

popular response which the goddess Arsinoe enjoyed. In the end, both phenomena may perhaps be viewed as special cases in the development of the Egyptian cult of the Ptolemies.

Aside from what was prescribed in the Canopus Decree, other monuments also indicate that distinct changes within the Egyptian cult of the king took place under Ptolemy III. These were developments analogous to those taking place in the Alexandrian dynastic cult.²⁰⁰

The first item to be mentioned are the scenes of ancestor-worship found on temple reliefs from Ptolemy III to IX which are a continuation of an ancient Egyptian tradition, which we know particularly from the New Kingdom period. In these scenes the deceased royal couples, beginning with Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II,²⁰¹ are worshipped as those who pass on a hereditary royal power with rites including incense-burning, libations or a sacrificial animal. In this way, the divine powers of the dead king or of the deceased royal couple are passed on to the new ruling pair. Other representations associated with these scenes of the transferral of power are meant to show that the gods countenance what has transpired. In these illustrations, the years of his reign are written for the ruling king by a deity on a palm frond following an ancient tradition; the act of transferral is testimony to the fact that the powers at work in the royal pair (their ka's) may be addressed as 'divine'.²⁰² The sacrifice before the ancestors, who from time to time are characterized as 'co-gods' (zšw.n.sn = θεοὶ σύνναοι) and this representation is found even in the inner sanctum in Edfu.

Accordingly, from the rule of Ptolemy III, the divinity of the Ptolemies is sometimes represented by including them among the ancient Egyptian gods. Thus, on the gate of Euergetes in Karnak,²⁰³ the first and second Ptolemaic couples are attached as σύνναοι to the two processions of the gods worshipping the moon. We also find deceased and living Ptolemies among the gods displayed on the upper fields of the stele from Kom-el-Hisn (the Canopus Decree)²⁰⁴ (Fig. 3.6).

It is clear that the erection of statues of the Ptolemies in Egyptian temples²⁰⁵ is in itself not sufficient proof of a change in the Egyptian cult of the king. Nevertheless, the numerous titles of local priests from all Egypt, but in particular of the high priest of Ptah in Memphis, indicate that a new ruler worship had been instituted in Egyptian sanctuaries, reminiscent of Alexandrian dynastic cults. This ruler worship was a further development of the existing cults for ancient Egyptian pharaohs²⁰⁶ and, beginning with Ptolemy III, was based on the Egyptian cult of statues. The relevant priestly titles indicate that the priest not only was in service to one or more Egyptian deities, he also administered the cult of the ruling Theoi Euergetai;²⁰⁷ in addition, the ruling Ptolemaic couple were added to the title as Theoi Philopatores, Epiphaneis, etc. until the end of the Ptolemaic period. The series of titles was thus formed in a similar fashion to that of the priests of Alexander.²⁰⁸ Occasionally, precedence was given to the Theoi Adelphoi as the first couple, who were already being worshipped in the native Egyptian

religious environment.²⁰⁹ The practice of this local dynastic cult, whose origins lay in the daily and festival cultic activities for the statues of the Ptolemies, was attached to the synods of the priests, certainly as a result of pressure from the government. Accordingly, the Canopus Decree includes the resolution that all w^{cb} priests had to be called 'w^{cbw} of the Theoi Euergetai';²¹⁰ later decrees²¹¹ prescribed the addition of the living royal couple.²¹² In contrast with the Alexandrian dynastic cult, where the dead Alexander was the origin and focal point of the cult, the Ptolemies were made synnaoi of the local gods in native sanctuaries all over the country. Alexander, on the other hand, was always excluded there. An Alexander cult in the chora is attested only from the second century.²¹³

The ideological connection between the Hellenistic and ancient Egyptian figures of the king

The evolution of the Egyptian Ptolemaic cult, which developed along parallel lines to the Alexandrian dynastic cult, leads us to conclude that it became successful with the aid of the Egyptian priesthood who made the divinity of the dynasty acceptable not only in Greek but also in Egyptian circles.

