. I give all good fortune (health?) eternally*.⁴⁴⁶ The first hymn, closest to the other Isis aretologies in content, assimilates Hermouthis, Agathe Tyche and Demeter to Isis, and portrays her as an omnipotent universal goddess, honoured by all, and known by different names.⁴⁴⁷ However, Isidorus' universal goddess

in the Philae hymns, Isis exercised her powers over destiny in relation to, or through the king. The king was the intermediary for his people. In this new era, Isis could respond to supplicants directly. Isidorus directly seeks Isis' mercy. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 138, 154.

⁴⁴² Dousa, 'Imagining Isis', 176. Isidorus, *Hymn* 1-2.

⁴⁴³ Isidorus, *Hymn II*, 5-6.

⁴⁴⁴ Date: Moyer, *Isidorus at the Gates*, 210. There are four hymns that vary both in style and in scale of focus. Hymns 1 and 3 are in hexameters, while 2 and 4 are in elegiac couplets. The first hymn focuses on a universal Egyptian goddess, the focus of the second is narrower, referencing local syncretism with a triad of Egyptian gods including the popular crocodile god and their festivals, while in the third hymn, the scale shifts between the universal and local, and piety and an 'ideal king' is introduced to mediate Isis' benefactions. The fourth hymn is firmly local and concerns the pharaoh that founded the temple. Moyer, 'Isidorus at the Gates', 215-231.

⁴⁴⁵ Moyer, 'Isidorus at the Gates', 210-211, 226-230.

⁴⁴⁶ Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 6. In the Ptolemaic period, Renenutet, goddess of harvest, fertility and good fortune was named Hermouthis or Thermouthis in Greek texts. Moyer, 'Isidorus at the Gates', 212-213.

⁴⁴⁷ Isidorus, *Hymn* 1.1-3

is centred in Egypt, where she causes the miracle of the flooding of the Nile, and the henotheism of Egyptian religion is evident in his description of Isis as ‘Thious’, ‘the one’.⁴⁴⁸ On the other hand, like the almost contemporaneous hymn of Maronea,⁴⁴⁹ the first hymn is more Greek than Egyptian in its second person mode of address, and the hymns reference Greek myth, literature and cult practise; Isis is said to be present on-high looking down on and judging men from Mt Olympus or her sun-chariot, or if she is present in the local nome, with the ‘Arsinoites’, ‘men of mixed races’, she witnesses their virtues as they make ‘sacrifices, libations and offerings’ to her and her temple sharing gods.⁴⁵⁰ Isis’ nature as a wealth-giver is emphasised; all men receive gifts but, in line with Egyptian tradition, there are special rewards for the ‘righteous’, those loyal to the King and Isis.⁴⁵¹ The memory of the reign of Ptolemy II and his divine consort is evoked by the special mentions of ‘Thracians’ as a category of ‘mortals’ in Hymn I, of the king who ‘rules both Asia and Europe, keeping the peace’ and to the Arsinoites in Hymn II.⁴⁵² As the ruler of a large stable Empire, and developer of the Fayum, and as visible queen and eponymous goddess, the memory of Philadelphus and Arsinoe persisted, and evoked ideal headship.⁴⁵³

Isidorus self-consciously mediated between two religious and literary cultures, saying he ‘translated’ and inscribed his learning into Greek ‘for the Greeks’.⁴⁵⁴ The Fayum was a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic area uniquely settled by Greek soldiers, Egyptians and others, whose descendants were receptive to an accessible Isis. Isidorus’ name is Greek, although derived from

⁴⁴⁸ Isidorus, *Hymn* 1.10-13. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*, 48, 230ff.

⁴⁴⁹ *RICIS* 114/0202. Dated to c.100BC, Versnel, *Ter Unus*, 41, note 6.

⁴⁵⁰ Isidorus, *Hymn* III. 23-31.

⁴⁵¹ Isidorus, *Hymn* III 3.4 Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 52. In the third hymn, Isis is portrayed in her traditional role as protector of the king; a role not portrayed in the aretologies composed outside of Egypt. Isidorus, *Hymn* III 3.7-9.

⁴⁵² ‘All mortals who live on the boundless earth, Thracians, Greeks and Barbarians’ Isidorus, *Hymn* I.14-15; II.13-14, 30. The audience for the hymns is reminded that Arsinoe was first married to Lysimachus who ruled over Thrace and that Thrace was a part of the Ptolemaic empire during the reign of Ptolemy II. Thracians also formed a large contingent of soldiers in the Ptolemaic army and of cleruchs given land in the Fayum. Their descendants may have been worshippers at the temple. Moyer, *Isidorus at the Gates*, 218. Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 27.

⁴⁵³ Philadelphus met the image of Isidorus’ ‘ideal king’ more than the contemporaneous warring Ptolemies, Ptolemy IX Soter and Ptolemy X Alexander. Moyer, ‘Isidorus at the Gate’, 227.

⁴⁵⁴ Isidorus *Hymn* IV 39. Moyer, ‘Isidorus at the Gates’, 216

the name of an Egyptian goddess, he is clearly educated in Greek language and literature, and may have been an Egyptian priest.⁴⁵⁵ Isidorus interacted with other nodes and ties in composing his hymns — perhaps the M-text itself at Memphis, papyri copies of that text or the hymns of Philae, priests or interpreters, other cult centres, travellers outside of Egypt, Greek tradition and literature, and the popular Egyptian tradition of Isis as a saving and listening deity.⁴⁵⁶

The composition and display of the hymns was both an act of worship and a mode of interaction with visitors to the temple precinct who read or listened to the hymns inscribed on the temple gates, connecting them to the Isis narrative.⁴⁵⁷ The audience would have been receptive.

Terracotta statuettes of Isis and Isis-Aphrodite attest to the popularity of the goddess in the late Ptolemaic period and Roman period, particularly in the Fayum.⁴⁵⁸ Although these cults of Isis emerged principally as popular or votive religion, such worship was not entirely separate from, and was informed by, conceptions of Isis in her hymns, both Greek and demotic, particularly her omnipotent power as saviour.⁴⁵⁹ Isis' saving domains such as healing and protection of family, I contend, interacted to reinforce to sailors⁴⁶⁰ the value of Isis as a protector at sea. Can we be so

⁴⁵⁵ As stated, Greek names were not necessarily indicative of Greek ethnicity particularly late in the Ptolemaic period. Moyer, *Isidorus at the Gates*, 216. For different viewpoints on Isidorus' Greek and priestly status, see notes 18 and 19, 216.

⁴⁵⁶ Zabkar suggests that Hymn VII at Philae could have 'influenced or inspired' Isidorus when he composed the 'polyonymous' section of his Hymn I. 'The association of Isis with some prominent cult centres and her assimilation to the leading Egyptian goddesses — which the poet of Hymn VII at Philae may himself have patterned on older Egyptian hymns of the same or comparable tenor — could well have stimulated Isidorus in his elaboration and extension of Isis epithets and functions; intermingling these with the identification of Isis with Demeter and other Greek as well as near Eastern goddesses.' Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis*, 139-140.

⁴⁵⁷ Many followers and potential followers of Isis were likely connected into the Isis narrative through an oral tradition; by recitations of hymns at festivals, procession and feasts for the goddess, even the explanations of professional (multi-lingual) aretalogists attached to temples. Indeed, the declamatory wording of the early M-text is suggestive of performative texts used in Egyptian cult practise. According to Jordens an oral tradition may explain why copies of the M-text have not been found in Egypt. Jordens, *Aretalogies*, 161-169.

⁴⁵⁸ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 261.

⁴⁵⁹ Versnel, *Ter Unus*, 45. Dunand and Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt*, 302.

