Individuals and Materials in the Greco-Roman Cults of Isis

Agents, Images, and Practices

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VOLUME 1

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INTRODUCTION

Agents, Images, Practices*

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À la mémoire de Michel Malaise et de Robert Turcan

> "I did not tread the dark funerary road to Acheron, but I, Meniketes, hastened to the harbors of the Blessed. For I furnished the linen-covered beds of the goddess, forbidden to the laymen, for the opulent dwellings of Egypt. And, honored after my death by mortals, oh stranger, I gained the remarkable reputation of the Isiacs, in pledge (of my actions). I honored my father Menestheus, leaving behind three children. May you, too, walk this way free from harm!"[1]

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Such is the eloquent epigram that the relatives of an Isiac, a certain Meniketes, son of Menestheus, inscribed on a marble funerary stele,[2] most likely made in

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1 Catling & Kanavou 2007, 104 (*SEG* 58, 1413): Οὐ δνοφερὰν Ἀχέροντος ἔβαν νεκυοστόλον οἶμον / Μηνικέτης, μακάρων δ' ἔδραμον εἰς λιμένας· / δέμνια γὰρ λινόπεπλα θεᾶς ἄρρητα βεβήλοις / Αἰγύπτου τραφεροῖς δώμασιν ἁρμοσάμαν· / τιμήεις δὲ βροτοῖσι θανών, ξένε, τὰν ἐπίσαμον / φάμαν Ἰσιακῶν μάρτυρ' ἐπεσπασάμαν· / πατρὶ δὲ κῦδος ἔθηκα Μενεσθέϊ, τρισσὰ λελοιπὼς / τέκνα· τὺ δὲ στείχοις τάνδε ὁδὸν ἀβλαβέως (trans. by R. Veymiers). The slashes of the Greek text distinguish the verses (and not the lines engraved in the stone).

2 The fragments of this stele, kept at the Bursa Arkeoloji Müzesi under inv. nos. 3812 and 3213, were joined by Catling & Kanavou 2007 (*SEG* 58, 1413), and published together in *RICIS* 308/1201 = Ascough, Harland & Kloppenborg 2012, no. 98 = Bricault 2013, 442, no. 45a = Harland 2014, no. 102. For earlier editions of the separate fragments, see, for inv. no. 3812, Cremer 1992, 20 and 124, no. NS 5, pl. 5 (*SEG* 42, 1112) = *I.Prusa ad Olympum* 1054; and, for inv. no. 3213, Şahin 1978, 997–998, pls. CCXV–CCXVIII (*SEG* 28, 1585) = *I.Prusa ad Olympum* 1028 = Merkelbach 1995, 62–63, § 110 = Merkelbach & Stauber 2001, 270–271, no. 09/14/01 = Obryk 2012, 120–122, no. E1.

Bithynia at the end of the 2nd cent. BCE.[3] This artifact, which is some 150 cm in height and is today broken into three pieces, was intended to be seen by everyone and thus to perpetuate the memory of the deceased around his tomb, as attested by the thick tenon with which it was fixed to the ground or a plinth. The communicative effect of this *sema* relies on the combination of words and images on the marble, which work in tandem even as each also conveys its own discourse.

These images are preserved in two fragmentary bas-reliefs, isolated in superimposed registers and separated by a thin band bearing the name of the deceased[4] followed by his patronymic. They occupy the uppermost, and most visible, part of the stele.[5] Each of these bas-reliefs shows our cult agent in his family environment, a natural choice for the commissioners of the stele. He is represented lying on a *kline* at a funerary banquet in the upper register while crowning his wife, who is seated beside him, in the company of three servants of smaller stature. We find him standing in the lower register beside four figures of varying sizes who are likely to include his three children.[6]

The lower half of the stele presents the epigram that serves as his epitaph. This funerary poem of nine verses, divided into elegiac distichs and partially written in the Doric dialect, celebrates and justifies the privileged destiny of the deceased in the afterlife. Contrary to ordinary mortals who are destined for the Underworld, Meniketes belongs to the virtuous "elect" who, like Homeric heroes, reach a place of bliss and delight, the Isles of the Blessed.[7] He owes this good fortune to his earthly actions, especially his piety towards Isis and successful accomplishment of certain religious functions. Some see him as a craftsman who made beds,[8] perhaps for banquets,[9] in the context of Isiac mysteries. But it was ordinary beds (δέμνια), not "dining couches" (κλῖναι),

3 Catling & Kanavou 2007, 108: "The monument itself was almost certainly the product of a Bithynian workshop, probably located at Nikomedeia, even if it may possibly have been destined for the grave of a citizen of a north Mysian city".

4 On the personal name Meniketes and its rare attestations, see *LGPN* V.A, 302.

5 On such steles with multiple reliefs, characteristic of the Northwest of Asia Minor, see the *Stockwerkstelen* of Cremer 1991 and Cremer 1992.

6 It seems useless to speculate on the presence of a sixth individual due to the fragmented state of the relief (*contra* Şahin 1978, 997).

7 On these new eschatological conceptions through funerary epigrams, see Le Bris 2001, 61–80. On the maritime image of the "harbors of the Blessed", see Bonner 1941.

8 Şahin 1978, 997 ("Schreiner"); Merkelbach & Stauber 2001, 271 ("Schreiner"); Catling & Kanavou 2007, 104 ("joiner or furniture-maker by trade"); Bricault 2013, 442 ("artisan").

9 Sometimes seen as an allusion to banquets associated with the *kline* of Sarapis (Şahin 1978, 997, and *I.Prusa ad Olympum* 1028).

that Meniketes "furnished" (ἁρμοσάμαν), which does not imply that he manufactured them,[10] for "dwellings" (δέμνιασιν) which might have been temples. "Forbidden to the laymen" (ἄρρητα βεβήλοις),[11] these beds were covered with linen, a textile known for purity worthy of Isis,[12] and seem to have indeed been used in the context of initiation ceremonies.[13] Meniketes therefore appears as an initiate who exercised a ritual role, though one difficult to correlate with a precise sacerdotal title.[14]

This religious devotion, which he proclaims with fervor, earned him access to the Isles of the Blessed, even shouting it out to the viewer (ξένε). His actions gained him the "remarkable reputation of the Isiacs" (τὰν ἐπισαμον φάμαν Ἰσιακῶν)[15] and are the reason he receives due honor from his contemporaries. Though he affirms his membership in a specific cultic group, that of the *Isiakoi*, Meniketes remains no less a polytheist, with a flexible, open and pluralistic religious identity. It is not by any means an exclusive devotion to Isis that is being expressed here, but rather a wholly embraced religious option, which bestows prestige on him even in the afterlife. It is a choice intended to be taken up by his descendants, who also add to his glory.

This Isiac choice and the way it is expressed have been at the core of the collective reflections that gave rise to this book. Who were these individuals that, like Meniketes, were seduced by Isis and her circle? Under what statutes did their cultic commitments manifest themselves? To what degree were they committed? What motivations and expectations guided their religious actions? In what contexts and at what times did they interact? What ritual experiences did they live? To what practices did they devote themselves? What gestures did they make? The contributions of this book, divided into three themed sections devoted to the "agents", their "images" and their "practices",

10 Catling & Kanavou 2007, 104, n. 5: "someone of the high social standing indicated by his gravestone and funerary epigram is unlikely to have been a manual worker".

11 On this expression in the context of the mysteries, see Harland 2014, 66–67.

12 As attested to by the epithets of Isis *linigera*, λινόστολος and λινόπεπλος (Bricault 1996, 43, 85; Bricault & Dionysopoulou 2016, 40, 76). On linen as a mark of the collective identity of the devotees of Isis, see the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 283–321, in this book.

13 Perhaps to invoke the "sacred marriage" between Isis and Osiris (Burkert 1987, 107), with the rite of Isiac initiation sometimes being considered as a sort of Osirianization.

14 Burkert 1987, 26, 47 and 107, improperly attributes the title of priest to him. We could consider him more as comparable to the "linen-bearer" (σινδονοφόρος) who before 166 BCE made a dedication tinged with eschatological expectations in *Sarapieion* C of Delos (*RICIS* 202/0170).

15 The elided accusative μάρτυρ' being in clear apposition to φάμαν, we steer clear of the translation suggested in *RICIS*. I thank Clarisse Prêtre for her clarifications on this matter.

will attempt to debate and even answer these questions by using various sources, reviewing them in context where possible.

1 Agents

The funerary stele of Meniketes reveals the existence during antiquity of "religious communities"[16] whose members defined themselves as "Isiacs". This designation, which seems to unite individuals sharing the same sentiment of belonging and claiming the same religious identity, is troubling, to say the least, in the Greco-Roman polytheist landscape[17] and is worthy of further investigation.

1.1 Isiacus *in Antiquity: A Matter of Identity*

The sources do not show us worshippers identifying their religious choice by describing themselves as "Dionysiac", or even "Mithraic". Such terms, constructed from a theonym, existed during Antiquity, but in an adjectival form, intended to relate a type of *realia* to a particular cult or divinity.[18] In a dedication from Philae dated to 13 BCE,[19] the adjective ἰσιακός emphasizes the divine patronage of a cultic association (συνόδωι εἰσιακῆι).[20] The same applies to an honorific inscription at Mantineia in the Peloponnese, from the 1st cent. CE, eulogizing a Roman woman receiving a portion of the honors on the occasion of "Isiac banquets" (ἰσιακοῖς δείπνοις).[21] In the Latin West, two plaques from Ostia could commemorate the intervention of an emperor, perhaps Caracalla, in the context of a tavern which housed an Isiac *collegium* (*taberna isiaca*).[22]

16 On the relevance of the expression in ancient societies, see in particular Belayche 2003 and Scheid 2003b.

17 Invalidating, for example, North 2003, 340, who pointed to "l'invention sous l'Empire de la coutume de se désigner par rapport à une dénomination religieuse, la première étant apparemment le christianisme".

18 See, for example, a passage of Longus which points to "Dionysiac paintings" (Διονυσιακὰς γραφάς) in a temple of Dionysus erected in the heart of a marvellous garden belonging to a rich Mytilenian owner who bears the theophoric name Dionysophanes (Longus IV, 3, 2, 1; see Jaccottet 2013).

19 *I.Philae* II 139. On this text, see Bricault 2013, 295, no. 94d, and 297.

20 Certain magic prescriptions written on papyrus in the 3rd to 5th cents. CE also involve the use of the adjective to describe a black piece of cloth belonging to Isis (*PGM* I 59; *PGM* VII 227 and 231; *PGM* VIII 67) or the linen garment of the worshippers of the goddess (*PGM* IV 3095).

21 *IG* V.2 269 = *RICIS* 102/1602.

22 *RICIS Suppl.* III *503/1134 ([—]*ernae Isi* [—]); Caldelli *et al.* 2014, 283–285, no. 13 ([— *taber*]*nae Isia*[*c*(*ae*)*?*]). A third plaque from Ostia could be linked to the same

The adjective sometimes seems to be transformed into an epiclesis to identify a confluence with Isis in the nature of another divine power, as can be seen in an altar from the Imperial period from Seripola, in Latium, bearing a dedication surprisingly addressed to the *Bona Dea Isiaca*.[23]

The use of the substantive Ἰσιακός or its Latin equivalent *Isiacus* is a phenomenon without parallels among the other cults. In addition to the epigram of Meniketes, the epigraphic evidence consists of a dozen inscriptions of the Imperial period, somewhat different in nature and relating to different contexts.[24] Such a distribution immediately raises the question of what the word signifies.[25] In the Greek-speaking East, a certain Pagapos may have been described, as in the case of Meniketes, as an "Isiac" on the stone that marked his grave in the region of Alabanda, in Caria,[26] but it is also possible that Εἰσιακο[ῦ] should be considered here rather as a patronymic, in accordance with an anthroponymic use attested by papyrological evidence.[27] In the Latin West, two epitaphs preserved the memory of deceased women who are distinguishable by their status of *Isiaca*: Arruntia Dynamis (Fig. 0.1), who died in her twenty-second year at Ostia around 50–150 CE,[28] and later, in the 3th or 4th cent., an "unmarried virgin" only known as Volumnia, who was celebrated in an epigram from Rome.[29] In another funerary inscription of the 2nd or 3rd cent., found along the Via Ostiense, it is the father of the deceased female, a

edifice (*CIL* XIV 4291 = *RICIS* 503/1120: [—] *duov*[*ir* —] / [—] *Isi et S*[*erapi* —] / [— *ta*]*bernas* [—]).

23 *RICIS* 503/0901 (*contra* Brouwer 1989, 106–107, no. 101).

24 Some have restored <Εἰ>σιακοῦ in the epitaph of a funerary stele from Callatis dated to the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd cent. (see *RICIS* 618/0901, followed notably by Malaise 2005a, 27, n. 14). As pointed out in *RICIS Suppl.* II, p. 297, 618/0901, it is actually necessary to read the personal name Σιακοῦ, well attested elsewhere, and thus to exclude this text from the corpus of Isiac inscriptions.

25 Vidman 1970, 90–94, and Malaise 2005a, 25–29, have already questioned the meaning of the word, but without taking sufficient account of the contexts of use.

26 *RICIS* 305/0301 (Imperial period): Λεοντᾶ / ζῇ. / Παγάπο/υ Εἰσιακο[ῦ] / ζῇ. The stone was reused in a house at Karaullar. On the personal name Pagapos, see *LGPN* V.B, 337 ("Παγαπος?").

27 *Contra* Vidman 1964, 64. See the contribution by W. Clarysse, *infra*, 205, table 6.3, who points to three attestations of the personal name *Isiakos*, the third of which is uncertain (*P.Ryl.* II 111, l. 7, in 161 CE; *P.Col.* VIII 225, r, l. 24, in the 4th quarter of the 2nd cent.; *O.Mich.* I 627, l. 3, in the 1st quarter of the 4th cent.).

28 *CIL* XIV 302 = *RICIS* 503/1121 (mid. 1st cent. – mid. 2nd cent.): *D*(*is*) *M*(*anibus*) / *Arruntiae Dy*/*namidis Isiac*(*ae*). / *Vixit ann*(*os*) *XXI, m*(*enses*) / *II, d*(*ies*) *XII*. *Fecit Ar*/*runtia Helpis fi*/*liae pientissimae* / *et sibi.* On this funerary altar, see Sinn 1991, 91–92, no. 65, 206, figs. 175–176.

29 *CIL* VI 36589 = *RICIS* 501/0176 (3rd–4th cent.): *Volumniae Isiace.* / *Ossa sub* [*h*]*ac lapidum felicia mole quiescunt,* / *sacra animam in*[*n*]*upte virginis aula* [*t*]*ene*[*t*]. On this text, see also Bricault 2013a, 326, no. 105b, and 328.

certain Cornelius Victorinus, who bears the qualifier *Isiacus*.[30] The same individual, identified as the scribe of a decury of secretaries officiating for the colony of Ostia, appears as *Isiacus* and *Anubiacus* in the dedication accompanying the *signum* of Mars which he offered to Isis *Regina* in recognition of his recovery.[31] Also in Ostia, in 251 CE a certain Flavius Moschylus, said to be an "Isiac of this place" (*Isiacus huius loci*), honored his protector Decimus Fabius Florus Veranus, whose religious choice he shared and who was one of the most important dignitaries of the colony, with a *statua*.[32] The statue was dedicated on the anniversary of the accession of Florus Veranus to the priesthood, a prestigious office highlighted in his title, which presents him as a "priest" of the *sancta regina*, to whom he owes his election as an "Anubiac". Even so, the status of Isiac or Anubiac was not dependent on the holding of a priesthood in Ostia.[33] The worshippers who bore such titles belonged to distinct groups, but these were also closely linked to each other,[34] and access to them required an "election," which suggests the existence of an entrance ritual. The expression *Isiacus huius loci* evokes the "Isiac of Igabrum" (*Isiaca Igabrensis*) named

30 *CIL* XIV 343 = *RICIS* 503/1119 (2nd–3rd cent.): *D*(*is*) *M*(*anibus*) / *Corneliae Cocceiae* / *Marcianeti, filiae* / *pudicissima*[*e et*] / *religiosissim*[*ae*], / *Cornelius Victo*/*rinus Isiacus et* / *Cocceia Manliane* / *parentes.* / *Q*(*uae*) *v*(*ixit*) *a*(*nnos*) *XXIIII, m*(*enses*) *IIII,* [*d*(*ies*)] *VII.* / *Luxuria.*

31 *CIL* XIV 4290 = *RICIS* 503/1118 (2nd–3rd cent.): *P. Cornelius P*(*ublii*) *f*(*ilius*) / *Victorinus*, / *Isiacus et Anubiacus* / *et decurialis scriba* / *librarius col*(*oniae*) *Ost*(*iensis*), / *signum Martis cum* / *equiliolo Isidi* / *reginae, restitutrici* / *salutis suae*, / *d*(*ono*) *d*(*edit*). On this text found in the Baths of Neptune, see also Cébeillac-Gervasoni, Caldelli & Zevi 2010 (2006), 179–180, no. 44 (with fig.); Bricault 2013a, 327, no. 105c, and 328; Renberg 2017, 367.

32 *CIL* XIV 352 = *RICIS* 503/1115: *D. Fabio D*(*ecimi*) *filio Pal*(*atina tribu*) / *Floro Vera<n>o*, / *sacerdot*(*i*) *sanct*(*ae*) *reg*[*in*(*ae*)], / *iudicio maiestatis eius* / *elect*(*o*) *Anubiaco, "prima"* / [[*dec*(*urioni*) *Laur*(*entium*) *vic*(*o*) *Aug*(*ustano*), *quattervi*(*ro*)]] / *naviculario V corpor*(*orum*) / *lenuncul*a*riorum Ost*(*iensium*), / *honorib*(*us*) *ac munerib*(*us*) / *omnib*(*us*) *funct*(*us*), *sodali* / *corp*(*orum*) *V region*(*um*) *col*(*oniae*) *Ost*(*iensis*). / *Hic statuam Flavius* / *Moschylus, v*(*ir*) *c*(*larissimus*), *Isiacus* / *huius loci, memor eius* / *sanctimoniae castitat*(*isque*), / *testament*(*o*) *suo co*(*n*)*stitui* / *ab heredib*(*us*) *suis iussit*, / *patrono munditiario* / *b*(*ene*) *m*(*erenti*) / *l*(*oco*) *d*(*ato*) *d*(*ecreto*) *d*(*ecurionum*) *p*(*ublice*). / *Ob honore*(*m*), *quo die sacerd*(*os*) *fa*[*ctus est*], / *dedicat*(*um*) *XVII Kal*(*endas*) *A*[*pr*(*iles*) *Aug*(*ustis*)] / *ter et semel co*(*n*)*s*(*ulibus*). / *Locus datus a*(*b*) *Iulio* / *Faustino, pont*(*ifice*) *Vulk*(*ani*) [*et*] / *aed*(*ium*) *sacrar*(*um*). *Permisit* / *act*(*or*) *Fl*(*avii*) *Mosc*(*h*)*yli* / *sub q*(*uin*)*q*(*uennalitate*) *c*(*ensoriae*) *p*(*otestatis*) / *Q. Veturi Firmi Felicis* / *Socratis et* / *L. Flori Euprepetis.* / *Ob cuius dedicationem* / *dedit decurionibus* (*denariorum*) (*tria milia*) / *cum officio basilices.* On this text, see also Bricault 2013a, 326–327, no. 105c, and 328; Bricault 2014a, 355; and the contribution by L. Bricault, *infra*, 160, 181–182, no. 13, in this book.

33 Vidman 1970, 92, suggested recognizing in the *Isiacus huius loci* a priest of lower status.

34 It is also worth noting the existence at Ostia of "Bubastiacs", relating to the goddess Bubastis, attested to by a funerary inscription of the Antonine era (*CIL* VI 3880 = *RICIS* 501/0169).

Flaminia Pale, whom the authorities of this *municipium* of Baetica honored with a *statua* in the 1st or 2nd cent. CE.[35] Such locative specifications reveal the importance of their being rooted in local religious landscapes,[36] directly raising the question of the scope of this status of "Isiac": was it recognized everywhere, or just on the scale of a region, city or even a single sanctuary?

All these worshippers who shared a similar devotion to Isis belonged to communities which evidently took different forms depending on the contexts. Two, or perhaps even three,[37] inscriptions painted on the walls of Pompeii the year before the volcanic eruption use the substantive in the plural, indicating that the *Isiaci* were involved in electoral activities.[38] These "Isiacs" operated near the *Iseum* to recommend candidates for the aedileship, a magistracy responsible for, among other things, the upkeep of the city's temples. On the wall facing the entrance to the sanctuary, it was "all the Isiacs" (*Isiaci universi*) who offered their support to a certain Cnaeus Helvius Sabinus (Fig. 0.2).[39] On a pilaster erected at the crossroads of *Via del Tempio d'Iside* and *Via Stabiana*, Popidius Natalis, along with the Isiacs (*cum Isiacis*), offered his support to C. Cuspius Pansa, of whom he was a client.[40] A hydria bearing his name, discovered in the *Iseum*, indicates that he was perhaps one of the cult officials,[41] which meant he could easily mobilise followers.[42] Some have questioned the identity of these *Isiaci*, either seeing them as the members of a

35 *CIL* II 1611 = *RICIS* 602/0401: *Pietati Aug*(*ustae*) / *Flaminia Pale* / *Isiaca Igabrens*(*is*) / *huic ordo m*(*unicipum*) *m*(*unicipii*) / *Igabrensium* / *ob merita* / *statuam decr*(*evit*), / *quae honore* / *accepto impens*(*am*) / *remisit.* On this text, see also Alvar 2012, 88–89, no. 116, and Bricault 2013a, 326, no. 105a, and 328.

36 Which does not mean that a priesthood can be understood here (*contra* Alvar 2012, 88, for whom *Isiaca Igabrensis* is, as suggested by the *CIL* II 1611, an equivalent to *sacerdos publica Isidis*).

37 If we restore *Isi*[*acis*(*?*)…]*is ubique* for the inscription painted on the South wall of the Vicolo del Panettiere (*CIL* IV 3141 = *RICIS* *504/0212).

38 A somewhat limited intervention, when considered in the context of the roughly 2600 known *programmata* (as rightly noted by Van Andringa 2009, 326).

39 *CIL* IV 784 = *RICIS* 504/0209 = Varone & Stefani 2009, 529, no. 4: *Cn. Helvium* / *Sabinum aed*(*ilem*) *Isiaci* / *universi rog*(*ant*). On this text, see also Bricault 2013a, 312, no. 99b.

40 *CIL* IV 1011 = *RICIS* 504/0210: *Cuspium Pansam aed*(*ilem*) / *Popidius Natalis cliens cum Isiacis ro*(*gat*). On this text, see also Bricault 2013a, 312, no. 99a. The same candidate was supported by a certain L. Caecilius Phoebus (*CIL* IV 785), who had, moreover, consecrated an archaizing statue of Isis at the *Iseum* (*CIL* X 849 = *RICIS* 504/0205).

