THE DEVELOPMENT AND DIFFUSION OF THE CULT OF ISIS IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD

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Abstract

During the 4th century BCE and the Hellenistic period (323 – 31 BCE), the cult of Isis increasingly appeared outside of Egypt throughout the Greek world. The widespread diffusion of her cult at this time occurred due to Alexander III of Macedon’s conquest of the Achaemenid Empire. His conquest of the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt led to the reorganization of the Greek world politically and economically. This reorganization influenced the religious atmosphere of the 4th century BCE and subsequent centuries for Greeks. Popular cults, like the mysteries of Demeter and Dionysus, often focused on the afterlife and individuals more than poleis. Isis fit the new religious atmosphere since she was a universal goddess with ties to the afterlife and daily life.

Under the Ptolemies, Isis became syncretized with Greek deities, such as Aphrodite and Demeter, which resulted in the increased likelihood of the reception of Isis’s cult in Greek cities. Her Alexandrian cult emphasized sailing and healing through her connections with the Pharos and the healing cult of Serapis, her consort in the Ptolemaic Egyptian pantheon. Through a case study of sites with shrines dedicated to Isis in the Greek world, including Athens, Corinth, and Delos, it is evident that these sites had political and economic ties to Egypt and that her cult was often adapted at these sites based on the needs of the people at that location.

Previous scholarship regarding the cult of Isis has emphasized her role in Egypt during the Pharaonic period or her reception among the Greeks and Romans from the 3rd century BCE to the 4th century CE. There is little literature that emphasizes Isis’s reception during the 4th century BCE and early Ptolemaic period when her cult was first appearing at Greek sites or that discusses the relationship between Isis’s cult and the political and economic factors of the Hellenistic period. This thesis attempts to examine the development of the cult of Isis in Egypt in
order to trace the Hellenistic religious domain of Isis back to the potential origins during the Pharaonic and Macedonian periods in Egypt.

I argue that Isis’s role as a protectress and establishment in Alexandria as a deity associated with sailors and navigation led to Isis’s reception in Greece first in ports, such as Piraeus, Corinth, and Delos. Furthermore, while sailing was important to the spread and reception of her cult during a period with increased economic activity, Isis gained popularity at these sites due to her vast patronages that increased the likelihood of her appeal to a variety of people and sites. The adaptability of her cult led to the widespread diffusion during the Hellenistic age and the endurance of her cult into the Roman period. Her role as a seafaring protectress starting from the 4th century BCE indicates that there was a focus on economics and travel that resulted in a preoccupation with fortune and safety. Isis was a natural fit, as a protectress deity, for the religious landscape of the Hellenistic zeitgeist.
Introduction

Isis, an Egyptian goddess, gained popularity and influence both in Egypt as well as across the wider Mediterranean region starting in the 4th century BCE and continuing throughout the Hellenistic period (323 – 31 BCE). This period witnessed the most intense expansion of this cult into areas outside of Egypt, especially into Greece. Her cult appears at many sites both in Egypt and at locations with a historical economic link to Egypt, such as Byblos, from at least the Third Intermediate Period (c. 1070 – 712 BCE). The conquest of the Achaemenid Empire by Alexander III of Macedon catapulted the diffusion of the cult of Isis that occurred during the 4th century BCE and Hellenistic period since the trade networks of the Mediterranean were dense between the kingdoms of the diadochoi, Alexander’s successors. Eventually, due to the expansionist policy of the Roman empire and the adoption of Isis as a patron of the military and seafaring, her cult spread well beyond the Mediterranean as far north as Britain and as far east as Bactria. The mysteries of Isis would remain famous through the preservation of the Iseion at Pompeii and Apuleius’s account of her mystery cult in his *Metamorphoses*. Even today, her iconography as a mother nursing her son arguably remains present in the iconography of the Madonna and Child in the Christian world.

Some scholars have examined why the cult of Isis was so influential and so well-received into the Greco-Roman world. Solmsen argues that “she was bound to appeal to different people for different reasons” because of her vast number of patronages and dynamic qualities that addressed the necessities of many different people. Her roles in Egyptian religion surrounding agriculture, motherhood, healing, and numerous other realms help account for the easier reception of her cult into other cultures as well as the syncretization of her with other

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1 For a table of all dates, see Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A.
2 Solmsen 1979, 61.
similar goddesses. Witt argues that it was Isis’s Egyptian associations with revitalization, healing, and magic above all of her other attributes that made her so appealing to Egyptians and Greeks alike. While Solmsen and Witt explore the reasons for Isis’s reception, only Brady’s *The Reception of the Egyptian Cults by the Greeks (330 – 30 B.C.*)*, published in 1935, addresses the correlation of the cult of Isis with the political and economic events of the Hellenistic period. Brady’s study, however, emphasizes the cult of Serapis, the syncretized Egyptian god Osiris-Apis, over that of Isis and does not examine the cult prior to the Ptolemaic Dynasty. To date, scholars have not closely examined the connections between the Egyptian cult of Isis, both before and during the Ptolemaic Dynasty, and its early diffusion and reception by the Greeks. I aim to merge a more comprehensive study of the Egyptian cult of Isis, emphasizing the Late Period (c. 712 – 343 BCE) to the early Ptolemaic Dynasty (c. 304 – 221 BCE), with a case study of the some of the locations in Greece – Athens, Corinth, and Delos – where the cult was well-received and where it endured. I also examine why the 4th century BCE was the period during which the cult took hold throughout the Greek world.

In order to understand why the 4th century BCE and Hellenistic period – and not an earlier period – witnessed an expansion of Isis into the Greek world, I examine in Chapter 1 the history of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods. This chapter explores social, religious, and cultural trends that were influenced by the dynamic political and economic environment of the Hellenistic period. During the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt and the Hellenistic period in the wider Mediterranean, the cult of Isis was rapidly assimilated into the Greek pantheon probably because of the political and economic motivations of the diadochoi, Alexander’s successors.

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3 Witt 1971, 22-23.
The cult of Isis in Egypt has a rich background and developed over millennia in conjunction with the Egyptian pantheon. In chapter 2, I trace the cult of Isis as it developed in Egypt during the Pharaonic Period, under Alexander, and during the Ptolemaic Dynasty. Like the cults of other major deities, the cult of Isis endured and adapted to the sociopolitical shifts in Egypt from the Old Kingdom (c. 2575 – 2134 BCE) through the Late Period (c. 712 – 343 BCE). The changes in the cult that took place over time can be seen in Isis’s iconography and the extent can be quantified by the amount of space allotted to Isis in temples. During the Ptolemaic Dynasty, Isis’s cult became increasingly prominent at Egyptian religious centers, like Philae, as well as in predominantly Greek cities such as Alexandria. The cult also began to spread to locations outside of Egypt. In fact, the temple of Isis at Pharos in Alexandria may have instigated the spread of her cult by sailors and travelers to other ports, as at Pharos she was often worshipped as Isis Pelagia, Isis “of the sea”. Evidence from the sites of Isis worship during the Ptolemaic Dynasty illustrate the spread of Isis within Egypt and the strengthening of her status as a universal goddess, one who could adapt to fit both the Egyptian and Greek pantheons.

In Chapter 3, I explore the evidence at the Greek sites to which the cult of Isis expands during the Hellenistic period: namely Athens, Corinth, and Delos. I also consider why these locations may have attracted the cult rather than other sites throughout Greece. Athens is the location of one of the earliest sites dedicated to Isis on the Greek mainland. The early appearance of the cult in Athens reflects the polis’s economic, political, and cultural influence during the Classical period (480 – 323 BCE). The influence continued into the Hellenistic period as Greeks in other regions were trying to maintain ties to the cultural core of the Greek world, Athens. Corinth seems to have had numerous Egyptian cults over the years, and by the time of

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4 Dating to around 333 BCE, this sanctuary was founded by Egyptians for Egyptians but seems to have expanded to be more inclusive to Greeks over time (Simms 1989, 216-221).
Pausanias in the 2nd century CE, there were two temples dedicated to Isis.\(^5\) Her attributes as a goddess of manumission and seafaring facilitated her acceptance at Corinth, a famous double port city with a population of manumitted slaves. Delos, a heavily trafficked site in the Hellenistic period, had an Egyptian temple complex, and the cult of Serapis may have fueled the expansion of her cult to this location. The Delian cult of Isis exhibits a close relationship with the Alexandrian which emphasized Isis as a protectress of the sea. Considering that all of these sites were economically and culturally important centers during the Hellenistic period, the cult of Isis may have expanded to these places by following the paths of travelers, merchants, and soldiers.

\(^5\) Smith 1977, 201-231.
Chapter 1 – Background

Introduction

The Greeks and Egyptians have had enduring economic connections that seem to have led to cultural fluidity between these two regions. As far back as the Bronze Age in the Greek world, Egyptian-influenced goods and technologies can be found both on mainland Greece and the islands.\textsuperscript{6} Throughout Greek history, phases of intensive long-distance trade, such as during the Orientalizing and Archaic periods, seem to have instigated an increase in cultural diffusion between Egyptians and Greeks. During the late Archaic and Classical periods, cultural transmission lessened due to the nature of the poleis to internalize their affairs. Greeks created native elite goods rather than always valuing exotic goods over local ones, as had been the previous trend. After Alexander III of Macedon’s conquests of the Near East and Egypt, Greek culture flooded these regions alongside Alexander’s soldiers and the subsequent migrations of the Greek population. Following his death in 323 BCE, Alexander’s commanders divided his empire amongst themselves.

The Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt became a center of Greek culture and withstood the constant political changes of the volatile Hellenistic period longer than the other kingdoms. It is probable that the Ptolemaic policy of religious tolerance enabled their success. Also, the Ptolemies made certain that both Greeks and Egyptians residing in Egypt had religious institutions. Their policy involved the establishment of temples to both Greek and Egyptian deities, the creation of the god Serapis to balance the two pantheons, and the adoption of Isis as the most prominent goddess.

\textsuperscript{6} See Table 1 for all Greek culture dates in Appendix A.
Eventually, the cult of Isis, alongside that of Serapis and Egyptian ruler cults, spread into the cultural core of the Greek world. Attica, Corinthia, and Delos illustrate the ease with which Greeks accepted the foreign cult of Isis into their religious landscape. This warm reception would not have been possible if not for the religious atmosphere during the Hellenistic period that emphasized individualism, reflecting the change in the socio-political system from the Classical polis to the Hellenistic multicultural city.

*Previous Connections between Egypt and Greece*

Prior to the Hellenistic period, there were cultural connections between Egypt and Greece, especially between Egypt and Crete during the Bronze Age, which are illustrated by the similarities in ceramic technology and artistic motifs. There is archaeological evidence for the employment of a potter’s wheel on Crete around the Late Minoan period (c. 1600 – 1100 BCE), which seems similar to a type of wheel in use in Egypt. Perhaps the best evidence of strong cultural connections between Crete and Egypt are the murals at Tell el-Dab’a in the Nile Delta.

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7 The wheels on Crete may not have been used for throwing fully wheel-made pottery, but the use of a wheel (similar to those in Egypt) would have assisted in finishing pottery or creating parts of the vessel. Additionally, there is some debate over the origin of the potter’s wheel throughout the Aegean (Evely 1988, 114-115).
These have Minoan themes and date between 1580 and 1550 BCE. In particular, there is one mural that illustrates bull leaping. Bull leaping was a Minoan sport with possible ritual affiliations (see Fig. 1.2a). The Tell el-Dab’ mural is often compared to the bull leaping fresco at Knossos (see Fig. 1.2b). The murals illustrate at least an artistic connection between

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8 Shaw and Mellink 1995, 91. Also, see Table 2 for all Egyptian culture dates.
9 For more information, see Shaw and Mellink 1995, 92-92.
10 It is also noteworthy that the Minoans used the same color coding by gender for their depictions of characters in frescos as the Egyptians (white for women and red for men).
Tell el-Dab’a and Knossos, if not a cultural connection between the two locations. The depiction of a Minoan cultural event at Tell el-Dab’a possibly demonstrates the fluidity of the cultures between Greece and Egypt from an early period. Since bull leaping was potentially a ritual...
activity at Knossos, it is probable that the mural demonstrates the movement of religion.\textsuperscript{11}

However, it is also likely that itinerant Minoan artists were traveling around the Aegean creating frescoes for elites in other locations, such as Tell el-Dab’a and in the Levant.\textsuperscript{12} During the Late Bronze Age at Mycenae, a niello dagger, from Grave V in Grave Circle A, shows themes from the Nile, including papyrus plants and water fowl.\textsuperscript{13} These Nilotic motifs found in Mycenae suggest that either there was a knowledge base of Egyptian flora and fauna among Mycenaean artists or that Egyptian artists were traveling to Mycenae. The Ulu Burun shipwreck off of the coast of Turkey, dating to c. 1300 BCE, also illustrates that Greeks were actively importing goods from all over the Mediterranean world, including Egypt.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Thompson (1989, 62) demonstrates the various scholarly opinions on where this event may have taken place at the palaces.
\textsuperscript{12} Cline et al. 2011, 245-246.
\textsuperscript{13} For more on the social stratification of the grave circles based on the grave goods, see Graziadio 1991.
\textsuperscript{14} Schofield 2007, 103.
After the Bronze Age, there is evidence of the influence of Egyptian culture and art on the Greek world. During the Orientalizing (700 – 600 BCE) and Archaic (600 – 480 BCE) periods, monumental architecture and sculpture, artistic motifs, and goddesses were introduced to Greece. Specifically, during the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, the kouroi, large male statues that marked many Greek graves or were dedications at sanctuaries, were certainly Egyptian-influenced.\textsuperscript{15} Their pose, left leg forward and fists by their sides, and proportions are similar to statues found in Egypt (see Fig. 1.3a and 1.3b). While Greek artists during the Orientalizing period were primarily inclined towards Syria and Assyria, some artistic themes came directly from Egypt and from the Egyptianizing art of the Phoenicians.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15} Davis 1981, 62-63.v
\textsuperscript{16} Boardman 1998, 83.
Not only were the Greeks influenced by monumental Egyptian sculpture, but they were also influenced by their monumental architecture. Early Greek temples, especially Doric, closely resemble Egyptian temples in certain aspects, such as the shape of the capitals, the capitals themselves, and the number of flutes.\(^\text{17}\) It is also possible that the Doric triglyph frieze and architrave were also influenced by Egyptian motifs and constructions, but there is less evidence for these trends in Egypt than, for example, the columns.\(^\text{18}\) More than stylistic elements, the Greeks seemed interested in adopting Egyptian technology and methodology for the construction process, including quarrying, building, and finishing the structures.\(^\text{19}\) The adoption by the Greeks of Egyptian technology seems to have been reinitiated around 660 BCE, when Psamtik I (664 – 610 BCE) regained control of Egypt from the Assyrians with the assistance of Greek mercenaries.\(^\text{20}\) Close contact between the Greeks and Egyptians was reestablished at this time and there are finds at Naukratis from 620 BCE at least. While the Greeks were adopting Egyptian technology, they were selective regarding which ideas they adopted and do not seem to have had an interest in Egyptian deities, but rather in their monumental religious structures.

During the Protocorinthian period (720 – 630 BCE), many motifs from the Near East and Egypt made their way onto Corinthian pottery in particular.\(^\text{21}\) Sphinxes similar to the one seen in Coulton 1977, 39.