⁴⁶⁰ Egyptian or Graeco-Egyptian sailors from the Fayum, as well as Alexandria manned the Ptolemaic and Roman Alexandrian and Misene fleet. See pp. 106-7 below. Shipbuilding and the port of Memphis remained important in the Ptolemaic period, particularly with the agricultural development in the region. DJ Thompson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies*. 54-55.

sure that cult, and their votives, divided along gender lines⁴⁶¹ or that an Egyptian sailor would not carry and offer a figurine of Isis or Isis-Aphrodite, as Herostratus carried the saving Aphrodite on his journey to Naucratis?⁴⁶² There is no such evidence; so that is mere speculation to suit my narrative.⁴⁶³ Now back to where some scholars say it all began.

Alexandria as a node

Alexandria quickly became the pre-eminent port city of Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean. Does it follow then that Isis emerged from here early as a harbour or sea goddess, as scholars have assumed?⁴⁶⁴ I have argued that it was not official Ptolemaic policy to establish such a cult through syncretism with Arsinoe/Aphrodite in the third century. Was Isis identified with the city in some other capacity? What of the dynamics of private worship? Some evidence suggests that Isis was a goddess associated with the city of Alexandria from the third century and was later worshipped as saviour goddess. However, the extant evidence for the worship of Isis in the Ptolemaic period is insufficient to support a firm view that a specifically-recognised marine Isis was first worshipped in, and then transmitted from, Alexandria.

Alexander is said to have established a temple of Isis in Alexandria, which would have made Isis the only founding Egyptian deity of the city.⁴⁶⁵ However, there is no extant evidence of a separate

⁴⁶¹ The figurines are generally associated with the domains of sexuality or fertility in domestic contexts. Bommas states, 'As naked Isis, she was worshipped by women'. Martin Bommas, 'Isis of Alexandria', *Biblische Notize*, No. 147 (2010) 36-37, 42.

⁴⁶² See above pp.26-27.

⁴⁶³ It is interesting, however, that the sea protection and sexuality domains of Isis do not seem to have overlapped or been connected in the minds of worshippers in the same way that they did with Aphrodite. This is consistent with Arsinoe's connection with Aphrodite *Ourania* but not *Pandemos*. See note 358 on p.65 above.

⁴⁶⁴ V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai sur le culte d'Isis à Pompéi* (Paris: Editions E. De Boccard, 1964), 98 '...from the time of the founding of Alexandria and of its syncretistic religion, Isis played a new role, viz. as patron-goddess of that port city; here she became Protector of Navigation'. trans. Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 81, note 38. Vanderlip, conflates time periods and asserts without supporting evidence, that 'No doubt [Isis] was known by such titles [Euploia, Pharia, Pelagia] all over the Aegean area as soon as her Alexandrian cult migrated north.' Vanderlip, *Hymns of Isidorus*, 81-82. Also Dunand, *Le culte d' Isis I*, 110. According to Bommas, the sources show that the Egyptian cult spread through private initiative, 'exclusively through the port of Alexandria'. Bommas, 'Isis of Alexandria', 25.

⁴⁶⁵ Arr. *Anab.* 3.1.5

sanctuary or cult of Isis in Alexandria.⁴⁶⁶ The philosopher Euhemerus, who was active in the early third century⁴⁶⁷, referred to the tomb of 'Pharian Isis'⁴⁶⁸. This may indicate that there was a cult of the goddess on the island of Pharos early in the Ptolemaic era. Was this the lost sanctuary initiated by Alexander? The evidence is unclear. Most likely Euhemerus used the term 'Pharian' as a substitute word for Egyptian or Alexandria.⁴⁶⁹ Later Ovid, and Statius too, use the epithet in this sense.⁴⁷⁰ Consistent with such usage is recognition of Isis as city-goddess and protector of the city. The Egyptian scribe Hor recognised Isis in this capacity, in his dream in 168, when Egypt was under attack from Antiochus IV:⁴⁷¹

Isis, the great goddess of this Egypt and the land of Syria,⁴⁷² is walking upon the face (of) the water of the Syrian sea. Thoth stands before her (and) takes her hand, (and) she reached the harbour at Alexandria. She said, 'Alexandria is secure [against (?) the] enemy...'⁴⁷³

Numismatic, epigraphic and literary evidence of the Roman period, and finds from underwater archaeology, are collectively suggestive of a late cult of Isis on the Pharos, although there is no evidence of cult practise.⁴⁷⁴ Importantly, images of sailing Isis with the Pharos lighthouse first

⁴⁶⁶ Strabo's description of Alexandrian landmarks makes no reference to a sanctuary or shrine of Isis. Strabo, 17.1.9. However, Strabo provides little information on sanctuaries or other buildings in his description, stating generally, 'in short, the city is full of public and sacred structures' (17.1.10.)

⁴⁶⁷ Burstein, S. 'Review: Euhemerus' Sacred History (Marek Winiarczyk, *The 'Sacred History' of Euhemerus of Messene*. trans. Witold Zbirohowski-Koseia *Beiträge zur Altertumskunde* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2013.)), *Histos* 8 (2014), xliii.

⁴⁶⁸ Min. Fel. Oct. 21.1

⁴⁶⁹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* II, note 125, 54-55. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 107.

⁴⁷⁰ Ovid. *Amor.* 2.13.7-8; *Metam.* 9.773-4. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 107. Bruneau, 'Isis Pelagia à Délos', 444. Statius also refers to Isis as Queen of the Pharos and also appears to use Pharian as an adjective equating to Egyptian; 'Pharian harvests' and 'Pharian altars'. Stat. *Silv.* 3.2. 22, 101-2, 112.

⁴⁷¹ In the Sixth Syrian War. Hölbl, *Ptolemaic Egypt*, 143-8.

⁴⁷² Ray comments that this title may refer to cults of the goddess existing in Syria such as Gaza, Ascalon or Berytus (as attested by the early second century AD source *P. Oxy.* XI, 1380, ed. F.C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1953), 128-130 or was deliberately intended to win Ptolemy XI Philometor's favour, given his ambition to recover Coele-Syria. Ray, *The Archive of Hor*, 1(a), 155.

⁴⁷³ O. Hor. 1. 12-14. Ray, *Archive of Hor*, 11-12.

⁴⁷⁴ OGIS 706 (AD 136-161?) Further epigraphical evidence cited in Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* II, note 125, 54. Literary evidence includes Ovid and Statius. See note 470 above. Archaeological finds include a colossus found on the sea bed at Qait Bey and identified as Isis and possible findings of a rock cut temple. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I

appear in coins of Roman Egypt from c. AD 90, only after Isis has been recognised and worshipped as a saving sea goddess elsewhere, and Isis cults ‘proliferate’ in Egypt in the late Ptolemaic period.⁴⁷⁵ It was only then that Isis may be justifiably termed a harbour goddess of Alexandria. It was Zeus *Soter* that first stood on high over the Pharos.⁴⁷⁶

Other evidence of the worship of Isis at Alexandria is sparse. Some scholars assume that Isis was worshipped at the Serapeum, despite her name not being included on the foundation plate,⁴⁷⁷ but we have no dedications from the site that confirm this or the capacities in which Isis was worshipped.⁴⁷⁸ We do know that Greeks, including the *dioecetes*, Apollonius, participated in Egyptian festivals of Isis in Alexandria but it is unclear whether there was a separate Greek cult of Isis, with Greek priests and cult practises.⁴⁷⁹ Private sanctuaries dedicated to Sarapis and Isis on behalf of the king and family attest to the active personal interest in the cult by the Greek elite or administrative class in the third century.⁴⁸⁰ However, to the extent Isis was worshipped in the early period by Greeks in Alexandria, she was principally worshipped as the consort of Sarapis.⁴⁸¹ Callicrates established a temple of Isis and Anubis at nearby Canopus, however, the combination

20-21; II notes 125, 126, 127, 128. For coin evidence, L. Bricault, *SNRIS* 29-30. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 107, 48, 63-65.

