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Culture and Community: A reconsideration of Egyptians at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century

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Culture and Community: A reconsideration of Egyptians at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century

by

Franciska I. Incze

A THESIS

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to reassess the presence of Egyptians at the Imperial harbours of Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century. This study will utilize a composite body of evidence that includes ancient written sources, epigraphical, architectural, and iconographical information in order to investigate the potential communal presence of Egyptians in the commercial centres. I suggest that through the careful scrutiny of key details in text, and on architecture, Egyptians created a niche for themselves in the Roman society that is not readily apparent in just any one avenue of study. While transporting grain from Alexandria, Egyptians arriving at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century would sometimes linger or settle permanently. They created favourable environments at the Imperial harbours with the erection of temples, monuments, and other culturally significant markers familiar to their faith and background.

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To Ana, Joseph, Ildiko, and Cecilia

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Dedications	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	13
2.1 IDENTIFYING CULTURAL MARKERS AT THE IMPERIAL HARBOURS.....	14
2.2 TRADE WITH ROME: GRAIN SUPPLY FROM THE AFRICAN PROVINCES	22
2.3 ALEXANDRIA AND THE IMPERIAL HARBOURS: THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE	30
2.4 A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH.....	34
CHAPTER THREE: THE HISTORY	36
3.1 THE CAPITAL’S GROWTH IN THE 1 ST CENTURY: POPULATION AND PROVISIONS	37
3.2 SERVICING OSTIA: THE CONSTRUCTION OF PORTUS.....	40
3.3 EGYPT AND AFRICA PROCONSULARIS: BREADBASKETS AND CULTURAL CENTRES	44
3.4 ‘EGYPTOMANIA’ AND EGYPTIANIZING ELEMENTS.....	47
3.5 CONCLUSIONS	51
CHAPTER FOUR: ANCIENT LITERARY SOURCES AND EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE.....	52
4.1 SECTION 1: ANCIENT LITERARY SOURCES AT ROME.....	53
4.2 SECTION 2: EPIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE AT OSTIA AND PORTUS	64
4.3 CONCLUSIONS	71
CHAPTER FIVE: ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE.....	73
5.1 SECTION 1: ARRIVAL TO PORTUS	74
5.2 SECTION 2: CROSSING THE ISOLA SACRA.....	83
5.3 SECTION 3: BUSINESS, LEISURE, AND WORSHIP AT OSTIA	93

5.4 CONCLUSIONS	100
CHAPTER SIX: ICONOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE	103
6.1 SECTION 1: OSTIA AND PORTUS	104
6.1.1 <i>Sculptures</i>	104
6.1.2 <i>Paintings</i>	114
6.1.3 <i>Mosaics</i>	114
6.1.4 <i>Discussion</i>	121
6.2 SECTION 2: THE ISOLA SACRA NECROPOLIS	122
6.2.1 <i>Sculptures</i>	122
6.2.2 <i>Paintings</i>	125
6.2.3 <i>Mosaics</i>	129
6.2.4 <i>Discussion</i>	133
6.3 CONCLUSIONS	133
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS	135
Bibliography:	141

List of Figures

Figure 1: Alexandria, plan of Roman city *c.* AD 300, archaeological remains with house and mosaics of first to third centuries AD. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 175 (fig. 299).

Figure 2: Plan of Ostia and Portus. Period 2. (Portus Project). Author: University of Southampton. Source: <http://moocs.southampton.ac.uk/portus/maps-plans/>

Figure 3 a-b: Alexandria, lighthouse Pharos: (a) Reconstruction by I. Hairy incorporating underwater discoveries of Centre d'Études Alexandrines, directed by J.-Y. Empereur (side view); (b) Reconstruction by H. Thiersch based on the Arab descriptions and the ancient descriptions. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 45 (fig. 48 a-b).

Figure 4: Alexandria, temple of Serapis complex, plan of building foundations of Ptolemaic and Roman phases. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 54 (fig. 66).

Figure 5: Plan of Temple of Isis and Cistern (Google Earth). Source: <http://ostia-antica.org/portus/s009.htm>

Figure 6: Plan of the Isola Sacra Necropolis. Source: Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*. (Pull-out map).

Figure 7 a-c: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 86: (a) front entrance to tomb 86 (left on foreground); (b) entrance to the upper burial chamber with furnace on the right; (c) the upper burial chamber with stairs leading to the lower chamber. Author: Valk Visuals. Source: http://www.ostia-antica.org/valkvisuals/html/tombe_86_1.htm

Figure 8: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 86: mosaic of man rowing woman across water. *c.* Late 2nd century C.E., black and white floor mosaic, unknown measurements. Source: Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 164-165 (fig. 80).

Figure 9: Alexandria, Kom el-Shuqafa, Large Hypogeum, sections and plan. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 196 (fig. 339).

Figure 10: Map of Ostia. Source: <http://www.ostia-antica.org/map/plans-so/overview-color.jpg>

Figure 11: Plan of *Serapeum* (III.XVII.4). Source: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*. <http://www.ostia-antica.org/regio3/17/17-4.htm>.

Figure 12: Plan of *Domus del Serapeo* (III.XVII.3). Source: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 143 (Fig. 60).

Figure 13: Isis Pharia (or Pelagia) with a snake. 2nd century, Basanite marble, unknown measurements. Ostia, Museo Ostiense. Inv. Nr. 18141. Source: http://www.ostiaantica.beniculturali.it/en/photo/museo/Iride_con_serpente_754.jpg.

Figure 14: Előresiető nőalak - Isis Pelagia. 150 C.E., Marble, 145 cm. Budapest, Szépművészeti Múzeum. Inv. Nr. 3934 (5568). Source: <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/record/2032004/5568.html>

Figure 15: The Winged Victory of Samothrace. c. 190 B.C.E., marble, 3.28 m. Inv. Nr. Ma 2369. Paris: Louvre. Source: <http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/winged-victory-samothrace>.

Figure 16: Statue of Isis. 125 C.E., marble, unknown measurements. Ostia, Museo Ostiense. Inv. Nr. 154 (E23908). http://www.ostia-antica.org/vmuseum/marble_5.htm.

Figure 17: Statuette of Serapis. 2nd century C.E., granite, unknown measurements. Ostia, Museo Ostiense. Inv. Nr. 1125 (E27297A and E27312). Source: http://www.ostia-antica.org/vmuseum/marble_5.htm.

Figure 18: Statue of Serapis. c. 2nd century AD, sycamore wood covered in painted plaster, 1.9 meters. Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 246 (fig. 412).

Figure 19: Statuette of Osiris and a Scarab. Unknown date, granite, unknown measurements. Ostia, Museo Ostiense. No Inv. Nr. (E27293A and E27293B). Source: http://www.ostia-antica.org/vmuseum/marble_5.htm.

Figure 20: Statuette of Osiris. 664-332 B.C.E., bronze, 28.8 cm. Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale/Museo Egizio. Inv. Nr. 3687. Source: <http://www.globalegyptianmuseum.org/detail.aspx?id=9665>.

Figure 21: Statue of Osiris. 664-525 B.C.E., greywacke, 55 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. Inv. Nr. 29.1131. Source: <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/statue-of-osiris-upper-part-146894>.

Figure 22: Depiction of the bull Apis. c. 127 C.E., Black and white floor mosaic, 2.90 x 1.40 m. Source: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, Tav. CI (n. 290).

Figure 23: Statue of black Apis bull erected by Emperor Hadrian. c. 2nd century, marble, unknown measurements. Alexandria, Greco-Roman Museum. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 185 (fig. 312).

Figure 24 a-e. Depictions of flora and fauna in Ostia's Serapeum: (a) water lilies and marsh scene; (b) ibis with snake; (c) stork with water lilies; (d) hippopotamus among reeds; (e) possible pygmy working in the field. c. 127 C.E., black and white mosaic, 8.0 x 11.0 m. Source: Becatti,

Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav), Tav. CXVII, CXIX, CXX, CXXI (n. 289); Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 151-152 (n. 289).

Figure 25: Mosaic in *Domus del Serapeo* dining hall. c. 127 C.E., polychromatic mosaic, 9.0 x 9.0 m. Source: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, Tav. CIII (n. 283), CIV, CCXII, and CCXIII; Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 144-149 (n. 283).

Figure 26: Forum of Corporations, *statio* no. 27, depiction of a river with branching tributaries. c. 150 C.E., black and white floor mosaic, unknown measurements. Source: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, Tav. XCIII (n. 109).

Figure 27: Forum of Corporations, *statio* no. 40, depiction of 'XANDRIN'. c. 190 C.E., black and white floor mosaic, unknown measurements. Author: Eric Taylor. Source: <http://www.ostia-antica.org/piazzale/corp40.jpg>

Figure 28: Mosaic in *Terme di Nettuno* latrine 2, Nilotic theme. c. 50 C.E., black and white mosaic, unknown measurements. Source: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, Tav. CXVIII.

Figure 29 a-b: Floor mosaic in *Terme di Nettuno*: (a) Drawing of floor mosaic in its entirety; (b) depiction of personified heads of Spain, Africa, Sicily, and Egypt (clockwise from top left). c. 50 C.E., black and white floor mosaic, 13.0 x 9.0 m. Source: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 46 (Fig. 14, n. 68); Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, Tav. CXXII (n. 68).

Figure 30: Akrotiri river fresco. c. 16th century B.C.E., fresco, unknown measurements. Author: Unknown. Source: <https://peripluscd.wordpress.com/tag/santorini/>

Figure 31: Nile mosaic of Palestrina. c. mid-2nd century B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E., polychromatic floor mosaic, 4.31 x 5.85 m (original possibly 4.35 x 6.87 m based on original location). Author: Sergio D'Afflitto. Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/9d/2012-09-07_Mosaico_del_Nilo_museo_Palestrina.jpg.

Figure 32: Kom el-Shuqafa Main Tomb: Statue of the male from the anteroom. c. 1st century C.E., unknown medium, unknown measurements (slightly under-lifesize). Source: Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 131 (fig. 108).

Figure 33: Kom el-Shuqafa Main Tomb: Statue of the female from the anteroom. c. 1st century C.E., unknown medium, unknown measurements (slightly under-lifesize). Source: Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 132 (fig. 109)

Figure 34: Kom el-Shuqafa entrance to the Main Chapel: two Anubis-Legionary figures standing guard on either side of the doorway to the main chapel. c. 1st century C.E., unknown medium, unknown measurements. Source: Empereur, *The Catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa*, 14 (Fig. 19).

Figure 35 a-b: Kom el-Shuqafa Main Tomb: (a) drawing of the right niche with the veneration of Apis, (b) drawing of the back wall in the central niche of the mummification of Osiris by Horus, Thoth and Anubis. Source: Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 136-137 (fig. 114-115).

Figure 36: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 26: Ducks in the reeds chasing cupids. c. late 2nd century C.E., painting, unknown measurements. Source: Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 149 (Fig. 60).

Figure 37: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 19: Ducks in the reeds with two hippocampi (one on either side of marsh scene). c. mid-2nd century C.E., painting, unknown measurements. Unknown Inv. Nr. (E17013, E17025, E41073, E41078). Ostia, Museo Ostiense (or still in situ). Source: http://www.ostia-antica.org/vmuseum/decor_3.htm; Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 130; Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*. http://www.ostia-antica.org/valkvisuals/html/html_fotos/tomb_19_03.htm

Figure 38: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 43: Ducks in the reeds. c. late 2nd century C.E., painting, unknown measurements. Source: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*. http://www.ostia-antica.org/valkvisuals/html/html_fotos/tomb_43_05.htm

Figure 39: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 80: Ducks in the reeds. c. mid-2nd century C.E., painting, unknown measurements. Source: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*. http://www.ostia-antica.org/valkvisuals/html/html_fotos/tomb_80_06.htm

Figure 40: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 30: Painting of the head of Serapis. c. 160 C.E., painting, unknown measurements. Unknown Inv. Nr. (E41167). Ostia, Museo Ostiense (or still in situ). Source: http://www.ostia-antica.org/vmuseum/decor_3.htm.

Figure 41: Alexandria, Kom el-Shuqafa, 'Hall of Caracalla' beside Large Hypogeum, plan. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 198 (fig. 342).

Figure 42: Alexandria, Kom el-Shuqafa, 'Hall of Caracalla', two wall-paintings on back wall of Tomb I. c. late 1st century C.E., painting, unknown measurements. Source: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 199 (fig. 344).

Figure 43: Necropolis of Isola Sacra, tomb 16: Nile mosaic. c. 150-160 C.E., black and white floor mosaic, unknown measurements. Source: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, Tav. CXIV.

Chapter One: Introduction

This study will investigate whether the presence of Egyptians, not just legally-defined Alexandrians, is tangible in Ostia and Portus during the 2nd century C.E. The difficulty of this analysis lies in the importance of Alexandria at the Imperial harbours, because the Egyptian commercial centre provided a great deal of the shipments of grain to Rome. Furthermore, an analysis of ancient sources and material culture in the first two centuries C.E. by modern scholars perpetuates a general assumption that Egyptians were not welcome at the capital, assuming instead that a detrimental ‘Egyptomania’ had overcome the populace of Rome and its environs.¹ This study’s primary objective is to investigate and re-evaluate traditional scholarship on Egyptians and Alexandrians present at Ostia and Portus. It will follow the opening of the Claudian basin at Portus and the subsequent rise of commercial activity in the area to the late 2nd century in order to examine the importance of Egyptian culture at the Imperial harbours. It will also seek to test the ability of scholarship to categorize strains of evidence differentiating between Egyptian and Alexandrian inhabitants at the Imperial harbours.

I will be looking at three categories of analysis as a means of identifying the presence of Egyptians. First, the ancient Latin literature available that remarks on the presence of foreigners from Egypt will be combined with the epigraphic content at Ostia and Portus. Second, the architectural designs of buildings at the Imperial harbours that either borrow forms or materials

¹ For example, see: S. Ashton, *Roman Egyptomania* (London: Golden House Publications, 2004); D. E. E. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome* (Cambridge, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 163-178; M. Swetnam-Burland, “Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: a taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy,” in *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*, ed. L. Bricault, M. J. Versluys, and P. G. P. Meyboom (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 113-136; M. T. Boatwright, *Peoples of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 99-130.

originating from Egypt will follow. Lastly, the symbolic iconography of the Imperial harbours that allude to similar visual materials found in Egypt and at Alexandria.

The first category of analysis deals with the ancient written and epigraphic material available on Egyptians and Alexandrians at the Imperial harbours and in the capital of the Roman Empire within the first two centuries of the empire. Whether through a study of history or of satire, the bodies of ancient literary work left available to us have the ability to impart the feelings and opinions of the authors themselves and their readers. Comparatively, epigraphic content of foreigners from inscriptions, dedications, or funerary epitaphs leave telling marks of real individuals who made their way to any given area and made a life for themselves. The value of this category of investigation is therefore incorporated to some degree in many studies because information divulged by these ancient and epigraphic sources offers important insight into the behaviour, attitudes, and cultural particularities of Roman or foreign subjects. However, scholars have a tendency to focus almost exclusively on evidence supplied by ancient literary sources. Such investigations are capable of reflecting social and cultural norms of a particular time period, albeit largely through the eyes of a particular social class. Furthermore, the target audiences were generally the wealthy ‘elite’ of Rome.² Modern interpretation of the texts can also be problematic, as not one ancient author treats any subject with uniformity or in some cases

² I will utilize John Clarke’s definition of what constituted an ‘elite citizen’ in Roman society, namely that they “possessed the four prerequisites necessary to belong to the upper strata of society: money, important public appointments, social prestige, and a membership in the *ordo* (the *ordines* are those of senator, Decurion, and equestrian).” Clarke further affirmed that if an individual missed any one of those qualifications, he or she did not qualify. As a result, a freedman might have money, public appointments (Claudius began offering some political power to freedman in the early 1st century), and social prestige, but he could not become a member of the *ordines*, and therefore cannot be classified as an ‘elite’ member of society. On the other hand, a freeborn citizen might have the membership in the *ordo* but did not have any money, negating him from the elite sphere as well. See: J. R. Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans: Visual Representation and Non-Elite Viewers in Italy, 100 B.C. – A.D. 315* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4.

clarity; furthermore, by their very nature, “written sources tend to be particularistic.”³ Epigraphic material offers some comparative information about the ‘thousands of newcomers’ who arrived at the Roman capital each year, because the epitaphs mark the passing of real people, but the information provided is scarce and inscriptions do not always mark a “distinct foreign identity.”⁴ In sum, societal norms and impressions of foreigners are both constructed through the opinions of those usually more privileged than the majority of a given citizen body, whereas epigraphic content is quantitatively more numerous but generally provides less detailed information on foreigners. The subjective understanding of these opinions by modern historians, and the minimal information provided by foreigners in the epigraphic record, are two key problems that leave gaps in our understanding.

The gaps can be rectified by archaeological excavations and the interpretation of material remains. These are the second and third category of analysis and make up the bulk of the thesis. Although physical remains are not uniform in nature they nevertheless are common to all sites of classical antiquity and provide much additional information on the lives of people from all social classes.⁵ Due to the variety of available material, which remains open for interpretation, this type of evidence is subdivided into two groups: the architectural and the iconographical.

The analysis of architectural remains incorporates a great deal of available information because this category includes the analysis of buildings in the urban and funerary contexts. It is furthermore an area of study that allows for the analysis of cultural impact on any given society because the features of a particular building, such as the design, construction materials, and

³ M. Fulford, “Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean,” *WorldArch* 19, 1 (1987): 58.

⁴ D. Noy, *Foreigners at Rome* (London: Ducksworth with The Classical Press of Wales, 2000), x.

⁵ Fulford, “Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean,” 58.

techniques, can all be isolated, defined, and contrasted with each another.⁶ Yet this kind of analysis is not without its problems. The process of analysis, for example, can be difficult and the interpretation of architectural elements is often left solely up to the archaeologist who needs to deduce ethnicity and culture “based on objectively observable material remains.”⁷

Nevertheless, some key features are identifiably associated with specific places and cultures. For example, the monumental gates and triumphal arches are quintessentially Roman architectural norms, whereas the iconic pyramids and *Serapea* are essentially key features of the Egyptian and Alexandrian landscapes.⁸

The last category includes the analysis of iconography. However, the complications of deducing identity in the epigraphic material is a similar problem also faced in the interpretation of iconographic symbols. This type of material has the potential to show the social processes, which lead to formations of presumed cultural identities, but it simultaneously requires a kind of recognition by a group of people with commonalities.⁹ As some of these observers made up a part of the ancient authors in the first category, the identification of particular symbols or structures with different cultural origins brings into play a number of other associated problems. The first of these is the interpretation of the symbols themselves. For example, the image of a

⁶ H. Dodge, “The Architectural Impact of Rome in the East,” in *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture in the Roman Empire*, ed. M. Henig (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1990), 108.

⁷ M. Grahame, “Material culture and Roman identity: the spatial layout of Pompeian houses and the problem of ethnicity,” in *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, eds. R. Laurence, and J. Berry (London: Routledge, 1998), 158.

⁸ D. M. Bailey, “Classical Architecture in Roman Egypt,” in *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture in the Roman Empire*, ed. M. Henig (Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1990), 127.

This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5, but briefly: Curl does mention that when pyramidal-shapes appeared outside Egypt, they were not necessarily harking back to Egypt. In fact, a few of the examples of pyramid tombs might be exhibiting an interest in the iconography of Egypt rather than on the actual culture. See also J. S. Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 40-41.

⁹ Grahame, “Material Culture and Roman Identity,” 158-159.

fish could invoke thoughts about the sea, about dining, or even Christ himself depending on the time period, the context, and the individual circumstances of any particular observer.¹⁰ Another related problem deals with the loss of identification of an image with its original symbolic meaning, a process defined as iconatropy.¹¹ An example is the image of the Nile, which would at first be an iconic representation of Egypt and Alexandria, but over time might be considered to lose much of its Egyptian association to become a generic symbol of idyllic peace.¹²

The difficulties outlined above have a very key fundamental problem at their core and ultimately boil down to two basic concepts. First, the identification and acknowledgement of certain key cultural processes. Definitions of ‘culture’ and ‘society’, what it means to be ‘Roman’ and ‘Egyptian’ or even ‘Ostian’ and ‘Alexandrian’, are social processes not easily defined.¹³ By interpreting artistic elements in any given population, it is inevitable that scholarship begins to compare and contrast what is local and what is foreign. The second problem faced by this type of research is the availability of materials that identify ‘Egyptian’ and ‘Alexandrian’ elements. Very little of it remains in textual or archaeological form at the Imperial

¹⁰ J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-2.

¹¹ C. M. Keesling, “Misunderstood Gestures: Iconatropy and the Reception of Greek Sculpture in the Roman Imperial Period,” *CIAnt* 24, 1 (2005): 43.

Iconatropy is defined by Jan Vansina as “one process whereby oral traditions originate as after-the-fact explanations for remarkable objects that, through the passage of time, have ceased to make sense to their viewers.” As an art historian instead of an ethnographer, Keesling extends this definition to loosely include archaeological sites and monuments, everyday artifacts and works of art. See also: J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology*, trans. H. M. Wright (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965), 36-39; J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 44-45, 157-158, and 187-188.

