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Melissa Mair April 14, 2012

The Transformation of a Goddess:
Depictions of Isis throughout the Ancient Mediterranean World

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Abstract

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The cult of the goddess Isis spread from Egypt out to Greece and Rome, where Isis became one of the most celebrated goddesses in the Ancient Mediterranean world. Her worship spanned an impressive time period from around the third millennium BCE up until the fourth century CE. Over time, as Isis was encountered by different cultures, her identity and image was transformed. From one among many deities to the all-encompassing goddess, the Hellenistic Isis appears to be a different deity than the original Egyptian Isis. In order to evaluate how and why these changes occurred, the artistic depictions of Isis are examined as a lens to view the cultural realities of religion in the ancient Mediterranean World. Several different sites, the chapel to Isis in the Temple to Seti I, the Temple to Isis at Philae, the Temple to Isis at Delos, and the Temple to Isis at Pompeii, are used as case studies to help show a specific presentation and depiction of the goddess Isis in comparison to broad generalizations found across the Mediterranean. At each site and geographical area, Isis' iconography changes to reflect the cultural norms of each place her worship is established. However, these changes do not obscure the goddess' Egyptian origins. Instead, her connection with Egypt is shown through the use of certain symbols associated with Egypt in her images as well as other Egyptian items found in her places of worship. The combination of different cultural ideas in the cult of Isis allows for Isis' own identity, powers, and connections to other deities to be expanded and changed as well. Overall, the transformation of the goddess can be seen as a conversation between the different cultures as each culture sought to incorporate the goddess into their own religious practices.

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Introduction

One of the best-known quotations referring to the goddess Isis comes from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*,[1] where Isis introduces herself to Aristomenes with the words:

> I, the mother of the universe, the mistress of all elements…I, the one true face and manifestation of all the gods and goddesses…. My power, unequaled, unchanging, is worshiped throughout the world, behind manifold images, through myriad rites, by uncountable names…but…the Egyptians…who worship me in ceremonies that are truly my own, call me by my true name, Queen Isis (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses,* 11.5)

However, before the cult of Isis spread to the Roman world, the goddess was first worshiped in Egypt. Although the myth of Isis and Osiris is never completely narrated in any one Egyptian document, many different texts include short extracts from it, so that modern scholars can reconstruct it. Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth, because Seth wanted to gain the throne. Osiris' sisters, Isis and Nephthys roamed the country in mourning, looking for his body, and, when they found it, Isis resurrected Osiris, in the process becoming impregnated by him. Isis bore their child Horus, who fought Seth to regain the throne, and Osiris became king of the Underworld. This myth was later worked together into a single narrative by the Greek author Plutarch,[2] who intended to present the myth to the Greek world in a familiar language and form.

Although the texts from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* and from ancient Egypt relate to the identity of Isis, they do not present Isis in the same manner. While Apuleius' text presents her as the preeminent universal deity, called by other names in different cultures but inherently the same, earlier texts sometimes linked Isis to other goddesses but never suggested she was identical to them. In some ways the Isis depicted by Apuleius appears to be an entirely different deity from the Isis found in the myth of Osiris and Isis, and the shift in the depiction of the goddess raises the following questions: How did we get here? How did one goddess from Egypt

[1] The only Latin novel to survive in its entirety, written sometime in the last half of the 3rd Century CE. Later translations of this novel sometimes refer to it with the title *The Golden Ass.*

[2] Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, trans. by J. Gwyn Griffiths (Cambridge: University of Wales Press, 1970).

become connected to numerous goddesses in the entire Mediterranean world and accepted into the classical pantheon as a preeminent deity?[3]

My thesis seeks to answer these questions, and I wish to show how and why each culture presented and worshiped Isis the way that they did, using art as a lens to view the cultural realities of religion in the ancient Mediterranean World. I tackle this topic by following, examining, and explaining the transformation of the depictions of Isis as the cult spread from Egypt to Greece and Rome. Ultimately, my studies have brought me to the following conclusion: Isis' iconography changes as she moves through space and time to reflect the cultural norms of every place her worship is established. However, these changes do not obscure the goddess' Egyptian origins. Instead, her connection with Egypt is shown through the use of certain symbols associated with Egypt in her images as well as other Egyptian items found in her places of worship. The combination of different cultural ideas in the cult of Isis allows for Isis' own identity, powers, and connections to other deities to be expanded and changed as well. Overall, the transformation of the goddess can be seen as a conversation between the different cultures as each culture sought to incorporate the goddess into their own religious practices.

This paper is organized chronologically and geographically following the spread of the cult of Isis from Egypt to the other areas of the Mediterranean, with four chapters – the first on ancient Egypt, the second on Ptolemaic Egypt, the third on Greece, and the fourth on Rome. At the beginning of each chapter, I will explore the way Isis was generally presented in the culture through an investigation of relevant literature and art. I will also examine the role of trade in spreading the cult to that area, since trade was a major means of transporting many of these religious ideas and items.

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[3] For scholarship on the preeminence of Isis, see: R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971).

The second half of each chapter will be a case study of one site within each of the geographical areas. The sites I am examining are the chapel to Isis in the Temple of King Seti I at Abydos, the Temple to Isis at Philae, the Temple to Isis at Delos, and the Temple to Isis at Pompeii. Through the examination of the art of each site, I will evaluate how the image of Isis changed and how each particular site relates to the others and to the general trends seen in the first half of each chapter. Case Studies help show a specific presentation of the cult as opposed to broad generalizations and can reveal complications that occur when trying to fit such a large religious cult into a few general themes. Further, each site adapted the cult in a way that met its own needs, allowing for a unique presentation of the goddess.

Before beginning my chapters, however, I first need to discuss some of the terms I will be using throughout this paper. One term I will use is "Hellenization" in order to describe how images of Isis were stylistically transformed to look more like typical Greek goddesses. Another term I will use is "Hellenistic." This term refers to the time period of Greek history after the conquests of Alexander the Great and before the Roman Empire as well as the art and culture that was prevalent during this time period. While "Hellenization" simply suggests a transition towards a Greek style of art, the term "Hellenistic" describes the specific artistic style used during the Hellenistic period.

I also use the word "political." I use this term when discussing political rulers' use of and interaction with the cult. The problem with the word "political" is that it can imply that any resulting images and changes to the cult were purely propagandistic in nature or that they were overtly spread as a religious ideology by political leaders. However, this is not necessarily the case, and the leaders usually did not propagate the cult themselves but instead it naturally spread. When I use the term "political," I simply mean that a religious leader was in some way

purposefully connecting himself or herself to the cult of Isis. Usually, the reason behind this was to legitimize his right to rule, connect himself to Egypt, or gain acceptance or popularity in some way. Further, the leader's actions were often carefully integrated into the religious sphere in some way that would reflect positively on him or her. In a few situations, the cult of Isis was more overtly used by political leaders, which I will discuss later on, but the term "political" should not suggest that this is always the case.

Another word I will use is "decoration" when describing other statues, artwork, and items within a temple that lacked the same religious role as the sculpture of the goddess herself. These items were used to decorate the temple, but the problem with the word "decoration" is that it can imply that the only function of the art was to be aesthetically pleasing or fill up space. However, such items did have potent religious meanings for followers of the cult, and they had integral roles in establishing the temple as a space for Isis. Thus, these items are more important than the modern word decoration might imply. Because these objects are not the cult statue or image of the goddess, I refer to them as decoration in order to lessen confusion between images that were worshipped and images that were otherwise connected to this act of worship.

The last word I use is "Egyptianness." I use it to present how a cultic space was made to look or feel more Egyptian. I use this word for several reasons. Firstly I use it to avoid using the word "Egyptianizing" to describe objects that look Egyptian in style or gave the temple an Egyptian feel. The problem with the word "Egyptianizing" is that it can imply that these objects were in some way less important than objects that were imported from Egypt and were actual Egyptian artifacts.[4] However, all of these items worked in the same way inside the temple. I also

[4] For more information on the problems with the word "Egyptianizing" see Molly Swetnam-Burland, "Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy," in *Nile Into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World: Proceedings of the IIIrd International Conference of Isis Studies, Leiden, May 11-14 2005*, ed. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G. P. Meyboom (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007).

use the word to show that the cult spaces given an Egyptian feel were not the same as actual Egyptian spaces. Instead, the culture adopting the cult presented the space as they thought an Egyptian space should or would look, taking up various aspects of Egyptian culture and meshing them together. Thus, these spaces cannot be described as Egyptian but only as giving a sense of "Egyptianness" to visitors.

Chapter 1 - The Cult of Isis in Ancient Egypt: The Chapel to Isis in the Temple of Seti I

I. The Origins, History, and Mythology of Isis in Ancient Egypt

Although the cult of Isis spread throughout the entire Mediterranean world, the goddess originated in Egypt, where she was the consort of Osiris, the mother of Horus, and a provider of life for the dead. The first surviving texts to record the presence of Isis were written at the end of the fifth dynasty and were found in the pyramid of King Wenis,[5] who died sometime around 2325 BCE.[6] Later funerary texts, such as the Coffin Texts and Book of the Dead, continue to refer to her. These texts come from many different periods throughout Egyptian history, from the 5th dynasty through the Roman period, and show the constant presence of Isis in Egypt over a long period of time. In all of these texts, Isis is called upon in numerous spells and utterances to help the deceased. In the Pyramid Texts alone, Isis is referred to over seventy-five times. Yet, despite the numerous mentions of the goddess, the myth of Isis and Osiris was never fully recorded in Egyptian sources and her origins remain elusive. However, the Egyptian sources mention many parts of the myth and present a distinctly Egyptian view of Isis without the biases of foreign authors. As there are many texts concerning Isis, I will only present and evaluate a few of these in order to get a better understanding of the cult of Isis in the Egyptian context.

Utterance 4 from the pyramid texts is a short text referring to Isis and runs as follows, "Recitation by Nut: O King, I have given to you your sister Isis, that she may lay hold of you and give you your heart for your body."[7] The mention of Isis as "your sister," places the deceased in the role of Osiris, who is Isis' brother-husband, and recalls her crucial relationship to him. In the myth of Osiris and Isis, Isis pieced all the body parts of Osiris back together after his murder and

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[5] R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts: Translated into English* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969), v.
[6] David O'Connor, *Abydos: Egypt's First Pharaoh's and the Cult of Osiris* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), 208.
[7] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts: Translated into English*, 1.

then endowed him with life. The deceased, by asking Isis to "lay hold" of and "give you your heart," references this part of the myth in the hope that, like Osiris, he or she will receive the life giving powers of Isis after their death and be reborn in the afterlife.

Another utterance in the Pyramid Texts that refers to Isis is Utterance 268. This Utterance is longer than Utterance 4 and only briefly refers to Isis with the words, "Isis nurses him,"[8] highlighting Isis's role as a mother. The deceased, therefore, is presenting himself as her child, the infant Horus. The deceased wants to be seen as the infant Horus for many reasons. Firstly, he or she wants to harness the life-giving act of being nursed, which will help to ensure a successful entrance into the afterlife, where he or she will be reborn much like an infant. In addition, Horus was considered the rightful king of Egypt after defeating Seth on behalf of his father Osiris, and, like Horus, the deceased hopes to be welcomed in the land of the deceased as Osiris' son. By presenting Isis as his mother and Osiris as his father, the deceased is recalling the myth of Isis' impregnation by Osiris when she aroused him from death. Not only are semen and impregnation important aspects of birth, but the act of giving life after death in connection with pregnancy is an especially potent symbol for the rebirth of deceased.

The Book of the Dead had its roots in the much earlier Pyramid Texts. The earliest papyri recording the spells from the Book of the Dead come from the 15th century BCE, and these spells continued to be used up through the Ptolemaic period.[9] As in the Pyramid Texts, numerous references are made to Isis, one such spell being number 181, For Going into the Tribunal of Osiris, which refers to the goddess as follows:

> Your sisters Isis and Nephthys will come to you, they will enfold you with life, prosperity and health, and you will be glad through them; they (will rejoice) over you through love

[8] Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts,* 77.
[9] Carol Andrews and Raymond O Faulkner*, The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 11.

> for you. They will enclose everything for you within your arms; the gods, the lord of kas will care for you, and they will worship you forever.[10]

Like the utterances in the Pyramid Texts, Isis' ability to give life and her role as the sister of Osiris are emphasized, and, in addition, she is called upon along with her sister Nephthys, both of whom mourned Osiris and went searching for his body parts. The mourning of the two sisters is commonly recalled in Egyptian texts, such as this one, to show the great love the two held for Osiris and their instrumental actions in recovering his body, which allowed him to be brought back to life.