\(^\text{17}\) Coulton 1977, 39.
\(^\text{18}\) For more on these potential influences, see Coulton 1977, 33 and 41.
\(^\text{19}\) Coulton 1977, 45-50.
\(^\text{20}\) Coulton 1977, 32.
\(^\text{21}\) It is interesting that Corinth played a major part during the globalizing periods of the Orientalizing and Archaic. Its role as an important economic center seems to have diachronically stimulated its cultural environment. This is reflected in the Hellenistic period as well.
Figure 1.4 on the Chigi Vase were common on pottery in Corinth as well as in both Egypt and the Near East. The Chigi Vase, dating to 640 BCE, is artistically advanced in a number of ways, including the sphinx and polychrome technique, but it is found in Veii, Italy rather than Corinth. The fact that such an innovative vessel was found outside of Corinth illustrates the globalized economic network during the 7th century BCE. Also, the upright rays at the bottom of some Protocorinthian vessels, like the Chigi Vase, are thought to be inspired by lotus petals on Egyptian flasks (see Fig. 1.5). Marinatos additionally argues that there are close connections between many Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Greek goddesses, all of whom have similar iconography and roles in religion to the so-called ‘Mistress of Animals’. The interregional

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23 Boardman 1998, 86.
24 See Marinatos (2000, 32-44) for more information. Also see Table 1 in Appendix A for chronology.
theme between multiple religions illustrates the impact that the cultures of the Mediterranean had on each other even before the Hellenistic period.

Additionally, there are votives present at Perachora that suggest an Egyptian connection. Found at Perachora, the sanctuary of Hera, Egyptian scarabs were dated to the 7th century BCE.\(^{25}\) These votives may demonstrate Egyptian worship in Corinthia at the site of Hera or the collection of Egyptian scarabs by Greeks for the purpose of later dedication at a sanctuary. There are many possibilities for the presence of exotica in sanctuaries as dedications; however, it is interesting to note that this occurs at Perachora, in Corinthia. Corinth seems to exhibit a diachronic cultural connection to Egypt from an early period. While there are scarabs at the sanctuary, Corinth was also one of the leaders during the monumentalizing period for architecture as well as the implementation of popular orientalizing motifs on pottery as discussed above.\(^{26}\) Corinth had a long history as an important trade route, so the material culture and innovative developments in technology are probably reflective of its economic role.

As briefly demonstrated above by the mural at Tell el-Dab’a, Minoans from the Bronze Age were influencing Egyptians just as the Egyptians were impacting trends in the Greek world. Aside from the mural, there is also Greek pottery present at many sites diachronically throughout Egypt, illustrating the economic connections between the two regions. For example, Mycenaean stirrup-jars were traded widely around the Mediterranean for their contents, and their unique shape was copied in other media, such as faience. According to Schofield, the Linear B tablets at Pylos demonstrate that perfumed oils were part of the elite gift exchange that seems to have been

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\(^{25}\) For more information on the votives at Perachora, see Dunbabin 1962.

\(^{26}\) See Sapirstein (2009, 195-197) for more information on Corinth’s innovation during the 7th century BCE in architecture, specifically tiles. While the moldmade terracotta tiles seem to have been introduced to Corinth from the Levant, the presence of tiles at Isthmia and Corinth demonstrate the concentration of innovative architectural elements in Corinthia (Coulton 1977, 35).
occurring between the Mycenaeans and other cultures.  
Naukratis, located southeast of Alexandria, became a commercial and residential area designated for the Greeks during the reign of Ahmose II (570 – 526 BCE). In fact, the site is home to temples of Apollo, Hera, and Aphrodite as well as small Archaic kouroi and vast amounts of Greek pottery. The temples of Apollo (620 and 440 BCE) are thought to be Ionic and westward facing. The temples of Aphrodite (600 and 400 BCE) are thought to be Doric due to the presence of a Doric capital. The presence of a temple dedicated to Hera is based primarily on votives that were thought to be dedicated to her. While Greek speakers had been living in Egypt from at least the period of Ahmose II at Naukratis, during the Hellenistic period there was an influx of Greeks into Egypt. They would have helped create a multicultural landscape in Egypt that embedded Greeks in the Egyptian culture more completely.

During the 6th century BCE, the affiliation between Aphrodite and Isis in the minds of Egyptians and Greeks may have been initiated with the foundation of a temple dedicated to Aphrodite in Naukratis. The presence of this temple, alongside those of Hera and Apollo, indicates the Greek

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27 Schofield 2007, 104-6. The gift exchange between the Egyptians and the Mycenaeans is also reflected in the Amarna letters, dating to the 14th century BCE, as well as Egyptian tomb paintings, as in that of Hatshepsut (1479 – 1457 BCE).
28 Macfarquhar 1966, 112.
29 See Jenkins 2001 for more information on the kouroi and the temples, and see Vickers 1971 for details on some of the pottery.
30 For a discussion on the populations during the 3rd century BCE, see Burkhalter 2012 and Clarysse and Thompson 2006.
31 Athenaeus (Deipn. 15.18) cites Polycharmos of Naukratis’ Περὶ Ἀφροδίτης, regarding the legend behind the foundation of the temple of Aphrodite in Naukratis. See Jenkins 2001 (163-164) for more information on the temple dedications and potential locations within Naukratis.
ethnicity of the population at Naukratis. While it is uncertain whether or not Aphrodite was formally worshipped during this early period as “Euploia” (“of safe sailing”), it is likely that her cult was associated with sailors, based on the account of the foundation of the temple quoted by Athenaeus. Athenaeus was writing around 200 CE and was quoting a story recorded by an earlier writer, Polycharmos. He states that Herostratos, around 688 – 685 BCE, brought a statuette of Aphrodite from Cyprus with him on his voyage back towards Naukratis. When a storm broke out, the sailors prayed to Aphrodite and upon their safe anchorage at Naukratis, Herostratos established a temple to Aphrodite.32 Aphrodite is also associated with the sea in inscriptions and at certain cult sites, such as at Knidos and Piraeus.33 From at least the 4th century BCE, she was worshipped at Knidos as “Aphrodite Euploia”.34 According to Pausanias, Konon dedicated a sanctuary to Aphrodite after a naval victory near Karia in 394 BCE.35 It is likely that she was worshipped at Pireaus, as at Knidos, as “Euploia”.36 Aphrodite, like Isis, was affiliated with sailors at important ports around the Mediterranean. For Greeks both in Egypt and throughout the Greek world, this common role of Aphrodite and Isis probably accounts for the similar locations of the cult sites of these two deities. Their commonality likely increased the awareness, and subsequent adoption, at least in the case of Isis, of each culture’s deity for the other culture. By the Roman period, the goddesses were syncretized as Isis-Aphrodite (see Fig. 1.6). The syncretization of Isis and Aphrodite could have been a compromise for hybrid populations, like that of Naukratis, and could have contributed to the awareness and reception of Isis later.

32 Athen. Deipn. 15.18.
33 See Barbantani 2005 on Arsinoe-Aphrodite and Aphrodite as “Mistress of the Sea”; see Rosenzweig 2004 on Aphrodite Euploia at Knidos and on Aphrodite Euploia at Piraeus (89-91); see also Pausanias (Desc. 2.34.11) on Aphrodite as Pontia and Limenia at Hermione in the Argolid.
34 Paus. Desc. 2.34.11. There is also the 4th century BCE statue by Praxiteles at Knidos.
35 Paus. Desc. 1.1.3.
36 Garland 1987, 112.
**Historical Background**

Between 359 and 336 BCE, Macedon became a dominant player in Greek affairs under Philip II of Macedon (see Fig. 1.7). Philip secured sole rule at Pella, the capital of Macedon, before successfully suppressing uprisings at the borders of his kingdom. After the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE, Philip succeeded in establishing the League of Corinth which gave him hegemony over the Greek poleis. While Philip had intended to invade Persia, he was assassinated in 336 BCE. Alexander III of Macedon came to power in 336 BCE and immediately planned his invasion of the Achaemenid Empire in Persia. Alexander spent the next 13 years solidifying his father’s kingdom and conquering the Near East, Egypt, and parts of Central Asia and India.  

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37 See Ray 2012 (specifically 86-136) on the rise of Macedon and Philip’s reign.  
38 For more on Alexander’s life and conquests, see Green 1991 and Ray 2012.
During the Hellenistic period (323 – 31 BCE), the diadochoi, Alexander’s successors, carved out new kingdoms for themselves from Alexander’s empire (see Fig. 1.8).\footnote{See Anson 2014 for more information on the wars of the successors and history of the Hellenistic age.} While these kingdoms politically divided the Mediterranean world, they also united it under the common influence of Greek culture in the regions where Hellenistic kingdoms were founded. On the other hand, newly conquered cultures, such as the Egyptians, began contributing to cultural, and specifically religious, changes in the Greek world during this period of increasing globalization and cultural fluidity. The diffusion of the cult of Isis from Egypt into the Greek world and the wider Mediterranean region exemplifies the sociopolitical and economic atmosphere of Ptolemaic Egypt and the Hellenistic world more generally.

![Figure 1.8: Map of the Hellenistic Kingdoms (Morris and Powell 2010, 453).](image)

Alexander came to Egypt in October of 332 BCE and stayed until April of 331 BCE. It is often argued that the Persians treated the native Egyptians poorly and disrespected Egyptian
religion, so Alexander’s implementation of a policy of religious tolerance and personal adherence to Egyptian traditions was well received. Alexander’s coronation as pharaoh of Egypt – and therefore, as the incarnation of Horus, son of Ra and Osiris – demonstrated his respect for the Egyptian tradition. While in Egypt, Alexander traveled to Siwah Oasis where the oracle of Zeus-Ammon, or Amun-Ra to the Egyptians, resided (see Fig. 1.1). By recognizing the resemblance between Zeus and Amun-Ra, as had previous Greeks like Herodotus, Alexander established a precedent for future Greek pharaohs of religious tolerance and assimilation – though this policy was often not holistic or was merely a façade. By visiting the oracle recognized by Greek tradition at Siwah, and not Egyptian oracles in the more convenient Thebes, Alexander illustrated that he was a Hellene to his army. Alexander’s trip to the Oasis helped establish the Macedonian (and later Ptolemaic) policy for religious interactions in Egypt, one which attempted to balance Greek and Egyptian needs in a multi-religious region. Alexander also reestablished the town of Rhakotis as Alexandria for international commercial purposes in order to move the capital to a port city that would have a better connection to the Greek world than traditional capital locations such as Memphis and Thebes (see Fig. 1.1). He helped determine the route of the city wall, the location of the agora and many temples, including that of Isis. Alexandria proved to be an important commercial center throughout the Hellenistic period as well as a cultural one. Alexander’s policy of religious tolerance was continued by the Ptolemies and proved to be effective for their rule over multiethnic Egypt.

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40 Green 1991, 268-270.
41 Arr. Anab. 3.3.1-2; Strabo Geo. 17.1.43.
43 The city was set on an orthogonal plan designed by Ephesus’ city-planner, Deinocharis. It took advantage of the Etesian winds from the sea to keep the city cool. For more details on the city see Green 1991, 275-276.
Ptolemy I Soter (304 – 284 BCE) first inherited Egypt as a satrapy from Alexander but became the new pharaoh upon Alexander’s death. According to Hölbe, it was necessary for Ptolemy I to establish himself as an acceptable ruler through religious policy and royal ideology and also to “ensure harmony” between the Greeks and native populations.\(^{45}\) Ptolemy I was tasked with the reorganization of religion in Egypt since state religious institutions needed to appease both Egyptians and Greeks. He promoted gods, like Serapis, that were relevant to both groups and also worked to align Greek gods with Egyptian ones, including those mentioned by Herodotus as having similarities, like Demeter and Isis as well as Zeus and Serapis.\(^{46}\) Under Ptolemy I, Isis and her cult were closely paralleled to Demeter and the Eleusinian mysteries.\(^{47}\) Arguably, this was in part due to the presence of Timotheos, a member of the clan that helped establish the Eleusinian mysteries, in Alexandria during the foundation of numerous cults (including at least one site to Demeter).\(^{48}\) It is not surprising that the two goddesses were conflated since both deities were associated with agriculture and motherhood. While the Greeks had previously recognized these similarities, Ptolemy I now made the connection explicit and utilized the link between the goddesses to encourage unity in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria and Egypt more widely. Solmsen argues that the syncretism of these two deities in fact facilitated the expansion of the veneration of Isis in the Hellenistic period.\(^{49}\)

After Ptolemy I’s death, he was succeeded by Ptolemy II Philadelphos (283 – 246 BCE) who simultaneously worked to expand the borders of the kingdom while constructing religious and secular buildings. He conquered the Syrian coast as well as many cities and islands.

\(^{45}\) Hölbe 2001, 25.
\(^{46}\) Her. Hist. 2.50.1.
\(^{47}\) Solmsen 1979, 22-24.
\(^{48}\) For a summary of Timotheos’s involvement in Alexandria and the potential for the modeling of the cult of Isis on that of Demeter, see Solmsen 1979, 23. For more on the cult of Demeter at Eleusis see Cosmopoulos (1-24) and Sourvinou-Inwood (25-49) in Greek Mysteries 2003.
\(^{49}\) Solmsen 1979, 27.
(including Samos and Miletus) following a new expansionist policy. This policy led to the First and Second Syrian Wars (274/3 – 253 BCE) between Ptolemy II and Antiochus II of the Seleucid Empire in western Asia. Ptolemy II made peace in 253 BCE by marrying his daughter to Antiochus in order to preserve resources and regain some stability. In 246 BCE, Ptolemy and Antiochus both died.\textsuperscript{50} Under Ptolemy II, Egypt flourished economically and culturally because of the creation of military and economic buffer zones.\textsuperscript{51} This prosperity resulted in new religious building all over Egypt for many gods, including Isis.

At times throughout the Ptolemaic Dynasty, wars interrupted the Ptolemaic rule of Egypt and resulted in the utilization of religion in order to appease native Egyptians. For example, while Ptolemy III Euergetes (246 – 221 BCE) succeeded seamlessly in Egypt, the succession in the Seleucid Kingdom was debated between Antiochus’ first wife’s sons and his second wife’s son. The second wife, Berenike Syra, asked her brother, Ptolemy III, for help; however, though he agreed, he arrived after she was assassinated. The assassination led to the Third Syrian War which lasted from 246 until 241 BCE. Eventually, Ptolemy III returned to Egypt to reestablish control after the native Egyptians revolted during the war.\textsuperscript{52} While the war in Syria and the revolts in Egypt were taking place, Ptolemy III constructed a temple to Isis at Philae as part of an effort to expand her cult within Egypt (see Fig. 1.1).\textsuperscript{53} The construction of her cult site at the southern border may have been a reaction to the revolt and an attempt to appease the Egyptians. Religious tolerance whenever politically useful had, after all, been the policy of the Ptolemies in order to help fuse the Greek and Egyptian cultures.