¹² U. Pappalardo, and R. Ciardiello, *Greek and Roman Mosaics*, trans. by Ceil Friedman (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 2012), 87; J. T. Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome* (2012), <http://ostia-antica.org/> (accessed 12 January 2013).

¹³ Grahame, “Material Culture and Roman Identity,” 157-158.

harbours. It is a good argument for pooling resources and thus shaping the methodology of this study.

The first problem, that of terminology, has in Roman studies traditionally asserted a form of classical scholarship which labeled foreigners as either ‘Hellenized’ or ‘Romanized’. The German historian Droysen invented the term ‘Hellenistic’ to define the period driven by the Graeco-Macedonian political and linguistic colonialism.¹⁴ It is not found in the vocabulary of ancient Greek writers of the Empire and so was primarily intended by Droysen to denote the political climate created by Alexander and the “post-301 concert of monarchic Greek-language powers in the Eastern Mediterranean.”¹⁵ Mattingly demonstrates that the term ‘Romanization’ – to literally ‘become Roman’ – was created by Mommsen and developed more fully by Haverfield to determine the extent of a society’s adaptation after contact with the Roman state; contact that would produce “profound and highly varied changes in behaviour, material culture, and social organization at the core, in the provinces and beyond the frontiers.”¹⁶ It, too, is not a term found in the vocabulary of ancient writers.

¹⁴ J. G. Droysen, *Geschichte des hellenismus vol. I-III*, 2nd ed. (Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1877-78), 3.1-3.38; A. D. Momigliano [1970], “J. G. Droysen Between Greeks and Jews,” in *A. D. Momigliano: Studies on Modern Scholarship*, eds. G. W. Bowersock and T. J. Cornell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 147-161.

¹⁵ J. K. Davies, “Hellenistic Economies in the Post-Finley era,” in *Hellenistic Economies*, ed. Z. H. Archibald, J. Davies, V. Gabrielsen, and G. J. Oliver (London: Routledge, 2001), 11.

¹⁶ D. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 210; T. Mommsen [1885], *The History of Rome*, trans. W. P. Dickson (London: R. Bentley, 1886), 193; F. Haverfield, “The Romanization of Roman Britain,” *ProcBritAc* 2 (1906): 186.

Grahame also remarks it was not a good term for gauging adaptability because we would then need to have an “a priori understanding” of what it meant to be Roman; a concept not easily defined by the Romans themselves, let alone modern scholars. The term furthermore measures the presence of stylistically ‘Roman’ or ‘Romanized’ objects based on subjective assumptions of the historian; the more frequent their appearance, the greater the degree of cultural influence.

See also: Grahame, “Material Culture and Roman Identity,” 175.

Therefore, the difficulty with such constructs stems from the fact that the terms are classifications not found in literary texts but are rather definitions created to define and establish levels of cultural conformity in Greek and/or Roman society.¹⁷ In order to even understand these constructs, which fundamentally track changes in the ethnic culture of a given society, it is important to further understand what is meant by ‘ethnicity’, ‘society’ and even ‘culture’. They are not one and the same thing. ‘Ethnicity’ emerges only as an association with a particular individual or group of individuals, ‘society’, who then produce material remains that can be observed by outsiders as a type of ‘culture’ unique to the process by which it was formed by this individual or group.¹⁸ ‘Hellenization’ and ‘Romanization’, concepts that emphasize conformity, mitigate problems of analysis in the transference of customs from one culture to the other because they each describe both a process and outcome in a unilateral direction.¹⁹ In a sense, these terms can therefore be said to derive from “a process of comparing oneself with others.”²⁰

The second problem, the analysis of material remains, is just as difficult to reconcile. Unlike terminology however, if there is an insufficient amount of material remains to analyze, it renders an investigation regrettably inadequate. At Alexandria, archaeological material dating to the Roman period of occupation (from the late 1st century B.C.E. to the 4th century C.E.) is severely lacking in the 1st and 2nd centuries, forcing historians to rely heavily on ancient literary sources to reconstruct the life of an Alexandrian in the Roman Period.²¹ Although Ostia and Portus have

¹⁷ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 205.

¹⁸ Grahame, “Material Culture and Roman Identity,” 158.

¹⁹ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 204-207.

²⁰ Grahame, “Material Culture and Roman Identity,” 162.

²¹ J. S. McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt: c. 300 BC to AD 700* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 149.

fared much better, with meticulous documentations of excavations spanning several centuries of habitation, excavations are still severely hampered by modern occupation and rising sea levels.²²

The difficulty with the lack of material remains is problematic for this study because it relies heavily on monuments, artifacts, and symbols to gauge the presence of one culture within that of another. In order to assess the influence of Egyptians at Ostia and Portus, establishing a basis of comparison for the norms and ethnic identity of Alexandria is as important as it is for establishing local traditions at the Imperial harbours so that foreign influences can be identified.

Despite these limitations, however, the three categories as a whole will help fill in the disparaging gaps of our knowledge about Egyptians at the Imperial harbours because each field of study supplements the other where information is lacking or conflicting. Rather than rely on one particular field of study, which has the potential to paint a particular bias, it is best to analyze the written, epigraphical, architectural, and iconographical features of Alexandria, Ostia, and Portus together in order to present as complete a picture as possible about the presence of Egyptians at the mouth of the Tiber in the 2nd century. Similarities (e.g., cultic worship, epigraphic formulae, etc.) and discrepancies (e.g., iconography, funerary traditions, etc.) will be made more readily apparent.

Such an undertaking is possible because I will be addressing both the commercial and funerary landscapes of Alexandria and the Imperial harbours in order to cover the similarities and discrepancies of accommodations made by the living and provided for the dead. Although a

²² Since excavations were done regularly at Ostia and on occasion at Portus (often treated as a single unit) throughout the 1900s to the present, numerous publications exist on the material uncovered. I am limiting this body of information to key documents used in this thesis: G. Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1940); R. Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973); I. Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto: Isola Sacra* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1996); C. Pavolini, *Ostia: Guide Archeologiche* (Bari: Laterza, 2006).

great deal of information will be covered, it is only in this way that a concise framework for comparison will be made available, a necessity in order to establish the cultural impact of the Egyptian (largely, Alexandrian) grain merchants at the Roman capital's port. It is my hope that this broad spectrum of analysis can suggest that there was more than just a passing presence of Egyptians and Alexandrians on Italian soil in the Ostian area during the 2nd century. This study will therefore include the urban landscape of the harbours already mentioned, as well as the funerary realms of the Alexandrian necropoleis Kom el-Shuqafa and the so-called "Hall of Caracalla"²³, and the Isola Sacra necropolis nestled between Ostia and Portus. This corpus of information available will allow a comprehensive analysis of the 2nd-century environment as seen through the eyes of an Egyptian traveller leaving Alexandria to visit the Imperial harbours; the familiarity left behind only to encounter the vestiges of Egyptian culture on foreign soil.

The underlying goal of this work is to understand that during the process of identifying the presence of Egyptians at the Tiber's mouth, the cultural impact of Egypt's Alexandrian grain fleet at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century can simultaneously suggest a process of assimilation that does not work as a one-way street. As at Rome, the harbours accepted different religious customs by constructing temples in honour of foreign gods, guilds formed to provide commercial

²³ Contrary to what the name might suggest, the "Hall of Caracalla" does not actually dictate that the construction of the tomb and subsequent burials originated in the 3rd century. Rather, the term was coined by Giuseppe Botti in beginning of the 20th century when he discovered a collection of horse bones and the remains of a human skeleton near the bottom of a funerary shaft in the necropolis. Due to the tomb's proximity to the stadium, where supposedly, the Emperor Caracalla ordered the city's youths to be slaughtered during his state visit in 215 C.E., Botti associated the historical event with the tomb. However, Empeur believes the area associated with the stadium's participants (e.g., sportsman). He points three key details that negate Botti's assumptions: (1) a grouping of horse bones were also found in the adjacent Hypogeum I, (2) Physician Dr. Piot analysed the bones and labelled them as race-horses, (3) discovery of painted symbols of Nemesis (associated with sport) on a nearby sarcophagi. See: Jean-Yves Empeur, *The Catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa*, trans. by Colin Clement (Alexandria: Sarapis Publishing, 1995), 19; M. S. Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria: The Theatre of the Dead* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 122-123.

contacts for the numerous traders arriving to the new dock facilities, and political power was sometimes placed in the hands of foreigners most familiar with the management of different shippers and traders. Egyptians – Alexandrians especially – helped shape the cultural environment at Ostia and Portus early in the Imperial era. The appearance of ‘Egyptian’ iconography at a ‘Roman’ port before the 3rd century also communicates interesting revelations about the multifaceted and dynamic influences of one culture interacting with another. The key to the identification of Egyptians at Ostia and Portus is Mattingly’s implications of a diffusion of culture and customs in multiple directions; he advocates that the exchange of ideas did not occur in a one-way street (‘Hellenism’ and ‘Romanization’).²⁴

This thesis will be broken down into seven chapters. The second chapter will look at the bulk of traditional scholarship that has focused on the excavation of the harbours and their surroundings, and the analysis of material which has been uncovered during the process. Scholarship has often understated the connection between Egypt and Rome in the 2nd century, choosing to refer the initial conquest as a type of ‘Egyptomania’ and only recognizing Alexandrian presence in the 3rd century with the ascension of Rome’s African Emperor Septimius Severus. I will follow the scholarly discourse on the influence of Egyptians at the Imperial harbours in the intermittent years and suggest that subsequent studies conduct a more comprehensive analysis of the local environments. Traditional textual analysis must be combined with all epigraphic, architectural, and iconographical evidence available at the Imperial harbours in order to clearly establish the relationship built between Roman province and capital.

²⁴ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 209.

The third chapter will follow the development of Ostia and Portus' relationship with Alexandria and Egypt. Due to the long period of occupation at all sites, this chapter will focus primarily on interaction of the commercial centres during the period of time spanning from 30 B.C.E. to the mid-2nd century C.E. I hope to establish that contact between Egypt and Rome extended beyond a bond of conquered and conqueror and developed into a mutually beneficial partnership of commercial and cultural exchange. It will be necessary to address at this time the prominent position of North Africa and Carthage as well. By the 2nd century they are seen as a dominant force in the productions and shipment of grain, and as a result, scholarship has deemed Carthage a reasonable consideration for Alexandria's dwindling importance at the Imperial harbours.

The fourth chapter will delve into the textual and epigraphical analysis of the interaction between Alexandria and the Imperial harbours. Setting the stage with what ancient sources indicate as the bond linking Rome and Egypt together, this chapter will investigate Imperial incentives, Roman opinions of foreigners, and foreign impressions of Rome. Epigraphic content at Ostia and Portus, with a couple of examples from Isola Sacra, will attempt to ground these opinions on location, because opinions made in the capital do not necessarily translate to other places in the Empire, even if inexorably linked by a co-dependent relationship.

The fifth chapter will extend the analysis of the Egyptian presence at Ostia and Portus to the buildings from which most of the epigraphic information derives. This chapter will seek to establish Imperial and local efforts to welcome Egyptians or the Alexandrian grain fleets by constructing familiar landmarks, religious centres, and other points of interest. The presence of such buildings will imply that not only were the transport fleets enticed to the harbour facilities of Rome, but that the people shipping the grain themselves were also welcomed. The depth of

their welcome will be revealed in the funerary realm at Isola Sacra, wherein familiar sepulchral monuments may potentially link the commercial centres of Rome to the trading centre of Egypt.

The sixth chapter will conclude the study with an analysis of iconographic material indicative of a lingering presence of Egyptians and Alexandrians at the Imperial harbours. Like the two previous, this section will also include evidence found in the funerary landscape of the Isola Sacra necropolis because it is in the final resting place, “a home for the dead”, that iconography can suggest the lingering presence (and by extension, settlement) of foreigners in the harbours. Additionally, comparative examples will be brought in from Alexandria’s necropoleis of Kom el-Shuqafa and the Halls of Caracalla.

The seventh chapter will offer final discussions and conclusions. An appendix of images will also be included. These images will be comprised of maps, building complexes, and iconographical images/symbols described through the course of this thesis. Maps are included in order to help situate the reader and to familiarize them with the landscapes encountered during the course of the analysis.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

When discussing and analyzing foreign presence at the harbours of Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century, scholars tend to focus on an increased contact with the grain-producing territories to the west of the Italic province. In particular, this scholarship tends to acknowledge that Rome's province of Africa Proconsularis provided much of the necessary basic commodities like grain and oil, as well as numerous slaves.²⁵ What needs to be proved at this time, however, is the role Alexandrian grain fleets played in provisioning the capital with similar commodities. The presence of Egyptians (who were primarily from Alexandria) acting as the shippers has also been downplayed. With few exceptions,²⁶ past scholarship often relied heavily on the individual interpretation of literary and archaeological material to assess the presence of foreigners at Rome, where the growing influence of Africa Proconsularis in the 2nd century is exemplified. In order to best establish the presence and continued influence of grain merchants from Egypt at Ostia and Portus it would be better to take a comprehensive approach that incorporates a thorough investigation of the ancient sources, epigraphic, architectural, and iconographic strands of evidence centralized in the Imperial harbours. This chapter will, therefore, provide definitions of 'Egyptian' and 'Alexandrian' individuals, the necessity of shipping grain to Rome from multiple provinces, the importance of constructing relationships between commercial harbours,

²⁵ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 252; S. Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," in *Bollettino di Archeologia On Line*, <http://www.archeologia.beniculturali.it/> (accessed 23 February 2014), 17; W. Broekaert, "Oil for Rome During the Second and Third Century AD: A Confrontation of Archaeological Records and the *Historia Augusta*," *Mnemosyne* 64 (2011): 596; W. V. Harris [2000], "Trade [70-192 AD]," in *Rome's Imperial Economy: Twelve Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 162-163.

²⁶ Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean.;" Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)."

and the need to assess these details in a comprehensive manner in order to fully analyze the possibility of Egyptians in Ostia and Portus' cultic and civic domains.

2.1 Identifying cultural markers at the Imperial Harbours

A basic problem that plagues modern studies of this nature revolves around the fundamental definition of what it meant to be an Egyptian, or even an Alexandrian, in the 2nd century. The comprehensive analysis of all the compiled secondary research cannot be conducted without first understanding how Egyptians identified themselves, and how modern studies have approached the identification. To begin, there is no simple definition for someone who is culturally 'Egyptian' or 'Alexandrian' since the cultural changes that took place over time and the interpretation of the change in the scholarship are often subjective.²⁷ As such, the social processes which created the associations are often reliant on cultural or political configurations of the people and civilization in the literary, archaeological, and iconographical material - the interpretation of which is neither concise nor uniform. Nevertheless, an attempt is made here because, without it, a comprehensive connection between the different strains of material available would not be possible.

Firstly, there is a need to distinguish between modern and ancient designations of 'Egyptian'. Modern practice would simply apply the term to any person originating from Egypt, but Swetnam-Burland identifies that there existed a kind of complexity with the association in the ancient world.²⁸ Being labeled an 'Egyptian' in either the ancient literature or epigraphic

²⁷ Grahame, "Material Culture and Roman Identity," 157-158; M. J. Versluys, "Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond," in *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, ed. L. Bricault, and M. J. Versluys (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 9.

²⁸ M. Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt in Italy: Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 46-47.

sources often implied a lower class in the Roman world, because such persons were unable to enjoy certain legal privileges (e.g., citizenship) and had far fewer cultural institutions (e.g., the gymnasium).²⁹ Yet, these people were often subject to higher taxes and harsher punishments under the law. According to Abd-el-Ghani, however, being labeled an ‘Alexandrian’ entitled one to a distinguished status and qualification for all the privileges denied to fellow Egyptians.³⁰ The reasoning behind such inequality derived from the Roman appreciation for all things Greek. So that when a great number of country-side Egyptian inhabitants surged into Alexandria after the annexation of Egypt into the Roman Empire, Roman magistrates would periodically take measures to push the Egyptians back out.³¹ Even the movement of ‘Egyptians’ out of the province was regulated and enforced by strict regulations, but Alexandrians were often encouraged or even invited to Rome.³² In essence, the *label* of being Egyptian or Alexandrian established a person’s legal status more so than their ethnicity, and it “determined and was determined by class, status, wealth, and ancestry.”³³ Even most modern papyrologists consider Alexandria *ad Aegyptum*, that is, “next to” or “toward” Egypt rather than *in Aegypto*, thus

²⁹ Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt in Italy*, 47; Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 245-51.

Ancient source: Plin. *Ep.* 10.5, 10.6, and 10.7; Plin. *HN* 26.3-4.

Epigraphic source: *Select Papyri* I, 112 = BGU 2.423.

³⁰ M. Abd-el-Ghani, “Alexandria and Middle Egypt: Some Aspects of Social and Economic Contacts under Roman Rule,” in *Ancient Alexandria between Egypt and Greece*, eds. W. V. Harris, and G. Ruffini (Leiden: Brill, 2004): 168.

³¹ Abd-el-Ghani, “Alexandria and Middle Egypt,” 168; A. Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt: The Case of the Acta Alexandinorum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 58-59.

In 78/79 an edict was made by prefect Vibius Maximus that demanded country-people to present written declarations of relatives already present in the city that they wished to visit. In 104, the edict was then changed by the same prefect so that country-people with good skills may be admitted to the city for satisfactory reasons. By the 3rd century, another prefect ordered country-folk to leave the city by harvest, and in 215 the emperor Caracalla issued a decree that expelled all Egyptians from the city entirely (unless under special circumstances, such as necessary business or religious involvement, for example).

³² Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt in Italy*, 47.

Ancient source: Plin. *Ep.* 10.5, 10.6, and 10.7; Plin. *HN* 26.3-4.

³³ Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt in Italy*, 47.

echoing the sentiment of the ancients.³⁴ As a result, although the complex identification of an ‘Egyptian’ and ‘Alexandrian’ has been better illuminated, identification of the people as a culture outside Egypt, be it inscriptional or iconographical, is still problematic.

The inscriptional evidence associated with various monuments and buildings has often had scholars focusing on the study of onomastics in order to infer ethnicity. It is essentially a practice of associating locations or origins with specific names. Despite its continued practice, this type of study has long been contested.³⁵ In order to avoid erroneous designations, some scholars will now employ a few basic principles in order to identify ethnic backgrounds.³⁶ Outlined clearest by Noy, the first of three principles requires an explicit marker of ethnicity or birthplace (usually with the common Latin *ex, natione, or civitas/civitate* in front of a place name), the second requires the subject to be the (ex-)slave of a local dynasty, and the third principle requires a connection to someone of foreign origin (usually by the military expression *corregionarius*).³⁷ In addition to following a strict set of guidelines for the identification of

³⁴ C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 7.

³⁵ MacDonal warns of three inconsistencies associated with such a study. First, linguistic idiosyncrasies in the particular language of the bearer; second, the association of a name with a specific ancient ethnic group; and third, that fashions in name-giving were not necessarily limited to specific communities with no means of influencing fashions elsewhere. Slave masters or sellers could have also changed a slave’s name due to personal preference, or in some cases, to even increase the value of a slave’s status to potential buyers. These men and women would then keep these names and only add onto them in order to symbolize their freedom once manumitted. See: M. Macdonald, “Some Reflections on Epigraphy and Ethnicity in the Roman Near East,” *JMA* 11 (1998): 187-188; L. Hughes, “Unveiling the veil: cultic, status, and ethnic representations of early Imperial freedwomen,” *Material Religion* 3, 2 (2007): 233.

³⁶ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 6.

The following scholars (relevant to this body of work) also employ the same standards: M. Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead: Roman Funerary Commemoration in Western Europe*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); V. M. Hope, “A Roof Over the Dead: Communal Tombs and Family Structure,” in *Domestic Space in the Roman World*, ed. R. Laurence, and A. Wallace-Hadrill (Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1997); E. Meyer, “Explaining the Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire: the evidence of Epitaphs,” *JRS* 80 (1990); L. H. Petersen, “Questioning Roman Freedman Art: Ancient and Modern constructions,” (PhD diss., University of Texas, United States of America, 2000).

³⁷ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 6-7.

foreigners in the epigraphic habit, Noy simultaneously employs the use of Roman literature, which provides a number of references to individuals who came to live at Rome. He acknowledges that most of Rome's leading writers were not natives to the city (e.g., Strabo, Pliny, Plutarch, Tacitus, etc.), but relying solely on epigraphic material would leave (sometimes biased) gaps in our knowledge.³⁸ Noy, therefore, combines an extensive number of inscriptions with a comprehensive analysis of Roman literature in order to define and analyze the types and numbers of foreigners at Rome. In this way Noy concludes that of the Egyptians in the capital, the culture "lacked any form of communal organization."³⁹ Most of these references concerned Alexandrians who were "apparently of Greek extraction, rather than 'indigenous' Egyptians," a result Noy believed owed in part to the anti-Cleopatra propaganda that created a stereotyped image of Egyptians as outlandish and worshippers of animal-gods.⁴⁰ His scholarship categorizes foreigners in a conveniently compartmentalized body of work based on provincial boundaries (e.g., Egypt, Africa, Gaul, etc.) for ease of access and analysis. As a result, Noy's work lays an excellent foundation for the study of Egyptians in the epigraphic and literary records, but the bulk of his material weighs heavily on Rome. Occasionally, evidence from the surrounding area,

He also mentions that this practice of stating a birthplace was common among some groups more than others, usually among soldiers, but not so much for civilians. The likelihood of commemoration as an immigrant is also linked to the time of arrival and subsequent death at Rome: recent arrivals were more likely to mention origins than those who had been at Rome for a number of years.

