Ptolemaic religious identity: A comparative study of the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex

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1. Introduction

1.1 Research questions and methodology

In this thesis my aim is to analyze architectural elements from two Ptolemaic temple sites in order to determine which aspects of the identities of the rulers who built the temples can be discerned from them. I will do this by studying selected architectural elements from the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex. These temple complexes are both located in different regions of Egypt, with the Serapeum being located in Lower Egypt and the Philae temple complex in Upper Egypt. I believe this difference in geographical locations may have influenced decisions made regarding the representation of identity during the building of the temple complexes. Additionally, a brief look at both temple complexes shows promising differences in both architecture and decorative elements. I will analyze both temple complexes based on visual style and their historical and material context. These elements include the birth house and the temple of Isis at the Philae temple complex and the foundations and fragmentary remains of the Ptolemaic Serapeum of Alexandria. These structures and elements were built between 285 and 221 BCE. Finally, I will set these elements side by side in a comparative analysis and discuss what the analysis reveals about the identities of both the rulers and citizens of Egypt during the reigns of Ptolemy II and III respectively, as well as the relationship between the rulers and citizens of Ptolemaic Egypt. During their almost three centuries of rule, the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt had many a temple built and decorated. Through the art and architecture of these temples, the Ptolemies expressed their identity. When studying such temples, their material culture is often categorized as ‘Greek’ or ‘Egyptian’ based on style. But what we call ‘Greek’ and ‘Egyptian’ material culture is not necessarily representative of ethnic identities. Rather, it is a scholarly shorthand for a group of elements originating from particular geographic regions under specific circumstances (Landvatter, 2018, p. 201). Research into identity based on architecture in Ptolemaic Egypt has been carried out by Landvatter (2018) in his chapter on identity and cross-cultural interaction in cremation contexts in Ptolemaic Alexandria. Cole (2022) has carried out research on identity in Ptolemaic Egypt based on the architecture and interior decoration of elite households. I believe that analyzing temple architecture in a similar manner to Landvatter and Cole may add interesting insights to the research surrounding Ptolemaic identity, particularly because of its religious context.

Based on this, my research questions are as follows:

- What architectural styles can be identified in the enclosure and temple of Isis in the Philae complex?
- What architectural styles can be identified in the foundations of the enclosure and temple of Serapis found at the Serapeum of Alexandria?
- What differences and similarities in architectural style can be seen when comparing architectural elements of the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex?
- How can these differences and/or similarities in architectural style be explained?
- What can the architectural styles used in the enclosure and Isis temple of Philae and the Serapeum of Alexandria tell us about identity in a religious context during the reign of Ptolemy II and Ptolemy III?

1.2 Introduction to the Serapeum of Alexandria

McKenzie et al (2004, p. 73) stated that the Serapeum or Sarapeion was Alexandria's most important sanctuary, and one of the most famous pagan sanctuaries of antiquity. It functioned as the center of the cult of Serapis, which spread widely across the Mediterranean during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. I will delve deeper into the cult itself in Chapter 2.

Foundation plaques found at the site indicate the Temple and Sacred Enclosure for Serapis were built during the reign of Ptolemy III, somewhere between 247 and 221 BCE. It was located in the old district of Rhacotis, which was later integrated into the new city of Alexandria. The site contained a main temple dedicated to Serapis along with other structures found before and during the most recent excavations carried out by Alan Rowe during World War II. Older foundations were found by Rowe as well, but it is not known for certain when these were built and by whom (van der Molen, 2019, p. 3-4).

Aside from its main temple, the Serapeum also contained a temple dedicated to Harpocrates, the son of Isis and Serapis. This temple was thought to function as a birth house and was built under Ptolemy IV. A Nilometer was also present, with a staircase leading down to it (McKenzie et al., 2004, p. 111). The Nilometer would have been used to measure the Nile's water level and its clarity. Based on the foundations of the Serapeum, it would have been a peristyle temple, with a colonnaded porch surrounding a covered, inner sanctuary. During a Jewish revolt under Trajan in 116 CE, the Ptolemaic Serapeum was in part destroyed. New structures were added later on, creating the 'Roman' Serapeum (van der Molen, 2019, p. 7).

I will be focusing my analysis on the foundations and fragments found at the site of the temple of Serapis as built under Ptolemy III.

1.3 Introduction to the Philae temple complex

According to Kockelmann (2012, p. 1), the Philae temple complex was one of the most important cultic centers dedicated to Isis and Osiris in Upper Egypt and Nubia. Nowadays, the site is located on the island of Agilkia, because Philae was submerged after the construction of the Aswan Dam. The site's main building is the Great Temple of Isis, which was built during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE and was decorated during and sometime after the reign of Ptolemy II (285-246 BCE). In the forecourt of the temple of Isis, a Nilometer is present, which was created under Ptolemy VI or VIII (Kockelmann, 2012, p. 1-4). In his report on the temples of Philae, Lyons (1908, p. 13) writes that the original portion of the temple consisted of only two rooms, with a further room added later on the north end. The entirety of the temple was surrounded by a colonnade, with a hall of two columns at the south end, near the main entrance.

The Philae temple complex also contains a small birth house or 'mammisi'. Archaeological evidence shows it was built in at least two major phases, possibly starting during the reign of Ptolemy II and finishing under Ptolemy VIII. The small temple contains three rooms in a row and is enclosed at the sides and back by a colonnade (Haeny, 1985, p. 211).

The oldest structure on the site is the kiosk of Psamtik, built during the Saite Period (664-525 BCE). The site also includes a kiosk built under Nectanebo I (379-363), and a gate, which was later decorated under Ptolemy II. Other notable structures from later in the Ptolemaic period (221-116 BCE) include the forecourt of the temple of Isis, the temple of Imhotep, the temple of the Nubian god Arensnuphis and the temple of Hathor. During Roman times (27 BCE-305 CE), a kiosk to Trajan, a temple to Augustus and a gate to Diocletian were added (Kockelmann, 2012, p. 1-4). Since my focus is on structures and elements implemented by Ptolemy II and III and these structures were not built during their respective reigns, I will not be describing nor analyzing them. I will go into further detail on the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex in Chapter 3 and 4.

1.4 Limitations

I should note that since parts of the Ptolemaic Serapeum of Alexandria were destroyed or reused during the Roman period, there are not as many archaeological remains to be studied

of this site, especially when comparing it to the site of Philae, which contains some of the most intact temples to be found in Egypt. I am aware of the limitations posed by these differences and I aim to keep this in mind during my analysis and comparison of said elements. Additionally, some of the finds from the Serapeum which I will be discussing have some unclarities surrounding them regarding details such as which buildings they belonged to. However, it is clear that these finds were created during the time which I am focusing on, and with the lack of finds in general I will be including such finds.

Next, I should note that for the temple complex of Philae, several Ptolemies seem to have built different architectural parts, based on the inscriptions found on these parts. For the temple of Isis, this means that several inscriptions from different Ptolemies were found throughout the building, making it difficult to determine which parts were built by exactly which Ptolemy. I will try to keep this in mind when analyzing these architectural elements.

Lastly, while I aim to focus on the Ptolemaic Dynasty, several authors whose works I will be using group the Ptolemaic and the Roman period together. In these cases, I will make it clear that the information shared is applicable to both periods.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Identity

2.1.1 Archaeology of identity

According to the *Oxford English dictionary,* identity is 'the quality or condition of being the same in… particular qualities under consideration' (Oxford University Press, n.d.). The term is often connected to concepts such as ethnicity, gender, and religion. The use of the term 'identity' is ambiguous; it can refer to both individual identity and group identity. Identity is not a static thing, as it is constructed through interactions between people. The process of acquiring and maintaining this identity requires agency and choice, in order to define ourselves (Diaz-Andreu et. al, 2005, p. 1).

Smith (2013, Theoretical considerations) states that in the archaeology of today, researchers favor an approach to identity that emphasizes its fluidity and situational character. Concepts like ethnicity, gender and religion are not seen as separate, but as interacting, depending on their context. The concept of individuality is seen as bound to identity, since identity differentiates from person to person. Archaeological theory focuses on the relationship between group identity and individual agency.

2.1.2 Ptolemaic identity

The study of identity in Ptolemaic Egypt is not an entirely new phenomenon. In his book *Ptolemy I and the Transformation of Egypt,* Landvatter (2018, p. 199) writes about the Egyptians and immigrant groups of Alexandria during the 3rd century BCE. He explains that, like the material culture of this place and period, researchers tend to divide its people into 'Greek' and 'Egyptian' categories. But he believes this strict division of ethnic identities would have been unlikely, stating that literary evidence shows Alexandria was quite a heterogenous city. Because of this, he argues that "the relationship between a real 'ethnic' identity and material culture is thus never straightforward, particularly in instances of cross-cultural interaction" (Landvatter, 2018, p. 202). Instead, he focuses on social and individual identity, specifically as manifested in mortuary practices in early Alexandria.

Another author who studied identity in Ptolemaic Egypt is Cole. In her essay, she analyzed the architecture and decoration of elite households, stating that these "allow insights into how members of the household wished to be perceived by visitors and the social practices in which they engaged" (Cole, 2022, p. 1). She advocates for the use of a framework of hybridization

when discussing Greco-Egyptian interactions in the visual culture of Ptolemaic Egypt. This framework emphasizes people and images as active agents in processes of exchange and lived experience. Cole emphasizes that 'hybridization' is different from 'hybridity', which she states assumes a preexisting condition of cultural purity. She also notes the potential usefulness of Stockhammer's notion of cultural entanglements.

In his article on hybridity and entanglement, Stockhammer (2013, p. 12-17) uses the term 'entanglement' instead of hybridity. Entanglement shares the same meaning as hybridity, but Stockhammer wishes to move away from the latter term due to its connection to purity, which is linked to racism and xenophobia. Other authors like Bhabha (1994, p. 7) and Lemos (2023, p. 163-164) discuss problems with the term 'hybridity' as well. They explain how hybridity assumes there being an 'authentic' culture, which draws from colonial perspectives, while according to them we should aim for postcolonial approaches that focus on things like individual agency and cultural interactions. Stockhammer distinguishes two states of entanglement which take place after encountering a foreign object: relational entanglement and material entanglement. Relational entanglement is reached when material is appropriated by other groups and given a new meaning within their worldviews and practices. The material itself remains unchanged. Material entanglement is when a new form of material is created, which combines the foreign with the familiar. According to Cole (2022, p. 2), both of these phenomena occurred in Ptolemaic Egypt. Certain images and practices may have kept their original meaning, while others had their meaning altered. Drawing on Greek and Egyptian influences and Ptolemaic dynastic ideology, new hybridizing forms developed as well.