\textsuperscript{50} Green 2007, 67-69.
\textsuperscript{51} Poly. Hist. 5.34.2-9.
\textsuperscript{52} Green 2007, 69-70.
\textsuperscript{53} Hölbe 2001, 87.
The dynastic succession during the period from Ptolemy IV (221 – 204 BCE) to Cleopatra VII (51 – 30 BCE) was increasingly convoluted due to the rivalry between heirs and the ever-present pressure from the other Hellenistic kingdoms.\textsuperscript{54} Throughout this period, as before, the kings found it necessary to continue to respect Egyptians in order to maintain control. For example, after the Fourth Syrian War (c. 219 – 217 BCE), land allotments were given to Egyptian infantry as well as Greeks.\textsuperscript{55} A degree of religious tolerance remained important for the Ptolemies whenever it fit their political agenda. While their tolerance was not absolute, it was practiced during their rule, contrary to the practice of the Achaemenids. During the later Ptolemaic Dynasty, the iconography of Isis was adopted by the Ptolemaic queens, and the cults of Isis and the queens were occasionally seen together at locations like Philae.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Internationalism and Culture during the Hellenistic period}

The natural defenses and the wealth of Egypt allowed the Ptolemaic Dynasty to survive its rival successor kingdoms until the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. The well-funded Library and Museum of Alexandria attracted intellectuals, scientists, and artists from all across the Mediterranean. The accumulation of researchers at Alexandria introduced an unparalleled intellectual environment that produced an astonishing number of works of literature and art as well as scientific and military advancements. Underlying much of this literature and art were ties to ancient, and strictly Greek, mythic and religious roots.\textsuperscript{57}

Interest in obtaining Greek goods for new Greek homes abroad and the militaristic lifestyle of the Hellenistic age enabled an increase in international trade during this time. While

\textsuperscript{54} This period will be discussed further in Chapter 2 in relation to the ruler cult of the queens.
\textsuperscript{55} Thompson 2003, 109.
\textsuperscript{56} Their relationship will be discussed in Chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{57} Green 2007, 62.
international trade was not uncommon before, it now became necessary for Greeks living outside of the cultural core of Greece to import Greek goods and establish their “Greekness”. As far away as Ai-Khanoum in Bactria (see Fig. 1.7), structures such as gymnasia and theaters can be found. These were built so that the Greeks who moved there would feel at home regardless of their distance from the Greek mainland. In many Hellenistic cities, people were looking to their cultural history, including the works of Homer and the philosophy of Classical Athens, as a means to emphasize their “Greekness”.

Their interest in their heritage led to the construction of cultural centers such as the Library and Museum in Alexandria, which were designed to house these works. The centralization of these works in Alexandria during the early Hellenistic period instigated trade between Greece and Egypt. Additionally, the many wars of the period contributed to the growth of the international economy since the almost constant fighting created a higher demand for food, equipment, and the service of mercenaries. This highly active international economy allowed for not only the movement of goods and men, but also of ideas – such as those about religion – during the Hellenistic age.

Religious Change from the Classical period to the Hellenistic period

The shift in the sociopolitical structure of the Greek world from a polis-oriented arrangement during the Classical period towards Alexander’s cosmopolitan ideal likewise helped enable change in religion. Traditionally, most Greeks were associated primarily with the deity and the cults related to the preservation of the polis and the family unit. In the Hellenistic period, the new sociopolitical system revitalized chthonic cults, those cults involving deities

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58 Green 2007, 56.
59 For more on the impact of war on Hellenistic economies, see Chaniotis 2011.
60 Martin 1987, 8-10.
linked to the earth and subterranean world, such as Dionysus, Demeter, and Persephone, as well as cults which were personal and immediate to the individual, such as healing and mystery cults. The increased popularity of chthonic deities, especially Dionysus and Demeter, suggests an interest in fertility and agriculture gods during this period. For example, during this period Asklepios gained popularity because of his cult physicians. “Elective cults”, those that were not required by the polis but were supplementary to the yearly religious cycle for individuals, such as the Dionysian and Eleusinian mysteries as well as the cult of Asklepios, created outlets for individual choice and agency within the Greek religious landscape. The rise of elective cults coincided with the growth of Hellenistic philosophies that also emphasized the personal quest for knowledge and questioned traditional religion and ritual. Not only was individual religious experience more important now, but so were new experiences and new gods. Increasing multiculturalism and long-distance travel across the Mediterranean after Alexander’s conquest led to the incorporation of Egyptian and Near Eastern cults into Greek religious practices, and included among those was the cult of Isis.

Isis’s syncretism with Demeter and Aphrodite and her association with Serapis helped to spread the cult around the Greek world during the Hellenistic period. By the 5th century BCE, Herodotus observed the likeness between the Greek goddess, Demeter, and the Egyptian goddess, Isis. By the end of the 4th century BCE, Isis was honored at Piraeus by Egyptians, and in the Hellenistic period, she had sanctuaries all over the Greek world. Ptolemy I Soter’s

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61 Price 1999, 108-109. Notably, there is religious activity at Eleusis dating back to the Mycenaean period according to Cosmopoulos (2003). This might indicate that Demeter and other fertility goddesses have greater continuity and, perhaps, importance among the Greeks as well as other cultures. During the late Classical and Hellenistic period, there was a resurgence of the Eleusinian mysteries and an interest in the depiction of Dionysus on vessels used in symposia, like the Derveni Krater (though found in a burial, it illustrates the important of Dionysus during the 4th century BCE).


63 An inscription at Piraeus dating to 333 BCE records that оι Αιγύπτιοι τὸ τῆς Ἱσηδός ἱερὸν ἱδρυτ|αὶ (“The Egyptians established the shrine of Isis”). Vidman 1969, no. I. This inscription and the site will be discussed below.
patronage of the Serapieion at Alexandria likely enabled the spread of her cult around the Mediterranean.\textsuperscript{64} Often, Isis often was associated with Serapis as new Serapieions were founded around the Greek world. However, it should be noted that the ritual requirements of the worship of Serapis, as well as Isis’s association with it and even her mythology, likely were adapted as necessary by the Greeks, especially the farther away the cult site spread from Egypt itself.\textsuperscript{65} Eventually, the Roman version of Isis’s cult during Apuleius’s time took a different form and adopted rituals that distanced the cult from the traditional Egyptian version.\textsuperscript{66}

During the Hellenistic period, individualism caused by increased mobility and the dissolution of the static sociopolitical structures of the Classical period after Alexander’s conquest and the age of the diadochoi coincided with a sense of alienation and insecurity and enabled the spread of elective cults.\textsuperscript{67} These elective cults increased in popularity not only because they empowered individuals, but also, as in the case of the cults of Demeter and Asklepios for example, because they provided a venue for personal salvation. Previous cults of the Classical period had been centered on the polis which few of its inhabitants ever left. Now, with the creation of a cosmopolitan Greek world and revitalized international trade that reached new distances, religion needed to be more individualized and integrated into everyday life, both at home and abroad. Elective cults outside of the more traditional Olympian polis-based cults became popular in the Hellenistic period and foreign cults were adapted to fit into this new world as needed. Isis’s patronage over healing, magic, motherhood, queenship, and fertility made her relevant to many Egyptians and Greeks alike. Furthermore, the diffusion of the cult to the Greek mainland was made possible because of the increase in travel by merchants, soldiers, and 

\textsuperscript{64} Martin 1987, 73.  
\textsuperscript{65} For details on ritual, see Martin 1987.  
\textsuperscript{66} Apul. \textit{Met.} 11.  
\textsuperscript{67} Tripolitis 2002, 2.
immigrants. Not only were they traveling, but they were residing in new places and learning new customs which they were then able to spread to other parts of the world. Isis in the Hellenistic period exemplifies cultural diffusion.

Conclusion

The early economic connections between Greeks and Egyptians subsequently led to similarities between the two regions apparent in their technologies and art. The foundation of the Archaic temple of Aphrodite in Naukratis around 600 BCE likely increased the exposure of the Egyptians to the cult of a goddess with affiliations to sea-faring, much like Isis. Prior economic relations between Egypt and the Greek world paved the way for cultural diffusion during the Hellenistic period, a time which saw the economic, in addition to political, hegemony of Greeks throughout the Mediterranean. The syncretization of Isis-Aphrodite and the adoption of Isis by the Greeks probably would not have occurred without the economic relationship between the Egyptians and Greeks.

Prior to the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt, Isis was already an important goddess with a wide variety of patronages. The cult of Isis shifted between the Third Intermediate Period and the early Ptolemaic Dynasty (c. 1070 – 221 BCE) from a cult that was primarily complementary to the other major cults of Re, Osiris, and Amun to a more central and independent cult. Already in the Third Intermediate Period, the cult of Isis was spreading around the Mediterranean. By the Late Period (c. 712 – 343 BCE), the first shrine dedicated to the goddess independent from

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68 Note that the nature of this cult as one to Aphrodite Euploia is recorded by Atheneaus, who wrote in the early 3rd century CE when this was a common epithet of Aphrodite.
69 See the OCD “Isis” entry for an overview of her attributes and further bibliography.
70 According to Kitchen (1973, 292 and 309), Shoshenq I (c. 945 – 924 BCE) and Osorkon I (c. 934 – 889 BCE) dedicated statues of Isis in the temple of Baalat-Gebal at Byblos. Isis and Baalat-Gebal will be discussed further in Chapter 2.
Osiris or Horus was built. Under the early Ptolemies, Egypt’s economic and military success resulted in the construction of new religious buildings, including temples to Isis. The reception of the cult in the Greek world reflects a rising interest in elective cults at the time as well as a desire for a more individualized relationship with the gods – often in the form of healing and mystery cults. Isis fit the changing religious atmosphere in the Greek world during the Hellenistic period.

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71 Wilkinson 2003, 149.
Chapter 2: The Development of the Cult of Isis in Egypt

Introduction

Although no Egyptian city claimed her as its patroness, Isis was an important deity in Egypt from the Old Kingdom (c. 2575 – 2134 BCE) onward. She was one of the most commonly depicted goddesses in the Egyptian pantheon, appearing in both temples and tombs. She came to be worshiped in shrines for other gods, including at sites dedicated to Osiris, Horus, and Serapis as well as alongside deified Ptolemaic queens. During the Greco-Roman period, Alexander, and later the Ptolemies and Romans, began to officially incorporate the cult of Isis into the Greco-Roman pantheon – although some port sites, such as Piraeus, had already allowed for the construction of shrines to Isis in preceding centuries. Her divine role as a queen and protectress and her patronage over motherhood, agriculture, and magic probably enabled the widespread acceptance of her cult by Greeks during the 4th – 1st centuries BCE.

Mythology of Isis

The myth of Osiris’s death, including Isis’s role in his transition to the afterlife, was one of the most important and widely-known myths in ancient Egypt. It was so common to people that it was rarely written down, and perhaps as a consequence the most complete narrative of the myth is not found until Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride. According to Plutarch, who wrote during the 1st to early 2nd century CE, Osiris, Isis’s brother, was trapped in a coffin which was sent down the Nile and out to sea. In one version, he ended up in Byblos on the Levantine coast where eventually Isis, his sister, freed him from a tree in which he was encased. The mythological connection to Byblos is likely influenced by the economic and political ties

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72 Wilkinson 2003, 146.
73 Vidman 1969, no. 1.
between Egypt and Byblos. The convergence of mythological and economic ties to Byblos probably led to conflicting mythological accounts.

Regardless of which account is the original Egyptian mythology, eventually, Osiris was murdered by his brother, Seth, and dropped into the Nile. After Isis recovered his body, she attempted to bury him. Seth, however, stole the body and cut it up into fourteen parts and spread them across Upper and Lower Egypt. Isis sailed the Nile searching for these parts and eventually reunified Osiris’s body parts. She was able to conceive Horus with Osiris’s reanimated phallus and then fled to the Delta in order to keep Horus safe from Seth. In the Delta, Isis protected Horus from numerous and varied dangers.74

Isis’s domain in the religious landscape of Egypt reflected her mythology. Probably since she was the loyal wife to Osiris and the protective mother to Horus, Isis was associated with queenship, families, and motherhood among the Egyptians from at least the Old Kingdom (c. 2575 – 2134 BCE). Because of the role magic played in many of the aspects of her mythology, Isis came to be a patroness of magic as well. There is evidence of her being worshipped as a healing deity from the Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1550 – 1307 BCE).75 Healing was an important attribute of Isis since she was able to partially revive Osiris and heal Horus. As with the Byblos connection, it is feasible that her religious roles influenced her mythology, rather than her mythology influencing her religious domain.

75 Lesko 1999, 170.
The association with the Delta region was potentially what caused Isis to become associated with sailing, as well as manufacturing involving papyrus. Lower Egypt served as the location for the manufacture of garments and canvas. It was also the central location for growing papyrus, which was used both as a material for writing and to construct early “punt-like” boats. A potential result of this could be Isis’s depictions with papyrus (see Fig. 2.1). Her association with the Delta region, and potentially with the construction of the boats, may have contributed to the importance of Isis for sailors.

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76 Witt 1971, 16.
77 Wilkinson 2003, 148. Isis is not the only goddess to hold the papyrus staff; many Egyptian goddesses, like Hathor and Mut, hold staffs topped with a lotus or papyrus flower.
By the Old Kingdom, Isis was already associated with the order of the earthly universe, the afterlife, mourning, and general sustainability.\textsuperscript{78} In fact, she was associated with Sothis, also known as Sirius and the Dog Star, which appeared in the summer and anticipated the return of the Nile floods.\textsuperscript{79} For this reason, her birthday was the day this star reappeared, and Isis was associated with inundation of the Nile and, by extension, water, fertility, and agriculture. She permeated all aspects of Egyptian life making her one of the most important and ubiquitous goddesses in Egypt. Her role in Egyptian religion was not static and changed depending on the political and economic necessities of the current pharaoh.

\textit{Isis during the Pharaonic Period}

Isis first appears during the Old Kingdom in the Pyramid texts (c. 2500 – 2100 BCE). Her role as a goddess of protection and sustainability is clear already in these early texts. She is commonly depicted mourning Osiris alongside Nephthys, their sister (see Fig. 2.2). During this period, Isis was closely associated with other deities such as Osiris and Horus and, as a result, was often worshipped at their temples. While she remained closely linked to Osiris as his consort, her cult became more independent from those of other Egyptian deities, and temples dedicated solely to Isis began to be constructed by the early 4\textsuperscript{th} century BCE. During the Eighteenth Dynasty (c. 1550 – 1307 BCE) of the New Kingdom (c. 1550 – 1070 BCE), the

\textsuperscript{78} Wilkinson 2003, 146-149.
\textsuperscript{79} Lesko 1999, 180.
cult of Isis received a professional priesthood to oversee rituals. There are also private monuments from the Nineteenth Dynasty (c. 1307 – 1196 BCE) of women who served as her cult songstresses. The new official distinction for her cult could have instigated the spread of the cult in Egypt itself. The rise in the popularity of Isis is illustrated by the love charms of women dating to the New Kingdom (c. 1550 – 1070 BCE). This association may help explain the eventual syncretism of Isis and Aphrodite.

During the Third Intermediate Period (c. 1070 – 712 BCE) and the Late Period (c. 712 – 343 BCE), both foreign and native pharaohs ruled Egypt. Unsurprisingly, there was little consistency in the political or religious realms at this time. Either little material evidence survives or it has not been excavated, resulting in a confusing period in Egyptian history.

