The use of the term globalization, which comprises the subject of this round table, within the historical context which points to the Hellenistic era must be seen as incompatible and deceiving, as it is lacking any sign of historical evidence. This point is confirmed if we take into account the fact that globalization is a contemporary phenomenon that is still being formulated by the influence of a complex set of political and economic developments that occur within modern historical reality. First of all, it is dominant in contemporary thought since the early 90ies and is originally identified with the notion of modernity, later with the development of industrial economy, and finally with the information society. It is a phenomenon strongly connected to the political system, a product of a transitional period that brings radical changes in people’s overall worldview (Petrou forthcoming: 1-3).

This fact forces us to draw a clear line between a pre-modern and a post-modern society. Besides, the use of the term “modern” for a period of a pre-industrial society seems, always according to the modern sociological approaches, inappropriate. This claim could perhaps partly yield, if we base any comparison between the two eras on the view of G. Benavides, who states that “[t]hinking in terms of multiple modernities may lead to diluting the usefulness of the concept; on the other hand, thinking in terms of multiple modernities forces us to consider the differences between a modernity

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such as the one we find in the West since at least the seventeenth century, which combines heightened reflectivity and technological development and one that is understood mainly in cultural terms — that is, as an attempt to free oneself in a self-conscious manner from the tyranny of place, of community, of tradition” (emphasis mine) (Benavides 1998: 188-189; 2004). These considerations allow us to advance onto a mutatis mutandis reevaluation of the Hellenistic period as a “modern era,” where phenomena similar to those of our own time appear. Of course, to avoid any misunderstandings, throughout this comparison we should always have a clear understanding of the differences that characterize the past in relation to the present.

The Hellenistic era is a period of transition, constant transformation, increasing knowledge of the natural environment and cosmological redefinition. Conservation coexists inextricably with the tendency for renewal that is observed mostly in the realm of the Hellenistic kingdoms, where the new and innovative reality is formed, in accordance to the spirit and the ideals of that time. In this context, we can observe a constant transformation in the way people think, characterized by the legitimization of new forms of power and the development of ecumenism and cosmopolitanism. The latter is a multidimensional civil system, related to specific changes in the socio-political structure of the ancient Greek city-state and characterizing the entire Hellenistic period (Tarn 1961: 103. Green 1990: 389). As a political system, it is a product of Stoic and Cynic philosophy that succeeds the politics of racial isolation (Baldry 1959: 14. Nilsson 1974: 293; 725. Green 1990: 57; 64; 312; 388; 407. Bilde 1996: 332. Humphrey 1978: 238). The overall framework contributes to the creation of a new world, an oecumene composed of various aspects that clearly distinguish it from other historical periods.

The above characteristics contribute to the development of new religious movements in Greece, as well as in other parts of the oecumene, parallel to the traditional religion. Dominant among them are the oriental deities, that are particularly attractive and imposing compared to the traditional religion of the ancient Greek world, as they offer special experiences through their lavish rites, their ascetic ordeals and their complex expiatory rituals (Verma-
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Within this framework, Isis is identified with Demeter. Their conjunction is not an automatic process, but a result of long durée fermentations, related to the developments (political-economic-religious) that take place in the ancient world. It begins during the fifth century B.C., and is completed during the imperial ages. To be able to understand the place of Isis’ cult as well as its final form after its propagation throughout the Greco-roman world, we should examine all of the factors that have contributed to this configuration of her divine form. These factors are basically related to the ecumenical spirit of the times. Ritual is also influenced by the Greek deities that are propagated in Egypt during the Hellenistic period, resulting to a gradual transformation of Isis’ form. The general ideology of this time has a drastic effect once again, and Isis exits the narrow local environment of Egypt and spreads throughout the broader ecumene. She becomes a means of propaganda for political power, through her priests who wander around the entire ecumene, following the general trend of the time (Dunand 1983: 77-79. Solmsen 1979. Gasparro 1985/1986. Pakkanen, 1996. Pachis 2002).

The political and economical behavior of this era coexists with religion and creates, especially in such complex times as the Hellenistic period, all these syncretistic expressions that facilitate communication, coexistence and mutual understanding among groups belonging to different cultural environments (Rostovtzeff 1941. Green 1990: 362-382. Martin 2003a. Pachis 2003b: 73-311).

This situation, however, does not lead to the extinction of the traditional way of expression, but coexists with it, always depending on the general conditions that prevail in the daily life of the areas it which it spreads (Stewart 1977. Nilsson 1974: 1-10. Graf 1995. Mikalson 1998: 315). This latter factor is combined with the ecumenical spirit of this era, as well as with the continuous wanderings of the people, who distribute on their way all kinds of doctrines and religious ideas within the constantly expanding Hellenistic world (Martin 1987: 23-25, 1994: 125-131. Pachis 2002).


