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# **Egyptomania in Hellenistic Greece**

A study based on water in the cult of Isis

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## Abstract

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The present study examines the function and religious symbolism of water in the Isis sanctuaries in Hellenistic Greece. This is achieved through a survey of all the Isis sanctuaries in Greece dating to the Hellenistic period and the water installations. This study also examined how water was provisioned to the sanctuaries and how Egypt, particularly the Nile was, perceived by the Greeks. In addition, to what degree the cult of Isis was the result of Egyptomania that swept across Greece has been studied.

The result shows that water provision through rainwater carried a religious meaning rather than the water installations design or location. This result is based on a Greek awareness of the meaning of the Nile within ancient Egyptian religion. The Greeks adapted their observations on what was Egyptian into their own Isis cult and for this reason the cult was an expression of Egyptomania.

Keywords: Isis, sanctuary, water, Hellenistic, Greece

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# 1. Introduction

Ancient Egypt was regarded by the Greeks as the land of many mysteries. Although their religions were similar in many ways, there was one thing that separated the two vastly: the Nile. The river that mysteriously flooded the land each year caught the attention of the Greeks, which is expressed in the works of a host of ancient authors, such as Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus.<sup>1</sup> When Egypt fell under the Hellenistic rule of the Ptolemies, there was an increased interaction between the Greek and Egyptian cultures, and a migration of people occurred that led to a Greek familiarity to the role of Isis and her association with the Nile in ancient Egyptian religion.<sup>2</sup> Isis' popularity grew amongst the Greeks and sanctuaries dedicated to her were erected.<sup>3</sup> The Greek fascination with the Nile continued and water became associated with the cult of Isis in Greece.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.1. Aim and purpose

The present study examines water in the worship of Isis in Hellenistic Greece. This is achieved through a survey of the location of the Isis sanctuaries, how the water installations were situated in relation to the sanctuary, the design of the water installations and how water was provisioned to them. In addition, this study aims to shed light on the symbolism of both water and the water facilities within the cult of Isis in Hellenistic Greece based on the Greek interpretation of the Nile and ancient Egyptian religion. Furthermore, this study aims to establish if the cult of Isis in Greece is an expression of Egyptomania.

## 1.2. Material and method

This study is divided into two main sections. The first section is based on archaeological remains of Isis sanctuaries that date to the Hellenistic period that are located on both the Aegean islands and mainland Greece. These sanctuaries dating to this period have a fixed water installation or contain traces that indicate a link between water and the sanctuary. The water installations will be analysed in two steps. Firstly, the general layout with surrounding buildings of the precinct of every sanctuary will be investigated as well as finds from these sites. This allows for a general impression of the context of the sanctuaries, their water installation and to discern differences and similarities in the appearance and features of the water installations. Secondly, the water installation will be divided into categories based on similarities in their appearance and analysed accordingly, which will contribute in understanding how the installations were provisioned with water.

It must be noted, however, that not all excavations have been published properly or are written in a language other than English, French and German. In addition, finds from the Isis

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<sup>1</sup> Gruen 2011, 76.

<sup>2</sup> Hornung 2001, 64–67; Pakkanen 1995, 49.

<sup>3</sup> Pakkanen 1995, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Nielsen 2014, 67; Wild 1981, 10–22.

sanctuaries in Greece are poorly published. This means that not all archaeological material was available for this study.<sup>5</sup>

The second section focuses on the symbolism of the water installations based on Egypt in the Greek imagination. In total four ancient Greek authors have been selected for this part. Their descriptions on Isis in Egypt, the Nile and the cult of Isis in Greece will be analysed. The authors that have been selected are; Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and Pausanias.

There are no authors dating to the Hellenistic period that provide such information and are authors pre- and post-dating the Hellenistic period chosen as a consequence.<sup>6</sup> However, the writers of an earlier period provide an impression of how Egypt was regarded by the Greeks prior to the arrival of the cult of Isis. The authors of a later date, on the other hand, provide an account on how Egyptomania was expressed in the cult of Isis in Greece. Additionally, these later texts are also a source of information on the cult itself, the usage of water and how the cult was performed by Isis worshippers in both Egypt and Greece. For this reason, the four ancient authors selected are relevant for this study, despite not dating to the Hellenistic period.

### 1.3. Theoretical framework

The first theory applied in this study is cultural memory, which is the assumption of maintaining past events through a cultural formation of memories.<sup>7</sup> This can be expressed through amongst others texts, monuments, recitations and rites.<sup>8</sup> It has been proposed by Maurice Halbwachs that the cultural framework of a memory is affected and developed through interactions with other people.<sup>9</sup>

The second theory which will be applied is the idea that ancient societies could imagine themselves and their own heritage in a broader cultural society. This implies that ancient societies could link their own culture to others and, through that, create their own historical memories.<sup>10</sup>

The last theory is Egyptomania. This is a modern term given to the assumption that another culture is influenced and fascinated by Egypt and that expresses itself through western art and design.<sup>11</sup> The term stems from the sparked interest in Egypt after Napoleon's expedition to Egypt late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when treasures of the country were brought to the attention of the European public.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.4. Previous research

It becomes evident from previous research that only sections of the cult of Isis in the Greek world have been studied and that water in the sanctuaries of Isis in Hellenistic Greece have not been fully investigated. The meaning of water within the cult has only been studied from a Greek and Roman perspective, where the ancient Egyptian religion is not taken into account. This could be due to the fact that Isis studies in Hellenistic Greece neither entirely belongs to classical or Egyptian studies and therefore falls between the two disciplines.

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<sup>5</sup> Pappadakis, N.G. 1915. 'Ανασκαφή Ἰσείων ἐν Ἐρετρία', *Archaiologikon Deltion*, 115–190. *Non vidi*; Salsac, A. 1915. *Isis, Sarapis a božstva sdužená dle svědectví řeckých a latinských nápisů*, Prague. *Non vidi*.

<sup>6</sup> There is a number of Roman authors providing such information as well, most notably the *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius and the *Satires* by Juvenal, which have been used in various studies on the cult of Isis (Heyob, S. 1975. *The cult of Isis among women in the Graeco-Roman world*. Leiden. *Non vidi*; Nilsson 1950; Solmsen 197; Witt 1971), but these will not be used based on the limitations to Greek authors in this study.

<sup>7</sup> Assman 2006, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Assman & Czaplicka 1995, 129.

<sup>9</sup> Assman 2006, 1; Halbwachs 1925, 27–28.

<sup>10</sup> Gruen 2011, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Whitehouse 1997, 158.

<sup>12</sup> Brier 2004, 16–17.

The role of water within the cult of Isis has only been researched by Robert E. Wild. His work *Water in the cultic worship of Isis and Sarapis* was published in 1981 and covers most of the Isis and Serapis sanctuaries in Greece.<sup>13</sup> Wild's research includes both Hellenistic and Roman sanctuaries and water facilities of the relevant sites have been investigated. Wild provides a brief discussion on how water was provided in the sanctuaries but a full study is missing. The provision of water is only discussed in practical way, but not the different possibilities, if they differ from site to site, and if water was of meaning for the cult.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, he refers to all water facilities as holders of Nile water, which gives the impression that it is evident to him from the start of his study that the water facilities held Nile water. This assumption by Wild is purely based on the the water facilities' being located in a sanctuary dedicated to an Egyptian goddess.<sup>15</sup> A discussion on why the water facilities carry Nile water is not undertaken until after the water facilities have been analysed. Wild argues for Osiris being of significance of how the water should be interpreted as the Nile, yet he does not include a comparative perspective on the ancient Egyptian religion in his study.<sup>16</sup>

Wild's proposition that the water facilities served to hold Nile water has not been questioned by later scholars, as can be noted in Inge Nielsen's study on the architecture of sanctuaries where mystery rites were performed in the ancient world. She refers directly to Wild and mentions that the water facilities served to hold Nile water.<sup>17</sup> Wild's interpretation of the of water within the Greek cult representing Nile water has only been contradicted by Martin Bommas study *Heiligtum und Mysterium: Griechenland und seine Ägyptischen Gottheiten*, and argues that the water does not need to represent the Nile because water occurs in other Greek cults as well.<sup>18</sup>