³⁸ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, xi and 5; R. Laurence, "Introduction," in *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire*, eds. R. Laurence, and J. Berry (London: Routledge, 1998), 5.

³⁹ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 251.

⁴⁰ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 246.

The "Eastern cults" were not entirely welcomed by early Imperialists and the battle against them was to be fought by a doughty champion of the Italian tradition, Augustus. After all, Isis and the deities of Egypt had sided with Antony and Cleopatra at Actium against the ancestral gods of Rome. Vergil (*Aen.* 8.706-727) went so far as to portray Egyptian cults as negative and foreign atrocities: "Monstrous gods of every shape" where "Anubis, the yelping dog, bears arms against Neptune and Venus and against Minerva." See also: H. H. Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero: A history of Rome 133BC to 68AD*, 5th ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 1986), 175.

particularly Ostia, is offered, but the examples are few and far between. For this reason, scholars like Taylor, Hermansen, Nielsen, and Helttula, who all focus on the epigraphic material available in Ostia and its surrounding areas, will help fill in the gaps of Noy's Rome-centric research.⁴¹

In addition to the literary and epigraphic material, archeological analysis of monuments will be utilized in order to introduce a broader range of evidence and produce a more complete picture of Egyptian presence at Ostia and Portus. Unlike Noy's three guidelines on identifying foreigners in inscriptions, the analysis of cultural markers in the material record has no concise indicators. The objectivity of the practice raises some concern because it is up to the archaeologist to determine what aspect of the past is being reflected. For this reason, it is necessary to understand how those who lived during a specified time created and viewed images associated with ethnicity, identity, and culture.⁴²

Traditionally, scholarship has chosen to identify changes in material culture as different forms of 'Romanization' or 'Hellenization' when any culture has come in contact with Rome or Greece, respectively. Recently, Mattingly has advocated for the concept of "discrepant identity", the definition of which stresses the heterogeneity of response to Rome, to culture change and to identity by essentially declaring the exhibition of difference.⁴³ Discrepant identity therefore

⁴¹ L. R. Taylor, *Cults of Ostia* (Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1912); G. Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman city life* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1982); H. S. Nielsen, "The physical context of Roman Epitaphs and the structure of 'the Roman family'," *AnalRom* 23 (1996); A. Helttula, "Observations on the Inscriptions of Isola Sacra and the People of Portus," *Akademiai Kiado, Budapest* 36 (1995).

⁴² Laurence, "Introduction," 1.

⁴³ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 213.

According to Mattingly, other recent studies of identity have also employed the term hybridization to a similar effect. Essentially, discrepant identity shows that Roman provincial societies "could sometimes exhibit cultural discordance as well as the broad similarities that are generally celebrated through Romanization theory [because] individual and group identities in the Roman period were multifaceted and dynamic." Mattingly based his new terminology on the research he conducted on material culture in Leptis Magna, in order to explore the interplay of identity between Africans and Romans living there during the 1st and 2nd centuries.

demands a broad look across the social spectrum rather than just at the Imperial elite, which Romanization theory favoured, and also must try to assess the cultural impact of the empire from different perspectives.⁴⁴ So although Mattingly does admit that Roman Imperialism had a profound effect on the behaviour, material culture, and social organization of a conquered or influenced people, both in the provinces and beyond frontiers, he stressed that culture was also fully capable of diffusing in two or more directions.⁴⁵

Despite focusing primarily on differentiating indigenous communities in Leptis Magna from imposed ethnic stereotypes by the Roman Imperial power, Mattingly's method focuses on the careful scrutiny of the archaeological record. He uses cultural material in order to assess occurrences of distinct social practices used to express notions of identity within society: identification of broad groupings in society through the slight variations of material culture. A similar problem occurs in Ostia because scholars have a tendency of recognizing key pieces of evidence (e.g., "Alexandr-" names, temples to Isis and Serapis, Nilotic scenes, etc.) and automatically concluding their 'Egyptianizing' quality without fully assessing their 'Egyptian' or 'Roman' characteristics.

In addressing the slight variations in material culture, it is impossible to avoid problems of how people related to different monuments and works of art. Elsner argues that the relationship between the object(s) viewed and the viewer are dependent upon a number of

⁴⁴ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 213. Mattingly uses discrepant identity in place of traditional terminology because he believed the term 'Romanization' acted as a concept which emphasized conformity and emphasized cultural change as a "unilateral and hierarchical process" that involved the passing down of Roman cultural ideas to "grateful provincials." As a result, the highest levels of social conformity would have existed among the upper levels of society, such as those involved with the governance of the state.

⁴⁵ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 209.

different contexts that change through the ages.⁴⁶ The placement, location, and identification of an image in a civic or cultic domain, for example, could change the meaning of an animal motif from that of banquet to religious significance through the span of just a few decades.⁴⁷ Yet, as markers of identity, research on culturally specific traditions, languages, art, architecture, and ideas also heavily rely on literary sources to interpret visual representations encountered. Elsner understands that the interpretations are often written by the elite members of society, but that such people were not the only viewers of art.⁴⁸ Although the bulk of his analysis weighs heavily on the transformation of Roman art in early Christian contexts, Elsner's study nevertheless advocates how "any work of art can give rise, in different observers (and sometimes even in the same viewer), to a multitude of varying and even contradictory responses and meanings."⁴⁹

Versluys, focusing specifically on Egyptian visual elements in order to better separate the ancient and modern desire for all things Egyptian, stresses the need to make a distinction between 'Egyptian' as an ethnic concept and so *being Egyptian* in texts, and 'Egyptian' as a cultural concept and thus designing something *after* an Egyptian style in the material culture.⁵⁰ He advocates Goudriaan's conclusions that imply 'Egyptian' or 'Hellene' constructs as only social

⁴⁶ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 1.

⁴⁷ Elsner provides the example of a fish in a *domus*, which to the 1st century C.E. observer might indicate an owner who favoured a diet of seafood. Place the image on a 4th century tomb in a necropolis however, and it becomes indicative of a worshipper of Jesus. A similar case could be made for the image of a bull, which could indicate farming, an Egyptian god, or sacrifice. See: Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 1.

⁴⁸ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 11.

⁴⁹ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 3.

⁵⁰ Versluys, "Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond," 9-10.

At the same time, Versluys brings up interesting questions that deal with Egyptian identity in times of occupation or dominance, primarily the use of symbols, styles or motives of the subjugating rulers in Egypt, but also the idea that it is difficult to assess after how much time Egyptian 'foreignness' abates. Additionally, Egyptian elements in different contexts and different periods can also provide multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings. According to Savvopoulos, the analysis of Egyptian traditions requires a sort of flexibility on the perception and identification of influences. For more information about the debate, see also: K. Savvopoulos, "Alexandria in Aegypt: The use and meaning of Egyptian elements in Hellenistic and Roman Alexandria," in *Isis on the Nile: Egyptian Gods in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, ed. L. Bricault, and M. J. Versluys (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 85.

definitions rather than ethnic ones.⁵¹ As a result, both Versluys and Venit advocate that in order to evaluate the material culture, specifically those in the Alexandrian tombs, ‘ethnic’ associations should be treated as fluid rather than static.⁵² In the material culture then, the choice between language, religion, or a particular style of art did not necessarily depend “on the ethnic or cultural background of the person concerned,” but rather on the *specific circumstances* of the person concerned.⁵³ This concept was termed *Aegyptiaca*, ‘for things Egyptian’, which could divide the material culture into two categories: Egyptian (“authentic” material or iconography often centuries old and originating from the Nile valley) and Egyptianizing (‘less authentic’ material made outside Egypt but in an Egyptian style).⁵⁴ Transferring this concept to Roman soil, Swetnam-Burland proposed that Roman-Egyptian iconography be labelled as *Aegyptiaca Romana*. It is another general term that builds on *Aegyptiaca* and focuses on how Romans placed a heavier importance on Egyptian content or style rather than their real origin.⁵⁵ At Ostia in particular, where an abundance of ‘pygmy’ mosaics abound and are found in cultic and civic contexts, all of them are identified by Clarke as Nilotic-inspired despite the motif’s absence in the Egyptian province.⁵⁶ Similar problems occur with the identification of ‘Egyptian’ elements in

⁵¹ Versluys, “Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond,” 10, ref. 12.

⁵² Versluys, “Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond,” 10; Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 10-11.

⁵³ Versluys, “Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond,” 11

He approaches this particular problem in the material culture from two different angles: A Mediterranean, or Hellenistic-Roman angle, as well as an Egyptian point of view but with an emphasis on the former.

⁵⁴ Versluys, “Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond,” 16.

He warns that due to the general and rather unspecific nature of the term (which was why it became so useful), the analyses are ‘handicapped’ by the unknown or sufficiently lacking archaeological contexts often plaguing Egyptologists.

⁵⁵ Swetnam-Burland, “Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts,” 114-116.

⁵⁶ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 195 and 213.

statues of Isis and Serapis, temple buildings, and sometimes on pyramid-shaped tomb monuments.

Laurence, a Roman historian who often utilizes a joint historic and archaeological approach to understanding the past, is a strong advocate of assessing cultural identity through the interpretation of both literary and material evidence. He points out that there is no single way to read a landscape or cultural object and infer a concise definition of cultural identity because not only are images, words, and material culture displayed as the subject wishes, but a viewer also reinterprets them as they are best able.⁵⁷ Therefore, it must be understood that the categorization of Egyptian concepts in literary, archeological, and visual analysis is no simple task; Egyptian, ‘other’, and modern perceptions all need to be taken into account in order for Egypto-Roman influences in Ostia to be fully understood. It is for this reason that a comprehensive approach to the subject is so vital. For although grain was transported out of Africa as well as Egypt, it is the presence of Africans that is so readily visible and often assumed more important to the cultural make up of Rome and its Imperial harbours than Egyptians. In order to counter-act this assumption, an in-depth analysis of the scholarship analyzing the trading partnership between Rome and its African provinces in the 2nd century will be necessary.

2.2 Trade with Rome: Grain supply from the African Provinces

The Roman Empire saw a sharp rise in population and increased prosperity at its height in the 2nd century. Although population sizes in peninsular Italy increased from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 2nd century C.E., a result of nearly 400 years of expansion, rapid urbanization, and the intensification of rural settlement, the 2nd century in particular saw the height of the Roman

⁵⁷ Laurence, “Introduction,” 5.

Empire with a surge in production and trade.⁵⁸ At this time, the provinces of Egypt and Africa Proconsularis, with their connection to the Red Sea and to sub-Saharan Africa, both supplied Rome with a great deal of raw materials, slaves, foreign trade, and vital grain provisions. In short, Rome required a great deal of valuable resources to support its people from all of the provinces as opposed to just relying on one.

Traditionally, in the study of the supplies of grain to Rome from the provinces, ancient literary sources can document aspects of commercial traffic. Such sources generally offer personal insights from either first-hand accounts or through careful study. In this regard, Fulford and Casson offer key references that illustrate the capital's need of acquiring grain stores, and which province Emperors placed a heavier reliance. As a main proponent for heavy grain exports from the territories of African Proconsularis, the 1st century Jewish historian Josephus (*BJ* 383-386) writes that grain from this province "fed Rome for eight months of the year [whereas] Egyptian corn fed the capital for four months alone."⁵⁹ The 4th-century epitome of Aurelius Victor (*Caes.* I, 6) reports a figure of 20 million *modii* "for the amount of grain tribute from Egypt for Rome in the time of Augustus," but the amount provided by Africa Proconsularis is

⁵⁸ W. Scheidel, "Demographic and Economic Development in the Ancient Mediterranean World," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics (JITE) / Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft* 160, 4 (December 2004): 744; N. Morley, "Population size and social structure," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome*, ed. P. Erdkamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Scheidel estimates a nearly 60-70 million people lived in the Empire at this time, relying heavily on the archaeological evidence provided by the intensification of rural settlements, surge of production and trade and mining of natural resources, and the steadily increasing number of Roman public and private building projects of the 1st and 2nd centuries. He also uses comparative studies based on cities with similar circumstances (international trade and cross-cultural contacts) in Ancient Greece, medieval Europe (e.g., Holland), 17th century China, and 18th century England.

⁵⁹ Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean," 66; L. Casson, "The Role of the State in Rome's Grain Trade," *MAAR* 36 (1980): 21.

missing.⁶⁰ In addition to the acquisition of adequate grain supplies, another factor in the feeding of Rome's population was the method of distribution. Recorded in the SHA (*Sev.* 23) the emperor is believed to have left almost 28 million *modii* of grain to the people of Rome. Coupled with Lucan's (*Bellum Civile* 1.319) assessment of 80,000 *modii* of annona every day per person in the late 1st century B.C.E., it would suggest a distribution of approximately 75,000 *modii* per day for the next seven years.⁶¹ Due to the perishable properties of grain, information about the quantities of the commodity in ancient sources provides modern historians with a general idea about how such valuable resources were transported.

However, Casson is quick to note that there are some issues with relying on ancient sources as principal sources of information for the Roman grain trade, namely that the reliability of the information is often difficult to corroborate. For example, the SHA likely gave hypothetical rather than actual numbers of daily *modii* values, resulting in an artificial overall amount of *modii* available, because Roman distributions (dole or rations) of grain were processed monthly and not daily.⁶² Reliance solely on written sources is a traditional practice but results in

⁶⁰ Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean," 66; Casson, "The Role of the State in Rome's Grain Trade," 21; Harris, "Trade [70-192 AD]," 162. According to Pliny (*HN* 18.66), a single *modius* of grain weighed between 6-7 kilograms, so that 150 *modii* could be said to have weighed a ton. See also: G. E. Rickman, "The grain trade under the Roman Empire," *MAAR* 36 (1980): 261.

⁶¹ Casson, "The Role of the State in Rome's Grain Trade," 21.

⁶² Casson, "The Role of the State in Rome's Grain Trade," 21-22.

Another problem is that the body of work known as the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* (SHA) was coined in 1603 by Isaac Casaubon, and consists of multiple manuscripts dedicated to six different authors. It is a compilation of thirty biographies of Roman emperors, co-emperors, and usurpers in chronological order from Hadrian to Carus and his sons. But none of these biographers, supposedly written in the years 300–325 CE, are attested outside the SHA. For this reason, information derived from the documents can be troublesome to corroborate. In fact, Lendering describes the compilation as a type of 'mockumentary' littered with fake dates, made up sources, and complicated information. Nevertheless, Lendering does believe that some of the 'major biographies' (less than two thirds of the available biographies) do hold authentic value and might have originated from a collection of real biographies meant to continue the work of Suetonius' *Lives of the Twelve Emperors*. See: J. Lendering, "Historia Augusta," http://www.livius.org/hi-hn/ha/hist_aug.html (accessed 22 July 2015).

often contradictory or biased information. Fulford raises another problem because he couples the written sources with archaeological evidence in the form of pottery remains. In his opinion, the approximate value of 60 million *modii*, derived from the combination of Josephus, and Victor's assessments, are much too high for the 1st century.⁶³ It was 'rash' for Rome to entrust their lifeline to overseas grain supplies at a time when the capital did not have a satisfactory harbour⁶⁴ capable of servicing the numerous vessels required to ship the grain from Africa and Egypt. Rather, Fulford thought it possible that ancient sources (Sen. *Ep.* 77) exaggerated the amounts of overseas grain supplies during lean times to alleviate population anxiety, but ordinary Romans did not read Seneca.⁶⁵ In this regard, analysis of pottery sherds found at Ostia and Portus from the 1st to 2nd centuries provides physical, albeit approximate, information on figures referring to the amount of grain available from Africa and Egypt. By investigating the physical characteristics (rims, bases, handles), as well as the stamps, *tituli picti*, and graffiti on amphorae at Ostia and Rome, a picture of a trade relationship between the Empire's capital and its provinces can be established in a broad range from the 1st to 7th centuries. Through such a study, the movement of grain and any significant changes in the proportions of the commodity from Egyptian, or eastern, material to that from the central and western Mediterranean can be made plain.⁶⁶ Such an analysis attempts to fill in the gaps where ancient sources are lacking,

⁶³ Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean," 67.

⁶⁴ The man-made harbour of Portus provided an artificially deep basin to service ships well over 20 tonnes, a feat that until its construction, belonged almost solely to Puteoli's naturally deep harbour system. Portus was needed because Puteoli was too far from the capital to make it a safe storage facility in times of famine. I will elaborate in the following chapter. See: C. A. Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 77 (1946): 238; J. H. D'Arms, "Puteoli in the Second Century of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study," *JRS* 64 (1974); J. Goiran et al., "Geoarchaeology confirms location of the ancient harbour basin of Ostia (Italy)," *JAS* 41 (2014), 397.

⁶⁵ Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean," 67.

⁶⁶ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 17.

namely, in the reliability and accuracy of the writings of the Roman elite. It is a more comprehensive approach to investigating the presence of grain suppliers at Ostia and Portus, and incorporates not only the ancient sources but also archaeological evidence supplied by ceramics. However, even this approach is not without problems.

The separate ceramic studies conducted by Fulford, Broekaert, and Keay, all manage to affirm a large amount of transported pottery assemblages at both Ostia and Rome during the early Imperial era.⁶⁷ However, Fulford admits that an underlying assumption is made during such an analysis, namely that the “proportion of the total assemblage roughly correlates with the total volume of goods imported.”⁶⁸ In general, he argues that the abundance of designated “African” pottery remains at the harbour quays in the 1st and 2nd centuries is brought about by a frequent interaction between Ostia and Carthage, due in large part to their close proximity. Case in point, in comparison to the short travel distance between Ostia and Carthage (a three-day journey),⁶⁹ Alexandria and Ostia are separated by almost four to five times the travel distance.⁷⁰ These travel times impact the amount of pottery visible at Fulford and Keay’s separate studies of the 1st to 2nd assemblages at Ostia, as well as Broekaert’s assessment of ceramics in the Monte Testaccio area of Rome. They all discovered that North African cooking ware and amphorae account for the greater majority of imports at the capital and its harbours throughout a broad time period

⁶⁷ Rickman, “The grain trade under the Roman Empire,” 231-235; Fulford, “Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean,” 70-71; P. L. B. De Quiroga, “Freedman social mobility in Roman Italy,” *Historia* 44, 3 (1995): 341-342; Harris, “Trade [70-192 AD],” 163; Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 17.

⁶⁸ Fulford, “Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean,” 68.

⁶⁹ Fulford, “Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean,” 71; Harris, “Trade [70-192 AD],” 163; W. Scheidel, and E. Meeks, “ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World,” <http://orbis.stanford.edu/#> (accessed 10 March 2015).

⁷⁰ Yeo, “Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy,” 232; Scheidel and Meeks, “ORBIS.”

Although in general most ships sailed in good conditions, the Alexandrian ships relied heavily on favourable winds. But even then, it was to be expected that travel times to Ostia took upwards of 15 days.

beginning from the early or mid-1st century.⁷¹ It was likely after the Claudian harbour was inaugurated, that Portus began to see a rise in grain shipments from the Western Mediterranean and, as a result, a large amount of grain began to derive from Africa.⁷²

There are a few key concerns that arise with this type of conclusion. Fulford points out that using pottery “as a proxy for other, perishable goods” is not a precise indicator for the flow of artifacts in the archaeological record, and that trade in the ancient world was not dependent upon the movement of “mass-produced consumer durables like pottery.”⁷³ Broekaert also warns that some vessels were actually ‘stamped’ less frequently than others arriving from other provinces, and that some types of pottery were also more reusable than others and thus might result in a more frequent recycle rate (hence might not show up as often in assemblages).⁷⁴ Additionally, unlike at Monte Testaccio, the study at Ostia and Portus derived its results from a relatively small sample size in Ostia, while the material from Portus is based only on a surface

⁷¹ Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 17; Fulford, “Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean,” 63; Broekaert, “Oil for Rome During the Second and Third Century AD,” 600-602.

Keay focuses on the available ceramic evidence dating from ~ 50 C.E. to 350 C.E. at Ostia and Portus. Fulford focuses on the available ceramic evidence dating from the 1st to 4th centuries C.E. at Ostia, Berenice, and Carthage. Broekaert focuses on the ceramic evidence dating from ‘Augustus to Aurelianus’ (~27 B.C.E. to 275 C.E.) at the Monte Testaccio hill near Rome, but because the excavations have not yet reached the Julio-Claudian later, Broekaert bases his analysis primarily on the available 2nd century material.

⁷² Hispania and Africa Proconsularis are designated as part of the West, but Egypt is grouped into the Eastern assemblage with Greece, Persia, and Black Sea region. This is a problematic separation because Hispania, Africa, and Egypt were among the biggest producers of oil and grain for the Roman Empire, but the territories of the Eastern Mediterranean in general (Greece, etc.) were not especially known for their production of grain. This designation, although problematic, is likely due to the geographic positions of Egypt lying to the east of Rome and the greater bulk of Africa Proconsularis to the west. See: Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 273; J. M. Anderson, *Daily life through trade: buying and selling in world history* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2013), 66; Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 17.