⁴⁷⁵ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 20-2. Bommas, ‘Isis in Alexandria’, 37.

⁴⁷⁶ See p. 73 and note 382 above.

⁴⁷⁷ Bommas ‘Isis, Osiris, and Sarapis’ 422; Francoise, Dunand, ‘The Religious System at Alexandria’ in *A Companion to Greek Religion*. ed. Daniel Ogden (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 258

⁴⁷⁸ Dunand, *Le Culte D’Isis* I, 110.

⁴⁷⁹ *P. Cairo Zen.* 59154. Thomas Allan Brady, *The Reception of the Egyptian Cults*, 13. Heyob, *Cult of Isis Among Women*, 9. Given the dearth of evidence, Fraser looks to other places outside of Alexandria for clues about possible cult practise in Alexandria. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 264.

⁴⁸⁰ For example, the dedication made in c. 276 BC of a temenos to Sarapis and Isis outside the city walls ‘on behalf of Philadelphus, ... son of Ptolemy and Berenice, Soteris, by Archagathus, the son of Agathocles, epistates of Libya ... and his wife Stratonice, (Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I 271; SEG xviii. 636, II note 676, 427); and the later dedication of a temple and temenos to Sarapis and Isis made on behalf Ptolemy III Euergetes, Berenice and their children, by ‘Apollonius, son of Philion, an Alexandrian citizen of the deme Ammonius and his wife Demetria’ (Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I 272; OGIS 64, II note 679, 428). Further dedications in Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* II, note 680, 428. Dunand also refers to a sanctuary to Sarapis and Isis established during the reign of Philopator. Foundation plates with the names of the dyad were found in excavations. One gold plaque also has a bilingual dedication (in Hieroglyphs and Greek) to Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III. Dunand, *Le culte d’Isis* I, 110. Such dedications became rarer after the reign of Philopator in the second century. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 270.

⁴⁸¹ The name of Sarapis appears before that of Isis in extant dedications in Egypt and in joint dedications in Delos. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 260.

with Anubis suggests Callicrates had her Chthonic aspect in mind.⁴⁸² The dedication of Nicagoras in the mid-third century links Isis and Aphrodite in some way in a saving capacity.⁴⁸³ Saviour gods protected human life in general⁴⁸⁴ but we have no way of knowing if Nicagoras or another dedicant to Isis (and Sarapis) as saviour gods at the time of Philopator had protection at sea in mind.⁴⁸⁵ Hor's reference to Isis walking on the sea and arriving in the harbour hints of a consciousness of Isis' sea connection in the mid - second century.⁴⁸⁶ Sources that post-date the aretalogies and developments outside of Alexandria are much more likely to relate to Isis as a sea saviour, such as those suggestive of a temple to Isis *Soteira* at Cape Lochias, at the time of Cleopatra VII.⁴⁸⁷ Another source lists the cult places of Isis in Egypt and refers to Isis *Soteira* and to Isis *Euploia*,⁴⁸⁸ however this papyrus is from the second century AD, and the later cult title was unknown until the first century.⁴⁸⁹ Allowance must be made for lost or inaccessible evidence; however, it may be tentatively concluded that marine Isis did not first emerge from Alexandria, either from above or via the accumulated actions and beliefs of private worshippers in Alexandria. Seafarers and traders had other sea deities available to them in Alexandria early in the Ptolemaic period: the aforementioned Zeus *Soter*, Poseidon, the Dioscuri and of course, Aphrodite\Arsinoe at Canopus⁴⁹⁰; only later would a more developed form of marine Isis arrive back in Alexandria to compete for attention.

⁴⁸² Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis I*, 112.

⁴⁸³ 'Nicagoras, the son of Aristonicus, 'Alexandrian', to Sarapis, Dionysus, Isis, Aphrodite, the Saviour and Fruitful Gods.' SB 5863, Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 198; II note 53, 332.

⁴⁸⁴ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 194.

⁴⁸⁵ SB 412 Dunand *Le culte d'Isis I*, 111 note 3.

⁴⁸⁶ O. Hor. 1. 12-14, Ray, *Archive of Hor*, 11.

⁴⁸⁷ Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 74; Dio Cass., 50.5.3.

⁴⁸⁸ P. Oxy. 1380, in Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, 128.

⁴⁸⁹ See pp. 100-1 and notes 537 and 545 below.

⁴⁹⁰ Poseidon had a temple in the area of the Emporium (Strabo, 17.1.9). The public cult of the Dioscuri had a temple in Alexandria, (Satyrus, POxy. 2465, fr. 12, col. ii, 5) Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 207; II, note 145, 352.

Delos as a node

Delos was a vital and early node in the Isis worshipper network in the Eastern Mediterranean. Long an important religious centre, for a brief era of about two centuries Delos was a cosmopolitan commercial centre and port on the Mediterranean trade route; a meeting-place of traders from all over the Eastern Mediterranean and traders from the Italian peninsula in the West.⁴⁹¹ These circumstances facilitated religious exchange and choice. Isis accompanied other Egyptian gods to Delos, conceptions of Isis inter-mingled with those of other Greek and non-Greek deities and travelled back and forth to other parts of the Mediterranean. The Isis worshipper network, and the network of the gods, was multi-directional. In Delos, gods or goddesses were what worshippers decided they would be; for some worshippers, unequivocally, Isis was a saving sea goddess.

Initially at least, Memphis appears more important than Alexandria, priests seemingly more important than traders as connecting ties, spreading 'Egyptian' cults to Delos.⁴⁹² It has already been noted that the promotion of Egyptian cults abroad was not part of official Ptolemaic *Religionspolitik*,⁴⁹³ and although Delos was subject to the soft political control of Egypt during the

⁴⁹¹ A number of factors contributed to Delos becoming for a time a prosperous trading port and a religious and cultural node. Strabo refers to its convenient location in the Aegean; a midway port of call for Italians and Greeks travelling to Asia Minor and to the destruction of Corinth which eliminated a competitor for trade (Strabo 10.4). Also significant was Rome's displeasure with Rhodes, its mandating of Delos as a free port under Athenian administration and, Strabo points out, Delos being a market place for slaves supplied by pirates (Strabo 14.2 C668). Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 170. Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 13. Michel Malaise, *Les conditions de pénétration et de diffusion des cultes égyptiens en Italie* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 270.

⁴⁹² It is not suggested that this is generally the case across the Mediterranean or indeed later in Delos. Fraser states 'It is perhaps not surprising that, as the home of the original god [Osiris-Apis], Memphis should have a particular role in the establishment of at least some of the early extra-Egyptian cult-centres, although other evidence shows beyond doubt that many, if not most, were founded by individuals from Alexandria and elsewhere'. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 254; II note 506, 403. In relation to 'Egyptian cults', their nature in Delos is briefly discussed below. The form of Egyptian cults and deities could vary widely between Upper and Lower Egypt and different regions, even, villages, and according to the occurrence and nature of Hellenic syncretism. Barret, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 14, and note 52.

⁴⁹³ See above p.59, note 329.

reign of Philadelphus, Alexandrian merchants were not significantly active in Delos until the mid-second century.⁴⁹⁴ A priest from Memphis is a known early connecting tie. An inscription displayed outside the sanctuary known as Serapeum A declared, in two ways, that Apollonius ‘an Egyptian from the priestly class’⁴⁹⁵ travelled from Memphis by ship, ‘bearing the god’ Sarapis, and that by order of the god his grandson and priest, founded the Serapeum.⁴⁹⁶ Fig 20 shows a reconstruction of Apollonius’ cabotage voyage.