The task of combining the many ideal characteristics of the basileus with the image of the pharaoh, who was defined by his religious functions and mythical role, was easy enough. On the one hand, the traditional qualities of the pharaoh had to be interpreted in a Greek manner. In this regard, Theocritus (*Id.* XVII) lauded Ptolemy II as a pharaonic conqueror of foreign countries. As such Ptolemy III bears the title of 'Great King' (βασιλεὺς μέγας)²¹⁴ on a propagandistic inscription from Adulis; addressing him by this title, an Egyptian wishes the king world domination in a written petition.²¹⁵ The same term is found again in Greek versions of the most common Egyptian royal title, that is in the title 'king of Upper and Lower Egypt' (nswt bjtj), first attested in the Raphia Decree of 217.²¹⁶ In his hymn to Delos (IV.160-195), Callimachus appropriates the ideas behind the Egyptian royal titulary for his own poetic purposes: he places Ptolemy II and Apollo in close relation to each other and so casts the victorious Horus-King in the role of the triumphant Apollo. In this way, he attempts to synthesize Egyptian and Greek concepts and rituals.²¹⁷

Conversely, the Greek cult names of the Ptolemies were also translated into Egyptian and could be understood in terms of the pharaoh's traditional cultic role.²¹⁸ *Soter* could thus refer to the 'saving' and 'protecting' aspects of the Horus-King. Similarly, *Euergetes* touched upon the ancient Egyptian idea of 'euergetism' which in the Canopus Decree is defined as the care of the temples and the gods.²¹⁹ Arsinoe II bore the name *Philadelphos* perhaps already during her lifetime and certainly she received it as a cult title after her death; its use as a title for Ptolemy II is attested only from the second century. Among members of the Ptolemaic dynasty, this title was assigned for the first time to Arsinoe II and was later taken up by other Hellenistic

royal families. It served to communicate to the subjects the high moral worth of sibling affection, loyalty and harmony, all of which the royal house claimed to uphold.²²⁰ In the case of the second Ptolemaic couple,²²¹ the title *Philadelphos* made reference to the sibling-marriage which itself was most often apostrophized with the cultic title of *Theoi Adelphei*. It was the court's propagandist aim²²² that the marriage remind the Greeks of Zeus and Hera; from an Egyptian point of view this was a clear reference to Isis and Osiris and to the exemplary bond of love and matrimony between the two. It is worth noting, however, that although sibling-marriages did occur at the ancient Egyptian court, there is no evidence from that time of a royal marriage between full brother and sister.²²³ The marriage between Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II, therefore, represented for the Egyptians a purer imitation of Isis and Osiris than that of their predecessors at the ancient Egyptian court. As we have seen in the previous section, beginning with Ptolemy III at the latest, the names given to the Ptolemaic couples were genuine cult titles, widely current even in the native Egyptian milieu.²²⁴

This overview of the religious policy of the Ptolemies shows us that they at once followed ancient Egyptian and Greco-Hellenistic traditions and attempted to synthesize the two. The Hellenistic cult of Sarapis was the natural result of such an attempt. Despite the great importance of the Alexandrian Serapeum, Sarapis never became an imperial god of the Ptolemies. Instead, further financing of the cult was terminated after Ptolemy IV because of its limited appeal to the native Egyptian population. Initiatives independent of those of the dynasty were responsible for the worldwide fame of the religion of Isis and Sarapis.

It thus remains the case that the kingship was for all peoples of the kingdom the only element of unity in all areas of culture and religion. For this reason, the kingship was given an exalted religious status and, in fact, became the focal point for all initiatives in religious policy. As a means of strengthening this elevated position, the king supported the cults of the gods, ancient Egyptian as well as Greek (especially the cult of Dionysos but also of Aphrodite), because of their ideological connection with the kingship.