⁷³ M. Fulford, “Territorial Expansion and the Roman Empire,” *WorldArch* 23, 3 (1992): 296-297.

⁷⁴ Broekaert, “Oil for Rome During the Second and Third Century AD,” 601-602.

Broekaert’s analysis heavily favoured Spanish pottery, but he does make some comparison with identifiable African amphorae in the ceramic assemblage at Monte Testaccio.

collection between Trajan's basin and the Tiber.⁷⁵ Although such scholars profess a comprehensive approach to their research, they seemingly lack more detailed information about the importance of the grain and its influence on the society where it arrived. It merely confirms the volume and distribution in order to corroborate with ancient literary sources.

Most recently, Keay has reopened the debate about Egyptians and the Alexandrian grain fleets at the Imperial harbours. His conclusion posits that although a fair amount of material evidence (inscriptions, coins, etc.) exists for an Alexandrian community at Ostia from the Hadrianic period onwards, Egyptians are much more difficult to pinpoint.⁷⁶ Due to this difficulty, owing in part to the scarce nature of inscriptions and dedications mentioning Egyptians, Keay also suggests that perhaps scholars need to reassess the importance of grain supplies from Africa and other parts of the Mediterranean. In fact, he warns that scholarship might suffer from the "danger" of "overestimating the significance of Egyptian grain to Rome."⁷⁷ It would be best for scholarship to acknowledge that Trajan's expansions at Ostia and Portus were made as a general increase in order to accommodate the influx of grain and other commodities from across the Mediterranean rather than to accommodate the Alexandrian grain fleets alone. Ultimately, Keay believes it would be best to focus on Rome's broader relationships rather than focus on the origins and quantities of a single commodity, but he also reaffirms that the commercial connections between North Africa and Ostia were much stronger than those between Egypt and Ostia.

⁷⁵ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 17.

⁷⁶ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 15-18.

⁷⁷ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 19.

Keay's assessment was based heavily on the 2nd and 3rd-century evidence of inscriptions (dedications in public and private spaces, and information from the *stationes* of the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni*), as well as pottery remains and some material analysis of trade goods. While the methodology is sound, Keay's findings fall in with the general trend in scholarship, which tends to emphasize the overabundance of information on Africans at the Imperial harbours. Yet, he relies almost entirely on dedications or other written components (inscriptions, papyri, the *corpus fabrum navalium*, etc.) to assess the presence of Egyptians at Ostia and Portus, sources that generally attest a large number of Africans living in the area. In fact, Keay epitomizes Noy's assessment of Egyptians at Rome as a possible reflection of Egyptians at Ostia, chiefly that Egyptians lacked a form of communal organization.⁷⁸ As a result, his study lacks even a fundamental investigation of the visual and architectural components of the Imperial harbour systems.

Such an analysis might show a clearer picture of Egyptian presence because ideas, artwork, and concepts were easy to transport and assimilate in Roman culture. In order to accurately analyze the complex imagery, which appears on walls, floors, tombs, markets, and in religious centres, knowledge of Alexandrian and Egyptian norms is required. This is what makes the analysis much more challenging because precise indicators of origins are much more difficult to discern. Nevertheless, it is necessary if an accurate representation of Egyptians at Ostia and Portus is to be made.

⁷⁸ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 15; Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 251.

2.3 Alexandria and the Imperial Harbours: The nature of the evidence

Excavations provide key details about life in the Roman Empire, but often scholars are forced to make inferences about scarce materials. Although papyri exist in large numbers at Alexandria, the material culture dating from the Roman Period is hard to come by due to the Arab occupation from the 7th century.⁷⁹ It is equally difficult to examine evidence at the Imperial harbours. Treating Ostia and Portus as separate commercial entities is preferred, but while excavations and epigraphic material were conducted regularly at the business centre, the Claudian-Trajanic port suffers from a high water table that inhibits most traditional forms of excavation. Nevertheless, much of what is known about life in Alexandria or the Imperial harbours comes from extensive excavations of the urban landscape, and some of the best preserved material can even be found in the tombs which cater to the commercial centres.

When Rome annexed Egypt in 30 B.C.E. to make it a provincial territory, the rule of the Imperial powers transformed much of the urban landscape at Alexandria (Fig. 1). McKenzie's work is crucial to this analysis because she establishes much of what is known of the architectural history of Egypt, spanning several centuries from 300 B.C.E. to 700 C.E. She compiles numerous historical references, archaeological excavations, coins, and tokens (e.g., bone carvings) in order to produce a massive volume on the changing monuments and architectural styles of Egyptian history through to the Byzantine era.⁸⁰ McKenzie's work is therefore first and foremost a chronological telling of the architectural changes occurring in Egypt, and so her

⁷⁹ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 8-9.

The Arabs took up residence at Alexandria and, like the Egyptians, employed the practice of reusing architectural stones. They removed stones from older buildings for projects in not only Alexandria, but at Cairo, and a few other cities as well. The best preserved material for Alexandria during the Roman Period of the late 1st century B.C.E. to the end of the 4th century C.E., comes from the 2nd century C.E. underground tombs, and the city's centre at Kom el-Dikka.

⁸⁰ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 173.

works lacks an analysis of style origins or influences. Nevertheless, her methodical work in detailing monuments in Egypt lays the groundwork for establishing easy-to-identify parallels in both the urban and funerary contexts. In this regard, Borbonus provides some key comparisons of Roman period funerary monuments in Egypt with columbaria in Italy.⁸¹ Analyzing numerous funerary monuments (*hypogeum* B1 in Gabbari, Via Caelimontana *columbaria*, etc.), and their architectural components (burial style, use of *loculi*, subterranean components, etc.), Borbonus concludes that funerary landscapes in areas connected with one another, such as Alexandria and Rome, triggered similar responses to increased trade and populations.⁸² His work is especially important to this thesis because he theorizes that although “Roman columbaria do not copy Alexandrian collective tombs directly,” they nevertheless offer “some striking parallels to suggest that they may have been inspired by them.”⁸³ Borbonus’ study offers a detailed comparison of funerary monuments at Alexandria and Rome, but his work on columbaria shifts the focus off the individual to a collective identity. As Keay has already demonstrated, evidence for Egyptians is notoriously difficult to differentiate in the material remains, but Borbonus at least investigates into the more subtle and underlying influences introduced by them.

In addition to the analysis of architectural changes occurring in Egypt and at the Imperial harbours, visual components such as wall paintings, mosaics, or sculptural elements also changed in Egypt after the conquest of 30 B.C.E. At Alexandria, the visual elements often point to a mix of local and imported artistic influences, and Riggs stresses how at the city “the interplay

⁸¹ D. Borbonus, *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁸² Borbonus, *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome*, 56-57, 59-60.

⁸³ Borbonus, *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome*, 56-57.

These will be looked at in greater detail in chapter 5.

of Roman, Greek, and Egyptian cultures was a dynamic process.”⁸⁴ A lot of this interplay is visible in the tomb chambers of Kom el-Shuqafa and the Hall of Caracalla, and based on the architecture and visual styles within the funerary monuments, dates for both necropoleis range from the late 1st century B.C.E. to the 2nd century C.E.⁸⁵ These elements within the tombs are remarkably well-preserved and allow for extensive study. McKenzie often focused on the architecture and layout of the tombs, whereas both Riggs and Venit offer an art historical approach to the displayed iconography in the two tombs, describing in-depth the works of art available.⁸⁶ Some of the displayed pieces include the double registers of Greco-Roman and Egyptian funerary scenes (“Rape of Persephone”, and traditional Egyptian funerary scenes), the similarly mixed-style of sculptural content in the tombs (Anubis as a Roman soldier), and the overall iconographical character of the subterranean catacombs themselves (Romano-Egyptian busts, architectural styles, etc.). It is through the descriptions of the necropoleis by these scholars that it is possible to conduct a comparative analysis of Ostia’s funerary landscape.

At the Imperial harbours, material evidence is a bit more generous. Although not the first excavator, Calza is the most prolific and provides some of the best information to date on the city plans and burial sites of the Ostia and Portus areas. His excavations began in the early twentieth century and culminated in a monograph that compiled his thorough evaluation of the epigraphic,

⁸⁴ C. Riggs, “Facing the Dead: Recent Research on the Funerary Art of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt,” *AJA* 106, 1 (2002): 99.

⁸⁵ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 194; Empereur, *The Catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa*, 1; Riggs, “Introduction,” 4.

To recap: the “Hall of Caracalla” does not actually dictate that the construction of the tomb and subsequent burials originated in the 3rd century. Local traditions in the modern city of Alexandria have mainly established that the “Hall of Caracalla” was given its name after a multitude of youths, slaughtered during the Emperor Caracalla’s state visit to Egypt in 215, were believed buried in the catacombs because bones of ‘racing’ horses were found inside.

⁸⁶ Riggs, “Facing the Dead”; M. S. Venit, “Ancient Egyptomania: The uses of Egypt in Graeco-Roman Alexandria,” in *Leaving no stones unturned: Essays on the Ancient Near East and Egypt in Honour of Donald P. Hansen*, ed. E. Ehrenberg (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002); Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*.

architectural, and visual elements he uncovered.⁸⁷ Although Calza also offers some assessment and analysis of his finds, the true value of his work is the meticulous notation of his excavations because there are only a few of his described images remaining extant to a modern audience. Building on Calza's excavations, archaeologists like Baldassarre and Pavolini focused on Ostia's funerary and urban landscapes, respectively. Baldassarre et al.'s itinerary for example, primarily focuses on the meticulous details of new excavations at Isola Sacra.⁸⁸ Although the introduction to the itinerary does offer some analysis of the burials (forms, methods, etc.), and visual iconography available, their summarization of the individual tombs and subsequent elements leaves little room for interpretation of influences introduced to the area. Conversely, Pavolini offers an in-depth and modern interpretation of the most recent excavations conducted at Ostia.⁸⁹ The separate compilations of all inscriptions in the Ostia area (including Portus and Isola Sacra) by Thylander, Hermansen, and Helttula, further add an enormous body of work to the information already available.⁹⁰ However, despite the abundance of scholarship which shows a great deal of interest in the foreigners⁹¹ at the commercial centres⁹², and on the necropolis of

⁸⁷ Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*.

⁸⁸ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*.

⁸⁹ Pavolini, *Ostia*.

⁹⁰ H. Thylander, *Inscriptions du port d'Ostie* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1952); Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman city life*; Helttula, "Observations on the Inscriptions of Isola Sacra."

⁹¹ For example: T. Frank, "The people of Ostia," *The Classical Journal* 29, 7 (1934); I. Pohl, "Piazzale delle Corporazioni ad Ostia. Tentativo di ricostruzione del Portico Claudio e la sua decorazione," *MÉFRA* 90 (1978); J. DeLaine, "The Commercial Landscape of Ostia," in *Roman Working Lives and Urban Living*, eds. A. M. Mahon and J. Price (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005); D. Rhode, "Der Piazzale delle Corporazioni in Ostia. Wirtschaftliche Funktion und soziale Bedeutung," *MBAH* 27 (2009).

⁹² Examples of scholars of Ostia and Portus: Taylor, *Cults of Ostia*; Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*; Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman city life*; C. F. M. Bruun, and A. G. Zevi, eds., *Ostia e Portus nelle loro Relazioni con Roma* (ActaInstRomFin 27, 2002); H. Mouritsen, "Freedmen and Freeborn in the Necropolis of Imperial Ostia," *ZPE* 150 (2004); Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)."

Isola Sacra⁹³, such scholars have yet to take into consideration a unified and comprehensive approach.

In order to conduct a comprehensive approach to assess the Egyptian presence at Ostia and Portus, it is necessary to consider more than the ancient literary sources and include the excavations conducted at the Imperial harbours and at Isola Sacra. Although scholars seemingly lack this approach, it is their expertise in a single field that allows a thesis of this nature to explore various avenues of analysis. By relying on experts of such fields, the presence of Egyptians can be made clearer by compiling key aspects of each research into a composite body of work.

2.4 A Comprehensive Approach

Any modern study that wishes to investigate the presence of Egyptians and Alexandrians at the Imperial harbours, must take a comprehensive approach. The broad literary and epigraphic study of foreigners in Rome conducted by Noy and La Piana provide a good background for this thesis and are supplemented considerably by the Ostian-focused epigraphic studies of several others, such as Hermansen, and Nielsen.⁹⁴ Primary excavations of the urban and funerary landscapes at the Imperial harbours are meticulously documented in monographs by Calza, and

⁹³ For example: J. M. C. Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 82-7, 101-103, and 134-141; Hope, "A Roof over the Dead," 73-82; Petersen, "Questioning Roman Freedman Art," 75-133; M. Heinzelmann, "A Les nécropoles d'Ostie: topographie, développement, architecture, structure sociale," in *Ostie. Port et Porte de la Rome antique*, ed. J. Descoedres (Geneva: Musée d'art et d'histoire, 2001); T. L. Prowse et al., "Isotopic Evidence for Age-Related Immigration to Imperial Rome," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 132 (2007); Nielsen, "The physical context of Roman Epitaphs and the structure of 'the Roman family'," 45-57.

⁹⁴ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*; G. La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire," *HTR* 20, 4 (1927); Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman city life*; Nielsen, "The physical context of Roman Epitaphs and the structure of 'the Roman family'."

For additional work on inscriptions at Ostia, Portus, and the surrounding areas, see: L. R. Taylor, "Freedmen and Freeborn in the Epitaphs of Imperial Rome," *AJP* 82, 2 (1961); Helttula, "Observations on the Inscriptions of Isola Sacra"; Thylander, *Inscriptions du port d'Ostie*.

Baldassarre et al.⁹⁵; excavations and analyses of Alexandria have been conducted by Empereur, McKenzie, and Venit.⁹⁶ Yet, the analysis of such a large body of available evidence provided by the primary excavators is difficult without key methodological techniques. In order to assess the available evidence comprehensively, the concepts and methodologies used by Mattingly, Elsner, Versluys, and Swetnam-Burland will be utilized.⁹⁷

Although scholarship on both Alexandria and Ostia abounds, no one has attempted to analyze the presence of the grain merchants at Rome's harbour systems by presenting all of the evidence available (in literature and material culture) in a composite and easily categorized manner. Keay does summarize a variety of different findings, but does not make a satisfactory compilation of the material, and he ultimately concludes North Africans had a greater presence at the harbours in the 2nd century. Due to the enormity of the project and the (sometimes) scarcity of the material, this thesis will attempt to lay bare the evidence for Egyptians and Alexandrians under specific headings. Through the literature and epigraphic material, architectural features, and iconographical elements, this thesis aims to reassess the presence of Egyptians and Alexandrians at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century in a more comprehensive manner.

⁹⁵ Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*; Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*.

For the compilation of recent excavations, and iconographical information, see: Pavolini, *Ostia*; Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*; G. Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV: Mosaici e pavimenti marmorei* (Rome: Libreria dello stato, 1961); G. Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV: Mosaici e pavimenti marmorei (Tavole)* (Rome: Libreria dello stato, 1961).

⁹⁶ J. Empereur, *Alexandria Rediscovered*, trans. M. Maehler (New York: George Braziller, 1998); Empereur, *The Catacombs of Kom el-Shugafa*; Judith McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt: c. 300 BC to AD 700* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007); Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*.

⁹⁷ Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*; Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*; M. J. Versluys, "Aegyptiaca Romana: The widening debate," in *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*, ed. L. Bricault, M. J. Versluys, and P. G. P. Meyboom (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Swetnam-Burland, "Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts"; Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt in Italy*.

Chapter Three: The History

In order to investigate the presence of Egyptians at the Imperial harbours in the 2nd century, this chapter will look into the background of Egyptian influence at Ostia and Portus from the 1st century to the mid-2nd century. Rome's circumstances of the early Imperial era facilitated the amount of traffic navigating between Rome and the African provinces, as the capital's growing population was under constant threat of famine.⁹⁸ As a result, the primary source of the grain by the 2nd century is a key factor in the shaping of the local landscape at the Imperial harbours. For although the rich Nile valley of Egypt was a great boon for Rome in the early 1st century, the larger and closer proximity of fertile hinterland made the territory of Africa Proconsularis a more viable supplier of grain in the 2nd century. My primary aim therefore, is to assess the need and extent of construction projects at Ostia in the first two centuries of the Empire brought about by the increase of commercial traffic from both of the African provinces. Through this investigation also arises a secondary aim, that of tracing the permeation of Egyptian symbols and their significance to the Latin populace over the course of time from Egypt's assimilation to the 2nd century. These two trajectories will help establish foundations in the discussion about the inviting and accommodating nature of a commercial centre capable of catering to Egyptian needs in both the civic and cultic contexts. As a result, it should be immediately apparent that although the political and economic activities of the Roman Empire affected the character of the Imperial harbours, the landscape and society of both Ostia and Portus still developed individual characteristics drawn directly from its trading partners.

⁹⁸ Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 237; Casson, "The Role of the State in Rome's Grain Trade," 24; M. Heinzelmann, and A. Martin, "River port, *navalia* and harbour temple at Ostia: new results of a DAI-AAR project," *JRA* 15, 1 (2002): 18.

Ancient source: Cass. Dio, 55.26.2-3; Lucan, *Bellum Civile*, 1.319; Amm. Marc. 19.10.4

3.1 The capital's growth in the 1st century: population and provisions

The population size of Rome had an indirect bearing on the traffic of Ostia and Portus. For when the capital of the Roman Empire saw a sharp rise in population at the turn of the 1st century, there was also an increase in prosperity and therefore a need to accommodate the commercial traffic. As the 'mouth' of Rome, lying at the 'mouth' of the Tiber, Ostia regulated a great deal of the commercial traffic heading upriver to the capital.⁹⁹ The most important of these were the regular shipments of grain arriving from Egypt and Africa which would feed the ever growing population at Rome.

The numbers and make-up of any ancient population are notoriously difficult to ascertain. For example, at Rome, Augustus' (*Res Ges.* 8.1-5) multiple censuses from 28 B.C.E. to 14 C.E. give modern scholars only a rough idea of population statistics in the early empire of Roman citizens, roughly 5,000,000. Augustus, unfortunately, does not specify where the census was conducted – Rome and/or its environs – but does indicate that the lustrum counted Roman citizens specifically. It leaves wide gaps in our understanding of population statistics because Roman citizenship was difficult to acquire and naturally, did not include the abundance of slaves, migrants, mobile labourers, seasonal shippers and traders, etc. However, the census is a valuable source of information on population estimates for the early Imperial period. Modern scholars like Harris and Scheidel, utilizing other written (e.g., Pliny, Strabo, etc.), archaeological (e.g., mapping the intensification of urban and rural settlements) and comparative studies (e.g., Ancient Greece, 17th century China), estimate a population in the Roman capital to range

⁹⁹ Morley, "Population size and social structure."

anywhere from 1 million to 7.5 million by the 2nd century C.E.¹⁰⁰ In a similar fashion, Scheidel believes it is possible to postulate how population sizes in peninsular Italy have also shown a marked increase from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 2nd century C.E., a result of various Imperial tendencies, such as conquests and border consolidations, but also rapid urbanization and the intensification of rural settlement – all of which brought about a rise in production and trade. He ultimately concludes that the 2nd century in particular saw the height of the Roman Empire with nearly 60-70 million people.¹⁰¹

As a population that rivalled most cities and many states, Rome required a great deal of grain to support its people. Initially, Rome would have turned to its own rural communities for the production and supply of grain. In particular, the territories of Latium and Campania served as the most suitable lands for agriculture up until the end of the 1st century B.C.E. In his analysis of ancient texts, Yeo discovered that by this time many of the farmers practiced a form of mixed agriculture by combining the productions of oil, wine, and the keeping of livestock with that of grain for Rome.¹⁰² He argues it was a more profitable way to utilize the land when, already by this time, Rome had begun turning to Sicily and its African Provinces for sources of grain. In addition to the specialized *latifundia* (large, managed agricultural estates) that were on the rise

¹⁰⁰ Harris, “Trade [70-192 AD],” 157; Scheidel, “Demographic and Economic Development in the Ancient Mediterranean World,” 744.

Scheidel (2005) tries to estimate that of a 7,500,000 population in Augustus’ time, 30-35% of the population would have been slaves and MacLean (2012) estimates that at least 10-15% of those numbers would have been freeborn inhabitants. See also: W. Scheidel, “Human Mobility in Roman Italy, II: The Slave Population,” *JRS* 95 (2005): 65; R. B. MacLean, “Cultural Exchange in Roman Society: Freed Slaves and Social Values,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, United States of America, 2012), 5.

¹⁰¹ Scheidel, “Demographic and Economic Development in the Ancient Mediterranean World,” 747.

Scheidel relies heavily on comparative studies based on cities with similar circumstances (international trade and cross-cultural contacts) in Ancient Greece, medieval Europe (e.g., Holland), 17th-century China, and 18th-century England.

¹⁰² Yeo, “Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy,” 229.