2.2 Religion and cult

2.2.1 Religion and identity

Rieger (2022, p.727-728) states that "religion is a socio-cultural phenomenon deeply embedded in power relations and thus impacting both social and political structures". She also mentions the importance of religion is a means of establishing identity. It helps people make sense of the world. Furthermore, identity is formed by memories. Such memories can be made through the repetition of religious rituals. These memories can be altered through the addition and deletion of elements to these rituals such as songs, stories, and physical structures like temples. So, religious practices and ideas provide a way to express this process of memorization.

2.2.2 The Ptolemaic ruler cult

When studying the identity of the Ptolemies themselves, it is important to mention their dynastic cult, also referred to as a ruler cult. Ptolemy II Philadelphus established this cult by deifying his father Ptolemy I and his wife. Ptolemy II later declared himself a living god as well. (Wellendorf, 2008, p. 33-34). The new cult played an important role in the politics and religious propaganda of the Ptolemies, essentially legitimizing their rule. The Ptolemaic cult developed in Egyptian temples, based on adopted practices from pharaonic times which were adapted to their new rule (Grabowski, 2014, p. 22-23). The Ptolemies built, restored and administrated temples throughout Egypt. The question is whether they did this out of faith or admiration of Egyptian religion and culture, or to secure their rule, as Egyptian temples and their priests held much power and importance (Wellendorf, 2008, p. 36-38).

Assmann & Frankfurter (2004, p. 156-157) emphasize the function of the divine rulership as a representation of social and political identity. They state that in Egypt, social and political identification focused on the temple and its deity. The religious role of citizens was in being a member of a festive community and participating in feasts celebrated in the form of processions. The role of the deity was political, limited not just to towns and cities, but spanning over the entire country.

2.2.3 The cult of Serapis

The name ‘Serapis’ seems to derive from a combination of the names of the gods Apis and Osiris. To the Egyptians, Osiris was the god of the underworld and fertility, who was paired with his consort Isis. The Egyptian god Apis was a royal god associated with the cult of the bull. It was thought that when the Apis bull died, it was transformed into Osiris-Apis. Alexander the Great worshipped Apis, and the Ptolemies followed his example. The god Osiris-Apis played an important role in legitimizing the Ptolemies. Under Ptolemy I, Osiris-Apis was subjected to a partial ‘interpertatio Graeca’. That is to say, he was not fully equated with any Greek deities, but he did gain aspects and features from Greek deities such as the underworld god Pluto, the father god Zeus, and the fertility god Dionysos. Along with this, his name was Graecised from Osiris-Apis to ‘Serapis’ or ‘Sarapis’. Like Osiris before him, Serapis was placed alongside Isis as his consort. Together, they formed a cosmic divine pair (Pfeiffer, 2008, p. 389-395).

The cult of Serapis adopted elements of Greek mystery cult traditions and incorporated these into its cult rituals. Another Greek influence is the annual replacement of the temple priests in

many cult sites. Egyptian influences can be seen in the use of Egyptian priestly titles, as well as in the training the priests of Serapis received (Pfeiffer, 2008, 392-393).

The appearance of the god Serapis was that of an anthropomorphic being in Greek garb, unlike the theriomorphic (animal-like) depiction of the Apis bull and other Egyptian gods. His hair and beard are curly and unkempt, as opposed to the often stylized facial hair appearing in Egyptian art. These visual elements can be associated with the Greek gods Zeus and Hades. On his head, he often wore a Greek *kalathos,* or a basket. Although he was depicted with an Egyptian *atef* crown of Osiris as well at times, which had feathers at the sides (Murphy, 2021, p. 37-39). Figure 1 shows 2nd-1st century BCE image of Serapis with curly hair and beard, wearing a *kalanthus.*

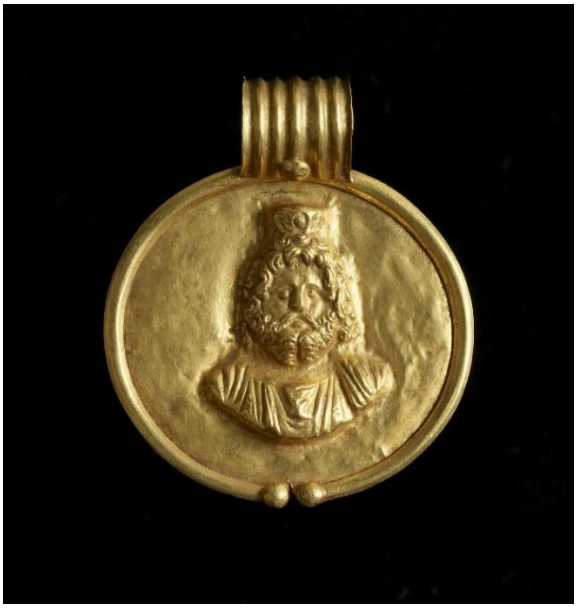

Figure 1 Pendant with image of Serapis. 2nd-1st century BCE. (The Walters Art Museum, 57.1524, https://art.thewalters.org/detail/25933/pendant-with-image-of-sarapis/)

2.2.4 The cult of Isis

The origins of the goddess Isis are unclear. Her origins may lie in the Delta region, since that is where the cult of Osiris originated from, which she was closely tied to. Unfortunately, the origins of Osiris are obscure as well. The Egyptian name for Isis was Aset. The ‘set’ in her name was written with a hieroglyph resembling a throne or a seat. This symbol was used as a crown for the goddess in depictions as well. The use of this symbol suggests a connection to kingship. The earliest appearance of Isis can be found in the *Pyramid Texts* of the 5th Dynasty (2494-2345 BCE).

An important aspect of Isis is her many names. The epithet ‘of many names’ was one attested to several Egyptian deities. However, it became an important feature during the Greco-Roman period, due to its emphasis on her unique position and her large and diverse number of attributes (Jackson, 2019, p. 19). Another important aspect of Isis was her role as a compassionate divine mother to Horus (or Harpocrates during the Greco-Roman period). She was seen as the mother of pharaohs. Aside from her portrayal as a devoted mother to Horus and wife to Osiris, Isis was also the personification of human grief. This can be seen in *The Lamentations of Isis,* found in the before-mentioned *Pyramid Texts,* in which Isis learns of her husband’s death and dismemberment and sheds tears that cause the annual flooding of the river Nile (Schaefers, 2010, p. 4-5).

As mentioned previously, Isis received a new consort – Serapis – during the Ptolemaic Dynasty. During this time, Isis was assimilated with Greek goddesses related to things such as motherhood and fertility, like Demeter, Artemis and Aphrodite. An important change in her cult during this time was its transformation into a mystery religion, which was limited to initiated members only. The Isis cult may have been influenced by the Eleusinian mysteries of Demeter, whom she was assimilated with. Before the Greco-Roman period, Isis’ main cultic responsibility was the revival of the deceased through mourning and the revitalization of the deceased person’s body parts. However, during the Greco-Roman period the mysteries of Isis *before* death gave devotees a possibility to attain a continued existence after death. This shifted the focus of Isis’ cult from Egyptian funerary procedures to initiation, because being initiated became the ticket to the Afterlife. However, Isis’ cult was not limited to its mysteries, as many votive descriptions were found thanking Isis for her help with things like health, wealth and prestige (Bøgh, 2013, 229-230).

Important context when discussing Isis during the Ptolemaic period is the diffusion of her cult across the Mediterranean during the Hellenistic (which also covers the Ptolemaic period) and Roman periods. Since Isis and Serapis formed a divine couple, both were eventually found outside of Egypt. Similar to what we see in Ptolemaic Egypt, the religious cult of Isis overlapped with the political power of the elite (Bricault & Versluys, 2014 p.5-35).

Egyptian depictions of Isis show her as a slender young woman wearing a sheath dress, seated on a throne or chair, wearing the previously mentioned throne-hieroglyph as a crown. Other forms of headwear for Isis include a vulture headdress with a sun disc between two cow horns on top. This symbol came to represent the female divine, as many goddesses adopted it. Another popular depiction of Isis is her nursing Horus. During the Greco-Roman period,

depictions of Isis vary, but both the symbol of the cow horns and sun disc as well as the throne-crown are still present, albeit made smaller. In Greek depictions specifically her hair is depicted as long with thick corkscrew curls, probably echoing ceremonial Egyptian wigs (Schaefers, 2010, p. 22-26) Figure 2 shows a popular depiction from 332-30 BCE of Isis nursing Horus in the form of a statuette. Figure 3 shows Serapis with curly hair and beard, wearing a small *atef* crown, and Isis with curls, wearing a small sun disc with cow horns.

Figure 2 Faience statuette of Isis nursing Horus. 332-30 BCE. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 55.121.5, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/548310)

Figure 3 Silver stater with the busts of Serapis and Isis. Serapis wears a miniature atef crown, Isis wears a miniature horned disc. (American Numismatic Society, 1944.100.77211, https://numismatics.org/collection/1944.100.77211)

2.3 Visual style

'Style' is an important term in archaeology. According to Sanz & Fiore (2014, p. 7104-7105), style on the one hand refers to past human actions perceivable in material culture, and on the other hand it is an analytical tool that allows archaeologists to find continuities and discontinuities in the archaeological record to answer questions about things like distribution and the cultural practices. The creation of artwork involves the manipulation of things like form, color and size in its process, which show patterns that suggest underlying stylistic rules and habits. So, the study of style includes things such as the design of visual motifs, their layout and combinations, the types of objects and contexts in which these images were created and displayed, the functions they may have had for their creators, and the effects they may have had on users and viewers. The use of the term style in archaeology is debated by authors such as Versluys (2017, p. 186-187), who writes that most archaeological interpretations of style do not differentiate between style in the concrete, objective sense and style in the subjective, interpretative sense. Versluys aims to distinguish between these styles, referring to the objective sense of style as 'stylistics' and the subjective sense of style as 'culture-style'. Versluys further explains that stylistics include formal features of expression, and that culture-style refers to common sets of characteristics shared by large groups of artefacts over long

periods of time and/or geographical relations. He also notes how most archaeologists use style as culture-style for interpretation, which they link to only specific ethnic and cultural groups or specific periods. But as mentioned before, culture-styles cover large ranges, so not only specific ethnic and cultural groups and specific periods. Furthermore, styles do not just express cultural meaning, but they are used to create meaning as well. Cultural styles are not simply passive categories, but active categories that create specific images or associations. Versluys argues that culture-styles do not simply represent something specific, but rather they represent their own development through time, which he calls a 'cultural biography'.