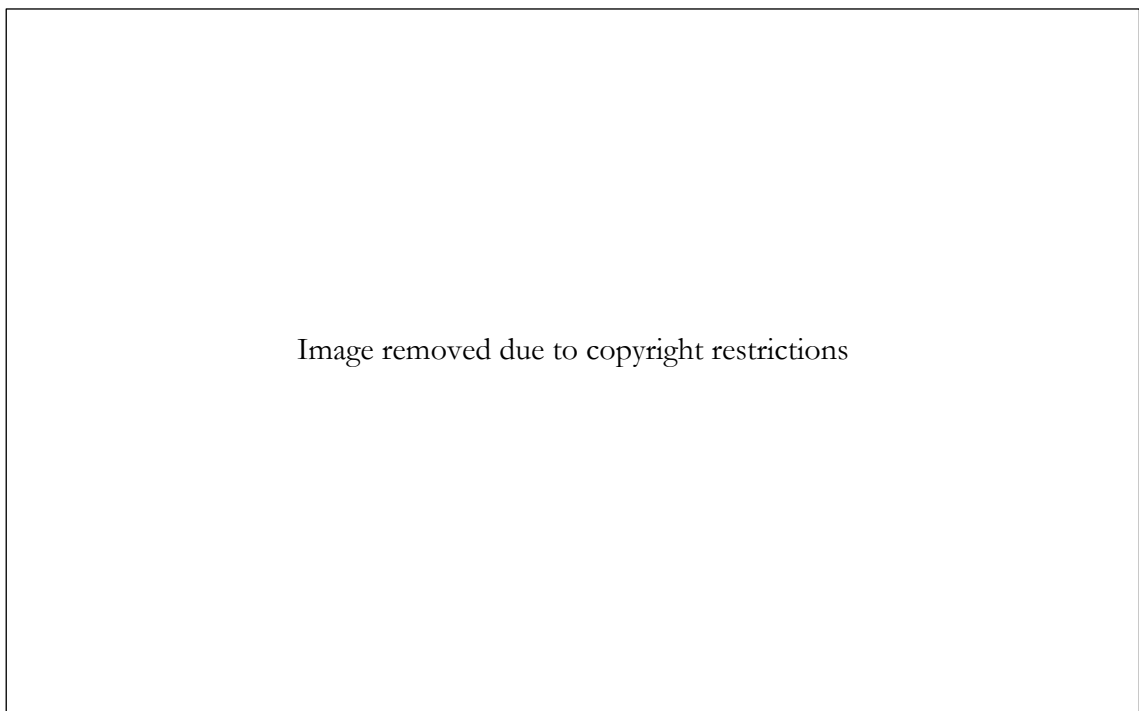


Figure 20. Apollonius’ journey to Delos
Map and image from ORBIS Project, in Mazurek, ‘Material and Textual Narratives’, 41.

⁴⁹⁴ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 170-171. Fraser explains that most Alexandrian trade was conducted with or through Rhodes until Roman intervention and Delos free port status was declared.

⁴⁹⁵ In a Greek context, the priest’s Greek name is used rather than his Egyptian version. Double names are already attested in 300-245. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 162, note 61.

⁴⁹⁶ *RICIS* 202/0101 = IG XI.4 1299, 3-5, 12-13, 38. The two versions inscribed on the stele are a prose narrative told in the voice of Apollonius’ grandson and priest, Apollonius II (lines 1-29), and an aretalogical poem by a person named Maiistas (29- 94). Translation by Ian Moyer in Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 284-286.

Isis travelled with Sarapis. The inscription refers to Isis as Sarapis' 'bed-partner', and to the deities as 'saviours' who 'always attend on noble men'.⁴⁹⁷ The testimony of the inscription may be considered reliable, given the Memphite connection to Sarapis⁴⁹⁸ and evidence of Egyptians and Egyptian cult elsewhere in the Mediterranean from the fourth century.⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, the oldest dedication to Isis on Delos seems to have been made by an Egyptian woman named Taessa.⁵⁰⁰ The timing of Apollonius' journey and arrival is debated and occurred any time between 300 and 230; however, the Serapeum and the inscription were not likely to have been erected until at least the end of the third century.⁵⁰¹ The reference to Sarapis and Isis as 'saviour' gods in the inscription is consistent with a date from the reign of Philopator.⁵⁰² Two other Serapeums known as 'B' and 'C', and an Isieion were built around the same time.⁵⁰³ Each Serapeum was originally a private sanctuary and Serapeum B was patronised by cult associations.⁵⁰⁴ Serapeum C, the largest and wealthiest,⁵⁰⁵ was officially administered by the early second century and was fully

⁴⁹⁷ RICIS 202/0101, 32-34. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 285.

⁴⁹⁸ Memphis was the original home of the god in the form of Osiris-Apis. It is probable that the cult of Sarapis was established in Memphis not long after it was established in Alexandria, although in Memphis, it would continue to be closely connected to the cult of Osiris-Apis. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 253.

⁴⁹⁹ Such as the inscription from the Piraeus of 333/2 referring to a permission granted to a group of Egyptians to build a temple there, RICIS 101/0101, 42-45; from the fourth century there is a dedication to Isis by Egyptians in Eritrea, RICIS 104/0101; and in Demetrias in Thessaly there is a stele of the mid third century marking the graves of an Egyptian priest of Isis named Ouaphres, RICIS 112/0701. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 161. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 254.

⁵⁰⁰ RICIS 202/0160. Her name is transliterated from its Egyptian form *Ta-3s.t.* and means 'She of Isis'. The dedication has been dated on a palaeographical basis to the beginning of the third century. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 161, 195.

⁵⁰¹ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 162, note 61.

⁵⁰² For sources attesting to this title for Sarapis and Isis during the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator see p.69, note 369 and p.92, note 483.

⁵⁰³ It has sometimes been assumed that Serapeum A was the first sanctuary established, however, that is not certain. We know from an inscribed date on a silver cup included in a temple inventory (RICIS 202/0424) that Serapeum C was operational from 215 at the latest, while another inscription sets a date of 196 for Serapeum B (RICIS 202/0314). Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 196. The circumstances of the founding of B and C are not known. Fragmentary evidence suggests that the first Isieion was built around 220 (IG XI, 352, 15), although its location is unknown. Possibly the Isieion became part of the later Serapeum C complex. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism* 196. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 85, note 3.

⁵⁰⁴ At least seven cult associations appear to have been associated with Serapeum B including 'the *Eranistai*, the *Therapenti*, the *Melanephoroi*, the *Thiasos of Sarapiastai*, the *Dekadistai* and *Dekadistriaei*, the *Enatistai* and the *Thiasta?*. CE 20, CE 21, CE 25 = RICIS 202/0139, CE 26-27 = RICIS 202/0140-1). Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 203, note 205. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 107-8.