41 As suggested, for instance, by Van Andringa 2009, 327.

42 *CIL* IV 2660 = *RICIS* 504/0211: *Popidio NAEΛTI.* On the powerful *Popidii* family, one of whose members, likely a freedman, had restored the *Iseum* in the name of his young son after the earthquake of 62, see Gasparini 2014a, 288–293.

cultic association having Isis as its patron,[43] or as the inhabitants of the neighborhood in which the *Iseum* stood.[44] However, the meaning of the term could have been broader, and included all those regularly visiting the temple of Isis.

Within these more or less informal groups of worshippers, the cult personnel naturally played a predominant role. This privileged connection can be clearly observed at Portus in a dedication that a certain Camurenius Verus, described as a "priest" of the *dea Isis*, inscribed at the end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd cent. on a marble table with the "other Isiacs" (*ceteri* [*Isi*]*aci*), in order to commemorate the restoration of a *megarum* they had financed.[45] The building activity of this community is also attested by the *ex-voto* given by Calventia Severina with her granddaughter Aurelia Severa, after having expanded the same structure.[46] This *megarum* is generally interpreted as a space intended for the celebration of mysteries, and the *Isiaci* as *mystes* who had the same initiation experience.[47] In fact, although it is also attested in other mystery contexts, the term can refer to a variety of types of structures, depending on the case.[48]

Prudence should be exercised when interpreting a term that has more than one unequivocal meaning. The realities pertaining to the title "Isiac" do not seem to have been the same everywhere or at all times. The conditions under which it was acquired, the status it conferred, the rights, duties and relationships it implied, must have varied depending on the context. A Roman

43 A suggestion by Vidman 1970, 92, notably accepted by Van Andringa 2009, 326–327; Bricault 2012a, 98; Gasparini 2014a, 294.

44 A position held, for example, by De Vos 1994, 130–132, and Krzyszowska 2002, 247–248; see the remarks of Gasparini 2014a, 293–294 on this matter. Some authors, including Malaise 2005a, 26, likewise held that an inhabitant of Rome's *Regio III*, called *Isis et Serapis*, could be designated by the name of *Isiacus* (basing this on an edict of the 4th cent. preserved on a fragmented marble plaque, *CIL* VI 31893b, l. 6, in which we should in fact read the word *ISACIS*).

45 *CIL* XIV 18 = *RICIS* 503/1221: [*Pr*]*o salute imp*(*eratoris*) *Caes*(*aris*) / [[.....]] *p*(*ii*) *f*(*elicis*) *A*/*ug*(*usti*) *Camurenius Veru*[*s*]*, sac*(*erdos*) / *deae Isidis CAP* / *CED et ceteri* / [*Isi*]*aci magar*(*um*) *de suo restitu*(*erunt*). On this text and the hypothetical restoration of the toponymic epiclesis *Cap*(*itolinae*), see also the contribution of L. Bricault, *infra*, 160, no. 17, 186, n. 176, in this book.

46 *CIL* XIV 19 = *RICIS* 503/1222 (2nd–3rd cent.): *Voto suscepto* / *Calventia Severina* / *and Aurelia Severa* / *nepos megarum* / *ampliaverunt.* As this inscription was found with the previous one, it is very likely that it relates to the same building.

47 See the bibliography relating to *RICIS* 503/1222.

48 It is, for instance, reflected in an analysis of the term in the *Periegesis* of Pausanias (see Pirenne-Delforge 2008b, 173–175). The ritual, architectural and topographical reality of the *megaron* (or *megara*) mentioned in two dedications from *Sarapieion* C on Delos is not any clearer (*RICIS* 202/0252 and *RICIS Suppl.* II 202/0439; see Siard 2007b, and the contribution by P. Martzavou, *infra*, 141–142, in this book).

honorary inscription, dated from 384 CE, supplies us with a late epigraphic attestation, further increasing the range of meanings that can be applied to the term. This text, sketched in the 15th cent. by Cyriacus of Ancona, celebrates Fabia Aconia Paulina, the wife of the prominent senator Praetextatus,[49] by enumerating her multiple religious affiliations, including her status of *Isiaca*.[50] Similar epigraphic declarations are attested for other eminent members of the Roman polytheist aristocracy,[51] resolutely engaged in the defence of the ancestral cults against an increasingly aggressive Christian power structure.[52] Moreover, these titles were likely more honorary than attached to specific religious functions,[53] at a time when polytheistic devotions were most often expressed in the intimacy of one's *lararium*, away from the public arena.

Well proven epigraphically, the label "Isiac" has a strong echo in ancient literature as well, where it was used in various ways. It was in the writings of Cicero, in the philosophical dialogue on divination he produced in 44 BCE, that the term made its appearance in an adjectival form.[54] In a passage denouncing the charlatans who took advantage of the credulousness of the people, the orator adds an example from his own time to the reflections of Ennius,[55] that of the "Isiac interpreters of dreams" (*isiacos coniectores*),[56] namely the agents of a cult which, despite the coercive measures of the Senate,[57] gained

49 On Praetextatus, Paulina and their religious activities, see Kahlos 2002, 62–84.

50 *CIL* VI 1780 = *RICIS* 501/0210: *Fabiae Aconiae Paulinae c*(*larissimae*) *f*(*eminae*), / *filiae Aconis Catullini v*(*iri*) *c*(*larissimi*), *ex praef*(*ecto*) *et consule ord*(*inario*), / *uxori Vetti Praetextati v*(*iri*) *c*(*larissimi*), *praef*(*ecti*) *et consulis designati.* / *Sacratae apud Eleusinam deo Iaccho, Cereri et Corae*, / *sacratae apud Laernam deo Libero et Cereri et Corae*, / *sacratae apud Aeginam deabus, tauroboliatae, Isiacae*, / *hierophantriae deae Hecatae, Graecosacraneae deae Cereris.*

51 Including Praetextatus himself (Kahlos 2002, 216–225, and Orlandi 2011, 452, no. 69); see, among others, the famous epitaph that Paulina had commissioned (*CIL* VI 1779 = *RICIS* 501/0180) with two poems recalling that she had been initiated into the mysteries by her husband (Festugière 1963, 135–136).

52 On these texts and their Isiac references, see most recently Bricault 2014a, 348–356.

53 For Vidman 1970, 93, Aconia Paulina was a high-ranking worshipper who had experienced initiation.

54 Cic., *Div.* I, 58, 132: *Non habeo denique nauci Marsum augurem / non vicanos haruspices, non de circo astrologos / non Isiacos coniectores, non interpretes somnium / non enim sunt ei aut scientia aut arte divini*. On this passage, see also Bricault 2013a, 268, no. 83h, and 271.

55 As rightly demonstrated by Nice 2001, 156–159; *contra* Salem 1938, who saw it as a paraphrasing of the text of Ennius, dating back to the end of the 3rd or the beginning of the 2nd cent. BCE.

56 Namely the equivalent of the "oneirokrites" (see Bricault 2013a, 266–272, no. 83). On this matter, see also Renberg 2015, 237–238.

57 On the place of Isiac cults in Rome at the end of the Republic, see especially Orlin 2008 and Malaise 2011a.

a firm foothold in Rome. The adjective also appears in Augustan poetry, first, in Manilius, who used it in describing the sistrum (*isiaco sistro*) accompanying Cleopatra in Actium,[58] and then in Ovid, when he mentions the altars (*isiacos focos*) at which a worshipper repents for having offended the goddess.[59] The tone is more acerbic in the verses of Juvenal, who at the beginning of the Antonine era mocked a Roman *demimondaine* who is in a hurry to go near the *sacra* of the "Isiac procuress" (*isiacae lenae*).[60] The label goes beyond Isis alone in the work of Firmicus Maternus, who, in the anti-pagan treatise he composed around 346, links certain Osirian rites to the Isiac *sacrum* or *sacra*.[61] A few decades later, the Christian, though non-polemic, poetry of Ausonius of Bordeaux described in the same way the *ratis isiacae*, the ship launched to sea during the *Navigium Isidis* festival,[62] and the noise generated by the sistra (*isiacos tumultus*).[63]

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58 Man. I, 914–918: *necdum finis erat: restabant Actia bella / dotali commissa acie, repetitaque rerum / alea, et in ponto quaesitus rector Olympi, / femineum sortita iugum cum Roma pependit, / atque ipsa Isiaco certarunt fulmina sistro.* By contrasting the sistra with thunderbolts, Manilius follows in the wake of Virgil (*Aen.* VIII, 696–713) and Propertius (III, 11, 39–43), with this religious propaganda redefining Actium as a combat between the gods of Rome and Egypt; see Becher 1965 and Malaise 1972b, 245–247, 379–384.

59 Ov., *Pont.* I, 1, 51–54: *Uidi ego linigerae numen uiolasse fatentem / Isidis Isiacos ante sedere focos. / Alter ob huic similem priuatus lumine culpam / clamabat media se meruisse uia.* On this passage, evoking penitential rites, see, among others, Bricault 2013a, 510, no. 165e, and 514.

60 Juv. VI, 487–491: *Nam si constituit solitoque decentius optat / ornari et properat iamque exspectatur in hortis / aut aput Isiacae potius sacraria lenae / disponit crinem ipsa capillis / nuda umero Psecas infelix nudisque mamillis.* On the sarcasm of Juvenal towards the Isiac cults in Rome, see Kardos 2008 and Kardos 2011b. The use of *lena* is not surprising, given that the temple of Isis was mentioned in another of his *Satires* as among the sanctuaries in which women would prostitute themselves (IX, 22).

61 On the grief for Osiris, see Firm., *Err.* II, 3: *Haec est Isiaci sacri summa. In adytis habent idolum Osiridis sepultum: hoc annuis luctibus plangunt, radunt capita, ut miserandum casum regis sui turpitudine dehonestati defleant capitis, tundunt pectus, lacerant lacertos, veterum vulnerum resecant cicatrices, ut annuis luctibus in animis eorum funestae ac miserandae necis exitium renascatur.* On the "vegetating" Osiris, see Firm., *Err.* XXVII, 1: *In Isiacis sacris de pinea arbore caeditur truncus. Hujus trunci media pars subtiliter excavatur, illic de seminibus factum idolum Osiridis sepelitur.* On these passages, see the comments of Turcan 1982a, 176–179, 334–336.

62 Aus., *Ecl.* XXIII, 23–26: *Adiciam cultus peregrinaque sacra deorum, / natalem Herculeum uel ratis Isiacae, / nec non lascivi Floralia laeta theatri, / quae spectare uolunt, qui uoluisse negant.* On the eclogue entitled *De feriis Romanis*, composed between 367–379 and devoted to the festivals of the Roman calendar, see Combeaud 2010, 106–107 (= *Ecl.* III, 16, 23–26).

63 Aus., *Epist.* XXI, 20–25: *Cymbala dant flictu sonitum, dant pulpita saltu / icta pedum, tentis reboant caua tympana tergis; / Isiacos agitant Mareotica sistra tumultus; / nec Dodonaei cessat tinnitus aeni, / in numerum quotiens radiis ferientibus ictae / respondent dociles*

The literary sources make similar use of the term in a substantive form, though this is more the case with prose than poetry. The earliest attestation to its use, at least to our knowledge, is attributed to Valerius Maximus, who, in his collection of moralizing *exempla* dedicated to Tiberius, depicts the plebeian aedile Marcus Volusius as appearing in Rome in the guise of an Isiac (*Isiaci habitu*), specifically the distinguishing features of an *alienigena religio*, to escape from the violent proscription of the triumvirs in 43 BCE.[64] Recounting the same anecdote at the end of the reign of Antoninus Pius,[65] Appian wrote, for his part, of an ὀργιαστὴς τῆς Ἴσιδος, from whom the Roman magistrate borrowed an ankle-length robe and a canine mask.[66] These were worn by the most representative members of the Isiac cults, those who had the honor – or the dishonor, depending on the point of view of the observer[67] – to perform the role of Anubis in certain circumstances.[68] The trickery of an individual disguised in this way is at the heart of another anecdote mentioning the "Isiacs", which Flavius Josephus recounted during the reign of Domitian.[69] This Jewish author living in Rome justifies Tiberius' repression of the Egyptian cults[70] by

moderato uerbere pelues. On this letter, dated from to 393, in which Ausonius complained about the silence of his friend Paulinus, who had recently settled in Spain, see Amherdt 2004, 21, 99–117 (esp. 106–107), and Combeaud 2010, 480–483 (= *Epist.* II, 19, 20–25).

64 V.Max. VII, 3, 8: *M. Volusius aedilis plebis proscriptus, assumpto Isiaci habitu, per itinera uiasque publicas stipem petens, quisnam reuera esset, occurrentes dignoscere passus non est: eoque fallaciae genere tectus, in M. Bruti castra peruenit. Quid illa necessitate miserius, quae magistratum populi Romani, abiecto honoris praetexto, alienigenae religionis obscurantum insignibus, per urbem iussit incedere?* On this passage, see Bricault & Gasparini 2018, and the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 291, 311, no. 2, in this book.

65 Which does not mean that he was inspired by Valerius Maximus (as suggested by Bricault 2013a, 336, although the two narratives do not seem to concur, particularly regarding the place where Volusius found refuge). On M. Volusius belonging to a family that was very likely close to Cicero, Hinard 1985, 550–551, no. 159, who opted for the Greek historian's version of the facts.

66 App., *BC* IV, 47, 200. On this passage, see also Bricault 2013a, 334, no. 107d, and 336, as well as the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 291, 314, no. 9, in this book.

67 See, for example, Juv. VI, 532–534. On the manner in which Anubis (or the one performing his role) was perceived in Rome, see now Rosati 2009.

68 On these actors sometimes bearing the title of *Anubophorus*, see Bricault 2000–2001, as well as the contribution by G. Sfameni Gasparro, *infra*, 88–91, in this book.

69 J., *AJ* XVIII, 65–80: Καὶ ὑπὸ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους ἕτερόν τι δεινὸν ἐθορύβει τοὺς Ἰουδαίους καὶ περὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τῆς Ἴσιδος τὸ ἐν Ῥώμῃ πράξεις αἰσχυνῶν οὐκ ἀπηλλαγμέναι συντυγχάνουσιν. Καὶ πρότερον τοῦ τῶν Ἰσιακῶν τολμήματος μνήμην ποιησάμενος οὕτω μεταβιβῶ τὸν λόγον ἐπὶ τὰ ἐν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις γεγονότα (…). On this passage, its authenticity and literary background, see recently Petridou 2016a, 246–247, and Gasparini 2017; *contra* Klotz 2012, who sees in it evidence of an echo of Egyptian practices.

70 These measures, likewise affecting the Jews, are also noted by Tac., *Ann.* II, 85, 5, and Suet., *Tib.* 36, 1–2.

means of the scandalous story of Paulina, a high-ranking Roman matron, said to have been sexually abused in the temple of Isis by the equestrian Decius Mundus, thanks to the audacious complicity of the Isiacs (τοῦ τῶν Ἰσιακῶν τολμήματος), subsequently identified as priests (τῆς Ἴσιδος τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν). It is obviously important to be careful not to take literally such narratives that are essentially literary constructions, which mix elements of truth with various commonplaces (*topoi*),[71] like the Isiac disguise (*Isiaci habitu*) referred to *c*. 119–122 by Suetonius[72] in his portrayal of Domitian fleeing the Capitolium to escape from the Vitellians in 69.[73]

The Isiacs are mentioned in various literary genres – not only historical ones – in passages that are sometimes enigmatic. Dioscorides' pharmacological treatise *De Materia Medica*, written in the 3rd quarter of the 1st cent., mentions "marine wormwood" (also called *seriphon*),[74] a medicinal plant which grew near the coast in Taposiris,[75] the stems of which the "Isiacs" used.[76] The same information can be found in the *Historia Naturalis* of his contemporary Pliny the Elder, who is not any more detailed about the Isiac use of these aromatic plants.[77] Equally surprising is the toponym "Harbor of the Isiacs" (Ἰσιακῶν λιμήν) on the northwestern coast of Pontus Euxinus, mentioned by Arrian in the geographical treatise he compiled following Hadrian's instructions after

71 See, for example, Petridou 2016a, 245–247, regarding "sex stratagems".

72 Suet., *Dom.* 1, 4: *Bello Vitelliano confugit in Capitolium cum patruo Sabino ac parte praesentium copiarum, sed irrumpentibus aduersariis et ardente templo apud aedituum clam pernoctauit, ac mane Isiaci celatus habitu interque sacrificulos uariae superstitionis, cum se trans Tiberim ad condiscipuli sui matrem comite uno contulisset, ita latuit, ut scrutantibus qui uestigia subsecuti erant, deprehendi non potuerit.* On this passage, see Bricault 2013a, 102, no. 22b, and 103, as well as the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 291, 313–314, no. 7c, in this book.

73 The same episode is described by Tac., *Hist.* III, 74, 1, mentioning Domitian "dressed in linen" (*lineo amictu*).

74 A sort of wormwood related to sea wormwood (*Artemisia maritima*), according to Aufrère 1987, 26–29.

75 A toponym derived from the presence of a tomb of Osiris (Calderini & Daris 1986, 359–360). On the plants growing on the tombs of Osiris, which often attracted snakes with their odors, see Koemoth 2012, esp. 83.

76 Dsc., *De Materia Medica* III, 23: Καλοῦσί τινες καὶ τὸ <σέριφον> ἀψίνθιον θαλάσσιον, ὅπερ πλεῖστον ἐν τῷ κατὰ Καππαδοκίαν Ταύρῳ γεννᾶται καὶ ἐν Ταφοσίρει τῆς Αἰγύπτου, ᾧ οἱ Ἰσιακοὶ ἀντὶ θαλλοῦ χρῶνται. (…). See Marganne 1992, 318–319, no. 24; Amigues 2001, 425–427.

77 Plin., *Nat.* XXVII, 29 (53): *Est et absinthium marinum, quod quidam seriphium uocant, probatissimum in Taposiri Aegypti. Huius ramum Isiaci praeferre solemne habent.* It should be noted that Malaise 1992–1993, 130, wrongly relates this passage and the preceding one to the olive tree. On the descriptions of this plant by Pliny, also including *Nat.* XXXII, 31 [100], see Marganne 1991, 169, no. 27.

being appointed governor in Cappadocia.[78] However, the most famous passage relative to the Isiacs appears in Plutarch's *Moralia*, at the beginning of *De Iside et Osiride*, the treatise which he devoted to these divinities in the year 120 at the latest.[79] In this work composed near the end of his career, in which Plutarch offers a Middle Platonist interpretation of a reconstructed[80] myth of Isis and Osiris,[81] the philosopher from Chaeronea paints for the Thyad Clea,[82] who was dedicated to the cult of Dionysos at Delphi, the ideal picture of an Isiac, an option she has embraced from tender age:[83]

> "It is a fact, Clea, that having a beard and wearing a threadbare cloak does not make philosophers, nor does dressing in linen and all manner of shaving make Isiacs; but the Isiac is he who truly, whenever he has heard by custom what is displayed and what is done with regard to these gods, uses reason in investigating and philosophizes on the truth found in them."[84]

Plutarch's Isiac is a worshipper[85] who, beyond his appearance, and strengthened by his learning (νόμῳ), tries to understand the profound nature of cultic

78 Arr., *Peripl. M. Eux.* XX, 2–3: Ἀπὸ δὲ Ὀδησσοῦ ἔχεται Ἰστριανῶν λιμήν. Στάδιοι ἐς αὐτὸν πεντήκοντα καὶ διακόσιοι. Ἐνθένδε ἔχεται Ἰσιακῶν λιμήν. Στάδιοι ἐς αὐτὸν πεντήκοντα. On this passage, see, in particular, Bricault, 2013, 137, no. 33d, and 138, who sees in it the resurgence of an early link between the Isiacs and merchant activities. The "Harbor of the Isiacs" is also mentioned in the anonymous *Periplus* published after Arrian (Anonym., *Per.* LXI, 7–8).

79 On this treatise, see especially the comments of Gwyn Griffiths 1970 and Froidefond 1988.

80 From erudite readings, notably available in the libraries of Rome and Italy (where Plutarch stayed several times; see Stadler 2014).

81 Among the philosophers of this school who were seeking an exegesis of the works of Plato, Plutarch would represent one particular subgroup, described by Pleše 2005 as "Platonist Orientalism".

82 The person to whom the treatise (and the slightly earlier *Mulierum virtutes*) is dedicated, whom Froidefond 1988, 18–22, identified as the Flavia Clea known from some Delphic inscriptions.

83 Plutarch informs us later that she was consecrated by her parents into the Osirian rites (Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 35 [364E]). On the religious identity of Clea, see the contributions by G. Sfameni Gasparro, *infra*, 74, 79–81, and P. Martzavou, *infra*, 148–149, in this book.

84 Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 3 (352C): Οὔτε γὰρ φιλοσόφους πωγωνοτροφίαι, ὦ Κλέα, καὶ τριβωνοφορίαι ποιοῦσιν, οὔτ' Ἰσιακοὺς αὖ λινοστολίαι καὶ πᾶσα ξύρησις· ἀλλ' Ἰσιακός ἐστιν ὡς ἀληθῶς ὁ τὰ δεικνύμενα καὶ δρώμενα περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς τούτους, ὅταν νόμῳ παραλάβῃ, λόγῳ ζητῶν καὶ φιλοσοφῶν περὶ τῆς ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀληθείας (trans. by R. Veymiers, closer to the Greek text than Gwyn Griffiths 1970, 123).

85 Gwyn Griffiths 1970, 269: "The word implies a follower or devotee or initiate of the goddess (including, especially, the priest), as is shown by the reference here to τὰ δεικνύμενα

objects (δεικνύμενα) and acts (δρώμενα), so as to reveal the truth of what he earlier described as "the divine" (τὰ θεῖα).[86] This portrait of the Isiac "philosopher"[87] is suitable, according to Plutarch, for the *hieraphoroi* and *hierostoloi* who convey this "sacred discourse about the gods" (τὸν ἱερὸν λόγον περὶ θεῶν) through symbols, which accompany them even after death on their garment.[88] Though it sheds light on many cultic realities, Plutarch's text remains above all a scholarly religious exegesis that seeks to reconcile Egyptian theology and Platonic philosophy. His Ἰσιακός can only be understood in the context of the overall purpose of the work.

The Isiacs reappear in Minucius Felix's *Octavius*, a philosophical dialogue often dated to the years 215–240 CE, in which he mentions, with apologetic intention, the ritual gestures effected by the wretched followers (*Isiaci miseri*) in order to participate in the suffering of the grief-stricken goddess.[89] At a time when Praetextatus and his wife collected cultic titles, the anonymous biographer of the *Historiae Augustae*, who belongs to the same Roman aristocracy,[90] illustrates the sadistic zeal of Commodus in persecuting the Isiacs. While participating in public processions,[91] the emperor satisfied his thirst for cruelty by forcing the Isiacs (*Isiacos*) to flog their chests and by beating their heads

καὶ δρώμενα". Froidefond 1988, 255: "Ici, et dans tout le passage, Ἰσιακός désigne indifféremment les prêtres d'Isis et les mystes".