Among the deities that appear in the Egyptian environment during that time, the cult of Demeter has a distinguished place. The so-called Zenon Papyri as well as Callimachus’ Hymn to Demeter, are the main evidence for her cult (Callim., Hymn. 6 1-6. Clem. Al. Protr. II 18P. Fraser – Rumpf 1952. Schneider 1969: II, 316; 318 Fraser 1972: I, 198-199; 556, II, 335; 338-342, 371. Nilsson 1974
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During the 3rd century, Demeter’s sanctuary is established in Alexandria and evolves into an important cultic centre of its religious life (Polyb. 15, 27, 1-3. Fraser 1972: I, 200-201, II, 17; 119; 334. Pantos 1987: 346-347). Many contemporary scholars identify this specific cultic centre with the city’s Thesmophorion, where they held the homonymous festival of Demeter. This is the most possible place, if we take into account the connection of the cult of the Thesmophoros goddess to that of the Egyptian queens (Athen., Deipn. 13, 37, 31. Strab. 17, 1, 16. P.Cair.Zen 1: 59028 [258 B.C.?]; II 59350, 5 [244 B.C.]. P.Teb III 1079, 2 [3th-2nd B.C.], III, 880 Fr 1, 12; 15. 895 rpr, 375. 903, 4. 998, 22. Skowronek – Tkaczow 1979: 132; 137; 44; 142, 96).

The cult of Demeter is particularly popular, not only within the environment of the Egyptian capital, but also in many parts of the country (chora), and mainly around the Nile Valley (OGIS 83. SB 2674. P.Petr. III 95, 5. Callim., Hymn. 6. Polyb., XV 29, 8, 33). Besides, this place is ideal for the development of a cult of a par excellence agrarian character, with the form of the “-analytics” goddess (Quaebebeur 1981). Among the cultic centers that flourish around this area, particularly famous are those of the Al Fayyum area. Reports on the presence of this cult in this area can be found in papyri from the 3rd century B.C. (Callim., Hymn 6. Polyb., XV 29, 8, 33. OGIS 83. SB, 2674. P.Petr. III 95, 6; 97, 1, 5. P.Cair.Zen III 59350. Doxiadi 1995: 126-133. Dunand 2000: 42-44)

In these specific areas, the goddess is highly respected by the Greek cleruchs, as well as by the native rural population, that often honour her jointly with local deities of similar character. Among them are the Greek metics and the veteran soldiers that settle in various areas. A Graeco-Egyptian community was formed, as intermarriage was very common, and the interaction between the two cultures was significant. The female members of these groups play a leading role in the rituals of the goddess, contributing to the propagation and popularity of her cult. The inhabitants of these areas consider Demeter as analogous to their patrimonial deity, Isis, and this fact leads to the approach and understanding of foreign cults on behalf of the natives (Perpilou-Thomas 1993: 81. Herrmann, Jr., 1999 [2000]).


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The “spirit of the times,” but mostly the rulers’ theocratic intentions, act particularly in favour of the syncretistic tendencies formed between the two deities in Egypt. Isis’ identification with Demeter is possibly the personal fabrication of the country’s rulers, as well as certain members of the priesthood who are in favour of the ecumenical reformatory agendas of the archons. Their endmost aim is to create ideal conditions of balance between the indigenous and the new inhabitants of the country. Being a vested order that has no connection to the traditional aspects of this area, it is very natural that they favour the trends that are in accordance to the spirit of the new age. In this way, better conditions for the governing of the state are created, as a new way of expression appears for the state administration. This particular tactics also contributes to the formation of the overall worldview of this time, not only within the environment of Egypt, but throughout the Graeco-Roman oecumene. Of course, this is an artificial system, that most often does not correspond to the real facts. Besides, the above tactics is nothing but an expression of the rulers, and especially of their ecumenical ideals, but not those of most of the local inhabitants, that remain, even during the Hellenistic period, secluded within the borders of their traditional world (Koch 1993. Dunand 2000: 43-44. Thompson 1998. OGIS, 83. SB V 8867).