Ancient source: Varro, *Rust.* 3.4-11; Suet. *Vit.* 13.2.

and the rural depopulation greatly swelling the capital of the Roman Empire, prices for overland transport had become expensive in comparison to sea-based transportation.¹⁰³ As a result, Yeo believed the grain produced by local farmers was for personal consumption or for the feeding of livestock, whereas the steady shipments of grain from outside Italy sufficed to feed the metropolis and other towns of the surrounding area.¹⁰⁴

For the grain being transported to Rome via the sea in the late 1st century, the majority of the supplies came in from the African provinces of Egypt and Africa Proconsularis. Egypt and Africa Proconsularis were both powerful breadbaskets for Rome¹⁰⁵ but the distances required to travel by each determined the amount arriving to the Italic coast. According to Scheidel and Meeks, the fastest transport time from Alexandria to Ostia was about two weeks with stops at Messena and other locations along the Italic peninsula heading north.¹⁰⁶ In comparison, the

¹⁰³ See: Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 221-222; G. Vitelli, "Grain Storage and urban growth in Imperial Ostia: a quantitative study," *WorldArch* 12, 1 (1980): 56; R. Laurence, "Land transport in Roman Italy: Costs, practice and the economy," in *Trade, Traders and the Ancient City*, eds. H. Parkins, and C. Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 127-131.

Using the example provided by Cato (*Agr.* 23.3) in 150 B.C.E., Yeo and Vitelli estimate that the standard transport costs by land of a bulky item doubles after about a hundred miles of travel. Yet, according to Laurence, neither Yeo nor Vitelli take into account the type of item being transported and postulate that the doubled price is standard for all transported items. As a result, Yeo decontextualizes original prices in order to refer to universalize costs of different products while additionally making a number of deductions about the speed of transport (and therefore altering costs for lightweight vs. heavyweight items). In comparison, Laurence uses Diocletian's Price Edicts of 301 C.E. to analyze the cost of grain transport by land and by sea. He summarizes his findings as follows. With the transport of grain over land, we are given the cost of about 20 *denarii* per 54.5 *modii* of grain per Roman mile, so it would cost about 0.36 *denari* per *modius* of grain. With the transport of grain by sea however, we are given the total cost of 16 *denarii* for 1250 miles, so it would cost about 0.0128 *denari* per *modius* of grain. Although it is clear that transport by sea was cheaper, it should be noted that the cost did not include previous transport by land from the interior hinterlands of some territories. Laurence describes the problems associated with his calculations as well.

¹⁰⁴ Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 226.

¹⁰⁵ Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean," 66.

Ancient source: Joseph. *BJ* 3.8.3.

¹⁰⁶ Scheidel and Meeks, "ORBIS."

A calculated 13-14 day transport from Rome to Alexandria was estimated during the summer, spring, and fall season when weather and sea transport could be at optimal conditions. Comparatively, the winter season saw an addition of 2-3 days. In the opposite direction, from Alexandria to Rome, a calculated 16-19 days were required during the fall-winter-spring seasons, and an additional 2-3 days in the summer.

transport of goods from Carthage in Africa Proconsularis to Rome was about three days, direct, and changed very little over the course of the seasons.¹⁰⁷ Rome had numerous trading partners across the Mediterranean on which to rely for basic commodities but its provinces in Africa were the main source of the much needed grain supply.

Although the speed by which transport occurred was almost three to four times as fast as that of ships travelling from Alexandria to Ostia, it did not necessarily mean that Alexandria, at a greater distance, diminished in importance. In fact, in his careful analysis of ancient sources, Haas estimates that during the height of the Roman Empire, “over thirty-two fully loaded vessels would have sailed weekly from Alexandria.”¹⁰⁸ Africa Proconsularis’ fertile hinterland provided a great deal of grain for Rome, and Carthage’s close proximity meant the speed of travel was enhanced, but the amount of traffic that flowed between Egypt and Rome could hardly qualify as diminished.

3.2 Servicing Ostia: the Construction of Portus

The Empire’s interaction and connection with both Alexandria and Carthage in the early 1st century unsurprisingly led to a surge of traders, merchants and businessmen making routine trips to and from the anchorages of Rome. In order to accommodate the surge of traffic, and to house the very important shipments of grain arriving to feed the Roman populace, construction projects and political measures had to be taken at Ostia because the harbour served as Rome’s

¹⁰⁷ Scheidel and Meeks, “ORBIS.”

A calculated 3-4 day transport from Rome to Carthage was estimated regardless of the season (only decimal point differences), whereas comparatively, 4-5 days was provided for the transport of goods heading from Carthage to Rome. It is worthwhile to mention the relationship between Carthage and Ostia because of the number of African wares found in ceramic assemblages at the Roman harbour.

¹⁰⁸ Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity*, 42.

primary access to the Mediterranean from its foundation.¹⁰⁹ As a result, Portus was inaugurated as the official harbour to Ostia by the mid-1st century, and began acting as a direct gateway to the heart of the Roman Empire by the beginning of the 2nd century.

On account of the regular silting in Ostia's basin, by the early *principate* the harbour system was no longer able to accommodate the large shipping vessels carrying grain from across the Mediterranean. Early in the 1st century, Strabo (5.3.5) described Ostia as a harbour no longer able to maintain a sheltered quay for ships due to the amount of Tiber sediments clogging up the seashore, and Goiran et al.'s geoarchaeological studies of the sedimentary records confirms that in the early Imperial period, major flooding episodes successfully sealed the harbour basin of Ostia.¹¹⁰ As a result, and despite the dangers, it was often standard practice in the Republic for large merchant crafts to anchor off-shore and unload their goods into smaller lighters that could then discharge cargo at the harbour or continue the voyage up river.¹¹¹ For this reason, a larger

¹⁰⁹ The foundation of Ostia is traditionally placed in the 7th century B.C.E. of the Roman Monarchic period with Ancus Marcius. Little is known about this time in both the literature and archaeological records. However, by excavating the *castrum* of Ostia, the permanent settlement at the harbour is believed to have likely been constructed around the 4th c. B.C.E. See: I. Pohl, "Was Ostia a Colony or a Fort," *PP* 38 (1983): 125; A. Momigliano, "The Origins of Rome," In *The Cambridge Ancient History: VII Part 2, The Rise of Rome to 220 B.C.*, 2nd edition, ed. F. W. Walbank, A. E. Astin., M. W. Frederiksen and R. M. Ogilvie. (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1990); P. Bellotti et al., "The Tiber river delta plain (central Italy): Coastal evolution and implications for the ancient Ostia Roman settlement," *The Holocene* 21, 7 (2011); J. Goiran et al., "Geoarchaeology confirms location of the ancient harbour basin of Ostia (Italy)," *JAS* 41 (2014).

¹¹⁰ J. Goiran et al., "Paleoenvironmental reconstruction of the ancient harbours of Rome: Claudius and Trajan's marine harbours on the Tiber delta," *Quaternary International* 216 (2010): 395; N. Marriner, and C. Morhange, "Geoscience of ancient Mediterranean Harbours," *Earth-Science Reviews* 80 (2007): 159. Geoarchaeology is a multi-disciplinary study that mainly incorporates geography and geology into archaeological studies to answer questions about natural processes associated with soil deposition. In this particular study, Jean-Philippe Goiran and others used sedimentary volumes (harbour soil content) and related them to what was known about the draught of ancient ships in order to know which were capable of reaching the quays.

¹¹¹ Sometimes sudden storms, like ones that hit Octavian's fleet in the late 1st century B.C.E., made this practice particularly devastating to ships: "[Octavian] lost six heavy ships, twenty-six lighter ships and an even larger number of Liburnian galleys in a single night." On a calm day, certainly, off-shore anchorages were safe for the purpose of transporting cargo inland, but it was also dangerously exposed to the sudden, on-shore gales of either the summer or winter seasons. See: R. F. Paget, "Ancient Ports of Cumae," *JRS* 58, parts 1 and 2 (1968): 153; Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 237-238.

Ancient source: Strabo, 5.35; Suet. *Claud.* 38; Sen. *De brev. Vitae*, 18.

and naturally deep port like Puteoli located in southwestern Italy was more favourable for merchants, but the ever-present threat of famine from a growing populace, made it dangerous for Rome to use it exclusively because the harbour was separated from the capital by a distance greater than 150 km.¹¹² Nearest to Rome, the use of Ostia was therefore a more natural choice than Puteoli.¹¹³ In order to better furnish Ostia with suitable docking and unloading facilities, and to combat the constant silting occurring in the area, in the mid-1st century the emperor Claudius initiated the construction of a new harbour system on the northern side of the Tiber's mouth.

Portus was created as a massive man-made port in hopes of servicing the larger grain vessels previously forced to anchor off-shore. Claudius' initial designs (Fig. 2) saw two rows of moles encircling a large basin on the sea, the right side providing a long series of dock facilities and storage-houses on land. The basin became semi-circular in shape and jutted outwards into the sea while the diameter rested on the beach.¹¹⁴ Although the ends of the two arms created access points that left a very wide opening to better manoeuvre in a storm, at the same time these access points proved very dangerous because the open-concept of the harbour basin could not

¹¹² Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy"; D'Arms, "Puteoli in the Second Century of the Roman Empire."

¹¹³ I would like to stress however, that this did not mean Ostia and Portus replaced the larger and more naturally deep basins of the southern coasts. Merely that as a gateway directly to Rome, the harbours at the river mouth greatly improved the efficiency of supply to the capital of the Empire. Although Meiggs did postulate that Alexandrian grain immediately diverted to Ostia, D'Arms stresses this would not necessarily take place until after the construction of Portus. Comparatively, Key believed that Puteoli continued to function as a major port well into the 2nd century and onwards. See: Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 58-59; D'Arms, "Puteoli in the Second Century of the Roman Empire," 104; Key, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 11.

¹¹⁴ L. Casson, "Harbour and River boats of Ancient Rome," *JRS* 55, 1/2, parts 1 and 2 (1965): 33.

Although Claudius initiated the construction of Portus, it is believed that the project was based on original designs made by Julius Caesar. Furthermore, Claudius would not live to see it completed, as the harbour was not inaugurated until Nero's reign in the 50's. For more information on the appearance and initial construction of Portus see: Goiran et al., "Geoarchaeology confirms location of the ancient harbour basin of Ostia (Italy)"; Casson, "Harbour and River boats of Ancient Rome"; A. Wirching, "How obelisks reached Rome: evidence of Roman double-ships," *IJNA* 29, 2 (2000); M. Apicella et al., "An example of possible innovations in Mediterranean marina design," *Marina Pollution Bulletin* 23 (1991).

provide adequate protection for its docked ships.¹¹⁵ In order to provide safer docking facilities during stormy weather, Trajan further added a hexagonal basin inland at the turn of the 2nd century. He also outfitted the basin with safe quays and large warehouse facilities (*horrea*) required by the shippers, and dug a canal from his basin to connect directly with the Tiber for the transport of the stored goods and grain up to Rome.¹¹⁶ Of specific interest is the provision of new storage space in the 2nd century because it proved a hallmark at Portus: “large elongated *magazzini* clustered around all six sides of the hexagonal basin, together with different structures running the north side of the Trajanic canal that connected the hexagonal basin to the Tiber.”¹¹⁷ These storage units more than doubled allocated space (from 32,790 to 92, 278m²), and serviced both Egyptian and African shippers of grain.¹¹⁸ Portus was now complete and as a unit, both Ostia and the new harbour acted as a unified commercial centre for the purpose of enticing merchants and storing the valuable supplies of grain forthcoming.

The development of Portus enabled Ostia to act as a commercial centre through which to pass on much needed raw materials, grain and luxuries to the heart of the Roman Empire. As the Imperial harbours began to quickly accommodate an influx of imports, as a unified commercial body they effectively carried out their role as gateways to the Roman capital. By the middle of the 2nd century, Portus’ construction soon saw the accumulation and storage of goods from the

¹¹⁵ Apicella et al., “An example of possible innovations in Mediterranean marina design,” 407.

¹¹⁶ Yeo, “Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy,” 238.

Trajan added the inner basin as a precaution against the strong winds still capable of plaguing Claudius’ basin. These winds could blow so violently at times that Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.18.23) once reported that a “fleet of 200 vessels once broke away from their moorings and were battered by the moles meant to protect them.”

¹¹⁷ Key, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 12.

¹¹⁸ Key, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 12-13.

It is difficult to judge which storage unit housed grain and which other commodities, or even a combination of both, and Key even comments that there is in fact no foundation for classifying which *magazzini* housed what products. But the brick stamps found on some of the storage units do date the expansion to the height of the Imperial era from the early and late 2nd century.

Empire's extended territories across the Mediterranean to the Rhine, north into England, and as far south as India.¹¹⁹ Ostia and Portus as a unit became an international centre for commerce.

3.3 Egypt and Africa Proconsularis: Breadbaskets and Cultural Centres

In addition to valuable supplies of grain, both of the North African provinces created points of access for a very lucrative international trade of luxury goods. Rome's relationship with Carthage and Alexandria further allowed for the relatively easy movement of people and various local cultural practices, such as the worship of foreign gods. Yet, although the importance of Africa Proconsularis cannot be denied from the 1st century onwards, Egypt would continue to demonstrate a connection with the capital and its harbours well into the 2nd century.

Due to its proximity to the Italic peninsula, Carthage was greatly favoured as a commercial centre, and so Rome treated the city as a point of easy access to sources of numerous resources from the African interior. Archaeological evidence in the form of ceramic assemblages even attests to the growing commercial link between Ostia and Africa Proconsularis. The separate studies of Fulford, Broekaert, and Keay on the excavated pottery of Ostia and Monte Testaccio (of Rome), all reveal this growing reliance on African wares from the 1st to 3rd centuries.¹²⁰ As such, it is possible to infer that the African province was definitely an important addition to the Roman Empire, but it was not valued only for its fertile hinterland. In addition to the highly valued supplies of grain and oil, Mauretania and Numidia (Morocco, northern Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya) of Africa Proconsularis additionally provided Rome with wild animals for

¹¹⁹ Fulford, "Territorial Expansion and the Roman Empire."

¹²⁰ Fulford, "Territorial Expansion and the Roman Empire,"; Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean"; Broekaert, "Oil for Rome During the Second and Third Century AD"; Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)."

the arenas, marble, copper, citron wood, precious stones, and slaves.¹²¹ The relative ease of regular travel between Ostia and Carthage is seen not just in the ceramic assemblages, but also in the abundant evidence of African individuals present in the harbour town.¹²² By the mid-2nd century, even the senatorial and equestrian ranks of Rome became filled with provincial aristocracy from the North African region.¹²³ According to Wolfram, “contemporaries ranked Carthage second after Rome and placed the African metropolis on par with Egyptian Alexandria.”¹²⁴

As points of access however, it was Alexandria that introduced the Roman Empire to an international exchange with cultures across the Mediterranean and beyond its borders. Once Alexandria fell under Roman control, the principate established a global policy for Rome with not only its own provinces, but also with frontier civilizations largely connected to Egypt through the use of the Red Sea. The much needed supply of grain from Egypt became increasingly supplemented by local commodities and luxury goods from the East, consisting of (but not limited to) glass, luxurious silks, gemstones, spices, incense, and other aromatics.¹²⁵ Alexandria was essentially the epicentre of a vast trading network that connected many civilizations economically and culturally: Greece, Rome, Spain, the Middle East and Black Sea regions, Africa, Arabia, and even India, the Malay Peninsula, and China.¹²⁶ The constant travel

¹²¹ Anderson, *Daily Life through trade*, 65; Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 327-330

¹²² Key, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 18.

¹²³ Piana, “Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire,” 196; Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity*, 204.

Other provincial aristocracy also filled the senatorial and equestrian ranks, such as the Gauls and Hispanics.

¹²⁴ H. Wolfram, *The Roman Empire and its Germanic Peoples*, trans. T. Dunlap (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 167.

¹²⁵ M. P. Fitzpatrick, “Provincializing Rome: The Indian Ocean Trade Network and Roman Imperialism,” *Journal of World History* 22, 1 (2011): 33.

¹²⁶ Fitzpatrick, “Provincializing Rome,” 28.

of people from one place to the other, especially while crossing the Mediterranean Sea, naturally led many of these merchants to worship gods and goddesses who would protect them on their journeys. The foremost protector of ships, merchants, and the seas, was an Egyptian unification of Isis and Serapis.

Alexandria's citizens worshipped Isis and Serapis more frequently than other deities, and a mighty temple to Isis and Serapis stood in Ostia, as well as Portus. They are supposedly similar in fashion to the unified association that had been made at the *Serapeum* and *Pharos* (lighthouse) of Alexandria.¹²⁷ Although Isis arrived on Italian soil by the 2nd century B.C.E., it was only during the Julio-Claudian reign that her festivals were incorporated into the Roman religious calendar, and her popularity at Ostia began to peak after the new harbour facilities were finished at the turn of the 2nd century.¹²⁸ At that time, alongside her consort Serapis, the goddess acted as the protector of wealthy merchants and their merchandise that sped along between Egypt and Rome.¹²⁹ Isis was also worshipped as a goddess of the sea, and a ship was launched in her honour at the state festival of *navigium Isidis* every year to mark the opening of the seas in spring.¹³⁰ The presence of a *Serapeum* at both Alexandria and at the Imperial harbours was key

¹²⁷ M. S. Venit, "Alexandria," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, ed. C. Riggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 113.

The construction of the *Serapea* and their importance to the Imperial harbours will be discussed at length in the following chapters.

¹²⁸ Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 207; M. Beard et al., *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 247; Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire," 217.

¹²⁹ R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

¹³⁰ Witt, *Isis in the Ancient World*; Taylor, *Cults of Ostia*.

This festival was also held in the autumn to 'close' the seas for winter, despite the fact sailing was a year-round practice in the Mediterranean. See also: Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 250; Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 207; Beard et al., *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, A History*, 247; D. Boin, *Ostia in late antiquity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 208.

for the transmission of culture between Egyptian and Roman society, as the cult of Isis and Serapis played a significant role in both commercial centres.

The importance of Egypt lies not only as producer and transporter of grain but also as a transmitter of culture: Portus' *Pharos* and *Serapeum* likely would have also appeared attractive for Egyptians sailing to Rome. The transmission of religion acts as one of the more reliable indicators of the permeation of a particular people in any given location, because the appearance of specific cultural elements (e.g., *navigium Isidis*) and identifiable symbols (e.g., Isis as goddess of the sea - Pelagia, Pharia) will manifest in various ways throughout the welcoming populace. The degree of cultural permeation however, is still difficult to ascertain because the symbols, which became incorporated into Ostian society, hold different associations throughout the first two centuries.¹³¹

3.4 'Egyptomania' and Egyptianizing elements

Ostia and Portus share a number of similarities with Alexandria that justify further investigation: they each had comparable commercial success, harbour situations (centre of commerce for respective cultures), and were connected by the same trade networks. After 30 B.C.E., when Egypt became a Roman province, a kind of 'Egyptomania' for all things "authentically Egyptian" appears to have even swept across Rome.¹³² By the 2nd century C.E.

¹³¹ Swetnam-Burland, for example, emphasizes that the foreign provenance of a piece had the ability to enhance the monetary value of the object, but that *Egyptian* characteristics need not derive directly from the source: it was an object's Egyptian aesthetic, rather than its origin, that appealed to Romans in the 1st century. Yet, Török stresses that the specific images of the gods remained as key symbols of Egyptian society. It would appear that as a result, scholarship generally assumes that images not directly associated with religion began to either slowly lose their cultural connection to Egypt or were understood as mere imitations of former Egyptian material. See: Swetnam-Burland, *Egypt in Italy*, 28 and 120; L. Török, *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East, Volume 53: Hellenizing Art in Ancient Nubia 300 B.C. - AD 250 and its Egyptian Models: A Study in "Acculturation,"* (Leiden: NLD, 2011), 74.

¹³² F. S. Kleiner, *A History of Roman Art* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2007); Versluys, "Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond," 16.

however, the fervor for all things Egyptian is generally assumed to have turned into the creation of objects, which only *resembled* Egyptian material but no longer had any connection to the culture it imitated.¹³³

Following the conquest of 30 B.C.E., the fervent desire for Egyptian, Greek and other ‘Hellenized’ cultural influences becomes strongly visible on funerary and religious architecture of Rome as well as at the Imperial harbours. For example, after the battle of Actium and the annexation of Egypt, Augustus removed the obelisks of Ramses II and Psammetichus II from Heliopolis and brought them to Rome; over time, with consecutive emperors, a total of thirteen obelisks came to reside in and around the Roman Empire’s capital.¹³⁴ A similar example can also be found in a lesser degree at Ostia and Portus. The great Pharos of Portus for example, designed to imitate the one at Alexandria, was built atop the sunken obelisk-ship of Caligula which served as the bulwark’s foundation.¹³⁵ Additionally, at Portus on the Trajanic Canal, a small shrine to Isis also stands with remnants of statues in the likeness of the goddess and of a bearded snake (iconic of Serapis).¹³⁶

By the 2nd century, it is generally believed that the fascination for Egyptian culture transformed into the adoption of various Egyptian elements that may or may not have held any cultural significance to the Romans.¹³⁷ Such ‘Egyptianizing’ elements can be seen at the *Iseum*

¹³³ Versluys, “Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond,” 16.