⁵⁰⁵ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 198. Temple inventories attest to its wealth such as the *Inventory of Kallistratos*, RICIS 202/0424 = I *Delos* 1417, A, II, 59-165; B, I, 1-88. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 93, note 1.

taken over by the Athenian administration after 166.⁵⁰⁶ Athenian control of the free port marked the beginning of the greatest period of prosperity on the Island and worship of Isis and other Egyptian gods became particularly active from this time.⁵⁰⁷

Religious choice and exchange were facilitated by the nature of the Serapeums and open access to the temples on Delos. The Egyptian cults were those of Lower Egypt, of Memphis and Alexandria, that had already undergone syncretic processes, recognising or translating gods and presumably some modes of worship for Greeks and Greek-speakers.⁵⁰⁸ That process continued on Delos. The Athenians placed a colossal Greek-style statue of Isis wearing a chiton and cloak in the small temple they erected in Serapeum C and in the Greek tradition, the image of the deity was open to public view and worship.⁵⁰⁹

The architecture of the sanctuaries was Greek although the dromos of Serapeum C resembled those of Egyptian temples including the Serapeum at Memphis.⁵¹⁰ By the mid second century most of the priests of the Egyptian gods were Greek, only Serapeum A continued to have a hereditary priesthood.⁵¹¹ However, the essential 'Egyptianness' of the cults continued and was evident in some Egyptian style statues and offerings, in collective rites such as incense offerings, ritual meals, incubation and dream divination, ritual prohibitions, and the use of water from the Inopos river in liturgies as a link to the sacred Nile.⁵¹² Interpreters of dreams and singers of

⁵⁰⁶ IG XI 1032, Brady, *Reception of Egyptian Cults*, 32. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 204.

⁵⁰⁷ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 171.

⁵⁰⁸ There is no direct evidence of cult practise for the cults of Egyptian gods in Alexandria. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria I*, 264.

⁵⁰⁹ A small Greek temple of Doric style was built in c. 150, while the statue was placed in the temple in 128/7: Michel Malaise, *Les conditions de penetration*, 278.

⁵¹⁰ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 197.

⁵¹¹ As a full public sanctuary from 166, the Athenians appointed Athenian priests on an annual basis from Athenian tribes in the traditional manner. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 202, 204.

⁵¹² The study of Dunand found that there was little variation in the cult practices between sanctuaries A, B and C. Dunand emphasised the 'Egyptianness' of the cults. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 100-108. All sanctuaries were built in the Inopos river valley and accessed the water from the river. Serapeum A did so directly, via a specially cut water channel. Egyptian objects from Serapeum C include a Late Period inscribed statue of a 'beautiful sistrum player', three sphinxes, engraved footprints, two bronze ears, a range of votive offerings relating to healing and horned

praises had an official role in explaining and promoting the divine deeds and saving powers of Isis and Sarapis on Delos.⁵¹³ These nodes and the hymns they sang were a mode of mediation between religious traditions.⁵¹⁴

Importantly, the temples were open to worshippers from all cultures, and to visiting gods.⁵¹⁵ There are dedications to Greek gods in every Egyptian sanctuary.⁵¹⁶ Greek style statues of non-Egyptian gods such as Apollo, Artemis and Aphrodite were dedicated at Serapeum C.⁵¹⁷ On the other hand, 'Egyptianising' Terracotta statuettes of Isis 'Oriental' Aphrodite and Arsinoe II have been found in or near the temple of Apollo but not in a Delian Serapeum.⁵¹⁸ The offerors of such dedications and statues may not have envisaged the statue as a visiting god at all. It is possible that worshippers understood dedications to Greek gods as dedications to their Egyptian equivalents. To a Graeco-Egyptian, an Apollo may be understood as Harpocrates, an Aphrodite as Isis.⁵¹⁹ The form and iconography of the terracotta figurines were sufficiently ambiguous or hybrid to allow multiple or alternate meanings and interpretations, in the eye and mind of the individual worshipper.⁵²⁰ An Egyptianising statuette of Isis, increasingly understood as an avatar

altars. The Hymn of Maiestas refers to 'smoky offerings', 'fragrant altars' and 'god-summoned feasts' in the communal dining room, *RICIS* 202/0101, 40, 63, 65. In relation to ritual prohibitions, an inscription in Serapeum A, refers to women and men dressed in wool being prohibited from entering the sanctuary. *RICIS* 202/0199. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 198, note 178., 199, 201-203 Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 106.

⁵¹³ Such as the Cretan, Ptolemaios, *RICIS* 202/0283.

⁵¹⁴ Panayotis Pachis. 'The Hellenistic Era as an Age of Propaganda: The Case of Isis' Cult' in *Theoretical Frameworks for the Study of Graeco-Roman Religions*, eds. Luther H. Martin and Panayotis Pachis (Thessaloniki: University of Studio Press, 2003), 105-107. Jördens, 'Aretalogies' 169.

⁵¹⁵ Barrett *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 409. The dedications of Italians, Greeks, Syrians and others to the Egyptian cults outnumber those of Alexandrians or Egyptians. Robert Parker, *Greek Gods Abroad: Names, Natures, and Transformations*. (Oaklands, Cal.: University of California Press, 2017), 160-161.

⁵¹⁶ Moyer comments that this is unclear. Moyer lists the names of the Greek gods attested in each of the sanctuaries. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 200-201, note 191.

⁵¹⁷ Malaise. *Les conditions de penetration* 309. Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 198, note 178.

⁵¹⁸ The term Egyptianising is used in the same sense given it by Barrett, to describe terracotta figurines that have been produced outside of Egypt by non-Egyptians or Egyptian expatriates who use Egyptian figurines as their direct models. They are used and found principally in domestic contexts but 11 of the published corpus were found in or close to religious sanctuaries. Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 324, 418.

⁵¹⁹ The Greek statue of Apollo holding a falcon a bird sacred to Horus from Serapeum C, for example, could be understood as Horus/Harpocrates, with whom Apollo was often identified. Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 188, note 643.

⁵²⁰ Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 411.

or as encompassing other deities, may be offered to Aphrodite in a Greek temple, while an Oriental Aphrodite may serve as Isis in a Serapeum. As discussed, the iconography of Ptolemaic queens was *prima facie* interchangeable with Isis, and in Arsinoë's case also with Agathe Tyche, facilitating interpretative syncretism.

Producers of 'popular' religious iconography on Delos were also informed translators of Egyptian gods.⁵²¹ Greek style Egyptianising terracotta figurines have been found on Delos in the same assemblages as non-Egyptian statuettes.⁵²² The producers of the figurines, catering to a diverse population and many religious traditions, appear to have consciously produced 'syncretic' images that are capable of multiple interpretations.⁵²³ This practise was also evident in Egypt in the Fayum.⁵²⁴ Barrett refers to both producers and 'consumers' as employing 'a strategy of active syncretism', to meet group and individual needs and choices.⁵²⁵ Active syncretism was also evident in the relief of sailing Isis discussed in Chapter Two, found in a shop adjacent to the Agora of the Italians on Delos.⁵²⁶ Such reliefs were given as votive offerings to give thanks for protection from the perils of the sea. Juvenal was later to say that artists 'make their bread and butter' from the offerings of such votive tablets to Isis.⁵²⁷ Although the deity shown on the relief has some iconography suggestive of Isis, she may also be interpreted as Aphrodite or as Isis-Aphrodite.⁵²⁸ We do not know how she was named, despite the common etic designation of Isis as 'Pelagia'.⁵²⁹ Epigraphy on Delos provides us with the best direct evidence of how worshippers

⁵²¹ Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 142.

⁵²² Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 324, 365.

⁵²³ A notable common element in Egyptian and Egyptianising Isis and 'Oriental' Aphrodite figurines, for example, is the pink and yellow paint colour of the goddesses' chiton. Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 172.

⁵²⁴ Frederick G. Naerebout. 'How do you want your Goddess? From the Galjub Hoard to a General Vision on Religious Choice in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt', in *Isis on the Nile. Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* eds. Laurent Bricault and Miguel John Versluys. (Leiden; Boston: Brill: 2010), 55-61.

⁵²⁵ Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 34, 122.

⁵²⁶ Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines*, 339, note 1545.

⁵²⁷ Juv. 12.26-28.

⁵²⁸ See pp.44-45 above.

⁵²⁹ The deity on the relief was called Isis Pelagia by Bruneau (in 'Isis Pelagia à Délos', 437) and scholars then assumed a cult presence of Isis Pelagia on Delos including Tran Tam Tinh and Vanderlip, (*Hymns of Isidorus* 81-82; note 38), Barrett, *Egyptianizing Figurines* 193 note 667 and many others. Bricault identified and collated all evidence of epithets

named their gods and of the agency of worshippers in the recognition and spread of Isis as a sea deity.