Notes

- 1 On the more than ten generations of the family of the high priest of Memphis which are attested from Ptolemy I to Augustus: Quaegebeur (1980); Reymond (1981); Thompson, D. J. (1988), 138–146.
- 2 See p. 90f. (Hephaestion and Ptolemy I).
- 3 On this see provisionally T. Holm-Rasmussen, 'Some monuments of the last pharaoh viewed in the light of contemporary ideology', *Hafnia* 10, 1985, 7–23.
- 4 The halting of Persian preparations for an invasion of Egypt in 359 could also be viewed as a triumph of Nectanebo.
- 5 An interesting side-comment is that the sarcophagus of Nectanebo II (today in the BM) in which the king was probably never buried, had at one time been revered as the tomb of Alexander the Great; it was situated in Alexandria in

the mosque of Athanasius. It is unknown whether the sarcophagus had truly served for a time as the dead Alexander's resting place. On this see E. D. Clarke, *The Tomb of Alexander the Great*, Cambridge 1805 (*non vidi*); H. Jenni, *Das Dekorationsprogramm des Sarkophages Nectanebos II*, Geneva 1986.

- 6 With regard to the legend of Alexander as the son of Nectanebo II, one may note the interesting detail that the oldest son of this last native pharaoh returned to Egypt after the turmoil had passed and still lived in Iseion (Behbeit el-Hagar, Delta) as an esteemed person at the start of the Ptolemaic period; cf. J. J. Clère, 'Une statuette du fils aîné du roi Nectanebô', *REG*, 1951, 135–156; Huß (1991, 1), 57.
- 7 The royal names discussed here and their parallels found in past Egyptian history can be seen in Beckerath (1984); id.: *LÄ* III. 1980, 542–556 (s.v. königsnamen); D. Kurth, *LÄ* IV.1982, 1193–1196 (s.v. Ptolemaios). On the development of the titulature of Alexander cf. Burstein (1991).
- 8 Cf. Kuhlmann (1988), 152. Similar conclusions can also be made for the throne name of Dareios I, 'beloved of Amun-Re': Dareios also had great need of legitimization from the gods.
- 9 See p. 83f.
- 10 Ramses VII, Sheshonk I, Osorkon II.
- 11 See p. 110.
- 12 L. Koenen, *ZPE* 54, 1984, 11, note 12.
- 13 Bresciani (1969), 561f.
- 14 Satrap Stele, l.3–4 = Urk. II.14.7–11.
- 15 Pithom Stele, l. 11–15 = Urk. II.91–94. The provenance of the Pithom Stele is the biblical Pithom now identified as Tell el-Mashuta in Wadi Tumilat (on this see p. 56 with note 114); it was erected in the city's temple of Atum in the twenty-first year of Ptolemy II evidently on the occasion of his coronation jubilee. The stele itself: see Kamal (1904–5), no. 22183; Urk. II.81–105; Roeder (1959), 108–128 (trans.); Grzybek (1990), 67–112. See the other references to the stele in the third index to this book.
- 16 Canopus Decree, l.6 = Urk. II.128f.; OGIS I.54.20–22 (see p. 71 with note 73).
- 17 See p. 111.
- 18 Raphia Decree, l.21–22, following Thissen (1966), 17, 60; on the decree see p. 162.
- 19 Orth (1977), 19.
- 20 Kamal (1904–5), no. 22182; Urk. II.11–22; Roeder (1959), 97–106 (trans.); U. Kaplony-Heckel, in *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, ed. O. Kaiser, I, Gütersloh 1982–5, 613–619; Goedicke (1985); Winnicki (1991, 1), 164–185.
- 21 See index three s.v. Satrap Stele.
- 22 See p. 5, note 1 as an introduction. Arses (according to Goedicke's reading, last note) was the son and successor of Artaxerxes III Ochus; he ruled from about November 338 to June 336.
- 23 The stele: Kamal (1904–5), no. 22181; Urk. II.28–54; Roeder (1959), 168–188; H. de Meulenaere, P. MacKay, Mendes II, Warminster 1976, 174–177, 205f. (no. 111), pl. 31; the passage mentioned: lines 6–10 = Urk. II.36–38. The stele at one time stood in the temple of the ram god of Mendes and was made after 264 BC on the occasion of the instalment of a new ram.