Style and identity are connected. Versluys (2017, p. 190) explains how the style of material culture can be seen as a sign of identity and status, and as a way of showing meaning both within and between different cultures. He notes that in archaeology, style used to be connected to a specific culture, but that now you could speak of a connection between a specific style and a specific identity. Versluys also argues for the importance of agency when talking about style, writing about approaches where style is not thought of as being *in* context but *as* context.

3. The Serapeum of Alexandria

3.1 Archaeological overview

The archaeological site of the Serapeum of Alexandria was first recorded in 1866 by Arab astronomer and surveyor Mahmoud-Bey. Parts of the site were then excavated in 1894-1896 by G. Botti, and later more was excavated in 1898-1902 by the Von Sieglin expedition. As previously mentioned, the most recent excavations of the site were conducted by Alan Rowe during World War II (McKenzie et al., 2004, p. 74). Figure 4 shows the recordings and excavations of the site of the Serapeum marked on a plan.

Walls at the site were recorded by Mahmoud-Bey (see Figure 4, north of the site). The enclosure had a colonnaded court (see east side of Figure 4). As mentioned in the introduction, foundation plaques found at the site show that the Temple and Sacred Enclosure for Serapis were built during the reign of Ptolemy III (247 and 221 BCE). A foundation plaque found at the site can be seen in Figure 5. Included in the enclosure was a court (see the innermost part of the enclosure in Figure 4, with two entrances in the east). The temple of Serapis can be seen in the north-eastern part of Figure 4. On the south-eastern side of the temple is a smaller building, thought to have functioned as a temple as well. This smaller building was built under Ptolemy IV. To the left of the temple of Serapis is a building which is positioned at a similar distance to the north-south axis of the colonnaded court as the temple of Serapis, suggesting that it was built at the same time (see 'Stoa-like structure' in Figure 4). The south wall of this building is set back. McKenzie et al. suggest that this was because the larger T-shaped building south of this building (see the 'entry to underground passages' in Figure 4) was probably already standing there, and so the newer building to its north was moved up to make space to walk between the older and newer building. This older building contained a passage which gave access to the 'south building' of Figure 4. The east side of Figure 4 shows a staircase on the hill leading to the enclosure. Parts of this staircase survive. At right angles to this staircase was a small staircase which led down to a Nilometer. This Nilometer was fed by an underground channel, which received water from the Canal of Alexandria. The function of a Nilometer is explored later in this chapter (McKenzie et al., 2004, 81-90).

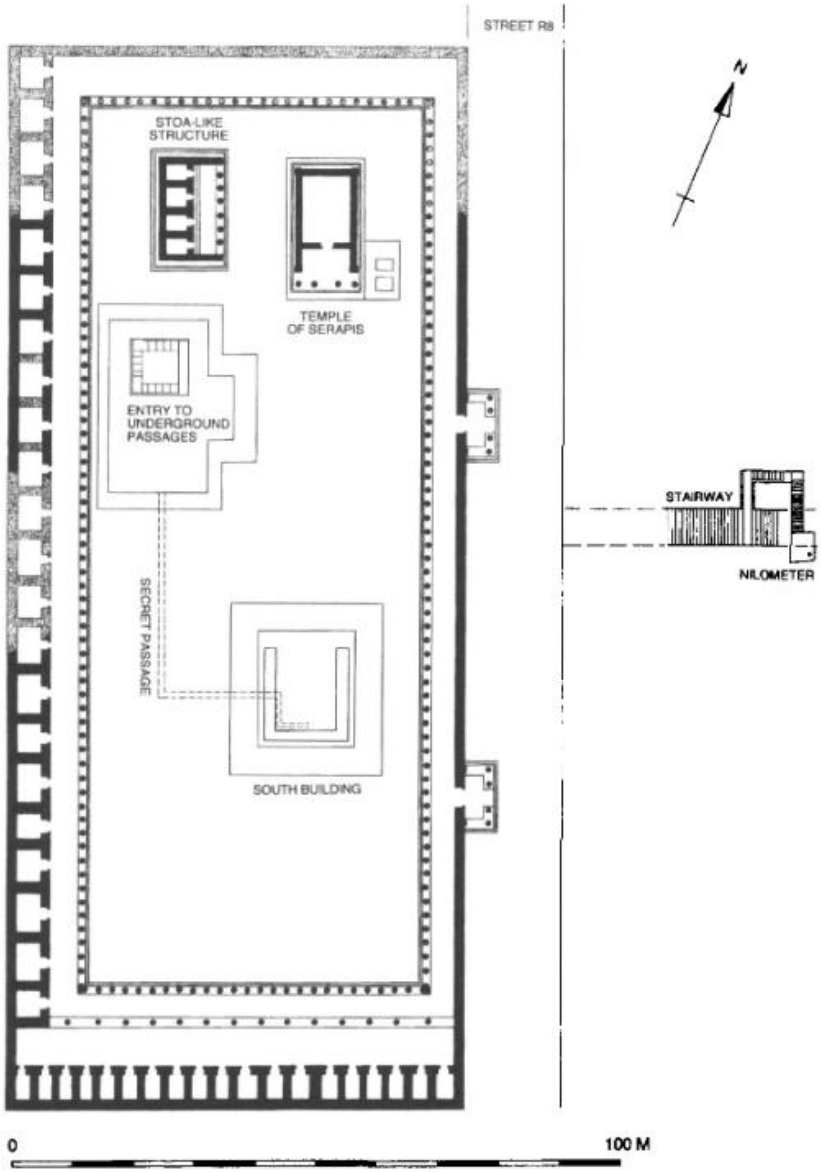

Figure 4 Reconstructed plan of the Ptolemaic Serapeum (McKenzie et al., 2004, p. 85, Figure 8)

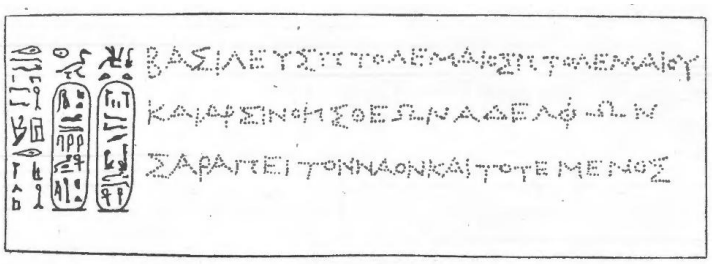

Figure 5 Hieroglyphic and Greek texts on gold foundation plaque from the Serapeum. The texts name Ptolemy III as its creator. (Reg. No. P. 8357)(Rowe and Drioton, p. 8, Figure 2)

Figure 6 Fragments found during the Sieglin expedition. Painted wall-plaster can be seen in the top left. In the lower right, the top part of a triglyph from a Doric frieze can be seen. (McKenzie et al., 2004, Appendix Plate IX)

Figure 7 Fragments of capitals found at the Serapeum site. These limestone fragments were found during the Sieglin expedition (McKenzie, 2004, Appendix Plate X)

3.2 Floorplans

While the temple of Serapis and its enclosure were able to be identified by the foundation plaques they contained, there is still some speculation as to the nature of the building west of the temple of Serapis. Rowe and Rees (1957, p. 491), suggested it may be a temple for Isis. Van der Molen (2019, p. 5) agrees that it may have served as an Iseum. The small building on the south-eastern side of the temple of Serapis built under Ptolemy IV is thought to have been a temple to the god Harpocrates. It may have been a birth house. The function of birth houses is explained later in this chapter.

Rowe and Rees (1957, p. 488-490) believe the passage between the temple of Serapis and the presumed temple of Isis would have been meant for the oracle. They also write that a large marble statue of Serapis likely would have stood within the temple of Serapis. McKenzie et al. (2004, p. 89) state that the south building (see south of Figure 4) does not follow the plan of a traditional temple, whether classical Greek or Egyptian. Suggestions for this larger building include a temple, a tomb or a monumental altar.

3.3 Capitals

The capital fragments found at the site (see Figure 6 and 7) appear to be Corinthian, as can be seen by its floral decoration, including an abacus, volutes, helices, cauliculus and an acanthus leaf (see top capital of Figure 8) This decoration matches that of the fragments of a capital found at the site (see Figure 7). McKenzie et al. categorize the capital fragments (Figure 7) found at the site as being parts of a Type I Alexandrian Corinthian capital in Figure 8, lower left).While it is unsure exactly which building these fragments came from, they were dated to the 3rd century BCE, proving their use during this time at the site. Based on the fragment of a triglyph found at the site (see Figure 6). McKenzie et al. believe a Doric frieze may have been used at the site, although it is not known when or on which building. Figure 8 shows the triglyph and other parts of a doric frieze.