Choosing Isis ‘of the sea’ in Delos

A number of dedications to Isis, alone or with other gods, tell us something about the early worshippers of the nascent marine Isis, their religious choices, syncretic thinking and behaviours. All of the relevant dedications to Isis have been found in Serapeum C and date from the Athenian period. The dedications are in the Greek language, and the names of the dedicators are Greek (occasionally Roman), despite their mix of origins.⁵³⁰ Most are inscriptions on white marble bases. Four dedications clearly recognise Isis’ divine power over sea travel or three others suggest this attribute through association with Aphrodite. In about 150 Protos of Cos made it safely across the sea to Delos and thanked those gods who saved many sailors from ‘great perils’ – Sarapis, Isis, Anubis, Apollo and ‘the gods who share the temple’.⁵³¹ Here Isis was recognised as only one of a number of saviours. Similarly, Eutychus, on behalf of all sailors, himself and his son, recognised the navigation protection offered by Zeus *Ourios* (of ‘fair wind’), Sarapis, Isis and others⁵³², and two dedications by Romans dedicated an offering to Isis and the other principal Egyptian gods, with Zeus *Soter* and the Dioscuri, respectively.⁵³³ A dedication to Isis Aphrodite by private associations in c. 105, for the Athenian and Roman people, indicates that Isis-

of Isis. He determined that Isis was named ‘Pelagia’ in imperial inscriptions/dedications in Mytilene and Iasos (*RICIS* 205/0302 = *SIRIS* 259, 3-4; *RICIS* 305/1402 = *SNRIS* 274, 7-8) and in relation to a temple in Corinth attested by Pausanias (Paus. 2.4, 6.). Laurent Bricault, *Myrionymy*, (Stuttgart and Leipzig; B.G. Teuber, 1996), 60. These sources are from the imperial Roman period. Bricault implicitly refers to a casualness in historical methodology when he says that Isis Pelagia and Isis Pharia are used to describe the goddess when portrayed sailing on a coin [or a relief], in catalogues and other studies of coins, when it is not made clear, why one name or another is given to the goddess. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 101. Bruneau later clarified that when he named Isis, ‘Isis Pelagia’ in connection with images of an apparent Isis sailing on Delos that he did so because of the later epigraphical evidence and for convenience, and stated that it was now preferable to use a general descriptive name such as sailing Isis. Bruneau, ‘Existe-t-il des statues d’Isis Pelagia’, 351.

⁵³⁰ Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 199.

⁵³¹ *RICIS* 202/0230.

⁵³² The other gods are ‘Anubis, Hapocrates and the gods who share the same temple and the same altars’ *RICIS* 202/0324. The dedication was made in c. 105/4.

⁵³³ *RICIS* 202/0362; 202/0273 (c.118/7).

Aphrodite was well recognised as a syncretised deity by this date.⁵³⁴ Isis Aphrodite was viewed as a protective deity for whole groups of people, and, in a special way, for particular individuals. Two brothers, sons of Dikaïos, arguably added an individual epithet *Dikaia*, based on their family name, to dedications to Isis Aphrodite, to publically claim the personalised protection of the goddess.⁵³⁵ In the context of an island trading centre, distant from the dedicators' home town, protection from the perils of sea was likely to be the protection sought from a now more widely known syncretised marine deity.⁵³⁶

As early as c. 140, Isis' recognition as a Mediterranean marine deity was made clear in a dedication by Andromachos to a unique combination of deities; *Isis Soteira Astarte Aphrodite Euploia Epekoos*.⁵³⁷ Andromachos may have been Cypriot or Phoenician, we cannot be sure, but the dedication reveals him to be a knowledgeable and conscious participant in cultural interaction on Delos.⁵³⁸ The Egypto-Phoenician-Greek deity (or complex of deities) is a super-charged cross cultural marine saviour, who listens. Isis *Soteiria* is the first-named lead goddess. The epithet saviour applies to Isis' marine aspect⁵³⁹ and this is explained and reinforced by the naming of the sea goddess Astarte and Aphrodite of fair sailing, the first recorded instance of the linking of the epithet *Euploia* with Isis through syncretism with Aphrodite.⁵⁴⁰ That Isis will listen to the prayers of her followers was a key theme in the hymns of Isidorus and is also the basis of the votive offering of ear images in both New Kingdom Egypt and in Delos at the time of the dedication.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁴ RICIS 202/0322. The dedication was made by the *Therapeuti* and the *Melanephoroi*.

⁵³⁵ RICIS 202/0346 (94/3); RICIS 202/0350 (94/3). Jenny Wallenstein, 'Personal protection and tailor-made deities: the use of individual epithets', *Kernos*, 21 (2008), para 25.

⁵³⁶ Jenny Wallenstein, 'Personal protection and tailor-made deities', para 25.

⁵³⁷ RICIS 202/0365. The dedication is also made to another group of gods 'Eros-Apollo-Harpokrates'. The relationship between the two sets of deities is unclear. Wallenstein, 'Dedications to Double Deities: Syncretism or simply syntax?', *Kernos*, 27 (2014), 9-10.

⁵³⁸ Wallenstein, 'Dedications to Double Deities' (Phoenician), 9. Budin, 'Aphrodite-Ashtart Syncretism' (Cypriot), 131.

⁵³⁹ Bricault rightly confirms that the title *Soteiria*, in context of Delos and Aegean alludes to her role in navigation, as it does for Zeus *Soter* and other saviour gods. The epithet is also given to Isis and other deities in RICIS 202/0230 and 202/0365 referred to above; and Isis *Soteiria* in RICIS 204/0108 (Rhodes); 204/1004 (Cos). Bricault commentary in RICIS, 380.

⁵⁴⁰ Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 102.

⁵⁴¹ see Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 113. Offerings at Serapeum C included bronze ears also inscribed with the words 'who listens' (RICIS 202/0361). Moyer, *Limits of Hellenism*, 198.

‘*Epekoos*’ is also an epithet given to Aphrodite and many other deities in the Eastern Mediterranean in this period.⁵⁴² Andromachos was doing more than simply equating deities or creating a new syncretic goddess he was ‘behaving in a syncretistic manner, in the syncretistic milieu of Hellenistic Delos ... communicating in terms to be intelligible to as many as possible, gods and humans alike’.⁵⁴³ Andromachus was using each goddess to explain the other,⁵⁴⁴ yet, a reader of the dedication would form their own view on the nature of the deity and whether she was one or many. In about 105 the theophorically-named Athenian, Isidorus, dedicated a garlanded altar solely to Isis *Enploia*.⁵⁴⁵ This is first known stand-alone attribution of Aphrodite’s marine epithet to Isis – again significantly attested in Delos, not Alexandria.

Two other related dedications indicate the nodal importance of Delos, a site where network ties intersected to influence and develop conceptions of Isis that would later become widespread in the Roman period. Ptolemaios, son of Dionysius, made an offering to Isis Tyche *Protogeneia* (‘the First Born’) in 115/4.⁵⁴⁶ He was a Cretan who held the religious offices of interpreter of dreams and aretalogist. The cult of Tyche *Protogeneia* was established in Itonia in Crete early in the Ptolemaic period.⁵⁴⁷ In Delos Ptolemaios connects that deity to Isis. We saw that in Alexandria Tyche was recognised as a personified goddess and was associated and named with Isis and Arsinoe Philadelphus on *oenochoe*.⁵⁴⁸ It appears that the Philadelphion established for Arsinoe II in the third century in Delos later became the Temple of Agathe Tyche.⁵⁴⁹ Highlighting the connection between the deities, the inventory records list a statue of Agathe Tyche holding a

⁵⁴² Such as in the dedication made on behalf of the Seleucid king, Demetrius I *Soter* and his family. ‘For the well-being of King Demetrius and Queen Laodice and their children, Apollophanes the son of Apollophanes, the priest [dedicated] the altar to Aphrodite Epekoos.’, Oliver D. Hoover, ‘A Dedication to Aphrodite Epekoos for Demetrius I Soter and his Family’, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 131 (2000) 106, 109 note 17.