The royal god Apis, to whom the bull Apis belonged as a ritual beast, went through various transformations in theological form from the time of the New Kingdom. Multitudes of Apis bulls were transmuted after their death into the god of the underworld Osiris-Apis (Egyptian Wsjr-Hp, in Greek Ὅσορῶπις or the like), a form of Osiris unique to Memphis. Theologians distinguished this form from that of the solar, royal Apis who is the god of heaven (Apis-Osiris).¹²⁸ This god, whose complex nature and mysterious transformations only the Egyptian scholars could fully appreciate, had already been Hellenized in the early years of Ptolemy I's satrapy. In this Hellenization, he assumed the names, characteristics and powers typical of Greek gods and came to be portrayed after the Greek fashion.

The Egyptian priest and historian Manetho is said to have made an important contribution to the creation and interpretation of the new cultic figure Sarapis¹²⁹ (Plu. *de Iside* 28).¹³⁰ While Egyptian theology constructed Sarapis from his roles of Osiris and Apis as king and fertility god respectively as well as from Osiris' role in particular as lord of the underworld, from a Greek perspective, the god was seen as Dionysos in his guise as chthonic god and as Zeus-Hades.¹³¹ Coins of Ptolemy II-IV illustrate his relation to Osiris by depicting Sarapis as Zeus with the Atef crown.¹³² The Roman imperial copy from Alexandria of the famous, indeed canonical, cult image of Sarapis, which portrays him as a paternal god (seated, bearded, with a kalathos on his head) was ascribed to the sculptor Bryaxis from the second half of the fourth century.

In keeping with his religious connection to Osiris, Sarapis was also associated with Isis to whom Alexander had already dedicated a temple in Alexandria.¹³³ Now Ptolemy I had the first Serapeum of Alexandria constructed on Rhakotis hill, also in Alexandria (see Map 3). Since Sarapis was the god of the king and Isis was conceived of as a queen by Egyptians, it is hardly surprising that the divine pair rose quickly to become gods of the Ptolemaic dynasty.¹³⁴ An altar in the oldest temenos of the Serapeum is dedicated to the second Ptolemaic couple as '(descendants) of the Theoi Soteres'.¹³⁵ Euergetes pursued the religious policy of his grandfather and initiated the large-scale new building of the Hellenistic Serapeum with cellae for Sarapis and Isis, the Nilometer, as well as two subterranean galleries which suggest Egyptian influences on the cult and, finally, a library.¹³⁶ The bilingual foundation plaques of the sanctuary of Sarapis indicate that the Egyptian name Osiris-Apis was the official counterpart of the Greek. The god remained linked to the Ptolemaic royal family in the new sanctuary, as the images of the third and fourth Ptolemies erected there confirm.¹³⁷

On the one hand, Isis and Sarapis were seen as Hellenistic gods integrated into the Greek world but, on the other, they were also viewed as ancient Egyptian divinities. Their dual nature thus corresponded nicely to the two-fold aspect of the Ptolemaic king. For the Egyptians, Sarapis was and remained the form attributed to Osiris in Memphis or merely the Greek name for the ancient Osiris. Contrary to the expectations of the religious policy which engendered it, there was little response in Egypt to the figure of Sarapis. By

contrast, the religion of Isis and Sarapis spread quickly throughout the eastern Mediterranean from the end of the fourth century onwards. Interestingly enough, this was accomplished mostly through private initiative even outside the kingdom of the Ptolemies and of the other Hellenistic realms.¹³⁸ Within the Ptolemaic empire (Thera and Cyprus), there is occasional evidence of the association of this cult with the cult of the Ptolemies.¹³⁹