86 See the very fine analysis of Aufrère 2016, who detects in this portrait of the Isiac – to be understood, in his opinion, as the Egyptian philosopher-priest in general – the influence of a school of thought identical to that of Chaeremon of Alexandria.

87 For whom "the reasoning that comes from philosophy" serves as a *mystagôgos*, a true guide for initiation into the mysteries of these cults (Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 68 [378A–B]).

88 Plut., *De Is. et Os.* 3 (352B): Διὸ καὶ τῶν <ἐν> Ἑρμοῦ πόλει Μουσῶν τὴν προτέραν Ἶσιν ἅμα καὶ Δικαιοσύνην καλοῦσι, σοφὴν οὖσαν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, καὶ δεικνύουσαν τὰ θεῖα τοῖς ἀληθῶς καὶ δικαίως ἱεραφόροις καὶ ἱεροστόλοις προσαγορευομένοις· οὗτοι δ' εἰσὶν οἱ τὸν ἱερὸν λόγον περὶ θεῶν πάσης καθαρεύοντα δεισιδαιμονίας καὶ περιεργίας ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φέροντες ὥσπερ ἐν κίστῃ καὶ περιστέλλοντες, τὰ μὲν μέλανα καὶ σκιώδη, τὰ δὲ φανερὰ καὶ λαμπρὰ τῆς περὶ θεῶν ὑποδηλοῦντες οἰήσεως, οἷα καὶ περὶ τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν ἱερὰν ἀποφαίνεται. Διὸ καὶ τὸ κοσμεῖσθαι τούτοις τοὺς ἀποθανόντας Ἰσιακοὺς σύμβολόν ἐστι τοῦτον τὸν λόγον εἶναι μετ' αὐτῶν, καὶ τοῦτον ἔχοντας, ἄλλο δὲ μηδὲν ἐκεῖ βαδίζειν. On this passage, and the one that follows it (*supra*, 13, n. 84), see Gwyn Griffiths 1970, 264–269, and Froidefond 1988, 254–256.

89 Minuc. XXII, 1: *Isis perditum filium cum Cynocephalo suo et caluis sacerdotibus luget, plangit, inquirit, et Isiaci miseri caedunt pectora et dolorem infelicissimae matris imitantur*. On this passage (in which Osiris and Harpocrates are confused) and the self-mutilation rites he mentions, see the contribution by F. Queyrel and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 406, in this book.

90 Some identified him with one of the *Nicomachii* (see the hypotheses of Festy 2004 and Ratti 2007).

91 Which we also learn from an extract of SHA, *Presc.* VI, 8–9.

(*capita Isiacorum*) with the *simulacrum* of Anubis that he was carrying.[92] At the end of the 4th cent., one of the members of this Roman senatorial milieu was the target of an anonymous versified pamphlet which lambasted him for abandoning Christianity to return to "the slavery of idols".[93] Imagining that an *Isiacus* designated as consul would be a subject of public ridicule, the author underlines the shame brought on by the opposite situation, which he wishes to denounce, in which a former consul had chosen to become a *minister Isidis*.[94]

The "Isiac" of ancient literature is likely to take on various meanings, which necessitates putting each reference in its textual context. This range of potential meanings also explains the absence of homogeneity among modern scholars who generally opt randomly for one of them, casting the "Isiac" sometimes in the role of a "priest", sometimes of an "initiate" and sometimes of a "worshipper". Ancient writers seem to have most often used the word in a generic sense that was deliberately vague, and thus suitable for all the participants in Isiac cults. Rightly noting that there is no equivalent of *Isiacus* for the worshippers of Sarapis,[95] M. Malaise persuasively concluded that the term could also be broadened to include other members of the circle of Isis.[96]

1.2 *The Reception of* Isiaci *in Modern Historiography*

It is this broadened definition to which modern scholars have turned in order to describe those who, in one way or another, adhered to these cults. The label was never completely forgotten following the end of Antiquity. The medieval copyists in effect served as a preserver of memory by ensuring that the texts of the Greeks and Romans were passed on. Mention is made, for example,

92 SHA, *Commodus* IX, 4–6: *Sacra Isidis coluit, ut et caput raderet et Anubim portaret. Bellonae seruientes uere exsecare brachium praecepit studio crudelitatis. Isiacos vero pineis usque ad perniciem pectus tundere cogebat. Cum Anubin portaret, capita Isiacorum graviter obtundebat ore simulacri.* On this passage, see Turcan 1993, 31, 46–47, as well as the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 292, 318, no. 15a, in this book.

93 As indicated by the title given by the manuscripts relating to this work (previously attributed to Cyprian of Carthage): *Carmen ad senatorem ex christiana religione ad idolorum seruitutem conuersum*. On the addressee, whom it is not possible to identify and whose historicity has not even been established, see Corsano & Palla 2006, 19–24.

94 *Carmen ad quendam senatorem* 21–27: *Nunc etiam didici quod te non fecerit aetas, / sed tua religio, caluum, caligaque remota / gallica sit pedibus molli redimita papyro. / Res miranda satis deiectaque culmine summo! / Si quis ab Isiaco consul procedat in urbem, / risus orbis erit; quis te non rideat autem, / qui fueris consul, nunc Isidis esse ministrum? / Quodque pudet primo te non pudet esse secundo!* On this passage, see Corsano & Palla 2006, 118–124; Boxus & Poucet 2010b; as well as the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 297–298, 319, no. 16, in this book. On the Isiac references of this text and related works, see Bricault 2014a, 329–341.

95 *Sarapiakos* is attested only as a personal name (Clarysse & Paganini 2009, 69, n. 7, and 87).

96 Malaise 2005a, 26.

of *Isiaca sacra* or *Isiaci antistitis* in the Carolingian scholia of the *Satires* of Juvenal.[97] Beginning in the 14th cent., European humanists rediscovered classical literature and, with it, mention of the Isiacs. Published by Alde Manuce in 1509, the first edition of Plutarch's *Moralia*, including his Isiac treatise, led to multiple translations in the 16th cent., both into Latin and the main contemporary languages.[98] The work influenced, to cite just one example, the writings of François Rabelais,[99] who in the adventures of the giant Pantagruel mentions "les Isiacques" several times.[100] At the same time, antiquarians took an interest in artifacts deemed to be "Egyptianizing" which emerged from Roman soil, sometimes attributing the label "Isiac" to them. Such was the case with the famous bronze table, acquired in the 1520s by Pietro Bembo,[101] which in a study by the erudite Paduan Lorenzo Pignoria appearing in 1605 was given the name *Mensa Isiaca*.[102]

After coming into fashion again in scholarly milieus, the term entered the encyclopedic dictionaries of the European Enlightenment. In 1721 the *Dictionnaire universel*, known as the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, introduced, in its second edition an "Isiaque" entry, describing a "Prêtre de la Déesse Isis" based on classical authors,[103] which directly inspired the entry that Ephraim

97 *Scholia in Iuvenalem vetustiora* II, 92 (*ad exemplum Cotyti dicitur Isiaca sacra celebrari*; ed. Wessner 1931, 24) and VI, 539 (*Isiaci antistitis*; ed. Wessner 1931, 108).

98 On the tradition of the *Moralia* in the 16th cent., see Aulotte 1965, esp. 325–357, listing the various editions and translations, and Frazier 2005. One can cite, for example, two contemporaneous translations which were long considered authoritative, one in Latin by Guilielmus Xylander (Xylander 1572, esp. 160–161 for the *isiacus*), and the other, in French, by Jacques Amyot (Amyot 1572, I, esp. 319 for "l'isiaque").

99 Who possessed several copies of Plutarch's *Moralia* (Plan 1906).

100 Hence *Le Tiers Livre* (Rabelais 1546, 343–344 [chap. 47]: "D'elle sont les Isiacques ornez, les Pastophores revestuz, toute humaine nature couverte en premiere position") or *Le Cinquième Livre* (Rabelais 1564, 21 [chap. 4]: "comme entre les Aegyptiens par certaines linostolies & rasures estoient creez les Isiacques"). In 1752, the *Rabelais moderne* of the abbot of Marsy stated that these "Isiacques" represent "Prêtres d'Isis" (Marsy 1752, IV.2, 159, comment [a]).

101 Perhaps before the sacking of Rome in 1527 (Danzi 2005, 42). On the history of the *Tabula Bembina*, today preserved in the Egyptian Museum of Turin, and its study since the 16th cent., see Leospo 1978, 1–28. This artifact is the focus of the contribution by M.-C. Budischovsky, *infra*, 322–339, fig. 10.1, in this book.

102 Pignorius 1605. The essay was reprinted twice (Pignorius 1608 and Pignorius 1669). His analysis was considered sensible by Montaucon 1719, II.2, 332, in contrast with that suggested in 1654 by Athanasius Kircher in an attempt to decode the hieroglyphics in his *Œdipus Ægyptiacus* (Kircher 1654, III, 80–160). Montaucon 1719, II.2, 331, stated that the table was called as Isiac "parce qu'elle contient la figure & les mystères d'Isis".

103 *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* 1721, III, 1120–1121 (*s.v.* Isiaque).

Chambers devoted to it in his *Cyclopaedia* published in London in 1728.[104] The term was also taken up in more specialized lexicons, such as the *Gründliches Antiquitäten-Lexicon* published by Benjamin Hederich in Leipzig in 1743.[105] It is therefore natural that it was indexed in the major work of that time, the *Encyclopédie* of Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert. Integrated into the eighth volume, published in 1765, the entry, written under the influence of "l'histoire romaine" by one of the most important collaborators in this monumental work, the Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, painted an unflattering picture of the "prêtres *isiaques*" who "se servoient souvent du voile de la religion pour pratiquer des intrigues criminelles" and "étoient très-bien assortis à ces tems de la dépravation des mœurs".[106] If this portrayal was obviously biased, the *Encyclopédie* definitively endorsed a qualifier[107] that has not ceased to be used since.

Beyond the literary sources, on which these dictionary entries are based, the scholarly world of the Enlightenment also could benefit from a more tangible body of evidence in order to understand these cults and their agents. Some of these material testimonies were already long known. Therefore, when, beginning in the 1630's, the Turinese antiquarian Cassiano Dal Pozzo created his *Museo Cartaceo* within the orbit of Cardinal Barberini, he included several inscribed and figural artifacts relating to the Isiacs. The funerary urn of G. Larinas Atticus, warning all profaners of the wrath of Isis, was known to him from the *Antichità romane* composed in the middle of the 16th cent. by Pirro Ligorio.[108] As for the six cult officials with shaven heads sculpted in relief at the base of a column originally belonging to the *Iseum Campense* (Fig. 0.3),[109] they had already been drawn in Rome in the second half of the 17th cent. by Alfonso

104 Chambers 1728, II, 406 (*s.v.* Isiaci).

105 Hederich 1743, 1435–1436 (*s.v.* Isiaca; *s.v.* Isiacus). There is also the *Dictionnaire de mythologie* by the abbot Claustre, published in Paris in 1745, whose entry is close to that of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (Claustre 1745, II, 217–218).

106 L. de Jaucourt, *s.v.* Isiaque, in Diderot & D'Alembert 1765, VIII, 912 (the first three paragraphs were inspired by the entry in the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*).

107 Which is to be found even under the pen of Voltaire (for example, in the article *Les Pourquoi* of his *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* [Voltaire 1772, IX, 185] or in the article *Du baptême indien* in his *Fragments sur l'Inde* [Voltaire 1773, 42–43]).

108 London, British Museum, Franks II, fol. 2, no. 211 (see Stenhouse 2002, 104, no. 47), based on the Ligorian drawing in the Codex XIII B.8, p. 89, of the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli. On this urn decorated with the sistrum and the situla, see Sinn 1987, 252, no. 663; and for its inscription, see *CIL* VI 21129 = *RICIS* 501/0172.

109 London, British Museum, Franks I, fol. 113, no. 126; Windsor Castle, Royal Library, no. 8517 (see Vermeule 1966, no. 8517). On this artifact, see, in particular, the contribution by L. Bricault and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 699, n. 47, fig. 25.2, in this book.

Chacón.[110] And these are but two examples of Isiac documents which cropped up in the sketchbooks of antiquarians, with a number of graphic variations. The scene of the column of the *Iseum Campense*, for instance, reappeared in 1652 in the *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* of Athanasius Kircher, to illustrate the *Pompa Isiaca* described by Apuleius,[111] in the form of a much more fanciful drawing (Fig. 0.4).[112] The publication by Father Kircher was one of the numerous sources used from 1719 onwards by Dom Bernard de Montfaucon in his famous work *L'Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures*. The Dominican monk resorted to documents such as the drawing by Kircher – testimonies he judged to be more objective than the texts – to express what the cult of Isis meant in Antiquity.[113]

The interest of antiquarians in these attestations of the Isiac cults, which were sometimes the object of contemporary imitations (Figs. 0.5a–b),[114] increased in light of archaeological discoveries, some quite exceptional. It was in the second quarter of the 18th cent. that the House of Bourbon undertook the exploration of the cities around Vesuvius, frozen in time by the famous eruption. In the summer of 1745, the excavators of Herculaneum uncovered, in the vicinity of the theater, the two most famous frescoes of the Isiac pictorial corpus (Figs. 0.6a–b), showing various agents fully engaged in ritual activities.[115] Nearly twenty years later, in December 1764, in a neighboring city identified as Pompeii not long before, the teams of Francesco La Vega came across a temple located next to the theater which was identified by an inscription, discovered in the entrance, as that of Isis.[116] News of this sensational discovery of a temple that was both Roman and Egyptian, with a remarkably well-preserved mixture of objects, quickly spread from one antiquarian to another[117] and stimulated

110 According to S. De Angeli in La Rocca & Parisi Presicce 2010, 64.

111 Apul., *Met.* XI, 9–11.

112 Kircher 1652, I, 226 (in Chapter IX *De cœremonijs, & ritibus Aegyptiorum, quos tum in sacrificijs, tum alijs in solennitatibus obseruabant*).

113 Montfaucon 1719, II.2, 286–287, pl. CXVI, fig. 2 (corresponding to *II. Processions ou pompes d'Isis* in Chapter VII of the book on *La religion des Égyptiens*). On the same engraving (fig. 1) we can find the drawing of a procession shown in bas-relief that was taken from the *Admiranda* of Pietro Santi Bartoli and Giovanni Pietro Bellori (Bartoli & Bellori 1693, pl. 16).

114 See *e.g.* a chalcedony cameo from the end of the 18th cent. (Weber 1995, 132–133, pl. XXVIII, no. 162) which reproduces a Roman funerary stele featuring a sacrificing couple (*RICIS* 501/0171) that had been illustrated by Ridolfino Venuti (Venuti 1778, pl. XXIV).

115 For the oldest reproductions, see Cochin & Bellicard 1757 (1754), 38–39, pls. 20–21, and Bayardi 1760, 309–321, pls. LIX–LX. On these frescoes, see the contribution by E.M. Moormann, *infra*, 367–372, figs. 12.1–2, in this book.

116 *CIL* X 846 = *RICIS* 504/0202.

117 Including the Neapolitan Domenico Migliacci, who produced the first work about it (Migliacci 1765).

the imagination of travelers,[118] artists (Fig. 0.7),[119] writers,[120] and musicians,[121] arousing across Europe an "Isiaco-Egyptian" craze marked by romantic passions and orientalist fervor.[122]

In tandem with this phenomenon,[123] which was even exploited by the symbolism of the French Revolution,[124] and were enriched still further by the expedition of Bonaparte to Egypt,[125] the development of a more scientific approach took hold. Scholars began to address questions about the reasons for the success of the cult of Isis among the Romans. This applies to the thesis entitled *De Isidis apud Romanos cultu* which Karl Reichel submitted in Berlin in 1849. Such questioning was new, but the heuristic approach was essentially literary and did not take sufficient account of the material culture.[126] In contrast, the thesis of Georges Lafaye on the *Histoire du culte des divinités d'Alexandrie Sérapis, Isis, Harpocrate et Anubis hors de l'Égypte*, published in Paris in 1884, divided into two sections devoted to the *textes* and *monuments*, the latter integrating a catalogue of 234 figurative objects.[127] Lafaye's work is foundational, laying down a set of rubrics, already listed in the title, which formed the

118 See, for example, the lifelike reconstruction of the temple during one of its nocturnal ceremonies in the *Voyage pittoresque* of the abbot of Saint-Non (Saint-Non 1782, 118–120, no. 75bis, and the contribution by V. Gasparini, *infra*, 729, fig. 26.5, in this book).

119 Also worthy of mention, apart from the reconstitutions of landscape painters such as Jacob Philipp Hackert, are the meticulous and vivid views drawn in 1770–1771 by Giovanni Battista Piranesi and engraved by his son (Piranesi, Piranesi & Guattani 1804).

120 In 1834, Edward Bulwer-Lytton made the ignoble Arbaces, Egyptian high-priest of the temple of Isis, the malevolent hero of his successful novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* (see the contribution by L. Bricault, *infra*, fig. 5.1). Some years later, in 1845, Gérard de Nerval, published a novel entitled "Le Temple d'Isis. Souvenir de Pompéi", which he reworked in 1854 in his famous collection *Les Filles du Feu* (see Mizuno 1997).

121 The visit made by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Pompeii in June 1770 at age fourteen (Bastet 1979 and Pappalardo 2006) influenced his telling of the fable at the heart of the *Magic Flute*, his last complete lyrical masterpiece, which he presented in Vienna on September 30, 1791 (Morenz 1952).

122 On the multifaceted craze caused by the discovery of the *Iseum*, see, among others, Romero Recio 2011.

123 These representations were at the heart of the *VII^e colloque international sur les études isiaques* organized from 19–21 October 2016 at the University of Toulouse-Jean Jaurès; see Bonnet, Bricault & Gomez 2019.

124 Malaise 2003b.

125 Giving rise, notably, to the "retour d'Égypte" style (see Humbert 2008b).

126 With a few exceptions, such as the base dedicated by a priest to Isis *triumphalis* (Reichel 1849, 53, which he knew thanks to Gruter 1603, LXXXIII, no. 14, and which corresponds to *RICIS* 501/0152).

127 Including some that were newly discovered, like the statue of an Isiac revealed in 1867 at Taormina in Sicily (Schöne 1867). On this artifact, see the contribution by M. Malaise and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 470–471, fig. 16.1, in this book.

structure of a new field of historical research. Wishing to compose a work of synthesis, the French Latinist devoted two chapters to the cultic ceremonies and their agents, sometimes organized into associations.[128] He analyzed these "dramatic" rites and "exalted" worshippers from an evolutionary perspective, partly inherited from Ernest Renan.[129] If "l'isiacisme" won the day over Greco-Roman paganism, it collided with Christianity, whose advent it prepared and facilitated.[130]

This perspective, attributing to the gods of the Orient a transitional place between paganism and Christianity, was also the one on which Franz Cumont based a cycle of lectures he gave in 1905 at the Collège de France on *Les Religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*.[131] The work, published the following year, integrates the Egyptian cults into a wider phenomenon, that of the "religions orientales transportées en Occident",[132] but does not focus on material realities, concentrating more on the religious sentiments of the ancients found in the literary tradition.[133] However, in his 1929 fourth edition, the Belgian scholar illustrates some chosen artifacts,[134] because they "nous mettent en contact plus direct avec le passé que celles de la pensée traduite par l'écriture",[135] a vision that went back to antiquarians such as Montfaucon.

Written in an elegant style amplifying a powerful intellect, Cumonts' synthesis aroused great interest, both among the educated public and specialists alike, even though it must be said that it preceded genuine analysis of the documents.[136] Its scientific impact was such[137] that any debate on these "traveling gods" at the time seemed closed. For decades, researchers were content merely to draw attention to new artifacts discovered around the Mediterranean

128 Lafaye 1884, 108–130 ("chapitre VI. Le culte") and 131–155 ("chapitre VII. Le sacerdoce").

129 On Renan and his vision of the "oriental religions", see Dussaud 1923.

130 Such was the conclusion of Lafaye 1884, 167–169.

131 For the historiographical horizon of the *Religions orientales*, see Bonnet & Van Haeperen 2006, XXIII–XXIX.

132 Cumont 1906, 91 (at the heart of Chapter IV, devoted to Egypt).

133 Bonnet & Van Haeperen 2006, XX.

134 Like the sacred dance on a bas-relief found at Ariccia a short time before (Cumont 1929, pl. VIII, 2, citing Paribeni 1919). On this artifact, see the contribution by L. Bricault and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 702, fig. 25.4, in this book.

135 Cumont 1929, XVI.

136 As noted by Leclant 2000, xxi. On the reception of the *Religions orientales*, see Bonnet & Van Haeperen 2006, XLIV–LX.

137 Contrary to the work of J. Toutain, published in Paris in 1911, which minimized the impact of what were then referred to as "Cultes orientaux" in the Roman provinces and was based mainly on epigraphic testimonies (Toutain 1911).

Basin.[138] Some studies can, however, be considered brilliant exceptions.[139] In 1916, while the First World War was raging, the French Hellenist Pierre Roussel produced a monograph on the Egyptian cults in Delos, based on some 340 inscriptions, which initiated significant reflection about the cult agents and their practices,[140] while at the same time revealing the mediatory role of the Hellenistic world.[141] From 1922 to 1925, a Czech philologist, Theodor Hopfner, collected the testimonies of nearly 400 authors writing in Greek or Latin on "Egyptian religion" in the broader sense of the term, creating a body of information in a major work that did not, however, become widely available.[142] In Missouri, the historian Thomas Allan Brady, who completed part of his studies at Harvard,[143] published a synthesizing essay in 1935 on the reception of the Nilotic cults in the Hellenistic *oikoumene*, including a prosopography of worshippers of non-Egyptian origin.[144]

The revival of documentation began in the 1950s, when Jean Leclant began an annual chronicle[145] of the *aegyptiaca* found outside Egypt and called for a resolution, by means of a general investigation, of the problem of the impact of Egyptian influences throughout the classical world.[146] There was a significant response to this initiative. While Victorine von Gonzenbach produced a monograph in 1957 featuring a series of some thirty portraits of children she identified as Isiac *mystes*,[147] in the Netherlands Maarten Jozef Vermaseren conceived a new book series aiming to bring together the *Études préliminaires*

138 Such as two silver goblets decorated with cultic scenes in the Palestra of Pompeii (Fuhrmann 1941).

139 Based on that of Cumont and Lafaye, the small book by Joseph Burel on *Isis et les Isiaques*, published in Paris in 1911, is presented as a "simple note" aiming at a non-specialized public (Burel 1911, 3–4).