The attempted transformation of the goddess’ form thrusts particularly between the 3rd and 2nd century B.C., starting during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 B.C.). During the same period, another significant novelty occurs, marking the already Hellenised form of Isis and related to her identification with her coun-


The same tactics continues during the rule of Berenice II, wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes. Berenice II maintains and reinforces her predecessor’s, Arsinoe’s, religious politics; without abandoning the traditional cult of Demeter, she creates, like all of the Ptolemies, a combination between Greek and Egyptian cultic reality. Her overall tactics contributes to the formation, for the first time, of the Hellenized form of Isis’ cult, as well as her iconography (P.Petr. III,
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1, col.2. Breccia, 1893: pl. XXV, 2. Vandebreek 1946: 67, 4. Dunand 1973: I, 38-39. Heyob 1975: 20-21, 119. Pantos 1987: 345-346. This is achieved at large in 238 B.C., as witnessed in the Decree of Canopus (OGIS I 56 90. Austin, 1981: 366-368; 374-378. Onasch, 1976. Green 1990: 262; 291). In this text, the conjunction of religious and political beliefs is dominant, since the rulers undertake — according to the spirit of the times — jurisdictions that belong to the divine world, and thus appear as gods or favoured of the gods (PAthen 35, 4. P.David 1rp 3, 3. P.Enteux 28rp r 2; 86 r 2. P.Giss Univ II 11, 6. P.Koeln II 95, 12. P.Mil, Congr. XVII 90, 2, 4. P.Tebt I 13, 10; 53, 18; 61B 13, 365; 72D 18, 364; FrV 9, 189; II 28, 2; ctr 6; 28, 4, 8; 28, 6, 15; 28, 8, 7; 28, 9, 11; 28, 10, 20; 289 rpr, FrD 1, 40; 345 Fr A1, 6; 2, 6; 375, 8; 13; 609r; III 1799, 3; 793r 1, 22; 793 r 8, 88; 11, 1; 792, 2; III 2, 826, 1, 4; 7; 880 Fr 1, 2, 5; 895 rp r 3, 75; 903, 4; 998, 22; IV 1102 rp dupl FB 20; 24: 1116 rp FrC 4, 78. SB III 7200, 2, 2, 4; 44; 5, 72; XVIII 13257 rp 5. P.Ry/II 331. PSI VII 737, 7; VIII 901, 7; 10; 20; XIII1311 r, 20. P.SeAvarge 2 rp 5; 3rp 6. P.Stras IV 192, 4. O.Wilck 1118, 2. StudPalX 92, 1, 1. Skowronek – Tkaczow 1979: 134). That is when the cult of this particular queen is enriched with new divine names, resulting to her ever-increasing connection to Isis-Demeter. This tactics continued during the reigns of Cleopatra II and III, who is characterized as “φιλομητωρ Σωτερις, “θεά ευεργετική, “Δικαιοσύνη and “Νυχτήριος (OGIS 107; 739, 7-8. P.Bad II 2r 1; 5; 15. UPZ 217 rp 1 int 2; ext 13; 14; 19. P.AdI G1 1, 5. P.Dion 13rp r, ext 7; 9, 14 rp r, ext 8; 10, 12, 15 rp r ext 7; 9, 10, 16 rp r ext 8; 9, 11, 17 rp r ext 8; 10; 12, 21 rp r ext 8; 10, 22 rp r ext 7; 9. P.Greut 15 1 rp 8. P.Koeln II 81, 2, 5; 10; 13. Bouché-Leclercq 1903-1907: III, p. 53; 62, n. 3. Tondraiz, 1948: 27-28 Dunand 1973: I, 40-41; 79). The above names demonstrate the relation of her divine adjective to the exercise of the dynastic rule (Pachis forthcoming). Cleopatra III is also characterized as “Ισις μεγάλη μήτηρ θεών,” a fact that points further to her identification with the goddess (BGU 993, II 3. Fraser 1972:1, 221).

The above politics finds its ideal expression in the iconography of the goddess, resulting to the emergence of the iconographical type that is known as “Alexandrine” (Dunand 2000: 44-49). Even in this case, however, the Greek elements are predominant compared to the Egyptian ones. The creators of this trend attribute to the goddess those characteristics that are common and related to their own way of though. Besides, the tactics of selection is one of the main aspects of syncretism, from antiquity to our time. In iconography, the goddess bears along with her Greek hieratic appearance elements of her traditional vesture (such as, for example, the crown of Athor, the knot and her fringed scarf), which comprise, already from the time of the New Kingdom, her par excellence attributes. The name of the new iconographical type allows us to understand that its origin should be traced, as with many innovations of that period, to the ecumenical environment of Alexandria (Schneider 1967: I, 485-486. Dunand 2000: 47). In time, these divine representations are not limited within the urban environment, but also appear in certain areas of the countryside, especially in those of the temples, that usually tend to be tolerant towards anything novel (Ballet 1994: 21, 3. Dunand 1990: 72, 2, 75; 76. Dunand 1994: 196. Frankfurter 1998: 98-106, 1999).