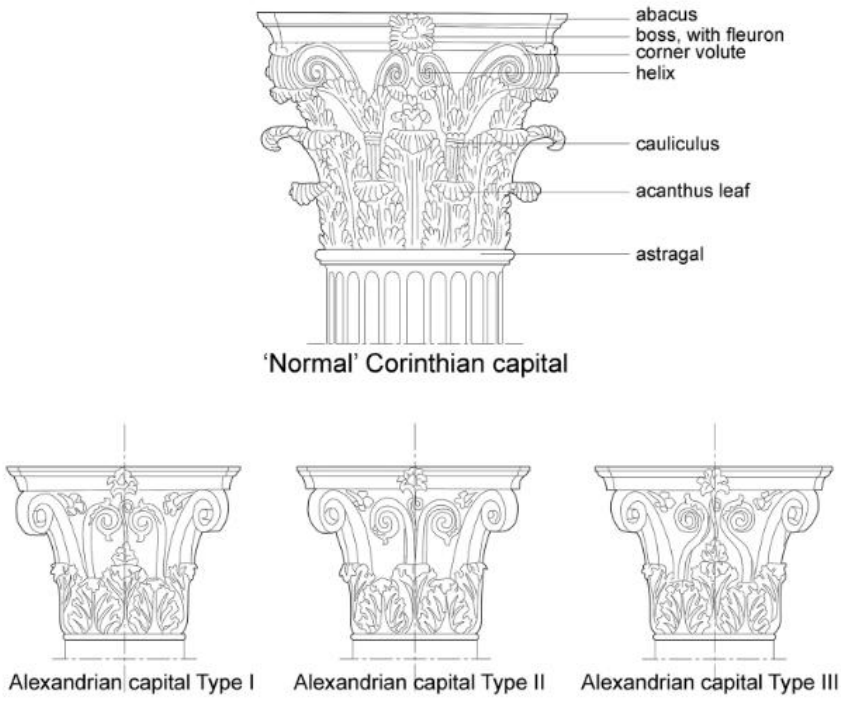

Figure 8 Corinthian capital vs Alexandrian Type capitals. Shown are 'normal' Corinthian capital and Alexandrian capitals of the Types I-III. The different parts of the Corinthian capital are named as well. (Krásniewska, 2022, p. 491, Figure 8)

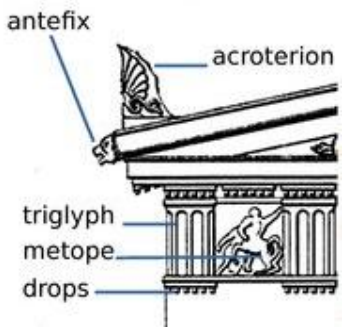

Figure 9 Doric frieze. The alternating triglyph and metopes are marked. (Paolo Villa, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ARCHITECTURE_ORDERS_Greeks_Etruscan_Roman_%28Doric_Ionic_Corinthian_Tuscan_Composite%29_by_Paolo_Villa_ENG_edition.pdf)

According to McKenzie et al. (2004, p. 86), the Temple of Serapis was depicted in Roman coins dating from Trajan to Marcus Aurelius, 175/6 CE. Figure 10 shows such a coin from 109/10 CE under Trajan, which depicts Isis, Serapis and Harpocrates standing between the two columns of a temple with a triangular pediment on top.

Figure 10 Roman coin from Alexandria. This coin depicting Serapis (middle), Isis (left) and Harpocrates (right) inside the Serapeum is dated to the 109/110 CE, under the reign of Trajan. (Bricault, 2019, p. 250, Figure 150)

3.4 Birth house

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the small building next to the temple of Serapis (see the small building on the south-eastern side of the temple of Serapis in Figure 4) which was built under Ptolemy IV is mentioned by McKenzie et al. (2004, p. 90) as possibly having functioned as a birth house. The explanation for this is the necessity of the inclusion of birth houses in the Ptolemaic dynastic cult. Additionally, Harpocrates was a juvenile god. The term 'birth house' or 'mammisi' refers to their decoration, centering around the marriage of a male and female deity, birth, and motherhood. Reliefs often show ceremonies connected to the birth of a god. Birth houses are connected to the divine rulership mentioned in Chapter 2. Pharaohs were identified with the young gods born from the union of a male and female deity. So, birth houses formed a part of the royal cult, showing this connection between the pharaoh and the gods (Kockelmann, 2011, p. 1-5).

3.5 Nilometer

The Serapeum included a Nilometer, as previously mentioned in this chapter. A Nilometer was used to measure Nile water levels and predict the annual flooding of the river. This flooding was important for agriculture in ancient Egypt, due to the fertile layer of silt deposited by the river. The type of Nilometer used at the Serapeum is one in the form of a rectangular basin with steps, which was used widely during the Greco-Roman period. No engravings were found to measure the Nile's water levels, but the steps may have been used for this purpose. Although this Nilometer may have also had solely a symbolic function (Osama et al., 2016, p. 25-29).

Figure 11 The Nilometer at the Serapeum of Alexandria. The lower parts form a rectangular basin. (Osama et al., 2016, p. 32, Fig. 1)

4. The Philae temple complex

4.1 Archaeological overview

The archaeological site of Philae attracted many travelers and researchers in the 18th century, with Napoleon's expedition copying reliefs and creating an early ground plan of the site. After this expedition, archaeologists like Rossellini, Champollion and Lepsius visited the site. A thorough survey of the site was carried out by Lyons from 1895 until 1896, and in the beginning of the 19th century, coinciding with the construction of the Aswan Dam, which was mentioned in Chapter 1. The plan of the site during circa 225 BCE in Figure 12 is based primarily on Lyons' report.

The plan on Figure 12 shows stone walls surrounding the sanctuaries at Philae, forming an enclosure. This enclosure no longer stands, but archaeological evidence from Lyons (1908, p. 6-9) and from Haeny (1985, p. 207-208) suggest it once existed. This evidence includes a short low remnant of a wall west of the pronaos or front part of the Isis temple, as well as foundation trenches along the east side of the temple. The main part or naos of the temple of Isis at Philae (see D, Figure 12 and Figure 13, right side) was built during the reign of Ptolemy II (285-246 BCE) . According to Haeny (1985, p. 208), the pronaos of the temple (see Figure 13, left side) was added by Ptolemy VI (180-164 BCE), due to an inscribed boulder found at the foot of the pylon (see left of Figure 13). Finally, the temple was decorated under Ptolemy VIII. (McKenzie, 2007, p. 129). Figure 14 shows the capitals from the columns in the pronaos of the Isis temple.

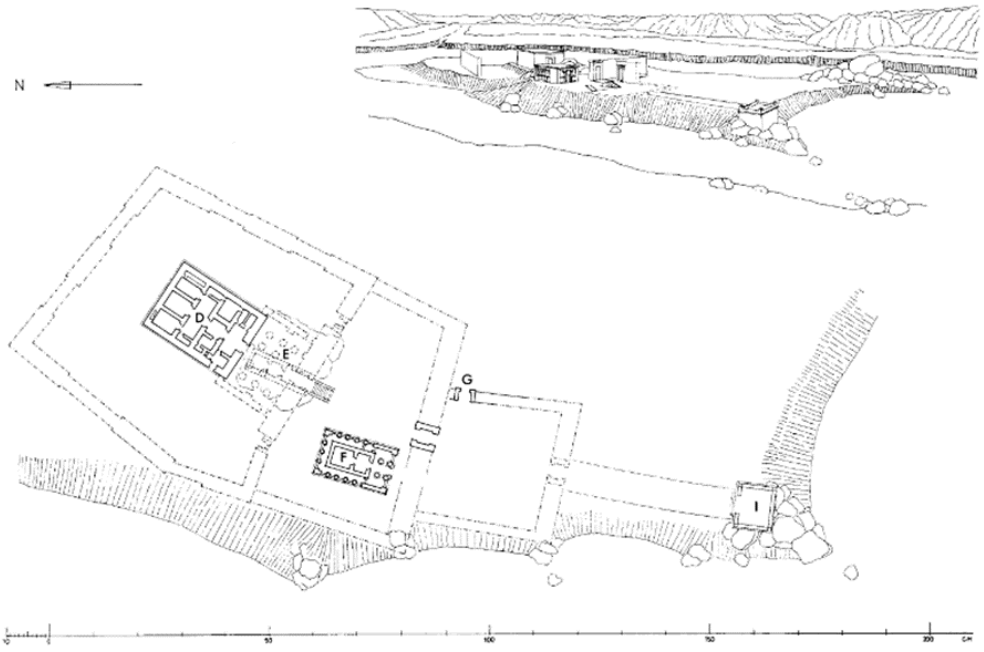

Figure 12 The temples of Philae by circa 225 BCE. D: The temple of Isis as built by Ptolemy II, E: Pronaos, F: Mammisi, G: The Gate of Philadelphus, I: Early South Platform. (Haeny, 1985, p. 209, Figure 2)

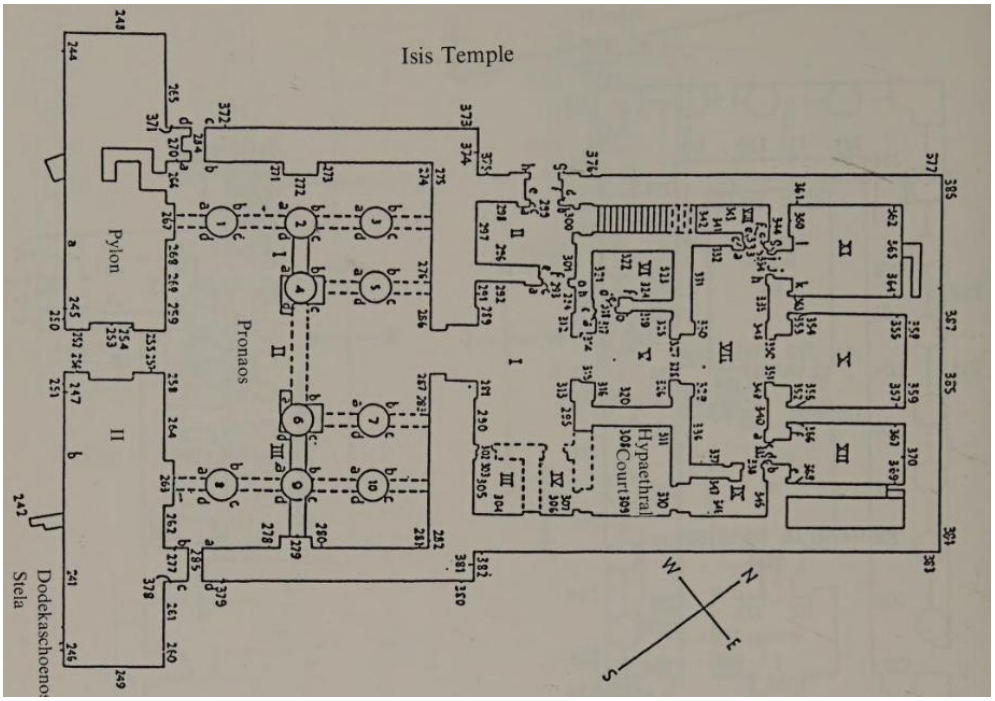

Figure 13 Isis temple. Plan of the Isis temple. (Vassilika, 1989, Plate IV A)

4.2 Capitals

Figure 14 shows four different column orders that were used in the hypostyle hall or pronaos of the temple of Isis of Philae. Note that Haeny (1985, p. 85) states that the term ‘hypostyle hall’ is used wrongly to refer to the hall with columns in the pronaos of the temple. Haeny explains that this term should be reserved for halls with columns that have closed walls on all sides and is completely roofed over, while at Philae a small part of the pylon (the large wall forming the front gate) was left open.