Egypt in the Greek imagination has been explored by Erich S. Gruen as part of his work *Rethinking the other antiquity*.<sup>19</sup> Gruen studied ancient texts by Herodotus, Diodoros Siculus and Plutarch in order to get an impression on how they viewed Egypt. The analysis, however, only gives an account on how Egypt was described by these ancient authors, and not a Greek impression on the Nile, Isis in Egypt, nor the cult of Isis herself in Greece, despite studying authors who have written about these subjects.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Gruen's study does not touch upon how the Greek view on Egypt was reflected within Greek society or the cult of Isis. Other scholars, however, have used ancient texts in order to understand the cult of Isis in Greece and her place in Greek society but the texts studied mostly date to the Roman period.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, Gruen accepts the assumption that the ancient authors visited Egypt. It has been heavily debated among scholars if Herodotus visited Egypt or not,<sup>22</sup> and one can not assume that all ancient authors did, nor that their texts provide accurate information. Finally, many of the previous studies were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then new archaeological material from Isis sanctuaries has come to light which has not been studied yet. Two examples are the Isis sanctuary at Dion which was published in 1982, a year after Wild's study was published, and the Isis sanctuary on Rhodes which was not published until 2008,<sup>23</sup> and which therefore have not yet been the subject of Isis studies.

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<sup>13</sup> The Isis sanctuaries at Dion and Rhodes are not included.

<sup>14</sup> Wild 1981, 63–65.

<sup>15</sup> Wild 1981, 9–60.

<sup>16</sup> Wild 1981, 101–28.

<sup>17</sup> Nielsen 2014, 58.

<sup>18</sup> Bommas 2005, 34, 41.

<sup>19</sup> Gruen 2011, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Wild 1981, 77–81 and 92.

<sup>21</sup> See note 6.

<sup>22</sup> Armayor 1978, 59.

<sup>23</sup> Fantaoutsaki 2008, 189–206.

## 2. The arrival of Isis in Hellenistic Greece

In 332 BC, Alexander the Great marched with his army into Egypt and the country became part of his empire. Through offerings to the local Egyptian gods and Greek gymnastic contests in Egypt, Alexander the Great acted as a reconciler between the Orient and West and as a disseminator of the Greek culture.<sup>24</sup> The Greek city of Alexandria was founded and grew into one of the greatest commercial cities of the Mediterranean.<sup>25</sup> Through this campaign, and the prosperity the city had to offer, Greeks started to settle in Egypt causing a familiarity between the two cultures. This was increased during the reign of Ptolemy I Soter, Alexander the Great's successor that ruled Egypt between 323–285 BC, who tried to merge the two cultures even further by introducing the god Serapis, a deity invented and designed to have both Greek and Egyptian attributes, and therefore appealed to both the Greeks and Egyptians.<sup>26</sup> The god Serapis became associated with the Egyptian goddess Isis and a new religious triad was formed consisting of Serapis, his wife Isis and their son Harpocrates.<sup>27</sup> Due to this new triad which was formed, Isis was often worshipped alongside Serapis in both Hellenistic Egypt and in Greece. It is noteworthy that the first Isis temple in Egypt was not constructed until shortly before Egypt fell under Ptolemaic rule. This temple dates to the reign of Nectanebo II (360–341 BC), last native pharaoh of Egypt, who started the construction of an Isis temple in Behbeit el-Hagar in the Nile Delta and which was finished by the Ptolemies.<sup>28</sup> When Egypt had become Ptolemaic, the Isis temple at Philae and the Serapeum at Alexandria were constructed during the reign of Ptolemy III in 247–221 BC.<sup>29</sup>

Long before the Greek conquest of Egypt, from at least the Archaic to the Classical periods, the Greeks already had encountered Isis through trade with Egypt, particularly at Delos which had become an important trading port during the Hellenistic period.<sup>30</sup> Migrations from Greece to Egypt and of Egyptians to Greece also contributed to a familiarity to Isis in the Greek world.<sup>31</sup> This can also be noted in Herodotus identification of Isis with the Greek goddess Demeter, which suggests that Greeks could recognize their own goddess Demeter in Isis and, through this, the Greeks linked themselves to the Egyptian cultural society.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the interactions led to a Greek familiarity with Egyptian religion and that they were able to recognize their own gods in the Egyptian ones. This likely opened the pathway for Egyptian immigrants to start their own private cults in Greece.<sup>33</sup> The Greek familiarity to Isis led the Greeks to join the cult as well and Isis received an official status in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC which led to the construction of Isis sanctuaries across Greece.<sup>34</sup>

The Greeks joining the originally Egyptian cult of Isis raises the question to what the degree the cult remained Egyptian. A text recorded at a Hellenistic Isis sanctuary in Greece might shed

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<sup>24</sup> Bell 1927, 171.

<sup>25</sup> Saad El-Din 1993, 2.

<sup>26</sup> Bowden 2010, 161.

<sup>27</sup> Such triads were very common within ancient Egyptian religion and there were different local triads across Egypt. Harpocrates also is an invention from the Ptolemaic period and replaced the Egyptian child god Horus, who originally was the son of Osiris and Isis (Wilkinson 2003, 132 and 201).

<sup>28</sup> Bricault & Versluys 2014, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Arnold 2003, 174 and 217; Rowe & Rees 1956, 488.

<sup>30</sup> Barret 2011, 5–6

<sup>31</sup> Solmsen 1979, 5; Woolf 2011, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Hdt 2.59.3

<sup>33</sup> Dow 1937, 184.

<sup>34</sup> Pakkanen 1995, 49–50.

some light on this matter. The text presents regulations regarding the organisation of the sacrificial rituals. The regulations state by whom, how and when sacrifices should be performed. The inscriptions stipulate that a priest of Isis orders an Egyptian to carry out the sacrifices.<sup>35</sup> This is an indication that the rituals performed in the cult were meant to be as authentic as possible. This also becomes clear in the rituals performed by Isis worshippers. During a possession to the Isis sanctuary in Greece, for instance, women made music by rattling sistra and carried jugs with water, while men walked towards the altar with their heads shaven, all both of which are typically Egyptian cultic traits.<sup>36</sup>

The cult, however, was not only performed by Egyptian priests and could a Greek become a priest of Isis, obtain the same responsibilities as an Egyptian priest and carry out the same sacrificial rituals. The Greek priest was simply regarded as a cult specialist by the the Isis worshippers and he could fulfil the requirements in the performance of the rituals in place of an Egyptian priest.<sup>37</sup>

The inscription recording the regulations suggests a strong link between Egypt and the cult of Isis in Hellenistic Greece, and that the cult having to be, at least originally, as authentic as possible. Due to this, it is probable to assume the original cult of Isis was founded and performed by Egyptians and that the cult was modelled after Egyptian priestly initiations. Perhaps the similarities between Isis and Demeter attracted Greeks to the cult, or perhaps Greeks who lived in Hellenistic Egypt brought back the newly founded cult of Serapis. Apparent from the regulations, however, is that a connection between Egypt and the cult of Isis in Greece, was important.

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<sup>35</sup> Nilsson 1950, 598; Stavrianopoulou 2007, 217.

<sup>36</sup> Nilsson 1950, 599. A sistrum is an Egyptian rattle instrument often used, but not exclusively, in the cultic worship of the goddess Hathor in Egypt (George 2005, 77). After the arrival of Isis, the instrument became associated with her cult in Greece, and priests, priestesses and Isis herself are often portrayed with the instrument (Witt 1971, 167). A shaven head was very common among Egyptian priests (Hdt. 2.36.1).

<sup>37</sup> Stavrianopoulou 2007, 214–220.

## 3. The Hellenistic sanctuaries in Greece

### 3.1. Location and layout

A total of eleven Isis sanctuaries were erected in Hellenistic Greece across the Aegean islands, as well as mainland Greece. Out of these eleven sanctuaries one sanctuary dates to 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, seven to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, two to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and only one to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. It becomes apparent here that the majority of the sanctuaries were erected around the same time. Eight of these eleven sanctuaries contain some form of permanent water installation. The remaining three, on the other hand, have archaeological indications that a water installation may have been present.