Individually, each of these texts refers to different parts of the myth of Osiris and Isis and helps to show how each aspect related to the deceased's hopes for the afterlife. When all of these texts are looked at together, they make it clear that Isis was an essential deity who gave life, nourishment, and love to the deceased and ensured them a successful transition into the underworld. Although Isis is recognized as a powerful deity, in all of these texts and most of the others not examined here, she is presented in connection with other deities rather than on her own. Her relationship to them, such as "sister" or "mother", are referenced either directly in words, or by her actions, such as "nourishing," or through the mention of a companion, such as Nephthys. The constant connection between Isis and others presents her as a partner rather than an individual, showing that religious practices in ancient Egypt, especially funerary ones, tend to focus on other deities, such as Osiris. Isis is more celebrated for her role in connection to these deities than for her own individual aspects.

This focus is also seen in her places of worship in ancient Egypt. Few spaces are dedicated specifically to Isis in the early period of Egyptian history. Instead, other temples that were dedicated to deities with whom Isis was associated usually incorporated the worship of Isis

[10] Andrews and Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, 180.

within the preexisting building.[11] It was not until after the New Kingdom that several spaces dedicated solely for Isis were built, but they were neither common nor large in size. One such site is the chapel to Isis, "Mistress of the Pyramid," at Giza in the 21st dynasty; it is not until the 30th dynasty that the first major temple for Isis was began by Nectanebo II in Behbeit el-Hagar.[12] The rest of this chapter will examine the chapel dedicated to Isis within the temple of Seti I at Abydos, which was built prior to the larger constructions made for the worship of Isis. The inspection of the architecture and art in the temple of Seti I reveals and reaffirms the ideas found in texts regarding Isis in ancient Egypt.

II. The Chapel to Isis in the Temple of Seti I

The temple of Seti I at Abydos is a complex structure: The chapel for Isis is only one chapel within the temple as a whole. Although the chapel is dedicated solely for the worship of Isis, the entire temple complex is not dedicated to her. An evaluation the architecture of the chapel of Isis in relation to the rest of the temple shows Isis' subsidiary role in this religious space as a whole.

The architectural plan of the temple (Figure 1) resembles the traditional Ramesside layout of Theban royal mortuary temples with two important deviations - the addition of seven chapels stretching across the width of the temple and the Osiris complex behind them.[13] The Osiris complex is larger than the chapels combined, and its size as well as its position at the rear of the temple shows that this feature was the focus of the temple plan. The seven chapels extend from south to north in the following order: Seti I, Ptah, Re-Horakhty, Amun-Re, Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Amun-Re's chapel is in the center, so it seems to be the most important; however, the

[11] Richard Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 149.
[12] Ibid.
[13] O'Connor, *Abydos: Egypt's First Pharaoh's and the Cult of Osiris*, 47-48.

entrance to the Osiris complex was only accessible through the chapel to Osiris, revealing that Osiris was more dominant.[14] The architecture's main focus was on Osiris in order to celebrate the king's identification with that god.[15] In comparison, Isis' role is subordinate, with her chapel placed to the right of Osiris', architecturally mimicking her mythic place as the consort of Osiris. Thus, her role in relation to Osiris is what is recognized and celebrated in this temple as a whole.

The site of the temple reveals the reasons for the focus on Osiris. Abydos was a site closely tied to Osiris and his cult. Several cities claimed that they were burial sites of different body parts of Osiris, but, out of all these sacred sites, Abydos was one of the most important. A tomb of a very early pharaoh at Abydos was incorrectly interpreted as the actual burial place of Osiris, and Osiris' image was carried from his temple to his supposed tomb in Abydos in an annual festival.[16] Because Abydos was seen as the home and final resting place of the deceased Osiris, many mortuary structures were built there, including royal ones like Seti's.[17] These structures allowed the deceased to remain close to Osiris and to continue to participate in his cultic activities in the afterlife. For the pharaoh, the connection with Osiris was especially potent. The pharaoh was a divine ruler who, through his identification as the living Horus, was the son of Osiris. Once the king died, he transformed into the ruler of the cosmos, reinforced by his close identification with Ra, the sun god, and Osiris, the god of the underworld.[18] Thus, the temple complex in Abydos served to link Seti I intimately to Osiris through religious imagery and belief. Here, Seti I was presented as "Seti-as-Osiris" in order to establish his authority as a cosmic, resurrected king.[19]

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[14] O'Connor, *Abydos: Egypt's First Pharaoh's and the Cult of Osiris*, 49.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid, 16.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid, 45.
[19] Ibid.

Although both the site and architecture focus on the king's relationship with Osiris, the decoration in the interior of the chapel of Isis focuses mainly on the goddess. All of the chapels in the Temple of Seti I, including the one designated for Isis, are elaborately decorated with painted reliefs that relate to the specific god or goddess to whom the chapel was dedicated. There are no depictions of Horus or Osiris in the chapel to Isis. Instead, the decoration portrays Isis as a deity alone, and she is depicted wearing either the two feathered crown, or the sun disk with cow horns, taken over from the goddess Hathor (Figure 2). These two crowns are depicted in many varying styles. Some include a double uraeus on the sun disk, where others lack even one, and some are more elaborate and detailed than others: these are all variations on the two crowns and the basic signifiers of each crown, the two feathers or the sun disk and cow horns, remain the same in each image.[20] Crowns helped to present the identity of the deity to viewers, so it is intriguing that Isis does not wear the crown that is made up of her hieroglyphic name, which she was commonly depicted wearing elsewhere. Rather, she takes up the crowns and thus the aspects of the identity of others. It was already quite common by this time for Isis's iconography to overlap with Hathor's, because the two were religiously connected early on in Egypt. Isis took on many aspects of Hathor, and, when she wore Hathor's crown, she took up the creative force that was manifested in Hathor.[21]

More intriguing, however, is the double feather crown that Isis wears, the *shuty* crown, associated with the royal iconography of the queen no later than the thirteenth dynasty.[22] It held solar connotations and referenced the cyclic rebirth of the sun, as Amun first wore it.[23] The

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[20] For more images found in the chapel of Isis, go to: Alan H. Gardiner, Amice Mary Calverley , and Myrtle F. Broome*, The Temple of King Sethos I at Abydos* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1933).
[21] Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image* (London: Viking Arkana, 1991), 252.
[22] Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in ancient Egyptian myth and history* (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1986), 126.
[23] Ibid*,* 126 -127.

crown also represented the feminine duality of the queen, who held the generational roles of both mother and daughter, making her a generative force. This role is reinforced in the rearing cobra and vulture headdress that was worn in conjunction with this crown.[24] Thus, while wearing this crown, Isis is presented as a queen and all these connotations are applied to her as well.

In this chapel, Isis, like a queen, is a generative force. She is the ultimate mother and will aid the deceased in receiving a successful cyclical rebirth after death. In addition, this crown recalls her role as a partner to Osiris. Like a queen she accompanies a ruler, and is not the dominent figure. As a deity, she receives her own chapel, but this is only in relation to Osiris and his cult in Abydos. Although images of the god are absent from her temple, it is clear that Isis is not celebrated by herself but rather as one entity in the divine family.

In the temple of Seti I, as well as in the texts and other sites relating to Isis, the common representation of Isis as a deity in relation to others defines her role in ancient Egyptian religion. Because Isis was not usually the sole beneficiary of a cult site or presented alone in texts, her identity is shown to be closely connected to Osiris, Horus, and other deities. Her worship was so completely linked to Osiris and Horus that it could even be argued she was considered more as a consort and mother than as an individual deity. This relational aspect of Isis, however, served a specific purpose and does not diminish Isis' importance. As seen in the texts, the deceased put themselves in a relationship with Isis as if they were the deity with whom Isis was connected. Thus, the deceased can easily call upon her and become more connected to her, making her transformative powers more effective. In addition, Isis remains a constant partner of Osiris and is intimately linked to the resolution of his story by providing him with life. Therefore, she became associated with the resolution of other aspects of society and life, such as childbirth.[25] Although

[24] Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in ancient Egyptian myth and history*, 122 – 123.
[25] Baring and Jules Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image,* 245.

the sites and texts mostly refer to Isis' role in a funerary context, this does not mean Isis' only role was funerary in nature. Most of our information comes from funerary contexts, so the evidence can seem highly skewed towards the funerary context. However, when the Ptolemies transformed the cult of Isis in Egypt, we can see more evidence from non-funerary sources.

Chapter 2 - The Cult of Isis in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Temple to Isis at Philae

I. The Adaptation of the Cult by the Ptolemies and the Greeks in Egypt

When the Ptolemies ruled Egypt, from 323 to 30 BCE,[26] elements of Greek culture, including religion, were introduced into Egyptian society. Although in many ways the Ptolemies followed the traditions of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs, they also created and changed certain aspects. One of the major changes instituted was in the worship of Isis. During the Ptolemaic period, Isis was worshiped in a new triad of deities with Sarapis, a new consort, and Harpocrates, the Hellenistic infant Horus whose name derived from the Egyptian Horpakhered "Horus the child."

Although the introduction of this triad seems to have coincided with the incoming Ptolemaic pharaohs, there is some debate over the origins of Sarapis.[27] The traditional view is that Ptolemy I, with the help of Manetho, an Egyptian priest, and Timotheus, a Greek priest, introduced the cult and connected Sarapis with Isis and Harpocrates in order to unify the differing Greek and Egyptian religions.[28] However, scholars have recently argued that the cult already existed before Ptolemaic rule and that the Ptolemies provided this cult with royal patronage because it was popular among the Greeks in Egypt.[29] Although it is uncertain exactly how the cult originated in Egypt, Plutarch and Tacitus recorded the arrival of the colossal Sarapis statue in Alexandria; both state that a statue in the image of Hades was brought in from Sinope, in Asia Minor, by the king on account of a dream, and accepted as a representation of Sarapis.[30]

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[26] Edwyn Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy: A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1968), xiii.
[27] For more information on the different scholarly views on Serapis, see Sharon Kelly Heyob, *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975) and Ian S. Moyer, *Egypt and The Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
[28] R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 52 – 53.
[29] Ian S. Moyer, *Egypt and The Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011),148.
[30] Ibid, 144-145.

The god contained both Greek and Egyptian elements; he sprang from Egyptian tradition, as he was an adaptation of the god Osiris-Apis,[31] but was given the form of the Greek deity Hades. The form of Hades is very fitting, as Hades was the god of the underworld like Osiris was in Egypt. This further strengthens the connections between the Egyptian deity Osiris and the Hellenized Sarapis, who became the consort of Isis.

In the past, many scholars saw the mix of Greek and Egyptian characteristics in Sarapis and his marriage to Isis as proof that the Ptolemies were trying to lessen the religious separation between Greeks and Egyptians and unify them through a mixed religion.[32] However, this hypothesis has been question by some scholars, such as H. P. Rusch, who argue instead that the cult of Sarapis was primarily for the Greeks and served to separate Greek and Egyptian traditions.[33] In my view, the debate over fusion or separation in the cult of Sarapis is presented as too black or white. Instead, I believe that the Ptolemies used the cult to enable mediation between the two cultures rather than to ensure complete assimilation or absolute separation. Sarapis was linked to Isis, who was an Egyptian deity actively worshipped by both Greeks and Egyptians, and his origins can be traced to Osiris-Apis,[34] so there certainly was an active connection to Egyptian religion. However, Sarapis was given the appearance of a Greek deity in order to help him fit Greek religious standards,[35] so there is a purposeful separation between the two cultures in this sense. Regardless of whether or not the Ptolemies used the cult to separate or unify the Egyptian and Greek peoples or even propagated the cult, the Ptolemies certainly used religion to ensure their control over Egypt, as seen in the cult of Isis and her connection to Sarapis.

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[31] Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy: A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty*, 45.
[32] Moyer, *Egypt and The Limits of Hellenism,* 146.
[33] Ibid, 148-150.
[34] Sharon Kelly Heyob, *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 3.
[35] Moyer, *Egypt and The Limits of Hellenism*, 150.

Not surprisingly, the part Isis played in the divine triad made her an important deity in the Ptolemaic Egypt. Not only was Isis a traditional Egyptian goddess, but her worship was also taken up and adapted by the Greeks living in Egypt, making her cult an important link between the Greek and Egyptian cultures. One of the reasons Isis was so easily accepted by the Greeks was because the similarity of the divine triad to the Hellenistic divine triad of Zeus, Hera, and Apollo appealed to them.[36] Certainly the Hellenized form of Sarapis helped to make this similarity more obvious, and just as Sarapis was connected to Greek divinities, Isis was also assimilated with the identity and portrayal of other Greek goddesses.[37] In this way, the connection of Isis to the Hellenistic Sarapis helped to further tie Isis to Greek religion and aided in the process of Isis' own Hellenization.