The queen as Egyptian and Greek goddess

Arsinoe II

From the Mendes Stele¹⁴⁰ (Fig. 3.3), we learn that the deceased Arsinoe was received into the world of the immortals as a *goddess* and as *living Ba* (roughly, a powerful divine being). Already in her lifetime, she had been the priestess of the ram of Mendes. This transformation followed as a result of the ancient Egyptian burial and deification rites which had been performed for Arsinoe in Mendes. Ptolemy thereupon decreed that her image be placed in all of the houses of the gods (ḥwt-ntr). Consequently, statues of the new goddess were made in every nome. She herself was given the cult name of 'beloved of the ram,¹⁴¹ brother-loving goddess,¹⁴² Arsinoe'.¹⁴³

This meant that from now on Arsinoe II would be placed in all of the country's sanctuaries beside the main god as a guest-goddess (in Greek: σύνναος θεά). She was placed next to the ram of Mendes, Ptah in Memphis, Sobek in the Fayum, to name only a few.¹⁴⁴ The upper field of the Mendes Stele illustrates this fact: the royal family¹⁴⁵ is shown offering before the gods of Mendes with the goddess Arsinoe among them, thus implying that Arsinoe is fictitiously offering to herself.¹⁴⁶ In addition, Ptolemy II is himself prominent in the worship of the new goddess on Egyptian reliefs and stelae;¹⁴⁷ perhaps the loveliest piece depicting such a scene is the gate of Philadelphos in front of the first Pylon of Philae (Fig. 9.1, O), where in one scene the king sacrifices to Isis and Arsinoe (Fig. 3.5) and in another to Nephthys and Arsinoe.¹⁴⁸

It is important to understand that the decision to deify the deceased Arsinoe II as a measure of religious policy did not go against ancient Egyptian tradition in any fundamental way, despite the spectacular manner in which it was carried out. The Mendes Stele shows quite clearly that the priests considered the erection of statues of Arsinoe in the temples to be quite acceptable. There is proof that in Ptolemaic Memphis itself there were a number of cults for deceased pharaohs each with its own priests. These pharaonic cults include those of Menes, Snofru, Teti, Ramses II, Merenptah, Amasis and of particular importance the one devoted to 'Nectanebo II the falcon'.¹⁴⁹ One could attach oneself to this tradition, as illustrated by the case of the high priest of Ptah, Nesisty II, who in the first half of the third century combined among his many duties that of 'prophet . . . in the shrine of Ramses II' as well as 'prophet of Arsinoe II'.¹⁵⁰



Figure 3.5 Relief from the gate of Philadelphos in front of the first pylon of the temple of Isis at Philae; Ptolemy II with the crown of Upper Egypt sacrifices before the goddesses Isis and Arsinoe II.

In like manner, Ptolemy II had temples constructed exclusively for Arsinoe as an independent Egyptian goddess. For example, in Memphis there was an Egyptian Arsinoeion that was closely connected to the temple of Ptah.¹⁵¹ There, in the third century the high-priest of Ptah was also the priest of Arsinoe. Even in Berenike, which Philadelphos had founded by the Bitter Lakes and named after his daughter, there was an Arsinoeion where the deified queen was worshipped as an Egyptian goddess. To this fact attest the foundation rites carried out by the priests of Atum of Pithom according to ancient Egyptian tradition.¹⁵² Statues of the Theoi Adelphoi were also placed in the sanctuary. This indicates that in Egyptian communities just as in Greek ones the cult of Arsinoe was kept separate from that of the Theoi Adelphoi, although Arsinoe did have some connection to the latter cult.

From an Egyptian point of view, Arsinoe could be identified with Isis in many ways, not only in native Egyptian communities¹⁵³ but even in the more Hellenized environment of Alexandria.¹⁵⁴ Arsinoe's intermediate position as an Egyptian-Greek goddess must have been particularly prominent in the Fayum, where she became the nome-goddess for both ethnic groups in the newly established Arsinoite nome.¹⁵⁵