¹³⁴ A. Roulet, *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972).

Augustus used one obelisk as a Horologium, and two others to mark his sepulchre. The two in front of his funerary monument could be said to have been erected in much the same way that the temple to Isis and Serapis in Alexandria was marked by Cleopatra’s two needles.

¹³⁵ Wirching, “How obelisks reached Rome: evidence of Roman double-ships.”

¹³⁶ Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 15.

The date of its construction is relatively unknown, but restoration of the *Iseum* occurred in the late 4th century. This monument (as well as the Portus lighthouse) will be discussed in detail in the following chapters.

¹³⁷ Roulet, *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome*.

Campense of Rome, likely constructed at the end of the 1st century B.C.E. and rebuilt at the end of the 1st century C.E. after it was burned to the ground in the fire of 80 C.E.¹³⁸ Each wall was decorated with “recumbent sphinxes as in the temple of Nectanebo I at Memphis, or recumbent lions, or baboons.”¹³⁹ Similarly, at the Isola Sacra necropolis situated between Ostia and Portus, a Nilotic-themed black and white mosaic with pygmies, crocodiles, and hippopotami decorates the entrance to one of the many tombs lining the Via Flavia-Severiana.¹⁴⁰ Similar images, such as marshlands, are incorporated on a few tomb walls as paintings. They act as possible indicators of idyllic scenes and invoke feelings of peace about the afterlife.¹⁴¹

Monuments associated with one culture or another could potentially provide markers of identity for different people of the Roman Empire. In principle, any image or piece of architecture can give rise in a viewer to a “multitude of varying and even contradictory responses and meanings”; different people who saw the same thing might have thought profoundly differently about what they saw.¹⁴² For example, for any one viewer, an obelisk might be seen as a street marker, a Horologium, an Egyptian artifact, or a giant phallus.¹⁴³ Swift explains this kind

¹³⁸ M. Bommas, “The Iseum Campense as a Memory Site,” in *Memory and Urban Religion in the Ancient World*, eds. M. Bommas, J. Harrison, P. Roy, and E. Theodorakopolous (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012): 182-183.

¹³⁹ Roulet, *The Egyptian and Egyptianizing Monuments of Imperial Rome*, 31.

¹⁴⁰ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 210-212.

¹⁴¹ P. G. P. Meyboom, and M. J. Versluys, “The meaning of dwarfs in Nilotic scenes,” in *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*, ed. L. Bricault, M. J. Versluys, and P. G. P. Meyboom (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 171. They further mention that perhaps only around 130 Nilotic images are left preserved for study. Meyboom, Pappalardo and Ciardiello examine the most famous example of this scene as it was found in Palestrina. It is dated to the 2nd century B.C.E., and dubbed the ‘Nile Mosaic’ with subject matter that exemplifies an Egyptian expedition following the course of the Nile (or the Nile’s eastern tributary, the Blue Nile) from Ethiopia to the Nile Delta, and showing an abundance of life and richness of culture. See also: P. G. P. Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); Pappalardo and Ciardiello, *Greek and Roman Mosaics*, 86.

¹⁴² Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, 3.

¹⁴³ D. Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 261; P. Stewart, *The Social History of Roman Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 136; W. M. Jensen, “The Sculpture from the Tomb of the Haterii, Vol. I,” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, United States of America, 1978), 182;

of interpretation as a form of culturally-dependent perception so that although the brain recognizes what is seen, it is the culturally constituted vision of the viewer that assumes the connotation associated with any given image.¹⁴⁴ Particular motifs incorporated into different buildings that were linked to various ideas, especially those associated with a long tradition, functioned as codes usually only understood by those from a particular cultural background; such images reinforced a sense of belonging with that culture, be it Roman or other.¹⁴⁵ At Ostia in particular for example, the existence of inhabitable apartments, and shrines to Serapis have also been found so that both living accommodations and temples in honour of the Egyptian god welcome the grain traders from the African province.

The surge of Egyptian influences became coined as a fascination for all things Egyptian, as either ‘Egyptomania’ or ‘Egyptianizing’, both of which terminologically understate the Egyptian cultural impact introduced. Yet Török would stress that the integration of Egyptian mortuary iconography and architectural forms (such as the worship of Isis and Serapis, and the temples to them) in Roman Italy likely “preserved their original religious meaning [and became a] part of a general process of adopting Egyptian mortuary religion.”¹⁴⁶ As such, culture is generally identified with a religion that either “actively proselytized or at least easily admitted converts”; religion helped to spread customs among the masses.¹⁴⁷ The relevance of Török’s work will be particularly poignant in the analysis of architectural and iconographical elements, where the symbols within or out of a particular building, as well as the architecture itself, would

¹⁴⁴ E. Swift, *Style and Function in Roman Decoration: Living with Objects and Interiors* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 12.

¹⁴⁵ Swift, *Style and Function in Roman Decoration*, 39.

¹⁴⁶ Török, *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, 74.

¹⁴⁷ C. Issawi, “Empire Builders, Culture Markers, and Culture Imprinters,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20, 2 (1989): 184.

be identifiable not only to converts, but outsiders as well who might be able to recognize some of the symbolic associations with ‘Hellenized’ Egyptian culture. Ultimately, it should be understood that the importance of Egyptian elements at the Imperial harbours from the 1st to mid-2nd century, whether “authentic” or in “imitation”, lies in their maintained connection to Egypt.

3.5 Conclusions

The provinces of Egypt and Africa Proconsularis, with their connection to the Red Sea and to sub-Saharan Africa, both supplied Rome with a great deal of natural resources, foreign trade, and vital grain. Perhaps the largest draw for Rome, however, was the valuable fertile hinterland of its African provinces; for a population that rivalled all cities in the 1st century C.E., Rome required a great deal of grain to support its people. Therefore, it can be said that Portus was designed and constructed with a mind to welcome all provincial grain fleets for which there was an ever-increasing need from the 1st century. Yet, as Egypt was the primary source of grain in the mid-1st century, it is to this populace that Portus was likely intended to attract before Africa Proconsularis began to grow in importance in the mid to late 2nd century. Egypt’s importance can be seen through the introduction (sometimes inadvertently) of valuable cultural practices and symbols, like the worship of Isis from Egypt, to Ostia and Portus. For, after the construction of Portus, the Egyptian goddess was celebrated annually at the new harbour, and those traders who travelled between Alexandria and Ostia found themselves protected both at departure and arrival.

The following three chapters will focus on the ‘Egyptianizing’ and ‘Egyptian’ elements introduced to the harbour systems in the epigraphic, architectural, and iconographical realms respectively. Such elements and features either cater to Roman audiences in search of

‘Egyptianizing’ objects/ideas or to an Egyptian culture that might have become assimilated into Ostia and Portus from the mid-1st to late 2nd centuries.

Chapter Four: Ancient Literary Sources and Epigraphic Evidence

This chapter begins the analysis of materials available at Ostia and Portus by investigating the ancient literary sources and epigraphic material capable of indicating an Egyptian presence at the Imperial harbours. Traditionally, due to the relative difficulty of assessing the influence of Egyptian culture at Ostia, only a few scholars¹⁴⁸ choose to treat the foreigners at the harbour system separately from foreigners living at Rome.¹⁴⁹ Yet, the opinions and attitudes of foreigners uncovered at the capital are not necessarily that of the Empire as a whole, nor even of its neighbouring communities: elite writers are but one component of Rome.¹⁵⁰ It is the voices of non-elite members of society in the epigraphic record (i.e., dedications on the harbours’ temples and tombs, guild rolls, inscriptions in places of high traffic) that can therefore become intrinsic in our understanding of the complex demographic of the Roman Empire. They help fill in the gaps of the written sources. For these reasons, this chapter will be split in two. The first section will investigate the opinions of foreigners in the ancient sources often written by the elite of Rome whereas the second section will investigate the epigraphic content specific to Ostia and Portus. The two forms of evidence, literature and

¹⁴⁸ Helttula, “Observations on the Inscriptions of Isola Sacra”; Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman city life*; Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008).”

¹⁴⁹ Scholars who treat Rome and its harbours as a single unit: La Piana, “Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire”; C. Ricci, “Egiziani a Roma,” *Aegyptus* 73 (1993); Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*. Noy considers Ostia and Portus as an extension of Rome, and due to the comprehensive nature of Noy’s work on foreigners in epigraphy and Roman literature, his influence in this chapter is substantial. Nevertheless, the opinions expressed should not be a direct reflection of its harbours where the very livelihood of its people were dependent upon the foreign traffic often looked upon with disdain by some of the elite in the capital.

¹⁵⁰ As a reminder, the elite of Roman society are equivalent to the heads of state and the aristocratic or senatorial orders. For Clarke’s more concise definition of an elite citizen in the Roman Empire, see: Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 4.

epigraphic, are treated together in order to better establish how Egyptian traders maintained a bond with the Imperial harbours well into the 2nd century.

4.1 Section 1: Ancient Literary Sources at Rome

Due to the abundance of material, this first section will deal specifically with the activities of the Imperial administration in encouraging foreigners to the capital, and the responding attitudes of other elite members in Roman society. It will include Imperial legislation, political campaigns, and the commentaries of members of the upper classes on the Imperial visits to the African provinces. In particular however, the Imperial focus on Egypt will be highlighted. Exploration of the attitudes of the social elite encountering the numerous merchants, immigrants, and travellers arriving to the capital as a result of the Imperial activities will follow.

In the early Empire, a period spanning the 1st and 2nd centuries C.E., several members of the Imperial household were keenly interested in the economic benefits of drawing numerous foreigners and their goods to the capital. Specifically, the grain, which fed the growing population of Rome. Despite the construction of a suitable port, Emperors still found it essential to offer the shipping men compensation with special inducements in order to keep the grain moving into Rome. The compensations were necessary because the government relied a great deal on imported grain from private owners.¹⁵¹ Several scholars investigate the economic changes during the early Empire by compiling the ancient source material. They elaborate on the Imperial administration's involvement in the letting of contracts to *societates* (groups or

¹⁵¹ Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 236; P. Temin, *The Roman Market Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 32.

collectives with common goals) and the encouragement of private merchants to participate in the process required to transport grain to Rome.¹⁵² First, Claudius rewarded contract participants in a number of ways if they were private merchants using their own ships, and carrying a minimum of 10 000 modii of gain for at least five years. He exempted the male merchants from Augustus' *Lex Papia Poppaea* (9 C.E.), which had penalized the unmarried and the childless, and if the merchant was a woman, granted her permission to make wills without intervention from a male tutor.¹⁵³ Finally, if the merchant had not yet achieved Roman citizenship, Claudius granted him the right.¹⁵⁴ Further approbations for merchants were arranged by subsequent emperors (e.g., Nero, Hadrian, etc.), which appeared in the form of tax exemptions "on the ubiquitous harbour taxes and municipal tolls," and insurance against losses at sea.¹⁵⁵

These concessions had a positive effect on the growth of the grain traffic from Egypt to Rome. Ships carrying Egyptian grain from Alexandria to Rome in the 1st century were official government boats which could weigh up to 1200 tons and measure 200 feet, and they did nothing but travel back and forth carrying hundreds of tons of grain.¹⁵⁶ At the turn of the 2nd century, a

¹⁵² Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 239; Temin, *The Roman Market Economy*, 32; Vitelli, "Grain Storage and urban growth in Imperial Ostia," 57; G. S. Aldrete, and D. J. Mattingly, "Feeding the City: The organization, operation, and scale of the supply system for Rome," in *Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire*, 2nd ed., ed. D. S. Potter, and D. J. Mattingly (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 210-211; L. V. Rutgers, "Cemeteries and catacombs," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome*, ed. P. Erdkamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 518.

¹⁵³ Vitelli, "Grain Storage and urban growth in Imperial Ostia," 57; Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 239; Temin, *The Roman Market Economy*, 32; Aldrete, and Mattingly, "Feeding the City," 210. Ancient sources: Suet. *Claud.* 18-19; Gai. *Inst.*, 1.32c; Ulp. 3.6.

¹⁵⁴ Temin, *The Roman Market Economy*, 32.

¹⁵⁵ Vitelli, "Grain Storage and urban growth in Imperial Ostia," 57; Temin, *The Roman Market Economy*, 32-33; Aldrete and Mattingly, "Feeding the City," 210-211; J. Aubert, "Commerce," in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Law*, ed. D. Johnston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 226. Ancient sources: Tac. *Ann.*, 13.51; *Dig.* 50.5.3, 50.6.6; *Lex Rhodia de iactu* (D. 14.2); *Naves, cauponae, stabula* (D. 4.9, and 47.5).

¹⁵⁶ J. S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the background of Early Christianity* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 38.

new Forum was constructed specifically at Ostia in order to receive the *species anabolicae* (state monopolized goods such as flax, hemp, glass, and papyrus) from Egypt.¹⁵⁷

At the end of the 2nd century however, ships from Africa Proconsularis began to grow in importance. Commodus is believed to have organized a special fleet ('Commodiana Herculea') that would ensure delivery of grain to the capital from the territories of Africa Proconsularis because "the Egyptian contribution could no longer be relied upon."¹⁵⁸ Yet, Rickman and Erdkamp suggest that Commodus' "designated African fleet" was created only when uncertainties arose regarding Egyptian supplies.¹⁵⁹ If the *Historae Augustae* is to be believed, then it would mean that the usefulness of the African fleet was directly related to the delay of an Egyptian fleet, making Africa the back-up supply for grain in the 2nd century, and not Egypt. But the importance of the Egyptian fleet as a primary or secondary proviso of grain is not the subject of this discussion;¹⁶⁰ rather, the underlying revelation here would be that Egypt had clearly maintained its role as a source for grain, possibly to the end of the 2nd century, even after there

These boats often carried passengers as well, which is why Paul and his guards (Acts 27.37-38) arrived via transport usually reserved for cargo (a crew and passenger count of 273 on an Alexandrian grain ship). Josephus (*Vit.* 3) also once sailed to Rome on a cargo ship carrying grain from Egypt.

¹⁵⁷ R. E. A. Palmer, "Customs on Market Goods Imported into the City of Rome," *MAAR* 36 (1980): 220; M. I. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Chesire: Biblo & Tannen Publishers, 1926), 611, ref. 57.

Ancient source: SHA (*Aurel.* 45.1).

¹⁵⁸ Fulford, "Economic Interdependence among Urban Communities of the Roman Mediterranean," 67; Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 18, ref. 79.

Although mentioned only in the SHA the 'Commodiana Herculea' might be grounded in some truth. For instance, problems with grain shortages in 190 nearly ended Commodus' reign; Commodus also had a penchant for renaming cities or institutions 'Commodianus'; the emperor is also well-attested as identifying himself with Hercules in the years 190-192. See: O. Hekster, *Commodus: An Emperor at the Crossroads* (Amsterdam: Brill Academic Publishing, 2002), 73-75.

Ancient source: SHA (*Comm.*, 17.7).

¹⁵⁹ Rickman, "The grain trade under the Roman Empire," 266; P. Erdkamp, *The Grain Market in the Roman Empire: A social, political and economic study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 230.

¹⁶⁰ Keay re-addresses this debate sufficiently and thoroughly. See: Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)."

was a need to supplement the supplies with those from other provinces. The need to draw upon provincial sources of grain stemmed from the underlying fear of famine at a capital with a vast and growing populace.¹⁶¹ In order to maintain adequate food supplies, the administration of the grain was regularized and monitored carefully.

The administration of grain fell to an official known as the *procurator annonae* (procurator for the supplies of grain), and his subordinates in the Imperial harbours.¹⁶² Circa 7/8 C.E., Augustus created the *procurator annonae* position to specifically manage the supply of foodstuffs to Rome, and gave it first to the prefect of Egypt, C. Turranius Gracilius.¹⁶³ Due to Gracilius' experience in Egypt as a political official, his appointment was a logical choice at the turn of the 1st century when Egypt was a major supplier of grain. Claudius later modified the position and entrusted the distribution of the grain to another, separate official presumably under the *procurator annonae*. He abolished the independent senatorial *praefecti frumenti dandi* and P. Aelius Liberalis, a Claudian freedman, took up the *procurator* position at that time.¹⁶⁴ A *procurator annonae* was also created at Ostia, and Trajan later created the position of another

¹⁶¹ Yeo, "Land and Sea Transportation in Imperial Italy," 237; Casson, "The Role of the State in Rome's Grain Trade," 24; Heinzlmann and Martin, "River port, *navalia* and harbour temple at Ostia," 18.

¹⁶² Rickman, "The grain trade under the Roman Empire," 263; Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 16; Aldrete and Mattingly, "Feeding the City," 212.

Ancient source: Suet. *Claud.* 24.2.

Epigraphic source: CIL 14, 00154; CIL 14, 00160.

¹⁶³ Aldrete and Mattingly, "Feeding the City," 212.

See also: B. Levick, *Roman Imperial Biographies: Claudius*, 2nd edition (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 54.

Ancient source: Suet. *Claud.* 24.2.

¹⁶⁴ G. E. F. Chilver, "Princesps and Frumentationes," *AJP* 70, 1 (1949): 8; G. W. Houston, "The Administration of Italian seaports during the First Three Centuries of the Roman Empire," *MAAR* 36 (1980): 160.

At this time, procurators were essentially the same authoritative body as prefects, but a procuratorship was a more formal way of defining a prefect's authority to govern. However, procurators were not magistrates; they exercised authority only under the supervision or concession of the Emperor. The use of the title 'procurator' then, emphasized the Emperor's personal control of a province. Essentially, the *procurator annonae Ostiensis* position was created for a freedman because a senatorial *praefect* that could act on his own authority was no longer tolerated. See also: Levick, *Roman Imperial Biographies: Claudius*, 54-56.

Epigraphic source: *CIL* 14, 02045.

new official, an equestrian *procurator annonae et in portu*, who was also responsible to the *procurator annonae* when the new Trajanic facilities at Portus were built.¹⁶⁵ In the late 2nd century, this procurator had African origins. Although his specialty was in the administration of oils from Africa and from Spain, Sextus Julius Possessor was also the *procurator ad Mercurium*, which designated him as a manager of a district of Alexandria famous for its storage of grain.¹⁶⁶ These positions betray two key Imperial objectives: to ensure a steady flow of grain to the capital, and to control the means of how it was done. As such, the foreign nationalities of at least some of the grain administrators are interesting to note. They show that the Imperial administration innately recognized the necessity of employing men familiar with the procurement of grain supplies and those supplying the commodities in order to better control the stores needed to feed the capital's population.

In addition to the economic and political activities to entice and administer merchant traffic, Imperial visits to the provinces helped solidify capital-provincial relationships. In particular, members of the Imperial administration (e.g., Augustus, Nero, Hadrian, etc.) made numerous forays into Egypt.¹⁶⁷ They quelled rebellions that might have impacted the steady

¹⁶⁵ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 16.

The position was vitally important to the Empire and a concern to those in power as the actual mechanism for achieving price control was not obvious. For example, Rickman reports that when grain prices rose to unacceptable levels, the *praefectus annonae* "could either order just the release of further amounts of grain onto the market and hope for a natural lowering of prices; or he could order the released corn to be sold at a specified price, which would be artificially low." Despite the best attempts to accommodate both a starving population as well as merchants supplying the grain, there was always a danger in artificially lowering the prices because it could result in bringing the grain dealers to the edge of ruin. See also: Rickman, "The grain trade under the Roman Empire," 270.

¹⁶⁶ Aldrete and Mattingly, "Feeding the City," 213.

¹⁶⁷ See: A. J. S. Spawforth, *Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 233; A. A. Barrett, *Caligula: The Corruption of Power* (London: Routledge, 2002), 68; G. W. Adams, *The Roman Emperor Gaius 'Caligula' and his Hellenistic Aspirations* (Boca Raton: BrownWalker Press, 2007), 47; T. Woodman, "Nero's Alien Capital: Tacitus as paradoxographer (Annals 15.36-7)," in *Author and Audience in Latin Literature*, ed. T. Woodman, and J. Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 185; L. Capponi, *Roman Egypt* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011), 30; Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 6-7; Abd-el-Ghani, "Alexandria and Middle Egypt," 163-164.

supply of commodities, toured the country to foster goodwill and demonstrate Imperial power, and inspected administration to ensure the smooth continuance of economic and political activities. The Julio-Claudian administration set a few Imperial trends by taking it upon themselves to visit Egypt personally in order to frequently quell Jewish revolts (having spread from Cyrenaica to Alexandria and then through to Judea) and solidify the administration of various parts of the new province. Augustus, for example, toured the new province and asserted his power, going so far as ‘forgiving’ the Alexandrians and Egyptians for their part in his fight with Cleopatra and Antony because he admired the “beauty and size” of the city (Plut. *Vit. Ant.* 80.1).¹⁶⁸ During Tiberius’ reign, and causing great controversy, Germanicus made a stop in Alexandria ‘to look at antiquities’¹⁶⁹, going out in Greek dress, opening the public granaries to relieve famine, and adopting ‘many practices popular with the multitude’.¹⁷⁰ The Hellenistic roots of Alexandria fascinated Caligula just as much as Germanicus, but to such an extent that he even wore the breastplate of Alexander the Great removed from its grave at Alexandria (Suet. *Calig.* 52).¹⁷¹ Nero is even accused by Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.36-7) of daring to transform Rome into Alexandria, in suggesting the young emperor was a foreign pervert “who subverts Roman

¹⁶⁸ Spawforth, *Greece and the Augustan Cultural Revolution*, 233.