The acceptance and Hellenization of Isis by the Greeks in Egypt can be seen in hymns written about Isis in Greek by Greeks living in Egypt. Several such hymns written sometime in the early first century BC by Isidorus, a devotee of Isis, were inscribed on the south gate of a temple in a village now called Medinet Madi.[38] The first of the hymns includes the following description of Isis:

> All mortals who live on the boundless earth,
> Thracians, Greeks and Barbarians,
> Express Your fair name, a Name greatly honored among all, (but)
> Each (speaks) in his own language in his own land…
> And the Greeks (call you) Hera of the Great Throne, Aphrodite,
> Hestia the goodly, Rheia, and Demeter.[39]

The text demonstrates the identification of Isis with other traditional Greek deities by the Greeks in Egypt. Moreover, the Greeks did more than just align her with their own culture; they

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[36] Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World*, 52.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Vera Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert LTD., 1972), 3. The ancient name of the village is unknown.
[39] Ibid, 18.

also saw her as the all-encompassing goddess, called by other names but the same person. Through this process of syncretism, it is apparent that the Greeks in Egypt had accepted Isis and ranked her as an equal with the Olympian deities[40] and other deities throughout the entire Mediterranean world.

These hymns also focus on Isis alone and not her consorts. While the texts from ancient Egypt almost always mention Isis in relation to another deity, these hymns never once mention Osiris, Horus, Nephthys or Sarapis, and, when Isis is mentioned in relation to other goddesses, it is only to show that these are other names of Isis herself. The single goddess Isis encompasses roles and abilities found in many other deities. Throughout his hymns, Isidorus praises Isis for "saving from war, cities and the citizens," "[bringing] livelihood to mankind and morality to all,"[41] "[creating] both heaven and the starry heaven," and for blessing her followers by answering their prayers for healing, fertility, and success in business.[42] The multitude of roles that Isis plays are quite astounding. Here we see Isis as a creator, a healer, a law-maker, and so on. These attributes are quite different from those found in ancient Egyptian texts, where Isis' role as a rejuvenating force in the afterlife is portrayed through her relationship with Osiris. Because the Greek texts focus on Isis alone, other aspects of her persona are able to be emphasized and new abilities are able to be given to her. This is not to say that Isis' Egyptian attributes and relationships were removed from her identity. Rather, her power over death was an essential aspect of her character that made her a healer[43] and both Osiris and Sarapis were still connected to her worship. It was her individual roles that are often not seen, although not necessarily lacking, in Egyptian tradition that were expanded in the Ptolemaic age by both Greek

[40] Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis*, 77.
[41] Ibid, 18.
[42] Ibid, 36.
[43] Ibid, 92.

and Egyptian means. To the Greeks she, like Demeter or Hestia, was a teacher and discoverer for mankind, whom she cared for, so she was seen as an omnipotent, powerful deity.[44] These many powers were not necessarily Greek in origin. Instead, she took over the powers of other traditional Egyptian deities, essentially becoming a synthesis of all the important deities both Greek and Egyptian, but, in this process, she did not subtract power or worship from the other deities whose powers she absorbed.[45]

The art depicting the goddess Isis shows how the Egyptian aspects of Isis were maintained and also mixed with Greek tradition. Many statuettes of Isis were made in Egypt, enormous numbers of which circulated throughout Egypt and were dedicated to Isis at her temples, especially in the last eight centuries BCE.[46] The number and movement of these statuettes suggest that they were encountered by many different peoples. Thus, it is no surprise that the statuettes display a variety of both Egyptian and Greek stylistic motifs.

One such statuette is a very traditional Egyptian depiction of the goddess (Figure 3). Isis is seated with her son Horus on her lap. Her left hand reaches behind to brace the leaning child and her right hand on her breast offers it to her child. She is depicted in bronze, wearing a uraeus, the cow horns and sun disk, a tight sheath dress, and a tripartite wig. In every way, from Isis' costume to her posture, this figurine is traditionally Egyptian in style. The statuette also presents the traditional Egyptian relationships and aspects of Isis. Here, the child Horus and her hand on her breast emphasizes her motherly role, which was one of her most significant attributes, and her uraeus signifies her queenly role as the consort of Osiris. Although this particular example comes from the 26th dynasty, this same style of statuette continued to be produced and

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[44] Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isi*s, 92 - 93.
[45] Ibid, 94.
[46] Erik Hornung and Betsy M. Bryan, *The Quest for Immortality: Treasures of Ancient Egypt* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2002), 178.

distributed throughout the Ptolemaic empire, showing that while the Ptolemies ruled Egypt the traditional Egyptian Isis was not discarded, but in fact commonly represented.

In contrast to the Egyptian style statuette of Isis, another bronze figurine of Isis shows a Hellenized version of the goddess (Figure 4). This figurine comes from Alexandria and was made sometime in the second to the first century BCE.[47] It depicts Isis with tight ringlet curls, wearing Hellenistic style drapery that conforms to the body, a cape that is tied around the neck with a knot between her two breasts, and sandals on her feet. These attributes are a departure from the traditional Egyptian style and present Isis as more Hellenistic. In fact, the curls in Isis' hair and the knot in her robes between the breasts became standard stylistic signifiers of Isis and her priestesses in Greek and Roman art found throughout the Mediterranean, although they are first seen in Ptolemaic Egypt. As Alexandria was built by the Ptolemies to be a metropolis that linked Egypt to the rest of the Mediterranean world[48] and catered to a large Greek population in Egypt, this figurine was probably intended for a predominantly Greek audience, which is why it is more Greek in style.

However, there are Egyptian aspects presented in this statuette as well. Isis is standing striding forward, which was a common figural motif in ancient Egypt.[49] This stride is different from striding positions depicted in Greek art. The Egyptian striding position is static, indicating no movement: the front foot is simply placed in front of the other with straight knees. In contrast, striding positions in Hellenistic art indicate motion: usually the front knee is bent and the legs seem to propel the body forward. Because the figurine presents Isis striding in the static Egyptian style, it is certain that this figurine is referencing the Egyptian motif. In addition, on her head she

[47] Dietrich Wildung, Fabian Reiter, and Olivia Zorn, *Egyptian Museum and Papyrus Collection, Berlin: 100 Masterpieces* (London: Scala Publishers Ltd, 2010), 174.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.

wears the Egyptian style vulture headdress, a headdress which she was often depicted wearing in ancient Egyptian art and which also evoked her motherly status. The striding position and the figurines' headdress, though both Egyptian in inspiration, are applied awkwardly, and fail to reflect the norms of Egyptian use. The striding position was used in ancient Egypt almost only when depicting men and a female deity would never be depicted in such a position. The pose, however, is so distinctly Egyptian that perhaps it was applied to the statuette without much thought that such a stance would never be used in traditional Egyptian art to depict a goddess. The vulture headdress is also not presented in a typical Egyptian manner. In Egyptian art, the headdress was usually engraved on the hair of the woman or goddess wearing it. In this statuette, however, it sits on top of the hair as a separate piece. Clearly, the Greeks are using Egyptian artistic motifs intentionally to refer to the goddess' Egyptian origins, but presenting them to a Greek audience in a Hellenistic style that does not correspond to Egyptian tradition.

Like the figurines and hymns to Isis, the way the goddess was presented and worshiped in Egypt during the Ptolemaic period is reflected in her places of worship. The temple to Isis at Philae, built by Ptolemy II early in the Ptolemaic period, show how art and architecture in a place of worship reflects iconographic changes to the goddess and suggest political advantage for the Ptolemies, who found, in the goddess, a figure to embody their right to rule both over both Egyptians and Greeks in Egypt.

II: The Temple to Isis at Philae

Although the site of Philae had connections to Isis since the 26th dynasty when king Amasis started constructing the first temple to Isis, it was Ptolemy II who built the temple that made this site one of the most important ones dedicated to the goddess.[50] Ptolemy II far surpassed the work of previous rulers when he made a new, well- planned temple for Isis, which

[50] Louis V. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988), 2-3.

contained all the Ptolemaic elements of a temple.[51] Although the temple architecture itself derives from Egyptian tradition, the dedication of this temple to Isis alone is different from previous structures. In traditional Egyptian temples, like the temple of Seti I, the area dedicated to Isis was usually a subsidiary part in a structure dedicated to Osiris or other deities, but here the entirety of the building was devoted solely to Isis (Figure 5). The fact that this temple was for Isis alone reveals her importance to the Ptolemies and her growing popularity. Thus, like the Greek hymns found in Egypt, the architecture of this temple presents Isis as a deity on her own.

The location of the temple also reflects the new identity of Isis. Locations in Egypt held important religious meanings and connections, and temples were purposefully built in certain places because of the significance of a location. As seen in the location of the temple of Seti I, the worship of Isis in ancient Egypt was intimately linked to Osiris and the king's mortuary cult. The temple of Isis at Philae, however, was not associated with funerary cult, but was simply a religious cult site, where Isis was a prominent deity.[52] This provided a framework for the celebration of the powers of the goddess, which went beyond regenerative functions natural for a funerary context. However, the site does not completely remove Isis from Osiris, since the island of Philae was near an island that was connected with Osiris and, so, was symbolically linked to Osiris and his island. Although the connection to Osiris remains, Osiris acts in a secondary role here to construct Isis' identity. Thus, the relationship between Isis with Osiris was not forgotten in the minds of Egyptians or the Greeks, but Isis was given the most dominant role of the triad on this island.

Although this temple in its location and architecture reflects the new Hellenistic identity of Isis, this does not mean the temple was for a Greek audience. In fact, the interior of this

[51] Louis V. Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae*, 3. For information on the Egyptian architecture of Ptolemaic temples, see Dieter Arnold, *Temples of the Last Pharaohs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[52] Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae*, 3.

temple was seen mostly by Egyptian priests of Isis, although the site of the temple itself was visited by people of both Greek and Egyptian origins. This temple serves as an example of the new ways in which Isis was being portrayed and worshiped. During the Ptolemaic period, Isis was reconfigured as a much more universal goddess that all people could depend on and whose powers reached out to touch every aspect of life, an expanded identity which is reflected in the temple.

The hymns and reliefs of this temple reveal a political use of religion by the Ptolemies. In contrast to Greek belief, in Egypt the king or pharaoh was divine. His body was the vessel in which the god Horus manifested. Therefore, the king had divine authority, which he used to ensure that order was maintained in the world. This traditional role was taken up by the first Ptolemy, who was seen by the Egyptians as divine and was described with the same formulas long used by native pharaohs.[53] All the following Ptolemies likewise took up the Egyptian titles and roles of the king.

Building a new temple for a deity would have been a project that traditionally a pharaoh would commission. In the past, pharaohs had completed building projects and temples on the island of Philae. Thus, when Ptolemy II started building a temple to Isis he was simply continuing a tradition long established and respected in Egyptian culture. Similarly, the hymns carved on the temple walls were also traditional in form. They were written in hieroglyphs, making them genuinely Egyptian, and they were written in a form that follows the religious literary tradition long used in Egyptian culture.[54] The traditional aspect of these hymns can be seen in the first two stanzas of hymn 1:

> Praise to you Isis-Hathor
> God's mother, Lady of Heaven,

[53] Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy: A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty,* 28.
[54] Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae,* 5, 12.

Mistress of Abaton, Queen of the gods.

You are the divine mother of Horus,
The Mighty Bull, protector of his father,
Who causes the rebels to fall.[55]

Many of the titles given to Isis and Horus used here are traditional Egyptian titles associated with the deities. Further, the relationship and roles of Isis and Horus that are presented are the same as those seen in ancient Egyptian texts. Here, Isis' role as a mother is emphasized and Horus is performing significant roles characteristic of a god-king. [56] These hymns, unlike the hymns by Isidorus, are distinctly Egyptian in style and do not introduce new themes or styles of writing that were not already familiar to Egyptians. Furthermore, by focusing on the roles of Horus, Ptolemy II is presenting himself as Horus and is proving his right to reign.

The reliefs on the walls of the temple are also traditional in form, using standard iconography relating to the goddess and king (Figure 6). For example, in one scene, Ptolemy II wears the Lower Egyptian crown and offers the ritual of "running with the rudder" to Isis and Hathor, while on the east side he offers the "running with the vessel" ritual to Isis and Nephthys.[57] Here, the king wears traditional crowns in an offering scene. The scene is dualistic in nature with the parallel scenes containing similar motifs and also geographic references to Upper and Lower Egypt and associations of east and west,[58] whereby the dual regions of Egypt come together in one scene, unifying all the parts of Egypt through the king. Not only are the scenes traditional in what they depict, but they are also traditional in how they are depicted. The scenes are mostly worked in raised relief, in which body parts and hair are layered to give depth

[55] Translation taken from Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae,* 22. For full translation of hymns please reference this source.
[56] Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae,* 23.
[57] Eleni Vassilika, *Ptolemaic Philae* (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters 1989), 27.
[58] Vassilika, *Ptolemaic Philae,* 27.

without attempting to include the illusion of the third dimension, and details are incised on the hair and clothing,

Despite the fact that Ptolemy II was Macedonian, he did not make this temple to Isis Greek in style. Instead, Ptolemy intentionally made the temple and the hymns and reliefs depicted within it Egyptian in style, in order to show that he was acting out the traditional duties of the king, which rendered him as an acceptable king to the Egyptians and allowed him to become endowed with spiritual authority.[59] The Ptolemies wanted the Egyptians to view them as traditional rulers, in order to continue to legitimize their rule over Egypt and maintain control over their Egyptian subjects. Thus, Ptolemy II not only used traditional projects and titles but also traditional art and literature to present himself to the Egyptians as an Egyptian pharaoh. However, the Ptolemies needed to legitimize their rule not just over the Egyptian population but the Greek population now living in Egypt as well, and Ptolemy II made sure to address the Greeks as well.