Along with her elevation to the status of an Egyptian goddess, Arsinoe also became a Greek goddess; this is the subject of Callimachus' poem 'Εκθέωσις Ἀρσινόης' (frag. 228, Pfeiffer). In Alexandria she had an annual eponymous priestess with the title of kanephoros or 'basket-carrier' (κανήφορος Ἀρσινόης Φιλαδέλφου) who is attested from March 269;¹⁵⁶ the kanephoros was from that time on mentioned in documents after the priest of Alexander. A lavish sanctuary was erected on the wharf of the old harbour (Arsinoeion; see Map 3). It is said that the architect planned the construction of a round portrait of Arsinoe made of iron which was to hang in the inner sanctuary suspended by means of magnetism (Plin. *Nat.* XXXIV.148). An obelisk from Heliopolis was placed within the cult precinct (Plin. *Nat.* XXXVI.67–69) to emphasize the Egyptian character of the place. As a Greek goddess, Arsinoe was identified with Hera, Demeter and other goddesses but, above all, with Aphrodite.¹⁵⁷ It was in this connection that the well-known admiral Kallikrates of Samos financed a small sanctuary to her as Aphrodite Euploia, the patroness of sailing, on cape Zephyrion east of Alexandria. The sanctuary was praised in epigrams by Callimachus and other poets of the age.¹⁵⁸

Probably in the wake of Arsinoe, her sister Philotera, who had passed away before her, also obtained her own Egyptian and Greek cults. Nesisty II, in addition to his functions mentioned above, was also 'prophet of the goddess Philotera, daughter of the king and sister of the king'.¹⁵⁹ A woman, Heresankh,¹⁶⁰ is likewise attested as having held the office of this priesthood; she was a member of the family of the high priest of Memphis. The Greek literary tradition mentions the combined worship of both sisters Arsinoe and Philotera (FGrHist. 613 F5). Several sites were named after Philotera, although the list of cities called Arsinoe is about three times as long.¹⁶¹

Philadelphos took every step to ensure that the decree regarding his sister-spouse's deification should be carried out and that the cult should become popular. To this end, coins were minted bearing the portrait of the queen, on which she wears the ram's horns of Amun, among other features. These representations of her on coins reveal a carefully thought-out iconography of the deification which would have been equally significant for both the Egyptians and the Greeks.¹⁶² To ensure that the cult was on a sound economic footing, beginning in 263, the king allotted a considerable portion of the religious tax (apomoira), which was raised on the fruit and vineyard production of the entire country, to the cult of Arsinoe.¹⁶³ The success of this religious policy can be seen from the number of cult sites; more than 25 are

attested to. Naturally enough, the majority of these are in the north, but Thebes is also represented. In Memphis, the loyalty and co-operation of the priesthoods is evident in the widespread use of 'Arsinoe' and 'Berenike'¹⁶⁴ as proper names for women. These are the only two Greco-Macedonian names to be found among the families of Egyptian priests.

Festivals in honour of the goddess Arsinoe, known as Arsinoeia, served to enhance her popularity.¹⁶⁵ These took place both in the rural areas (Chora) as well as in Alexandria. In the capital, a procession led by the kanephoros took place during the festival; according to one source, on those streets where the procession bearing the cult image of Arsinoe passed, residents erected their own altars and brought victims for sacrifice.¹⁶⁶ There was a certain amount of coercion implicit in these festivities, since by their participation people demonstrated their loyalty to the royal house.

The cult of Arsinoe as the patroness of sailing established itself quickly in numerous harbour-cities of the eastern Mediterranean. The cities were either a part of the empire or were in places where the Ptolemaic fleet could make their presence felt. This was particularly true of the cities named Arsinoe.¹⁶⁷ At Kition on the island of Cyprus, an eponymous kanephoros for Arsinoe was established whose presence is confirmed from 255/4.¹⁶⁸ On the island of Delos, the nesiarch Hermias established a festival called Philadelphieia in which he associated Arsinoe Philadelphos with Apollo, Artemis and Leto;¹⁶⁹ epigraphic sources also testify to a Philadelphieion which was probably built on the island soon after the death of the queen.¹⁷⁰ In addition, there is evidence for the celebration of the Arsinoeia on the island of Thera as of the reign of Ptolemy II/III.¹⁷¹ Even outside Egypt, Arsinoe was often worshipped together with Isis and Sarapis.¹⁷² The best evidence that the new goddess actually had an impact on the emotional lives of people is furnished by the dedication plaques and house altars on which her name is inscribed; many have been found on sites throughout the Aegean and on the island of Cyprus.¹⁷³