The following chapter will discuss the general layout and location of the Isis sanctuaries in Greece and where the water installations are situated in relation to the sanctuary. An in-depth discussion on the water installations is provided in Chapter 4. In addition to this, it must be noted that, albeit the cult being founded during the Hellenistic period, some remains are of Roman date and are studied instead in case there are no remains dating to the Hellenistic period.

*Fig. 1. Map showing the location of the Isis sanctuaries in Hellenistic Greece. A = Argos, B = Cyme, C = Delos, D = Dion, E = Eretria, F = Gortyn, G = Priene, H = Rhodes, I = Soli, J = Thera and K = Thessalonica.*

#### 3.1.1. Argos

To the east of Mount Larissa was a sanctuary complex situated where temples to amongst others Hera and the nymphs have been uncovered. Inside the complex runs an aqueduct of Roman date. The Isis sanctuary (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) was not located inside this complex but just outside towards the south.<sup>38</sup> It is unknown why the sanctuary was not constructed inside the complex itself, but a probable explanation could be it being a later addition.

The remains of the Isis temple are cut directly into bed rock and are situated on a masonry terrace which is approximately 14.30 m<sup>2</sup>. Not much survives of the actual temple, and the remains measure only 2.50 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>39</sup> A water installation is situated immediately south of the terrace where a terracotta lamp has been recovered.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, the the motif of the terracotta lamp is not described by the excavator. The limited archaeological remains caused difficulty in recreating a general layout for the sanctuary and there is none available for this reason. The lack of layout also caused troubles in interpreting the water installation and its relation to the Isis cult. The terracotta lamp, however, is indicative of the water installation being used within the cultic worship of Isis, for terracotta lamps have been uncovered in association with the cult of Isis and water facilities at other sites.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Vollgraff 1958, 516.

<sup>39</sup> Vollgraff 1958, 556. According to Vollgraff (1958, 556) the measurements are not thorough because of his rapidness when measuring the site.

<sup>40</sup> Vollgraff 1958, 561.

<sup>41</sup> A lamp displaying a mummified Osiris has been uncovered at the Athenian agora for instance (Dunard 1973, 220) and have lamps been uncovered at the Isis sanctuary at Eretria (Nielsen 2014, 63).

The remains have been identified as a place of Isis worship based on two inscriptions uncovered at the location as well as small finds. One inscription has been found on a statue base recording a dedication to Isis and Serapis. The other inscription was found on an Egyptian-style statue base and records an offering to an unnamed god. It is believed the statue base belongs to an unknown Egyptian god based on its Egyptian-style.<sup>42</sup> In addition, a small statue of Harpocrates (*Fig. 1.*) has been uncovered at the site, but its exact finding location in relation to the sanctuary is not mentioned.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.1.2. Cyme

The sanctuary at Cyme (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) in Aeolis was dedicated to Isis and Aphrodite (*Fig. 3.*) The sanctuary consisted of a central temple (7 x 14.20 m), with a cella (no. 2: 5 x 4.30 m) and an adyton (no. 3: 4 x 3 m). In addition to this was an assembly hall (no. 11: 5 x 3 m) on the south-eastern side of the central temple.<sup>44</sup>

*Fig. 3.* Cyme with the central temple (1–3), the assembly hall (11) and the possible location of a water installation (X).

During the Czechoslovak expedition in 1915 a water installation was recovered.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately it is difficult to confirm this because the sanctuary was covered over after the excavation was finished. In addition, only parts of the excavation report were published and are not easily available. This makes it problematic to ascertain the presence of a water installation. However, traces of water pipes have been uncovered and reported. Again, it is unknown where the water pipes in the sanctuary were situated, but if there indeed are water pipes it suggests there was a possible water installation present within the sanctuary.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.1.3. Delos

There were three different phases of the Isis sanctuary at Delos, Delos A, Delos B and Delos C.

Originally the cult was dedicated to Serapis and Isis was a slightly later addition.<sup>47</sup>

The first sanctuary (210–200 BC), Delos A (*Fig. 4.*), was a rather small structure measuring 19.50 x 15.50 m surrounded by a wall. The court could be accessed through a door and a staircase on the northern side of the precinct.<sup>48</sup> A passage gave access to two rooms on either side: a porticus room (E) and a room for cultic dining (D).<sup>49</sup> The central temple (A: 4.10 x 3.20 m) was situated in the court on a podium and could be accessed by stairs leading up to the temple on the western side. In the southern wall of the central temple a staircase was located that descended to a chamber (B: 2.30 x 1.03 m, height 1.66 m) that was furnished with a water

*Fig. 4.* Delos A with the central temple (A), chamber with the water basin (B), cultic dining room (D) and porticus room (E).

<sup>42</sup> Vollgraff 1958, 560; Wild 1981, 169. The Egyptian-style statue base has not been published in Vollgraff's excavation report.

<sup>43</sup> Dunard 1973, 21; Raftopoulou 1963, 54.

<sup>44</sup> Nielsen 2014, 67.

<sup>45</sup> Wild 198, 17; Salsac, A. 1915. *Isis, Sarapis a božstva sdružená dle svědectví řeckých a latinských nápisů*, Prague. *Non vidi*.

<sup>46</sup> Wild argues for the cistern to have been located in front of the central temple based upon illustrations by Antonin Salac, who carried out the excavations in 1915, published in *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* (Wild 1981, 17; BCH 1925, fig. 11.). This however, likely is an error made by Wild for the figure shows the Ionic remains of a temple and not a cistern.

<sup>47</sup> Wild 1981, 171–174.

<sup>48</sup> Nielsen 2014, 127.

<sup>49</sup> Wild 1981, 35.

basin on the eastern side (1.10 x 1.10 m). Just outside the sanctuary a large water reservoir is located which was filled with water from the Inopus river.<sup>50</sup>

Just outside the

sanctuary a large water reservoir is located which was filled with water from the Inopus river.<sup>50</sup>

Delos B (200 BC) was constructed just a few years later and is situated a terrace higher up the slope where Delos A was built (*Fig. 5*).

The sanctuary could be accessed through a corridor, which was flanked by benches dedicated to Serapis, Isis and Anubis, on the western side.<sup>51</sup> On the northern side of the corridor was an assembly room (G).<sup>52</sup>

The central temple was situated on a podium on the northern side of the courtyard and was rather small in comparison to Delos A, only 7.0 x 4.5 m (A). To the rear a portico was located with benches that were to be dedicated to Serapis, Isis and Anubis.<sup>53</sup> Stairs led to a small chamber (D: 1.8 x 0.7 m) underneath the portico (C) on the eastern side of the precinct. A basin has not been uncovered in the crypt but remains of stucco suggest the chamber was designed to hold water.<sup>54</sup>

*Fig. 6.* Delos C with the propylon (A), Isis temples (C & I), the temples of Serapis (U) and Anubis (L) and the water installation (X).

The last phase, Delos C (200–190 BC), is the largest of the Isis sanctuaries and measures 120 x 50 m (*Fig. 6*.) The sanctuary was divided into two parts, an elongated court which could be accessed through a propylon on the southern side of the precinct (A), and a square court with temples dedicated to Egyptian gods to the north which could be accessed through an entrance to the east (K).<sup>55</sup> There were two temples dedicated to Isis within the precinct, one in the elongated court (C: 85.88 x 8.17 m) and one on the square court (I: 5 x 12 m). The other smaller temples were dedicated to Serapis (U) and Anubis (L).<sup>56</sup> To the east of temple C a water installation is situated which was decorated with a column and statues of sphinxes (X).<sup>57</sup>

### 3.1.4. Dion

The Isis sanctuary of Dion near Macedonia was situated next to a river and was submerged when it was discovered in 1982. The cult was

originally founded in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC but the remains date to the Roman period.<sup>58</sup>

The excavators did not provide a detailed report with measurements of the structures nor a reconstructed layout of the sanctuary. The report does describe the main structures and their approximate location and an aerial view of the sanctuary provides an impression of the layout (*Fig. 7*).

*Fig. 7.* Dion with the central temple (A), the courtyard (B) and the three rooms surrounding the central temple (C–E). In room C a water installation is situated.