In absolute accordance to the above iconography of the goddess is her form as “Isis lactans, by which her property as a divine mother is particularly underlined (Dunand 2000: 49-55. Tam Tam Tinh 1990). All of her depictions by and large aim to underline her absolute dominance on nature, her magnificence. She is usually represented bearing wheat spikes, that relate her all the most to the form of the Greek Demeter, and also express her connection to fertility and agriculture. This latter element is another yet aspect that borrowed from the traditional Egyptian deity of grain and produce, Renenunet-Hermouthis. Their relation can be traced mainly during the Ptolemaic rule, and is expressed in various ways, that demonstrate her multifaceted divine form (Dunand 1973: I, 89-92; 102-103; 179. Dunand 2000: 50-51. Perpillou-Thomas 1993: 79-79. Tran Tam Tinh 1990: 788-789, nos 332-364). All these new forms of religiosity that are integrated to the cult of the goddess, as well as of other deities of the Egyptian pantheon (for example, Horus/Harpokrates, Anubis), very soon find their way out of Egypt, especially when the Ptolemies employ an imperialistic political agenda towards the broader Hellenistic occumene (Vidman 1969, 1970. Dunand 1973. Wild 1981. 1984. Mora 1990).
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The transformation that occurs to the character of the goddess during the Hellenistic age is witnessed by Diodorus Siculus. In the first book of his Bibliotheca Historica, he presents us with a panorama of the beliefs and customs of Egypt during his time. This is a period when the goddess's cult is propagated by its agents all over the Hellenistic ecumene. The local aspects of the cult are replaced by the ecumenical and cosmopolitan ones, thus intensifying her syncretistic character. Until now, the Greeks get their information about the religious and everyday beliefs of Eastern peoples — totally different to their own way of life — by the stories of travellers and writers who visit foreign and far away places. Everything seemed exotic, charming, and distant to them. Now, however, a large part of this distant world is "transferred" closer to them (Pachis, forthcoming).


The above conviction expresses the political status quo of his time. It demonstrates ideas according to which the rulers are considered as civilizers and saviours of the ecumene, thus propagandising their deification. The rulers of the country of the Nile are attributed with similar beneficent qualities of the divine couple, Isis and Osiris, who spread agriculture to mankind and thus create the most appropriate conditions for the development of civilisation. This fact defines, by and large, their political behaviour: as new gods, they go around the entire ecumene and spread cultural commodities to all humans, who recognise them as civilisers and benefactors of mankind (Diod. Sic. I, 19, 5-8. Vernière 1990. Pachis 2003b: 195-201). The absolute authority of the Successors continues to exist throughout the Hellenistic era, in every sector of public administration, commercial transactions, as well as many aspects of the cultural life of this period. This last point plays an important role in Diodorus' overall work, and is related to the hermeneutical approach of Euhemerus (Rostovtzeff 1941: II, 1132. Nilsson 1974: 283-289; 294. Green 1990: 55; 108-109; 132; 172-174; 189; 196; 207; 247; 264; 273; 339; 348; 395; 398-399; 402; 602; 622; 629; 632). Euhemerism is also apparent in the stories of Diodorus Siculus, and is the main characteristic aspect of his narratives. Euhemerus' ideas echo the religious beliefs that prevail in Alexandria during the rule of the first Ptolemies, as well as in the greater Hellenistic world. A regulatory factor for the shaping of his theory is the phenomenon of deified rulers (Nilsson 1974: 35-185. Green 1990: 397-406. Gruen 1993. Koenen 1993. Walbank 1993: 9-105; 295-306. Gehrze 2000: 78-80; 85-86; 124-125; 236-240; 272-273. Pachis 2003b: 247-289). The rulers of this time are considered as patrons and eternal agents of civilisation. They are representatives of harmony, order,
and continuous stability, and for that reason are considered as “divine savours” (Nock 1972. Nilsson 1974: 183-185. Mikalson 1998: 76-104. Koenen 1993: 61). Their districts of influence are those areas where law prevails, and so do themselves, as the absolute enforcers of the law. Their “philanthropy” is directly related to their general politics and is the best evidence of their salvific effect on their subjects, especially whenever they are in danger (Pachis 2003b: 186-206).

Isis gradually becomes, during the second half of the 1st century B.C., more important than her husband, Osiris. Her wider acceptance can be interpreted on the basis of the historical facts of this era, that are connected to the increased role of the Egyptian Queens in religio-political affairs (Diod. Sic., 1, 27. Dunand 1973: I, 41). Their authority is so powerful, that they can impose changes even in religious life. Among their politics is the support of the cult of Isis in opposition to that of the other local deities. This fact has a catalytic affect on the overall form of the goddess in later periods. In the Aretalogies, it is her, and not Osiris, who carries through every act of acculturation (Vernsel 1990: 39-95. Pachis 2003a: 105-110).