Through the posthumous deification of Arsinoe II, Ptolemy II succeeded in creating a goddess who had emerged from the ruling family and who would be recognized in all of the eastern Mediterranean basin. At the same time, the dynasty began its first and most successful attempt at introducing a deceased member of the family into the Egyptian pantheon. The decree raising Arsinoe's status to that of a *σύνναος* in the temples of the native gods indicates that her cult was not intended as just another addition to those already in existence. In comparison with this, the move to associate Arsinoe with Isis was only of secondary importance and was probably meant to widen her significance. The identification with Aphrodite will have served a similar function within the framework of Greek religion. There, a strong religious need, which conveniently became entwined with the religious policy of the Ptolemaic state, was a driving force in the widespread diffusion of Arsinoe's cult.

Berenike II

Apart from the worship of Berenike II in conjunction with her spouse, her individual cult was far less significant than that of Arsinoe II. Its development, however, already began during her lifetime.¹⁷⁴ When Ptolemy III embarked on the Third Syrian War, Berenike pledged that she would dedicate a lock of her hair to the gods in the temple of Arsinoe on Cape Zephyrion, should the king return safely. She fulfilled her promise but the lock disappeared on the next day. The mathematician and astronomer, Konon of Samos,¹⁷⁵ thereupon found the lock once again in the form of a celestial constellation (Call. 'Lock of Berenike': frg. 110 Pf.: Catul. 66).¹⁷⁶ In performing this act, Berenike II was not only inspired by Greek tradition¹⁷⁷ but was also influenced by certain deeds attributed to Isis in Egyptian mythology. The story was that in Koptos Isis had dedicated a lock of hair while mourning her husband, Osiris (Plu. *De Iside* 14). Indeed, a thick tuft of hair was shown as a relic to visitors to Koptos. For this reason, Isis of Koptos was viewed in the Greco-Egyptian period as the 'goddess of hair-growth (τρίχωμα)'; the lock of Isis signified resurrection and rebirth.¹⁷⁸ To mark the favourable outcome of the Third Syrian War, seals were made in the Greek style depicting the head of Berenike. The queen who, from 243 was named Thea Euergetis, was depicted with shorn hair and bearing the fertility attributes of Demeter-Isis.¹⁷⁹ In addition, in Callimachus' poem the 'Victory of Berenike'¹⁸⁰ the queen was associated with Io, the beloved of Zeus who had been driven to Egypt. This reference also connected her to the world of the gods, since Io had long since been identified with Isis (Hdt. II.41.2; Diod. I.24.8).

There is reliable evidence for the cult of a Berenike in the Fayum during the reign of Ptolemy III which was distinct from that of the king; presumably Berenike II is meant, since the sources use the cult name 'Aphrodite'¹⁸¹ in reference to her and they also equate her with 'Isis, mother of the gods'.¹⁸²

The continuation of the cult of Berenike II after her death as 'benevolent goddess' as well as as '(Isis) protectress in disasters at sea' (*σώζουσα*) must be placed in the period from Ptolemy IV onwards.¹⁸³ Apart from the Egyptian forms of common cult for the Ptolemaic couple, the worship of Berenike II remained within a Greek setting, even when she was identified with Isis.

The priestly Decree of Canopus and the development of the Egyptian cult of the king to the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies

In the second half of the third century, it was the duty of the high-ranking Egyptian priests to come from all parts of the country once a year and gather at the king's court;¹⁸⁴ the dates were fixed according to special events such as the coronation of the king, his birthday, a victory celebration or festivals of national importance. At these synods, matters regarding cults and temple organization were primarily discussed. With the growing importance of the