<sup>50</sup> Nielsen 2014, 127. Wild (1981, 34) argues for the water basin to be situated directly underneath the temple where the cult statue is placed.

<sup>51</sup> Nielsen 2014, 128.

<sup>52</sup> Wild 1981, 37.

<sup>53</sup> Nielsen 2014, 128.

<sup>54</sup> Nielsen 2014, 128; Wild 1981, 37.

<sup>55</sup> Nielsen 2014, 64.

<sup>56</sup> Nielsen 2014, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Siard 2005, 424–426. According to Wild (1981, 39), there is no water installation at Delos C, only an inscription that mentions *hydreion* which was used as a cultic water pitcher in the cult of Isis. Siard (2005, 431–433), on the other hand, argues that *hydreion* refers to a water installation and that *hydreios* is the term used to refer to the cultic water pitcher. Wild (1981, 115–116) instead uses the term *hydreios* when discussing water pitchers shaped like Osiris which were used in the cult of Isis in Greece. This gives the impression that *hydreion* indeed refers to a water installation.

<sup>58</sup> Pandamalis 1982, 730–732.

The sanctuary consists of a courtyard (B) with the central temple (A) situated on a podium to the east. Two other rooms are located to the north (C and D) of the central temple and one to the south (E). Room C to the north contains a water installation and a niche in the western wall where cult statues could be placed.<sup>59</sup> To the south of the central temple an *in situ* cult statue resembling Isis in Hellenistic fashion has been uncovered. A similar statue was found on the northern side of the precinct.<sup>60</sup> In addition, statues of Aphrodite, Demeter and Artemis have been discovered within the sanctuary.<sup>61</sup>

### 3.1.5. Eretria

The sanctuary at Eretria (300 BC) was accessed through an entrance (Fig. 8, Z) which led to a portico on the north-eastern part of the precinct (E). In order to reach the central temple (A–B), one had to pass through two courtyards. The first, the main courtyard (D), was accessible through an entrance in the western wall of portico E. The entrance to the second and closed courtyard (C) was directly opposite to the entrance of the main courtyard.<sup>62</sup> The central temple consisted of a pronaos (B) and cella (A).<sup>63</sup> In the far west corner of the precinct of the sanctuary was a chamber containing a water installation situated (X). It is unclear how this water facility was accessible and where the entrance was located.<sup>64</sup>

Fig. 8. Eretria with the central temple (A–B), the closed courtyard (C), the main courtyard (D), the water installation (X) and the entrance (Z).

### 3.1.6. Gortyn, Crete

The sanctuary at Gortyn on Crete (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC), was accessed to the east via a portico (Fig. 9, E). Almost immediately upon entering one accessed the area where the central temple (C) was situated.<sup>65</sup> In the western wall of the central temple three niches were located. To the south of the central a corridor was situated, flanked by a statue of Serapis, which led to a crypt underneath the temple (G). It was previously believed that this crypt served for the storage of cult objects.<sup>66</sup> This earlier belief was likely based on the niches which furnished the walls of the crypt.<sup>67</sup> The crypt, however, contains a water installation (1.10 x 1.15 m, depth 0.40 m) with a water pipe situated just above it.<sup>68</sup>

Fig. 9. Gortyn with the central temple (C), the portico (E) and the crypt with a water installation (G).

### 3.1.7. Priene

The Isis sanctuary of Priene (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) was located on a terrace above the Greek town.<sup>69</sup> Only parts of the foundations of the sanctuary have been uncovered (Fig. 10.) To the north of the precinct a propylon gave access to the vicinity where an altar was situated. To the west of the altar a portico was located. A water

Fig. 10. Priene with the portico to the west, the propylon to the north and a drain to the east of the altar.

<sup>59</sup> Pandamalis 1982, 730.

<sup>60</sup> Nielsen 2014, 66; 732.

<sup>61</sup> Pandamalis 1982, 731–733.

<sup>62</sup> Nielsen 2014, 62.

<sup>63</sup> Wild 1981, 56.

<sup>64</sup> Wild 1981, 55.

<sup>65</sup> Nielsen 2014, 65–66.

<sup>66</sup> Nielsen 2014, 66; Salditt-Trappman 1970, 54–55; Wild 1981, 41.

<sup>67</sup> Nielsen 2014, 67.

<sup>68</sup> Nielsen 2014, 67. Wild 1981, 42.

<sup>69</sup> Nielsen 2014, 67.

drain has been uncovered to the east of the altar which is the only indication of a possible water installation at the site.<sup>70</sup>

### 3.1.8. Rhodes

It was not until 2008 that the first paper on the Isis sanctuary at Rhodes (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) was published.

*Fig. 11.* A male statue in Egyptian-style from the sanctuary at Rhodes.

Up until then there was too little evidence to attest that the remains found inside the Hellenistic fortification belonged to an Isis sanctuary. The

*Fig. 12.* The head of Horus from the sanctuary at Rhodes.

sanctuary covered an area of 47.0 x 75.0 m and was situated between two harbours and could be accessed by both land and sea.<sup>71</sup>

The central temple (12 x 18 m) was located on the northern side of precinct and faced southwards. The central temple consisted of a cella and a pronaos.<sup>72</sup>

At the southern part of the temple, a stairway is situated that leads down to a water facility. A stone slab that was uncovered *in situ* suggests that the structure was roofed-over and had a height of approximately 1.80 m. The water installation in combination with Egyptian-style finds (*Figs. 11. and 12.*), such as a statue of Horus and a male statue completely in Egyptian-style, identified the structure as an Isis sanctuary.<sup>73</sup> Due to the lack of surviving remains of the Isis sanctuary has it not been possible to create a reconstruction of its layout.

### 3.1.9. Soli

Inside the walls of the ancient city at Soli on Cyprus the Isis sanctuary was located on the western part of the city. The sanctuary consists of a Hellenistic (Soli D, 1<sup>st</sup> century BC) and a Roman phase (Soli E, 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD). Soli D (*Fig. 13.*) was situated to the south of an adjoining Aphrodite sanctuary.<sup>74</sup> The

*Fig. 13.* Soli D with the courtyard (A), entrance (B) and the adjoining Aphrodite sanctuary.

preservation of the Isis sanctuary is fairly poor, but it appears to have consisted of a courtyard (A) with an entrance to the east (B).<sup>75</sup> Two water installations were uncovered at the adjoining Aphrodite sanctuary, one within the walls of the precinct and the other outside.<sup>76</sup>

*Fig. 14.* Soli E with the cellae dedicated to Osiris Hydreios (XLV), Serapis (XXIV) and Isis (XXXV).

Soli E (*Fig. 14.*) is slightly better preserved and was situated next to that of Soli D. The entrance was positioned to the west and led to a courtyard (E). Three cellae were found to the west of the courtyard and were dedicated to Osiris Hydreios (XLV), Serapis (XXIV) and Isis (XXXV). No water installation has been uncovered in connection to Soli E.<sup>77</sup>

*Fig. 15.* Thera with the water basins to the north and the west of the niched wall.

<sup>70</sup> Wild 1981, 20–21.

<sup>71</sup> Fantaoutsaki 2008, 189.

<sup>72</sup> Fantaoutsaki 2008, 190.

<sup>73</sup> Fantaoutsaki 2008, 191.

<sup>74</sup> Wild 1981, 14–15.

<sup>75</sup> Westholm 1934, 97.

<sup>76</sup> Wild 1981, 15.

<sup>77</sup> Nielsen 2014, 60.

### 3.1.10. Thera

On the slope of the Doric city of Thera (250 BC) a wall with niches likely used for the placement of votive offerings to Isis has been uncovered (*Fig. 15.*)<sup>78</sup> Unfortunately, not a lot has been recorded or published on the finds. That the wall has been identified as a place for worship of Isis is largely based on the water installations which the excavators found similar to other Isis sanctuaries.<sup>79</sup> This wall is the only indication that an Isis cult at Thera was present and any foundations to a sanctuary have not been discovered. To the north and west of this wall are two large water installations situated.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.1.11. Thessalonica

Similar to Thera, at Thessalonica (3<sup>rd</sup> *Fig. 16.* Thessalonica and the walls that remain of the century BC), no foundation belonging to sanctuary.  
an Isis sanctuary has been found at the site, only a few walls, nor has there been uncovered any form of water installation (*Fig. 16.*). The only indication of the cult and a possible water installation is an inscription concerning the Isis cult which mentions *hydreion*, a water installation<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Von Gaetringen & Wilksi 1904, 86.