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80 Ndubokwu 2002, 45.
81 Lesko 1999, 179.
82 Lesko 1999, 179.
83 The Third Intermediate Period includes the Twenty-first through the first half of the Twenty-fifth Dynasties, dating from c. 1070 to 712 BCE.
84 Bard 2015, 286.
Nevertheless, the data available reveal that both the iconography and cult of Isis changed throughout the Third Intermediate and Late Periods. For example, in the Late Period there was an increase in the popularity of depictions of Isis with the infant Horus, illustrated in Figure 2.3a. This version of Isis with Horus had been seen before, but after the Late Period and into the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods this iconography became more common (see Fig. 2.3b). Depictions of Isis holding or nursing Horus emphasize her patronage over motherhood. Furthermore, images of Isis with Horus recall the myth of these characters during the period when they were in the Delta and Isis’s role as a protectress. Depictions of Isis with Horus (or Harpocrates) became numerous in the Ptolemaic Dynasty and persisted into the Roman Period, arguably transforming into early Christian depictions of the Madonna and Child. Furthermore, the sacred Theban triad shifts over time from Amun, Mut, and Khonsu during the New Kingdom (c. 1550 – 1070 BCE), to Osiris, Isis, and Horus during the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The shift between these triads illustrates the increasing importance of Isis as well as of Osiris and Horus.

It is possible that the widespread worship of motherhood or fertility deities cross-culturally led to the increase in popularity of depictions of Isis with Horus during the Third Intermediate Period when there were foreign rulers, such as Nubians, in Egypt. Isis had attributes similar to those of goddesses with whom the foreigners were already familiar. The introduction of these foreign rulers into Egypt would have enabled more cultural diffusion between

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85 Schultz and Seidel 2009, 126.
86 Harpocrates was the Greek interpretation of the god, Horus the Child, and was the god attributed to secrets, silence. He was often conflated with Bes as a protector against monsters and animals due to the myth of the infant Horus strangling snakes in the Delta. See “Horus” in the OCD. For more on the connection between Isis and early Christianity’s Madonna, see Stefaniak 2006. For more on Isis Lactans (Nursing) with Horus the child as Madonna and Child, see Higgins 2012.
87 Amun and Mut were the parents of Khonsu just like Osiris and Isis were the parents of Horus in Egyptian mythology. It should be noted that the worship of Isis may have been more common in the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom; however, little archaeological material remains since most of the evidence for religion during this period comes from Luxor where Amun, Mut, and Khonsu were preeminently worshipped (Lesko 1999, 169).
previously segregated peoples. The close associations between the cult of Isis and those of similar goddesses from other cultures is evident from the surviving dedications by Egyptians to those goddesses as well as the adoption of foreign goddesses of the motherhood or fertility type by Egyptians. For example, Shoshenq I as well as Osorkon I, pharaohs of the Twenty-second Dynasty (c. 945 – 712 BCE), dedicated statues of Isis at Byblos at the temple of Baalat-Gebal, “Lady of Byblos”. Baalat-Gebal, the primary fertility goddess at Byblos, probably appeared to be more similar to Isis in terms of her religious roles than any other goddess in the Egyptian pantheon. The similarity between the two goddesses likely made Baalat-Gebal the most easily assimilated goddess at Byblos. Kenneth Kitchen argues that dedications to her would have helped to maintain a political alliance with the local rulers of Byblos. The tradition of making offerings to Baalat-Gebal was probably religiously significant as well. It likely would have strengthened the connection between Isis and Baalat-Gebal for Egyptians who frequented the port city of Byblos. The movement of Egyptian people into the region would have created a need for some form of cult there that was similar to that of Isis since traveling would have separated Egyptians from their own temple complexes where ongoing offerings by priests ensured the safety of the population and the preservation of ma’at. Isis, as a protectress, was a natural fit for this role, and the dedications to Baalat-Gebal exemplify the Egyptian practice of appropriating foreign protective deities in regions with historical trade connections to Egypt. The relationship between Isis and Byblos is reflected in her mythology. I argue that because of the dangers of

88 Kitchen 1973, 292. The early affiliation of Isis with Baalat-Gebal is likely due to the long-standing trade relationship between the Levant and Egypt. For more on the economic link between the regions, see Ward 1968. For a brief overview of Baalat-Gebal, see Wilkinson 2003, 139.
89 It should be noted that this goddess is often also associated with Hathor.
91 Ma’at (“justice”, “truth”, “balance”, “cosmic order”) was the most important concept in the Egyptian worldview. It was the reason for all religious rituals and helped justify the succession of the pharaohs since their primary role was to maintain ma’at on behalf of all Egyptians. See Wilkinson (2003, 150-152) for a brief overview of this concept.
travel and the need for good fortune on voyages, early itinerant Egyptians, probably merchants, likely associated foreign deities in other places with their own deities as substitute patrons.

The Late Period (712 – 332 BCE) includes the Twenty-fifth through the Thirtieth Dynasties and the period of Persian hegemony in Egypt under the Achaemenid Empire. The Twenty-fifth Dynasty (c. 770 – 712 BCE) succeeded in reunifying Egypt and expanding its borders. Around 525 BCE, Cambyses of the Persian Achaemenid Empire conquered Egypt and created a satrapy that lasted for 100 years.\(^92\) The Twenty-eighth, Twenty-ninth, and Thirtieth Dynasties ruled during the period following the death of Darius II in 404 BCE, which also marked the end of Persian control for a time. However, the Thirty-first Dynasty (c. 343 – 332 BCE), established after Artaxerxes regained control of Egypt in the 340s BCE, was once again Persian in ethnicity.\(^93\) The Thirty-first Dynasty comprises the entirety of the Achaemenid Period in Egypt. It remained in place until Alexander came to Egypt in 332 BCE and established the Macedonian Dynasty.

As during the Third Intermediate Period, political instability characterized the Late Period, during which there was civil war and a regular threat of Persian invasion (when the Persians were not already ruling Egypt). Yet in spite of the many disruptions, this was still a time of significant cultural growth. For example, during the Thirtieth Dynasty (380 – 343 BCE), the pharaohs Nectanebo I (380 – 362 BCE) and Nectanebo II (360 – 343 BCE), native Egyptian pharaohs, undertook a large-scale building program, including religious monuments.\(^94\)

\(^93\) Bard 2015, 288-291; Waters 2014, 189.  
\(^94\) Mysliwiec, 2000, 169-176.
During the Late Period, there is already evidence for the diffusion of the cult of Isis around the Mediterranean as well as within Egypt. For example, the shrine of Isis at Behbeit el-Hagar (see Fig. 1.1), located in the eastern Delta, was begun by Nectanebo II and later completed under the rule of Ptolemy III (246 – 221 BCE). Similar to other earlier sites, Isis continued to be honored alongside Osiris and Horus at Behbeit el-Hagar, but the shrine of Isis here was the first sanctuary dedicated to the goddess herself in a shrine that stood apart from that of Osiris or Horus (see Fig. 2.4). Behbeit el-Hagar was only ten miles north of the site of Busiris where one of the most important complexes of Osiris was located. The proximity of Isis’s cult to Osiris’s seems to have remained important during the Third Intermediate and Late Periods. The practice of the primary male deity being worshipped alongside his consort was an Egyptian tradition that would later be continued with the juxtaposition of shrines dedicated to Isis and Serapis during the Ptolemaic Dynasty.

Outside of Egypt, there is evidence for the foundation of a temple dedicated to Isis in Piraeus on mainland Greece dating to 333 BCE (during the Achaemenid Period in Egypt). The inscription suggests that the cult of Isis had already begun to spread in the late 4th century BCE to other parts of the Mediterranean and would have already been familiar to Greeks. By the 4th

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95 Wilkinson 2003, 149.
96 Witt 1971, 18.
97 Vidman 1969, no. I.
century BCE, people from other cultures had probably already begun to recognize the similarities between Isis and a number of other goddesses, among these Demeter and Aphrodite to the Greeks, and Pessinuntia to the Phrygians in addition to Baalat-Gebal to the people of Byblos.  

*Isis during the Macedonian and Ptolemaic Dynasties*

The turbulent Late Period came to an end when Alexander III of Macedon conquered Egypt in 332 BCE. His rule was welcomed – or at least accepted – and only Gaza is reported to have resisted. It seems clear that Alexander wanted to be viewed by the public as the savior of the Egyptian people and a ruler who would be able to maintain the order of life in Egypt politically, economically, and religiously. In contrast to the tyrannical suppression and lack of religious tolerance of the Persians, which had created widespread resentment among the Egyptians, Alexander illustrated whenever possible that he respected the Egyptian lifestyle and the native pantheon of gods as well as religious festivals and traditions. For example, in 331 BCE, Alexander visited Heliopolis and Memphis and made sacrifices to the gods as an Egyptian king would, and he also visited the oracle of Amun at the Siwah Oasis. Here, he was reportedly declared “son”, which related him directly to Amun (Zeus to the Greeks). Alexander’s alleged divine parentage fit nicely within the Egyptians’ traditional view that their pharaoh was the son of a god.

Alexander succeeded in not only expanding his empire, but in creating what may be conceived of as a globalized economy that stimulated cultural exchange all over the

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98 These are names later mentioned by Apuleius (*Met.* 11.47).
100 It was perhaps with this memory of Alexander in mind that Ptolemy I took the name Soter (“savior”) when he switched his role from satrap to pharaoh of Egypt after 323 BCE.
102 χαίρε, εἴπεν, οἱ παῖ: καὶ ταῦτην παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔγε τὴν πρόσρησιν (“Hello, [the oracle] said, son: take this greeting as also from the god (Zeus-Amun”)). Diod. *Biblio.* 17.51.1.
Mediterranean world. Alexandria, previously known as Rhakotis, was reestablished in 311 BCE. Alexandria was the epitome of a cosmopolitan Hellenistic city with a multiethnic population, advanced city planning, centers dedicated to cultural development, like the Museum and Library. The city became an important economic hub that connected Egypt to the broader Hellenistic Mediterranean trade network. In addition, many of the most important intellectual innovations of the Hellenistic age occurred in Alexandria, and the city fostered several generations of scientists, academics, and philosophers. It was also the site of several cults that would later spread to Europe, including those of Isis, Osiris, and Serapis. As Arrian notes, during the foundation of Alexandria, Alexander established a specific area for a temple to Isis.

\[\text{πόθος οὗν λαμβάνει αὐτὸν τοῦ ἔργου, καὶ αὐτὸς τὰ σημεῖα τῇ πόλει ἔθηκεν, ἵνα τε ἁγορᾶν ἐν αὐτῇ δείμασθαι ἔδει καὶ ἱερὰ δόσα καὶ θεῶν ὄντων, τῶν μὲν Ἡλληνικῶν, Ἱσίδου δὲ Ἀἰγυπτίας, καὶ τὸ τεῖχος ἣν περιβεβλῆσθαι.}\]

In fact, the desire for the work seized him, and he himself established the boundaries for the polis and where it was necessary in it to build the agora and the shrines, both how many shrines and for which gods, on one hand for Greek gods, and on the other hand for the Egyptian god Isis, and where it was necessary to place the wall around it.

The attention Alexander purportedly paid to Isis, making her the only named Egyptian god to have a temple in his newly refounded Greek city, could suggest that there was enough interest among the Greek population of Alexandria in honoring the deity to justify the cost of constructing the shrine and maintaining the cult. As Arrian was writing in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE, the emphasis on Isis here could reflect her importance in the Roman era. Regardless, the passage demonstrates that Alexander thought it was important to construct both Egyptian and Greek temples. Alexander’s respect for Egyptian religious beliefs would have helped Egyptians more easily accept Alexander as a foreign ruler, especially after their

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104 Arr. Anab. 3.1.5.
105 For more on Isis in Alexandria see below.
subjugation by the Persians. His apparent respect for native traditions illustrated for the Egyptians that he was going to fulfill his traditional roles as pharaoh.

Isis was a prominent deity in the city from its foundation as Alexandria. She had cult centers all over Alexandria: within the Serapieion, on Pharos Island, and at Cape Lochias (see Fig. 2.5).\textsuperscript{106} She was also probably worshipped by proxy as the Greek goddesses with whom she was often syncretized, such as Demeter and Aphrodite, who, according to Strabo, also had temples in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{107} Considering that Alexandria was (nominally, at least) a Greek city, it is

\textsuperscript{106} Dunand 2007, 258.
\textsuperscript{107} Strabo \textit{Geog.} 17.1.8-10. The location of these temples is uncertain.
interesting that it continued to house Egyptian cults.\textsuperscript{108} The continuity of Egyptian cults in the city suggests the presence of a hybrid population as well as Alexander’s religious tolerance. It is possible that Alexander and his successors wanted to maintain as well as disguise their hegemony in Egypt by assimilating the culture of Egyptians. This process likely included the adoption by Greek leaders, or at least tolerance, of local cults, which probably had been present when the city was still known as Rhakotis. Their outward displays of respect for both Greek and Egyptian religions may have facilitated the political and cultural fusion of Greeks and those Egyptians who had remained in the city.

During the Macedonian Dynasty (332 – 304 BCE), many changes occurred in Egypt; however, the atmosphere of respect emphasized by Alexander, and later continued by the Ptolemies, meant that these changes were not altogether disorienting for the Egyptians or even unwelcome.\textsuperscript{109} Respect for native traditions was an important political tactic that allowed the Greeks to rule in Egypt more effectively and for a longer period than the Persians before them. The Greek pharaohs constructed many temples and continued to maintain \textit{ma’at} for the Egyptians by adequately fulfilling the traditional roles of Egyptian kings in both the spiritual and earthly worlds. These roles included not only constructing temples to the gods, but participating in festivals and making offerings to the gods on behalf of the Egyptian people to maintain the balance in the world.

The cult of Isis flourished during the Ptolemaic Dynasty (304 – 31 BCE). For example, the Temple of Isis on the island of Philae (see Fig. 1.1), begun under Nectanebo II, was

\textsuperscript{108} Mysliwiec 2000, 180-181. A Greek city would usually include temples to Greek gods, a theater, and other Greek architecture such as stoas.  
\textsuperscript{109} Mysliwiec 2000, 179.
completed by Ptolemy II (see Fig. 2.6 below). There is, however, evidence that dates the site to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty, which was Nubian in ethnicity. The date of the site to the Nubian Dynasty illustrates the intercultural popularity of Isis among other African people, like the Nubians. It was subsequently expanded over time by other rulers into the Roman Period. Ptolemy II completed the naos, and Ptolemy III constructed a birth house that consisted of a peristyle three-roomed building. Philae was the location of a large trading center with connections to southern Africa. Isis could have been an important deity here, especially if foreigners, like the Nubians, were able to associate their own deities with Isis and other Egyptian gods. Additionally, at Aswan, Isis was venerated as the patroness of the Egyptian army. Due to Aswan’s location at the First Cataract, close to the border with Nubia, it is

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110 It may have been begun under Nectanebo I, but this is unclear.
111 Lesko notes that Taharqa (690 – 664 BCE) of the Twenty-fifth Dynasty constructed additions to the site (1999, 181).
112 MacQuitty 1976, 123.
113 Hölbe 2001, 87.
possible that Isis was honored here not only for her warrior attributes, which would perhaps have been valued during the turmoil of the Age of the Diadochoi, but also for her traditional role as a protector goddess.\textsuperscript{114} The location of the temple at the traditional border with Nubia implies that Isis’s role as a protectress was valued after the introduction of foreign, including Nubian, pharaohs in Egypt.