140 Roussel 1916, esp. 239–293 ("Troisième partie. Histoire, organisation et traits principaux des cultes égyptiens à Délos").

141 Somewhat neglected by Cumont (see, for example, the criticism of Bickermann 1931).

142 Hopfner 1922–1925 (which Grenier 1995–1996 planned to make more accessible).

143 Where he could benefit from consultations with Arthur Darby Nock (one of the correspondents of Cumont, whose *Religions orientales* had been translated into English in 1911).

144 Brady 1935 (reprinted in Brady 1978, 1–88). Three years later, he produced a mimeographic impression with limited circulation, devoted to a collection of 376 figured monuments, one of whose sections focusses on the cult personnel (see Brady 1938, reproduced in Brady 1978, 89–118).

145 Published in the journal *Orientalia* beginning with volume 21 (1952).

146 Leclant 1956, 179. It was this ambitious project which led him to accept, in 1964, the position of "directeur d'études" at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris on "l'Égypte hors d'Égypte" (Leclant 1965–1966).

147 Gonzenbach 1957.

aux religions orientales dans le monde romain (*ÉPRO*). Inaugurated in 1961 and based in Leiden, this modestly titled but ambitious program, influenced by the work of Cumont,[148] from the outset encouraged regional studies aiming to spread its scope to include the whole of the Roman Empire. While some of them are not very detailed,[149] others go well beyond mere cataloguing and supply us with scholarly synthesis. This is the case with the theses of M. Malaise in 1972 on Italy and Françoise Dunand in 1973 on the Eastern Mediterranean, which devote long chapters to cult agents and their practices.[150] While becoming free from the Cumontian category of the so-called "Religions orientales",[151] the series turned towards more thematic investigations centered on these divinities, but sometimes also on the communities that worship them. This can be seen in Sharon Kelly Heyob's 1975 study, which sought to present Isis as an established protector of women.[152] The funerary altar of one of them (Fig. 0.8), Fabia Stratonice, was the subject of an analysis in 1978 by Jean-Claude Grenier.[153] All of these and other Isiac worshippers were listed in 1990 by Fabio Mora in a prosopography supplying statistical data clarifying their social status.[154] This analytical work, which notably reevaluates the place of women,[155] is based especially on some 850 Isiac inscriptions which a Czech philologist, Ladislav Vidman, had catalogued in 1969 in the Berlin series *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*.[156]

Certain important monographs on the subject appeared somewhere other than *ÉPRO*. In the wake of his epigraphic *Sylloge*, Vidman published a synthetic study in the same series in 1970[157] that focussed more on cult agents than on the ceremonies in which they participated.[158] In 1976, Hans-Bernhard Schönborn devoted a monograph to the functions of *pastophoroi*,[159] an

148 On this passing of the baton from Cumont to Vermaseren, see Bonnet & Bricault 2013.
149 Such as the volume by Maria Floriani Squarciapino on Ostia (Floriani Squarciapino 1962).
150 Malaise 1972b, 23–156 ("Première partie. Les personnes ou les isiaques d'Italie"), and 217–243 ("Deuxième partie. Les dieux égyptiens en Italie. Le culte"); Dunand 1973, III, 136–286 ("Clergé et rituel des sanctuaires isiaques dans la Grèce hellénistique et romaine"), and 287–319 ("Prosopographie du clergé isiaque").
151 Independently of the series title, which remained unchanged until 1992 (see *infra*, 24).
152 Heyob 1975.
153 Grenier 1978a.
154 Mora 1990 (and the review article by Malaise 1993).
155 Mora 1990, II, 1–29 ("la partecipazione delle donne al culto isiaco").
156 *SIRIS*.
157 Which Witt 1971, so often cited in Anglosphere literature, does not constitute.
158 Vidman 1970, 48–65 ("Priester und Priesterkollegien") and 66–94 ("Gläubige und Kultvereine").
159 Schönborn 1976.

Egyptian class of cult personnel whose functions are debated,[160] in the series *Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie*, which had already included Reinhold Merkelbach's analysis of the Isiac festivals in 1963.[161] In 1977, Marie-Françoise Baslez in the *Collection de l'École Normale Supérieure de Jeunes Filles* published her thesis on the "Religions orientales" of Delos, adopting as much as possible the point of view of the participants in religious life,[162] and examining their involvement in various social networks.[163] An essay published in 1980 by F. Dunand in the proceedings of a conference on *Religions, pouvoir, rapports sociaux*, organized three years earlier at Besançon, analyzed from a slightly Marxist point of view the "clientele" of these cults in the light of socio-political tensions.[164] Many studies carry the weight of a recent past – which the upsurge in gender studies also reveals.[165] Two monographs in the years 1980–1990 dealt with the iconography of Isiac women, thus giving visual clarity to the analysis of S.K. Heyob.[166] In her thesis, which was published in a 1988 *Hesperia* supplement, Elizabeth J. Walters raises questions about the religious and social status of female figures in the guise of Isis represented on some 106 Attic funerary steles (Fig. 0.9), 34 of which were found in the Athenian Agora.[167] Three years later, in 1991, Johannes Eingartner published his thesis on the sculpted representations of Isis and her followers in a *Mnemosyne* supplement,[168] classifying these according to the type of clothing, thus also raising the question of identification criteria.[169]

The body of evidence provided by all these works, sometimes uneven or redundant, brought about a renewal of the scholarly representations of the world of ancient religion, progressively disqualifying the Cumontian category of the "Religions orientales". In his impressive synthesis on *Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain*, published in Paris in 1989, Robert Turcan also already distances himself from this "typologie quelque peu abstraite ou même

160 See especially the immediate reaction of Malaise 1976b.
161 Merkelbach 1963.
162 Baslez 1977, 141–307 ("Formes et caractères de la vie religieuse") and 315–394 ("Prosopographie des dévots attestés dans les cultes orientaux à Délos").
163 Including cult associations (for example, the *melanephoroi* already studied in Baslez 1975).
164 Dunand 1980a, 73: "L'utilité des concepts marxistes, lorsqu'il s'agit d'analyser le fonctionnement d'une religion au sein d'une société, ne me paraît pas contestable".
165 This is true of studies going beyond the agents of Isiac cults (Horster 2012a, 7–8).
166 See *supra*, 22, n. 152.
167 Walters 1988.
168 Eingartner 1991 (mentioning in his forward that he was unable to integrate the study of Walters 1988).
169 As noted by the insightful critique of Malaise 1992.

étrangère à l'histoire",[170] that only forms a unity in the polemical opinions of some Christian apologists.[171] Being thus freed from the label "oriental",[172] these cults could be further studied in their own right, in terms of their own evolution, and within the many religious and communal systems in which they were practiced. Turcan's book therefore became *The Cults of the Roman Empire* when rendered into an English version appearing in 1996.[173] At the same time, in Leiden, the successors of Vermaseren renamed the *ÉPRO* series to *Religions in the Graeco-Roman World* (*RGRW*).

In 1997, the exhibition *Iside, il mito, il mistero, la magia* held in Milan revealed to the public the richness of the sources for Isiac worship collected since the foundation of *ÉPRO*,[174] and brought about a renewed momentum in research devoted to these cults.[175] Two years later, in 1999, Laurent Bricault organized the *1er colloque international sur les études isiaques* in Poitiers, inaugurating this new era in the presence of his advisor J. Leclant, who then introduced the neologism of "isiacologie".[176] These created the impetus at the dawn of the 21st cent. for a series of scholarly gatherings which succeeded each other, even beyond Isiacological meetings,[177] the seventh of which, held in Toulouse during the Autumn of 2016, was devoted to the phenomena of reception after Antiquity.[178]

These discussion forums, sometimes organized to coincide with exhibitions for the general public,[179] were also occasions for thinking about an interdisciplinary field of study which, beyond the label, did not hesitate to redefine itself in order to better adapt to the reality of the evidence.[180] All the sources associated with specific cult sites had been mapped out in 2001 in an *Atlas de la*

170 Turcan 1992 (1989), 13.

171 Even if they had already caused xenophobic reactions in an old Roman such as Juvenal or Lucian of Samosata (Turcan 1992 [1989], 14–18).

172 On the "oriental" character of these cults that were integrated into Greco-Roman religious forms, see Belayche 2000a and Belayche 2000b.

173 Turcan 1996 (1992).

174 Arslan 1997.

175 For a survey of research for the years 1997–2012, see Bricault & Veymiers 2012.

176 Leclant 2000, xxii.

177 The results of which thus far have been published in Bricault 2000a; Bricault 2004a; Bricault, Versluys & Meyboom 2007; Bricault & Versluys 2010; Bricault & Versluys 2014a.

178 Bonnet, Bricault & Gomez 2019.

179 This was the case with the exhibition *Ägypten, Griechenland, Rom. Abwehr und Berührung*, mounted in Frankfurt in 2005–2006 (Beck, Bol & Bückling 2005), which had been preceded by a two-part academic conference held in the same town in November 2002 and January 2003 (Bol, Kaminski & Maderna 2004).

180 Malaise 2005a is emblematic in this regard, aiming to better define the object of Isiac studies, find a common terminology and supply some key points for relevant analysis.

diffusion des cultes isiaques.[181] The work of collecting these has been continuing ever since, without neglecting any historical source, leading to the publication of new analytical repertoires, some of them devoted to objects that had been deemed as trivial or, at best, minor.[182] One of the most instructive corpora for the cult agents and their practices is that which L. Bricault himself devoted to some 1771 Isiac inscriptions found outside Egypt, his *Recueil des inscriptions concernant les cultes isiaques*, published in 2005.[183] This burst of activity, which, under the aegis of Miguel John Versluys,[184] also saw the development of new theoretical reflections on the cultural interactions between Egypt and the classical world, revealed, however, the necessity of reintegrating the Nile Valley into a field of study that traditionally focussed on "Égypte hors de l'Égypte".[185] This observation was put forward in 2008 in Liège on the occasion of a meeting specifically devoted to Isiac cults in Egypt.[186]

As the areas of investigation broadened, Isiac studies also benefitted from the creation of a specific series at the same time, the *Bibliotheca Isiaca*, which aims to follow all new material and the evolution of scholarly thought. Launched in Bordeaux in 2008, this series,[187] edited by L. Bricault and R. Veymiers, presents original analytical studies and supplements to the main catalogs,[188] as well as a critical bibliographical survey revealing the exponential growth in publications since 2000.[189] Some of these studies addressed old questions or raised new ones about the identity and role of the Isiac priests, sometimes assisted by specialists, at the level of a city[190] or a region,[191] usually located in the Greek East. Others examined individual types of cult officials

181 Bricault 2001a.

182 This was the case with coins (*SNRIS*), gems and jewels (Veymiers 2009a), or lamps (Podvin 2011).

183 *RICIS*.

184 Following his work on the Roman perception of Egypt through Nilotic scenes (Versluys 2002).

185 See *supra*, 19–20, et 21, n. 146.

186 Bricault & Versluys 2010; Malaise 2010.

187 Three volumes have appeared (Bricault 2008a; Bricault & Veymiers 2011; Bricault & Veymiers 2014) and the fourth is currently being published.

188 Notably epigraphic (see *RICIS Suppl.* I–III, offering a total of 108 new inscriptions and numerous updates to existing entries).

189 Continuing the *Inventaire bibliographique des Isiaca* (*IBIS*) established by Jean Leclant and Gisèle Clerc for the years 1940–1969 (Leclant & Clerc 1972–1991).

190 See, for example, Stavrianopoulou 2005 (in Priene); Dignas 2008 (in Delos); Steimle 2008 (in Thessalonika); Martzavou 2011 (in Athens).

191 Such as Christodoulou 2009 (for Macedonia) and Swetnam-Burland 2011 (for Italy).

such as the *Anubophoroi*,[192] stolists,[193] and *pastophoroi*,[194] or certain cultic associations such as the *hypostoloi*,[195] Sarapiasts,[196] and *therapeutai*.[197] The family networks by which these cults spread also have remained a focus of attention,[198] as well as certain categories of worshippers considered itinerant, such as soldiers or merchants.[199] As for ritual practices and their performance, the archaeology of sanctuaries and their applied sciences made it possible to shed new light on them.[200]

1.3 Isiaci *in Context between Local and Global*

If these works were often relevant, sometimes even brilliant, they needed to be continued, systematized and placed in correspondence with each other. Isiac studies today benefit from a profusion of extremely varied information, allowing us to envisage a new comprehensive investigation into the communities that animated this vast religious movement. The objective of this book, and the conferences which gave rise to it, is precisely to suggest such a broad reflection, drawing from the richest possible documentary sources while taking account of the most recent debates on the religious mutations that affected the Hellenistic and then Roman worlds.[201]

This body of evidence calls for a very fine analysis of situations, not only in major multicultural centers like Delos, Rome or Alexandria, but also in innumerable local micro-contexts, where the Isiac cults sometimes developed in different conditions and with different stakes. There were several levels of penetration and visibility for these cults, various strategies of appropriation as well as valorization, which varied in accordance with the places, time periods and individuals involved. It is this insertion into the local contexts, subject

192 Bricault 2000–2001.
193 Malaise 2003a.
194 Hoffmann & Quack 2014 and Thomas 2014.
195 Malaise 2007a.
196 Bricault 2014c.
197 Baslez 2014.
198 See, for example, the analysis of Martzavou 2010 on certain Italian merchant families found at Delos, Euboea and Thessalonika, or that of Sfameni 2012 on the role of the senatorial aristocracy in the 4th and 5th cents. CE.
199 See most recently Siekierka 2008.
200 See, for example, the publication by Dardaine *et al.* 2008 of the Isiac sanctuary of Baelo Claudia, and the much-awaited publication on the sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna in Mainz (see already Hochmuth, Benecke & Witteyer 2004; Witteyer 2004; Witteyer 2013).
201 On religious mutations, see, for example, the picture painted by Bricault & Bonnet 2013 on the fiftieth anniversary of the *ÉPRO* series.

to global dynamics, that current research aims to interpret,[202] deconstructing many received ideas, many generalities that have been developed based on literary exegeses taken much too literally.

If Isiacs did indeed exist in the societies of the Greco-Roman world, they did not constitute, as the successors of Cumont had for a long time imagined, uniform religious communities that were isolated and exclusive, displaying an exotic and provocative otherness. They were men and women from all ethnic, social and professional backgrounds who, in accordance with various expectations, made a common choice to gather together around the altar of Isis and her kin. The stereotype of the linen-clad throng in Tibullus or Martial in fact appears a lot more heterogeneous and colorful, offering varied configurations in accordance with the contexts.[203]

The contextualized evaluation of data is therefore imperative in terms of the overall picture, in order to avoid, as much as possible, the promotion of reductive visions caricaturizing cultic groups that are likely to obscure many realities. This approach, which could be qualified as "emic" from a methodological point of view, takes the Isiacs out of the category of "oriental religions" and reintegrates them into the religious pluralism of the cities of the "Greco-Roman Empire".[204] The Isiacs are therefore examined within local cultic landscapes where they had other possible options that they did not hesitate to embrace.

If they had a fluid religious identity that was both pluralistic and cumulative, they expressed their Isiac devotion in ways that were sometimes singular and by means of different kinds of markers,[205] constituting many distinctive traits that the focus on contexts allowed to surface even more. This claim of belonging reveals the existence of an "Isiac identity" in variable forms which should be clarified and interpreted in all its complexity, free from modern prejudices that are sometimes frozen in a kind of dichotomy between polytheism and monotheism.[206]

202 On this intermingling of local and global dynamics, see Bricault & Versluys 2012.

203 Tib. I, 3, 29–30; Mart. XII, 28, 19–20. On these passages and the stereotype they convey, see the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 311–312, nos. 1 and 4, in this book.

204 Defined by Veyne 2005.

205 On the markers – essentially ritual, conceptual, behavioral and hierarchical – of religious communities, see Belayche 2013, 17–20.

206 On this rigid opposition between exclusive and inclusive religions, theorized by the fathers of the Church, see the judicious remarks of Bonnet & Bricault 2016, 9–20.

1.4 *Isiac Cult Personnel: A Composite Picture*

The religious life of Isiac sanctuaries was regulated by cult personnel whose structure and hierarchy varied depending on context. Any generalized presentation of this group, long described as "Isiac clergy", based on priestly lists supplied by various literary sources hardly seems pertinent.[207] The personnel of the Isiac cults do not constitute an immutable category and can be broken down into a multitude of variants which oblige us to avoid all systematization.

In the Greco-Roman religious system, the superior authority was held by an individual whom antique sources qualified as ἱερεύς or *sacerdos*, which our modern languages translate as "priest", thus yielding to a Christianizing linguistic facility, which is therefore biased and anachronistic.[208] Functioning by "analogy", the use of such a term is evidently not without its dangers, which has resulted in the proposal of alternative expressions, such as "practitioners of the divine",[209] which emphasize their religious function without, however, covering the social and political role sometimes played by these agents.[210] If this terminology consecrated by historiography often seems inevitable, it is nonetheless essential to apply it with knowledge of the reason for this, and an awareness of the differences between the agents of polytheist and Christian cults.

Depending on their regions, cities and sanctuaries, the individuals assigned to the *hiera* of the Isiac divinities, while presiding over ritual celebrations, corresponded to various realities, implying a considerable heterogeneity of statuses, rights, obligations and powers. There were a multitude of specific situations possible as much in Egypt and the Greek-speaking East as in the Latin West, which require us to keep a distance from literary stereotypes such as the Mithras of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius or the Calasiris of the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus.[211] One of the challenges of this book is to confront the sources, and therefore the media of communication, so as to paint a nuanced and composite picture of the Isiac priest within these three cultural spheres.[212]

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207 See for example, the attempt by Estienne 2005 for the Roman world.

208 This terminological problem was already the central focus of the volume *Pagan Priests* (Beard & North 1990).

209 Dignas & Trampedach 2008.

210 For a new insight into these matters, see the volume *Beyond Priesthood* by Gordon, Rüpke & Petridou 2017.

211 On the representation of priests in the Greek novels, see, for example, Baumbach 2008, who analyses the literary image of Calasiris, that of a "divine man" offering a universal model of the priest-philosopher.

212 Hence the triptych made up by the contributions of J. Quack, P. Martzavou, L. Bricault, *infra*, 108–126, 127–154, and 155–197, in this book.

Many factors come into play in the profile of a priest which it is necessary to contextualize as much as possible in his immediate environment, at the heart of the religious life of the city which served as home to his temple, in order to bring out both his distinctive qualities and his similarities to the priests of other cults. This approach reveals certain situations where the private and public, the civic and religious spheres are closely interlinked, sometimes involving various levels of authority. This is the case, for example, with the decision taken shortly after 166 BCE by the Roman Senate and followed by the Athenian *strategoi*, who required the *epimeletes* of Delos, to authorise Demetrios of Rhenaia to serve at *Sarapieion* A, which was founded by one of his ancestors from Memphis.[213] While the priesthoods of this private temple were hereditary and for life, and thus of Egyptian inspiration, those of *Sarapieion* C, which became public towards 180 BCE, were Hellenic in nature, being undertaken for a year by Athenians engaged in a sort of priestly *cursus honorum*.[214] But Delos was only *one* center, *one* pivot, *one* intermediary among other sites involved in the propagation of these cults,[215] which could have taken various forms in the other parts of the Hellenistic world. And things were still very different in the Roman world, where priesthoods were more attached to Isis than to Sarapis, among other peculiarities.

In addition to these high-ranking holders of a priesthood, other types of cult personnel interacted with worshippers in the sanctuaries. The Isiac lexicon attested to in written sources is very rich and varied in this regard. Some categories of servants, such as the *oneirokrites*, the *aretalogoi*,[216] and the *pastophoroi*[217] bear original titles, sometimes of Egyptian origin, while others, such as the *kleidouchoi* and the *kanephoroi*,[218] belong to a nomenclature more widely used in a Greek or Latin milieu. Several of these titles still escape a fully

213 *ID* 1510 = *RICIS* 202/0195. On this text, which is consistent with the socio-political conflicts on Delos when the island once again with the help of Rome came under Athenian control, see the recent remarks by Martzavou 2014, 177–181.

214 At least until 89/88 (see the study offered by Bricault 1996 on *RICIS* 202/0203, an incomplete list of priests of Sarapis dated to 110/109 BCE, in which he extends the list based on other inscriptions).

215 As Veymiers 2014d wrote about the analysis by Barrett 2011.

216 On the *oneirokrites* and *aretalogoi*, see Bricault 2013a, 266–272, no. 83.

217 See *supra*, 26, n. 194.

218 On the *kanephoroi* and *kleidouchoi*, see, for example, Connelly 2007.

clear explanation: what were the roles of the *sindonophoros* of Delos,[219] the *megalephorus* of Rome,[220] or the *cellarius* of Verona,[221] for example?

The cult personnel were not always the same, but varied from one temple to another. Several liturgical tasks could be performed by the same individual, especially in modestly sized temples. The small temple built on the southern slope of the Acropolis in Athens has conserved, for example, the memory of acts of euergetism carried out around 120 CE by a female worshipper who was at the same time a "lamp carrier" (λυχνάπτρια) and interpreter of dreams (ὀνειροκρίτις).[222] The cultic offices and the practices they involved spread with the gods from one shore of the Mediterranean to the other, sometimes appearing under other names. Those who were tasked with dressing, adorning and cleaning the cult statues received the title of "stolist" (στολιστής) in both Egypt and in the rest of the Greek-speaking world.[223] In the Latin West, a dedication to Isis from Nîmes (Fig. 0.10) revealed an *ornatrix fanis*, a position which could have been dedicated to the same task.[224] Sometimes, in contrast, a title would remain the same, but not necessarily the case with the role or the functions associated with it. If they were often subordinate officials, for example, as at the sanctuary of Maroneia in the 2nd or 1st cent. BCE,[225] the *neôkoroi* (νεωκόροι) – etymologically, "those who clean the *naos*" –[226] during the Imperial period can be described as individuals who should be honored. Some high-level athletes, victorious in many competitions, citizens of Alexandria and several other cities bear the title of "*neôkoros* of the great Sarapis".[227] With the passing of time,

219 See *supra*, 3, n. 14.

220 *CIL* VI 32463 = *RICIS* 501/0150.

221 *CIL* V 3294 = *RICIS* 515/0806. If Malaise 1972b, 131, saw him as "l'économe du temple", L. Bricault suggested calling him rather "le gardien de la cave du sanctuaire", tasked with supplying the banquets with wine.

222 *IG* II^2 4771 = *RICIS* 101/0221.

223 See *supra*, 26, n. 193.

224 *CIL* XII 3061 = *RICIS* 605/0103.

225 *I.Aeg.Thrace* 183 = *RICIS* 114/0203.