<sup>79</sup> A comparison is made to the Isis sanctuary of Pompeii which dates to the Roman period (Von Gaetringen & Wilksi 1904, 87).

<sup>80</sup> Wild 1981, 13.

<sup>81</sup> Wild 1981, 39–40; Nielsen 2011; 64. For a discussion on *hydreion* see note 57.

## 4. The water facilities

The water installations present in the Isis sanctuaries in Hellenistic Greece display similarities and difference and, according to this, is it possible to place them into categories. The categories in which they can be divided are as follows; water crypts, cisterns and water basins. Three water installations did not conform to any other categories and are placed in their own category of questionable water facilities (*Table 1*).<sup>82</sup> Common, however, for all water facilities is that there appears to be no form of drainage system to get rid of waste water.

*Table 1.* Showing all the sanctuaries in Greece studied, their chronology and the form of water facility present.

<b>Geographical Location</b>	<b>Chronology</b>	<b>Water Facility</b>
Argos	3 <sup>rd</sup> cen. BC <sup>83</sup>	Water basin
Cyme	3 <sup>th</sup> cen. BC <sup>84</sup> Rebuilt 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> cen. BC.	Cistern (?)
Delos A	210 – 200 BC <sup>85</sup>	Water crypt
Delos B	200 BC <sup>86</sup>	Possible water crypt
Delos C	200 – 190 cen. BC <sup>87</sup>	Possible water crypt
Dion	2 <sup>nd</sup> cen. BC <sup>88</sup>	Cistern
Eretria	300 BC <sup>89</sup> Rebuilt 150 – 100 BC	Cistern
Gortyn	2 <sup>nd</sup> cen. BC Rebuilt 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> cen. AD. <sup>90</sup>	Water crypt
Priene	3 <sup>rd</sup> cen. BC <sup>91</sup>	Drain

<sup>82</sup> Wild also divided the water installations into categories. His, however, only consisted of two; the Nilometers and Nile water containers. Wild discussed how the Egyptian Nilometers resemble three water facilities in Isis sanctuaries in Hellenistic Greece. The Nile water containers covers all water installations that were not similar to his Nilometer-type (Wild 1981, 25–47). In this study Wild's categories and the water facilities have been reassessed and are new categories created according to the appearance of the water facilities. Owing to the ambiguity in the term Nilometer and Nile water containers are those terms not used in this study when referring to the water facilities in the Isis cult in Hellenistic Greece.

<sup>83</sup> Wild 1981, 163.

<sup>84</sup> Nielsen 2014, 67. Wild (1981, 163), proposes the slightly early date of the 4th century BC.

<sup>85</sup> Wild 1981, 164.

<sup>86</sup> Wild 1981, 164.

<sup>87</sup> Wild 1981, 164.

<sup>88</sup> Nielsen 2014, 66.

<sup>89</sup> Wild 1981, 164.

<sup>90</sup> Wild 1981, 164.

<sup>91</sup> Wild 1981, 165.

Rhodes	3 <sup>rd</sup> cen. BC <sup>92</sup>	Water crypt
Soli D	1 <sup>st</sup> cen. BC Rebuilt 2 <sup>nd</sup> cen. AD. <sup>93</sup>	Two water basins in conjunction to the sanctuary of Aphrodite.
Thera	250 BC <sup>94</sup>	Two reservoirs outside of the possible sanctuary
Thessalonica	3 <sup>rd</sup> cen. BC <sup>95</sup>	No water facility uncovered but an inscription records a <i>hydreion</i> .

#### 4.1. Water crypts

In order to understand Wild's proposition that certain water installations resemble the Egyptian Nilometers, is it first necessary to outline the typical features of such a structure in Egypt.

The Egyptian Nilometers are usually located underground and consist of roofed chambers that can be accessed by a stairway which is cut into bed rock. After descending into the chamber, one first approaches a landing (2.50 x 2.70 m) where it was possible to stand upright.<sup>96</sup> After this a second stairway was located that continued down in a ninety-degree angle towards the basin that was filled with Nile water.<sup>97</sup>

In Egypt it was uncommon that a Nilometer was located in conjunction to a sanctuary and it was not until when Egypt fell under Ptolemaic rule they occurred in such a context.<sup>98</sup> In Ptolemaic Egypt Nilometers were likely not only used to measure the Nile, but for liturgical rites as well.<sup>99</sup> There is no direct connection between Nilometers and the cult of Isis in Egypt, and only the Ptolemaic Isis temple at Philae is known to have a Nilometer. However, Wild's proposition that water installations in Hellenistic Isis sanctuaries in Greece resemble the Egyptian Nilometers to some degree is not entirely incorrect, as there are three installations that bear such a resemblance located on Delos, Gortyn and Rhodes.

Only one sanctuary on Delos, Delos A (*Fig. 4.*), contained a water installation that conforms to the crypt type. The water crypt was situated to the east of the central temple and could be accessed directly from the inside of the temple through a stairway in the southern wall. The stairs led down in a ninety-degree angle to a chamber where a square water basin was situated

<sup>92</sup> Fantaoutsaki 2008, 189.

<sup>93</sup> Wild 1981, 166.

<sup>94</sup> Wild 1981, 166.

<sup>95</sup> Wild 1981, 166.

<sup>96</sup> Sabottka 2008, 243.

<sup>97</sup> In Egypt the Nilometers were used to measure the rise and fall of the Nile, which was made possible through either an opening at the bottom or the water infiltrating through the soil, causing the water to rise within the structure until it reached the same level as the Nile. Lines on the wall of the water basin were used to measure the level of the Nile. To the Egyptians, knowing the level of the Nile each year was a way knowing the quantity of crops the coming year would bring (Bell 1970, 572; Wild 1981, 25–26).

<sup>98</sup> Wild 1981, 25–26; Daressy 1915, 207. There are three types of Nilometers. The first one being the one as described as above, constructed from Pharaonic times until the Roman period. Nilometers of this sort have been found at, amongst other locations, the temples of Elephantine, in conjunction to the temple of Satet who was associated with the Nile, the Isis temple of Philae, the Horus temple of Edfu, Kom Ombo where Sobek and Horus the Elderly were venerated, and the temple of Hathor at Dendera. All these temples, except for Elephantine, date to the Ptolemaic period. The second type is the so-called well type and is found at Kom Ombo, Edfu and Elephantine. This type was only constructed during the Ptolemaic era. Nilometers were also constructed well after the Roman era in Egypt, but mostly in the form of the last type, the column Nilometer, and have no association with any temples in Egypt. It is unknown how old the oldest Nilometer in Egypt is. Known, however, is that the Egyptians since early historic times recorded the flooding of the Nile in their yearly annals (Friedman 2008, 1751–1560).

<sup>99</sup> Fairman 1954, 172. This assumption can be based on the Egyptian view on the Nile and that water extracted from it was regarded as sacred. Water directly acquired from the inundation thus increased its symbolic value. The inundation represented rebirth and renewal and was the working of the gods. Therefore, the inundation was of great significance within ancient Egyptian religion (Jaroslav 1952, 85; MacQuitty 1976, 55.).

(1.10 x 1.10 m, depth 1.0 m). The height of the chamber, 1.66 m measured from floor to roof, was likely sufficient enough for someone of that time to be able to stand upright.<sup>100</sup>

The second sanctuary to contain a similar structure is Gortyn (*Fig. 9.*), where a water crypt is situated to the south of the central temple. The crypt was not built in conjunction to the central temple and was only accessible through an entrance in the corridor to the south of the crypt. A stairway descended to an underground chamber in a ninety-degree angle where a square, 1.10 x 1.10 m, water basin was located.<sup>101</sup> The height, from the floor of the basin to the roof of the chamber measured 2.10 m.<sup>102</sup> It is unknown how deep the water basin was, but based on the height of the chamber on Delos, is it not impossible it was approximately the same at Gortyn.