While the Egyptians would have worshipped Isis in her traditional form at Philae, I argue that the Greeks likely would have associated the goddess with Demeter or Aphrodite since the Greeks recognized that each of their goddesses shared some of the qualities that were associated with the Egyptian goddess. Isis is honored at Philae in the inscribed hymns as “Isis in all her manifestations” according to Zabkar.\textsuperscript{115} The hymns, dating to the Ptolemaic Dynasty, already anticipate the syncretized goddess referenced in Apuleius, writing in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century CE.\textsuperscript{116} The conception of Isis as a universal goddess in Egypt was already common by the Ptolemaic Dynasty and likely would have helped Greeks embrace the idea that she permeated multiple aspects of both life and the afterlife. Additionally, a sanctuary dedicated to Isis and Harpocrates, the Greek interpretation of Horus as a child, was built on Philae.\textsuperscript{117} Additions to the complex were made at Philae well into the Roman period (see Fig. 2.6 above). It was one of the last pagan sites used in Egypt after the ban on pagan worship instituted in 550 CE by Justinian.\textsuperscript{118} The continuous expansion of the complex at Philae demonstrates the importance of Isis’s patronage of motherhood for the Greeks and Egyptians alike.

\textsuperscript{114} A cataract is a narrowing of the Nile River caused by rocks, cliffs, or other features of the landscape that make the river more or less impassable. Cataracts are therefore easily defended areas.
\textsuperscript{115} Zabkar 1988, 138-141.
\textsuperscript{116} Apul. \textit{Met.} 11.5.
\textsuperscript{117} I. Philae. I. 4.
\textsuperscript{118} Wilkinson 2000, 214.
The location of Philae, and Aswan with it, at the First Cataract of Egypt (see Fig. 1.1) indicates that Isis was important as a protector of life in Egypt – including the physical protection of warfare. Her protectress attribute has also been argued to be the reason for the construction of cult sites during the Thirtieth Dynasty, the period of the last native pharaohs, at either end of the Nile (at Philae and Behbeit el-Hagar) was carried out because of this attribute. In addition to military reasons, there are numerous potential motivations for the continued Ptolemaic construction of the cult site of Isis at Philae. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the construction at the site under Ptolemy III may have been motivated by the revolt of the native Egyptians and therefore an attempt to appease them. The construction of the complex also demonstrates that the Ptolemies valued the goddess and wanted offerings to her to continue.

Ptolemy III also ordered a festival to be held on the day when Sothis rose, Isis’s star, known as New Year’s Day in Egypt. The New Year’s festival is thought to pre-date the Ptolemaic Dynasty in some way. It was a festival dedicated to the rise of Sothis (Sirius) which anticipated the inundation of the Nile and subsequent revitalization of fertile land in Egypt. The important festival was later appropriated by the Romans in a form known as the Navigium Isidis (“Boat of Isis”), or Ploiaphesia, held on the 5th of March. The Navigium Isidis marked the opening of the sailing season for the Romans and is the festival described by Apuleius. The launching of the “boat of Isis” was a tribute to Isis’s search down the Nile for the body parts of Osiris in Egyptian mythology. His leg was even said to have been at Bigeh, next to Philae. There were similar festivals at Philae and Busiris that involved, like many processions for Egyptian deities, taking the cult image of Isis from her temple on a pilgrimage over the Nile by

119 Lesko 1999, 182.
120 Dittenberger 1903, no. 56. Witt 1971, 15.
121 Apul. Met. 11.8.
122 Tomorad 2005, 252.
boat. In the Pyramid texts, Isis holds the forward cable of the Sacred Bark, and in some versions of her mythology, she was the one who traveled to Byblos to retrieve Osiris. The reinstitution by Ptolemy III of the festival of the New Year, during which Isis was celebrated for her revitalization and life-sustaining abilities, followed the tradition of the Egyptians to associate Isis’s processions with the navigation of both the Nile and the ocean. It follows from this tradition that Isis would become linked to seafaring over time since the Hellenistic (and later Roman) period instigated an increase in maritime economic activity.

*Isis and Hellenistic Ruler Cult*

Ptolemy III was succeeded by Ptolemy IV Philopator in 221 BCE. After Ptolemy III’s death, there were few victories for the Ptolemies. In fact, Ptolemy IV spent most of his reign coping with a shortage of silver and the loss of Egyptian territory to natives. After Ptolemy IV, successions in the Ptolemaic Dynasty were turbulent and dictated by economic and political rivalries both within Egypt and abroad. The Ptolemaic Dynasty held power in Egypt until 31 BCE when Octavian defeated Cleopatra VII’s forces at the battle of Actium.

The Ptolemies outlasted the other Hellenistic kingdoms, and religion played a large role in their success. Religion was used as a political tool by the Ptolemies for negotiating power. Many Ptolemaic queens increasingly identified themselves with Isis, goddess of queenship, by parodying her iconography and titles in order to justify their rule and affirm their status as elites. The adoption of the iconography of goddesses by queens also occurred during the Pharaonic Period. While the adoption of a deity’s iconography was not a new practice, Ptolemaic queens

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123 Witt 1971, 165-167.
124 Green 2007, 74.
125 Green 2007, 129.
primarily exploited Isis rather than other deities like Mut or Hathor. Their adoption of her cult aspects likely spurred an interest in the cult of Isis in its own right as well as an understanding of the association between the cult of Isis and the Ptolemaic queens among Greeks specifically.

Arsinoë II (318 – 270 BCE), the wife of Ptolemy II, was the first Ptolemaic queen to be deified on her death, potentially even during her lifetime, and accepted as a guest-goddess into sanctuaries, such as at Delos, where she was worshipped alongside traditional Egyptian deities, especially Isis. At Philae in Egypt, the pylon of the temple of Isis shows Ptolemy II sacrificing to both Isis and Arsinoë, which suggests that a ruler cult for queens was being implemented, perhaps, because of the association between the queens and Isis as the goddess of queenship (see Fig. 2.7). The connection between Arsinoë and Isis is illustrated further by street names in Alexandria including Arsinoë Sozousa (“the saving one”). During the Ptolemaic dynastic successions, the cult of Isis changed and grew while ruler cult expanded in Egypt. The Ptolemy II offering to Isis and Arsinoë II (Hölbe 2001, 102).

Figure 2.7: Relief on the Gate of Philadelphos at Philae; Ptolemy II offering to Isis and Arsinoë II (Hölbe 2001, 102).

126 Nilsson 2011, 3.
127 For an example of the posthumous deified Arsinoë, see Hölbe’s discussion regarding the Mendes Stele (2001, 83-84).
128 Fraser 1972, 237.
The implementation of Greek ruler cult in Egypt probably also contributed to the diffusion of the cult of Isis across the Mediterranean since Ptolemaic queens were often either worshipped depicted in the iconography of Isis, alongside her in shrines as separate deities, or in a syncretized form. As noted above, Arsinoë II, as the first deified Ptolemaic queen, helped instigate the process of deification for Ptolemaic queens. Not only was her cult found within Egypt, at sites such as Philae, in a religious context, but abroad as well. At Delos, for example, Arsinoë had her own festival, the Arsinoeia.129

Arsinoë – like Isis – seems to have had an association with sailors as a protectress over navigation. Cavena suggests that there is a connection between altars with sand and Arsinoë’s dominion over seafaring. These altars were either constructed from sand or were made of stone and subsequently covered with sand. They would have created a visual reminder of the sea for people involved in the ritual, cult officials or members.130 The epithet Euploia (“of safe sailing”) is often applied to Arsinoë and is reminiscent of the associations of Isis with sailing and navigation. Another example of the similarities between the cults includes the offerings of pigs and boars during the Theadelphia, the festival of the deified ruling couple in Alexandria. These same types of offerings are prominent at the Delian Arsinoeia.131 Furthermore, in the Serapieion at Alexandria, both a temple of Isis and an altar for Ptolemy II Philadelphos and Arsinoë II have been reconstructed (see Fig. 2.8 below).132 The similarities between the cult and the reoccurrence of the cults in the same place suggests that the Delian cult of Arsinoë had its origins in Alexandria.

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129 The festival sanctuary, the Philadelphion, is mentioned in two inscriptions from Delos dating to the 2nd century BCE (ID 400 and ID 440 A). Cavena (2012, 80) notes that it is feasible that the building is older, dating back to the period around the death of Arsinoë, since the building was already being restored in 192 BCE due to its age.

130 Cavena 2012, 80.

131 Cavena 2012, 82.

132 McKenzie et al. 2004, 84. While the exact location of the dedicated altar to the Ptolemaic rulers is unknown, there was a foundational plaque found marked on McKenzie’s map (75).
It does not seem coincidental that cults dedicated to both Arsinoë Euploia and Isis appear on Delos. The island was a major economic center during the Hellenistic period, and for this reason, it is feasible that the island was ripe for the development of cults associated with seafaring and voyages, similar to another economically important Hellenistic island, Samothrace.\textsuperscript{133} The cult of Arsinoë may have furthered the spread of Isis or vice versa because of the associations both goddesses had with sailing, their shared iconography, and the emphasis during the Hellenistic period on ruler cults.\textsuperscript{134} Eventually, the cult of Berenike II in the Fayum directly conflated Berenike with Aphrodite and Isis in a syncretized form or in dedicatory inscriptions.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} For a discussion of the sanctuary of Samothrace in relation to maritime activity, see Blakely 2012, Stewart 2016, and Wescoat 2015. Delos will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{134} Lesko (1999, 188) argues that Arsinoe helped the cult of Isis spread around the Mediterranean.

\textsuperscript{135} Hölbe, 2001, 105.
Isis and Serapis

During the early Ptolemaic Dynasty, the cult of the Egyptian god, Serapis (Osiris-Apis), was reinvigorated, and Serapis was coopted by the rulers as the preeminent male deity of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The adoption of Serapis, versus that of another Egyptian deity, introduced a god who was both Egyptian and Greek into the Ptolemaic religious landscape, enabling the Ptolemies to further integrate the two cultures. While the Egyptians saw him as a combination of...

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136 According to Stiehl (1963, 24), the cult may originate in Babylon.
Osiris and Apis, the Greeks identified him as Dionysus because of their similar fertility and agricultural roles.\textsuperscript{137} The syncretization of Serapis was not unfamiliar to the Egyptians, although Osiris-Apis had previously been so rare that he may as well have been an invention by Ptolemy II.

The primary dyad switched during the Ptolemaic Dynasty from Osiris and Isis to Serapis and Isis. While Osiris was replaced for political reasons, Isis flourished during this period.\textsuperscript{138} Since Isis was already familiar to Greeks, associated with Demeter and Aphrodite, and a part of the Hellenistic Greek pantheon, it was unnecessary for the Ptolemies to change the primary female deity in the dyad to another goddess. She filled a role that was culturally mutual between the Egyptians and Greeks while maintaining some continuity for one of the primary deities in Egypt. The continuity of Isis probably provided a sense of stability for the Egyptians.

From the initial affiliation of the two deities, seen in the Serapieion in Alexandria, founded around 246 BCE (see Fig. 2.8), the dyad became nearly inseparable, resulting in the foundation of numerous cult sites of the two deities together both in Egypt and abroad, such as on Delos.\textsuperscript{139} Additionally, the cult of Serapis was a healing cult in Alexandria. Nile water and incubation is thought to have been used by the priests of the cult to cure devotees.\textsuperscript{140} Isis, like Serapis, was a god of healing and associated with the Nile. These common attributes may have helped the Ptolemies merge their cults into the new dyad. The introduction of the cult of Serapis during the Ptolemaic Dynasty was instrumental in the spread of the cult of Isis since they were so often worshipped in the same place both within Egypt and abroad. Eventually, the cult of Isis

\textsuperscript{137} For more on the connection between Serapis and Osiris, see Dunand (2000, 259).
\textsuperscript{138} For more on the adoption and reinvention of Serapis by the Ptolemies, see Dunand (2000, 259-260).
\textsuperscript{139} McKenzie et al. 2004, 79-80. See below for further discussion of Alexandria.
\textsuperscript{140} See Wild (1981, 2-4, 29-31, and 167-168) for a discussion on the connection between water, architecture, and the cult. See Brady (1935, 12) and McKenzie et al. (2004) on the healing aspects of Serapis and insights gained from the architecture.
overtook that of Serapis, and Ptolemy IV eventually discontinued funds for the god since he had less of an appeal to the native Egyptians.\textsuperscript{141}

\textit{Isis in Alexandria}

After the foundation of Alexandria by Alexander in the late 4\textsuperscript{th} century BCE, Isis’s cult gained popularity among both Egyptians and Greeks in the city. Dunand notes that Isis’s iconography in Alexandria was more innovative than it was at other cult sites that had a longer tradition, dating back to the Pharaonic Period, such as at Philae. Her cult seems to have been multifaceted, serving numerous purposes depending on the location of the cult. Numerous sites were founded in the city, including a shrine in the temple of Serapis, a temple at Cape Lochias, and a temple on Pharos Island (see Fig. 2.5).

Prior to the Ptolemaic Dynasty, Serapis (as Osiris-Apis) was worshipped as an afterlife deity in Memphis.\textsuperscript{142} At the Alexandrian Serapieion, some of these associations persisted, but the purpose of the large Greco-Roman temple in Alexandria seems to have been primarily political. Serapis, and Isis with him, was adopted as a deity with close ties to the dynastic succession of the Ptolemies due to their affiliation with kingship and queenship. In the early 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BCE, a temple was dedicated to Serapis and Isis alongside Ptolemy IV Philopator (221 – 204 BCE) and Arsinoë III.\textsuperscript{143} Even before this construction, there are dedications to these gods and an altar to Ptolemy II (283 – 246 BCE) and Arsinoë II at the site.\textsuperscript{144} From the early Ptolemaic Dynasty, the Alexandrian cult of Isis in conjunction with that of Serapis was increasing in popularity among

\textsuperscript{141} Hölbe 2001, 112.
\textsuperscript{142} McKenzie 2004, 81.
\textsuperscript{143} McKenzie 2004, 81.
\textsuperscript{144} McKenzie 2004, 84.
both Greek and Egyptian audiences. It was likely supposed to function as propaganda for the Ptolemies intended to better integrate Greeks and Egyptians religiously and politically.

As noted on page 40, other sites dedicated to Isis in Alexandria include the temples of Isis on Pharos and at Cape Lochias.\textsuperscript{145} The temple of Isis on Pharos Island, the location of the lighthouse, highlights the connection between Isis and seafaring. Dunand notes that Isis was worshipped as “Lady of the Sea” in Alexandria and is often depicted on coins with sails next to the Pharos and leaning on the rudders of ships (see Fig. 2.9).\textsuperscript{146}

Moreover, Isis’s affiliation with maritime activity is emphasized both at Delos, where the rituals of the cult of Isis paralleled those of Alexandrian Isis, and at Corinth, where the importance of sailing had always been paramount to the double-harborored city. The location of a temple to Isis at Cape Lochias, another coastal location, further demonstrates the importance of Isis in seafaring during the Hellenistic period. Interestingly, the temples of Isis at Pharos Island and Cape Lochias meant that the Great Harbor was surrounded by her protective presence. The other harbor also had a protective deity, Poseidon (see Fig. 2.5). I argue that the sanctuaries in either harbor bookended Alexandria with both Greek and Egyptian seafaring deities further maintaining a balance to the cultural fusion of Alexandria. Isis also had many cult sites in coastal

\textsuperscript{145} Dunand 2007, 258.
\textsuperscript{146} Dunand 2000, 258.
cities nearby Alexandria, notably at Mentuthis and Ras el-Soda.\textsuperscript{147} As will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, Isis Euploia or Isis Pelagia seems to have been one of the most widely received versions of the cult throughout Greece.