Figure 15 depicts the basic forms, additions and decorative elements of Egyptian capitals. The decorative elements are what determines the order of the column. Using this information, the first column in the left of Figure 15 can be identified as single-stemmed, with papyrus decorative elements. This particular papyrus column falls under the subcategory of a papyrus column with an open capital or campaniform shaft. The element of the papyrus in this column is reflected in the shape of the shaft, hinting at the three-cornered section of the papyrus plant’s stem. The capital is decorated with rows of open papyrus umbels. This type of column is common in hypostyle halls in Egypt (Arnold et al., 2003, p. 54).

The second and third columns from the left in Figure 14 are four-stemmed, with 3 additional rows and a combination of palmette (upper part) and papyrus (bottom part) decorative elements, as well as lily-shaped decorations. Due to its combined elements, this type of capital is referred to as a composite capital. These types of capitals first appeared during the reign of Nectanebo I (380-362 BCE) and are a distinctive feature during the Greco-Roman period. Note that the Egyptian composite capitals are not related to Greco-Roman composite capitals (McKenzie, 2007, p. 125). The capital on the lower right, second from below on Figure 16 shows a clearer image of this type of composite capital (Arnold et al., 2003, p. 54-55) McKenzie (2007, p. 129) also notes the use of composite capitals in the pronaos of the temple of Isis.

The first column on the left behind the composite columns in Figure 14 is eight stemmed. It is a palm column with palm fronds growing up from the top, bound with circles of cord. The capital in the lower middle on shows this type of palm capital. The final column in the right in the back of Figure 17 is single-stemmed with a combination of papyrus and palmette decorations. Because of its combination of elements, this is a composite capital (Arnold et al., 2003, p. 53). The fourth capital from the left of the bottom of Figure 16 shows a clearer image of this type of capital.

Figure 14 Capitals and columns in the pronaos of the Isis temple of Philae. Four different capitals are shown. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hypostyl_hall_Philae.JPG)

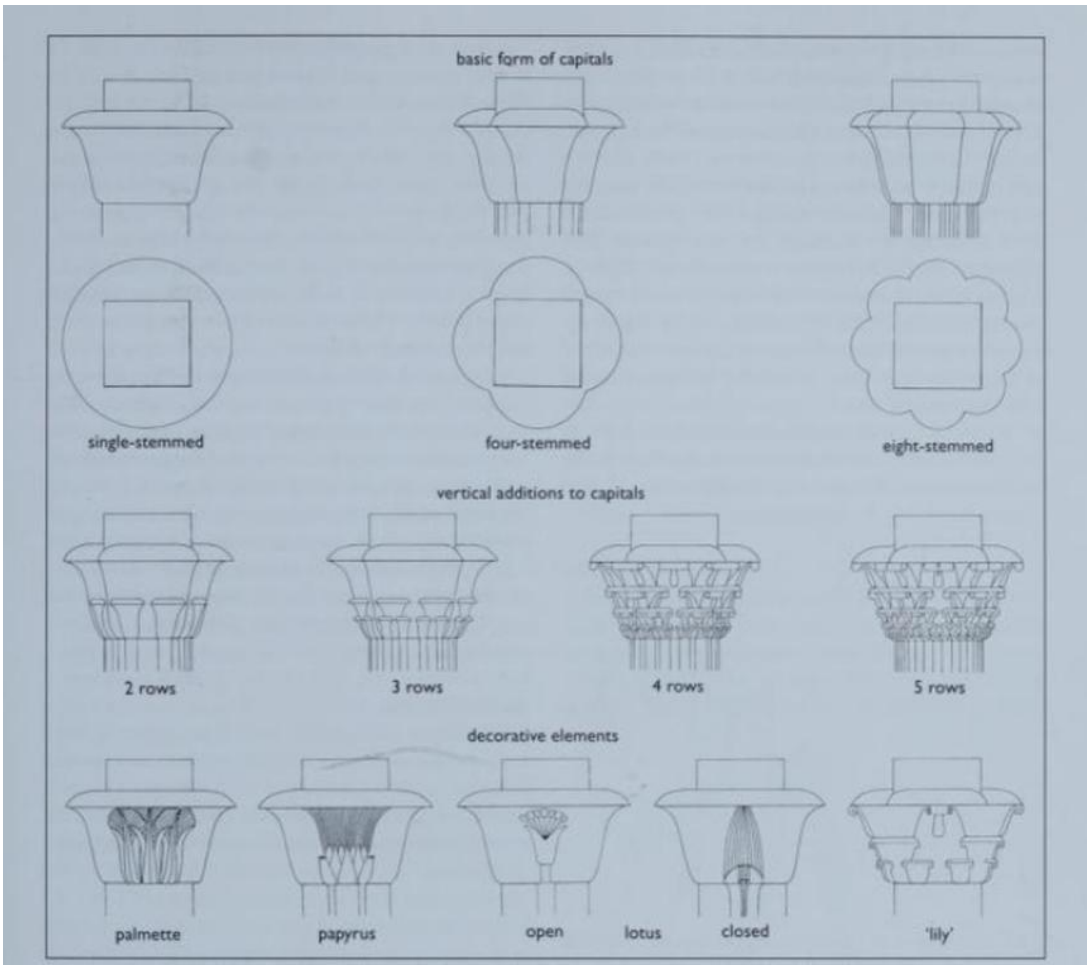

Figure 15 Capital forms. This shows the basic Egyptian capital forms, as well as their additions decorative elements. (Arnold et al., 2003, p. 57)

Figure 16 Egyptian capitals. Reconstruction drawings of several Egyptian capital types. (Owen et al., 1856, Plate VI)

4.3 Birth house

According to McKenzie (2007, p. 129), the mammisi or birth house (see F, Figure 12 and Figure 17) was built under Ptolemy III and extended in the back by Ptolemy VIII. It consists of an inner core of three rooms, with a vestibule of four columns in the front. An inscription of the Isis temple contains a reference to the mammisi, suggesting building may have started during his reign. The recording of the oppression of a revolt in Upper Egypt by Ptolemy V on the east wall of the vestibule of the mammisi (see east side of pronaos at the bottom of Figure 17) marks the completion of the masonry during his reign. Room III (see Figure 17) was inscribed with the name of Ptolemy VII, who built it as an extension to the already existing rooms. The decoration of the birth house was started under Ptolemy III, but most of the work was done under Ptolemy VIII, and continued under Ptolemy XII and during the Roman period. However, it was never fully finished (Haeny , 1985, p. 211).

Birth houses or like the one in Philae were important features during the Late, Ptolemaic and Roman periods. The interior plan of the birth house of Philae contains three chambers (see

Figure 17), each bigger than the other, with the last one serving as a sanctuary to the Harpocrates. The decoration of the birth house mostly took place after the reign of Ptolemy III (Haeny, 1985, p. 211), which means I will not discuss this further.

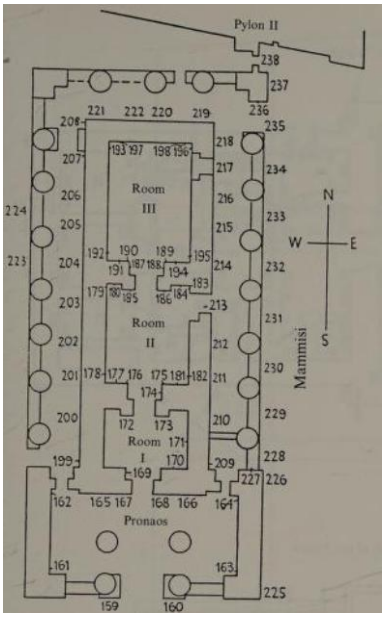

Figure 17 The mammisi or birth house. A plan of the mammisi and its rooms. (Vassilika, 1989, Plate III)

4.4 Nilometers

There are two Nilometers present near the temple of Isis; one west of the temple (see Figure 18) and one behind the western colonnade (see Figure 19). The latter was decorated during the Roman period under the Emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius and Nero (Kockelmann, 2012, p. 4). The Nilometer west of the Isis temple is well-preserved. It is cut from solid rock, with a staircase leading down to the Nile water. The steps are each about 12 meters wide. A scale is engraved in the wall of this Nilometer, which reaches to 12 cubits. The Nilometer behind the colonnade is filled with sand nowadays. It has two scales engraved in the wall, reaching 17 cubits. One cubit is the same as seven palms, which is the same as 28 fingers, which each equal 0.534m (Osama et al., 2016, p. 27- 28).

Figure 18 The Nilometer west of the temple of Isis. A staircase leads down to the Nile water. (Osama et al., 2016, p. 34, Figure 6)

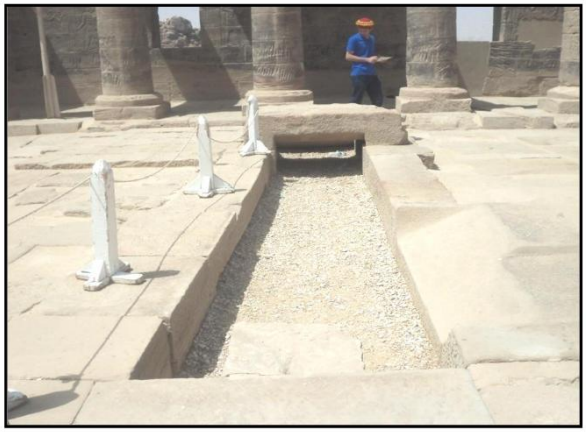

Figure 19 The Nilometer behind the western colonnade at the temple of Isis. This Nilometer is filled with sand. (Osama et al., 2016, p. 35, Figure 7)

5. Comparative analysis

Now that I have discussed the materials and interpretations from the Serapeum and the Philae temple complex, I will select and compare elements that I believe to be the most relevant to analyze. Firstly, I will look at the plans of the temple complexes in Figure 20 and Figure 21. When looking at the shape of the outer enclosure walls that surround both complexes, the enclosure of the Serapeum has a straight, rectangular shape. Meanwhile, the shape of the Philae complex walls consist of two separate shapes; the one that holds the Isis temple is bigger and does not continue on the same line as the walls of the smaller shape. Note that the walls of the Philae temple complex follow the shape of Philae island. Another thing to note is the presence of a colonnade in the plan of the Serapeum, and the lack thereof in the plan of the Philae complex. Colonnades were later built on either side in front of the temple of Isis, along the inner sides of the walls. Additionally, there is a stairway leading to the Serapeum on the eastern side of the complex, while the Philae temple has a stairway in the west that is connected to an earlier platform (see Figure 21). Both temple complexes had more than one entrance; the Serapeum had two on its eastern side, and the Philae complex has two subsequent entrances in the south and one in the east (McKenzie et al., 2004, p. 85-87)(Van der Molen, 2019, p. 210-212).