226 On the activities inherent to this task, existing from the Classical era in many Greek cults, see Ricl 2011. On the *neôkoroi* in Isiac contexts, see Bricault 2013a, 278–281, no. 87, and 283, no. 89.

227 This was the case, for example, at the beginning of the 3rd cent. of the pancratiast Marcus Aurelius Asklepiades, known as Hermodôros, sometimes described as the "elder of the *neôkoroi* of the great Sarapis", which indicates that they constituted a *collegium* whose headquarters was possibly in Alexandria (see the Roman inscriptions *IG* XIV 1102–1104 = *RICIS* 501/0203–501/0206, and the comments by Strasser 2004, while waiting for the study being prepared by L. Bricault).

the title became more prestigious and honorific, serving even to underline the Isiac devotion of Praetextatus in the Rome of the end of the 4th cent.[228]

Beyond local particularities, the relations between the Isiac sanctuaries of the Mediterranean, their cult officials and the communities who frequented them are worthy of study. The multiple versions of the aretalogy[229] of Isis found in Kyme in Aeolis, in Thessalonika and Kassandreia in Macedonia, at Ios in the Cyclades, and Telmessos in Lycia reveal the existence of trans-Mediterranean cultic networks whose importance remains to be evaluated.[230] The wide circulation of this text, originally composed in Memphis during the 3rd cent. BCE,[231] in which the goddess hymnically ensures the promotion of her multiple areas of competence, does not mean that posting copies of it was the action of proselytizing missionaries[232] anxious to spread "a pan-Mediterranean religion".[233] Instead, the role of the individuals who used it, on the advice of the religious authorities, to establish a communication with the divine inside a sanctuary, must not be overlooked.[234] This most likely represents a better *raison d'être* for this text, the popularity of which stemmed mainly from its ritual effectiveness.

1.5 *Isiac Communities: An Impressionist Painting*

In the absence of any centralized religious power, the individuals gathered in local or regional sanctuaries to worship Isis, thereby constituting scattered and autonomous communities of different kinds.[235] Nonetheless, they were not

228 *CIL* VI 1778–1779 = *RICIS* 501/0180–501/0181. On the Isiac nature of this title, see Bricault 2014a, 353–354.

229 The copy from the Isiac sanctuary of Kyme, dated from the 1st or 2nd cent. CE, is *a priori* complete (*I.Kyme* 41 = *RICIS* 302/0204), in contrast with those of Thessalonika (*IG* X.2, 1, 254 = *RICIS* 113/0545), Kassandreia (Veligianni & Kousoulakou 2008 = *RICIS Suppl.* I 113/1201), Telmessos (*RICIS* 306/0201) and Ios (*IG* XII.5 14 = *RICIS* 202/1101). More Hellenized literary adaptations were found at Maroneia in Thrace (*I.Aeg.Thrace* 205 = *RICIS* 114/0202), and at Andros in the Cyclades (*IG* XII.5 739 = *RICIS* 202/1801).

230 As also emphasized by Bricault 2004b, 549–550, and Bricault 2013a, 76–77.

231 On the Egyptian substrate of this text supplemented by *aretai* suitable for seducing a Hellenized public, see Quack 2003b (with the previous bibliography) and Moyer 2017.

232 As suggested by Boeft 2003, *contra*, for example, Rossignoli 1997 and Pachis 2003, who saw in it an active effort at religious propaganda.

233 As written by Scheid 2011a, 537: "In short, there was no one, pan-Mediterranean religion of Isis".

234 The author of the aretalogy of Maroneia addresses the goddess in this manner: "For if you came for my deliverence when called upon, how could you not come when called for the sake of receiving an honor that is yours?" (*RICIS* 114/0202, ll. 10–11: εἰ γὰρ ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐμῆς καλουμένη σωτηρίας ἦλθες, πῶς ὑπὲρ τῆς ἰδίας τιμῆς οὐκ ἂν ἔλθοις). As for the versions of Kyme, Kassandreia and Ios (see *supra*, n. 229), each is preceded by a dedication to the Isiac divinities.

235 On this fragmentation of Greco-Roman cultic groups, see, in particular, Scheid 2011a.

always tied to just one sanctuary, having the freedom to exercise their devotion in various contexts and locations, and therefore to successively join several cultic communities. We have an echo of this in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, whose hero Lucius, after having been initiated at Kenchreai, made his way to Rome, where, in order to be integrated, he had to undergo a new initiation.[236]

Identifying, and therefore analyzing, the communities that frequented the temples is certainly not an easy task. If in the past it has been possible to reduce them to emigrant groups (Egyptians, Orientals) or migrants (merchants, soldiers), no systematization is acceptable in reality. These cults had to make themselves attractive for all sorts of individuals, sharing ideas, practices and common markers which cemented their sense of shared identity.[237] However, the evidence rarely provides sufficient means to trace the contours of a real prosopography of the audience of the Isiac temples, outside of exceptional epigraphic sets like those of Delos and Thessalonika. This is one of the challenges of this book,[238] which addresses questions on identification criteria for the worshippers, while testing, for example, the religious value of the theophoric Isiac personal names.[239]

Onomastic investigations are indeed rich in information, provided that they are conducted methodically and prudently. In the Roman colony of Dion, for example, a member of the municipal elite who, with his wife, financed a part of the Isiac sanctuary[240] belonged to a *gens*, the Publii Anthestii, linked to the practice of the *negotia*.[241] Many Italians in the East who left a souvenir of their Isiac devotion belonged to these networks of *negotiatores* who readapted themselves according to economic interests, or even political circumstances. The Mithridatic wars therefore reinforced, or even triggered, the departure of

236 Apul., *Met.* XI 29: "As for the initiation that still awaits, you will understand the absolute necessity, if you now at least reflect upon the fact that the ornaments of the goddess you obtained in the province remain in the shrine where you placed them" (*Ceterum futura tibi sacrorum traditio pernecessaria est, si tecum nunc saltem reputaveris exuvias deae, quas in provincia sumpsisti, in eodem fano depositas perseverare*).

237 Thereby symbolically creating what Mol & Versluys 2015 call "imagined" communities, according to a concept developed by Anderson 1991.

238 See, in particular, the contribution by J. Alvar, *infra*, 221–247, in this book.

239 A question that had already been the focus of Malaise 1972b, 25–34, and which Parker 2000 further put into perspective. See the contribution by W. Clarysse, *infra*, 198–220, in this book.

240 *RICIS* 113/0207.

241 This was revealed by the meticulous analysis of Demaille 2008, which followed Salomies 1996, 115, in considering that only the individuals bearing the same *praenomen* and *gentilice* were truly related.

Italian dealers from Delos, but also from Euboea,[242] to other Mediterranean ports, including those in the Latin West,[243] where they displayed their cultic preference.[244]

Another way of approaching the prosopography of the cult agents is by means of the associative structures in which they congregated to worship their divinities.[245] Many groups were created in or on the fringes of Isiac sanctuaries, where they interacted under different names, the meanings of which are still sometimes a subject of debate. *Sarapieion* B of Delos, for example, seems to have housed several associations, such as the *therapeutai*, the *melanephoroi* and the Sarapiasts who united at the beginning of the 2nd cent. BCE to jointly honor the same priest.[246] Adherence to these Isiac groups was not exclusive by any means, with their members also able to belong to associations devoted to other divinities.

Organized within the same framework as any other Greek or Roman association,[247] the collegiate Isiac structures presented various configurations depending on their contexts. While the Sarapiasts who set up an Isiac sanctuary at Rhamnous around 220 BCE were Athenian citizens,[248] those who, at the same time, honored their officials in Athens were all metics, or even slaves.[249] These cultic groups strengthened their cohesion through communal activities: for example, the "banquetting *hieraphoroi*" (ἱεραφόροι συνκλίται) from Thessalonika who, at the beginning of the 2nd cent. CE, participated in banquets in honor of Anubis.[250] This integrative sociability could continue

242 According to Martzavou 2010, the Salarii who participated in the development of the Isiac sanctuary of Thessalonika originated in Chalcis, where a member of this *gens* had financed the festivities of *Navigium Isidis*. The example is reused by Bricault 2013a, 149–151, no. 40.

243 And even in Rome where they contributed to introducing the Isiac divinities (see, for example, Coarelli 1984).

244 Perhaps in order to integrate more into the local societies (see Rizakis 2002, 120–122, about Thessalonika).

245 On these structures described as *thiasos, koinon* or *synodos, collegium* or *sodalitas*, see Bricault 2012a for the Latin West, and the contribution by I. Arnaoutoglou, *infra*, 248–279, in this book, for the Greek East.

246 *IG* XI.4 1226 = *RICIS* 202/0135.

247 On the associative phenomenon, see, for example, Dondin-Payre & Tran 2012, for the Roman West, and Frölich & Hamon 2013, for the Aegean world.

248 Petrakos 1999, no. 59 = *RICIS* 101/0502.

249 *IG* II^2 1292 = *RICIS* 101/0201.

250 *IG* X.2, 1, 58 = *RICIS* 113/0530. On these practices of sacred commensality, which have their origin in sacrifices, see Veyne 2000 and Scheid 2005b.

beyond death, as is attested by funerary markers (*horoi*) defining the boundaries of the plots reserved for worshippers of Isis or Osiris.[251]

Such social structures left room for initiatives, for individual innovations, which need to be analyzed in their environment and therefore also in their collective frameworks, while at the same time maintaining a distance from certain global interpretation templates.[252] The success of the Isiac cults throughout the Hellenistic and then Roman worlds has long been associated with the development of individualism and personal religiosity at a time when civic religion was disintegrating.[253] This picture, to which Cumont had largely contributed, appears to be much more nuanced and complex,[254] with the cities not being in decline from the time of the Hellenistic era, but redefining themselves in accordance with socio-political developments that had religious implications.[255]

The documentation brings to our attention many individual situations, firmly rooted in particular contexts, which reveal various degrees of personal investment, sometimes reflecting a worshipper's will to establish a direct and privileged relationship with the divine powers. This applies to those who, like Meniketes,[256] wanted to gain access to a new life – and a new community – by being initiated into the Isiac mysteries. This strong, but not exclusive, commitment could take other forms which sometimes remain enigmatic. Were the recluses (κατόχοι) of Priene, as in Memphis, "willing prisoners" living under divine protection in the sanctuary precinct?[257] Was the hierodule who devoted a statue in Rome to Zeus Helios megas Sarapis, as in Egypt, bound by a contract declaring him to be a "slave" of the divinity?[258]

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251 For the Isiasts, see *NSill* 493 = *RICIS* 204/1008. For the Osiriasts, see *SEG* 58, 889 = *RICIS Suppl.* II 204/1013. On this memorial practice, see Rebillard 2003.

252 On the importance of the individual in religious initiatives, see the contribution by J. Rüpke, *infra*, 61–73, in this book. An alternative area of inquiry is that pertaining to the emotions (see *infra*, 55–58).

253 An association seen, for example, as recently as Barrett 2011.

254 See the modern debates caused by the interpretative models, undoubtedly more complementary than concurrent, of "polis religion" (Scheid 2013a) and "religious individuation" (Rüpke 2013a).

255 On civic religion after the 4th cent. BCE, see, in particular, Mikalson 2006 and Deshours 2011.

256 See *supra*, 1–3, n. 1.

257 *I.Priene* 195 = *RICIS* 304/0802 = *CGRN* 157 (*c.* 200 BCE). On the evidence for Memphite "recluses" in the Ptolemaios Archive, dating from the second quarter of the 2nd cent. BCE, see the detailed analysis of Legras 2011.

258 *IG* XIV 1024 = *RICIS* 501/0107 (beginning of the 3rd cent. CE). On the Egyptian contracts in Demotic writing, dating mostly from the end of the 3nd or the 2nd cent. BCE, see, for example, Chauveau 1991.

2 Images

Beyond written sources, strictly speaking, the Isiac communities left their trace in the figurative traditions of antiquity, in the form of images depicting certain religious functions or ritual practices. This "cultic iconography",[259] relative to the agents, their spaces and their instruments, had already grabbed the attention of antiquarians who, as Montfaucon wrote,[260] saw in it "presque les effets d'une descente sur les lieux".[261] The way of looking at these images has evolved over time, espousing various perspectives, methods and objectives.

For a long time, iconographic research has been aimed at understanding what these images represent by focussing on identification issues which lead to a thematic or nominalist logic.[262] Some art historians have also constructed series of images which have in common a characteristic, a "formal sign" such as a hairstyle,[263] a scar,[264] an item of clothing,[265] or a diadem,[266] all deemed to be particularly revealing in terms of an Isiac identity, which these scholars attempt to define by consulting written sources. Religious historians have often delved into these inventories, in the same way as antiquarians, to illustrate or directly document the religious life of these communities during antiquity.[267]

What these images represent, however, does not sufficiently convey to us what they meant for the ancients. Other fields of research, in particular, historical anthropology,[268] have renewed the questions raised by these images. Many scholars over the last few decades have considered them more as cultural products inseparable from the material objects that bear them and the successive contexts in which they evolve. The ancients made use of these figurative media, these "image-objects", to convey a discourse to their contemporaries.[269] It is

259 As described by Turcan 1988.
260 Montfaucon 1724, I, vi.
261 See *supra*, 17–18.
262 Such was, for example, the approach of *LIMC* in the 1980's and 1990's concerning iconography associated with the gods.
263 Gonzenbach 1957.
264 Dennison 1905.
265 Eingartner 1991.
266 Goette 1989c.
267 This is the use that is always made by the entries of the *ThesCRA*. On the gap between the real and its representation, see *infra*, 39–43.
268 Of which Jean-Pierre Vernant (Frontisi-Ducroux & Lissarrague 2009) is one of the precursors, and Alfred Gell (Gell 1998) one of the theorists. On these recent orientations, see, among others, Baert, Lehmann & Van den Akkerveken 2011.
269 On the artifactual nature (materiality) of the image, see, for example, the reflections of Baschet 1996 concerning the Middle Ages.

therefore necessary to focus as much on the works themselves as their environment in order to understand what they meant and what they accomplished.

Isiac cultic iconography has not yet been sufficiently examined in the light of these recent orientations which question, beyond the representation of its subjects, the materiality, perception and agency of these figurative media. This book aims to reevaluate this world of images from this point of view, in order to reveal its full informative potential as a historical source. This figurative documentation remains extremely scattered, not yet having really taken its place in the dynamic from which Isiac studies have benefitted for nearly twenty years.[270] The necessity of continuing the work of collation, without overlooking any type of material, was therefore stressed at the beginning of our meetings, leading to a *Thesaurus Iconographicus Cultuum Isiacorum* (*ThICIs*) project, to appear in *Bibliotheca Isiaca*,[271] which would offer an overview of this world of images.[272]

2.1 *Relevant Signs? Identifying Isiac Images*

From the outset, such heuristic work raises the question of the criteria of selection and therefore of identification. As the funerary stele of Meniketes reveals,[273] the religious status of an individual is not always indicated by the image, but sometimes instead by the inscription that accompanies it. But when it is visually represented, this Isiac identity is expressed by voluntarily explicit and relevant signs, sometimes borrowed from the iconography of the gods, like the knotted and fringed mantle, the sistrum and situla, or even the *basileion* (Fig. 0.11).[274] We still need to understand fully what is in front of our eyes. It is indeed not rare to see the same label applied by modern scholars to distinctive features such as the "Horus lock", which is attributed indifferently, and erroneously, to various hairstyles of young children.[275]

If certain visual indicators are unquestionably Isiac, others which are sometimes considered as such seem more ambiguous, or even doubtful. It is therefore necessary to bring out, if they exist, the premises on which these

270 See *supra*, 24–26.

271 Hence its announcement in Bricault & Veymiers 2014, 5.

272 This will reactivate, to some extent, the *Corpus Cultus Serapidis Isidisque* (*CCSI*) formerly envisaged by M.J. Vermaseren in the framework of *ÉPRO* series (see, in particular, Kater-Sibbes 1973, ix).

273 See *supra*, 1–3.

274 On this mimetic set, see the contribution by M. Malaise and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 470–508, in this book.

275 On these children adorned with the "Horus lock", see the contribution by A. Backe-Dahmen, *infra*, 509–538, in this book.

interpretations are based, and to prove their relevance by conducting a "seriation" of the images related to them. The headband with pendants displayed by some children[276] is no more a sign of Isiac adherence than the tuft of hair hanging from the back of a shaven head in masculine portraits which feature athletes.[277] Prudence needs to be applied to many identifications, requiring a critical approach. Some scholars have thus established identification criteria from iconographic features, the attestations of which are actually well beyond the Isiac sphere. If some sculpted, bare and elongated heads[278] could be taken as representing an Isiac priest, such as a Ptolemaic specimen made of granite that was reused in Rome's *Iseum Campense*,[279] can one truly consider as such, for example, the wrinkled and bare marble portraits (Fig. 0.12) found in Athens outside of any strictly Isiac context?[280] This iconography, often described as "verist", expressed the values of members of the elite having various statuses and occupations during the late Republican era.[281] With repetition, hypotheses, sometimes ingenious, came to be taken as certainties, giving rise to veritable "scholarly myths". This applies to a famous series of portraits of individuals with shaven heads bearing a x-shaped scar attributed to Scipio Africanus by the humanists, before being identified, at the beginning of the 20th cent., as priests of Isis bearing ritual marks.[282]

When placed in series, the images shed mutual light on each other. Certain original compositions do not, however, give up their secrets easily. Understanding their discourse, decoding their language,[283] means taking account of all the elements and their structural arrangement within the image. For example, the bovine wearing the *basileion* while standing beside a pitcher of wine and a horned altar, which is decorated with a bust of Janus wearing the same crown, carved on a marble relief found on Rome's Velian Hill (Fig. 0.13),

276 The Isiac nature of this ornament was the subject of a debate between Claude Rolley and Victorine Von Gonzenbach (Rolley 1968; Gonzenbach 1969; Rolley 1970).

277 As had already been noted by Schwartz 1963; Haevernick 1966; Richard 1973.

278 Wood 1987 described them as "Eggheads".

279 Lembke 1994a, 235, no. 30, pl. 41.1–2.

280 See, for example, the head of a "priest of Isis" published by Poulsen 1913. Another portrait found in the Athenian Agora (Harrison 1953, 12–14, no. 3, 84–85, pl. 3) presents a tubular headband (*strophion*), a possible sign of the tenure of a priesthood, which modern scholars generally consider – without doubt excessively – as Isiac.

281 On these portraits, see, in particular, Howard 1970 and Croz 2002.

282 On this historiographic phenomenon, see, the contribution by F. Queyrel and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 384–412, in this book.

283 A metaphor placing emphasis on the internal syntax of the images which owes a lot to the structuralist work of Hölscher 1987.

in no way represents the Memphite Apis,[284] but rather a victim that was ritually adorned before being sacrificed.[285] On a plaster mold or molding acquired in Athribis,[286] rather than a procession led by Isis,[287] we appear to see the sacrificial propitiation essential to the celebration of a festival related to the flooding of the Nile, which explains the presence of Euthenia, personifying the Egyptian countryside fertilized by the waters and therefore being naturally merged with Osiris' companion. Certain unique artifacts bear figural representations which, given their incomplete state, remain confusing or even enigmatic. Such is the case with the marble sarcophagus found in Hierapytna,[288] in Eastern Crete, the badly fragmented imagery of which reinterprets the Egyptian offering scenes placing the Pharaoh and the divinity face to face (Fig. 0.14).[289]

Even when the solution seems obvious, many traps await the modern interpreter, always daring him to clarify his reasoning. Texts and images combine with variable degrees of autonomy.[290] The funerary monument of L. Valerius Fyrmus, called "priest of Isis in Ostia and of the Mater Deum Transtiberina", depicts him mainly as an agent of the Metroac cult.[291] "Attributes" can also be misleading, not having a single meaning.[292] There are certainly some regular associations, but they are far from being absolute, varying in accordance with their contexts. Though the sistrum and the knotted dress are irrefutable Isiac indicators in Italy and Greece, this is not necessarily the case in Egypt, where they are also linked to other cults, such as that of Hathor.[293] There is a polysemy of figurative references, a set of multiple identities, which obliges us to

284 As believed by, for example, Iacopi 1974, 45, and Kater-Sibbes & Vermaseren 1977, 41, Add. 12, pl. XVI.

285 Hence the headbands (*infulae*). On sacrificial victims in images, see, for example, Turcan 1988, 10.

286 Erman 1895, 37–39, pl. III. This document is illustrated in the contribution by J.-L. Podvin, *infra*, 615–616, fig. 21.1, in this book.

287 See, for example, Meyboom 1995, 62–63.

288 Mendel 1912, I, 135–145, no. 40, and, recently, Parlasca 2017. R. Veymiers and L. Bricault are preparing a new study of this unusual artifact, which should be dated, as proven by Koch 2017, to the third quarter of the 3rd cent. CE.

289 On the figure of the pharaoh as a cult agent, see the contribution by M.-C. Budischovsky, *infra*, 322–339, in this book.

290 On this relationship between the text and the image, see, in particular, the artifacts examined by L. Bricault, *infra*, 166–175, in this book.

291 *CIL* XIV 429 = *RICIS* 503/1123. On this artifact, see L. Bricault, *infra*, 160, no. 14, and L. Beaurin, *infra*, 305, in this book.

292 On the polyvalence of attributes, see, among others, the reflections of Bérard 1985 and Mylonopoulos 2010 with regard to iconography associated with the gods or myths.

293 This is revealed by the contribution of G. Tallet, *infra*, 413–447, in this book concerning tomb furnishings in Roman Egypt.

look at the full range of possibilities when faced with a polyvalent representation, while resisting the modern temptation to always settle on a single interpretation. This is the case with certain images that can represent, according to the circumstances, a divinity such as Isis or Anubis, or a devotee shown in this divine guise (Fig. 0.15).[294]

2.2 *Reading Images between* Topoi *and Reality*

The contextualized evaluation of images is essential. One should not be content to assess the meaning outside of all context. It is necessary to try to define the criteria which led to the choice of a motif and the message this gesture intended. Everything depends on the environments in which the artifact had been circulating and therefore naturally the agents who commissioned, created, used or merely observed it – in short, those making up its sociocultural network. But for many objects, this precious context is lost, even if some parallels – especially when part of an established series, as described above – occasionally put us on the right track. For example, a marble funerary stele,[295] perhaps acquired in Venice in 1661 for Charles II of Mantua, representing a woman in the guise of Isis presents characteristics of a type of objects produced in Attica during the Imperial period (Fig. 0.9).[296] That said, it generally remains difficult to decipher the intentions which determined the iconography of decontextualized artifacts.