The representation of the deified Queen Arsinoe II appears in the midst of the strongly formal, traditional style of reliefs.[60] Although there are some well-known examples of the deification of a queen in Egyptian history, the assimilation of Arsinoe II with Isis and her divine status as Isis' co-templar were emphasized in an unprecedented manner.[61] Arsinoe II appears several times throughout the temple, usually standing behind the goddess Isis receiving the same offerings and reverence as Isis (Figure 7). In room X, she appears twice where, together with the goddess, she receives two kinds of purification from the king.[62] Here, the deified queen is

[59] Vassilika, *Ptolemaic Philae,* 13.
[60] Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae*, 12.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae*, 89.

intricately linked to Isis and presented almost as another Isis herself, because she is partaking in the same actions as the goddess.

Ptolemy II purposefully connected the deified Arsinoe II with Isis, with the help from the religious leaders who approved this divinization, in order to legitimize his marriage to his sister Arsinoe II, something which was viewed as unacceptable by his Greek citizens.[63] The presentation of the queen as Isis and the king's preexisting associations with Osiris would purposefully compare Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II's marriage to the marriage of the two divinities, a story which was familiar to both Greek and Egyptian subjects,[64] and would make the Greeks more accepting of an incestuous relationship. Although these temple reliefs would not have been seen by non-priestly visitors, their existence shows that the divinization of Arsinoe II was supported by the religious institutions in Egypt and that Ptolemy II promoted the connection of his divinized wife to Isis.

The Temple to Isis at Philae reveals that the Ptolemies were consciously legitimizing their rule over Egypt to both Egyptian and Greek citizens. Understanding the need to be able to relate to two different cultures, the Ptolemies used both Greek and Egyptian religious beliefs and imagery relating to the cult of Isis. As seen in the literature and art, Isis began to become Hellenized, connected to other Greek deities, and took over more powers, while the traditional Egyptian depictions of Isis were still readily used throughout Egypt at the same time. The Ptolemies also used religion in the Greek sphere. Other images of queens depicted as Isis or in connection with Isis were presented in Egypt and circulated throughout the Mediterranean, and I will discuss this phenomenon in the next chapter.

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[63] Zabkar, *Hymns to Isis in Her Temple at Philae,* 12.
[64] Ibid.

Chapter 3: The Cult of Isis in Greece: The Temple to Isis at Delos

I: The Spread of the Cult of Isis to Greece and the Greek Interpretation of Isis

As the cult of Isis and the divine triad of Isis, Sarapis, and Harpocrates were accepted by the Greeks living in Egypt, it is not surprising that the cults spread out from Egypt into Greece. Most of this expansion occurred due to trade. Alexandria became one of the most important commercial centers and transit posts in the ancient Mediterranean,[65] as described by Diodorus: "in beauty, size, and income as well as in the number of inhabitants it surpassed by far all the other cities" (Diodorus Siculus, XXII.52.5).[66] The Ptolemies were very diligent about exercising economic control and increasing their royal revenues,[67] so they established trade routes out from Alexandria that ended ultimately at the port of Puteoli in Italy, which in turn allowed Egyptian religious cults to be carried out into the Mediterranean world.[68] The cults quickly spread to port cities and trading centers, and temples were built in honor of Isis, Sarapis and other Egyptian deities.

However, the extent to which the Ptolemies actively promoted the cults of Isis and Sarapis in Greece is still uncertain. Ian Moyer has recently argued that there is little evidence that the Ptolemies spread the cult of Sarapis as religious policy,[69] and, in the case of Isis, it is known that the cult reached the Greek world before the Ptolemaic period. In fact, the cult of Isis had already reached Piraeus in the last quarter of the fourth century BCE,[70] although the sanctuary for Isis in Piraeus was intended only for Egyptian visitors and was a privilege given to the

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[65] Fik Meijer and Onno van Nijf, *Trade, Transport, and Society in the Ancient World: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1992), 64.
[66] This source quotation was found in Fik Meijer and Onno van Nijf, *Trade, Transport, and Society in the Ancient World : A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1992), 64.
[67] Meijer and Nijf, *Trade, Transport, and Society in the Ancient World,* 65.
[68] Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, 48.
[69] Moyer, *Egypt and The Limits of Hellenism*, 148-149.
[70] Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis*, 18.

Egyptians by the Athenians.[71] In addition, the Greeks certainly had knowledge of the cult before Hellenistic times, as the writings of Herodotus attest, but it was not until the Hellenistic period that the cult of Isis became more widespread and practiced by Greeks in a specifically Greek context. Although trade allowed the cult to be spread, the trade routes were not established for the purpose of spreading religion, and it is likely that the Ptolemies did not actively propagate the cult for political purposes. Instead, the cult spread organically as different peoples traded both objects and ideas. However, that does not mean that the Ptolemies did not take advantage of the naturally occurring spread of the cult to further legitimize their right to rule.

Objects with images combining religious and political figures were traded throughout the Mediterranean and suggest that the Ptolemies used the acceptance of Isis in Greece in order to present their religious affiliations to the Greeks. Many seal stones and intaglios depicting Ptolemaic queens wearing the costume of Isis circulated around the Mediterranean. One such intaglio is signed by Lykomedes and is believed to be a portrait of Cleopatra I or II (Figure 8), because the features of the face, including the heavy chin and neck, were associated with the Ptolemies.[72] This intaglio depicts the queen as Isis with tight ringlet curls, a soft modeled face, and a fillet with a small sun disk with horns at the top tied around her head.[73] However, the sun disk and horns bear little resemblance to the traditional Egyptian representation of this crown. The disk is very small and shown at an angle. Likewise, the "horns" are small and shown from an angle so that only one is truly visible. They are also flat and ringed around the disk coming to what appears to be a single point at the top, so they do not appear as separate long horns coming off the disk as in Egyptian depictions. This crown certainly refers to Isis' Egyptian origins but presents the Egyptian aspects in a purely Hellenistic style.

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[71] Jon D. Mickalson, *Ancient Greek Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 201.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Dimitris Plantzos, *Hellenistic Engraved Gems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 52.

There are countless examples of similar busts of "Isis" engraved on stones or intaglios (Figure 9) and it is never quite clear whether the image represents a Ptolemaic queen or the goddess, showing how intimately associated the Ptolemaic queens were with Isis. Following the deification and association of Arsinoe II with Isis, later Ptolemaic queens were regularly seen as earthly counterparts of the goddess. In fact, Cleopatra I used visual analogies of the royal family as the divine triad of Isis, Osiris, and Horus as a central political strategy in order to help quell unrest in Egypt at the time.[74] Presenting the queen as Isis served to link the Ptolemies to a popular cult and also to draw a comparison between the queen and a deity. This strengthened the Ptolemies' claim to the throne not only in Egypt but also outside of Egypt, once the goddess was actively worshiped by Greeks as well. Images such as this also served to signify the geographical region, which the Ptolemies ruled, so these images might have simply been used to announce the Ptolemies rule over Egypt. It is likely that the Ptolemies did not commission all of these objects to be made, but it is apparent that this religious imagery became widespread, something which certainly benefited the Ptolemies.

Although the connection between Ptolemaic queens and Isis first emerged in Egypt, the intaglio does not display this connection in an Egyptian style, but in the visual language of the Greek culture. The Greeks worshiped the goddess Isis, but they did not maintain her traditional Egyptian representation. Changes in the cult that began in Ptolemaic Egypt continued to be developed outside of Egypt as Isis became completely Hellenized in her depictions. The figurines, intaglios, and engraved gems, including those of Ptolemaic queens, traded throughout the Greek world present this Hellenized image of Isis.

A terracotta head of Isis, not depicting a Polemaic queen, presents the goddess in a similar Hellenistic style. Isis has tight curls and a small sun disk and cow horns flanked by ears

[74] Plantzos, *Hellenistic Engraved Gems*, 52.

of grain at the top of her head above a fillet from which has various plants emerge (Figure 10). The sun disk and horns appear more like the Egyptian depictions but the crown is miniaturized and set into a Hellenistic headdress, essentially becoming an entirely different crown altogether. Here the vegetation references Isis' abilities to grow and produce life: vegetation replaces the cow horns and sun disk at the top of the head other images of Isis. What is most interesting is that because of the type of clay used this figurine is believed to have been made on the island of Cyprus.[75] If it did come from Cyprus, that would mean that the image was produced by Greeks for a Greek audience, because the Greek community was well-established on Cyprus by this time. Unlike the intaglio, this imagery appears to have no reference to the Ptolemies. Thus, this figurine shows that the Hellenistic Isis was accepted within the Greek sphere.

The need to present Isis in a purely Hellenistic way is also found in literature. The Greek hymns about Isis written by Isidorus reveal that a Greek style was employed to describe the goddess. The form of the hymns is largely epic-poetic, with repetitions of wording in order to fit a borrowed hexameter formulae.[76] The epic-poetic form of writing was a very traditional form specific to Greek culture used by poets such as Homer. Isidorus intentionally chose to write in this style in order to present his written worship of Isis in a purely Greek form and link Isis back to Greek history and culture.[77]

This raises the question as to why Isis needed to be entirely Hellenized, especially in respect to images or literature depicting her. In Ptolemaic Egypt, Isis was assimilated into Greek religion by synthesizing and associating the identity of Isis with other Greek goddesses. As a result, Isis was presented as a universal deity who represented all Egyptian and Greek deities. If

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[75] Lucilla Burn, Reynold Alleyne Higgins, and British Museum, *Catalogue of Greek Terracottas in the British Museum Volume III* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), 92.
[76] Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis,* 87.
[77] Ibid*,* 100.

Isis was assimilated in such a way as to be a leading member of the Greek pantheon, then she had to fit into the Greek conceptions of the divine,[78] meaning she needed to be represented like most other Greek deities. Certain aspects of the cult that did not fit into traditional Greek practice had to be changed.[79]

One of the major aspects that was most noticeably changed is the animal imagery. The cow horns that Isis was depicted wearing in the Hellenistic images traded around the Mediterranean are so small and stylized that they no longer look much like cow horns. Instead, they appear as a headdress and not as an actual part of an animal that is worn on the head. As Isis was presented in Egypt with only the cow horns on her head and not with an animal head like many other Egyptian deities, her form was more easily humanized.

To the Greeks, mixed animal and human deities were the least preferable in comparison to human deities.[80] The reason for this can be seen in the way the Greeks depicted hybrid creatures in their myths. By the classical age satyrs had become characterized as lecherous and ithyphallic creatures,[81] and centaurs aroused similar negative connotations. For example, at the wedding of Peirithous and Hippodameia the centaurs became drunk on wine and tried to carry away the bride and other Lapith girls before they were defeated and driven to the Peloponnese (Homer, *Iliad,* II, 743).[82] Here the centaurs' actions present them as anarchic and uncontrollable figures who like to run amok and lack an understanding of justice.[83] The centaurs' negative attributes were so well known that centaurs were depicted in Greek art in order to present a moral allegory, where the drunken and lustful centaurs struck down by heroes, represented the

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[78] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, 2.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Friedrich Solmsen*, Isis Among the Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 61.
[81] G. S. Kirk, *Myth*: *It's Meaning and Functions* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 153 - 154.
[82] This source was found referenced in G. S. Kirk, *Myth*: *It's Meaning and Functions* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 158.
[83] Kirk, *Myth*: *It's Meaning and Functions,* 157 – 158.

victory of virtue defeating vice.[84] However, some hybrid creatures did have positive connotations, such as the sphinx, which will be discussed later, so not every hybrid creature was seen in the same way. Thus, the use of human deities instead of hybrid deities can only be seen as a preference instead of a set standard.

The Greeks also preferred the worship of human deities, because they saw man as set apart from animals, creatures that lack reason and law and exist solely for man's benefit.[85] Man stood in between the animal realm and the divine realm acting as a mediator who sacrificed the animals on behalf of the gods.[86] Animal or part animal creatures were less appropriate to act as a god in such a hierarchy. Even Plutarch who first wrote an explanation of the cult of Isis and Osiris for Greeks, *De Iside et Osiride,* contains references to this belief. He writes that it is better to view the experiences of Isis and Osiris as "neither of gods nor men, but of great daemons" (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 360 E) and describes great daemons as "[not possessing] the divine element in pure and unadaltered form" (Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 361 A).