Lastly, a water crypt is located on Rhodes. Little is reported about this water crypt but it exhibits similarities to the sanctuaries on Delos and at Gortyn. In the southern part of the sanctuary a stairway is situated that descends to an underground rectangular chamber where a water basin was located. The measurements of this water installation are unknown.<sup>103</sup>

Based on these archaeological remains, the water crypts found at Isis sanctuaries in Hellenistic Greece display certain similarities to the Egyptian Nilometers. The water crypts and the Nilometers were both underground structures situated in a separate room from the central temple. In both cases the water basin was accessed by a stairway leading down to the installation. However, a key feature of Nilometers was to measure the Nile for which the Egyptians had carved the basins with lines to measure the water level. The Greek water crypts, on the other hand, lack any means to measure water levels and are the installations purely constructed to hold water. In addition to this, one of the key differences is that Nilometers clearly contained Nile water whereas the water crypts in Greece did not.

## 4.2. Cisterns

Cisterns are water installations designed and used to hold water and bear many similarities to what has been defined as water crypts in this study. Cisterns were underground structures as well which either could be open or covered with a lid and that in some cases could be accessed by stairs.<sup>104</sup> In this study, a distinction is made between cisterns and water crypts. The distinction is based on water crypts always occurring in a separate chamber with stairs descending in a ninety-degree angle to the water basin in the same manner as Egyptian Nilometers. It must be noted that cisterns as described above are not structures purely associated with the cult of Isis on Greece, but occur all over Greece in both sacral and profane settings.<sup>105</sup>

There are three sanctuaries with installations that fall under the category of cisterns, located at Cyme, Dion and Eretria. It has been reported that a cistern existed at Cyme but its exact location is unknown.<sup>106</sup> All that is known is that the cistern was hewn into the ground and that it was lined with plaster to prevent water from leaking out (*Fig. 3.*).<sup>107</sup> The water installation at Dion (*Fig. 7.*) neither fully conforms to the water crypt nor the cistern type. Due to its closest resemblance to a cistern, has it been placed under this category. The cistern was cut into the ground of room C located to the north of the central temple.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Wild 1981, 34–35.

<sup>101</sup> Oliviero 1914, 277.

<sup>102</sup> Wild 1981, 41–42. Wild (1981, 42) argues the measurements to be 1.10 x 1.15 m

<sup>103</sup> Fantaoutsaki 2010, 190.

<sup>104</sup> Klingborg 2017, 15 and 31.

<sup>105</sup> Klingborg 2017, 108–109.

<sup>106</sup> Wild 1981, 17.

<sup>107</sup> Bulletin de correspondance hellénique 1925, 478. The site was excavated in 1915 by Antonin Salsac but only sections of his reports have been published (Wild 1981, 17); Salsac, A. 1915. *Isis, Sarapis a božstva sdružená dle svědectví řeckých a latinských nápísů*, Prague. *Non vidi*. The placement of Cyme under the cistern category is purely based on what has been reported on the water installation by Wild.

<sup>108</sup> Pandamalis 1982, 730.

The cistern at Eretria (*Fig. 8.*) is located in the far west corner of the precinct of the Isis sanctuary and to the west of the central temple. The cistern was situated in a room behind solid walls and was only accessible through an entrance to the north. A roof likely covered the room.<sup>109</sup> The cistern was dug into the ground and measured 0.65 m in diameter and was 1.20 m deep. Tiles covered the walls of the cistern to prevent water leakage.<sup>110</sup>

The lack of information about the cisterns in relation to the Isis cult constitutes a problem in understanding these structures and their relation to the cult. Considering the occurrence of cisterns in other sacred settings, as well as profane one, it is difficult to determine to what degree they were a distinct feature for Isis sanctuaries in Greece.

### 4.3. Water basins

The last category of water facilities in Greek Isis sanctuaries that can be identified are water basins. In contrast to the previously discussed water installations, they are simple installations to store water. Unlike the water crypts and cisterns, there is not always a direct link between an Isis sanctuary and a water basin and they can occur both within the precinct of the sanctuary but also outside. In addition, they do not contain any other structures as was the case with Nilometers and sometimes cisterns.<sup>111</sup>

There are two sanctuaries with such installations, located at Argos and Soli on Cyprus. Not a lot is reported on the water basin at Argos and is it unknown where exactly it was located. A probable location is to the south of the central temple, but this is purely based on vague descriptions by the excavators.<sup>112</sup>

The two water basins at Soli D on Cyprus (*Fig. 13.*) are not found in association with the Isis sanctuary and five water basins in total have been found inside the city walls of the ancient city of Soli.<sup>113</sup> The amount of water basins found in the city itself is an indication that they were common. The two closest to Soli D are not found in connection to the sanctuary either, but are located in conjunction to the sanctuary of Aphrodite to the north-east of that of Isis.<sup>114</sup> One water basin was situated on the inside of the Aphrodite sanctuary and one just outside, which provided access to water for the worshippers of Isis.<sup>115</sup>

As already could be noted already with the cisterns, water was not solely a feature of the Isis cult in Greece and is it no strange occurrence that in the case of Soli the water basins are found across the city and in conjunction to the Aphrodite sanctuary.

### 4.4. Questionable water facilities

There are two Isis sanctuaries which do not have any form of permanent water installation, yet there are archaeological remains that suggest the presence of water. In addition to this, one Isis sanctuary in Greece does have a water installation but its connection to the sanctuary is uncertain. For this reason, these three sanctuaries do not conform with any of the water facilities

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<sup>109</sup> Wild 1981, 55.

<sup>110</sup> Bruneau 1975, 46; Wild 1981 55.

<sup>111</sup> Nielsen 2014, 60, 78;

<sup>112</sup> Vollgraff 1958, 561. Wild (1981, 14–15), on the other hand, does not believe the water basin at Argos was linked to the Isis sanctuary. He based this assumption solely on that the water basin was excavated several years after its initial discovery in 1958. However, there are no archaeological indications to attest a later date to the water basin.

<sup>113</sup> Westholm 1934, 64–65.

<sup>114</sup> Nielsen 2014, 6; Westholm 1934, 97; Wild 1981, 15.

<sup>115</sup> Wild 1981, 15.

previously discussed and will therefore be discussed below. These sanctuaries are located in Priene, on Thera and in Thessalonica.

At Priene (*Fig. 10.*), only remnants of a drain have been uncovered. This drain was situated approximately 5.20 m to the east of the podium of the central temple that was located in an open courtyard in the sanctuary. The drain continued underneath the eastern wall and ends with an opening on the street.<sup>116</sup> Without the presence of a fixed water facility it is difficult to know the exact purpose of this drain and its link to the sanctuary. For this reason, the drain could have functioned to clear the area of waste water. Wild argues the drain must have led to a water installation now destroyed.<sup>117</sup> There is no archaeological evidence, however, to support this assumption. In addition, not all Isis sanctuaries did have a water installation. At Soli D, for instance, the Isis sanctuary did not have its own water installation and it is not impossible that the sanctuary at Priene never had such a structure either.

At Thessalonica (*Fig. 16.*) traces of a fixed water installation have not been uncovered. However, an inscription found at the site mentions a dedication to Isis and Serapis through a *hydreion*.<sup>118</sup> The inscription likely refers to a water installation and is suggestive that the water installations of the Isis cult in Greece were used for dedications.

At Thera, finally (*Fig. 15.*), only two quite large water reservoirs are situated to the north and south of the wall where the cultic worship of Isis took place. The one to the north measured approximately 3.80 x 1.0 m and was rectangular in shape and the southern one, which was fairly irregular, measured approximately 4.0 x 1.5 m.<sup>119</sup> The water reservoirs likely had no direct connection to the cult of Isis and rather functioned as a water source for the inhabitants of the city.

#### 4.5. Water provision

The difference in the water facilities in the Greek Isis sanctuaries raises the question if a distinction can be noted in the provision of water to the installations, and if this has an effect on how the water facilities should be interpreted. As previously noted, the archaeological remains have varying degrees of preservation and, as a result, the study on water provision to the Isis sanctuaries is largely dependent on four sites; Delos, Dion, Gortyn and Eretria.