If the modern interpreter must prioritize, as soon as possible, an "emic" approach to iconography, he is often obliged to resort to external keys in order to understand as to which ancient realities the cultic images referred. The divine servants who are distinguishable by varying dresses, insignia and specific instruments thus are often identified by means of priestly lists supplied in the 2nd or 3rd cent. CE by Apuleius, Clement of Alexandria and Porphyry of Tyre,[297] or even the Ptolemaic decrees of Canopus and Memphis.[298] The famous *Pompa Isidis* painted sometime after 62 CE in the peristyle of Pompeii's

294 See, for example, the female figure with the sistrum and the situla adorning the Roman altar of a sanctuary overseer named Astragalus (*CIL* VI 345 = *RICIS* 501/0122), which Lembke 1994a, 246, identified as an Isiac adept, while Eingartner 1991, 128, associated her with the goddess Isis.

295 Rausa 2000, 76–79, no. 13. On the epitaph, see *IG* II^2 7667 = *RICIS* 101/0901.

296 Walters 1988; Eingartner 1991; Moock 1998 constitute the main references.

297 Apul., *Met.* XI, 9–11 (concerning the procession of *Navigium Isidis* in Kenchreai); Clem.Al., *Strom.* VI, 4, 35, 2–37, 3 (concerning a procession celebrating Osiris in Alexandria); Porph., *Abst.* IV, 8, 5 (a passage borrowed from Chaerem.Hist. [Fr. 10; ed. Horst 1987, 16–23] concerning the everyday life of Egyptian priests).

298 *I.Prose* 8, ll. 3–5 (Canopus; 7 March 238 BCE), and 16, ll. 6–7 (Memphis; 27 March 196 BCE).

Iseum,[299] housed, according to these written sources, a "hierogrammateus" (ἱερογραμματεὺς) wearing a headdress of feathers, an "astrologer" (ὡροσκόπος) bearing a palm leaf, and a "prophet" (προφήτης) carrying a hydria.[300] The cult official wearing the mask of Anubis (Fig. 0.16), who is part of the same setting, was described as an "Anubophorus" (*Anuboforus*),[301] a qualifier borrowed from an epitaph of the 3rd cent. CE found in Vienna, in the distant Rhone valley.[302] However, nothing indicates that such titles were being used in the Pompeian sanctuary. The Isiac lexicon did not remain fixed, and could vary according to time and place.[303] And it seems quite tenuous to apply literary or epigraphic titles, like so many registered brands, to figurative media pertaining to particular contexts without taking account of these variants.[304] If the long Egyptian loincloth, wrapped around the chest, is the source of the name of the cultic association of *hypostoloi* attested in the Aegean Basin in the 2nd and 1st cents. BCE,[305] does this mean that we can associate them with each representation of a devotee wearing such a garment (Fig. 0.17),[306] there or elsewhere, in the Greco-Roman world?

Ceremonial images, such as that of the marble bas-relief reused in a tomb at Ariccia,[307] in which attitudes, gestures, and looks are part of ritual sequences,[308] communicate a discourse on the religious practices and the divine powers which they address. However, this "théologie en images"[309] cannot be taken literally. Prudence is required with regard to these figurative expressions which are in no way direct pathways to a past that has become inaccessible. The images do not give us a perfectly reliable and undistorted reflection of the antique realities to which they refer. Their creators played with the "real" in accordance

299 On these frescoes, see especially *PPM* VIII, 732–785, and the contribution by E.M. Moormann, *infra*, 376–377, figs. 12.6a–c, in this book.

300 Such was, for example, the interpretation of Tran tam Tinh 1964, 92–96. It should be noted that the bearer of the hydria is completely hypothetical, restored under the influence of a bas-relief featuring a procession that has been known for a long time (see *supra*, 18, n. 113).

301 See, in particular, Bricault 2000–2001, 33, fig. 1.

302 *CIL* XII 1919 = *RICIS* 605/1001.

303 See *supra*, 29–31.

304 We should therefore temper the enthusiasm of Gasparini 2013, 195, when he considers that the description of Apuleius "is magnificently transposed into images in the paintings of the Temple of Isis in Pompeii".

305 As judiciously demonstrated by Malaise 2007a (citing the ὑψίστολοι of Hesychius, namely "those who are dressed in a chiton that rises high" [Hsch. Y 945]).

306 See the iconographic file compiled by Malaise 2007a, 309–316.

307 See *supra*, 20, n. 134.

308 On this "expression des corps" in ancient iconography, see Bodiou, Frère & Mehl 2006.

309 Such is the way Cordier & Huet 2006, followed by Bricault & Prescendi 2009, define the discourse of religious images.

with their needs, without seeking to reproduce it. By a dynamic composition, in which cult officials and worshippers interact during a ceremonial occasion in a sanctuary precinct filled with palm trees and ibises, the two frescoes of Herculaneum (Figs. 0.6a–b) offer the vision of an exotic and mysterious cult, practiced in a small group, far from the eyes of outsiders[310]. These ritual paintings are not, however, to be understood as snapshots of scenes of the religious life of this city of Vesuvius, where the cult of Isis does not in any way appear to have been closed off to others. The contextualized analysis of the material which has been brought to light seems to reveal close links between Isis and Magna Mater, who at the time of the eruption may have been sharing the same sanctuary.[311] These frescoes were constructed in accordance with figurative choices intended to create an effective visual impact in a specific space, for a specific public. By depicting an Isiac ritual, the painter was aiming, above all, to produce a performative model, rich in stereotypes which were particularly evocative for the viewer.[312]

These stereotypes which the artisans used in their compositional work stem from a "visual memory" which they shared with their contemporaries. And yet, this "iconographic knowledge" is largely lost on us today. It is necessary to reconstitute the visual culture of the ancients to grasp the mechanisms that drove the creation of their images. The interaction among the different kinds of artifacts and their figurative systems was constant during antiquity.[313] Only cross-analysis of *all* "image-objects" can lead to an understanding of the "intericonic" play between them,[314] and bring out convergences likely to correspond to stereotypes.[315]

The image of the Isiac priest, for example, as in the literary tradition,[316] is distinguished by two distinctive traits, a shaven head and linen clothing. This

310 See *supra*, 18, n. 115.

311 If we accept an ingenious hypothesis by Gasparini 2010a, suggesting that we identify the complex known as the "Palestra" as a sanctuary of Magna Mater which sheltered the cult of Isis under Vespasian. On these links between Isis and Magna Mater in the Latin West, see Bricault 2010a.

312 On the interpretation of ritual images, see the methodological reflections of Lissarrague 2012. The frescoes of Herculaneum are reviewed from this angle by L. Bricault and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 694–695, in this book.

313 As rightly noted by Lissarrague 2009, 20–21, no. 5.

314 On the concept of "intericonicity" which progressively came to replace the one of "intertextuality", see Arrivé 2015. For its use in ancient iconography, see in particular Laboury 2017.

315 Which also includes stereotyping of color, a subject addressed by the contribution of A. Grand-Clément, *infra*, 340–365, in this book.

316 On the uses of this literary *topos*, see the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 283–321, in this book.

appearance is originally that of the priests in Egypt, regardless of the cult to which they were attached, and meets the official requirements of ritual purity.[317] Outside Egypt, it is found in various kinds of media, both in the East and the West, to conventionally represent the servants of the cult of Isis and the members of her circle. In its "cultural biography",[318] the motif lends itself to one medium or another, one context or another, to distinct readings and usages. In a cultic context, the figures of this type that are carved across the lower sections of granodiorite columns (Fig. 0.3) erected during Domitian's reign at the entrance to the courtyard of the *Iseum Campense* – with an extra Roman touch, the laurel wreath – participated in the accomplishment of rites, of which they are veritable models.[319] The image of such a cult practitioner also appears in the illuminated *Calendar of Philocalus* (Fig. 0.18), a work offered to an eminent personality on January 1st 354, in which it is used for symbolizing the Roman festival of the *Isia* in the illustration corresponding to November.[320] In the intimacy of a *triclinium* of the Pompeian House of Octavius Quartio, a similar generic image, serving as a vignette in the center of a mural panel painted during the third quarter of the 1st cent. CE, applies to a particular individual, as indicated by the legend at his feet,[321] in order to evoke the religious status from which he gained his prestige.[322] It was in this manner that several Isiac priests were depicted on their funerary monuments. A marble stele from Demetrias, in Thessaly, dating from the second half of the 3rd cent. BCE, represents such a figure sacrificing at an altar, underneath an epitaph which identifies him as

317 Prescripts imposed, under threat of sanction, by the articles of *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* (§§ 71, 75–76), which date from the years 150–180, but reflect a document dating back to the reign of Augustus.

318 An approach conceptualized by Kopytoff 1986.

319 Four of them have been preserved, including one that has been well-known for a long time (see *supra*, 17–18). On this group, see, among others, Lembke 1994a, 186–188, cat. D 3–6, pls. 5–8. The contribution by L. Bricault and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 699, n. 47, fig. 25.2, in this book, deals more specifically with the musicians, and that by S. Albersmeier, *infra*, 448–449, figs. 15.1–15.2, with the dress of the cult officials.

320 On this codex, known from three Renaissance copies, see Stern 1953, esp. 279–283. For an analysis of this vignette, notably based on the four-line poem in Latin which accompanies it on one of the copies (but which might only be a late scholium, not to be hastily considered as an original caption for the image), see Hari 1976; Koemoth 2008; Bricault 2013a, 392–393, no. 129f.

321 For the different readings of this legend, see, *CIL* IV 7534, *RICIS* 504/0214, and the contribution by E.M. Moormann, *infra*, 375, in this book (*contra* Swetnam-Burland 2011, 339–341).

322 On this fresco, see *PPM* III, 70–79, esp. 74–77, nos. 51–53, and the contribution by E.M. Moormann, *infra*, 375–376, fig. 12.5, in this book.

the Egyptian Ouaphres from Busiris, a priest of Isis.[323] The individualized features that these linen-clad individuals with shaven heads present on the cover of an anepigraphic funerary urn (Fig. 0.19),[324] or the front side of the Roman funerary altar of M. Aemilius Cresces,[325] raise a question as to the actual application of these ritual prescripts.[326] Care must be taken not to interpret too literally these artifacts conveying an iconographic stereotype that embodied a well-determined religious status in the eyes of contemporaries. However, in reality, the priests of Isiac cults were not obligated everywhere and in all eras to follow such vestimentary and physical norms. It is very difficult to imagine, for example, the Athenian citizens of good families who came to serve at *Sarapieion* C of Delos for a year appearing in this guise. The norms varied from one place to another and evolved over time. Moreover, other artifacts depart from this stereotype, such as a fresco from the first half of the 1st cent. CE found in a *cubiculum* of the Villa de Campo Varano at Stabiae, which features three bearded and long-haired ministers of Isiac cults.[327]

2.3 *Visual Symbols and Constructing Identity*

This global approach, placing in dialogue all kinds of figurative media to reveal the games of intericonicity, makes it possible to retrace the living history of this world of images which developed over time and space, following various cultural interactions. As a real "index" of religious ideas,[328] the figurative media simultaneously reflect and stimulate the various dynamics which drove the diffusion and reception of Isiac cults throughout the Greek and subsequently Roman worlds.[329] Along with the images of gods who were transformed into various configurations depending on the context,[330] in those that represent cult agents we see a generalization of symbolic markers to which these cultic groups resorted in order to proclaim their religious identity and therefore to strengthen their cohesion.

A funerary stele at Smyrna, in Ionia, dated from the beginning of the 2nd cent. BCE, is the oldest known attestation of one of these formulas which

323 *RICIS* 112/0701. On this artifact, see Stamatopoulou 2008, and the contribution by P. Martzavou, *infra*, 132–133, fig. 4.1, in this book.

324 Arslan 1997, 167, no. IV.13 (2nd cent. CE).

325 *RICIS* 501/0163. On this artifact dated from the end of the 1st cent. CE, see the contribution by L. Bricault, *infra*, 168, no. R1, fig. 5.3, in this book.

326 Such is the question that underlies the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 283–321, in this book.

327 On this fresco, see, among others, Allroggen-Bedel 1977, 36–37, pl. 3.2, and the contribution by E.M. Moormann, *infra*, 372–373, fig. 12.3, in this book.

328 On material culture like "index" of religious communities, see Arweck & Keenan 2006.

329 On these local or global dynamics, see *supra*, 26–27.

330 On Greek and Roman Egypt, see, for example, Dunand 2013 and Veymiers 2016.

spread around the Mediterranean.[331] On this artifact, a woman identified as Isias in the epitaph can be seen in the guise of Isis wearing her knotted and fringed clothing and holding the sistrum and situla. It is the same appearance that was adopted by many women during the High Empire on Attic funerary steles (Fig. 0.9),[332] sometimes exported or imitated in other regions, as attested by the examples found at Tanagra,[333] Corinth,[334] and Syros.[335] Contemporary steles of this type were also discovered at Phryxou Limen in Bithynia,[336] at Apollonia in Illyria,[337] and at Caesarea in Mauretania Caesariensis (Fig. 0.20).[338] Other women outfitted as Isis are likewise to be found on various Roman funerary monuments, such as the altar of Babullia Varilla dated from the beginning of the Antonine era.[339] Such a distribution raises the question of the meaning of these images. Why did the commissioners choose to represent these women in the guise of Isis? By means of this mimetic set that could take various forms,[340] in a context that was often but not exclusively funerary,[341] these women implemented an original iconographic practice which did not apply solely to Isiacs, even though they could be seen as precursors. This theomorphic mode of representation, sometimes described as *consecratio in formam deorum*,[342] also appears in relation to other divinities during the

331 Eingartner 1991, 143, pl. LXII, no. 98, and the contribution by M. Malaise and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 478–479, fig. 16.6, in this book. For the epitaph, see *RICIS* 304/0202.

332 On this important corpus (cited *supra*, 23 and 39), see Walters 1988; Eingartner 1991; Moock 1998.

333 Bonanno Aravantinos 2008, 240–242 and 247, figs. 5–6. For the epitaphs, see *RICIS* 105/0205–105/0206.

334 A fragment still unpublished (Corinth, Archaeological Museum, S-3634).

335 Mantzoulinou-Richards 1988. As suggested by Nigdelis 1990, 419, the stele, reused in a house in Syros, should correspond to that mentioned by *IG* XII.7 441 in Aegiale of Amorgos. For the epitaph, see *RICIS* 202/0704.

336 Eingartner 1991, 158, pl. LXXVIII, no. 127, and the contribution by M. Malaise and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 506, fig. 16.13, in this book.

337 Praschniker 1920, 155–157, fig. 72, no. 28. For the epitaph, see *CIGIME* I.2, 54, no. 197 = *RICIS Suppl.* IV 111/0501.

338 Eingartner 1991, 164, pl. LXXXIII, no. 136. For the epitaph, see *RICIS* 705/0101.

339 Eingartner 1991, 159, pl. LXXIX, no. 130, and the contribution by L. Bricault, *infra*, 171, no. R5, fig. 5.5, in this book. For the epitaph, see *RICIS* 501/0194.

340 On these variants, see the contribution by M. Malaise and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 478–483, in this book. On the other hand, the so-called empresses in the guise of Isis constitute a "dossier documentaire fantôme", as revealed by the contribution of E. Rosso, *infra*, 539–567, in this book.

341 See, for example, the statue of Taormina (see *supra*, 19, n. 127), the context of which is very likely cultic.

342 According to the title of Wrede 1981, which concentrated on the western provinces of the Roman world in addition to Macedonia, particularly rich in testimonies of this kind (see, more recently, Terzopoulou 2010, listing 111 Macedonian examples).

Imperial period, such as Mercury and Hercules or Venus and Diana, whose most characteristic traits men and women, respectively, adopted. Rather than reflecting eschatological aspirations by suggesting a sort of "apotheosis", these images were intended above all to retrospectively celebrate the virtues of individuals whose social promotion they consecrated.[343] The choice could be applied to Isis due to the human and feminine values that she personified,[344] including in the familial context that the Attic steles often display at the same time. The epitaphs inscribed on these artifacts inform us about their social background, pointing to a prosperous middle class, including freedmen of foreign origin.[345] With that said, it is important not to rule out too quickly any religious function for these images. While it may, for example, have emphasized the status of the spouse or mother of the deceased,[346] the choice of Isis also represented an efficient way for the commissioners to publicly affirm the deceased's adherence to her cult. Undoubtedly, it is not necessary to seek to define under a single label the religious status of the Isiacs who proclaimed their identity in this way, even if some of these women were apparently initiates, as indicated by the presence of one or several mystical *cista*(*e*) by their side.[347]

This desire to display one's religious identity, to proclaim one's cultic commitment even beyond death, seems to have particularly interested the Isiacs, who sometimes limited themselves to marking a sistrum on their funerary monument.[348] The worshippers and officials, invested to various degrees in the cult devoted to the circle of Isis, accumulated at the same time other religious adherences which they could likewise claim as well. By commissioning his own funerary altar in the second half of the 1st cent. or perhaps in the 2nd cent. CE, L. Valerius Fyrmus chose to present himself in his epitaph as a "priest of Isis in Ostia and of the Mater Deum Transtiberina".[349] A bilingual funerary

343 This allegorical and honorific meaning has been commonly accepted since Wrede 1981 and the review of this work by Turcan 1982b.

344 As suggested by Mele 2006, 433.

345 See, for example, the stele of an "Isias, from Miletus" (*RICIS Suppl.* I 101/0255). The same applies to other theomorphic representations which, if Wrede 1981, 93–105 is right, would first have interested communities of slaves and freedmen of Eastern Greek origin involved in commercial activities.

346 Or have been conditioned by a theophoric personal name referring to the goddess (such as the "Hermes" or "Hermas" represented as Mercury that are studied by Wrede 1981).

347 On the religious statuses of these women in the guise of Isis, see the contribution by M. Malaise and R. Veymiers, *infra*, 505–508, in this book.

348 See, for example, the Roman funerary altar which an imperial slave had erected for her companion Claudia Isias (*CIL* VI 15479 = *RICIS* 501/0195). On this matter, see especially Genaille 1994a and Genaille 1994b.

349 See *supra*, 38, n. 291.

poem, inscribed in the 2nd or 3rd cent. on the Roman sarcophagus of the young Alexandria celebrates her as a "priestess" (*sacerdos*) or "servant" (πρόπολος) of Dionysos and "*pastophorus*" (*pastophorus*/παστοφόρος) of Isis.[350] However, it should be noted that, in such memorial enterprises, despite a flexible and fluid, mulifaceted and cumulative, polytheist identity, the choice often went in favor of Isis. The women in the guise of Isis indeed appear on nearly one-fifth[351] of the Attic funerary steles of the Imperial period.[352] Such a predominance calls for and requires an investigation into its reasons.[353] Those who opted for this mode of representation had clearly found there a means of promotion that was particularly efficient for Athenian women in the first centuries of our era.[354] This reveals that the cult of Isis was prosperous during that period, attracting many adherents whose devotion was not solely evoked on the surface of their tomb. In Greece,[355] as in other Roman provinces, sistra were discovered inside some graves, where they emphasized the religious option of the deceased, who likely used them during their earthly lives in the context of various ritual practices.

3 Practices

The religious life of the Isiacs was regularly marked by sequences of gestures and postures which were performed in a traditional order, and at fixed times within an hourly or annual time frame. Though they have sometimes been represented by means of images, or referred to in inscriptions, these ritual practices have long, been studied through literary sources, partly with the purpose of precisely reconstructing their visual performance, but especially in order to determine their theological content.

350 *IGUR* III 1150 = *CIL* VI 32458 = *RICIS* 501/0174. On this artifact, see L. Bricault, *infra*, 169–170, no. R3, fig. 5.4, in this book.

351 Rather than a third, as thought by Walters 1988, 1, whose estimate is often repeated in subsequent scholarship (see, recently, Bricault 2013a, 325 and 445).

352 Mele 2006, 432, counted 108 Isiac steles in a corpus of some 600 examples.

353 See Bianchi 1990, 233: "The more vexing questions of why the Athenians selected and cast an Isiac motif into a peculiarly Attic form and why that form, once introduced, was so long-lived and so dominant in Attic funerary imagery remain open to further discussion".

354 Moock 1998, 62.

355 See, for example, the two bronze sistra found in a cista tomb in Ambracia (Andrikou 2003, 185–187, nos. 75–76).

Among ancient literary works, the eleventh book of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* constitutes, in this regard, a foundational text.[356] This novel, which was most likely written in Carthage around the year 170 CE, offers us in its final chapter a detailed description of various Isiac ceremonies in which the hero, Lucius, at the port of Kenchreai, becomes caught up as a spectator and subsequently as a participant, under the aegis of an eminently providential goddess. While regaining his human form after having received an epiphany of Isis as he lay on the beach, he attends the celebration of the spring festival of the *Navigium Isidis*, marked by a long procession, before dwelling within the precinct of the temple, where he carries out various daily cult activities, and finally being initiated into the mysteries.

This remarkable ritual spectacle has consistently caught the attention of modern scholars,[357] paving the way for rather diverse interpretations.[358] While certain commentators reject the possibility that there was any religious dimension to this *fabula*,[359] considering it to be a completely fictional work,[360] others judge the *Metamorphoses* to be authentic to some extent, in that the final chapter most likely adapts some of Apuleius' own experiences.[361] Sometimes deemed a true "sacred book",[362] this exceptional literary testimony has thus at times been treated as universally applicable, giving a fixed image of the Isiac ritual apparatus.[363] Even so, since it is not comprehensive, the gaps of the Apuleian model are filled in from other literary sources, which often are much more allusive. It has thus been deduced, for instance, from an epigram

356 Book XI has been the subject of many commentaries. Though that of Gwyn Griffiths 1975 remains an essential reference, the most recent is Keulen & Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2015.

357 Since the rediscovery of the *Metamorphoses* at the dawn of the Renaissance (see, notably, Küenzlen 2005).

358 On this multiplicity of often irreconcilable points of view, see the contributions collected by Keulen & Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2012.

359 This is how Apuleius himself termed his work (*Met.* 1, 1).

360 Some commentators even assign it a satirical purpose (Winkler 1985, 219–227; Harrison 2012, 73–85).

361 On the autobiographical nature of the work, the most essential study remains Veyne 1965, esp. 248.

362 See, for example, Merkelbach 1962, who saw it as an initiatory novel conveying a hidden meaning only accessible to the initiated, or Martzavou 2012, 271, who considers it to be "a serious religious text".

363 See *e.g.*, recently, the insightful remarks by Gordon 2016, 723–724, on the work of Bremmer 2014, 114–125, who focused on Apuleius' account in order to reconstruct the initiation into the Isiac mysteries.

by Martial, that there existed a ceremony for the closure of the temple,[364] which corresponds to the morning service described by Apuleius.[365]

However, none of these texts can be interpreted literally, independently of their authors' overall goals and the contexts in which they are written. Admittedly, though the eleventh book of Apuleius forms part of a literary construction in which it is starkly contrasted with the preceding books, his descriptions are not unrealistic.[366] But Lucius' world is a distorting mirror image of that of its creator, who recasts the reality of his era, manipulating it to serve his narrative framework in such a way as to please his readers.[367] Moreover, there is no reason to presume that the rituals referred to in his work relate to standard practices employed throughout the entire Mediterranean Basin.