Decisive for this reality, as we mentioned above, is the role of the Egyptian Queens, who since the 2nd century B.C. are actually the governors of the country. This contributes to an even closer connection between Isis and the world of fertility, as witnessed by the hymns that derive from the temple of Philae, and that can be considered as the model for the her Aretalogies (Zabkar 1988: pp. 138-146. Herrmann, Jr 1999 [2000]: 74). This belief is all the more reinforced in time, and becomes one of Isis’ most characteristic attributes. Isis’ connection to agriculture, and generally to the world of production, is another yet reason for the rulers of Egypt to favour the development of the specific cult. Their tactics creates new ideas that contribute decisively to a new, flourishing economy. The homo politicus of the 5th century B.C. gives his place to the homo economicus of this era (Rostovtzeff 1941: I, 100-101; 411-412; 421-422, II., 1074-1077; 1119-1121. Edelstein 1967: 81-83. Austin – Vidal Naquet 1998: 210. Pachis 2003b: 16; 90). At this point, it is worth mentioning that the above outlook covers only a part of reality, and not the overall character of these cults. In this specific case, we are dealing with a problem which is multifaceted, as is this era in general. Demeter continues to be worshipped by the Greek metaioi in her Greek form, and the same applies to Isis and the Egyptians. The above groups are related to all those who cannot tolerate any compromise of their traditions towards anything foreign. The people who live outside the “spirit of their times” try to dig themselves in the immiscible traditional environment. At the same time, however, there is another group of people, Greek as well as native, who jointly worship these two deities (Fraser – Rumpf 1952: 73). Among them are the residents of the urban centres, as well as those of the country (chora), who obey — whether consciously or not — to the trends of the new age. The acceptance of the new ideas, especially by the countrymen, comes as a surprise, as the latter are usually considered as exponents of the traditional lifestyle. Despite all that, there are people who care more about their annual crop, and therefore their survival, rather than the existing cultural peculiarities. For this reason, they accept the cult of the Greek deity, that reminds them of their own Isis, and attribute to her the same credit that they pay to their traditional deities.


Among the foreign cults that appear in the island are those of the Egyptian deities (Sarapis, Isis, Anubis) as well as the cult of the Ptolemies (such as, i.e., that of Ptolemy VI) (Roussel 1916: 249-251. Bruneau 1970: 457-466. Dunand 1973: II, 83-115. Ferguson 1974: 242. Mikalson 1998: 223; 229-231; 311). At first, the priests that represent these cults strictly follow the Egyptian ritual order, as it is still the time of the settlement and gradual adaptation of the cult to the life of the new social environment (Habicht 1998: 334-335). The Athenians of Delos in the beginning are indifferent to the cult of Isis and Sarapis, because of their patrimonial beliefs. In time, however, and due to the existence of intense commercial transactions with Egyptian merchants, their initial diffidence gives in, and they begin to be interested in these cults. The cosmopolitan environment of the sacred island contributes to the acquaintance and familiarisation with these cults. The rulers of the island follow a more flexible tactics towards these cults, in order to create even better conditions for the conflation between the Egyptian ritual of the foreign cult and the patrimonial customs of the Athenians. In this way, the traditional distinction between “us” and the “others” that used to be dominant collapses, even in the conscience of the Athenian cleruchs (Ferguson, 1974: 407; 418-419; 421-423).

Isis’s cult quickly becomes particularly popular among the Athenians of Delos, not only for the reasons mentioned above, but mainly because she is closer to Demeter, whose cult is widely spread in Delos during this period. Besides, we should not forget that the women of Delos, as those throughout the rest of the Greek world, celebrated the Thesmophoria to honour Demeter, Kore, and Zeus Euboleus. The Thesmophoria had two altars, one for each deity, a sanctuary, and the Megaron (μέγαρον), where the ritual of the “Νυκτοφυλαξία” (Νυκτοφυλαξία) is conducted as part of the festival (Bruneau 1970: 269-290; 290-293. Mikalson 1998: 211).

The overall reversal of their attitude is clearly demonstrated by an inscription of 158/7 B.C., citing the names of the Athenians serving in these cults (Mikalson 1998: 216-217; 237-238. ID, 2605). This change is all the more obvious in the architecture of a new temple of Sarapis, named by contemporary archaeological research as Sarapieion C (Roussel, 1916: 47-67; 106-202. Ferguson 1974: 357; 365. Dunand 1973: II, 93-95. Wild 1981: 38-39; 173-174. Bricault, 1996b). This sanctuary is built according to the Greek tradition in 135/4 B.C., in the valley of the river Inopos. Thus, after a relatively short period of time, and especially after 100 B.C., the Athenians are so much affected by the cosmopolitan and syncretistic spirit of the island, that they become particularly tolerant towards all these foreign cults. This attitude takes over the original mistrust with which they used to confront them in earlier times. There are many reasons that lead us to conclude that the Athenians of Delos begin to adopt, due to the environment in which they live, a different way of seeing things, and become cosmopolitans.