Their feelings towards hybrid forms made the Greeks often choose "pure" human gods over hybrid deities. Thus, the imagery of Isis needed to be changed to resemble other "pure" Greek goddesses if she was to be worshiped like most Greek deities, so the images of the goddess were adapted to make Isis a Hellenized goddess, lacking the obvious imagery of the cow horns, while also referring to her Egyptian origins. In this way, the Egyptian Isis was transformed to fit the traditional mold and standards of Greek religious beliefs and iconography.

However, the transition of the Egyptian cults to the Greek world is not quite as clear-cut as it seems. Although Isis was mostly presented in her new Hellenized form, this does not mean that other decoration or worship relating to the cult lost its "Egyptianness." Likewise, in many

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[84] Helen F. North, *From Myth to Icon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 28 – 29.
[85] R. L. Gordon, *Myth, Religion, and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 218.
[86] Ibid, 219.

ways the cult varied according to the specific needs of whatever community it was situated in inside of the larger Greek sphere. Certainly, there are trends, but this does not mean that the new presentation or identity of Isis was the same in every location. A study of the worship of Isis at the site of Delos helps to bring to light many of these complications.

II: The Temple to Isis at Delos

Delos was a "melting pot" of different cultures, a truly international environment, due to its function as a major port and trading center conveniently located in the center of the Aegean Sea (Figure 11). [87] It was here that the cult of Isis flourished and grew. In fact, it is very likely that Italian merchants first experienced the cult of Isis on Delos.[88] Delos was intimately connected to the Roman Republic, especially in its prosperous years, from 166-87 BCE, because the Roman Senate ceded the island to the Athenians under the understanding that the port be a duty-free zone.[89] This allowed the Romans greater profits and use of the port. Thanks to Rome's link to Delos, the island held an essential role in spreading the cult from Egypt to Italy. Thus, the site of Delos is a particularly important one to examine because of its role in spreading the cult and its unique multi-cultural commercial environment.

Since many merchants visited Delos, it is no surprise that foreign cults were introduced to the island and adopted by the Greeks who lived there. The temple to Isis on Delos was only one of several temples dedicated to foreign deities, and, unlike the temple at Piraeus, it was a temple visited and used by both local Greeks and foreign visitors. The popularity of the cult of Isis on Delos with the Greeks is particularly visible in the 247 Greek inscriptions concerning the cult of

[87] Gordon, *Myth, Religion, and Society*, 200.
[88] Sarolta A. Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 5.
[89] Nicholas Rauh, *The Sacred Bonds of Commerce: Religion, Economy, and Trade Society at Hellenistic Roman Delos,166-87 B.C.* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, Publisher, 1993), 1.

Isis found on the island,[90] 170 of which were found in the temple to Isis.[91] Although it is apparent that the temple on Delos was often visited for the worship of Isis, the location of the temple complicates our understanding of Isis' role on the island.

The temple to Isis on Delos is located in the largest sanctuary area dedicated to Sarapis, Sarapeion C, on the east side of the upper court (Figure 12).[92] A vast majority of the space in this Sarapeion is dedicated to what archeologists call "Temple C." However, the identity of the deity to whom Temple C was dedicated is still speculated. Over time, scholars have debated the function of the Sarapeion and the identity of Temple C, and over time the identification of this structure has changed. This is apparent in the *Guide de Delos*, a book which seeks to summarize all the archeological sites on Delos, where the authors write "Le Batiment C dans lequel on avait cru reconnaitre un Metroon (R. Vallois) ou un temple d'Isis (Ph. Bruneau) est maintenant identifie avec un Hydreion, temple du dieu de l'eau Hydreios (H. Siard)"[93] indicating all the possibilities of the identity of Temple C given over time, up to the most recent interpretation. It is necessary to examine the different theories concerning Temple C, because the possible identities of the temple affect the preeminence the cult of Isis might have held on Delos.

The area has been deemed a Sarapeion, in which the temple to Isis is only one among many. The term Sarapeion suggests that this area and temple are dedicated to Sarapis.[94] Much like the chapel to Isis in the temple of Seti I, this architectural plan would indicate that Isis' role in this religious area is subordinate. Sarapis seems to be the consort of Isis on Delos, as Osiris

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[90] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, 97. For translations of these inscriptions see Pierre Roussel, *Les Cultes Egyptiens a Delos* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1916).
[91] Pamela Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture: Figural Motifs in Western Antoalia and the Aegean Islands* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 138.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Philippe Bruneau and Jean Ducat, *Guide de Delos*, ed. Michele Brunet, Alexandre Farnoux, and Jean-Charles Moretti (Athenes: Ecole Francaise d' Athenes, 2005), 279.
[94] Pierre Roussel, who excavated this site, deemed it a Serapion or a sanctuary area dedicated to Serapis. See: Pierre Roussel, *Les Cultes Egyptiens a Delos* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1916).

was in the temple of Seti I. If this area was mostly dedicated to Sarapis, it complicates the new identity of Isis that was emerging in the Hellenistic world. While in literature and art, we see Isis celebrated for her multitude of powers and depicted separately from Osiris and/or Sarapis, it is possible that her temple at Delos presented Isis much like she was in ancient Egypt. This raises the question of how much Isis was actually connected to Sarapis and Osiris during this period and how important these connections were outside of Egypt. Do these relationships define Isis or simply act as one of the many attributes of Isis? Certainly, it was common for temples to Isis to be placed near temples to Sarapis and other foreign deities, but in many cases Isis' temple is a separate structure similar in size to the others in the area, showing that the goddess was as important with these deities as she was without them.[95] However, the temple of Isis at Delos, if the sacred area was mostly dedicated to Sarapis, is outside this norm.

Another theory about Temple C is that it was a temple dedicated to Isis. In 1980, Philippe Bruneau refuted the previous designation of Temple C as a Metroon and asserted that Temple C was a temple dedicated to Isis based on epigraphic and architectural evidence that a temple to Isis on Delos had a long Dromos before its entrance.[96] If Temple C was dedicated to Isis, this would mean that a majority of the space in the so-called Sarapeion was used for the worship of Isis and that Sarapis acted more as a consort here, opposed to the proposal that Temple C is for Sarapis.

It is tempting to agree with this theory because it would fit into the trends found across the ancient Mediterranean concerning Isis and would relieve some of the tension the questions posed above create. However, this theory can never fully be proved and has been recently overturned by Helene Siard. In 2003, Siard rejected the theories put forward by Vallois and

[95] For example, the Isuem in Rome and in Beneventum, as well as the temple to Isis at Pompeii.
[96] Philippe Bruneau, "Le Dromos et le Temple C du Sarapieion C," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 104 (1980): 163 – 188.

Bruneau and ended by stating that the identity of Temple C remains anonymous.[97] However, in 2005, she revised her argument to assert that Temple C was dedicated to Hydreios, god of holy Nile water, based on the presence of a hydreion, or a hydraulic construction, and inscriptions that mention the dedication of a temple to Hydreios, one which previously was not identified.[98] Siard states that the hydraulic construction in Temple C is not like the water crypts found elsewhere, like in Sarapeion A and B also in Delos, because it acts as a temple structure.[99] However, Siard does connect the cult of Hydreios with Isis by calling the Sanctuary "Isaic" and stating that Hydreios was connected to Isaic worship practices as seen in devotions to a water deity, or Hydreios, that are attested in the cult of Isis.[100] Thus, if this area was actually dedicated to Hydreios then it probably was connected to the temple of Isis, perhaps indicating the influence of Isis in this area. However, the use of holy Nile water is attested in the worship of Sarapis as well.[101] Certainly, if the temple was dedicated to Hydreios, it would have fulfilled specific needs of the Egyptian cults, by providing water for the cultic activities performed in all of the Sarapeion, while also physically connecting the cults to Egypt through the Nile water. However, the use of water has been well attested in the cults of Isis and Sarapis,[102] so it is quite possible that this temple was not dedicated to Hydreios but is a unique example of a hydraulic construction within a temple to an Egyptian deity or to multiple deities including Hydreios.

Although it is impossible to know exactly to what deity Temple C was dedicated and the relationship between the temple of Isis and Temple C, the temple yields insight on the role of the

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[97] Helene Siard, "Nouvelles recherches sur le Sarapieion C de Delos," *Revue Archeologique* 2003 No. 1: 193-197.
[98] Helene Siard, "L'*Hydreion* du Sarapieion C de Delos: la divinisation de l'eau dans un sanctuaire Isiaque" in *Nile Into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World: Proceedings of the IIIrd International Conference of Isis Studies, Leiden, May 11-14 2005*, ed. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G. P. Meyboom (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), 417 - 447.
[99] Ibid, 433.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Robert A. Wild, *Water in the cultic worship of Isis and Sarapis* (Leden : E.J. Brill, 198), 9.
[102] Ibid.

cult of Isis on the island of Delos as a whole. The earliest inscription dedicated to an Egyptian deity on the island of Delos dates to the beginning of the third century BCE.[103] This inscription was found in Sarapeion C, but, as Sarapeion C was not built at that time, the inscription must have been moved from another cult site to this location.[104] Another inscription from around 220 BCE references an Isieion, but this structure no longer exists, so it is impossible to know if it stood where Sarapeion C now stands or if it was located elsewhere.[105] These two inscriptions seem to suggest that the cult of Isis was established before the cult of Sarapis and that perhaps the cult of Isis had more cultic sites and activity than remain today. Robert Turcan finds this evidence compelling, for he writes, "There Sarapis has three sanctuaries, but Isis, who had preceded him, enjoyed absolute preeminence and influence."[106] However, is there enough evidence to warrant such a statement? Could Isis really have been the most dominant Egyptian cult on the island? Certainly, the inscriptions help to fill in areas where we lack archeological evidence, and, if the cult of Isis was established first, then there is reason to believe that the cult of Isis was instrumental in bringing Sarapis to the island as her consort, while she enjoyed a preeminent position above him. However, the fact that three sanctuaries to Sarapis were established all relatively around the same time,[107] while Isis only has one temple and reference to one Isieion, seems to suggest that Sarapis was preeminent over Isis. Without the archeological evidence of the Isieion, it is impossible to know which deity was dominant on the island.

All of the evidence indicates that the cult of Isis was an important and thriving cult on Delos, but the question of the cult of Isis in relation to the cult of Sarapis remains ambiguous. However, the theories concerning Temple C and the role of the cult of Isis on Delos help to give

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[103] Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 195.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid, 195-196.
[106] Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 82.
[107] Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellism*, 196.

insight into the possible popularity of the Egyptian cults practiced on the island. Perhaps the cult of Isis was established first and helped bring the cult of Sarapis to the island, which then grew more popular than the cult of Isis. Perhaps both the cult of Isis and the cult of Sarapis held great influence in Delos. Perhaps Isis was more celebrated and worshiped than Sarapis. None of these possibilities can ever currently be proved, but they help to show the complications in understanding the Hellenization of the cult of Isis as the cult was always undergoing adaptation on the part of the different cultures taking it up. There was constant dialogue between religion and culture and over time things tend to change. What changes occurred on the island of Delos can only be speculated on, but they are still nonetheless useful in understanding the role of the cult of Isis on the island and Greek culture as a whole.

While none of the theories can prove without a doubt the true identity of Temple C, it is clear that Isis was connected to Sarapis and Anubis in Sarapeion C, because a temple clearly dedicated to her was near the temple of Sarapis and a temple dedicated to Isis, Sarapis, and Anubis.[108] This proximity emphasizes Isis' Egyptian connections, as does its decoration.

Although most of the sculpture inside the sanctuaries is of Greek style, Sarapeion C had several pieces of Egyptian origin and/or style, constituting a majority of the Egyptian pieces found among all the sanctuaries.[109] Inside the temple of Isis at Delos, specifically, there was a black granite statue of a female sistrum holder, Nesnephthys, done in typical Late Period Egyptian style, complete with a hieroglyphic text inscribed on the back of the statue.[110] It is thought that sculptures such as these were created by Egyptian artists on Delos, but their exact origins are uncertain.[111] The presence of such items seems contradictory to the Hellenization of

[108] Photini Zaphiropoulou, *Delos: Monuments and Museum* (Athens: Krene Editions, 1983), 47.
[109] Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, 197-198.
[110] Ibid, 198.
[111] Ibid.

Isis seen thus far. Why would the goddess be so completely transformed yet the décor of the cult site retain the previous connections to Egypt? Objects such as these indicated the "Egyptianness" of the cultic space by incorporating Egyptian elements as part of the temple's visual character.[112] Although the cult of Isis was transformed to fit the Greek's religious preferences and the goddess was connected to the Greek Pantheon, nonetheless Isis was still known to be an Egyptian goddess. In addition, an Egyptian look and feel of the cultic space further enhanced the exotic connotations the cult had, which probably appealed to Isis' followers outside of Egypt. Overall, images such as this statue served to create a more Egyptian atmosphere in the cult space befitting the goddess' origins, while at the same time allowing for the Hellenized depiction of Isis to remain intact.