Although, the Egyptian Nilometers and Greek water crypts are similar, they clearly differ in how water was provisioned to either water facility. The main difference is the kind of water. In Egypt the Nilometers were obviously provisioned with water from the river Nile, whereas Nile water was not accessible in Greece. In addition, only two sanctuaries were located near a river, those of Delos and Dion.<sup>120</sup>

At Delos A, ca. 11.0 m to the east of the central temple, a water tank was situated with an inflow from the Inopus river.<sup>121</sup> A channel leading from the water tank towards the water crypt has also been uncovered, implying the crypt was supplied with water directly from the river.<sup>122</sup> This means that the water level of the water crypt at Delos A rose and fell in accordance to the Inopus river, just like it did in the Nilometers with the rising and falling of the Nile, which gives the impression that the Greeks purposely tried to mimic the annual flooding of the Nile in the water crypts. There are no archaeological remains, however, to indicate water was provisioned in the same manner at Dion, despite its close location to a river as well.

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<sup>116</sup> Nielsen 2014, 68; Wiegand & Schrader 1904, 169; Wild 1981, 21.

<sup>117</sup> Wild 1981, 21.

<sup>118</sup> Wild 1981, 39.

<sup>119</sup> Wild 1981, 13. According to Wild (1981, 14), these reservoirs have no connection to the Isis cult at Thera because one of the reservoirs is of an earlier date than the wall with the niches and because such reservoirs, and cisterns in general, are found all across Thera.

<sup>120</sup> Nielsen 2014, 66; Wild 1981, 35.

<sup>121</sup> Roussell 1919, 83.

<sup>122</sup> Wild 1981, 35.

The water crypt at Gortyn was not located near any water source and was situated a fair distance from the harbour. This water crypt was furnished with a water pipe just above the basin,<sup>123</sup> through which water either could have been supplied through the means of an aqueduct or rain water.<sup>124</sup> There are no archaeological remains to support the thesis of an aqueduct, therefore making the latter a more likely way to provision the crypt with water.

Although the majority of the sanctuaries are located near a harbour, sea water does not appear to be a water source for the water facilities. At Eretria, for instance, the water basin was likely filled with rain water, despite its close proximity to an inlet of the Euboea Gulf.<sup>125</sup> Additionally, rain water was a common way of filling a cistern,<sup>126</sup> and is it therefore a probable means of filling the cisterns in Isis sanctuaries as well.

Without a sufficient amount of archaeological evidence is it difficult to ascertain how water was provisioned to the water facilities, and is it often a mere conjecture how the facilities were filled. The lack of pipes in combination with the absence of a direct water source in form of a river or the sea that could provide water in the sanctuaries, makes rainwater the only probable way to fill the water facilities.

If the water facilities were to mimic the annual flooding of the Nile, it would be expected the water source to be efficient enough to make the tanks flood each year, which raises the question of water quantity in Greece through rain. The cistern at Eretria, for instance, is 1.20 m deep which means a tremendous amount of rainwater was required in order to make it flood, of which in this part of Greece the yearly average is only about 40 cm.<sup>127</sup> However, the quantity of water should not be determined by the volume of a cistern nor by average numbers, for variations between dry and wet years have not been taken into account. This means that during wet years water did rise a noticeable amount in the cisterns and could even overflow.<sup>128</sup> If rainwater was the main water source, six out of eleven water facilities would be able to overflow (Argos, Cyme, Dion, Eretria, Gortyn, Rhodes). Delos A was provisioned with water from the Inopus river which allowed the water to rise in the crypt as well, meaning a total of seven water facilities had the ability to overflow. The possibility of a rising water level and overflow in the water facilities is indicative of the Greeks attempting to recreate the inundation of the Nile in the water facilities. There was no drain in the water facilities which suggests they were emptied by hand when they flooded.

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<sup>123</sup> Nielsen 2014, 67.

<sup>124</sup> Wild 1981, 43.

<sup>125</sup> Wild 1981, 55.

<sup>126</sup> Klingborg 2017, 77.

<sup>127</sup> Wild 1981, 55.

<sup>128</sup> Klingborg 2017, 77 and 80.

## 5. Egyptomania and the symbolism of the water facilities

It becomes clear from the archaeological material that there was a strong link between the cult of Isis and water. However, water facilities in general within sanctuaries in Hellenistic Greece were common.<sup>129</sup> Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, in Egypt there were no temples dedicated to Isis until shortly before the Ptolemaic period and water facilities, as those found in Greek Isis sanctuaries, were not common. This raises the question to what degree there is an actual link between Isis and water in Greece. There are factors that suggest the water installations in Greece are related to the Egyptians' view on water, and that the Greeks adapted this view into their own cult. Particularly so because the Greeks already were aware of Isis and the Nile in Egypt even before the Isis cult was established in Greece.<sup>130</sup> The Greek attraction to Egypt may have expressed itself through cultural memory and Egyptomania which, in turn, was represented in Greece through the construction of Isis sanctuaries and the water facilities. In order to understand how cultural memory and Egyptomania in Greece functioned and how it relates to water within the cult of Isis, it is first necessary to understand the Egyptian's view on the Nile and Isis.

The inundation of the Nile is one of the most important aspects of ancient Egyptian religion and is explained in Egypt through the myth about the murder of Osiris by his brother Seth.<sup>131</sup> According to the myth Osiris was lured into a casket by Seth and thrown into the Nile. The wife of Osiris, Isis, searched for his body and buried him after finding it. When Seth got notice of this, he hunted for Osiris' body and cut it up into fourteen pieces upon finding it and scattered the pieces across Egypt. Isis searched for all the pieces which she then wrapped together. Isis mourned over his body and brought Osiris back to life with her breath, but Osiris had been undone from his earthly form and could therefore only rule the underworld. In the eyes of the Egyptians, he had died, been resurrected and now lived for eternity. The Egyptians saw this myth as reflected in the rising and falling of the Nile and for each inundation, Osiris came back to life.<sup>132</sup> In addition to this, the tears Isis shed while mourning the death of her husband caused the Nile to rise and overflow, and Isis became associated with the inundation as well.<sup>133</sup>

That the Greeks were aware of the role Isis had in ancient Egyptian religion can be observed in the works of ancient authors such as Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus and Pausanias. Herodotus, for instance, describes Isis as the goddess who was considered to be the most important one in Egypt,<sup>134</sup> while she is described by Diodorus Siculus as a woman of medicine and healing.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, Pausanias attributes the inundation of the Nile to the tears Isis cried when she mourned the death of Osiris. According to Pausanias, it was therefore also when the Nile rose that Isis worshippers in Egypt mourned the death of Osiris during the so-called Festival of Isis.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> As for instance could be observed earlier were water installations found in conjunction to the cult of Aphrodite as well.

<sup>130</sup> Barret 2011, 5–6; Solmsen 1979, 5; Woolf 2011, 75.

<sup>131</sup> The myth of Osiris and Isis was used by the Egyptians to explain the actual occurrence of the flooding of the Nile, and were Osiris and Isis only linked to the inundation. The actual inundation was personified as the god Hapi (Wilkinson 2003, 106), whereas Khnum controlled the inundation (Wilkinson 2003, 194).

<sup>132</sup> MacQuitty 1976, 55; Taylor 2001, 28.

<sup>133</sup> Tobin 2001, 464–468.

<sup>134</sup> Hdt. 4.40.2.

<sup>135</sup> Diod. Sic. *Bib. hist* 1.25.

<sup>136</sup> Paus. 10.32.18.

The accounts on Isis provided by Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus and Pausanias may have been an expression of Egyptomania and cultural memory in Greece. The Greek interactions with Egypt prior to the arrival of Isis,<sup>137</sup> caused the Greeks to create a new cultural framework of memories and the cult of Isis and the water installations in her sanctuaries can be seen as an expression of this process. That the Greeks formed new cultural memories through their interactions with the Egyptians, is also evident in the works of ancient Greek authors. Pausanias, for instance, describes the Isis sanctuaries in Greece as built by the Greeks,<sup>138</sup> while Plutarch describes the ceremonies in Greece as similar to those in Egypt and states that they are performed during the same period as in Egypt, i.e. when the Nile flooded and the Isis worshippers mourned the death of Osiris.<sup>139</sup> It becomes apparent in Pausanias' and Plutarch's accounts that the Greek founded the Isis sanctuaries in Greece and that the ceremonies in the Isis cult imitated the Egyptian, which suggests an expression of Egyptomania. That the cult was an expression of Egyptomania can also be observed in the regulations from Priene stipulating that an Egyptian priest was to carry out the sacrifices in Greece.<sup>140</sup> For this reason, Greek Isis worshippers likely aimed to recreate an Isis cult that was as authentic as possible based on cultural memory and Egyptomania, which ultimately had an affect on the symbolism of the water facilities in Greece.