In contrast to the number of sites throughout the Mediterranean dedicated to Egyptian deities, Greek Olympian deities are particularly absent from the city, except those who may have appealed to a broader portion of the population, such as Aphrodite, Demeter, Poseidon, and Dionysus, all of whom are well attested.\textsuperscript{148} It is perhaps not coincidental that all of these deities are often syncretized or conflated with Isis and Serapis and fill similar roles in religion (especially those associated with the maritime sphere). It is unclear if their temples date prior to the city’s re-foundation as Alexandria, but there were at least sites of Greek cult activity in Naukratis from the 6\textsuperscript{th} century BCE which could suggest earlier religious influence.

There have been suggestions that Isis and Demeter were not only similar in their role in the Greco-Egyptian pantheon, but also that the mystery cult of Isis might have been influenced by that of Demeter. How and when the cult of Isis became a mystery cult is debated by scholars.\textsuperscript{149} Arguably, it was during the early Ptolemaic Dynasty in Alexandria, from Ptolemy I through Ptolemy III, that the cult of Isis began exhibit qualities that are often associated with Greek mystery cults. Alexander employed Timotheos, the overseer of the cult of Eleusinian mysteries during the late 4\textsuperscript{th} century, as one of his religious advisors in Egypt.\textsuperscript{150} The similarities between the mysteries of Isis and Demeter are argued to date back to Alexander’s foundation of the cult in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{151} Lesko notes that, in Egypt, the cult of Isis had some of the necessities

\textsuperscript{147} Dunand 2000, 258.
\textsuperscript{148} Fraser 1972, 197.
\textsuperscript{149} See Lesko (1999, 187) for a review on the scholarship on the connection between Demeter and Isis. A mystery cult, as defined by Griffiths (1970, 42-43), implies a “secret initiation and the prohibition of divulging cult activities to outsiders”.
\textsuperscript{150} Brady 1935, 10. Witt 1971, 51-52.
\textsuperscript{151} See Heyob (1975, 57) for a review of the scholarship on the origins of the mysteries of Isis.
of a mystery cult: a professional priesthood, ritualized music and dancing, ritualized dramatic events, the use of sacred water, specified dress for priests, public processions, and incubation.\textsuperscript{152} Moreover, it was already the nature of Egyptian religion to privatize the majority of cult rituals.\textsuperscript{153} The similarities between the roles and cults of Demeter and Isis are numerous, and if the popularity of the Eleusinian cult is any indication, it is unsurprising that the mystery cult of Isis gained widespread popularity.

\textit{Conclusion}

The mythology and religious domain of Isis during the Pharaonic Period defined the role that Isis would play during the Ptolemaic Dynasty. Her dominion over fertility, agriculture, protection, magic, healing, motherhood, and queenship made her applicable cross-culturally and diachronically. By the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, Isis was being accepted throughout the Mediterranean at sites historically linked to Egypt for their economic value, like Byblos and Piraeus.

Following Alexander’s conquest of Egypt in 332 BCE, an influx of Greek ideas came to Egypt with the migrant population of Greeks. In his new kingdom, Alexander needed to create an atmosphere that incorporated both Egyptian and Greek traditions, and above all to appease the Greek need to feel as though they were at home and not sacrificing their “Greekness” by moving to a foreign region. One way in which he tried to attain these goals was through religion. The construction by Greeks of temples in Egypt to deities that were relevant to both the Greek and Egyptian pantheons created a forum for positive Greek and Egyptian interaction and cultural fusion.

\textsuperscript{152} Lesko 1999, 187.
\textsuperscript{153} Hegedus 1998, 162-163.
In the case of Isis, Alexander’s policies allowed her cult to become multi-cultural. The support of Isis and other Egyptian deities by Alexander and the Ptolemies probably accelerated the adoption of her cult by Greeks in Egypt and throughout the Greek world. The ruler cults of the Ptolemaic queens were also particularly important to the reception of her cult in Egypt by Greeks and the spread of her cult due to their of Isis’s iconography and cult rituals. The association of Isis with the healing cult of Serapis, and debatably the development of the Alexandrian mystery cult, amplified the popularity of Isis among foreigners. Interestingly, the cult of Isis Pharia, that of Isis on Pharos), was very significant thereafter and arguably the most widely received version of her cult. Her widespread adoption as Isis Pharia is evidenced by the cult of Isis first appearing in prominent ports, such as Byblos and Piraeus. Now, during the Hellenistic period of economic growth, maritime activity increased and the cult of Isis was adopted at ports, such as Delos and Corinth, in Greece as Isis Euploia and Isis Pelagia, likely linked to Alexandria’s cult of Isis Pharia. Alexander and the Ptolemies were instrumental in the acceptance of Isis’s cult by Greeks and laid the foundation for the widespread diffusion of her cult.
Chapter 3: The Reception of the Cult of Isis in the Greek World

Introduction

The cult of Isis was not the only foreign cult that entered the Greek world during the Hellenistic period, but hers was extremely widespread.\footnote{Other cults include Serapis and Mithras.} The manifestation of her cult in Greece varied depending on the location of the new cult site and the economic, cultural, and political needs of the population there. However, some similarities between the sites in Egypt, specifically Alexandria, and the Greek world, at Athens, Corinth, and Delos, demonstrate potential reasons for the widespread diffusion and reception of the cult of Isis in the Greek world, perhaps even over that of other foreign cults. These similarities include Isis’s diverse patronages likely relating to her Egyptian myth, her role as Serapis’s consort, and the occurrence of mystery and healing cults during the Hellenistic period.

The cult of Isis spread across the Mediterranean before and well after Alexander’s conquests. There are cult sites in Anatolia, the Levant, the Greek islands, the Greek mainland, and Italy. Eventually, there is evidence of the cult of Isis penetrating into the Middle East and as far west as Spain and north towards Britain during the Roman period (see Fig. 3.1).\footnote{Lesko 1999, 187. See Witt (1971, 264-265) for a detailed map of the cultic evidence of Isis in Greece and the Near East.} Roman soldiers seem to have adopted Isis as a patroness of the military since she was affiliated with the navy and warfare leading to her appearance in the archaeological and textual records, such as Apuleius’s \textit{Metamorphoses}, all over the Roman Empire well into the Late Antique period.\footnote{Lesko 1999, 190.} The spread of the cult likely occurred both because of Egyptian and Greek (and later Roman)
political and economic policies. Prior to the Hellenistic period, Isis’s associations with sailing likely motivated Egyptians to dedicate sites to Isis outside of Egypt, such as Piraeus. Bruneau notes that the similarities between Isis Pelagia, Nike of Samothrace, and Aphrodite Euploia of Lemnos all had the same purpose. These deities, as well as Aphrodite Pelagia of Knidos and Piraeus, were associated with navigation and safe sailing at various locations around the Mediterranean. All of these cults were highly active during the 4th century BCE and the Hellenistic period. Isis’s patronage over sailors and the increase in economic activity could explain the concentration of her shrines at port sites which were heavily trafficked during this period, such as Corinth and Delos. There are often sites dedicated to Isis alongside those of

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157 Bruneau 1961, 442.
158 Besides this, ports are natural foci for cultural diffusion in general due to the concentrated economic activity leading to travel between regions.
Serapis, such as on Delos. Their association, because of the Ptolemaic ties between the two deities in Egypt, likely enabled the simultaneous spread of their cults.

Isis’s role as a goddess of healing and magic in Egypt further aligned her with overarching themes in popular Hellenistic religion, like an individualized relationship with the gods. There was a rising interest in mystery and healing cults at this time, and the cult of Isis fits into both of these categories.\(^{159}\) Her affiliation with these types of cults could account for the ease of reception of her around the Greek world. The veneration of Isis in a mystery is best exemplified in book 11 of Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses.* Though his novel dates to the mid-2\(^{nd}\) century CE, the cult’s mystery aspects arguably existed before this time, as demonstrated in Chapter 2. Also, her cult is often affiliated with that of Asklepios which was also rapidly spreading around the Mediterranean during the 4\(^{th}\) century BCE and Hellenistic period. It happens that the cult sites to Isis are often found near those dedicated to Asklepios, at Athens and Corinth especially.\(^{160}\) Regardless of the proximity of sites for Isis and Asklepios, the contemporary spread of the cult of Asklepios indicates that, starting around the 4\(^{th}\) century BCE, healing cults were rising in popularity.

*Isis in Attica*

During the Hellenistic period, Alexander’s successors, the diadochoi, still considered Athens the center of Greek culture, and as a result, Athens received numerous gifts because Classical culture was valued among the distant Hellenistic kingdoms. Since Greeks in other parts of the Mediterranean were drawing heavily on Archaic and Classical Greek literature, art, myth,  

\(^{159}\) Mystery cults and healing cults had previously existed, but during this period they explode both in popularity and occurrence.  
\(^{160}\) While this could have been coincidental, it seems to have been intentional at certain sites (Athens in particular).
and religion for inspiration for the production of their own works, Athens and other parts of the Greek mainland became natural focal points for the patronage of Hellenistic rulers.\textsuperscript{161}

Euergetism, the benefaction by elites, became a major part of the Hellenistic ruler persona and was not only appreciated but anticipated, if not expected. As Lafond notes:\textsuperscript{162}

\begin{quote}
The benefaction offered on one occasion could add divine support to the elevated status of the benefactors and maintain the memory of actions performed within a religious context [constituting] a way for cities to link the new social-political practices to sacred tradition.
\end{quote}

Benefaction helped to establish a global presence for Hellenistic kings, legitimizing their rule among Greeks around the Mediterranean. Alongside small dedications from monarchs, full sanctuaries and shrines to foreign gods and goddesses, as well as secular types of monumental architecture with foreign elements, such as the Stoa of Attalos, began to appear in Athens during the Hellenistic period.\textsuperscript{163}

Sometime before 333 BCE, the shrine of Isis at Piraeus was constructed with the permission of the Athenians.\textsuperscript{164} The shrine was founded by Egyptians, probably merchants, during a period when foreign trade was being encouraged by Lycurgus.\textsuperscript{165} The religious needs of foreign merchants in Attica resulted in the construction of a shrine to Isis during the second half of the 4\textsuperscript{th} century BCE, but it is likely that foreigners were worshipping Isis in Piraeus before this temple was formally sanctioned. We are uncertain where this shrine was in Piraeus. No architectural evidence for the shrine has been uncovered; however, a statue has been tentatively

\textsuperscript{162} Lafond 2016, 20.
\textsuperscript{163} The Stoa of Attalos is large, as was typical of architecture in Pergamon especially, and utilizes the Pergamene capital, which was specific to the region of the Attalid kingdom and would have recalled the power of the Attalid Dynasty.
\textsuperscript{164} Vidman 1969, no. 1. This grant was referenced as a precedent in a decree established by the ekklesia for the Citians to build a shrine to Aphrodite in Piraeus.
\textsuperscript{165} Simms 1989, 219-220.
identified as Isis or a priestess of Isis. The statue has both Greek and Egyptian elements. The multicultural stylistic elements of the statue indicate that the cult, or at least this image of Isis or her priestess, was Hellenized for Greek consumption. In fact, Simms notes that “unlike other deities… [Isis] underwent a considerable amount of Hellenization before her official cult adoption”. It is interesting that the cult of Isis may have been adapted for Athenian culture before the official establishment of the cult, because the adoption of a Hellenized form of Isis, rather than an Egyptian-style of veneration, indicates the preference for a Greek ritual over an Egyptian one. It is possible that the cult at Piraeus was Hellenized or that this statue fragment dates to the later Hellenistic period when her cult was more Hellenized generally throughout the Greek world. The Hellenization of Isis may have started in Alexandria, however, due to the population of both Greeks and Egyptians.

Alongside the cult of Serapis, that of Isis was established in Athens around 200 BCE. The Athenians also seem to have incorporated Serapis into the polis, but the date of his shrine is unclear. Pausanias tells us only that his shrine existed:

\[\text{ἐντεῦθεν ἴοδσιν ἐς τὰ κάτω τῆς πόλεως Σαράπιδός ἐστιν ἱερόν, ὃν Ἀθηναῖοι παρὰ Πτολεμαίου θεῷ ἐσθῆτων, \τὸν ἔπηγάγοντο ("For those going from there [the Prytaneion] to the lower part of the city, there is a shrine of Serapis, the god whom the Athenians introduced from Ptolemy")}.\]

Pausanias’s comment is the only record of a shrine of Serapis near the Prytaneion. The cults of Isis and Serapis were formalized later in Athens during the early 2nd century BCE, but by the end of that century Isis was receiving dedicatory inscriptions independent from Serapis and became

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166 Paraskevaidis 1961, 131-137. It cannot be established whether or not this statue stood in the 4th century BCE temple, but the presence of the statue illustrates the prominence of Isis in Piraeus.
167 Simms 1985, 203-204.
168 Simms 1985, 205.
169 Simms 1985, 205.
170 Paus. Desc. 1.18.4. Pausanias does not describe this shrine.
the predominant Egyptian deity. While the cult of Isis appeared first and endured longer than that of Serapis, the accelerated rate of the spread of the cult of Isis can be partially attributed to the establishment of temples dedicated to both deities by the Ptolemies. During the early Ptolemaic Dynasty, temples dedicated to Serapis were founded with the intention of popularizing his cult. Serapis was adopted and subsequently altered by the Ptolemies in order to fuse the two cultures, Greek and Egyptian, under the new Ptolemaic Dynasty. While the cult of Serapis became less prominent, that of Isis remained popular across Egypt throughout the Ptolemaic Dynasty. It is possible that Isis’s status as a healing deity in addition to her other roles enabled the survival of her cult after the decline in popularity of the cult of Serapis. As a healing deity herself, Isis would have been able to replace Serapis.

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171 See Dow (1937, 230-231) for a discussion on the breakdown of dedications to Isis and Serapis in Athens and on Delos.
172 See Chapter 2 for a discussion of Serapis and Isis during the Ptolemaic Dynasty.
By the Hadrianic period (116 – 138 CE), a shrine to Isis had been established on the south slope of the Acropolis. Interestingly, the temple is on the same terrace as the Asklepieion (see Fig. 3.2). It is possible that this location was deemed appropriate for the temple of Isis since she was a patroness of healing in a similar way as Asklepios. Moreover, both of these deities are known to utilize water in their cult rituals. As the plan shows, this terrace allowed for access to a spring. The layout of the terrace is not the only instance of a shrine to Isis being in close proximity to an Asklepieion. Healing deities gained popularity in the 4th century BCE

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173 Walker 1979, 244-245. This identification is based on column capitals and an inscription. Vidman 1969, no. 16.
174 See Wild 1981 for more on the use of water in the cult of Isis and this is reflected in the architecture at various sites.
175 This is illustrated below at Athens, Corinth, and Delos.
and continued to develop into widespread cults in the Hellenistic period. Their popularity is most clearly illustrated by the diffusion of the cult of Asklepios, but Isis, too, was readily received by the Greeks as well as other cultures. A shrine of Isis was probably complementary to the Asklepieion since both deities were associated with healing.

Isis was among the first of the foreign cults to come to Athens, probably entering as Isis Pelagia in the port. Her cult began in Piraeus, an important port throughout Athenian history, and later was legally integrated into the Athenian religious calendar, probably enabled by the cult’s ties to Serapis. The cult of Serapis was confirmed socially and legally alongside that of Isis, but it was Isis’s cult which withstood the test of time in Athens. It was likely her role as a healing deity and protectress over sailors that enabled her cult’s reception and endurance in Athens. While Serapis was a healing deity, Isis had multiple domains which diversified her roles and increased the opportunity for reception by the Greeks. Additionally, the Asklepieion terrace on the south slope of the Acropolis provided a convenient location for a shrine to Isis in later periods and illustrates the important role of as a healing deity. It also seems that her role as a seafaring deity was important in Athens from the 4th century BCE and helped the cult remain in Athens into the Roman period.