In the dromos leading towards Temple C, there is more Egyptian decoration seen in the sphinxes lining the dromos (Figure 13).[113] There are many reasons behind the use of the sphinx. Firstly, even in the earliest times of contact with Egypt, both the Greeks and Romans saw sphinxes as potent guardians.[114] Here the sphinxes can be seen as acting as guardians of the religious space. In addition, sphinxes were very strong symbols of Egypt, as the pharaohs erected multiple sphinx statues there. Thus, like the other Egyptian elements, the image of the sphinx created a foreign tone in the sanctuary.[115] Although, sphinx statues were used, their image was not worship or venerated, showing that both hybrid imagery and the worship of a human deity could be combined in an appropriate manner in Greek religious spaces.

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[112]Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellism,* 198.
[113] Bruneau, "Le Dromos et le Temple C du Sarapieion C," 163.
[114] Molly Swetnam-Burland, "Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy," in *Nile Into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World: Proceedings of the IIIrd International Conference of Isis Studies, Leiden, May 11-14 2005*, ed. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G. P. Meyboom (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007), 123.
[115] Ibid, 122.

In contrast to the Egyptian statues and decorations that clearly delineated the space as a place to worship Egyptian deities, the architecture of the temple to Isis and the statue of Isis are distinctly Greek in style (Figure 14). The temple (Temple I on the plan of the Sarapeion) was dedicated by the Athenians in 130 BCE.[116] The cult of Isis was also established and widely worshipped on Athens, and, due to the cult's popularity there, it is not surprise the Athenians chose to dedicate a temple to Isis. The temple was Doric in order with a distyle -in-antis *pronaos* and shallow *cella,* made of white marble and local stone.[117] The Doric order was one of the earliest standardized architectural forms in the Greek world and was used very frequently throughout the archaic Greek period.[118] However, the use of this order did not stop after the Archaic and Classical periods. Instead, the Doric order was commonly employed on Delos and indicates the continued use of this order in the Hellenistic period.[119] As in the Greek art and literature depicting Isis, the structure of the temple meets Greek religious standards. It seems logical that if Isis needed to be represented in a Greek style, she needed to be worshipped in an appropriately Greek space as well. The architecture of the temple to Isis helps to link Isis to other Greek deities, because it is like the temples that housed other traditional Greek divinities. Specifically, however, the architecture of the temple was likely referencing the nearby Heraion, a much older temple, which likewise was Doric in style,[120] thus linking Isis with Hera architecturally. As has been discussed, Isis was commonly associated with other Greek deities, Hera included, as the goddess became Hellenized.[121] The link between Isis and other Greek deities on Delos is reinforced not only architecturally but also textually. In every Sarapeion,

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[116] Bruneau and Ducat, *Guide de Delos*, 278.
[117] Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture,* 138.
[118] William Bell Dinsmoor, *Architecture of Ancient Greece: An Account of Its Historical Development* (London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd., 1950), 50.
[119] Bruneau and Ducat, *Guide de Delos*, 71.
[120] Ibid, 278.
[121] See page15 of this thesis

including Sarapeion C, names of Greek gods have been found, but it is not always clear whether or not the names were supposed to be Greek equivalents of Egyptian deities.[122] However, the presence of Greek names certainly confirms that the cult of Isis was in some way connected to other Greek cults on the island.

As the architecture of the temple to Isis is inherently Greek, so is the sculptural representation of Isis inside the temple (Figure 14). Like the figurines and intaglios depicting Isis, the temple of Isis at Delos contains a Hellenistic depiction of the goddess. The statue of Isis is believed to have been placed inside the temple around 128 BCE.[123] This statue presently exists in a fragmentary form[124] with the lower half of the body of Isis remaining. Due to this, it is impossible to evaluate the distinguishing features of the goddess, including type of headdress or objects held in her hands. However, what remains of the statue does make it apparent that this is a Greek depiction of the goddess.

The legs of the statue are covered in flowing textured cloth. The cloth at the top around the hips is slightly thicker and is modeled to form a belt of twisted fabric while the cloth around the legs drapes with organic folds in order to show the shape of the legs underneath. The drapery gives a sense of natural movement and this movement is enhanced as one leg of the goddess is slightly in front of the other as if the goddess is striding forward. The textured cloth and sense of movement is indicative of both the Classical and Hellenistic periods of art, a far departure from the Egyptian representations.

This statue of Isis is similar in appearance to the remains of an akroterion sculpture on the left part of the roof above the pediment (Figure 14).[125] The bottom half of this figure is

[122] Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellism*, 201.
[123] Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture*, 138.
[124] Zaphiropoulou, *Delos: Monuments and Museum*, 47.
[125] Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture*, 139.

likewise the only remaining part of the sculpture and is assumed to be a Nike due to the flowing drapery blowing out behind the legs as the figure strides forward.[126] The two statues complement each other in their similar drapery and striding position, appearing to be almost a pair of figures. Thus, the statue of Isis not only depicts the goddess Isis but also relates to the Nike above. Nike figures were typical figures represented in the Greek world, so it can be argued that the Greeks are purposefully trying to depict Isis is a similar style.

The architecture of the temple and the statue of Isis at Delos reflect the Greek efforts to fit the cult of Isis into their realm of beliefs. However, the Egyptian items in and around the temple at Delos show that the Egyptian origin of Isis was not completely forgotten. Further, the Greek and Egyptian elements do not oppose each other but, instead, serve to highlight the intermingling of both Greek and Egyptian tradition within the cultic practices in Greece. I think it best to look at the changes occurring in the cult as a dialogue between the two cultures as the Greeks tried to make the cult best fit their own beliefs and practices while still respecting the origins of the goddess. Essentially, they preserve the "Egyptianness" of the cult while at the same time removing the "Egyptianness" of the goddess herself.

The temple of Isis at Delos helps to display general Greek adaptations of the cult, but it also served the specific needs for the particular community it was located in. The epithets given to the goddess in inscriptions reveals how the cult met these needs. One such inscription is on a pair of bronze ears with the dedication to Isis who hears.[127] These ears have connections back to Egyptian practices, because they are similar to the hearing ear carvings found in Egyptian temples that allowed the gods to hear the living.[128] Further, the phrase "one who hears" implies that the person speaking has a relationship with the one listening, and, in Egyptian texts, the

[126] Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture*, 139.
[127] Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellism*, 198 and Bruneau and Ducat, *Guide de Delos*, 277.
[128] Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellism*, 198-199.

relational attribute of the goddess was emphasized. Yet, the epithet is Greek, so it was easily recognized by the Greeks. The Greek epithet was combined with an Egyptian visual representation of the same phrase, allowing the relational aspect of Isis to be displayed in a way that would be easily understood by both Greeks and Egyptians. As Delos was such a multicultural location, there was a need to communicate ideas to visitors from many different backgrounds, just as these ears could relate to several different cultures.

Another epithet given to Isis on Delos was "Isis Pelagia" or Isis of the sea.[129] It is immediately apparent why "Isis of the sea" would be particularly fitting for Delos. Delos is an island and any merchant or visitor coming to the island would need to cross the sea, so there would have been a concern for safety on the sea by those on the island. "Isis of the sea" would have been an accessible deity who could help provide safety for travelers and also secure the island against the rages of the sea. Isis' relation to the sea was not a concept found only on Delos. For example, the hymns by Isidorus refer to this property of Isis as well.[130] Although, there is a long tradition acknowledging Isis' power over maritime travel, not every place of worship celebrated this particular aspect of the goddess. However, on Delos, this ability of Isis readily applies, and "Isis of the sea" certainly was a necessary and important identity of the goddess to be emphasized.

The temple of Isis at Delos must be looked at from many perspectives. Not only does the site provide information on the Greek adaptations of the cult, the intermingling of Greek and Egyptian characteristics in the worship and art relating to the cult, and the complications that occur when evidence from a specific site goes against common trends, but the cult also must be evaluated to show the ways the cult answered the needs of the specific community it served.

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[129] Bruneau and Ducat, *Guide de Delos*, 278.
[130] Vanderlip, *The Four Greek Hymns of Isidorus and the Cult of Isis*, 87.

Certainly, Delos has made it apparent that religion is not something that can be neatly summarized. Rather, every site is different and brings up its own complications and questions, and every community within the greater Mediterranean sphere had its own needs and interpretations of the same cult. This continued to be true as the cult spread to Rome.

Chapter 4: The Cult of Isis in Italy and the Roman Empire: The Temple to Isis at Pompeii

I: The Spread of the Cult to Italy and Roman Adaptions made to the Cult

The interconnectedness of the Mediterranean during the Hellenistic period and under the Roman Empire helped spread the cult to Rome. As in Greece, the cult of Isis spread to the Romans mostly through trade routes. Romans were trading with Egypt as early as the second century BCE, especially to buy grain from Alexandria,[131] and Egyptian traders were coming and trading in Italy as well,[132] so the Romans had ample contact with Egyptian influences. It is the Greek Isis, however, which most influenced the Romans: Delos acted as the trading link between Alexandria and Italy[133] and probably had a greater role in exposing the Romans to the cult than Alexandria.[134] Delos was economically tied to Campania, so Italian traders and merchants came into contact with the cult there and then brought the cult back to Italy.[135] Inscriptions dedicated by Italians are found on the island as early as the beginning of the second century BCE,[136] and by the early first century BCE, the cult appeared on Roman soil.[137] Once the cult reached the peninsula, it spread from the ports in the south up to the northern areas of Italy. Trade also played a major role in the spread of the cult throughout Italy, and there is evidence for a strong correlation between trade routes and the diffusion of the cult of Isis in Northern Italy. Concentrations of Isaic material have been found at major trading centers and along trade routes where dedications to the goddess Isis were made.[138] Although, the spread of the cult has been described here according to large geographical trends, it is important to note that the spread of

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[131] Meijer and Nijf, *Trade, Transport, and Society in the Ancient World*, 98.
[132] Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire*, 84.
[133] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 5.
[134] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, 11-12.
[135] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 29-30.
[136] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World,* 11.
[137] Eric M. Orlin, *Foreign cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2010), 204.
[138] Mark Humphries, "Trading gods in northern Italy" in *Trade, Traders and the Ancient City*, ed. Helen Parkins and Christopher Smith (London: Routledge, 1998), 208.

the cult of Isis to Italy was not a simple process. Merchants from different areas were influenced by the cult, and the cult spread to multiple areas in and around the same time.

Because of the influence of Greece in bringing the cult of Isis to Italy, the Romans took up worship of the Hellenized Isis and Sarapis and began the process of accepting these deities as Roman imperial gods.[139] This is not very surprising as Greek culture heavily influenced the cultural and religious atmosphere of Rome,[140] and the Romans often incorporated Greek religious practices into their own. Like the Greeks, the Romans also preferred the worship of human deities, and the Greek connotations of certain hybrid animals continued in the Roman world. Roman mythology often used similar depictions as the Greeks as seen in the words of Juvenal, "the thirst of a drunken centaur," (Juvenal, *Satires*, XII, 8) which negatively depicts centaurs in the same way as Greek texts. Also, the Romans considered their religious beliefs to be similar to the Greeks and thought their beliefs were superior to the animal worship of the Egyptians. This belief is evident in the work of Cicero who writes, "…a bull, which the Egyptians call Apis, is deemed a god, and many other monsters and animals of every sort are held sacred as divine. Then, too, he would see Greece, just as with us Romans, magnificent shrines, adorned with statues in human form" (Cicero, *De Re Publicus De Legibus*, III, 14). Here Cicero is equating Greek and Roman religion and his words show that the Egyptian Isis with her cow horns does not fit into the traditional depiction of Roman goddesses, who were presented as superior to the Egyptian "monsters." In addition, Augustus is remembered for stating that he was wont to revere gods, not bulls,[141] and Juvenal too wrote of the Egyptian customs saying "Who has not heard, Volusius, of the monstrous deities those crazy Egyptians worship? One lot adores crocodiles, another the snake-gorged ibis" (Juvenal, *Satires*, XV, 1-2). Therefore, the Romans

[139] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World,* 30.
[140] Ibid, 31.
[141] Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, 25.

used and adopted the Hellenized Isis as opposed to the Egyptian Isis, because of their preference for human deities, as well as their belief that Roman religion was superior to Egyptian religion.