Such "literary models", which convey the image of an exotic and insulated pan-Mediterranean cult,[368] were nonetheless put forward for a long time by scholars as true keys for analysis, aiming to shed light on any material documentation of a cultic nature. Many have thus sought to find evidence supporting Apuleius' account in figurative media,[369] but sometimes also in inscriptions or even archaeological remains.

3.1 *Archaeology of Sanctuaries and Materiality of Practices*

This perspective, however, has recently been inverted, evolving towards a "down-top" approach, with the development of an "archaeology of cult",[370] and subsequently an "archaeology of ritual",[371] as an academic discipline in its own right.[372] This refreshing development, in which religious interpretations are no longer externally imposed, but rather produced through the analysis of data in context, has considerably modified our perception of polytheistic religious practices, thereby revealing the very wide diversity of local situations.

364 Mart. X, 48, 1.

365 Apul., *Met.* XI, 20, 2–5.

366 From all the evidence, Apuleius clearly had a very precise knowledge of Corinth and its surroundings (Millar 1981), as well as of the cult of Isis (Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2000), which reinforces the theory that he may have himself actively participated in the cult of Isis as an agent (see *supra*, 47, n. 361).

367 While Apuleius' religious terminology reveals a truly Roman Isis cult, he accentuates its genuine Egyptian features in order to give it a more exotic aura (hence the recourse to various stereotypes which are the subject of the contribution by L. Beaurin, *infra*, 283–321, in this book).

368 See *supra*, 31.

369 See Veymiers (forthcoming) on the so-called mystery images.

370 Since the foundational study by Renfrew 1985.

371 See especially the reflections of Scheid 2000.

372 See, recently, Insoll 2011 and Raja & Rüpke 2015.

Though religious activities took place throughout cities and their territory, sanctuaries clearly served as the primary setting for them. Still, we must be able to identify cult places without succumbing to the many dangers of over-interpretation. Certain structures discovered in Greece have thus been regarded as Isiac by excavators who were concerned with fleshing out Pausanias' *Periegesis*.[373] Such is the case with the complex brought to light in the south-western tip of the bay of Kenchreai,[374] in which some have even believed to have found Lucius's route.[375] It was the presence of glass panels decorated with Nilotic scenes which led to archaeologists identifying this as the sanctuary referred to by Apuleius and the *Periegetes*. However, such scenes do not at all indicate, on their own, that this was a cult place.[376]

As with decorative features, certain structural features have been considered to be characteristic of Isiac cult places of the Greco-Roman world,[377] implying the existence of an architectural design which would be specific to them.[378] Even though Osiris *Hydreios* has been venerated in certain sanctuaries, such as *Sarapieion* C on Delos (Fig. 0.21),[379] does this still allow one to make each hydraulic structure have a connection to the rituals attached to his worship?[380] Though Lucius' initiatory experience has been described by Apuleius as a journey into Hades, can every underground structure thus be considered a room devoted to trials associated with the mysteries?[381]

The archaeology of sanctuaries, as it is practiced nowadays, in fact reveals the great variability of Isiac cult places, the nature and organizational layout of which could differ, notably according to the environments in which they

373 For the Peloponnese, see the cases analyzed by Veymiers 2014b.

374 On these archaeological remains related to Paus. II, 2, 3, see Scranton, Shaw & Ibrahim 1978, 53–78; Rife 2010, 402–407; Veymiers 2014b, 147.

375 See, for example, Bommas 2005a, 109–112.

376 Some commentators have therefore suggested, more reasonably, that we should identify this structure as a public *nymphaeum* (Rothaus 2000, 69–76) or a private residence (Stern & Thimme 2007, 308–311). On the Nilotic scenes and the diversity of contexts to which they belonged, see Versluys 2002.

377 See, for example, Aupert 1985, who compiles a list of *distinctive* features to support the implausible hypothesis of an identification of the first phase of "Bath A" at Argos as a *Sarapieion-Asklepieion*. On this "complex" and the Isiac cults at Argos, see Veymiers 2011a.

378 As is noted by Golvin 1994, 235–236, citing Tran tam Tinh 1964, 38.

379 Siard 2007a. On the "sacred water" of Isiac sanctuaries, see Wild 1981 and Genaille 1983.

380 It is thus, for example, that Smith 1977, 216, had presumed a ritual purpose for the supposed reservoir of water adjoining the Sarapis chapel in the South Stoa of the Corinthian Agora (see Veymiers 2014b, 147, in which this "reservoir" is identified as a court open to the sky).

381 This is the function postulated by Dardaine *et al.* 2008 for the half-buried space in one of the annexes (P3) of the Isiac sanctuary of Baelo Claudia (see Bricault 2010b, 685).

are implanted.[382] Amongst this plurality of forms and of structures, certain architectural features are indeed found frequently, but they are not at all specific to Isiac sanctuaries, and instead belong to wider architectural traditions.[383] Such is the case with the podium on which some Isiac temples were built (Fig. 0.7), and of the widening of the central intercolumnation in front, which corresponded to certain ritual practices, including the display of the cult statue celebrating the majesty of the divine power embodied therein.

The nature of the religious activities organized in these sacred precincts between their foundation and abandonment have been inferred from the "material landscape" which has been preserved at them.[384] Cult places were dynamic and evolving material spaces, containing monuments and objects of an extremely varied nature, which acted as a framework or support for ritual practices. The study of this architecture and of the paraphernalia which accompanied it allow us to gain a closer understanding of the appearance of a sanctuary and the functioning of its cult, both synchronically and diachronically.

The identity of the divine proprietors is not always known and may itself also have evolved over time. Such is the case with the Isiac sanctuary of Thessalonika, which modern scholars have labelled as a *Sarapieion*, a name which is not given by any ancient document, whereas discoveries actually reveal a plurality of divine recipients who sometimes reveal themselves under multiple forms.[385] Among these, most notably, was Osiris, to whom in the year 39/38 BCE there was given an *Osireion* including a peristyle and a *didymaphorion*, which is most often presumed to be a receptacle containing his testicles, used during certain rituals.[386] The divinities present in these sanctuaries, often as *synnaoi theoi*, are not all members of the Isiac circle. It is natural to find in these sacred precincts inscribed or iconographic references to

382 The catalogue of Kleibl 2009, which updates those furnished by Wild 1984 and Bricault 2005a, thus offers a wide range of forms of spatial organization. The identification of certain sanctuaries as Isiac (mod. Hohenstein, Kenchreai, Argos) has since been called into question, while others that certainly or probably belonged to this cult (Dios, Rhodes, Messene[?], Italica, Sibari) have been discovered.

383 See in this regard the methodological reflections of Bianchi 2007 and Naerebout 2007, drawn up, notably, on the basis of the sanctuary erected in the 2nd cent. CE at Ras el-Soda.

384 On this "inference", see the nuanced reflections of Elsner 2012. On this idea of "material landscape", see recently Versluys 2017, who employs the concept of "object-scape".

385 On this sanctuary and its rich epigraphic and statuary material, see especially Steimle 2008, 79–132.

386 *IG* X.2, 1, 109; *RICIS* 113/0520. Some commentators have associated this *didymaphorion* with the festival celebrating the Osirian myth (see, for example, Bricault 2013a, 227).

non-Isiac members of the local religious landscape, such as Venus or Bacchus at Pompeii,[387] which it is pointless to seek to attribute, as has long been endeavored, to ancient worshippers' vague syncretistic intentions.[388] It is this same "isiacocentric"[389] reflex which led to the attribution to Isiac sanctuaries of all artifacts in Egyptian or Egyptianizing style that were discovered out of context,[390] without considering that they might also contain authentically Greek or Roman works. Sanctuaries such as the *Sarapieia* of Delos, the *Isieion* of Gortyna,[391] or the *Iseum* of Beneventum,[392] were, in fact, places within which there was a mix of diverse influences expressing the rich heritage of local pantheons.

This "material landscape", simultaneously familiar and alienating to those who frequented it,[393] bears the memory of the ritual practices and religious experiences which gave it its form.[394] Once they were installed in the sanctuary, throughout their sacred life the objects which had become the property of the gods would fulfil various functions at the heart of diverse forms of social interaction. Dedicated by donors with varying intentions, be they propitiatory or motivated by gratitude,[395] these offerings were taken in charge by specially appointed agents who took care of them, catalogued them, and displayed them in such a way that they would have an effect on viewers, by arousing their admiration or even motivating them to accomplish certain acts. Such is the case with the *thesauros* displayed in the courtyard of the *Sarapieion* A of Delos, following its consecration to Sarapis, Isis and Anubis by a Tinian towards the end of the 3rd cent. or the beginning of the 2nd cent. BCE, which was originally

387 For their preserved sculpted images, see De Caro 2006a, 114, nos. 3.7–3.8, and De Caro 2006b, 27, 33, 68, nos. 87–88. On the divine statues in the temples of Pompeii, see Van Andringa 2012.

388 See, for example, the remarks of Veymiers 2014d, on the *Sarapieia* of Delos.

389 Determined by a cloistered vision of these cults, which bears the weight of the Cumontian category (see *supra*, 27).

390 On the *Aegyptiaca romana* and the religious paradigm of which they have long been the focus, see the recent study by Muskens 2017, esp. 12–14.

391 On this sanctuary, see, notably, Di Vita 1994–1995.

392 See, in this regard, the analysis by Bülow-Clausen 2012, which complements Muller 1969 in re-establishing the Roman aspect of the statuary decoration of the sanctuary.

393 On this somewhat paradoxical effect, see, notably, Jones 2000.

394 On this connection between material culture, rituals and experiences, see Mol & Versluys 2015, and the contribution by M. Swetnam-Burland, *infra*, 584–608, in this book.

395 On the complexity of the links uniting donors, offerings and divine beneficiaries, see, notably, Prêtre 2009.

provided with a bronze guardian-serpent urging visitors to make a donation intended for the financing of the sanctuary.[396]

The life of such objects, their meaning, and their agency evidently varied according to their contexts and the agents who used or observed them. The interpretative models which are often employed in order to explain their presence within sacred precincts are thus limited. Such is the case, for example, with the slabs bearing the imprint of the soles of feet (*vestigia*) which have sometimes been attributed to the gods, sometimes to their worshippers.[397] Often placed at the entrance of temples, these "spacial indicators of human-divine encounters"[398] fit varied formulas which reflected their polyvalence. The plaques bearing footprints of different sizes unearthed at Dion, were, for example, positioned at or near the base of the temple's staircase and facing away from its interior (Fig. 0.22),[399] whereas the ones discovered in Italica, highly stylized, were turned in both directions,[400] thus revealing diverse forms of interaction with the gods.[401]

3.2 *Archaeology of Gesture and Reconstruction of Practices*

The spatial representation of the "material landscape" of cult places is richly instructive. The organization of buildings and equipment reveals areas for circulation, assembly, performance and storage, through which the life of these sanctuaries is reflected.[402] However, the liturgical implications of the structures cannot always be easily discovered. In the sanctuary which Herodes Atticus had commissioned at Marathon around 160 CE, four propylaea resembling Egyptian pylons led, via paved pathways, to an architectural complex organized around a stepped structure, the nature of which remains an enigma (Fig. 0.23).[403] In one of the rooms of this complex were found some 70 very large lamps decorated with Isiac motifs which had been stored there

396 *IG* XI.4 1247 = *RICIS* 202/0124, ll. 9–10: "But, with good cheer, deposit what is dear to you, from the heart, / into my capacious body, through my mouth"; ἀλλὰ χαρεὶς ἔνβαλλε ὅ τί σο(ι) φίλον ἐστὶ ἀπὸ θυμοῦ / εἰς ἐμὸν εὔδεκτον σῶμα διὰ στόματος.

397 On these symbolic representations attested to in about ten Isiac sanctuaries, see, among others, Dunbabin 1990; Takács 2005b; Bricault 2013a, 406–409, no. 133b; Revell 2016.

398 This is what they are called by Gasparini (forthcoming a) in a study to be published in the framework of his project on Isiac rituals and their *embodiment* (see *infra*, 55).

399 *RICIS* 113/0201, 113/0203 and 113/0205–0206 = Christodoulou 2011, 18–22, nos. 4–7.

400 *RICIS* 602/0202–0205 and Alvar 2012, 62–65, nos. 70–74.

401 Which is also revealed by the *viso*/*iussu*-type formulas which are sometimes engraved on them (see the contribution by G. Renberg, *infra*, 649–671, in this book).

402 See, for example, Mol & Versluys 2015, 457–459, on the *Iseum* of Pompeii.

403 On this sanctuary which has provided us with a remarkable set of "Egyptianizing" statuary, see especially Dekoulakou 2011a, and esp. 26 for the central structure.

(Fig. 0.24).[404] Traces of black smoke stains attest to their use, which probably was to mark out a processional route during nocturnal celebrations.[405]

Such signs of use on certain objects have thus commemorated specific ritual sequences, which can now sometimes be reconstructed thanks to recent progress in stratigraphical archaeology. Many sanctuaries have been excavated without any real method for recording archaeological data, thus furnishing raw documentation from which contextual information has disappeared.[406] However, a real turning point occurred at the end of the 20th cent., thanks to the development of sciences applied to the analysis of a great variety of artifacts and biofacts, such as ceramology, lychnology, coroplastic studies, archaeozoology, anthracology, carpology or palynology. Thus, we now possess increasingly well-documented sets which shed new light on ancient ritual practices, paving the way for an "archaeology of gesture".[407]

This evolution has expanded our understanding of the ritual act which is at the heart of so many religious services: the sacrifice.[408] The analysis of hearths uncovered in sanctuaries enlightens us as to the nature of the sacrificial offerings deposited there, thereby allowing us to understand local forms of what has been termed as "cuisine du sacrifice",[409] by going beyond the modes of use extrapolated from literary sources. From the poetry of Ovid, Philip of Thessalonika or Juvenal,[410] or Aelius Aristides' prose,[411] it would appear that the goose was the ritual victim *par excellence* to be offered to the Isiac divinities.[412] This preference, which has been attributed to an Egyptian

404 On these Corinthian lamps, which are between 40–42 cm in length, see Dekoulakou 2003; Fotiadi 2011; Dekoulakou 2011b.

405 On the role of light and luminaries in Isiac rituals, see the contribution by J.-L. Podvin, *infra*, 609–627, in this book.

406 The *Iseum* of Pompeii escaped, however, from this destructive carelessness, thanks to the remarkably accurate surveys of the excavators of the 18th cent., marking a milestone in the history of archaeology (see Hoffmann 1993).

407 This approach, which has reinvigorated our understanding of ancient funeral rites (see Scheid 2008), is now implemented in the excavations of sanctuaries (see, among others, Schafer & Witteyer 2013, and in particular Van Andringa 2013 and Van Andringa 2015, as well as the contribution by W. Van Andringa, *infra*, 571–583, in this book).

408 On sacrifice and its implicit "theology", for which there is a very copious bibliography, see especially Scheid 2005a and Prescendi 2007.

409 A topic which Detienne & Vernant 1979 addressed in their famous book of that title.

410 Ov., *Fast.* I, 453–454; *AP* VI, 231; Juv. VI, 539–541.

411 Aristid., *Or.* XLIX, 45 (= *Hieroi Logoi* III).

412 As had already been observed by Montfaucon 1719, II.2, 301–302. On the goose as a sacrificial offering in the Greek world, including in the cult of Isis, see now Villing 2017.

sacrificial tradition,[413] seems to be confirmed by the vignette from the *Calendar of Philocalus* which features the bird at the feet of an Isiac priest.[414] However, none of the sacrificial deposits analyzed up to now in Isiac sanctuaries supports the widespread use of sacrificial geese inferred from these testimonies.[415] More than 90% of the charred bones discovered together with other remains, including seal impressions and coins,[416] in a hearth altar at *Sarapieion* C on Delos (Fig. 0.21) belonged to fowl which were burned completely as holocaust offerings.[417] In fact, each cult place had its own ritual vocabulary,[418] which was also determined by such pragmatic criteria as those linked to available supplies of victims and the financial resources of worshippers.[419]

In the absence of any centralized norms, the archaeology of ritual can only be regarded as quite varied. For example, though it was forbidden at *Sarapieion* C on Delos to enter the temple after consuming wine because it was considered to be impure,[420] this evidently was not the case in other sanctuaries, such as that of Londinium, in which this drink could accompany cultic meals.[421] These "ritual norms", which had to be enforced by cult officials,[422] are sometimes echoed in the literary tradition, whose accounts remain of value for specific cases, though less so when they are transformed into universal models.[423]

413 Noted by Herodotus (II, 45), without Isis being mentioned. On the goose in Egyptian religious life, see the recent thesis of Zayed 2017.

414 See, *supra*, 42, n. 320, fig. 0.18. This sense is also sometimes associated with the goose depicted in one of the panels depicted within the frescoes of the peristyle of the *Iseum* of Pompeii (*PPM*, VIII, 761, no. 45).

415 For the Latin West, see the cases presented by W. Van Andringa, *infra*, 571–583, in this book. On the contribution of osteological research, see Lepetz & Van Andringa 2008a.

416 The relationship of these objects to sacrificial practices is open to question (see Siard 2010): it is the same in the West, and notably in Pompeii, where two *ushabtis*, broken under the effect of combustion, have been discovered (see De Caro 2006a, 118, no. II.80).

417 On this hearth altar located on the southern esplanade of the sanctuary, near the *hydreion*, see Siard 2008.

418 As discussed by Van Andringa 2015, 30.

419 See, for example, Lignereux & Peters 2008, 233, attributing the virtual non-existence of the goose among the offerings at Baelo Claudia to the rarity of that bird in Baetica.

420 As is stated by a plaque dating from before 166 BCE (*IG* XI.4 1300 = *RICIS* 202/0175 = *CGRN* 173).

421 If we are to believe the graffito on a jar from the 2nd cent. CE discovered in the Southwark district (*RICIS* 604/0301; see Gwyn Griffiths 1973).

422 Thus reinforcing their authority over the worshippers by threatening them with various penalties. See, for example, the decree of an Isiac sanctuary of Priene around 200 BCE (*I.Priene* 195 = *RICIS* 304/0802 = *CGRN* 157), which belongs to a corpus of inscriptions, varied in nature, labeled in the past as "sacred laws" (see Carbon & Pirenne-Delforge 2012 and Carbon & Pirenne-Delforge 2017).

423 See, for example, Dunand 1973, III, 190–191, on Plutarch (*De Is. et Os.* 5–6 [352F–353C]) and some "generalized" prohibitions, notably concerning wine.

Pausanias, who was interested in local specificities,[424] evokes the extra-urban sanctuary of Isis at Tithorea in order to describe a biennial festival marked by a fair, followed by specific sacrificial rites.[425] Though pigs, sheep and goats, so often sacrificed in Greece, were forbidden on this occasion, victims, prepared according to the Egyptian way,[426] consisted of cattle and deer for the wealthier worshippers, and geese and guinea-hens for the poorer.[427] Extremely rare in Greek cults, except in the case of Artemis,[428] the sacrifice of *cervidae* to Isiac divinities was apparently practiced locally from the 2nd cent. BCE, as is seemingly borne out by the decor of altars found at Orchomenos and Chaeronea (Fig. 0.25).[429]

3.3 *Experiences, Emotions and Religious Identities*

Beyond these local variations, and the institutionalized frameworks in which they are inscribed, historical research in recent years has sought to give further thought to ritual practices in terms of religious experiences, thus highlighting the role of individuals and the communities to which they belonged.[430] Liberated from the yoke of the "religions orientales", and from the intense, irrational, or even mystical religiosity which had been ascribed to them,[431] the Isiac cults needed to be re-examined in the light of these new approaches, thereby viewing the rites and their effectiveness from a social, identity-related and emotional angle. These issues have thus been at the heart of our meetings, and have given rise to a project of greater scope, developed by Valentino Gasparini under the title *The Breath of gods: Embodiment, experience and communication in everyday Isiac cultic practice*, which espouses the conceptual framework adopted by the "Lived Ancient Religion" approach promoted most notably by Jörg Rüpke.[432]

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424 Jost 2006 and Pirenne-Delforge 2008a.

425 Paus. X, 32, 13–18. See, in particular, the commentary by Egelhaaf-Gaiser 2005, and the critical review in Bricault & Veymiers 2014, 318–319, of the study by Bommas 2011b.

426 Paus. X, 32, 16–17: τρόπος δὲ τῆς σκευασίας ἐστὶν ὁ Αἰγύπτιος.

427 On the singularity of these sacrificial victims, see Chandezon 2011.

428 See, for example, the great holocaust reported by Paus. VII, 18, 8–13, during the *Laphria* at Patras.

429 On those altars adorned with the deer skulls instead of the usual bucraniums, see Chandezon 2011, 149–159, figs. 1–2 and 5–6. For the slave manumissions which were later engraved on them, see, for Orchomenos, *IG* VII 3200–3204 = *RICIS* 105/0703–0707, and for Chaeronea, *IG* VII 3308 and 3356–3374 = *RICIS* 105/0808 and 105/0856–0874.

430 See, among others, Chaniotis 2011a; Rüpke 2013a; Rebillard & Rüpke 2015.

431 Bonnet & Van Haeperen 2006, XXXIX–XLIV. On the place of "religiosity" in historiography, see also Bendlin 2006.

432 Beginning with Rüpke 2012a.

In the course of their religious life, Isiacs were involved in a vast array of ritual practices,[433] which it seems quite problematic to reduce to a group of rigid categories, given the extent to which they can vary and are diversely interlinked according to contexts.[434] The performance of these ritual acts (their orthopraxy) was dictated by local tradition, thereby activating a "cultural memory"[435] shared by members of a religious community. Many forms of behavior visible in an Isiac context are also to be found in other cults which, in fact, adhere to the same ritualistic framework. For instance, such is true of the acts of adoration recorded by *proskynema* formulas left by some worshippers on the walls of sanctuaries, sometimes at the end of a long pilgrimage.[436] The same applies to the divinatory practices which they engaged in, so as to communicate with the gods, subsequently making a dedication that would often bear the memory of this interaction by means of a codified language (the so-called *viso/iussu* formulas).[437] Only a re-contextualization within a wider cultic context can in fact reveal the true value of an Isiac ritual testimony, by possibly highlighting its singularity. Certain practices are thereby revealed to be more cult-specific, such as those which were at the heart of the cult of Osiris *Hydreios*,[438] by having recourse, generally, to a cultic vessel supposed to contain Nile water (Fig. 0.6b) – life-giving water because it was infused, according to myth, with fluids emanating from the body of the god.[439]

Through the use of such objects in skillfully devised performances, all communal rituals stimulated a feeling of belonging among the assembled congregations, thereby reinforcing their cohesiveness while also forging a real collective identity.[440] Though scholars have, for a long time, focused on the form and content of these ceremonies, there is, at present, greater attention

433 For the Latin West, see the thesis of Beaurin 2013.

434 Hence the limitations in the taxonomic classifications of rites (see, for example, Luginbühl 2015).

435 As defined by Assmann 1992.

436 See the contribution by F. Dunand, *infra*, 628–648, in this book. On *proskynema* inscriptions, see, notably, Geraci 1971 and Bernand 1994.