⁵⁴³ Wallenstein, ‘Dedications to Double Deities’, 10.

⁵⁴⁴ Wallenstein, ‘Dedications to Double Deities’, 10.

⁵⁴⁵ *RICIS* 202/0329. 104/3 to 92/1.

⁵⁴⁶ *RICIS* 202/0283.

⁵⁴⁷ *Inscr. Cret.* III, 14. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* II, note 428, 395.

⁵⁴⁸ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 241.

⁵⁴⁹ The sanctuary was dedicated by the nesiarch Hermias *ID* 400, 38-40, (192 BC); *ID* 440 A, 91, (190 -180 BC). Construction of the temple may have commenced before this date. para. 8 Caneva, ‘Queens and Ruler Cults’, para 8 and note 13.

gilded double cornucopia.⁵⁵⁰ Although the Western version of Isis-Tyche, Isis-Fortuna, did not emerge until the end of the first century,⁵⁵¹ Delos was the major source of transmission of the cult and iconography, such as the cornucopia, to Italy. The network ties were the significant number of traders and officials who settled in Delos for a time or travelled back and forth across the sea, principally to the Campania region.⁵⁵²

Although the deity or deities honoured in Delos could be what worshippers ‘chose them to be’, worshippers did not act as wholly free agents. Worshippers made meaning as participants in networks. The decision to make offerings to a saving marine Isis alone or in a combination of deities were variously made through worshipper’s interactions with their religious tradition, *interpretatio*, relationships they made in Delos and other ports of call, and transmitted conceptions or stories of the universality and saving powers of Isis. Importantly, the choice was not an either-or decision; worshippers could make a new tie with Isis without breaking ties with the other deities they followed.

Polytheism, Isis’ avatar nature, and her growing reputation as ‘saviour’, brought Isis to the fore, in the market for sea deities in Delos’ open religious environment. Athenians and Italians, for

⁵⁵⁰ The inventory of Kallistratos (156/5) *RICIS* 202/0424 = *ID* 1417 1417 A, II, lines 26ff.

⁵⁵¹ Most evidence of the Roman deity dates to the Imperial period. Previously some scholars, such as Coarelli, argued that Italians brought Isis Tyche from Delos influencing the establishment of an Isis temple and the bringing about of the syncretised deity, Isis-Fortuna Primigenia, in Praeneste by the end of second century BC. This is no longer generally accepted. Arya argues that Isis may have been first depicted with aspects of Fortuna in designs connected with Caesar’s planned cult of Isis in the Campus Martius. The Yellow Frieze in the House of Livia and another image in the Villa Farnesina have Isis figures holding a cornucopia. Among the largest bodies of evidence are the Isis-Fortuna statuettes in Pompeii from the imperial period. André Darius Ayre, *The Goddess Fortuna in Imperial Rome: Cult, Art, Text*, Ph.D. diss. (Austin: The University of Texas, Austin, 2002) 246-247, note 770.

⁵⁵² According to Malaise, the earliest evidence of Egyptian cults in Campania, Puteoli (Pozzuoli) and Pompeii arises after Italians become most active on Delos from 166. Malaise found that there were 115 Italian worshippers of Isis and other Egyptian gods on Delos. Twenty-four Italians are named in dedications, while seventy-six are listed as financial supporters of the sanctuary. Ten of the fifteen worshippers that contributed to temple inventories, contributed specifically to the temple of Isis. Malaise, *Les conditions de penetration*, 270, 303, 310. 331.

The influence of Italians as followers and diffusers of the Isis cults is likely to have been even greater than these numbers suggest. At the time of Mithridates’ attack in 88, Appian says that most of the 20,000 people killed were Italians (although this number may be inflated by the inclusion of numbers from surrounding areas). App. *Mith.* 28

example, would be more likely to worship Isis in Delos than they would in their home cities. Distance from the dictates of the religious system of the home *polis* enhanced individual religious freedom and interactions.⁵⁵³ So, Astarte was joined to like-powered Isis, and Athenians made dedications to Isis *Eupolia* or Isis-Aphrodite rather than to Aphrodite *Euploia* (or they were considered one and the same).⁵⁵⁴ Worshippers could choose any Egyptian god in any combination. Sarapis may have attracted some worshippers to Isis; on the other hand, the irrelevance of Ptolemaic royal ideology in Delos is likely to have encouraged the worship of Isis as a stand-alone saviour deity.

Social networks, the desire for safety, and Isis' multi-faceted powers also influenced the choice of Isis as a sea deity. Generally, cult associations such as those attached to Serapeum B, or commercial associations connected to a deity, constructed identity and support for itinerant traders and others. Counterpart associations in other port cities provided ready-made communities, and later those connected to Isis or Egyptian cult facilitated the movement and following of marine Isis.⁵⁵⁵ It is clear from the dedications that worshippers called on Isis to protect themselves, their families and whole cities of people.⁵⁵⁶ Temple inventories of votive offerings of images of eyes and other body parts to Isis attest to belief in Isis healing powers, among others.⁵⁵⁷ These offerings and the forms of dedications also highlight that we know only of the religious choices of those that could afford to make such offerings, such as traders and ship-owners. We can only assume Isis' following among common sailors.

⁵⁵³ Malaise argues Italians were much more likely to worship Isis at Delos than their home: 'where they were far from the eyes of the Roman state and its jurisdiction'. Malaise, *Les conditions de penetration*, 282. These dictates could include which gods to worship, where and when, and the circumstances in which they could be worshipped. Indeed, traditional cults were often tied to place and were not easily transferable. Mikalson, 'Continuity and Change', 209
⁵⁵⁴ *RICIS* 202/0365. *RICIS* 202/0329. *RICIS* 202/0322.

⁵⁵⁵ Parker, *Greek Gods Abroad*, 156-160. Mikalson, 'Change and Continuity', 210-211.

⁵⁵⁶ *RICIS* 202/0230. Protos, son of Pythion, of Cos, gave thanks for safety from the perils of the sea on his own behalf and in the name of his children Philoumene and Pythion, and he acknowledged that the gods, including Isis, saved others at sea. The people of Athens and Rome: *RICIS* 202/0322.

⁵⁵⁷ These include a large number of gold and silver eyes, a metallic eye and a silver arm. Malaise, *Les conditions de penetration*, 281.

Isis presence and presentation in Delos meant that she was of Egypt but not only for Egyptians. From Taessa and Apollonius on, as Dunand contends, 'individual initiative played a primordial role' on Delos.⁵⁵⁸ Through her worshippers, Isis was connected into multiple divine networks and could be syncretised to, or stand in the stead of, Aphrodite and other deities to protect those who travel the sea.

Emergence of Isis of the sea

Isis emerged as goddess of the sea late in the Hellenistic period, through the dynamic of the universal saviour narrative, and the undirected, cumulative acts of worshippers in Delos and other port centres. At some point Isis of the sea is likely to have been brought back to, or recognised in, Alexandria, perhaps by Alexandrian or Italian traders from Delos or Puteoli and found an (unknown) following among its cosmopolitan seafaring and trading population.