The sculpture of Isis from the Iseum in Rome presents a Hellenized Isis who, like the figures from Greece, has tight ringlet curls and soft modeled features (Figure 15). Her headdress is also similar to Greek ones. However, instead of a miniaturized sun and cow horns, a stylized form of vegetation, probably a lotus flower, rests on the top of her head.[142] The shape of the flower is similar to the sun disk and cow horns. The center of the flower is a circle, similar to a sun disk, and the petals of the flower come up around to the top of the circle like horns. In fact, it is possible that this shape was a reinterpretation of the sun disk and cow horns. Regardless, the flower on the top of her head recalls the goddess' life giving attributes as well as informed the viewer that this was a depiction of Isis. Although the headdresses of Isis varied in their depictions, small vegetation or cow horns and sun disk on the head signified that the goddess depicted was Isis. This sculpture is not a bust, so it presents a full view of the sculpture. As was common in Hellenistic art, Isis is wrapped in Greek style clothing, complete with drapery and sandals, and stands in contraposto. The depiction of the body is fully reminiscent of the Greek and Roman style sculptures of deities with whom Isis is now equivalent. Only the sistrum and the hydria, which would carry holy Nile water, both of which the goddess carries in her hands, contain references to the Egyptian origins of the goddess, because these items were used in Egyptian cults.[143] However, even these items are presented in a Hellenistic style.

Trade with Greece was not the only factor that contributed to the spread of the cult to Italy and the adaptations of the goddess. Politics were also a very important factor, especially in

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[142] Similar vegetative headdresses are found on other Graceo-Roman sculptures of Isis, so this was not an unusual depiction of the goddess.

[143] Eric M. Moormann, "The Temple of Isis at Pompeii." In *Nile into Tiber. Egypt in the Roman World: Proceedings of the IIIrd International Conference of Isis Studies, Leiden, May 11-14 2005*, ed. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G. P. Meyboom, 142.

the spread of the cult to the capital Rome. While in Campania the spread of the cult was met with little opposition, in and around the city of Rome, where the government was headquartered, the religion met more opposition.[144] The Roman government exercised control over religion, so restrictions and bans were able to be placed on the cult of Isis.[145] Many of the ways the cult was received in Rome had to do with the either the political problems or prosperity of that time as well as political leaders' own opinions on the cult of Isis. This is best seen in the actions taken by the Senate and the Emperors regarding the cult of Isis.

During the Late Republic, periods of repression of the cult of Isis were interspersed with periods of tolerance. Coins with images of symbols associated with Isis and other Egyptian deities were being produced by 80 BCE.[146] In addition to these coins, statues and altars to Isis in the capital were erected prior to 58 BCE, showing that the cult of Isis was already established in Rome by this time.[147] However, in later periods the cult was actively repressed, and by 58 BCE the statues and altars on the capital had already been destroyed.[148] The 50s BCE was a very politically unstable period of the Roman Republic, marked by civil war, and the destruction of Isis' temples and shrines was ordered more than once – by the Senate in 53 and again in 50 BCE.[149] The cult was further restricted by the government because it was not allowed to be practiced within the *pomerium*, or the boundaries, of the city. [150] It is no surprise that, when the Senate was struggling to maintain control of the Republic, foreign cults were often oppressed. The Senate's actions against the cult were attempts to maintain a cohesive social structure and

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[144] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World,*15.
[145] Ibid.
[146] Ibid,16. Takacs makes some interesting claims regarding the production of these claims. She writes that it is possible that people working for the Moneta, the place were coins were minted, placed these images on coins without consulting the moneyer in charge of the distribution of these coins. See Takas, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 34-35.
[147] Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 86.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Valerie M. Warrior*, Roman Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 89.
[150] Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 86-87.

ensure the stability of the Roman Republic during a turbulent time, by reinforcing their own authoritative powers over religion.[151]

Later, when several leaders fought to gain control of the Republic at the end of the Late Republic, Egyptian cults played a major role in their political propaganda. In 43 BCE, the triumvirate of Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian authorized the construction of a temple to Isis and Sarapis, but this temple was never built because the *triumuiri* began to focus on defeating each other.[152] The resulting political battles between Antony and Octavian used religious propaganda. Antony had an alliance with Cleopatra[153] and presented himself as the deified Osiris, while Cleopatra took up the title of "New Isis."[154] Thus, Antony intimately connected himself to the myth of Osiris and Isis and employed Egyptian religious imagery to try and gain control of Rome. In contrast, Octavian presented his own religious and moral values as completely opposite to Antony, by portraying himself as the protector of traditional Roman religion and values, which Antony had abandoned by conforming to Egyptian religious beliefs.[155] Ultimately, Octavian defeated Antony, who committed suicide in Egypt.[156] Not surprisingly, Octavian's success directly impacted the cult of Isis in Rome. Not only did Octavian have a religious policy that focused on maintaining traditional Roman values, but he also sought to continue to separate himself from Antony by actively opposing Egyptian cults. Thus, when Octavian, who later was renamed Augustus, established the Principate, a new political model that made him Emperor, the central political and religious figure in the government, while also continuing the existence of the Senate,[157] he prohibited the worship of Egyptian cults inside the city boundaries.[158]

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[151] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World,* 56-57.
[152] Ibid, 69.
[153] Warrior, *Roman Religion,* 90
[154] Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 87.
[155] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 69.
[156] Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 87.
[157] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 71.

The following Emperors of Rome continued to influence the worship of the cult of Isis in Rome. Tiberius, who directly followed Augustus, continued the ban on Egyptian cults in 19 CE,[159] but Caligula, who followed Tiberius, officially recognized the cult.[160] The next Emperor, Claudius, established a temple to Isis and Sarapis in the Campus Martius, but this location was outside the *pomerium*.[161] The following Emperors continued to tolerate or increase their attention toward the cult, allowing for a general period of increase in the popularity of Isis up until the cult reached its height under Caracalla, who abolished the ban keeping Egyptian religious rituals outside the *pomerium*.[162] However, not every Emperor was equally interested in the cult, so within this general period of growth there were times of more or less focus on the cult of Isis. The Emperor Antinous Pius, for example, was not very interested in the cult, only issuing one coin with Isaic imagery, while the Emperor Commodus was an avid fan, probably an initiate, and liked to depict himself as Anubis.[163]

The Flavians were particularly connected to the Egyptian cults, including Isis. Vespasian became Emperor after a period of civil war. Before becoming Emperor, he had ruled over Egypt, where he had been accepted as a pharaoh. After the death of the previous Emperor, he was accepted as Emperor by Sarapis; he used this Egyptian religious imagery to connect himself to Alexander the Great and present himself as a worthy ruler of the Roman Empire.[164] Vespasian showed his respect for Egyptian deities by staying in the temple of Isis on his return to Rome.[165] Further, Vespasian's son Domitian was able to escape Rome without being killed by his father's

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[158] Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 87.
[159] Warrior, *Roman Religion*, 90-91.
[160] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, 298.
[161] Tackas, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 90-91.
[162] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, 30-40.
[163] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 107,112-113.
[164] Ibid, 96-97.
[165] Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 127.

political enemies by dressing up in an Isaic costume.[166] Thus, Egyptian religion played an important part in the ascension of the Flavians to the Emperorship.

For the Flavians revered for the cult of Isis because of its integral role in helping the family claim rule of the Roman Empire, and, because of this, the cult became important in their religious policies and ultimately Isis acquired the status of an imperial deity.[167] When Domitian became Emperor he refurbished and rebuilt temples to Isis in and around Rome, including the temple to Isis in Beneventum.[168] There, he placed a statue of himself as pharaoh inside the temple (Figure 16). This black granite statue portrays Domitian in the same style in which pharaohs were depicted in Egypt. He wears a traditional costume of the pharaoh, the royal nemes headdress and kilt, and he strides forward with one leg straight in front of the other and his arms down by his side. The sculpture is also carved in the Egyptian way, in which the excess stone in between the arms and torso is not removed. It is apparent that Domitian not only supported and respected the cult, allowing it to grow in importance in Rome, but that he also used the connection the cult had with Egypt to present himself as a divine king, or a pharaoh. This should not be seen as Domitian trying to increase his own divinity but, instead, to place the Flavian dynasty on an equal footing with the Julio-Claudian dynasty.[169] Some of the members of the Julio-Claudian dynasty were deified after their death, allowing their successors to proclaim themselves as sons of deities, and Domitian sought to have the same status applied to his own family, by presenting himself as a pharaoh. This was only possible in connection to Egyptian cults, since Roman religion did not deify living people.[170]

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[166] Turcan, *Cults of the Roman Empire*, 90.
[167]Takack, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 102, 127.
[168] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, 33.
[169] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 102.
[170] Ibid, 102-103.

Domitian is just one Emperor who used the cult of Isis during his reign as Emperor, and it is apparent that each Emperor had his own religious interests, beliefs and opinions, and used the cult in different political ways, as can be seen in each one's religious policies. The cult of Isis was certainly an important cult in the Roman landscape that was affected by the actions of the reigning Emperor. However, these actions did not necessarily have a huge impact on those devoted to the goddess. Even in periods of active oppression of the cult of Isis, the restrictions placed on the cult did not stop its spread or make people cease to worship the goddess. Rather, the restrictions only regulated how the goddess could be worshiped, and they were purely political moves that did not display a Roman dislike of everything Egyptian.[171] In fact, Egyptian artistic motifs, such as depictions of Nilotic landscapes, increasingly were used after Egypt became a Roman province.[172] Certainly when Emperors actively supported the cult, the worship of Isis became more accessible and more widely popular, but the support of an Emperor was not the sole reason for the spread of the cult. Instead, the cult continued to attract followers during both periods of oppression and support, and many Emperors' interactions with the cult were done to increase their own political standing and not the spread or reputation of the cult.

It is apparent that the cult, despite being at first opposed in the city of Rome, spread to all areas of Italy, and that the Romans continued the Hellenization of the cult of Isis. However, the Romans also implemented their own adaptations to the art and architecture of the cult. This is apparent in the temple to Isis in Pompeii. It is important to remember, as at Delos, that each site had its own specific uses and interpretations of the cult, and Pompeii is no different.

II: The Temple to Isis at Pompeii

[171] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 79.
[172] Ibid, 78.

Pompeii was a port city and, because commercial activities occurred there, the inhabitants were exposed to people and cultures from all over the Mediterranean, which made them open to the reception of Graeco-oriental influences (Figure 17).[173] Scholars generally agree that Italian merchants from Pompeii first experienced the cult of Isis on the Greek island Delos,[174] and when Delos was later abandoned by the Romans, Campania ports, such as Pompeii, were used more, increasing the demand for places of worship of Egyptian gods.[175] Thus, it is not surprising that Pompeii had one of the earliest cult centers established in Italy for the worship of Isis.[176] In addition, the well preserved remains of the temple to Isis at Pompeii make this an essential cult site to study the adaptations of the cult of Isis in Italy.

The temple of Isis is a podium temple surrounded by a portico,[177] with a *pronaos* that has four columns in the front with one column behind the outer front columns in front of the *cella* (Figures 18 and 19). This temple plan is common for Roman temples, as shown by the temple to Apollo in Pompeii which has a similar layout.[178] The temple is stuccoed in First Style frescos, made to look like large blocks of marble, referencing the traditional use of marble to construct temples.[179] Like the temple of Isis on Delos, this temple to Isis reflects the culture and religious norms of the people who adapted the cult, indicating that the goddess was integrated into Roman religion just as she was in Greece. Outside of the temple, in the entire area dedicated to Isis (the Iseum) is a Nilometer in front of the temple (Figure 20), which is a feature unique to the worship of Egyptian deities, a so-called ecclesiasterion, traditionally a Greece political court to make public speeches, to the west side of the portico, and a sacrarium, or an area for sacred uses, to the

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[173] Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World,*14.
[174] Takacs, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 5.
[175] Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire,* 84.
[176] Michael I. Rostovtzeff, *Mystic Italy* (New York: Henry Holt and Company: 1927), 27.
[177] Moormann, "The Temple of Isis at Pompeii," 138.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid,141.

east.[180] All of these areas were decorated in Roman style frescoes. It would be impossible to discuss all of these frescos in this paper, because so many frescoes were preserved. However, the frescoes of the ecclesiasterion will be discussed in depth.

The ecclesiasterion contains frescoes depicting a Nilotic landscape (Figure 21). These landscapes were depicted in the tradition of Fourth Style frescoes, and similar landscapes can be found in houses such as the House of the Small Fountain in Pompeii.[181] Only a close inspection shows that the landscapes were set in Egypt.[182] Inside the panels of the landscape, Io is portrayed as the protagonist in scenes pertaining to her myth.[183] On the first panel, Io is depicted to the left of Argos who is offered a syrinx by Hermes and on the other Isis is receiving Io as she lands in Canopus (Figure 22).[184] The depiction of this myth brings up several questions. Why did the frescoes focus on Io and not Isis, to whom the temple was dedicated? Why was Io portrayed with horns on her head while Isis had to lose her cow imagery? In the following discussion of this myth, I hope to shed some light on these questions.