*Isis in Corinth*

Many of Alexander’s successors possessed Corinthia as a province or through alliance during the first part of the Hellenistic age, from 323–301 BCE, including Ptolemy.176 Ptolemy gained control of Corinth around 308 BCE in order to establish freedom for the Greeks as had been agreed at the Peace of 311.177 By “freeing the Greeks”, Ptolemy was demonstrating his

176 Dixon 2014, 46.
177 Dixon 2014, 57.
goodwill, similar to the premise under which Alexander conquered the Achaemenid Empire.\textsuperscript{178} However, his attempt was unsuccessful since the Greeks did not provide proper compensation for his efforts, and Ptolemy’s reinstitution of the League of Corinth was mostly a failure. It seems that Ptolemy provided Corinth with grain during their shortage.\textsuperscript{179} There is numismatic evidence that Ptolemy’s control in Corinth may have extended beyond the garrison on Acrocorinth. The Chiliomodi hoard consists of 33 coins of Ptolemy I, some of which were minted in Corinth.\textsuperscript{180} According to Diodorus, Ptolemy returned to Egypt after instituting a garrison; however, it is possible that he introduced other artifacts of Ptolemaic society, including the cult of Isis.\textsuperscript{181} It was not uncommon for the Ptolemies to establish her cult around the Mediterranean, and the presence of Isis in Corinth later indicates a familiarity in Corinth with her cult prior to the Roman period although the archaeological remains are scarce.

\textsuperscript{178} Diod. Sic. 20.37.2. ἐπεβάλετο μὲν οὖν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας Ἑλληνίδας πόλεις Πτολεμαῖος ἐλευθεροῦν, μεγάλην προσθήκην ἦγουμενος ἐσεθαι τοῖς ἱδίοις πράγμασι τὴν τῶν Ἑλλήνων εὔνοιαν.
\textsuperscript{179} Dixon (2014, 33-34) discusses the shortage of grain on the Greek mainland in the 4\textsuperscript{th} century.
\textsuperscript{180} Dixon (2014, 59) argues that these coins may have been intended to pay the garrison, but this cannot be determined from their context alone.
\textsuperscript{181} Diod. Sic. 20.37.2. ἐπεὶ δὲ οἱ Πελοποννήσιοι συνταξάμενοι χορηγήσειν σῖτον καὶ γρήματα τῶν ὀμολογημένων οὐδέν συνετέλουσιν, ἀγανακτήσας ὁ δυνάστης πρὸς μὲν Κάσανδρον εἰρήνην ἐποίησατο, καθ’ ἣν ἐκατέρως ἔδει κυριεύειν τῶν πόλεων ὅπως εἶχον, τὴν δὲ Σικυόνα καὶ Κόρινθον ἀσφαλισάμενος φρονῷ διήρεν εἰς τὴν Αἰγύπτον.
In 146 BCE, Rome sacked the city, enslaving citizens and stripping many of the religious and civic structures of their wealth. After the Interim Period (146 – 44 BCE), the formal period of the discontinued use of the city, Corinth was refounded as *Colonia Laus Iulia Corinthiensis*. Given the dense Roman stratigraphy because of its history, the evidence for Hellenistic Corinth is limited. Nevertheless, the cult of Isis at Corinth merits comment here since it is thought to be the site of the festival for the goddess described by Apuleius and since it was likely based on the Hellenistic phase.

Pausanias reports at least two possible sanctuaries to Isis at Corinth, including one on Acrocorinth that excavations have not yet uncovered, and one in the harbor, Kenchreai (see Fig. 3.3 above).

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182 Paus. Desc. 7.16.8. τὸν δὲ ἐγκαταληφθέντων τὸ μὲν πολὺ οἶ Ρώμασι φονεύουσι, γυναῖκας δὲ καὶ παῖδας ἀπέδοτο Μόμιος.
184 Apul. Met. 11.
185 Paus. Desc. 2.4.6. ἐς δὴ τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον τούτων ἀνισότατον ἔστιν Ἰσίδος τεμένη, ὥς τὴν μὲν Πελαγίαν, τὴν δὲ Ἀγαμεμνόναν αὐτῶν ἐπονομάζοντι, καὶ δύο Σαράπιδος, ἐν Κανόβῳ καλομένου τὸ ἔτερον.
186 Paus. Desc. 2.2.3.
Ἐν δὲ Κεχρέαις Ἀφροδίτης τὸ ἔστι ναὸς καὶ ἀγαλμα λίθου, μετὰ δὲ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῷ ἐρύματι τῷ διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης Ποσειδώνος χάλκιον, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἐπέραν πέρας τοῦ λιμένος Ἀσκληπιοῦ καὶ Ἰσιόδος ἱερά.

And in Kenchreai, there is a temple and a stone statue of Aphrodite, and after it on the pier along the sea is a bronze statue of Poseidon, and down on the opposite end of the harbor, there are shrines to Asklepios and Isis.

Excavations in Kenchreai revealed mosaics and dedicatory inscriptions, such as “Orgia” (“secret rites”), related to Egypt and Isis (see Fig. 3.4). These excavations combined with numismatic evidence (see Fig. 3.5 c) and Pausanias’s description suggest that this sanctuary may have been found. Kenchreai is thought to be the sanctuary of Isis Pelagia, whose festival Lucius most likely attends in the Metamorphoses. Dixon notes that Corinth experienced many renovations and new constructions during the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BCE. Remodeling at the sanctuary dates to the Roman colonial period (c. mid-2nd century CE); however, it is feasible that the cult was established prior to the Roman period. Bookidis even argues that many Olympian cults at Corinth were reoccupied after the Interim Period (146 –

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187 Scranton 1967, 163-164.
188 Smith 1977, 201-203. For more on the coins associated with the harbor sanctuary see Hohlfelder 1970, 326–331.
189 Apul. Met. 11.7-18.
190 Dixon 2014, 111.
44 BCE), including those of Aphrodite, Demeter and Kore, and Apollo.\textsuperscript{191} It is possible, therefore, that the cult of Isis at Corinth was also reestablished based on an earlier Hellenistic site.

![Coins illustrating Kenchreai harbor](image)

Figure 3.5: Coins illustrating Kenchreai harbor. A: Semicircular harbor with Poseidon as the central figure (138–161 CE); B: Semicircular harbor with Poseidon as the central figure (138–161 CE); C: Semicircular harbor with Isis Pelagia as the central figure (before 138 CE). (Holhfelder 1970, 332).

The site at Kenchreai might further connect Isis to sailors and sea navigation. Firstly, Isis is referred to as Isis Pelagia by Pausanias.\textsuperscript{192} The Isis Pelagia epithet demonstrates the close connection between Isis and seafaring. Aphrodite and Poseidon, mentioned by Pausanias, are also known to be associated with maritime safety and navigation in addition to Isis. Poseidon’s affiliation with Corinth as the protector of the sea is demonstrated by numismatic evidence as well (see Fig. 3.5 a and b). There is numismatic evidence illustrating Isis with sails (see Fig. 3.5 c).\textsuperscript{193} On this coin, the figure of Isis closely resembles the figure of Isis Pharia on the coin from Alexandria (see Fig. 2.9). The similarity of the two figures suggests the influence of the Hellenistic cult of Isis in Alexandria on the one in Corinth. Bruneau suggests that “Egyptian” (Αἰγυπτίαν) in the report by Pausanias may mean “Pharia” by metonymy.\textsuperscript{194} This possible

\textsuperscript{191} Bookidis 2003, 257.
\textsuperscript{192} Paus. Desc. 2.4.6.
\textsuperscript{193} Smith 1977, 221.
\textsuperscript{194} Bruneau 1961, 444.
conflation of terms suggests that there was, not one, but two cults at Corinth for Isis “of safe sailing”. Since Corinth was an important port city, it is likely that a cult to Isis appeared here under the volition of Egyptian sailors, or Greek sailors who had adopted her cult in Egypt, who wanted a patron deity of seafaring at this location.

The sanctuary at Kenchreai, assuming that it is dedicated to Isis, is interesting because it is near a sanctuary to Asklepios. The association between sites dedicated to Asklepios and Isis, as at Athens, persists at Corinth. Similar to Isis, Asklepios had many desirable traits as a healer making his cult easily accepted in new places. The appearance of these two healing cults together at Corinth is likely more than coincidental due to the similarities in the historical appearance of the cults at Corinth. The Asklepieion at Corinth, like the Isieion later in the 4th century BCE, was one of the first to appear outside of the cult center at Epidauros during late 5th century BCE. Isis may have been readily adopted at Corinth if there was already a history at the site of constructing temples to deities outside of civic tradition.

Beyond their similar attributes within the realm of healing, Wickkiser argues that Isis and her associations with slavery and manumission made her an obvious choice in the Corinthian religious landscape. Often slaves were manumitted through a “sale to the god”. Asklepieia, as well as other sanctuaries, had become common locations for the manumission of slaves during the Hellenistic period because of the parallel capacity of healing and manumission to alter lives. Other sanctuaries include those to Apollo, Athena, Dionysus, Serapis, Nemesis, and also Isis. Zelnick-Abramovitz even discusses the possibility that this mode of manumission in Greece was

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195 This identification was made due to the presence of glass mosaics with Egyptian style motifs and the location’s correspondence with Pausanias’ description. See Smith (1977, 202-206) for more information about the dispute over the identification.
196 Wickkiser 2010, 37.
197 Wickkiser 2010, 61-66. See (89), for an example of manumission in the presence of a priest of Isis and Serapis.
198 See Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005 for more information on this mode of manumission (91-98).
199 Wickkiser 2010, 62.
influenced by an Egyptian practice.\footnote{Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005, 95.} While Corinth has no records of sacred manumission occurring at sanctuaries, there is historical evidence for a large population of manumitted slaves living in Corinth, and arguably many cults were dedicated to deities with connections to manumission, including Asklepios and Demeter.\footnote{Wickkiser 2010, 65-66.} The cult of Isis aligns closely with this interpretation because of her connections to slavery and manumission. Especially in Greece, her cult was open to people from any class.\footnote{Lesko 1999, 199.} Her classless worship is evidenced by the fact that she is recorded as being worshipped by slaves as well as the fact that mystery cults were innately classless as long as an initiate followed the appropriate rites. The connection between Corinth and manumission as well as between Isis and slavery could insinuate that the cult of Isis was introduced in Corinth because there were already cults there dedicated to deities with ties to manumission. Isis was even worshipped during the Roman period in Spain as “the Fellowship of Homeborn Slaves”, and there are records of her worship in Pompeii via the emancipation of

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure3.png}
\caption{South Stoa of Corinth showing location (p) of the bust of Serapis (Fig. 3.7) (Smith 1977, 213).}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure4.png}
\caption{Bust of Serapis from South Stoa, Corinth, c. mid-2\textsuperscript{nd} century BCE (Bookidis 2003, 258).}
\end{figure}
slaves for her. Because of these other records of Isis’s association with slaves and manumission, it is not unlikely that she was welcomed into Corinth as an emancipator.

Similar to their appearance in Alexandria and Athens, shrines of Serapis and Isis were constructed near each other in at Corinth. While a lack of archaeological evidence makes it difficult to determine the closeness between these deities at Corinth, there is evidence for both cults in the city. Near Acrocorinth, Pausanias reports that there were “two sanctuaries of Serapis” in addition to that of Isis. Regardless of the uncertainty about the association these sites might have had with each other, a possible shrine of Serapis has been discovered in the South Stoa (see Fig. 3.6). It is argued to be his shrine since there is a life-sized bust of Serapis (see Fig. 3.7). The appearance of Serapis in Corinth as well as Isis further illustrates the simultaneous spread of these two cults because of their roles as the patron deities of the Ptolemaic Dynasty.

While the evidence at Corinth primarily dates to the Roman colonial period, it is probable that the cult of Isis dates back to at least the Hellenistic period at this location due to the interest by the Hellenistic kings in the polis as well as the important role of Corinth as an economic and cultural center. The location of Corinth at an intersection of two important land and sea trade routes might have allowed for the introduction of the cult of Isis Pelagia which closely mimicked that of Isis Pharia in Alexandria as demonstrated by the numismatic evidence. The association of Isis with manumission and healing, like Asklepios, seems to have made her reception into Corinth, a city with a large population of manumitted slaves, worth the financial burden for the city to construct and maintain her cult well into the Roman period.

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203 Witt 1971, 286.
204 Paus. Desc. 2.4.6. ἐς δή τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον τοῦτον ἁνωτάτον ἔστιν Ἰσιδὸς τεμένη, ὅιν τὴν μὲν Πελαγίαν, τὴν δὲ Λιγυπτικῶν ἀντίων ἐπονομάζουσιν, καὶ δύο Σαράπιδος, ἐν Κανόβῳ καλουμένον τὸ ἔτερον.
205 Bookidis 2003, 257.
206 Bookidis 2003, 258. For a catalog of other evidence relating to Serapis at Corinth see Smith 1977.
*Isis on Delos*

Following the role of Delos as the location of the treasury of the Delian League during the Classical period, it is not surprising that the island retained its importance in the centuries to follow. Delos developed into an important economic and religious center during the Hellenistic period and maintained this role throughout the Roman period as well. The island was home to a number of foreign sanctuary complexes during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, including those of the Syrians, Italians, and Egyptians. These foreign deities were introduced by the merchants who were using the island consistently as a trading post and possibly migrating there for economic purposes.