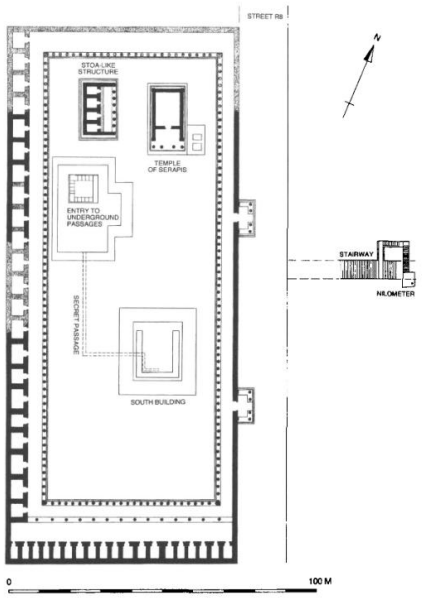

Figure 20 Reconstructed plan of the Ptolemaic Serapeum. The plan is based on the archaeological evidence found during previous excavations. (McKenzie et al., 2004, p. 85, Figure 8)

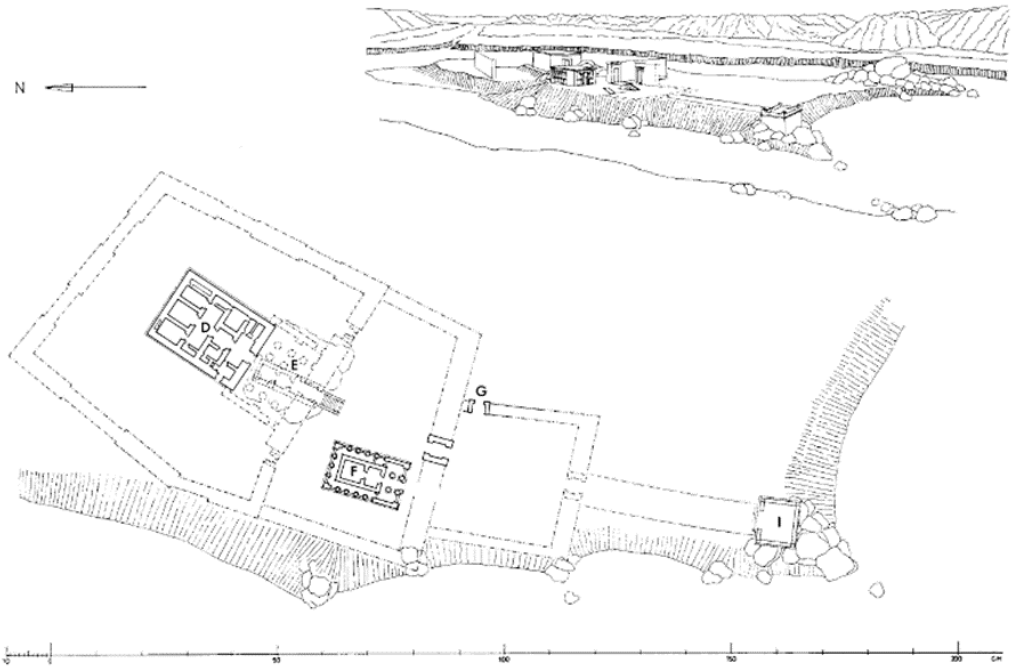

Figure 21 Plan of the temple complex of Philae by circa 225 BCE. D: The temple of Isis as built by Ptolemy II, E: Pronaos, F: Mammisi, G: The Gate of Philadelphus, I: Early South Platform. (Haeny, 1985, p. 209, Figure 2)

Next, I will look at the plans of the temple of Serapis and the temple of Isis, as shown in Figure 22 and Figure 23. When comparing the overall shape of the larger walls, both complexes seem to be divided into a larger back room (the naos) and a smaller room in the front (the pronaos). The pronaos of the Serapis temple contains one row of four columns, while the pronaos of the Isis temple contains two rows of four columns – one of which was connected with walls – and one row of two columns. Note that the temple of Isis has two pylons as well, marking the entrance in the south. Furthermore, the pronaos and the pylon-gate of the temple of Isis are wider than the rest of the structure, while the width of the structure of the Serapis temple does not vary. Lastly, the temple of Serapis has two separate rooms; the one in the front (the pronaos) being smaller than the one in the back (the naos). While the temple of Isis can also be divided into a bigger room in the back and a smaller one in the front, these larger rooms are also subdivided into smaller rooms, making a total of 12 or so rooms.

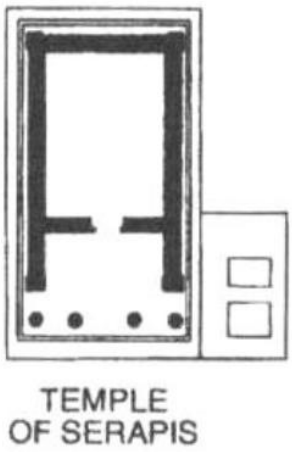

Figure 22 Reconstruction of the plan of the temple of Serapis. To its right are the foundations of what is thought to be a temple for Harpocrates. (McKenzie et al., 2004, p. 85)

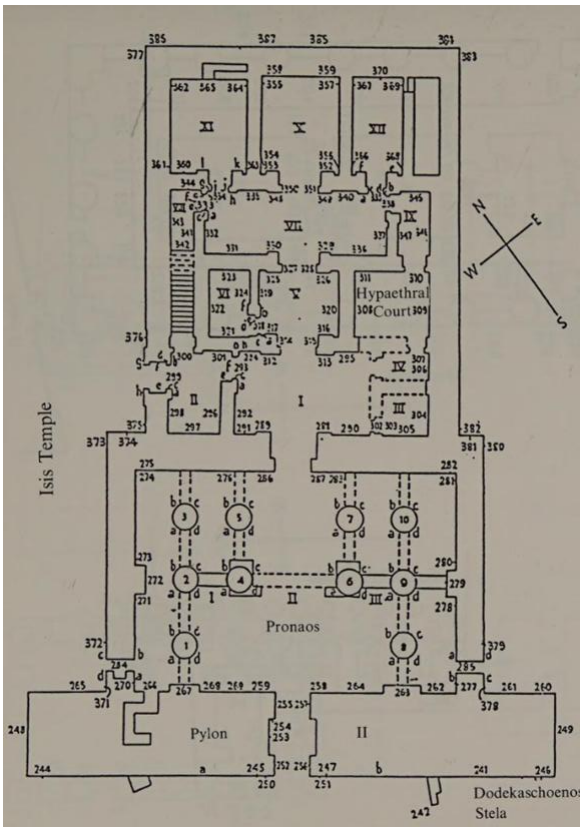

Figure 23 Plan of the Isis temple. This shows the temple as built by Ptolemy II. (Vassilika, 1989, Plate IV A)

Figure 24 Alexandrian type I capital. Part of the 'evolution of capital forms'. (Krásniewska, 2022, p. 491, Figure 8)

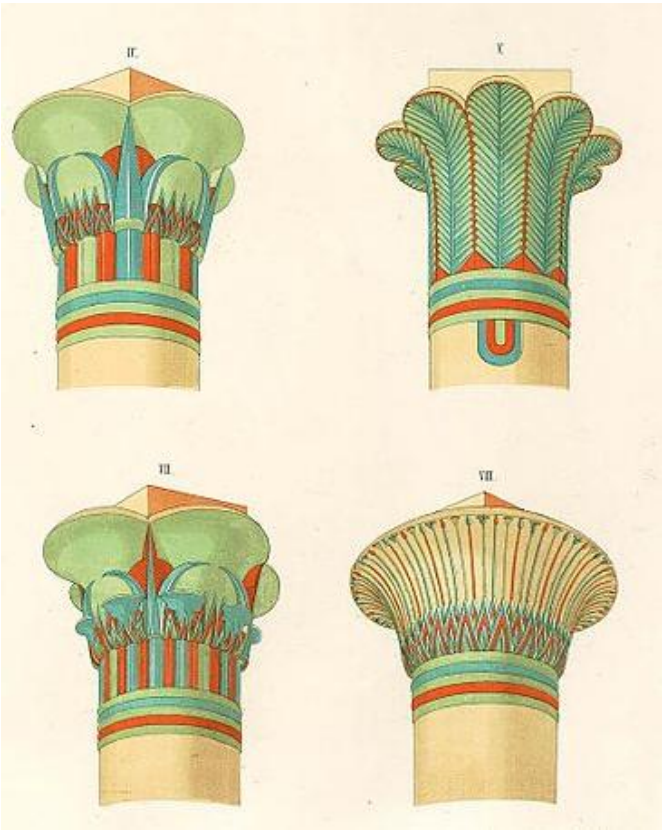

Figure 25 Four Egyptian capitals. On the left are two types of composite columns and on the right are two types of papyrus columns. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lepsius-Projekt_tw_1-2-108.jpg)

Figure 26 Composite capital. This image is part of a larger plate containing Egyptian capitals. (Owen et al., 1868, Plate VI)

Now, I will take a look at reconstructions of capitals found at the site of the Serapeum and ones still present at the Isis temple. Figure 24 shows an Alexandrian type I capital, with both plant decorations in the form of acanthus leaves. The lower capitals and the upper right capital in Figure 25 are still present at the Isis temple. The capital on the right is an open palm type capital with open palm folds. The capital in the lower left of Figure 25 is a composite type capital with a combination of palmette and papyrus decorations. On the lower right of Figure 25 is an open papyrus type capital. Finally, Figure 26 shows another composite capital, with a combination of papyrus and palmette decorations. Thus, both the Alexandrian capital and the Egyptian capitals have plant elements.

While the temple to Harpocrates and presumed birth house was built by Ptolemy IV, I still think it is important to mention its inclusion, as the Philae complex had its own birth house, which was partially built under Ptolemy II and III, but mostly under Ptolemy VII. However, due to the later building and decoration dates of the Harpocrates temple and parts of the birth house of Philae, I will not go into detail on the plans and the decorations of these buildings.

Finally, I will compare the Nilometers found at both sites. The Nilometer at the Serapeum (see Figure 11) was of the type in the form of a rectangular basin with steps. The two Nilometers at the Philae temple complex (see Figure 18 and Figure 19) were of a different type, namely ones in the form of walls with descending staircases. The latter was the most common type from the Pharaonic until the Greco-Roman period. As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, the Nilometer of the Serapeum may have had a symbolic function, especially with

the lack of engravings to measure the Nile water levels. The Philae Nilometers did contain engraved scales, with the one in Figure 18 reaching 17 cubits and the one in Figure 19 reaching 12 cubits (Osama et al., 2016, p. 26-28).