Egyptomania is also expressed through a Greek consciousness of the inundation of the Nile and its association to Isis in Egypt, which can be observed in the water installations in Greek Isis sanctuaries that helped to recreate a flooding like the Nile. As was established in the previous chapter, seven out of eleven water facilities had to the ability to overflow. However, in Egypt the inundation and the Nile had a clear link to Isis, which raises the question to what degree water in Isis sanctuaries in Greece was associated with Isis and the Nile. In order to answer this question, is it necessary to take water provision in Greek Isis sanctuaries into consideration. If the water facilities were to resemble the Nile and its inundation, one would expect the Greeks to recreate this as closely as possible. For this reason, a provision of water by a river or the sea to the facilities would be the most logical method, for it could possibly create an overflow within the facilities in the same manner as the Nile overflowed in Egypt. Yet the main form of water provision appears to have been rainwater which could drop down from the roofs into the water facilities.<sup>141</sup> The dropping movement of rainwater does not directly imitate the Nile, but rather the teardrops of Isis. As seen in the myth, her tears caused the Nile to rise, which in Greece was recreated by raindrops causing water to rise in the water facilities. Due to this, water in the Greek water facilities likely resembled the tears of Isis, which in turn recreated the inundation of the Nile. The Greeks may have adapted the symbolism of the tears of Isis from the myth of Osiris into their own cult based on their cultural memory and due to the lack of rivers which could fulfil the purpose of imitating the Nile.

The performance of the cult by the Greeks can be seen as an expression of Egyptomania as well. As was described by Pausanias and Plutarch, Osiris was mourned during the festival of Isis in both Egypt and Greece. The tears shed by the worshippers were equivalent to the tears shed by Isis. The Greeks clearly used their own perception of what is Egyptian to form their own cult, particularly as regards the role of the Nile.

It is worth noting, however, that not all water facilities were built in conjunction to an Isis sanctuary in Greece, as for instance at Soli and Thera. This raises the question how such water facilities fit with the assumption that the water facilities resemble Isis' tears and the inundation. One possible answer is that it was not deemed necessary for the cult of Isis to construct its own water installations, which can be explained through the fact that even the water facilities originally constructed for another cult likely were filled in the same manner, i.e. rainwater, and that the Isis worshippers could get a familiar impression even from those water facilities.

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<sup>137</sup> Barret 2011, 5–6; Solmsen 1979, 5; Woolf 2011, 75.

<sup>138</sup> Paus. 10.32.13.

<sup>139</sup> Plut. *Is. Os.* 69.

<sup>140</sup> Stavrianopoulou 2007, 217.

<sup>141</sup> Wild 1981, 43.

## 6. Conclusion

It is apparent after surveying all the Isis sanctuaries in Hellenistic Greece that there is a clear link between the water installations and the Isis sanctuaries, but there is no pattern in where the water installations were situated in relation to the Isis sanctuary. The water installations at Delos are located on the eastern side of the central temple, whereas at Eretria to the south-west, and at Gortyn to the south of the central temple. In the case of Priene, Cyme and Thessalonica is it even uncertain where, and if, a water installation was present. Based on this archaeological evidence one can conclude that there is no direct correlation with the placement of water installations and their symbolic meaning, and they were likely to have been positioned based on practical reasons, such as on ease of accessibility to the worshippers and the natural environment of the site. In addition, it can also be noted that the different types of water installations suggest that their appearance does not carry a religious meaning. This indicates that the water crypts, albeit being similar to the Egyptian Nilometers, were not meant to replicate the Egyptian structures. If this were the case, it would be expected that the other sanctuaries would have similar installations. For this reason, is it assumable that the design of the water installations was not of importance to the cult of Isis in Greece. Therefore, a religious symbolism of the water facilities must be sought elsewhere.

The sanctuary at Delos A, and perhaps at Dion, was the only one that appears to have been provisioned with water from a river. As was discussed in Chapter 4, a general assumption for cisterns is that they are filled with rainwater. Owing to the lack of rivers in close proximity to the remaining sanctuaries is it probable they were provisioned through the means of rainwater. This would suggest that how water was provisioned to the sanctuary was of greater importance than the water installation's location and design, and that the water installations were an expression of Egyptomania. The Greeks used their own interpretation of the Nile and the ancient Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis to form the cult and the symbolism of water. Rainwater filling the water installations fits the assumption that the Nile was filled with the tears Isis shed when she mourned the death of her husband Osiris. This is also implied by the performance of the festival of Isis. In both Egypt and Greece, they mourn the death of Osiris, which suggests that the festival was performed in Egypt when the Nile had flooded and in Greece when water in the water installations had risen. For this reason, one can conclude that the water in the water facilities in Greece resembled the tears of Isis and that the provision of water carried the most significant religious meaning.

If the Greeks indeed adapted the Osirian myth from Egypt into their own Isis cult and used this to give a religious symbolism to water, it appears as if the cult of Isis in Greece was meant to resemble the Egyptian cult of Isis. This also becomes apparent in the regulation recorded at Priene and the procession by the Isis worshippers. The presence of an Egyptian priest in the cult of Isis in Greece suggests the Greeks intended to make the cult as authentic as possible. The Isis worshippers themselves also followed the Egyptian customs by rattling sistra and men shaving their heads. That the Greeks recreated Egyptian customs and ceremonies also becomes clear from Plutarch's account on the Greek ceremonies of the Isis cult. From the ancient texts it also becomes evident that the Greek were fascinated by Egypt, its religion and the Nile which, in turn, was expressed in the cult of Isis in Greece in the form of Egyptomania. The Nile was present through the water facilities, the Greeks followed the Egyptian customs of the performance of the cult and used an Egyptian priest for the sacrificial ceremonies.

Egyptomania can also possibly be expressed through the iconography relating to the cult. Although, the amount of published archaeological material from Isis sanctuaries in Greece are

not sufficient enough to fully establish such a conclusion, the three examples discussed in Chapter 3 provide an indication that iconography in the Greek Isis cult was Egyptian in character. This becomes particularly clear in the statues uncovered at Rhodes (*Figs. 11. and 12.*). The male statue evidently is formed after Egyptian standards. In addition, the head of Horus has a clear link to Isis and Egypt as well. These two finds give the impression that the Greeks used their impression of the Osirian myth, formed their own cultural memory after this, and adapted it into their own Isis cult as an expression of Egyptomania.

The statue of Harpocrates, however, is worth commenting on and to what degree this statue should be considered Egyptian. Evidently, he replaced Horus as the son of Osiris and Isis when Egypt fell under Ptolemaic rule. For this reason, it perhaps is not entirely correct to regard this statue as fully Egyptian. Harpocrates was the result of Ptolemy I Soter's campaign to merge the Egyptian and Greek culture together and, therefore, is a Greek invention. However, Ptolemy I Soter was able to place the Greek culture in a broader cultural aspect and, through the invention of Serapis and the triad consisting of Isis and Harpocrates, linked both the Greek and Egyptian culture together and created new historical memories for both. For this reason, the occurrence of Harpocrates in the Isis cult in Greece is the result of the Greek's ability to link their own culture to the Egyptian.

In conclusion, the establishment of the cult of Isis and the water facilities in Greece was an expression of Egyptomania, which was reflected in a Greek consciousness of the role Isis has in Egyptian religion. Through this awareness, the Greeks created their own memories of Isis and the myth and formed their own cult after this. In addition, the cult of Isis in Greece shows a clear ability by the Greeks that they could link their own cultural heritage to the Egyptian, which contributed to the popularity of Isis amongst the Greek and the founding of eleven sanctuaries in Greece during the Hellenistic period.

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