All these factors contribute to the fact that Greek as well as Egyptian inhabitants of Delos pray to both of these deities. Both of them had similar attributes for the cosmopolitan inhabitants of the island, and for that reason they no longer noticed their differences. Besides, what was more important to them was the fulfilment of their expectations by the dynamic intervention of these deities. Their sanctuaries are open to all the people of the ecumene, without any distinction of race. Characteristic of the tactics of the resi-

Another yet aspect of the Delian effect is the fact that within the Athenian environment we find the same hieratic degrees as in Delos. Among them, dominant are those of the zakoroi, the oneirokrites, and the kleidouchoi of the cult of the Egyptian deities, that are occupied by members of renowned Athenian families (IG II/2 3681. Dow 1937: 207-208. Roussel 1916: nos 64; 84; 119; 120; 123; 135; 136; 146; 147; 148; 150; 151; 152; 153; 156; 158; 164; 165; 166; 169; 170; 171; 182; 185; 201; 209. Vidman 1969: 66-78, 1970: 7; 38; 53-60; 62; 73; 74. Dunand 1973: II, 9-11. Dunand 1983: 89. Mora 1890: nos 15; 119; 120; 123; 146; 147; 148; 150; 151; 152; 153; 156; 158; 164; 165; 166; 169; 170; 171; 182; 185; 201; 209. Vidman 1969: 66-78, 1970: 7; 38; 53-60; 62; 73; 74. Dunand 1973: II, 9-11. Dunand 1983: 89. Mora 1990: nos 18; 122; 158; 247; 442; 555; 603; 673; 681+; 728+; 817+; 841+; 938+. Pakkanen 1996: 55-56; 59-60). This phenomenon is not only exclusive to Delos, but is also seen in Athens, where some time later the members of Eastern and Italian families cohabit in harmony. Though these representative families, new foreign deities and religious communities arrived in Athens a lot more often than before, thus justifying the ascertainment that the dominant cosmopolitanism of Delos also had effects on Athens, which of course was already open to foreigners in the past (Dow 1937: 208-213. Day 1942: 76-82. Habicht 1998: 377. Mikalson 1998: 223; 237-238; 243; 254.). The organisation and the ritual of the cult follow the Greek standards, as in the Athenian cultic environment, generally putting the Egyptian form aside. The priests are elected according to the Greek customs, having an annual and elective, and not lifelong (διὰ εἰκόνος) and hereditary term (Vidman 1970: 37-42; 48-52).

The negative attitude of the polis and the demos towards foreign cults gives way, mainly from 134 B.C. and later (ID 2124, -28. Dow 1937: 202. Simms 1995: 204-205. Dunand 1973: II, 95. Mikalson 1998: 229-231; 232; 235-238. Bruneau 1970: p.1). This is when the conjunction is completed between the form of Isis and that of Demeter, while we should bare in mind that the cults of the two deities originally remain in a state of "parallelisation" (Pakkanen 1996: 79; 81; 87; 89-92; 97-98). In this way, the form and the symbolisations of one deity characteristically complete the other. The
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The goddess retains for a long time, after her establishment in Greek territory and especially in Athens, a certain distance from the cult of Demeter; their relations develop gradually according to the spirit of the time. Thus, attributes and symbolisms related to the Egyptian deity are shaped according to the Greek models, contributing to Isis’ gradual acquisition of a totally different character, ever more resembling to the form of the Greek goddess. This coexistence does not create any expression of antagonism or hostility between the two cults; to the contrary, they coexist in harmony.

The analogous character of the two deities also becomes evident in Isis’ new appearance. Her iconographic form is originally identified in the environment of Alexandria with that of Demeter. The congruence of the two deities is achieved through the use of common symbols, that are connected to the evocation of fertility. These elements are further reinforced with Isis’ identification with Demeter, than with any other Egyptian deity, as Isis, the “Mistress and source of life,” is considered to represent the power of production. This attribute is not only limited as far as humans are concerned, but also expands to agricultural production and is thus considered as the absolute power that guarantees the fertility and rich harvest of cereals, as demonstrated by the ears of wheat on the royal crown of the goddess, a definitive symbol of her creative power (Pakkanen 1996: 99-100. Pachis, forthcoming).

Despite all that, we should not overlook the differences that continue to exist, even in this case, among the two deities. Their different place of origin functions decisively to emphasise the dissimilarities between the rituals of these two cults. Furthermore, we should bear in mind that Isis’ identification with a Greek deity does not mean the end of her association with her original environment. In the first case, there is a goddess who lightens and reinforces the magnificence of the Athenian state with her presence, while in the second it is a foreign cult transplanted to this area during the Hellenistic ages. These differences gradually fade out, resulting to the henotheistic form of the goddess, during the 2nd century A.D. (Versnel, 1990. Bricault 1996a Pachis, forthcoming). Isis’ identification with Demeter is more than a common place during this period. Their complete conjunction expresses the spirit of the times in an entirely unique way. It is one more sample of the convergence and consolidation of the Greek and the Oriental spirit.