¹⁶⁹ Harker reports that despite Germanicus’ interest in Alexandria as a tourist, he ultimately became deeply embroiled in the politics of the city, which supposedly caused the rift with Tiberius. The ancient sources report this is the underlying cause for Tiberius poisoning his successor. See: Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt*, 65.

Ancient sources: Tac. *Ann.*, 2.59, and 3.16; Suet. *Tib.* 52.2-3.

¹⁷⁰ Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt*, 65-66.

Ancient sources: Joseph. *Ap.* 2.63; Suet. *Tib.* 52.2; Tac. *Ann.*, 2.59.

¹⁷¹ Barrett, *Caligula*, 68; Adams, *The Roman Emperor Gaius ‘Caligula’ and his Hellenistic Aspirations*, 47. Barrett remarks that “Caligula’s reign is an adherence to the religious and political traditions of Egypt”; when Caligula departs from Rome, he is inspired by the departure of Isis after the death of Osiris, “and the recovery of his mother’s ashes is modelled on Isis’ similar service for Osiris.” The story of his incest with Drusilla only added fuel to the rumours that Caligula had a ‘mania’ for all things Egyptian, including the Ptolemaic practice of marriage within the royal family to keep the bloodline pure.

standards of civilization.”¹⁷² The Julio-Claudian administration’s activities suggest a preoccupation with Egypt. After an initial bout of enforcing Roman political power, many of the successors openly displayed their attraction with the cosmopolitan centre of Alexandria.

Following the first Imperial administration’s examples, other emperors found it both necessary and beneficial to make forays into Egypt. Sometimes however, the visits were not always looked upon favourably by the locals and they openly opposed Roman rule. When Vespasian became emperor, for example, both Cassius Dio (65.8) and Suetonius (*Vesp.* 19.2) remark that the Alexandrians insulted him. Possibly, Capponi explains, because Vespasian had blockaded grain supplies from Egypt to Rome in order to blackmail the senate into ratifying his election.¹⁷³ Yet, after his ascension to his throne, Vespasian was supposedly greeted by an adoring crowd in the Hippodrome at Alexandria.¹⁷⁴ Although his successor Titus did enter Alexandria, a private letter (*P.Oxy.* XXXIV 2725) mentions that it was only briefly to visit the *Serapeum* and the *Hippikos* (Hippodrome), before the emperor focused his attention on the conquest of Jerusalem and chasing the fleeing Jewish forces.¹⁷⁵ It will not be until the turn of the 2nd century that Emperors return to Egypt, and this time it would be a result of Trajan’s subsequent efforts in quelling more Jewish rebellions.

¹⁷² Woodman, “Nero’s Alien Capital,” 185; Scullard, *From the Gracchi to Nero*, 360; M. Owen, and I. Gildenhard, *Tacitus, Annals, 15.20-23, 33-45: Latin text, study aids with vocabulary, and commentary* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2013), 169-170.

¹⁷³ Capponi, *Roman Egypt*, 30.

¹⁷⁴ Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt*, 61-63.

Ancient Sources: Tac. *Hist.* 2.79; Tac. *Ann.* 4.81-2; Suet. *Vesp.* 6-7; Cass. Dio 66.8.1-9.2; Joseph. *BJ* 4.616-8. Epigraphic Source: *SB* XVI 12255.

¹⁷⁵ Capponi, *Roman Egypt*, 30; Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt*, 60.

Ancient Sources: Suet. *Tit.* 5; Joseph. *BJ* 7.116.

Perhaps experiencing the greatest favour from the Egyptian locals, the ‘philhellenic’ Emperor Hadrian was probably the most prolific because he entered the province on multiple occasions.¹⁷⁶ Early in the 2nd century, he honoured Pompey at Pelusium, a former centre of Jewish uprisings. In a show of Roman supremacy, he reaffirmed Pompey’s hero status with a sacrifice and subsequently restored the funerary monument in honour of the former military officer (Cass. Dio, 69.11.1).¹⁷⁷ Hadrian then continued through Egypt restoring many Greek buildings that he came across, particularly in areas damaged by Trajan’s efforts to quell the Jewish revolts.¹⁷⁸ In much the same manner, the emperor then visited the city of Alexandria (App. *B Civ.* 2.90) in order to restore monuments in the city also damaged during Trajan’s battle with Jewish rebels in the early 2nd century.¹⁷⁹ Apart from a few sights (e.g., the tomb of Alexander, the installation of the Apis bull statue in Memphis¹⁸⁰) however, other details about what Hadrian saw and did in Egypt during his second visit are vague in the written sources. The SHA (*Hadr.* 20.2) records his interest in the Alexandrian Museum, and a few ancient sources and papyri record the Emperor’s visit to the *chora* (‘country’ outside the *polis* or ‘city’) where his companion Antinous drowned in the Nile.¹⁸¹ In general, other Imperial activities in Egypt during the 2nd century came to an end after Hadrian’s reign.

¹⁷⁶ Carroll, *Spirits of the Dead*, 6-7; Abd-el-Ghani, “Alexandria and Middle Egypt,” 163-164.

¹⁷⁷ E. Speller, *Following Hadrian: A second-century journey through the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 114-116.

¹⁷⁸ M. T. Boatwright, *Hadrian and the cities of the Roman Empire* (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2000), 142.

After Trajan’s reign, the Jews of the Dispersion instigated numerous riots. Frustrated, Hadrian visited Jerusalem in 130 and rebuilt the ruined city as a *colonia*. He further forbade Jews from setting foot in the city except once a year. Outraged, the Jews rose in revolt in 132, rioting periodically throughout the 2nd century. See also: E. T. Salmon, *A History of the Roman World, 30 BC to AD 138*, 6th ed. (London: Routledge, 1968), 307-308.

¹⁷⁹ Capponi, *Roman Egypt*, 30.

Epigraphic Sources: temple account from Soknopaiou Nesos (*StudPal.* 22.183).

¹⁸⁰ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 184-185, ref. 75, fig. 312.

¹⁸¹ Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt*, 63-64.

In addition to the Imperial activities in Egypt, Roman emperors also took measures to prohibit the worship of specific cults at Rome and sometimes even expelled foreign groups from the city. For example, at the end of the 1st century B.C.E., Augustus originally forbade the worship of foreign cults, Egyptian in particular, within the *pomerium* of Rome (Cass. Dio, 53.2.4 and 54.6.6).¹⁸² Shortly after, Jews and Egyptians were also expelled from Italy unless they gave up their cultic beliefs on account of ‘over-zealously proselytizing’ (Tac. *Ann.* 2.85; Suet. *Tib.* 36).¹⁸³ This negativity towards Jews and Egyptians likely stemmed from an early Augustan anti-Cleopatra political campaign that contrasted Egypt with Rome, and which clamped down on Egyptians while simultaneously striving to revive Roman religion.¹⁸⁴ In reality, it was common practice in the 1st century to expel any number of different groups of foreigners perceived as a threat (real or imagined), and generally included the periodic expulsion of cultural groups (Egyptians, but one; additionally, Gauls and Germanics) as well.¹⁸⁵ The practical application of

Whether it was an accident or a sacrifice, it is known that the site became the famous location of the new city Antinopolis. See also: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 154.

Ancient Sources: Cass. Dio 69.11.2-3; Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 14.5-7; SHA (*Hadr.* 14.5-7); *P.Oxy.* VIII 1085.

Epigraphic Sources: *Pap.Graec.Mag.* IV 2441-621; *P.Mil.Vogl.* I 20.

¹⁸² E. Manolaraki, *Noscendi Nilum Cupido: Imagining Egypt from Lucan to Philostratus* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2013), 33.

¹⁸³ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 42.

A few ancient sources believe it a result of the state’s general hostility towards those of Jewish background.

Ancient sources: Tac. *Ann.* 2.85; Josep. (*AJ* 18.65-84); Sen. *Ep.* 108.22; Cass. Dio, 57.18.5a.

¹⁸⁴ E. M. Orlin, “Foreign Cults in Republican Rome: Rethinking the Pomerium Rule,” *MAAR* 47 (2002): 6.

Ancient source: Vitruvius, *De arch.* 1.7.1

¹⁸⁵ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 47, and 214.

In fact, Noy (p. 286) comments that in general, “foreigners who did not have Roman citizenship were always liable to summary expulsion from the city.” Furthermore, the expulsion of Jews and Egyptians appears to be more a question of an early Imperial intolerance for people of the Jewish faith, of which many were Egyptian in nationality and likely from Alexandria, than it was a question of cultural intolerance. Case in point, Noy lists that the expulsions of Jews occurred many times throughout Roman history, from as early as mid-2nd century B.C.E., at least three times in the 1st century C.E., and again only in the 5th century. Beard et al. mention the expulsion of Jews and the banning of their faith occurred seven times throughout the span of the 1st century C.E., and that at least one of those times (Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.52) the expulsion was ineffective. Rutgers offers comparative examples of similar expulsions occurring a century earlier in Greek cities of Asia Minor almost half a century earlier. See also: Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 45, ref. 94-101; Beard et al., *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, A History*, 231; L. V. Rutgers, “Roman Policy towards the Jews: Expulsions from the City of Rome during the First Century C.E.,” *CIAnt* 13, 1 (1994): 70.

such legislations and the effectiveness of Roman law in everyday life is difficult to determine, not least because of a general lack of adequate sources.¹⁸⁶ For example, Noy's epigraphic collection shows that these groups were often able to quickly return due to an "absence of legislation being enforced."¹⁸⁷

After the death of Augustus, Imperial tolerance of Egyptians and the cult of Isis and Serapis took an immense turn in the opposite direction. Emperors sought a positive relationship with their grain-producing province and the worship of Isis and Serapis began to receive Imperial sponsorship so that even priests were being imported with the cults.¹⁸⁸ La Piana summarizes the growing favour from the reign of Caligula to the Antonines and provides several examples in literary and epigraphic material.¹⁸⁹ For example, he mentions that either Caligula or Nero constructed the *Iseum* on the Campus Martius and that Domitian (Suet. *Dom.* 1) later rebuilt the temple to Isis when it burned down; Hadrian joined the new cult of his companion Antinous with the Egyptian cult of Serapis (IGUR-1, 00098); and lastly, Commodus (SHA, *Comm.* 9) supposedly went so far as to shave his head and carry around a statue of Anubis. Evidently, following Augustus' efforts with the anti-Cleopatra campaigns, and the aforementioned periodic expulsion of foreign cultural groups, the activities of the Emperors show a more favourable preoccupation with Egyptians throughout the 1st and 2nd centuries.

Ancient Sources: Val. Max. 1.3.3; Cass. Dio, 49.43.5, and 57.15.8-9; Suet. *Tib.* 36; Suet. *Vit.* 14; Tac. *Hist.* 2.32, and 2.62; Tac. *Ann.* 12.52.

¹⁸⁶ J. G. Wolf, "Documents in Roman Practice," in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Law*, ed. D. Johnston (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 61; T. A. J. McGinn, *Prostitution, Sexuality, and the Law in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 5.

¹⁸⁷ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 45; Ricci, "Egiziani a Roma," 75.

¹⁸⁸ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 43.

¹⁸⁹ La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire," 302.

Other elite representatives of Roman society met these Imperial preoccupations with Egyptians with mixed opinions. La Piana, and Noy made an encompassing exploration of the plethora of different negative and positive attitudes of foreigners at Rome. They uncovered that although a few ancient Romans delighted in the arrival of learned foreigners to the capital many more looked down upon these new arrivals as detrimental to the moral fabric of Rome.¹⁹⁰ Yet, it would be difficult to discredit the work, education, and economic benefits these foreigners brought to the capital. In the case of Egyptians, a desire to admire their culture and the arts perhaps led some sources to accept, or at least overlook their ‘so-called vices’. Strabo (14.5.15), for example, remarks rather favourably that Rome was now a place filled with learned Tarsians and Alexandrians.¹⁹¹ In fact, among some of the occupational groups who lived in the capital, Ricci mentions at least seven Egyptian astrologers in the epigraphic record, and Harker mentions a number of Alexandrian ambassadors.¹⁹² Yet at the same time, a few staunch Roman writers saw Egyptians and other foreigners as a source of detriment to Roman society. For example, Lucian (*On Salaried Posts (De Mercede)* 10, 17, 27) criticizes the growing importance of Syrian, Libyan, and Alexandrian slaves in the Roman household; he also observes how Roman dinner-guests were being repeatedly upstaged by the Greeks who had just come into the household.¹⁹³

A Roman elite’s appraisal of learned foreigners combined with their class prejudice against foreign slaves would suggest that rather the *quality* of the foreigners, not the *quantity* of them, made their place so significant in the Empire. The quality is indicative of the astrologers,

¹⁹⁰ See specifically: Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 31-32, and 34; La Piana, “Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire,” 230.

¹⁹¹ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 32.

¹⁹² Ricci, “Egiziani a Roma,” 75; Harker, *Loyalty and Dissidence in Roman Egypt*, 93-96.

¹⁹³ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 35

ambassadors, tutors, and other professionals who worked as visiting scholars or slaves in a household, rather than the quantity of commoners, traders, and uneducated slaves supposedly appearing in Rome in droves. Yet, the activities of the Emperors drew in all kinds of foreigners, and the upper class antagonism was not always mirrored by the lower classes who interacted with them on a more regular basis, most especially at the harbours of Ostia and Portus.

4.2 Section 2: Epigraphic Evidence at Ostia and Portus

The gaps created in the previous section, the mix of opinions and lack of information on individual Egyptians, will hopefully be filled in through the provision of specific examples from the harbour towns. By incorporating the epigraphic material from Ostia and Portus into the discussion, a different ‘sense of audience’ might be made apparent, especially when the previously discussed opinions and commentaries derived from - or were attributed to - Rome. Quantitatively, the evidence provided by inscriptions (epitaphs, honorary inscriptions, dedications, etc.) in general is also quite high; they vastly outnumber the amount of written records we have.¹⁹⁴ This section will therefore highlight the corpora of epigraphic evidence to discuss the actual breadth of the presence of foreigners, particularly Egyptians, in the Ostia and Portus area.

To begin, Egyptians in the epigraphic material from Rome and its environs have been divided by Noy into four categories: royalty, priests, slaves, and a ubiquitous category of ‘others’.¹⁹⁵ Several Egyptian Ptolemaic rulers visited or lived in Rome from the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.E. (Philometor, Auletes, and Cleopatra). After the 1st century C.E., Egyptian priests

¹⁹⁴ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 6.

¹⁹⁵ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 245-250.

were likely imported with the Isiac cult, and at Ostia the popularity of Isis and her patronage of sailing likely increased the amount of Egyptian tourists and workers at the port. Noy makes use of various epigraphic inscriptions to further mention that many Egyptians worked in and around the capital as statesmen, doctors, merchants, military men, or simply were tourists to the capital and its harbours, but that Alexandrian scholars were particularly highly regarded by the Roman upper classes.¹⁹⁶ It is also his belief that by the 1st century, Egyptian slaves and ex-slaves even began gaining recognition in the city. Some of their occupations are attested in the epigraphic record, and included work as entertainers (e.g., dancers, musicians, actors, etc.), gladiators, and *pancratiasts* ('boxers' and 'wrestlers').¹⁹⁷ Despite the small variety of occupations listed above however, few examples of Egyptians at Rome exist in the epigraphic record of the first two hundred years of the Empire. For although the late 1st and early 2nd centuries still saw the import of a number of Egyptian slaves, Ricci has noted that the inscriptions become rather vague in their designation; the commemorated were not necessarily (ex)slaves.¹⁹⁸ This ambiguity derives from an overall decline of an ex-slave's use of the term *libertus* as a status indicator on funerary monuments. Although some examples persisted, as in the Isola Sacra (a total of 12 of over 100)

¹⁹⁶ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 245-250, ref. 340, 341, 372, and 384.

¹⁹⁷ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 247, ref. 348, 349, 350, 351, and 352.

Ancient source: Mart. 11.13.

Epigraphic source: Ricci, "Egiziani a Roma," 98; CIL 06, 10194; IGUR-01 00240; Beard et al., *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, A History*, 294; IGI-Porto 00021.

Example: M ANTONIUS EXOCHUS // THR / M ANTONIUS / EXOCHUS NAT / ALEXANDRINUS / ROM OB TRIUMP / DIVI TRAIANI DIE II / TIR CUM ARAXE CAE / ST MISS / ROM MUN EIUSD DIE VIII FIMBRIAM / LIB VIII MISS FE / ROM MUN EIUSD. *Marcus Antonius Exochus a thraex gladiator. Marcus Antonius Exochus from Alexandria (was) in Rome for the triumph of the divine Trajan as a beginner on the second day (of the triumph) fighting to a draw with Araxis an Imperial slave. On the ninth day of the triumph he fought to a draw with Fimbria who was a free man in Rome on the same day of the games* [CIL 06, 10194].

¹⁹⁸ Ricci, "Egiziani a Roma," 85.

for example, the term appeared less and less in the 2nd century and disappeared almost outright by the end of the 3rd century.¹⁹⁹

Noy's method can be employed in similar fashion at Ostia and Portus, where the presence of a few working and visiting Alexandrians or Egyptians can be found. For instance, upon initial inspection of the epigraphic material, a large portion of Ostia's population seems to be made up of Greeks (and Africans). In Frank's examination of the guilds' rolls in Ostia from the first two centuries of the empire, he discovered that the names which bore Greek *cognomina* always had a dominating presence even if they were not often the majority.²⁰⁰ It is mostly through these Greek inscriptions that vestiges of the presence of Egyptians at the harbours can be found and dated to the 2nd century. A few of these visitors (traders, sightseers, etc.) left dedications in the temples at Ostia and Portus and many at the latter were in Greek. For example, Dessau provides inscriptions from the *Serapeum* at the harbours indicating that both temples were modeled to some extent after the Great *Serapeum* of Alexandria, and that an Alexandrian senator even made one of the Greek dedications found there.²⁰¹ Moreover, the Greek form of address used in the dedications (primarily at Portus) to either invoke the Egyptian god or mention the title of the priests, are

¹⁹⁹ Mouritsen, "Freedmen and Freeborn"; H. Mouritsen, "Freedmen and Decurions: Epitaphs and Social History in Imperial Italy," *JRS* 95 (2005); Taylor, "Freedmen and Freeborn."

²⁰⁰ Tenney Frank, "The people of Ostia."

There is also a greater instance of 'Africans' in the epigraphic record, some 23 Ostian magistrates. See: O. Salomies, "People in Ostia. Some Onomastic Observations and Comparisons with Rome," in *Ostia e Portus nelle loro relazioni con Roma. Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae* 27, ed. C. F. M. Bruun, and A. G. Zevi (Roma: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, 2002); M. L. Torres, *Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica* (PhD diss., University of Texas, United States of America, 2008), 31 ref. 106.

²⁰¹ Taylor, *Cults of Ostia*, 74

The Greek inscription from Portus mentions a Eutyches who possibly dedicated to the great Sarapis, and in thankfulness put up this inscription for his own good. But only after having obtained permission from Caius Nasemnus Marcellus, the priest for the temple of Vulcan, and of Quintus Lollus Rufus Chrysidianus and Marcus Aemilius Vitalis Crepereianus, who were *duoviri*. A thank you for my supervisor Dr. Nielsen for the translations. Epigraphic source: CIL 14, 00047; CIG. 4864.

believed to be identical to inscriptions found at Alexandria.²⁰² There is even recorded a possible Egyptian custodian of the temple of Serapis at Ostia, once again in Greek.²⁰³ In addition to the plethora of Greek inscriptions, a few Latin dedications have also been found. For example, both Meiggs and Terpestra mention the names of two possible Egyptians (Arion Amoni and Chrysippus Ptolomei) recorded on a shipbuilders guild roll, the *corpus fabrum navalium* (body of ship craftsmen).²⁰⁴ In an area designated for a Roman fire brigade at Portus (near the medieval *Episcopium* or ‘Seat of the Bishop’), among the soldiers from different Roman cohorts documented there between the 1st to 3rd centuries, is an Egyptian called Q. Lusius Rufus.²⁰⁵ To this can be added the scarce inscripational evidence on mosaics of at least sixty *stationes* (offices) of the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni*. Dating from the mid-2nd to beginning of the 3rd century C.E. and grouped geographically, it is believed that the *stationes* on the north and west sides (i.e., *Statio* nos. 40 and 27) belonged to Egyptian groups transporting wild animals and grain.²⁰⁶ In general, however, individuals from Alexandria, as opposed to Egypt, are known to be more numerous in the epigraphic record at the Imperial harbours.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Taylor, *Cults of Ostia*, 74.

Epigraphic source: CIG. 4683; IGUR-01, 00240 (Alexandrian shrine at Rome).

²⁰³ T. Terpstra, *Trading Communities in the Roman World: a micro-economic and institutional perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 120; Beard et al., *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, A History*, 293-294.