In Greek mythology, Io was a priestess of Argos whom Zeus loved. However, Hera discovered this, and Zeus changed Io into a cow in order to hide her away from his jealous wife. Hera was not deceived, and she sent a gadfly that chased Io as a cow across lands and seas (Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*, 654 – 841). Io visited different places in the different versions of the myth, but in Egypt her running ceased and her cow imagery, similar to that of Isis', linked the two together in the Greek mind.[185] Isis and Io began to be seen as two intertwined women who together linked the Egyptians to the Greeks through not only their shared forms but also

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[180] Moormann, "The Temple of Isis at Pompeii," 141-143, 152.
[181] Ibid 145.
[182] Ibid, 145-146.
[183] Ibid, 146.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Solmsen, *Isis among the Greeks and Romans*, 17.

since both gave birth to divine sons in Egypt.[186] The similarity in their cow representation, their royal sons, and their years of suffering wandering around the world seems to connect the two completely, [187] but an underlying aspect of Io made her the perfect counterpart to Isis. When Io was turned into a cow, she lost her human form and her sanity: only when she was transformed back to her human self was she freed from the madness of her animal form.[188] This marked a separation between the animal and human side, appropriate in Greek belief. Thus, in images connecting Isis to Io, Isis was given the human form, or the transformed Io, while Io retained the cow imagery, as is seen in the frescoes in Pompeii.

In both frescoes, Io can be recognized by the modest horns on her head, which symbolize that she literally was in cow form, while Isis wears a wreath on her head. Interestingly, the Greek heroine wears a typical Egyptian headdress and the Egyptian deity wears a typical Greek headdress. Thus, the cow imagery is made clear and referenced in Io yet, at the same time, was removed from Isis, allowing her be presented as a Greek-looking goddess. In this temple, this myth acts as a mental bridge connecting the virtues of the Egyptian Isis to the Roman world in a familiar form.[189] Although, the use of a Greek myth may seem strange in a Roman space, it is necessary to remember that Roman religion was strongly connected to Greek religion, and Romans were very familiar with Greek mythology. It can be understood that a Roman viewing these frescoes would understand the religious implications and significance of such images. As people did not worship Io as a goddess, the images of Io found at the Iseum in Pompeii do not contradict the preference for human deities found in the Roman world. The frescoes also

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[186] Solmsen, *Isis among the Greeks and Romans*, 18 – 19.
[187] David L. Balch, "The Suffering of Isis/Io and Paul's Potrait of Christ Crucified Frescoes in Pompeian and Roman Houses and in the Temple of Isis in Pompeii" *The Journal of Religion* Vol. 83 No. 1 (2003): 24 – 55, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1205435, 42.
[188] Ibid, 44.
[189] Moormann, "The Temple of Isis at Pompeii," 154.

reference the Egyptian origins of Isis, because hidden in the landscape of the painting are references to Egypt seen in the details of the Sarcophagus of Osiris[190] and in the crocodile on which Isis stands.[191] Here the Egyptian attributes of Isis are displayed for the viewer –her Egyptian brother-husband Osiris and her connection to animals and the Nile – but they are represented within the scheme of an understood and respected Roman image.

The visual language of these frescoes is quite complex. Firstly, the area used normal Roman style paintings adapted to fit a sacred environment,[192] which would be easily recognized and understood by Roman viewers and were appropriate for the setting of this temple. In this way, the sacred aspects of the cult were communicated to the Romans in a visual language that they would be familiar with. However, these Roman frescoes were used to illustrate a Greek myth which in turn was used to portray Egyptian aspects of the goddess of Isis, capturing the interaction between Greek and Egyptian culture and displaying how the Greek interpretation of Isis continued to be adapted and expanded by the Romans. All of this can best be summarized as follows: Greek myth and ideology was portrayed in Roman visual language to present the aspects of an Egyptian goddess. Certainly, these frescoes indicate the intermixing of many different cultural ideas that occurred when the cult of Isis was brought to Italy.

The sculpture of Isis likewise shows a mixing of several cultural traditions (Figure 23). Archaic and Classical styles of sculpture clearly inspired the form of the life size statue of Isis from the Iseum in Pompeii. Isis' head lacks cow horns, has stiff patterned curled hair, and the trademark smile that characterizes the Archaic style, but her body stands in slight contrapposto,

[190] Moormann, "The Temple of Isis at Pompeii," 145.
[191] Balch, "The Suffering of Isis/Io and Paul's Potrait of Christ Crucified Frescoes in Pompeian and Roman Houses and in the Temple of Isis in Pompeii," 46.
[192] Moormann, "The Temple of Isis at Pompeii," 148.

covered in the transparent wet drapery style found in later Classical styles.[193] This type of statue clearly presents Isis in a familiar, understood, and accepted Greek form. The viewer could clearly relate this image to that of Demeter, Venus, or any other goddess with whom Isis was associated. However, this statue is also unique because of its Archaic attributes, which are not commonly found in Hellenized images of the goddess. It is interesting that this site would use an archaistic sculpture instead of a Hellenistic sculpture like those found across Greece and Rome, and this complicates our understanding of the images of Isis. Although this image is not traditionally Hellenistic, its connections to Greek artistic conventions indicate that the image of Isis was not left in her traditional Egyptian form. Despite the fact that it was most common for the goddess to take on a Hellenized form, this sculpture still contains similar visual symbolism and language as seen in Hellenized sculptures.

The mix of Greek styles here seems to allude to specific Egyptian properties of the goddess Isis. The archaic face represents the sense of antiquity about Isis as she was worshipped in Egypt long before Greek or Roman religion existed.[194] Also, the wet drapery emphasizes Isis as a fertility figure and her annual role in inundating the Nile.[195] Further, these aspects were commonly accepted aspects of the goddess by the Roman population. Just as the flowing Hellenistic drapery and the vegetation on Isis' head references her fertility, so does the wet drapery. Like the sistrum and miniature cow horns and sun disk, the Archaic face references the long history of the worship of the goddess in Egypt. Thus, this sculpture could be used for the same purposes as is seen in other Hellenistic sculptures of Isis and was similarly appropriate in its depiction. However, if this sculpture referenced the same ideas then why did the cult site not just use a Hellenistic image of the goddess? There are several possibilities for why this was the

[193] Swetnam-Burland, "Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy," 116.
[194] Ibid, 118.
[195] Ibid.

case. This sculpture might have been imported from Greece and revered because of its antiquity. In addition, perhaps, the sculpture highlighted both the cult's and Pompeii's connection back to Greece, which is where many of the merchants from Pompeii were first exposed to the cult. As this was one of the first Italian sites to have a temple to Isis, it is possible that there was a greater connection to the Greek Isis. However, the sculpture does not completely remove Isis from her Egyptian origins and aspects. The sistrum Isis holds in her left hand and the ankh held up in her right are both very clear Egyptian icons associated with the goddess. Thus, in one single sculpture, the deity was presented as she was known by her Italian followers: a recognizable Roman and Egyptian goddess at the same time, but not an animal.[196]

In contrast to the distinctly Greek and Roman form of the frescoes and sculpture, other Egyptian art and references are found in the Iseum in Pompeii. Like the Nilotic scene on the frescoes, the cultic space was likewise given an Egyptian feel, although much more directly than the frescoes. Like the temple to Isis at Delos, this cultic space had Egyptian and stylistically Egyptian sculptures and artifacts. Inside the Iseum excavators found a sphinx, the feet from an Egyptian statue, a canopic urn, a faience image of a divinity along with two sculptures of divinities, an ushabty figurine made in the twenty-sixth dynasty, and a Ptolemaic inscription, but most of these items have since been lost.[197] Many of these items were imports, and some of them, such as the hieroglyphic text, were prominently displayed, indicating their high symbolic value.[198] However, not all of the objects were imported. Some were made in Italy to look like Egyptian items or animals, such as the terracotta waterspouts, which together present a wide range of animals including a cat with a lotus on its head, a black and white ibis, a phoenix, a

[196] Swetnam-Burland, "Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy," 118.
[197] Ibid, 126.
[198] Ibid, 126-128.

crocodile, and a scarab, among many others.[199] Both imported and non-imported items were displayed together in the cultic space, indicating that one was not more esteemed than the other, but that both served to reinforce the other.[200] Together these items indicated the cult's exotic origins to visitors and also held deep religious significance to the followers of the cult.[201] In addition, such art reveals that zoomorphic symbolism still remained important to the cult as the religious space was literally imbued with animal imagery, reminding the viewer of Isis' control over animals.[202] Along with the other Egyptian objects, these items served to create a Nilotic feel to the space and set the tone for the ritual and impressed the viewer.[203]

The religious imagery found at the Iseum in Pompeii is not clear-cut Roman or Egyptian and can complicate our view of the typical adaptation and imagery of the cult of Isis. However, these complications further our understanding of how the art used in the cult of Isis was used by specific people to relate the cult back to their own needs and culture. Further, the art in the cult space shows a mixing and meshing of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian artistic styles as well as religious meanings and references to ultimately create a hybrid form of art used to express the differing aspects of the cult in a way that was most comfortable and meaningful to the followers of Isis at Pompeii. The Egyptian connotations of the cult did not lose their importance in Pompeii, nor in the rest of the Roman world, but, instead, the art form simply shifts to make Isis an appropriate Roman goddess but with all the animal and Nilotic connections she had in Egypt. The combinations of mythology, art forms, depicted figures/animals, and the symbolism and function behind all of these representations should be seen as a dialogue between the Egyptian,

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[199] Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World*, 32.
[200] Swetnam-Burland, "Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy," 134.
[201] Ibid, 126-128.
[202] Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World*, 32.
[203] Swetnam-Burland, "Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy," 119.

Greek, and Roman facets of the cult. In this way, the cult of Isis becomes as much a Roman cult as an Egyptian one.

Conclusion

Throughout these chapters, I have examined the changes in the literature, art, and architecture relating to the goddess Isis as the cult spread to other cultures through trade routes, in order to show that the goddess was usually depicted in the visual language of those taking up her worship. Although, this thesis discusses political leaders' connection to the cult in length, many of the followers of Isis were not politicians or even high ranking individuals. In fact, the popularity of the cult among the masses might have been the reason why this cult even attracted the attention of political leaders in the first place. As the cult spread through trade, it gained popularity among people of all stations, which this thesis has sought to show through the discussion of trade, merchant followers, and literature written by devotees who were not politicians. The cult appealed to people from all walks of life and multiple stations. Much of Isis' appeal had to do with her transformation to preeminent deity, which made her a valuable religious force. To sum up, what this means is that as the cult spread out of Egypt and into Greece and Rome and the goddess became worshiped by peoples of all walks of life in each culture, the architecture, art, and literature relating to the goddess became Hellenized and transformed to fit the standards of Greek and Roman culture.

The question may be posed as to why this is important. Firstly, the adaptations to the cult show that the goddess was accepted into the Greek and Roman pantheons. Further, Isis' acceptance was guaranteed through the alterations of her physical appearance as depicted in art. In this way the changes in the art were necessary for Isis to be worshiped outside Egypt. Secondly, the changes undertaken to make Isis an appropriate Hellenistic deity reveal Greek and Roman perceptions of and relations to Egyptian religion. If Isis had to be transformed to fit Greek and Roman standards, this implies that the Egyptian Isis was in some way inappropriate.

Literature reveals why the art changed and what perceptions the Greeks and Romans had towards Egyptian religion. Several ancient authors make it clear that they preferred to worship human deities. Thirdly, the changes in the images and architecture show changes in the worship and identity of the goddess. Not only did Isis have to look like an acceptable Greek and Roman goddess, but her identity too was transformed. In both literature and art there are trends indicating that Isis took over the attributes of other deities. While in Egyptian style, the stylistic attributes of the goddess refer to her queenly and motherly roles; in Hellenistic imagery, Isis is depicted similarly to other Greek deities, indicating her multitude of attributes and roles. Fourthly, the art used in the cult of Isis served more than just a religious role. Instead, some of the art relating to the cult was political propaganda, and the cult was used by both Ptolemaic and Roman rulers to help strengthen their right to rule. Religion and politics deeply influenced each other and the changes in the cult of Isis make this apparent. Lastly, the art found in places of the worship of Isis were related to that specific site's needs. Not all temples had the exact same looking statue of Isis or the same Egyptian artifacts. Rather each site had their own specific relationship to the goddess as revealed in the art chosen to be displayed in their temples.

The changes in the art and architecture relating to the cult of Isis were more than simple techniques to make the goddess look "normal" for the culture worshiping her. There was no strict formula used for adopting foreign cults, and each site had to make its own choices regarding how to implement the cult. Not all foreign cults were transformed to fit the architectural norms of Greek and Roman religious spaces. Thus, the changes in the cult of Isis must be viewed as significant, because they reveal many different aspects of the religious, political, and economic realities in the Ancient Mediterranean. Further study of foreign cults and the corresponding art and architecture could be used in comparison to the cult of Isis to examine the different

implementations of foreign cults in Greek and Roman settings and would expand upon the conclusions this paper has drawn.

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