The comparative analysis shows both similarities and differences between the complex plans, the temple plans, the capitals and the Nilometers found at the sites of the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex. When looking at the complex plans, similarities can be seen in the formation of an enclosure to surround the sanctuaries, as well as the use of more than one entrance into these enclosures. Another similarity is the inclusion of a staircase leading to enclosure, with the Serapeum containing one in the east and the Philae temple complex having one in the west. Another possible similarity is the possible presence of a birth house at the Serapeum, dedicated to Harpocrates, and the presence of a birth house in the Philae temple complex. Differences can be seen in what was used to create the enclosure; the Serapeum contains a colonnade that surrounds the temple complex, or a colonnaded court, while the Philae complex is surrounded by walls. Even with the later addition of two colonnades to the Philae temple complex, these do not surround the temple complex the way the colonnades at the Serapeum did.

The temple plans show similarities in the use of a smaller room in the front of the temple in the form of a pronaos, and a bigger room in the back that makes up the naos. But there is a difference in the total number of rooms, as the Serapis temple appears to only have two rooms total, while the Isis temple appears to have a total of 12 rooms. Both temple plans share a similarity in the presence of columns in the pronaos, but have a difference in the amount of columns and column rows. The Serapis temple has one row of four columns, while the Isis temple has two rows of four columns and one row of two. Another difference can be seen in the width of the temple plans, as the Serapis temple has the same width throughout, while the Isis temple has a wider pronaos. The Isis temple also has a pylon gate in front of the pronaos, which the Serapis temple does not.

The comparison of capitals from both temple complexes revealed similarities in the use of plant decorations; the capital from the Serapeum contained acanthus leaves and volutes, and the capitals from the Philae temple complex had things like palm folds and palmette and papyrus decorations.

Lastly, comparing the Nilometers found at the sites (one at the Serapeum and two at Philae) showed similarities in the use of a means to walk down into the Nilometer; steps for the

Serapeum and staircases for the Philae Nilometers. Differences can be found in the basic types of the Nilometers, with the Serapeum Nilometer being in the shape of a basin, while the Philae Nilometers are of a walled type. A final difference is the presence of engravings, which the Serapeum Nilometer does not have, while the Philae Nilometers both have engraved scales.

Table 1 Differences and similarities between the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex. This table provides a summary of the comparisons discussed.

	Serapeum of Alexandria	Philae temple complex
Complex plans	- Colonnaded court - Straight, rectangular shape - Two entrances eastern side - Staircase east	- Walls surrounding complex (colonnades added later, but not fully surrounding the complex) - Outer shape follows shape of island - Two subsequent entrances south, one east - Staircase west
Temple plans	- Pronaos and naos - Two rooms total - One row of four columns in pronaos - Same width throughout structure	- Pronaos and naos - 12 rooms total - Two rows of four columns and one row of two columns in pronaos - Pronaos wider than rest of structure - Pylon gate
Capitals	- Plant decorations; acanthus leaves and volutes	- Plant decorations; palm folds, palmette and papyrus decorations
Birth houses	- Temple of Harpocrates possibly functioned as birth house (but built under Ptolemy IV)	- Birth house possibly started by Ptolemy II, continued by Ptolemy III (but mostly built by Ptolemy VIII)
Nilometers	- One Nilometer - Rectangular basin - Steps - No engravings - Possible symbolic function	- Two Nilometers - Walls - Descending staircases - Engraved scales; one reaching 17 cubits, other reaching 12 cubits

6. Discussion

Now that I have compared selected elements from the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex in the previous chapter, I will use this chapter to analyze and interpret the differences and similarities I have found.

I will start by summarizing the writings on Ptolemaic identity from Chapter 2 and explaining my view on these writings. According to Landvatter (2018, p. 200), the city of Alexandria was home to immigrants both from within Egypt and from the wider eastern Mediterranean. These peoples include Jews, Syrians, Egyptians, Persians, Macedonians and Greeks. Landvatter believes that interactions between immigrants and the indigenous population were inevitable, due to the scale and intensity of the settlement of Alexandria. He also states these interactions would have been necessary for society to function. As seen earlier in Chapter 2, Cole (2021, p.1-2), speaks of hybridization in Ptolemaic Egypt, emphasizing people as active agents in the process of exchange and meaning making, as well as the presence of relational and material entanglement in Ptolemaic Egypt. These entanglements come from Stockhammer (2013, p. 23), who argues that the connection between 'hybrid' or 'authentic' and 'pure' is necessary, and that differentiating entanglements helps study processes for which these terms are used. I am inclined to agree with Landvatter in assuming that interactions between immigrants and indigenous populations in Alexandria took place, and I believe these interactions would have influenced the identities of the citizens of Alexandria. For the entirety of Ptolemaic Egypt, I do not think concepts like hybridity, hybridization, and relational and material entanglement properly reflect the identities of people during that time. These terms separate the different aspects of culture and identity in Ptolemaic Egypt in a way that may make them easier to categorize for researchers, but that I believe does not fit into how people themselves would have seen these aspects. I argue that the people of Ptolemaic Egypt would have viewed their identities more as an interconnected whole, rather than something consisting of separate parts.

This view of Ptolemaic identity as a whole rather than consisting of parts carries over to the analysis of architectural elements from the Ptolemaic period as well. Versluys (2017, p. 186-187), touches on this when discussing the term style, distinguishing between stylistics – concrete designs with formal features of expression and execution – and culture style – common characteristics of artifacts that can be categorized. He argues that when analyzing visual styles, archaeologists should focus on their social function, or their impact and agency,

to understand what they do and represent. Sanz & Fiore (2014, p. 7104-7105) emphasize the importance of style as a term in archaeology, in order to refer to the perceivability of past human actions in material culture, as well as its use as an analytical tool to study continuities, discontinuities and distribution in the archaeological record. I agree with Sanz & Fiore that style as a term is important in archaeology, and I agree with Versluys that when using this term we should focus on its social function. I also understand the need for distinction between different types of style and their categorization. However, I do believe that when categorizing styles, there is a risk of once again separating different aspects which the people of the past may have seen as more of a connected whole than as separate parts.

I will now address the architectural categorizations of the Serapeum and the Philae complex. As. Based on the ground plan and the fragments discussed in Chapter 3, I am inclined to agree that the architecture seems more Greek than Egyptian in style. Although I believe a subcategorization as Alexandrian might be suitable as well, given the categorization of capital fragments found at the site as 'Alexandrian Type I', which is a regional variant with distinct differences from 'classical' Greek Corinthian capitals. Notably, sources on the Ptolemaic structures of the Philae complex generally do not focus as much on whether it is considered Greek or Egyptian in architectural style. This may be because of similarities between the architecture of Philae from the Ptolemaic period, and earlier Egyptian architecture. McKenzie (2007, p. 129) mentions such similarities when describing capital types used at Philae, noting how their styles originally derive from already existing capital styles in Egypt. Ashby (2020, p. 1-2) provides a different view of the architecture of the Philae complex by emphasizing its role as a Nubian sacred space, the nature of which was revealed during the dismantling and excavations of the complex during its move in 1970. This adds 'Nubian' as another possible option when interpreting the architecture of the Philae complex, aside from 'Greek' and 'Egyptian'. Ashby explains that Philae is located south of the First Cataract of the Nile, which marked the border between Egypt and Nubia. Since the temple complex was situated south of the Cataract, it was located in Nubia. The complex is also oriented toward the south, so toward Nubia. The categorizations by McKenzie and Van der Molen focus on the use of the ethno-cultural term 'Greek' to describe the Serapeum's architecture. In contrast, Ashby does not use 'Nubian' as an ethno-cultural term for the categorization of the architecture of the Philae complex, but rather focuses on the involvement of Nubians in the use of the complex. Versluys (2017, p. 187) states that while culture-styles like 'Greek' and 'Egyptian' exist, they no longer refer to ethno-cultural groups during the Hellenistic period, which includes the

Ptolemaic period. As mentioned previously in Chapter 2, he writes that styles do not just express cultural meaning, but are used to make cultural meaning with, which means they are not just passive categories. I agree with this notion and understand that while categorization as 'Greek', 'Egyptian' and perhaps 'Nubian' can be useful for archaeologists, it does not fully reflect identity based on architectural styles used during the Ptolemaic period. As Versluys (2017, p. 226-227) puts it, styles can be seen as being taken from possibilities that were already present. And so, the use of particular styles that we categorize as 'Greek' or 'Egyptian' are references to these already present styles. In this case, the architecture of the Serapeum can be seen as a reference to the 'Greek' architecture familiar to the Greek and Macedonian immigrants in Alexandria, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. The architectural style of the Philae temple complex would then be a reference to earlier architecture already present in Egypt. But, as Versluys also mentions, in such contexts questions about the 'national' origin of architectural styles is actually not that useful, because the styles in this context are not culture-styles, in the sense that they are not connected solely to a specific ethnic or cultural group. As seen in the beginning of this chapter, the context of Ptolemaic Egypt includes both immigrants from outside of Egypt, as well as indigenous Egyptians. The architectural styles used during this period reflect all of these people, so categorizing these styles as 'Greek' or 'Egyptian' merely divides the people of Ptolemaic Egypt into divided groups, rather than one integrated whole.