The cults of marine Isis and her manifestations were still in incipient form as Egypt became a province of the Roman Empire. There were few images and little evidence of festivals.⁵⁵⁹ The festival of *Ploiaphesia*, which was held at the beginning of the sailing season, was first attested in Eritrea in the first century.⁵⁶⁰ In the Roman period this festival, known as the *Navigium Isidis*, and another Alexandrian festival of Isis, the *Sacrum Phariae*, were incorporated into the official Roman calendar, confirming that Isis in her sea dimension was an official goddess of empire.⁵⁶¹ As Isis-Tyche or Isis-Fortuna (Fig. 21), in particular, Isis was tied to the safety and prosperity of the empire and its people. The Egyptian iconography in her Roman era representations again

⁵⁵⁸ Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 115.

⁵⁵⁹ Bogh, 'The Graeco-Roman cult of Isis', 235. According to Bricault many scholars wish to find the origin of the launching of the boats festival in Alexandria but no such origin can be shown. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 139.

⁵⁶⁰ RICIS 104/0109-11

⁵⁶¹ These festivals were held on 5 March and 25 April, respectively. *CIL* I2 338. The *Navigium Isidis* is colourfully described by Lucius in Apul. *Met.* 11.16. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis II*, 107. Bricault, *Isis, dame des flots*, 134.

revealing the ongoing dynamic of continuity and change, as it recalled the attributes of Arsinoe and the Ptolemaic queens.⁵⁶²



Figure 21. Statuette of Isis-Fortuna. 2nd century AD. J. Paul Getty Museum Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program.

Although now officially recognised, individuals continued to be important in the diffusion of forms of marine Isis. It is often assumed that ordinary Egyptian sailors were among the early worshippers and transmitters of her cult.⁵⁶³ This seems plausible, however, there is no evidence to show this until the Roman period. A significant number of ordinary Egyptians were engaged

⁵⁶² Such as the Hathoric crown with a uraeus, the ankh symbol, situla, sistrum, and the Isis knot. Bogh, 'The Graeco-Roman cult of Isis', 235. Some of these attributes are shown in Figure 23, together with the cornucopia. The rudder was an attribute from Tyche.

⁵⁶³ eg. Bommas, 'Isis, Osiris and Sarapis' 11-12.

in the Roman Misene fleet from the first century AD.⁵⁶⁴ Some of these sailors served on the trireme 'Isis', which may have been named under their influence, and they worshipped both Isis and marine Sarapis, the latter deriving this attribute from his connection to Isis – another dynamic change on the divine network.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁴ The employment of these Egyptians was an exception to the code prohibiting their employment in the military forces. Greeks and Greco-Romans of a higher rank than *epikekrimenos* were permitted to man the Egyptian fleet from the Julio-Claudian period. A considerable number of the latter seafarers came from the Fayum, although this may reflect the greater amount of surviving papyri evidence from the region. Chester G. Starr, Jr. *The Roman Imperial Navy*, 31 BC – AD. 324 (Westport: Connecticut; Greenwood Press: 1941), 77, 111. Malaise calculated that of the crew attached to the Misene fleet, 15% were Egyptians and 10% were Alexandrians. A smaller percentage was attached to the fleet at Ravenna. These figures relate to the period 77 to 211AD. Malaise, *Les conditions de penetration* 325.

⁵⁶⁵ Serving on the trireme Isis: *RICIS*: 501/0218, 504/0502 and 504/0503. The sailors of this fleet were particularly involved in the celebration of the *Navigium Isidis*, as officers of the fleet were officials in the sacred procession. *RICIS*: 501/0175. Starr, *Roman Imperial Navy*, 87-88. cf. Bricault, who doubts Starr's interpretation, of the title *bis navarchi* as a religious title. Bricault, commentary to *RICIS* 501/0175, 548. On the worship of marine Sarapis: Apion, a new recruit to the Misene fleet from Philadelphia in the Fayum stated in a letter to his father following his arrival, 'I give thanks to the Lord Serapis that he saved me at once when I was in danger on the sea'. *BGU* 423, Starr, *Roman Imperial Navy*, 79, note 45,100.

Conclusion

'It clearly is unlikely, with the scanty evidence at our disposal, any single interpretation will be wholly right'.⁵⁶⁶

'The historian's task is to complicate not to clarify'.⁵⁶⁷

The principal research question posed was of course a leading question. As attractive, and as apparently logical as it may seem, Isis as 'goddess of the sea' was not the 'creation' of Ptolemaic rulers in third century Alexandria through the syncretisms of Arsinoe II, Aphrodite and Isis. Delos has a greater claim to being the birthplace of marine Isis than Alexandria. These conclusions have been reached by critically examining evidence for syncretic processes, agency and context, through a network lens, and by paying attention to my own pre-conceptions.

The emergence of Isis as a nascent sea goddess in different forms at the end of the Hellenistic period was the cumulative result of syncretic processes and other dynamic interactions with Isis, including in and between Narcautis Memphis, Byblos, Philae, Alexandria, Delos, Crete, Thrace, Athens; Arsinoe and other queens, Memphite priests, Isidorus, Apollonius, dedicators and worshippers on Delos and elsewhere, unknown traders and sailors; myth, hymns, statues; Hathor, Astarte, Renenutet, Aphrodite and Tyche, and more, from the seventh century. Key crystallising moments in the Ptolemaic period include the syncretic creation and transmission of the M-text, the hymns of Isidorus, and the personal syncretic dedications on Delos. The emergence of Isis in marine forms was undirected and was only recognised in official cult and by the Roman state when individual acts of worship reached a critical mass. However, power, exercised in different ways, formed part of the network dynamic of change.

⁵⁶⁶ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* I, 243.

⁵⁶⁷ J.Z. Smith, *Map is Not Territory. Studies in the History of Religions*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 290.

The enduring popularity of divine Arsinoe was particularly important as a network ‘shock’ and facilitator in the broader development of Isis. Poets and others connected Arsinoe to the Aphrodite narrative as a naval and saving sea goddess, and as patron of her people. Arsinoe’s power as a divine personality was enhanced by her association with Aphrodite and other goddesses. Most importantly, Arsinoe (and then, later queens) paralleled Isis as a saviour goddess, as the female embodiment of Ptolemaic power, and that parallel, I surmise, reinforced Isis’ power in the minds of her followers and attracted more followers to Isis generally. Marine Isis eventually inherited the *dikeras* from Arsinoe, and from Arsinoe and other queens, her Greek face and garb, and other attributes of Egyptian queens.

Isis in her marine aspect was not entirely new nor wholly ‘Greek’ or ‘Egyptian’; she was essentially what her worshippers wanted her to be. The key driver of change was not political directive but the shared semantic dimension of polytheistic religion and the needs of worshippers. Egyptian Isis could be readily translated and given new attributes, whether in a formal syncretic process, such as the inter-cultural creation of the M-text, or in the minds of individual worshippers who called on her saving powers. Aphrodite or Arsinoe-Aphrodite may well have been the model for Isis’ earthly sea powers, extending those powers that existed in embryonic form in Egypt. Worshippers could choose to connect Isis to Aphrodite or to any other sea deity. Crucially, Isis was attractive as a sea goddess because of her interacting network of powers. The broader power and conception of Isis as an omnipotent ‘listening’ saviour goddess had Egyptian antecedents and was promoted by Isidorus and writers of demotic texts.

Some of these conclusions will be reinforced, or will change, when more evidence of persistence and change come to light, particularly in Alexandria. The words ‘undoubtedly’ and ‘must’ appear too commonly in the literature without supporting evidence. The only certainties in this story are complexity and uncertainty. Given the absence or nature of the evidence, generalisation and a

certain amount of reasoned speculation is unavoidable. I have asked some questions that I could not answer. More questions need to be asked. To be continued.

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