437 See the contribution by G. Renberg, *infra*, 649–671, in this book. On incubatory practices and their epigraphic expressions, see henceforth the comprehensive study of Renberg 2017.

438 Notably referred to by Vitruvius (VIII, praef. 4): *Ex eo etiam qui sacerdotia gerunt moribus Aegyptiorum, ostendunt omnes res e liquoris potestate consistere: itaque quum hydrim tegunt, quae ad templum aedemque casta religione refertur, tunc in terra procumbentes, manibus ad caelum sublatis, inventionis gratias agunt divinae benignitati.*

439 On the sacred hydria, not to be confused with the images identified as Osiris Canopus, see, notably, Knauer 1995; Malaise 2005a, 59–66; Krauskopf 2005a. On this Nilotic theology, see Kettel 1994.

440 The effects of this "communion" are discussed by Mol & Versluys 2015, 455–456.

being paid to their social and identity-related implications.[441] Processions held during the major religious celebrations provided an opportunity for the cult to express itself within the public space, in front of the entire civic, or even regional, community, which was directly integrated into it during the event.[442] Thus in his romanticized description of the procession of the *Navigium Isidis* in Kenchreai, Apuleius offers a vivid account of a carnivalesque prelude which captures the attention of the crowd by parodying its high-society activities as well as its ancestral myths.[443] This colorful masquerade, providing a satirical reflection of local society,[444] paradoxically sheds light on the impeccable procession which follows it in a hierarchical order that gradually reveals the whole of the cultic community, evidently culminating in the gods.[445] At the center of the parade, the "crowd of the initiates into the divine mysteries"[446] constitutes a distinct group, exhibiting a sociability and a specific identity thanks to their shared religious experience. These *mystes* enjoyed a privileged and prestigious status within the cultic community, a status acquired within the heart of the sanctuary following an initiatory ceremony that was "reserved and unrevealed",[447] during which they had gone down a ritual pathway of deep emotional intensity which included an encounter with the divine.[448]

As has been revealed by recent research, individual and collective emotions played an essential role in the effectiveness of rituals, through both the interaction among the worshippers and their dialogue with the gods.[449] Though reduced for a long time to the status of religious meetings or joyful gatherings, the Isiac *theoxenia* offered, depending on circumstances, a kaleidoscope of emotions and attitudes which were difficult to control, in which the

441 See, for example, Brandt & Iddeng 2012, concerning Greek and Roman festivals.

442 Chaniotis 2013b thus defines the Hellenistic processions as a "multifaceted phenomenon".

443 Apul., *Met.* XI, 8–11. On the prelude (*anteludia*) and its local references, behind which we must not search for Isiac symbolism, see especially Gianotti 1981.

444 Rife 2010, 410, describes it as "a dynamic channel for the participation of non-initiates in a major public ritual".

445 On this religious procession and its Egyptian background, see the contribution by S. Pfeiffer, *infra*, 672–689, in this book.

446 Apul., *Met.* XI, 10, 1 (*turbae sacris divinis initiatae*).

447 It is thus that Belayche & Massa 2016, 8, define mysteries.

448 On the emotions aroused by the Isiac mysteries, see, in particular, Chaniotis 2011b, 267–272. The reconstitution of the ritual sequence of the Isiac mysteries has given rise to the most diverse speculations: see, for instance, the Egyptological point of view of Malaise 1981, compared to the Eleusinian viewpoint of Bremmer 2014, 114–125.

449 See, among others, Chaniotis 2012a and Chaniotis 2013a. Emotions are also at the center of purely cognitivist approaches, such as that of Bowden 2010 implemented in relation to initiation.

presence of the gods nonetheless ensured a certain "frisson sacré".[450] When declaimed within sanctuary precincts, essentially becoming a verbal epiphany, the aretalogical text of Isis was likely to arouse emotions among her worshippers, making a striking impression on their minds by forging a newfound closeness to the goddess.[451] Many rituals were occasions of elaborate performances designed to create an immersive atmosphere that was likely to stimulate the senses and to arouse emotions. In this regard, the Isiac cults appear to have been particularly performative,[452] using effective strategies such as performing these ritual dramas (Fig. 0.6a), which sometimes were performed in theaters neighboring the sanctuaries.[453] The autumn festival of the *Isia* was thus interspersed with dramatic performances re-enacting the major episodes of the Isiac myth, such as the mourning of Isis, her quest, and her eventual rediscovery of Osiris, thus provoking contrasting emotions which manifested themselves in the form of lamentations, acclamations and rejoicing.[454] Such religious spectacles involved various types of agents,[455] whose visual, tactile, auditory, olfactory, and even taste-related effects plunged audiences[456] into a "paysage sensible"[457] which was specifically Isiac – a landscape this book seeks to explore in its many facets and nuances.

450 Regarding which Veyne 2000, 18, has written quite effectively in regard to the practices of sacred commensality. On Isiac *theoxenia*, see, notably, Castiglione 1961 and Bricault 2013b, and, for the papyrological corpus of invitations to the *kline* of Sarapis, Youtie 1948, Koenen 1967 and Gilliam 1976.

451 See, in this regard, the thought-provoking study of Martzavou 2012, who speculates on the existence of two distinct aretalogical moments during the initiatory ceremonies.

452 Mol & Versluys 2015, 458, have thus noted "a particular emphasis on performance and performativity with the cults of Isis that should be a focus of further research".

453 See the situation of Pompeii analyzed by Gasparini 2013, and, more globally, the contribution by V. Gasparini, *infra*, 714–746, in this book.

454 Concerning which the ancient literary tradition has preserved numerous polemical evocations: see in the early example of Sen*., De superst*. (fr. 34–35; ed. Haase), *ap.* August., *C.D.* VI, 10. On the *Isia*, which we should beware of reconstructing solely in light of their Egyptian counterparts, such as the Osirian festivities of the month of Hathyr to which Plutarch refers (*De Is. et Os.* 39 [366E–F]), see, most notably, Bricault 2013a, 386–394, no. 129.

455 On these agents, see the contribution by L. Bricault and R. Veymiers, *infra*, esp. 703–713, in this book.

456 On the role, both passive and active, of the public during these religious celebrations, see Huet 2015. The religious psychology of spectators is addressed in the contribution by V. Gasparini, *infra*, esp. 742–745, in this book.

457 An expression borrowed from Grand-Clément 2010, whose recent research seeks specifically to shed light on the role played by polysensorial stimuli in the experience of the divine which ancient worshippers had (see the project *Synaesthesia* [http://synaesthes.hypotheses.org]). On the "archaeology of the senses", see Hamilakis 2013.

0.1 Marble funerary altar of Arruntia Dynamis, Ostia, mid. 1st cent.–mid. 2nd cent. CE. Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano ex Lateranense, inv. no. 10655. After Sinn 1991, 206, fig. 176

0.2 Inscription painted on the wall facing the entrance to the *Iseum* at Pompeii. After Varone & Stefani 2009, 529, no. 4

0.3 Drawing of the reliefs sculpted at the base of a granodiorite column (after the *Museo Cartaceo* of C. Dal Pozzo), Rome, *Iseum Campense*, Domitian's reign. London, British Museum, Franks I, fol. 113, no. 126

0.4 Drawing of the reliefs sculpted at the base of a granodiorite column (after the *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* of A. Kircher), Rome, *Iseum Campense*, Domitian's reign. After Kircher 1652, I, 226

0.5a Chalcedony cameo reproducing a Roman funerary stele featuring a sacrificing couple, Rome (?), end of the 18th cent.
© Munich, Staatliche Münzsammlung, inv. no. 1169 (coll. Möhl no. 6). Ph. by Nicolai Kästner

0.5b Drawing of a Roman funerary stele featuring a sacrificing couple, Rome, mid. 2nd cent. CE. After Venuti 1778, pl. XXIV

0.6a–b Drawings of the Isiac frescoes found in 1745 at Herculaneum. After Bayardi 1760, pl. LIX–LX

0.7 View of the temple of Isis at Pompeii drawn by Giovanni Battista Piranesi. After the engraving published by Piranesi, Piranesi & Guattani 1804, pl. LXVI

0.8 Marble funerary altar of Fabia Stratonice, Bari, end of the 1st cent. CE. Karlsruhe, Badisches Landesmuseum, inv. no. 67/134. After Siebenmorgen 2013, 170, no. 144

0.9 Marble funerary stele, Athens, end of Hadrian's reign. Ephorate of Antiquities of Athens, inv. no. M1160
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0.10 Marble funerary cippus of Titia Savinis, Nîmes, 2nd cent. CE
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0.11 Marble funerary stele representing a funerary banquet, Thasos, 2nd cent. BCE. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. MA 3575 (MND 266)

0.12 Marble Portrait, Athenian Agora, late Republican era. Athens, Museum of the Ancient Agora, inv. no. S 333
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0.13 Marble relief representing a sacrificial bovine, Rome's Velian Hill, imp. period. Rome, Antiquarium Forense, inv. no. 3383
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0.14 Marble sarcophagus, Hierapytna, third quarter of the 3rd cent. CE. Istanbul, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 665
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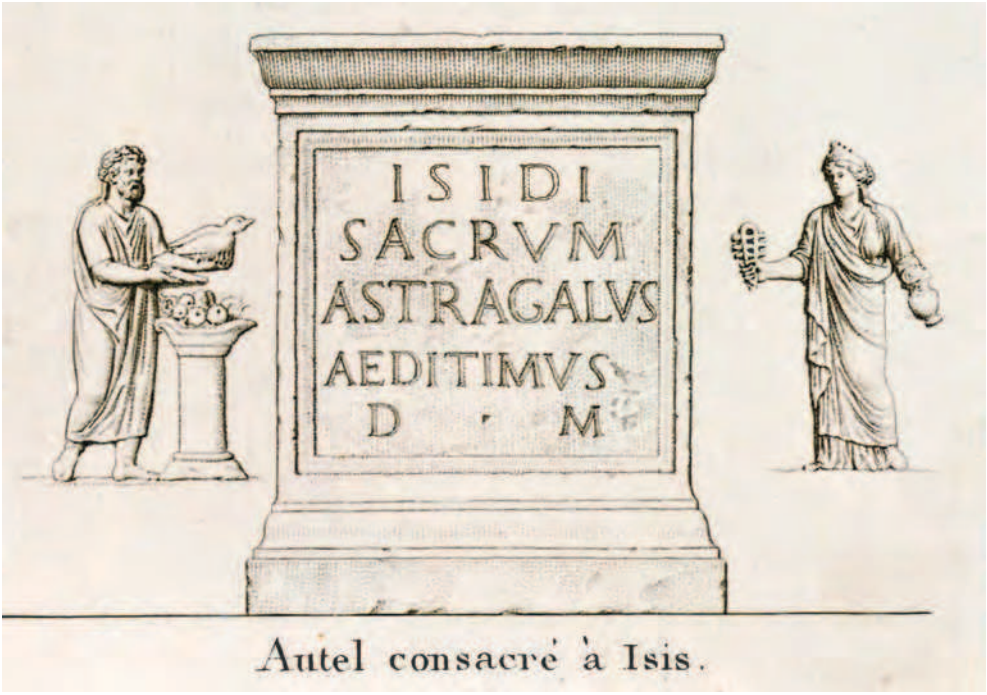
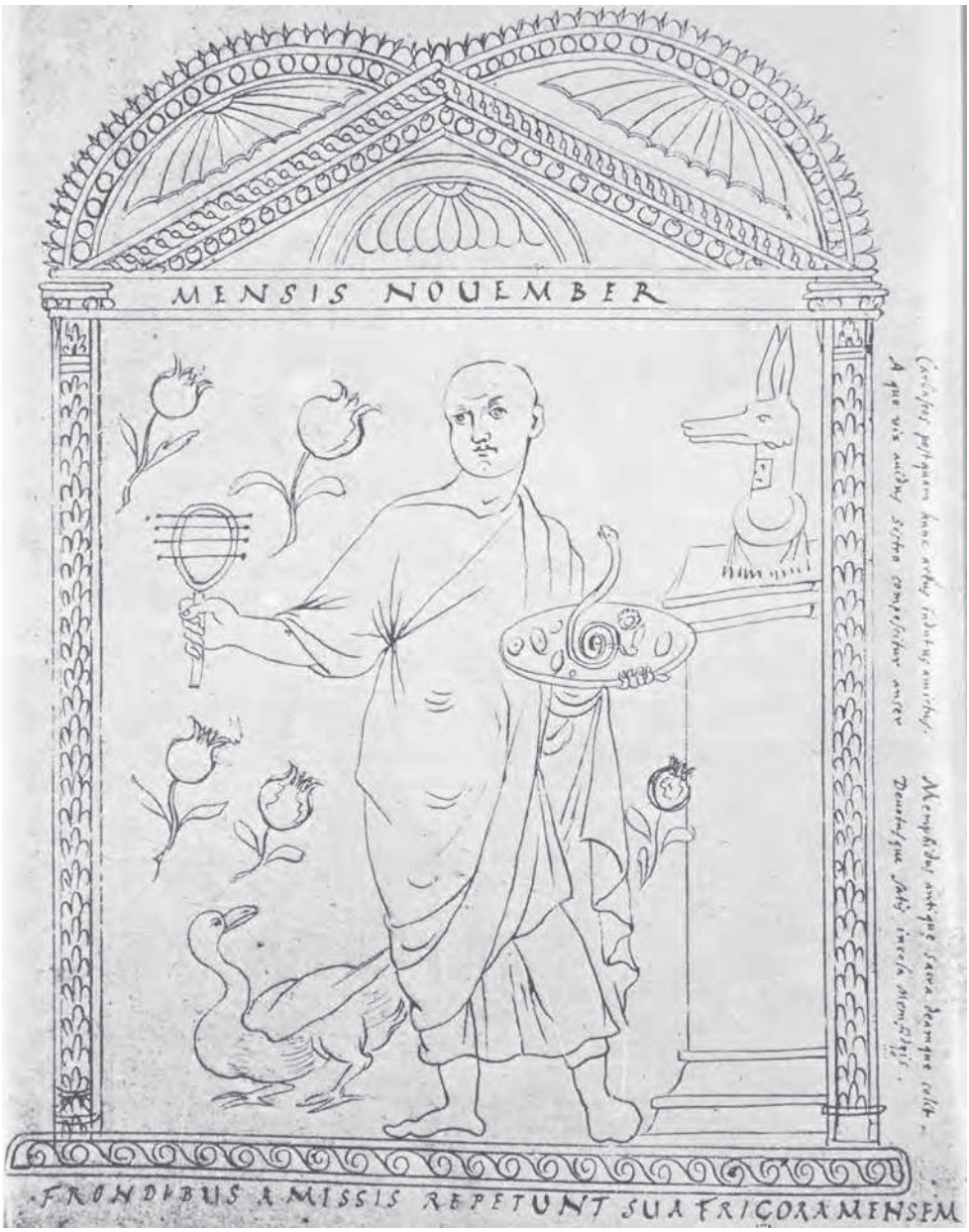


0.15 Drawing of the marble votive altar of Astragalus, Rome, mid. 2nd cent. CE. Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. no. MA 1544. After Bouillon 1811–1827

0.16 Painted vignette from the west wall of the portico of the temple of Isis at Pompeii. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. no. 8920. After Arslan 1997, 426, no. V.44

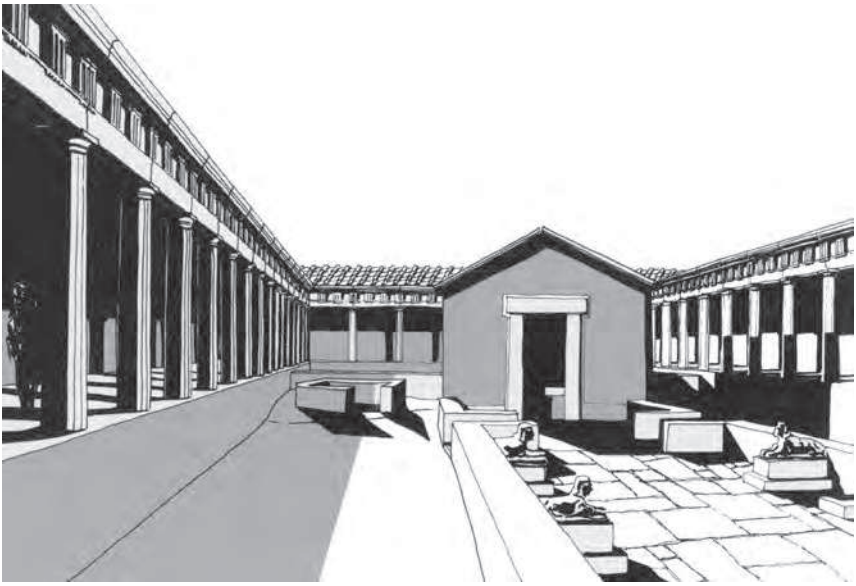
0.17 Panel painting from the east wall of the portico of the temple of Isis at Pompeii. Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. no. 8975. After De Caro 2006a, 99, no. 1.5

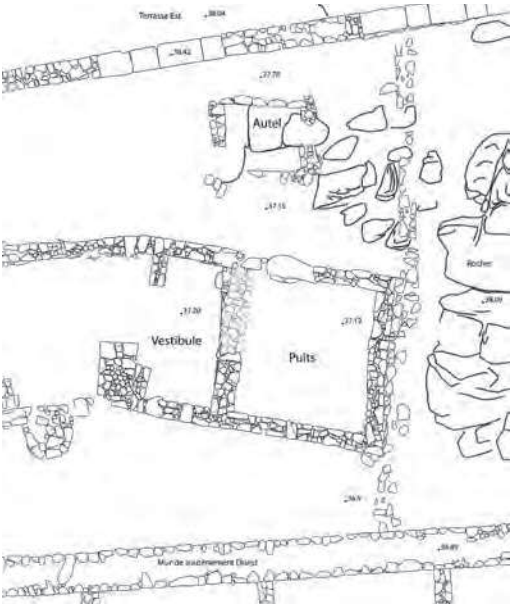


0.18 Vignette of November from the 4th cent. *Calendar of Philocalus*. Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, cod. Barberini, lat. 2154, fol. 22r. D'après Hani 1976, fig. 2

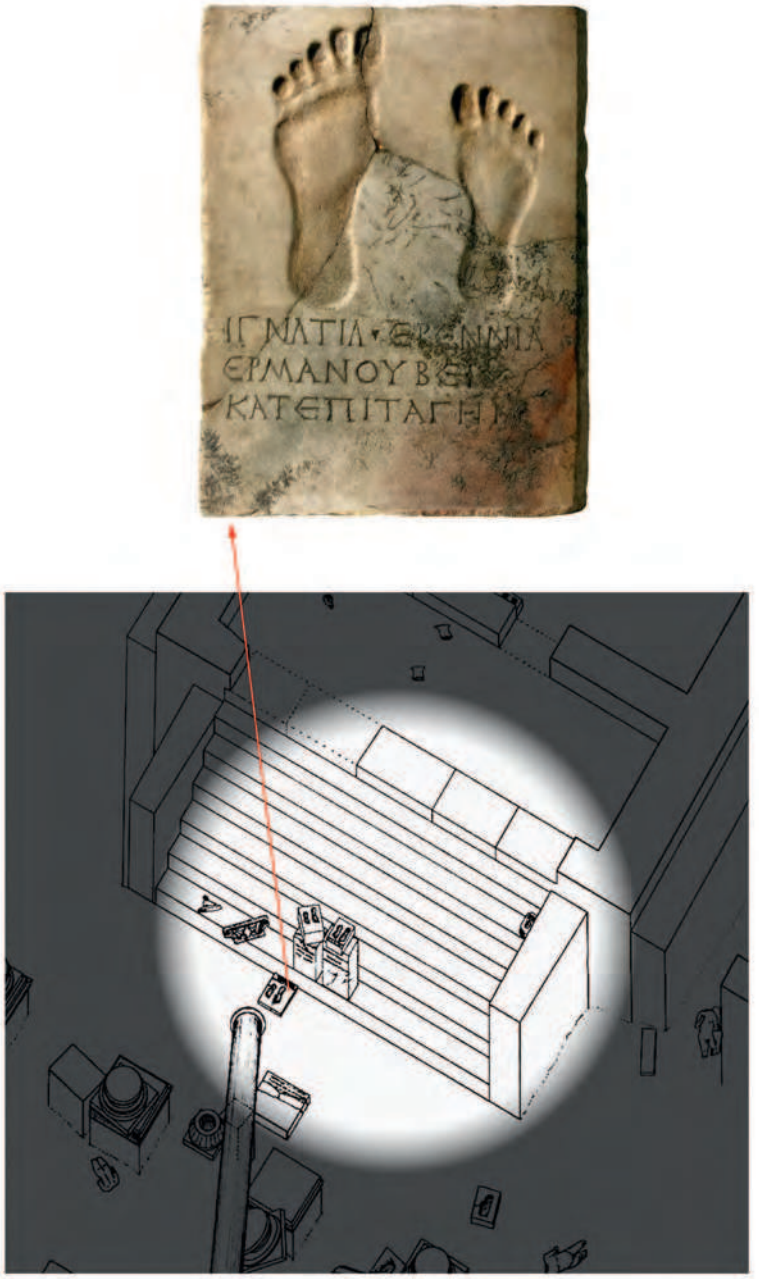
0.19 Cover of a marble funerary urn, 2nd cent. CE. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des antiquités égyptiennes, inv. no. E 32553. After Arslan 1997, 167, no. IV.13

0.20 Marble funerary stele representing a woman in the guise of Isis, Caesarea (Mauretania), end of the 2nd cent. CE. Cherchell, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. S 118. After Sintès & Rebahi 2003, 165, no. 75





0.21 Graphic reconstruction (by F. Siard) and plan (by F. Muller) of the *Hydreion* ("Temple C") of the *Sarapieion* C of Delos. After Siard 2010, 197, fig. 2, and 198, fig. 4



0.22 Axonometric projection of the entrance of the central temple of Isis at Dion, and marble plaque with footprints (Dion, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 419). After Christodoulou 2011, 12, fig. 2, 20, fig. 15

0.23 View of the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods at Marathon. After Dekoulakou 2011a, 24, fig. 1 (aerial photograph 2005)

0.24 Terracotta lamp from the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods at Marathon. Marathon, Archaeological Museum, inv. no. 45. After Steinhauer 2009, 294

0.25 Marble altar decorated with deer skulls, Orchomenos, end of the 3rd or beg. of the 2nd cent. BCE. Orchomenos, Archaeological site
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