So, without focusing on the ethno-cultural aspect of identity as an interpretation of the Ptolemaic architectural elements I compared, what *can* they tell us? In his work on visual style, Versluys (2017, p. 247) focuses on looking at the associations that stylistic elements built up over time and in various contexts. While I am focusing only on architectural elements from the reigns of Ptolemy II and III, I do believe that putting these elements within the context of the Ptolemaic period and its religious context can provide a similar perspective. With this perspective, I will now interpret the differences and similarities between the elements I compared in Chapter 5. First, the temple complex plans. Both plans show that the complexes were in some way enclosed, with the Serapeum having a colonnaded court and the Philae complex having walls. Ainian (2016, p. 90) states that from the 7th century BCE onwards, peristyle became a staple in Greek temple architecture. Additionally, the Serapeum has two entrances on its eastern side, while the Philae complex has one entrance in the east and two subsequent entrances in the south. The southern entrances of Philae can be explained by the presence of a platform in the south, leading to these entrances. The difference in shape

between the two complexes can be explained by the curvature of Philae island (see Figure 27), which the complex followed, as well as the limited space on the island. The staircase of the Serapeum leads to its two eastern entrances, hence its location there. The staircase of the Philae complex leads to what seems to be its main entrance, and is connected to an earlier platform. McKenzie et al. (2004, p. 81) uses the term ‘temenos’ for the temple enclosure of the Serapeum, which refers to “a piece of land cut off as a… sacred domain” (Merriam-Webster dictionary, n.d.). The question is whether this term is applicable to the temple complex of Philae as well, given the similarities in the physical closing off of these places with walls in the case of Philae and colonnades in the case of the Serapeum. According to Assmann and Frankfurter (2004, p. 244-245), papyri and temple inscriptions from Greco-Roman Egypt make the entirety of Egypt appear as a sacred space. Egyptian cities for example were given sacred ranks. However, temples specifically were houses for the gods, of which the architecture was thought to be designed by the gods themselves. So while the division of sacred space may not be sharp enough to speak of a ‘temenos’ for the Philae complex, I do believe you can speak of different gradations of sacredness within Egypt as a whole, based on the sacredness of cities and of temples, for example.

Figure 27 Plan of Philae island. This plan shows the complex on Philae island, before the complex was moved.

Then, the plans of the temple of Serapis and the temple of Isis. Both temples have a pronaos in the front and an inner sanctuary in the form of a naos. But while the Serapis temple consists of two rooms, the Isis temple has about 12 rooms in total, with seven doorways that have to be passed through before reaching the final room. According to Johnston (2004, p. 245- 246), this sequence of seven doorways is linked to the processional route a deity took during festivals. With each room one passed through, the holiness and intimacy increased. As one walked through these rooms, the darkness of the rooms would have increased while the size of the rooms decreased. Additionally, during festivals these boundaries of sacredness and intimacy were suspended. So, the many rooms and doorways of the Isis temple seem to reflect the importance of the processional festivals to the Ptolemies. As for the citizens of Egypt, considering the varying degrees of openness of the spaces inside the temple, it is likely that accessibility to at least some of these spaces was limited to the public. However, certain priests would probably have had access to these spaces, so to these priests, these festivals were definitely important in connection to the many rooms and doorways of the temple. Other citizens would then probably only see the procession of the festival once outside the temple, making its connection to the temple architecture less important to those citizens. The sequence of doorways and rooms and their increased darkness, together with intimacy and holiness, also seems to suggest the importance of a gradual transition from the more open, lit and 'regular' spaces to the darker, smaller 'holier' spaces. This 'transition of holiness' then seems to have been an important part of the religious identity of the citizens visiting the temple of Isis, at least within the region of Philae. As for the Ptolemies themselves, the lack of such a gradual transition in the temple of Serapis suggests it may not have played such an integral part for their religious identity. And the use of only two rooms and less doorways at the Serapis temple suggests that in the region of Alexandria, the gradual sequence may not have held as much importance for the identity of citizens as in the region of Philae. Now continuing to the use of columns in the pronaos, the Serapis temple has one row of four columns, and the Isis temple has two rows of four columns and one row of two. Note that according to Haeny (1985, p. 208), these columns might have been erected by Ptolemy VI. Although, this is based on an inscription found on the pylon, and I do believe the columns are important to include. Either way, more columns and column rows are present in the Isis temple than in the Serapis temple. I believe this difference once again links back to the sequence of doorways and rooms, which go from more bigger and more open to smaller and more enclosed, as the hall with columns would have been bigger and more open than the rooms following it. Thus, I believe this once again reiterates the importance of this gradual

sequence to the citizens in the region of Philae visiting and using this temple, although this particular feature may relate to a later date than the period I am focusing on. Lastly, the Serapis temple has the same width throughout, while the Isis temple has a wider pronaos and a pylon gate in the front. Note that the wider pronaos may have been added by Ptolemy VI, which could explain its difference in width to the rest of the structure. Although this difference may also be explained once again by the sequence of larger and wider rooms to smaller rooms in the temple. The pylon gate was definitely added by a later Ptolemy than the ones I am focusing on, when looking back at the aforementioned inscription it contained. So, I do not believe the pylon gate can add too much to the discussion of the other elements, aside from the fact that another similar gate was already present, which may have inspired this new addition (Haeny, 1985, p. 204).

Next, the birth houses and the Nilometers. As discussed in Chapter 3 and 4, these features appear prominently during the Ptolemaic period. Birth houses specifically can be linked to the Ptolemaic cults because of their connection to the deification of pharaohs, through their comparison to the juvenile gods worshipped at birth houses (Kockelmann, 2011, p. 1-5). So, birth houses at the very least could have played a role in the formation and representation of the religious identity of the Ptolemies, though I cannot say how important this would have been for the religious identity of citizens during this time. Nilometers show the importance of the Nile's inundation to the Ptolemies and the people of Ptolemaic Egypt. While the engravings in the Philae Nilometers show a practical use as well, the absence of engravings in the Serapeum Nilometer shows a possible symbolic function (Osama et al., 2016, p. 26). Either way, the presence of Nilometers at temple complexes specifically shows they had a role in Ptolemaic religious temple architecture, and thus could have played a part in the formation and representation of Ptolemaic religious identity of the Ptolemies and the people of Egypt.

Finally, the capitals. As mentioned before, it is unsure where the capital fragments found at the site of the Serapeum came from. Additionally, the capitals and columns at the Isis temple may have been added by Ptolemy VI, rather than Ptolemy II. However, I do believe that analyzing these capitals provides an interesting addition to this thesis, as most comparisons would focus on their ethno-cultural associations, which I do not intend to focus on here. Rather, I would like to focus on the use of plant motifs in these capitals in general. The plant decorations of the fragments found at the Serapeum are based on acanthus leaves, while the decorations of the capitals of the Isis temple are based on palms and papyrus plants. Note that

types of acanthus grew in both Greece and Egypt (Tan et al., 2023, p. 90). Both palms and papyrus plants were found in Egypt as well (Borojevic, 2013, p. 81-84). So, I believe the use of these plant decorations reflects the importance of these types of flora to both the Ptolemies and the citizens of Egypt, as they would have seen these plants in Egypt's landscape.

7. Conclusion

In this thesis I analyzed and compared architectural elements of the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae temple complex in order to see what the similarities and differences between elements might say about the religious identity of Ptolemy II, Ptolemy III and the citizens of Egypt during their reigns. In Chapter 1, I introduce this topic and my research questions. Chapter 2 contains the theoretical framework used to help answer my research questions. This chapter summarizes existing research and writings on identity and religion, specifically during the Ptolemaic period.

7.1 Architectural styles

Chapter 3 describes and analyzes the complex of the Serapeum, its temple of Serapis, fragments of capitals found at the site, a possible birth house and a Nilometer from the site. I also provided existing interpretations of these materials. Similarly, Chapter 4 describes and analyzes the Philae temple complex, its temple of Isis, capitals from the temple of Isis, a birth house and the two Nilometers found at the site.

7.2 Differences and similarities

In Chapter 5, the materials discussed are put side to side in order to show their differences and similarities. The differences between the temple complexes include the use of a colonnade for the Serapeum, as opposed to the use of walls at Philae. Similarities between the complex plans include the use of enclosures in general, the use of more than one entrance (although in different places), the presence of a birth house at Philae and a possible birth house at the Serapeum, and the presence of stairs (in different places). The temple of Serapis and the temple of Isis show differences in the amount of rooms (2 for the Serapis temple, 12 for the Isis temple), the amount of columns and column rows, the width of the temples (the Isis temple having a wider pronaos), and the use of a pylon gate for the temple of Isis. Similarities can be seen in the use of a pronaos-naos layout in both temples, as well as the general use of columns in the pronaos. Comparing the capitals shows differences in the type of decorations (acanthus leaves at the Serapeum, palm and papyrus decorations at the Isis temple), and similarities in the use of plant decorations in general.

7.3 Explaining the differences and similarities

In Chapter 6, I gave my views on the relevant parts of the theoretical framework, and I eventually linked these things together to answer my research questions. In order to interpret the aforementioned differences and similarities, I went back to the theoretical framework and discussed which writings I agreed with. I ended up arguing for a view of identity in Ptolemaic Egypt as a whole, rather than consisting of parts. I also aimed to not focus as much on the ethno-cultural interpretation of identity, when interpreting my data. In the end, the most important interpretations include the differences in sacred transitions between the Serapeum and the Philae temple complex, especially when comparing the temple of Serapis to the temple of Isis. The temple of Isis shows a clear and gradual transition in the openness and size of its rooms, while the temple of Serapis does not. This is especially interesting in the textual context of Greco-Roman Egypt as a whole being a sacred space with different ranks of sacredness, as opposed to the Greek separation of the 'temenos' as a specific sacred space. Next, the (possible) presence of birth houses at each site can be linked to the Ptolemaic cults, due to their connection to the deification pharaohs through a comparison to juvenile gods. The presence of Nilometers at both sites shows the importance of the Nile's inundation to the people and rulers of Ptolemaic Egypt. Finally, the plant decorations reflect the importance of Egyptian flora like the acanthus and papyrus plants and palms to the people and rulers of Ptolemaic Egypt, since these could be found in the landscape of Egypt.

7.4 Link to identity

To conclude, I believe the architectural elements I analyzed and compared show that the distinction between 'regular' and 'holy' spaces, the deification through comparison to juvenile gods, the inundation of the Nile and the measurement thereof, and plants like acanthus, papyrus and palms play a part in the formation and representation of the religious identity of Ptolemy II, Ptolemy III and the citizens of Egypt. Additionally, the gradual transition of temple rooms seems to be part of the identity of Egyptians in the Philae region, but not as much part of the represented religious identity of Ptolemy II and III and the citizens in the region of Alexandria, due to the lack of this transition at the Serapeum.

7.5 New questions and future research

New questions are raised with the abovementioned conclusions. Why do we see differences in sacred transitions and divisions when comparing the Serapeum of Alexandria and the Philae

temple complex? Is the supposed temple of Harpocrates at the Serapeum a birth house or not, and how do we determine if it is? What can be said about the possible symbolic function of Nilometers during the Ptolemaic period? And similarly, what can be said about the choice of specific plant motifs in connection to their symbolic meanings? Future research might provide questions to these answers. Future studies could benefit from focusing on other areas where Ptolemaic identity and architecture meet, while not focusing too much on ethno-cultural aspects alone, as this could provide new and interesting insights.

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