The definitive and official recognition of the cult of Isis is affirmed by the text of a sacred law of the 1st century B.C., which describes the official participation of the ministers of Isis in the rituals of the Athenian state. At the same time, the priests appeal “πρὸς τὴν θείαν την θυσίαν καὶ τὸν θυσιον καὶ τὸν θεσπλεν λαθεντισμὸν” for resolution to their problems (Pollitt, 1965. Vidman 1969: 18, no 33a. Sokolowski 1969: 93-95, no 50A. Dunand 1973: II, 14-15, 1983: 89). The literature of this period reveals the evident influence that derives from Delos. The coins of this era are one more secure proof for the augmentation of the followers of the Egyptian deity; they depict symbols of the goddess, next to the names of renowned men of the city. We have no evidence of offerings from foreigners, as in the case of Delos, but from Athenian citizens who had been proselytised to the cult of the goddess (ID I, 2039. Habicht 1998: 344).

The decisive effect of the Eleusinian cult will become even more obvious in later times, and especially during the 1st century A.D. Isis’ rituals only have the elements of a secret cult that is simply related to the circle of the so-called “deities in vicissitude” (Plut., De Is. et Os. 25. 360 D-F. Griffiths 1970: 383-386. Plut., De E Delph. 9.384D. Bianchi 1976: 1-3 1984: 74-76. Sfameni Gasparro 1985: xiii-xxii). The analogical relationship between the form of Isis and that of Demeter reinforces her status in the cultic life of the Athenians, and the Greeks in general, however there isn’t yet any sign of any mystery cult. Only later, with the beginning of the Imperial ages, does the ritual of Isis’s cult acquire a mystery form. The Eleusinian influence defines the final completion of the ritual order (Plut., De Is. et Os, 27. 361. D-E. Griffiths 1970: 390-392. Apul., Met., XI, 6; 23. Griffiths 1975: 163-167; 296-308. Bianchi 1980. Sanzi 1996a: 50-52, 1996b: 64-66. Pachis, 2000). The same applies to the rest of the cities of the continental and insular Greek territory, where the cult of the goddess and the rest of the Egyptian deities is propagated (Bricault 2001). The archaeological research in Dion that revealed the goddess’s sanctuary has proved that it was close to that of Demeter (Pantermalis 1999: 60-73). This mystery form completes the official mystic character of her rituals; this form
will continue to exist until the 4th century A.D., in Greece, as well as the rest of the vast Roman state.

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The Hellenistic age as a transitory period of antiquity offers a characteristic example for the attempt of humans to release themselves from the suffocative limits of space, society and tradition. Particularly helpful in this attempt is peoples’ translocation from the narrow environment of a “centripetal” society to the wider environment of a “centrifugal” one (Smith 1993a: 10, 1993c: 131-132). In this way, people reach a mutual understanding and communication, with the establishment of the ecumenical ideals of this epoch. Among the characteristic aspects of this time we should recognise its anti-individualistic texture, in order to avoid making invalid generalisations (Martin 1994). Thus, the overall historical frame of this period enables certain conveyors of power (kings and priests) to use certain “common denominators” (i.e., by imposing or allowing a single common language or promoting the phenomenon of syncretism), that facilitate the imposition of new politico-religious situations, as well as the mutual understanding and communication between the citizens of the Hellenistic oecumene (Pachis 2003b: 29-30. Martin 2004a). Their general tactics relies on a systematic use of traditional as well as any kind of innovative aspects that appear during this period. Crucial to this politics of the conveyors of power is the strategy of propaganda (Dunand 2000: 66-67. Pachis 2003a) that reinforces the imposition of types of government that are novel to the traditional way of thinking. Besides, it is implied by the rulers that those who will adopt the new ideas will be among the well-favored of the overall politico-economic, as well as religious, system of this time, contrary to those who choose to remain faithful to the traditional way of thinking. The tactics of a directed imposition of innovatory ideas is even more intense, and thus controlled in certain important centres (i.e. the capital cities of the Hellenistic states), than in the periphery (Smith 1993a: 98-99, 1993b: 107-119, 1993d: 294-295. Bilde – Engberg-Pedersen – Hannestad – Zahle – Randsborg 1996).