![Figure 3.8: Plan of Serapieion C at Delos. A Entrance; B and B’ porticos; C Metroon/Heraion; D Dromos; E “avant-cour”; F “cour”; G Temple of Serapis; H Temple of Serapis, Isis, and Anubis; I Temple of Isis (Bruneau 1970, 460).](image-url)

Serapieion C, located in the Egyptian sanctuary, houses two temples of Isis: one independent shrine and one tripartite shrine which was probably dedicated to Serapis, Isis, and Anubis (see Fig. 3.8). The majority of the monuments from Serapieion C date to the second half of the 2nd century BCE. Based on this evidence and inventories of the dedications, Serapieion C was an officially administered cult center on the island by the 2nd century BCE, which probably
resulted in the discontinuation of use of the older sanctuaries, Serapieia A and B, by that time or shortly thereafter. The sanctuary remained important until it was either destroyed or abandoned between 88 and 69 BCE. 207

The excavations of Serapieion C have revealed a probable hydreion, a room in the sanctuary where water was present for the purpose of the cult. The presence of the hydreion in Serapieion C suggests a link between the Egyptian belief in the regenerative properties of water and the use of water in healing cults around the Greek world in the cults of Serapis and Isis. 208

The presence of water in the sanctuary suggests the possibility that, by the end of the 2nd century BCE, the sanctuary of Serapis and Isis on Delos was a healing cult. Their roles as healers would have aided the reception of the cult on the island since healing cults were popular considering that they functioned as hospitals. Interestingly, the Serapieion was not the only healing cult on the island. An Asklepieion was built in the 4th – 3rd centuries BCE along the western shore of the island. The presence of multiple healing cults on the small island of Delos illustrates the popularity of this type of cult during the Hellenistic period and demonstrates that, at this time, it was not uncommon for the cults of Isis, Serapis, and Asklepios to coexist though they all served similar purposes. 209

208 Siard 2009, 160. Also, see Wild 1981 for more information on water in the cults of Isis and Serapis.
209 It is important to note that while these temples are not next to each other, their proximity still shows the interest in Serapis and Isis as healing deities even though their perceived powers in this area may not have been a primary concern of the participants in their culture.
On Delos, there are a variety of inscriptions, references, and dedications that indicate a cult to Isis Pelagia on the island. As a major port during the Hellenistic period, Delos established a cult to Isis Pelagia likely for the merchants commonly stopping at this location. One relief, dating to the second half of the 1st century BCE, illustrates Isis standing on the prow of a boat holding a sail (see Fig. 3.9). The depiction of Isis holding sails and standing on a boat recalls the coin from Alexandria (Fig. 2.9). In fact, there is other evidence suggesting a direct link between the Alexandrian and Delian cults of Isis. As discussed in Chapter 2, there were connections between the cult of Arsinoë and that of Isis on Delos. The cult of Arsinoë closely followed the rituals established in Alexandria, especially regarding the festival rites of the Alexandrian Theadelphia and the Delian Arsinoeia.\(^{210}\) The continuity between these cults illustrates the connection between the religious landscape of Alexandria and that of Delos. It is feasible that both cults here were connected to maritime activity and may have even been a part of

\(^{210}\) See Caneva (2012, 80) with references for more on the festival rites.
the same rituals and festivals. Finally, there is a lamp fragment of Corinthian origin depicting Isis with a sail standing on ship, dating to the first half of the 2nd century CE, which was found on Delos (see Fig. 3.10). The lamp further emphasizes the connection between seafaring and the cult of Isis. Not only does the lamp votive demonstrate the continued use of the cult of Isis Pelagia at Delos into the Roman period, but it also suggests that the cult was Aegean-wide. It is possible that a Corinthian, probably leaving from Kenchreai, traveled to Delos and dedicated this lamp. Alternatively, a Delian could have visited Corinthia and picked up the lamp there to dedicate upon a safe return to Delos. While it is unclear who the dedicator was, the juxtaposition of the archaeological provenience and the sourcing of the clay demonstrates that there was a religious association between these two locations since the lamp is impressed with Isis Pelagia and connected with two similar cult sites. It makes sense that both ports, being important during the Hellenistic period, had visitors from the other port who wanted to worship at the temple of Isis Pelagia on both sides of their voyage. It is easy to imagine a pilgrim buying a Corinthian lamp for Isis Pelagia and vowing to dedicate upon a safe return, since vows of protection and success were common.

Delos was a prominent port during the Hellenistic period because of its central location between the Hellenistic kingdoms in the Near East and Egypt and the Greek mainland. Its history as a central member of the Delian League, though not necessarily a dominant power, reinforced the role of Delos as a stopover for travelers on their way to other places. As a result, the island came to be one of the most heavily trafficked ports during the Hellenistic period and became a host for many foreign cults for these itinerant people, whether they were migrants or merchants.

\[211\text{ Smith 1977, 222.}\]
Conclusion

The religious and philosophical changes in the Greek world during the 4th century BCE coupled with the rise of individualism enabled an expansion of cults beyond Olympian cults of the traditional civic pantheon of gods to cults of chthonic deities that emphasized fertility and healing while allowing for a personal relationship with the god. These chthonic cults served new religious purposes, like healing and seafaring, which previously had not been as much of a priority as they became during the Hellenistic period. The increase in travel during this period also enabled the diffusion of foreign deities such as Isis.

The Greek reception of the cult of Isis likely occurred because of the widespread adoption of cults that emphasized individualism in the Hellenistic period, such as mystery cults, like that of Demeter, and healing cults, like that of Asklepios. During the Hellenistic period, there was an increase in the diffusion of the cult that was accelerated because of the mystery aspects of it that were popular. Moreover, Isis and Asklepios frequently appear together—except in Alexandria—which could be because they are both healing deities. At Athens, Corinth, and Delos, there is evidence that during the Hellenistic period the cult of Isis spread around the Mediterranean because of her association with sailing and healing, as well as her position as a consort for Serapis. These attributes, which can be traced back to Egypt, enabled Isis to appear both at sites with Ptolemaic influence as well as sites where sailing was a major part of the lifestyle.

The economic growth during the Hellenistic period seems to have enabled the rise of the cult of Isis Pharia, a seafaring deity at the Pharos of Alexandria. Isis Pharia seems to have been adopted by the Greeks as Isis Euploia or Isis Pelagia at various locations. It seems that during the

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212 Fraser 1972, 207-208. It is possible that at Alexandria the cult of Asklepios was not prevalent because of the overwhelming presence of Serapis at this particular site as a healing deity.
Hellenistic age, a period of increased sailing and therefore increased risk of shipwreck, there was a wide-spread adoption of female deities affiliated with maritime, like Nike of Samothrace and Isis Pelagia. Isis Pharia, as Pelagia or Euploia, was welcomed into the wider Hellenistic Greek world because of the heavy maritime activity as well as her role in mystery and healing cults. The maritime version of the cult of Isis continued to resonate with people well into the Hellenistic and Roman periods.
Conclusion

Synopsis and Conclusions

The development of Isis’s cult in the Greek world expands beyond the traditional cult in Egypt. In Egypt, she had been a dominant goddess in the Egyptian pantheon but typically not the most important deity in rituals until the later Pharaonic and Ptolemaic Dynastys at sites like Philae and Alexandria. Over time, her cult came to be widely received throughout the Greek world. The diffusion was possible on a larger scale because the sociopolitical climate in the Greek world shifted during the late 4th century BCE and Hellenistic period from being polis-oriented towards emphasizing a cosmopolitan ideology that permeated the economic, social, political, and religious aspects of life because of Alexander’s conquest of the Achaemenid Empire. The religious climate changed by stretching beyond the cults typically associated with the polis structure to include foreign deities, such as those from the Near East and Egypt, and to emphasize “elective cults”, such as the Dionysian mysteries and the healing cult of Asklepios.213 The cult of Isis aligns with the trend towards elective cults since it both has healing and mystery qualities that offer salvation in more than one way to the participant. There are a number of potential reasons for the widespread diffusion and reception of the cult of Isis during the Hellenistic period including Ptolemaic propaganda, the variability of her patronage, and her connection with maritime during a period of dense economic networks.

Isis’s cult was easily appropriated by the Ptolemies for a variety of reasons including her accessibility among both Egyptian and Greek audiences due to her syncretization with other foreign deities as well as her broad range of patronage. Her mythological roles in agriculture, fertility, motherhood, queenship, protection, healing, and magic connected her, not only to many

Greek deities (including Demeter, Aphrodite, and Artemis), but also to other goddesses around the Mediterranean as at Byblos. These patronages and connections with other deities made the reception of Isis easier among diverse population in Egypt during the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The fluidity of Isis’s cult would have been useful to the Ptolemies who were only just starting to establish a dynasty in Egypt where they were the foreigners. The Ptolemies would have been able to employ Isis as a consort to Serapis, allowing them to reconstruct the traditional Egyptian dyad with a propaganda-steeped god like Serapis and a popular traditional Egyptian goddess like Isis.

The cults of Serapis and Isis were spread quickly around Egypt and the wider Mediterranean by the Ptolemies, especially to highly trafficked sanctuaries and ports like Athens, Corinth, and Delos. The presence of Isis, in addition to Serapis, probably made the less historically popular deity, Serapis, more accepted in new locations. Eventually, the cult of Isis established at these locations became just as substantial as that of Serapis, and often surpassed his in popularity or longevity. The endurance of her veneration over that of Serapis could be attributed to the fact that she not only filled the roles of healer and patron deity of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, like Serapis, but also had patronage over a variety of realms, like agriculture, magic, and seafaring, that diversified the population which was interested in her cult. Her diversity stimulated the veneration of Isis by increasing her adaptability for the people’s needs.

The Ptolemies’ agency in the diffusion of the cult of Isis around the Mediterranean extends beyond the association of Serapis and Isis as consorts. From the time of Arsinoë II (318 – 270 BCE), Ptolemaic queens were appropriating the iconography of Isis and starting to implement a ruler cult in Egypt that was atypical for Greek culture. The Egyptian ruler cult was

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214 See Plutarch’s *Istide et Osiride* for the most complete surviving account of the mythology of Isis. See Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses* Book 11 for a list of some of names of goddesses attributed to the same “mother goddess” figure.
not only part of the religious landscape in Egypt, but also can be seen in Hellenistic sanctuaries around the Greek world. At sites like Delos, the cult of Isis appears not far from shrines to Ptolemaic queens who often were depicted in the iconography of Isis. This trend would have increased the familiarity of the cult of Isis through the iconography of the queens and introduced a cult of Isis by substitution since the goddess was often conflated with the queen due to Isis’s patronage over queenship.

Additionally, the economic networks during the Hellenistic period accelerated the diffusion of the cult of Isis throughout the Mediterranean. In fact, the relationship between a rich economic period and cultural diffusion between Egypt and Greece can be traced back to the Bronze Age as was discussed in Chapter 1, although not with Isis. Sailors – whether they were merchants or sailors – seem to have been instrumental in the spread of the cult of Isis from the 10th century BCE. One of her earliest shrines outside of Egypt appears at Byblos, a site with historical trade connections to Egypt. Even her first known shrine in Greece appears at Piraeus, a major port, and is said to have been built by Egyptians.215

The fact that her shrine in Piraeus was constructed by Egyptians in Attica indicates that they felt that it was necessary to construct a shrine to this particular deity. The construction of shrines at the important international ports of Byblos and Piraeus from at least the 4th century BCE indicates an association between Isis and seafaring (or at least trade). This sanctuary might be evidence that her patronage over seafaring in Egypt predates the Ptolemaic Dynasty, but the evidence for veneration of Isis as a seafaring deity in Egypt is scarce. Furthermore, her potential affiliation in Egypt with the Delta region because of her mythology (and possibly even her patronage over crafts and the use of papyrus in early boats) could have later resulted in her

association with sailing during the Ptolemaic Dynasty. Again, the mythological sources from the pre-Ptolemaic period are unclear on Isis’s affiliation with seafaring, Byblos, and the Nile due to a lack of preservation of the myths by Egyptians. However, the early appearance of Isis outside of Egypt at ports illustrates at least an interest in her as a seafaring deity. It seems reasonable to conclude then, based on her appearance at port sites around the Mediterranean and her later patronage over sea navigation, that the Egyptians who founded the shrine in Piraeus might have been merchants who commonly found themselves in Piraeus and wanted to construct a shrine at the Greek port along their trade route to their patron deity of maritime activity.

Isis appears during the Hellenistic period at major ports in Egypt, like Alexandria, and throughout the Greek world at ports like Kenchreai and Delos. The location of her cult in ports could partially be caused by the ease of cultural diffusion in locations where people from different regions regularly meet. Port locations could, however, also indicate her patronage over the sea. This is further evidenced by her iconography at sites in the Greek world, especially at Corinth and Delos, which indicates her importance to sailors as well as a connection of these cults to Alexandria. Isis Pelagia, became one of the main attributes of the cult of Isis at Corinth and Delos and seems to be based on the cult of Isis Pharia in Alexandria. The location of her temple on Pharos Island could indicate that Isis was a natural choice for a harbor deity which was dangerous enough to warrant the invention of a lighthouse for safety. Eventually, Isis was syncretized as Isis-Aphrodite, further emphasizing her connection to sailing since the two deities share the epithet “Euploia”.

The reception of her cult by Greeks during the Hellenistic period in particular was made possible because of the fluidity of the cultural world caused the conquests of Alexander who redesigned the poleis system of the Archaic and Classical worlds. Alexander and the Ptolemies’
policy of relative tolerance towards the native Egyptian religious structure was a result of their need to appease the Egyptians. Their policy resulted in the construction of large sanctuaries to Isis, such as Philae and Dendera. Subsequently, the propaganda and euergetism of Ptolemies, often in the form of temples, increased the number of sites dedicated to Isis across the Greek world as well as within Egypt. Moreover, the Ptolemaic kings and queens utilized the cults of Serapis and Isis in conjunction with their own ruler cults in order to further establish political influence outside of Egypt, as at Delos. For this reason, the Ptolemaic queens often adopted Isis’s iconography since she was the goddess of queenship. Her affiliation with the dynastic successions of the Ptolemies resulted in the perseverance and diffusion of her cult. During this period the vast number of cultural and social changes surrounding religion developed an atmosphere of religious tolerance. The cult of Isis, as an elective mystery cult of seafaring, protection, and healing that was already familiar to Greeks from at least the Archaic period, was a perfect fit for the Hellenistic religious environment of the Greek world.

Implications for Hellenistic Culture

This project has illustrated potential causalities for the diffusion and reception of the cult of Isis around the Mediterranean starting from the 4th century BCE. The Ptolemaic use of Isis as a tool of propaganda alongside Serapis and the ruler cults of queens as well as Isis’s vast patronage over the earthly world and afterlife in mythology, especially as a healing and mystery deity, instigated her reception among a variety of people. Her association with seafaring naturally attached her to sailors, merchants, and soldiers who were likely anxious to worship a deity that would protect them during a period of increased travel. The widespread diffusion of her cult as well as its endurance and popularity throughout the Greek world during the
Hellenistic period implies that this period was ripe for the reception of this particular deity. Not only were religious expectations different during the 4th century BCE than before with respect to the rise of elective cults in conjunction with individualism because of Philip and Alexander’s upset of the previous political balance of the Mediterranean world, but there was a trend towards the inclusion of foreign cults due to the increase in mobilization of people around the Mediterranean. The diffusion of the cult of Isis exemplifies Greek Hellenistic trends of cosmopolitanism and individualism as well as the impact of the political change and economic networks on cultural trends.
Appendix A: Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event or Period</th>
<th>Dates (BCE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Bronze Age</td>
<td>c. 3600 – 2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Bronze Age</td>
<td>c. 2100 – 1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Bronze Age</td>
<td>c. 1600 – 1050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometric</td>
<td>1050 – 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientalizing</td>
<td>700 – 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archaic Period</td>
<td>600 – 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical Period</td>
<td>480 – 323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander's rule</td>
<td>336 – 323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hellenistic Period</td>
<td>323 – 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinthian Interim Period</td>
<td>146 – 44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Chronology of Greece including specific events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Dates (BCE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old Kingdom</td>
<td>c. 2575 – 2134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Intermediate Period</td>
<td>c. 2164 – 2040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Kingdom</td>
<td>c. 2040 – 1640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Intermediate Period</td>
<td>c. 1640 – 1532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Kingdom</td>
<td>c. 1550 – 1070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Intermediate Period</td>
<td>c. 1070 – 712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Period</td>
<td>c. 712 – 343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achaemenid Period</td>
<td>343 – 332 [216]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonian Dynasty</td>
<td>332 – 304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ptolemaic Dynasty</td>
<td>304 – 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Period</td>
<td>30 BCE – 337 CE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Chronology in Egypt \[217\]

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216 See Green (1991) for a historical timeline of Alexander’s life, including his interruption of the Achaemenid period in Egypt.

217 All dates are from Wilkinson 2003 unless otherwise noted since Egyptian absolute dates are highly debated.
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