The base for the formation, propagation and imposition of all those ecumenical ideas are the cities and the commercial centres of the Hellenistic kingdoms. In this case, we shall focus on Alexandria, the capital of the Ptolemies, and Delos, which became an important commercial centre of the Mediterranean. This allows us to understand the particularity of the various political centres and those of the diaspora, that are created because of the continuous movement and wandering of the people of this era. These places are nodal for the acquaintance with and diffusion of these cults throughout the wider oecumene (Martin 1987: 23-24, 1994: 125-131. Martin 2004a: 256, 5. Pachis 2002b. Pachis 2003b: 51-54).

In the case of Alexandria as a cosmopolitan centre, we are facing a directed procedure of syncretism, customised to the general way in expression of this era, and deriving from the encounter between the Greek and Eastern way of thinking. The main protagonists of this encounter are in this case a Greek goddess, Demeter, and a member of the Egyptian pantheon, Isis. Their identification is based on their analogical features, and thanks primarily to the careful selection of all these aspects that are directly related to the traditional cultural way of thinking of the people of this era, who become carriers of these new ideas (Andersen 2001: 18, 22. Barsalou 1992: 83. Sperber 1996, 101-102. Boyer 1994: 11-12; 14-21; 181; 268-275. Beyer 1998: p. 10-11. Lawson 2001: 141-144. Martin 1996: 220-221. Martin 1997: 149. Martin 2001b: 399, 2003a: 215; 221. Pachis 2002a: 226; 235.). The tactics for creating these religious syncretistic forms is amplified in the consciousness of the members of the group through certain “imagistic” modes of religiosity, that are particularly attractive to them, resulting to a progressive impairment to possible sources of resistance (Martin 2004a: 248, 2. Whitehouse 2000, 2002). The influence of all these ideas and the decisive change that occurs in the way of thinking of the people of these regions could be compared to the appearance of an epidemic in a specific area. Indeed, in the case of Alexandria that is of special interest to us here, the imposition and application of these particular syncretic forms of religiosity is achieved on the basis of an organised strategy that deliberately weakens people’s cognitive defenses. In another

The same situation can be seen in the case of Delos, that could be considered as a “nowhere land” for the Athenian klerouchoi who settle on the island, due to the particular character of this region (Smith 1971: 238) the traditional mode of a locative society is lost. Within this environment of the diaspora, the tight limits of a group’s local particularities gradually seem to be fading more and more, yielding to the pressure of external factors. The coexistence of two separate groups usually creates a composite way of expression, customised to the ideals of the time. For the Athenians, their acquaintance with this cult in the Delian environment, out of the sphere of their immediate control, gives them the chance to make a free choice and create novel religious forms, that in their home environment would have remained in the margins of socio-religious reality.

The choice is made also in this case — indeed now more intensely — based on the pre-existing ideas related to the cult of the primary Greek deity of agriculture, Demeter. Indeed, in this case, the consequences of this new religious reality, as it is expressed in the form of Isis-Demeter, are more obvious, in the absence of all those factors that could control the situation and restore a healthy way of thinking, one that is expressed in accordance to tradition (“Δημοκρατία”). We can say that the behaviour of the Athenian klerouchoi in the environment of Delos can be compared — once more — to the case of an organism that is weak and therefore more vulnerable to microbial factors. This situation is intensified by the constant communication between the Athenians and the groups of the Egyptian communities of the island, as well as by the free choice of ideas that can be considered as “sources of infection” (Martin 2001: 295-296, 2003a; 214-215, 2004a). Of course, we should not forget that the choice is always between beliefs that bear an analogical resemblance to their personal way of thinking. In this way, the proper conditions for the gradual spread of the cult from its particular environment to the rest of insular and continental Greece are created.

Abbreviations

AM Atheneische Mitteilungen
Anc.Soc Ancient Society
APFJ. Davies, Athenian Propertied Families 600-300 B.C., Oxford 1971
BCH Bulletin Correspondence Hellenique
BSA Annual of the British Scool of Athens
CLA Classical Antiquity
CE Chronique d’Égypte
CJ Classical Journal
EPRO Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain
HSCPh Harvard Studies of Classical Philology
HThR Harvard Theological Review
ID Inscriptiones Deliacae
IG Inscriptiones Graecae.
JHS Journal of Historic Studies
LIMC Lexicon Iconographicum Graecum Mythologiae Classicae, Zürich, 1974-
MTSR Method and Theory for the Study of Religion

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MTSR Method and Theory for the Study of Religion
P.Petr. The Flinders Petrie Papyri, Pt. 1, ed. J. P. Mahaffy (Royal Irish Academy, Cunningham Memoirs, No 8); Pt. 3, ed. J.-P. Mahaffy (Royal Irish Academy, Cunningham Memoirs, No 11), Dublin 1891-1905.


RGVV Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten.


SIRIS Sylloge Inscriptionum Religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae, ed. L.Vidman 1969.

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