Written in Greek, they are both honorific dedications to Commodus and Septimius Severus from Alexandrian grain merchants, in thanks for their support. A thank you to my supervisor Dr. Nielsen for the translations.

Epigraphic source: IGI-Porto 00002, 00003.

²⁰⁴ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 216; Ricci, “Egiziani a Roma,” 90; Terpstra, *Trading Communities in the Roman World*, 120; Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 15.

Epigraphic source: CIL 14, 00256 (nrs. 148, and 185)

²⁰⁵ Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 14-15.

D M // Q LUSIUS RUFUS // III MERCURIO // MIL CL PR MIS // EGYPTIUS. *In memory of Quintus Lusius Rufus, third level Mercurio, soldier of the flagship fleet of Miseno. (From?) Egypt [CIL 14, 00239].*

²⁰⁶ Torres, *Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica*, 29; Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 15, ref. 51 and 52; Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, no. 108 and no. 109, 74-78; Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, CLXXXIV and XCIII.

These mosaics with inscriptions will be looked at more fully in the following chapter.

²⁰⁷ Terpstra, *Trading Communities in the Roman World*, 120.

At this point, it is worthwhile to briefly mention the evidence provided through the traditional practice of onomastics, the inference of ethnicity through names. Yet, picking out purely Egyptian-sounding names from the multitude of Greek-sounding names that abound is a major setback since a portion of Egypt's history, Alexandria's in particular, is Hellenistic.²⁰⁸ Even those Egyptians (slaves, freed/freeborn, traders, shippers, merchants, etc.) who quickly came to live and work at the Empire's renowned capital and harbours, were "apparently of Greek extraction, rather than 'indigenous' Egyptians," and a great majority concern Alexandrians with a Hellenistic heritage.²⁰⁹ Noy, for example, only mentions the same two *peregrini* (foreigners) as Meiggs, the ones with 'Egyptian-sounding' names that are recorded in the *corpus fabrum navalium* at Ostia.²¹⁰ In his monograph of the inscriptions found at Isola Sacra, Thylander also came across only one monument he believed indicative of an Egyptian family. In tomb no. 86, a

For example: DIS MANIBUS / T FLAVIO APOLLONIO / ALEXANDRINO. *In memory of Titus Flavius Apollonius, an Alexandrian* [CIL 14, 00478].

For example: DI{I}S MANIBUS / T FLAVI QUIR ZOILI / FILIO PISSIMO VIXIT / ANNIS XX / PRISCA HECATAEI F FECIT SIBI ET / APHRODISIO ARPOCRATIONIS F/ ALEX ET / FLAVIAE ARTEMIDORAE FILIAE / ET SUIS ET / LIBERTIS LIBERTABUS POSTERISQUE / EORUM / ET EPAPHRODITO APHRODISI LIB. *In memory of Titus Flavius Zoilius of the Quirine tribe, a most dutiful son. He lived 20 years. Prisca Hecata, daughter of Prisca, made this for herself and for Aphrodisio Arpocraton, son of Aphrodisio, an Alexandrian, and Flavia Artemidora, daughter of Flavia, and for their freedman and freedwomen and for their descendants, and the freedman Epaphroditus Aphrodisus* [CIL 14, 00479].

²⁰⁸ In fact, the reliability of these Greek individuals as indicators of 'Hellenistic' or 'Egyptian' ethnic identity is rather tenuous at best. Mostly because of the emergence in the fifth and fourth centuries of a Greek ethnic, or consciously national identity, which contrasted Greeks with *barbaroi*. The division between Greeks and 'other' would then be bridged when Alexander, who conquered the Persian Empire and many parts of the Near East in the late fourth century B.C.E. He re-introduced Greek elements into native practices of various regions. His attempts at fusion eventually led to the majority of Hellenistic influences becoming diffused with increasing rapidity so that by the second century, Hellenism really flourished as a cultural innovation. See: F. Millar, "Looking East from the Classical World: Colonialism, Culture, and Trade from Alexander the Great to Shapur I," *The International History Review* 20, 3 (1998): 508.

²⁰⁹ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 246 and 248.

Additionally, Egyptians favoured Greek as a language in pagan inscriptions more than Latin; a trend shared by Christian inscriptions. Noy suggests this was a trend largely indicative of free immigrants rather than slaves who would have likely adopted Latin once manumitted.

²¹⁰ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 247, ref. 346; Ricci, "Egiziani a Roma," 90; Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 216. Epigraphic source: CIL 14, 00256 (nrs. 148, and 185): ARION AMONI FIL // CHRYSIPPUS PTOLOMEI.

marble sepulchral pillar with two inscriptions²¹¹ bears the dedication for and by a woman with an Egyptian-style name: ‘Claudia Hammonilla’. According to Thylander’s analysis, the woman’s name comes from Hammonius (=Ammonius) and therefore *Ammon/Amon*; the name is indicative of a “child of Amon”, an Egyptian name. Otherwise, based solely on their similarity to Egyptian gods, famous rulers, or towns in Egypt, there is an additional possibility of almost 200 identifiable ‘Egyptian-sounding’ names in the Ostia and Portus areas.²¹²

For obvious reasons, however, this kind of reading of nationality through epigraphy is not without problems, because without key indicators (Latin *ex, natione, or civitas*) the inferences of national identity are very often subjective and impossible to verify. Therefore, the lack of key indicators of nationality or ‘possible Egyptian’ identifications in the epigraphic record leads scholars to under-estimate the number of Egyptians at the harbours. Or, conversely, over-estimating the presence of Alexandrians. Both are significant enough assumptions that it warrants further investigation.

²¹¹ (On the cornice) D M / CLAVDIAE HAMMONIL/LAE. *In memory of Claudia Hammonilla*; (On the front) D M / TI CLAVDIO / SEVERO / CLAVDIVS SEVERINVS / ET CLAVDIA / HAMMONILLA / PATRI PIENTISSIMO. *In memory of Tiberius Claudius Severos. Claudius Severinus and Claudia Hammonilla (made this) for their most pious father* [IPOstie-A, 00070]. Thylander stresses that the importance of this inscription is the brother’s lack of his own second name (he bore a conjugation of his father’s name [-inus, -anus]). See: Thylander, *Inscriptions du port d’Ostie*, A 70 (pg. 70-71).

Epigraphic source: IPOstie-A, 00070 = ISIS 00105 = Arctos-2012-219.

²¹² Examples of inscriptions with persons possibly named after Egyptian gods at Ostia and Portus: Anubis (CIL 14, 04290); Aten (IRepEp 00181); Isis (CIL 14, 00753); Osiris (AE 1977, 00174); Serapis/Sarapis (CIL 14, 00574; CIL 14, 00256). Examples of inscriptions with persons possibly named after Egyptian towns at Ostia and Portus: Alexandr- (AE 1985, 00164; CIL 14, 01107a); Ammonium (CIL 14, 04788; IPOstie-A, 00041); Arsinoe (CIL 14, 01403); Euhemeria (AE 1985, 00200; CIL 14, 01654); Heliopolis (AE 1998, 00274; CIL 14, 00024); Memphis (CIL 14, 05375); Philadelphia (CIL 14, 01462); Ptolemais (CIL 14, 04569; IPOstie-A, 00057). There is also an interesting inscription from Ostia that is worth mentioning here because it gives the name of Alexandria and Cleopatra: D M / ALEXANDRI{a}E / V A XV M VI / T FLAVIUS / FORTUNATUS / ET VALERIA / CL<e=i>OPATRA / VERN{a}E CARISSI/MAE B M F. *In memory of Alexandria, who lived 15 years and 6 months. Titus Flavius Fortunatus and Valeria Cleopatra made this for their dearest and most well-deserving house-born slave* [AE 1985, 00164].

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Nielsen for compiling and helping me sift through the multitude of inscriptions from Ostia and Portus.

Traditionally, Alexandrians are considered separate individuals from those classified as Egyptians, but both groups coexisted at Alexandria. In the 2nd century B.C.E., Polybius (34.14) divided the population into three groups: *native* Egyptian, Alexandrians, and a Mercenary class.²¹³ By the Roman Period, Alexandria constituted a mix of Romans, Egyptians, Alexandrians, and Jews.²¹⁴ Even at the turn of the 2nd century, Egyptians were still very much a part of the fabric of Alexandria. In fact, from Pliny's letter to Trajan, in which he details a need to give his Egyptian doctor Harpocras Alexandrian and Roman citizenship, modern historians learn two things: Egyptians were still treated as second-class citizens, but also that Egyptians still existed as a separate group at the commercial centre.²¹⁵ Abdelwahed compiles these ancient sources and is aware through them of the 'inferior mode of life' Egyptians lead, but he also rightly adds that there is a "gulf between such a literary, theoretical statement and the complicated reality of Romano-Egyptian society on the ground"; boundaries between Alexandrians and Egyptians are not easily outlined.²¹⁶

Returning to the Imperial harbours, another problem afflicts analysis of Egyptians in the epigraphic record. Namely, African shipments of grain and the presence of Africans in the epigraphic record in general are both well-attested and heavily documented by numerous scholars²¹⁷, whereas comparatively, the physical evidence for Egyptians is considered lacking. It

²¹³ Y. E. H. Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*. *Roman Archaeology* 6 (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015), 14.

²¹⁴ Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 14.
Ancient Sources: Strabo 17.1.6; Philo, *In Flacc.* 10.78.

Epigraphic sources: *P.Giss.Lit.* 6.3 = *P.Giss.* 40.ii.17-29 = *Sel.Pap.* II.215; *CPJ* II.156c.ii.25-7; *BGU* IV.1151.

²¹⁵ Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 14-15; B. Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire: A sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 153.

Ancient Source: Plin. *Ep.* 10.6-10.7.1.

²¹⁶ Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 15.

²¹⁷ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 18; Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 251-255; Salomies, "People in Ostia. Some Onomastic Observations and Comparisons with Rome," 135-160; M. Cebeillac-

is for this reason that Noy's assessment of an Egyptian 'lack of communal organization' as an explanation of the scarce nature of material is often followed by other scholars like Keay.²¹⁸ The scarce nature of the evidence should not, however, detract from the fact that Egyptians and Alexandrians were a part of the fabric of Ostia and Portus in the 1st and 2nd centuries. Being labelled an Alexandrian was a legal status attainable by Egyptians who shared the space with Jews, Romans, and Greeks at Alexandria. As such, although material identifying the presence of Egyptians at the capital appears scarce, a continued trading partnership with Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century would suggest that the Egyptian province and its people maintained a close bond with Rome.

4.3 Conclusions

The relationship between Egypt and Rome in the 1st and 2nd centuries is fairly consistent within the literary and epigraphic records. Ancient sources describe the draw of Rome to people who found themselves under the umbrella of the Empire, while also imparting biased attitudes on these visitors. Conversely, the epigraphic record helps substantiate the written material because there are examples of Egyptians visiting, working, and living in the Ostia area at the time, although the majority appear to be mainly from Alexandria. Those from Alexandria comprised a mixed group of Egyptians, Jews, Romans, and Greeks by the Roman Period. A full range of individuals, together with the elite upper classes down to the working labourer lower classes, is visible. However, it is imperative that these suggestive clues be paired with more visual components in order to best gauge the presence of Egyptians in Rome. For this reason, the next

Gervasoni, "Gli "Africani" ad Ostia, ovvero "le manisulla città", in *L'incidenza dell'antico*, ed. C. Monteaone (Naples: Studi in memoria di Ettore Leppore III, 1996), 561-563;

²¹⁸ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 15; Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 250-251.

chapter will delve further into the available corpus of materials by analyzing architectural and iconographic elements in hopes of corroborating or contradicting the evidence supplied by this chapter.

Chapter Five: Architectural Evidence

This chapter investigates the Egyptian and Egyptianizing elements of architectural monuments at the Imperial ports of Rome by associating particular styles, material, or other characteristics with Alexandria and Egypt. In particular, the emulation of Egyptian architecture (e.g., *Pharos*, Great *Serapeum*, etc.), the temples dedicated to the worship of Egypt's Isis and Serapis (e.g., *Iseum*, *Serapeum*, etc.), and the Roman funerary forms that mimicked or emulated Egyptian styles (e.g., pyramid-shape, subterranean rooms, etc.). The emperors and worshippers of the Egyptian cults constructed these buildings in order to cater to the needs of the arriving grain fleets. Some of these more important construction projects include the *Pharos*, markets, warehouses, and cultic centres. Although this chapter will focus on architectural features, identification of certain buildings is sometimes done through the use of inscriptional evidence (e.g., commemoration, dedications, etc.) when archaeological evidence is unavailable. Rather than a study of individuals however, the epigraphic material in this chapter will only serve to identify monuments and support or discredit Egyptianizing claims.

Due to the nature of the material to be covered, this chapter will be split into three sections. In all sections, rather than chronologically, the buildings described will be introduced by way of an imaginary late 2nd-century Egyptian traveller. He will depart from Alexandria and arrive at Portus via the Tyrrhenian Sea, before making his way across the Isola Sacra to Ostia in order to conduct business, perhaps engage in leisure activities (food, and drink), and possibly stop to worship at temples dedicated to familiar deities. The first section will begin the investigation with Portus as the landing site of Egyptian merchants, the second will look into possible monuments at Isola Sacra reminiscent of Egypt and Alexandria, and the third will delve

into the Egyptian and ‘Egyptianizing’ material at Ostia as the commercial centre of the Imperial harbours.

5.1 Section 1: Arrival at Portus

By the turn of the 2nd century, the new harbour system catered a great deal to Rome’s multicultural suppliers, and an argument can be made that Rome was keenly aware of its Egyptian clientele. In addition to the construction of buildings and facilities associated with transport or storage, like the Pharos or expansion of warehouses, the appearance of cultic centres and guilds to Isis and Serapis also appeared along the waterfront of the *Fossa Traiana*. Some inscriptional and iconographical evidence has traditionally suggested a form of Alexandrian mimicry in the Portus buildings. Specifically, the appearance of the Portus lighthouse, expansion of warehouses, or design of the *Isea* and *Serapea*. In order to verify the Egyptian quality or contest these traditional associations as simple Egyptianizing elements at Portus, an in-depth analysis of the aforementioned buildings will take place here.

The first sight to greet sailors on any merchant ship heading for Portus would be the Pharos. Suetonius (*Claud.* 20), Pliny (*NH* 5.43.128), and Josephus (*BJ* 4.10.15) tell us that Claudius erected the very high tower after the example of the Pharos-tower of Alexandria in order to direct ships on their way at night with a continuously burning beacon.²¹⁹ However, there is no description of the Portus lighthouse in these ancient texts. Rather, modern scholars are left with discrepant images of the Pharos on numerous reliefs, paintings, and Imperial coins that commemorate the construction and importance it symbolized to a port town in the mid to late 1st

²¹⁹ Wirching, “How obelisks reached Rome: evidence of Roman double-ships.”

century.²²⁰ As a result, modern scholars have a difficult time describing the appearance of the Portus lighthouse. Bakker's compilation of iconographical evidence for the Claudian lighthouse suggests anywhere from 15 to 30 metres for a compositional height, all rectangular drums but for a cylindrical top that housed the fire, with any number of stylized doorways or windows (e.g., rectangular, square, slits, arched, etc.) that acted as openings in the lighthouse.²²¹ Bakker identifies the material used to construct the lighthouse as a dark-coloured basalt, some marble, and granite.²²² Due to the ambiguity of the iconography, the true height of the lighthouse is relatively unknown. Suetonius (*Claud.* 20) comments that it was "the highest tower" after the example of the lighthouse of Alexandria, which has led Bakker to posit anywhere from a 50 to 120 meter height in order to make it clearly visible from Rome or up to 40 km away.²²³

In contrast, McKenzie compiles a great deal of consistent information on the Alexandrian Pharos (Fig. 3 a-b) through archaeological evidence, and the records of Arab writers travelling to the area from the 9th to 15th centuries.²²⁴ As a result, it is possible to know that while the actual height of the Portus lighthouse is only an estimation, the Alexandrian Pharos was definitively measured between 115-120 meters tall.²²⁵ Additionally, in both the Arab writings and

²²⁰ La Piana, "Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire," 262; McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 184.

²²¹ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

Iconographic evidence: Torlonia Relief (Testaguzza, p. 171); Coin of Antoninus Pius (Meiggs, pl. XVIII); Harbour scene Relief (Meiggs, pl. XXVI, b); Funerary slabs (Stuhlfauth, fig. 5, 6, 7); *Piazzale delle Corporazioni* (statio nos. 3, 22, 23, 26, 35, 46, 49). See specifically: O. Testaguzza, *Portus. Illustrazione dei porti di Claudio e Traiano e della città di Porto a Fiumicino* (Roma: Julia Editrice, 1970); Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*; G. Stuhlfauth, "Der Leuchtturm von Ostia", *RM* 53 (1938).

All of the images are at the following link: <http://www.ostia-antica.org/portus/c001.htm>.

²²² Via oral communication with Antonia Arnoldus-Huyzendveld. Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

²²³ A. A. Boyce, "The Harbour of Pompeiopolis," *AJA* 62, 1 (1958): 77; Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

²²⁴ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 42.

²²⁵ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 42-43 and 194; S. K. Hamarneh, "The ancient monuments of Alexandria according to accounts by medieval Arab authors (IX-XV century)," *FoLor* 13 (1971): 85-91; Boyce, "The Harbour of Pompeiopolis," 77.

comparative iconographical evidence from the 1st century C.E., it is known that the Alexandrian Pharos's tower was reached by a 'substantial ramp', comprised of three tapering storeys (rectangular, octagonal, and cylindrical), adorned with bronze statues, and retained the use of a very large mirror to reflect the light. The Arab writings and archaeological fragments uncovered also reveal the material composition of the Pharos as a type of white stone (possibly marble), and some red granite for lintels and door frames.²²⁶

When little archaeological material remains to be examined, scholars rely heavily on other ancient sources such as written texts, numismatics, and reliefs in order to recreate monuments no longer visible. In this way, modern scholars can envision how sailors leaving Alexandria were likely to have received a spectacular send off from a Pharos that shone like a star, before arriving into a harbour that mimicked the very Pharos that had sent them off.²²⁷ As shown earlier, however, there is a great difficulty in assessing the design of the Claudian lighthouse, because little of it remains and iconographical information is conflicting. Boyce puts forth instead the notion that the Emperor wished to imitate the Alexandrian Pharos in idea rather than form, primarily because iconographical evidence shows a consistent relationship between Ostia and Alexandria from the mid-1st century.²²⁸

²²⁶ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 42.

²²⁷ Pliny (*HN* 36.18.83) likens the Alexandria Pharos to a shining star but he also complains that the fire might be so bright that sailors would mistake it for an actual star rather than a beacon to warn them about the shoals. It is also from Pliny (*HN* 5.43.128) that we know Claudius deliberately copied the Alexandria Pharos at Ostia in his new harbour of Portus. See: McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 184.

²²⁸ Boyce, "The Harbour of Pompeiopolis," 77; Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

Ancient sources: Suet. *Claud.* 20.3; Plin. *HN* 16.202.

For representations of the Alexandrian Pharos: [Boyce] Pl. 14, nos. 1, 2, 5, and 7.

For representations of the Claudian Pharos: [Bakker] nos. 01 (mosaic), 08 (mosaic), 09 (mosaic), 12 (relief), 14 (relief), 17 (graffito), 23 (funerary slab). See specifically: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*, <http://www.ostia-antica.org/portus/c001.htm>.

Monumental links between the two cities were further reinforced by Imperial building projects that both expanded and reconstructed the urban landscape.²²⁹ Their key attention to the shippers of grain is particularly noteworthy because, following the immediate arrival of the Alexandrian grain ships, sailors offloading at Portus stored their goods into massive *horrea* (granary warehouses) originally built by Trajan in the early 2nd century and expanded by later emperors. Trajan likely constructed the first *horrea* around the same time as the inner basin, which had been designed as additional protection for ships over a certain tonnage. Keay describes the provision of this storage space as a hallmark at Portus: “large elongated *magazzini* [storerooms/warehouses] clustered around all six sides of the hexagonal basin, together with different structures running the north side of the Trajanic canal that connected the hexagonal basin to the Tiber.”²³⁰ One group of *horrea* were interconnected in the shape of a “U” with openings to the Sea on the West side while those on the East side were accessed by a system of canals and docks.²³¹ The size of this cluster in the harbour system is about 315m long by 175m wide and contains about 150 storage units alone.²³² By the mid-2nd century, archaeological evidence of another level testifies that these warehouses more than doubled in allocated space (from 32,790 to 92, 278m²), coinciding with Trajan’s and Antoninus Pius’ construction projects, and were likely to have aided in the servicing of the Egyptian and African shippers of grain.²³³ In

²²⁹ Boyce, “The Harbour of Pompeiopolis,” 75-77.

²³⁰ Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 12.

²³¹ F. Pagliaro et al., “The Architecture of warehouses: A multidisciplinary study on thermal performances of Portus’ Roman store buildings,” *Journal of Cultural Heritage* 16 (2015): 561.

²³² Pagliaro et al., “The Architecture of warehouses,” 561.

²³³ Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 12-13; Pagliaro et al., “The Architecture of warehouses,” 561-562.

A ‘lack of systematic’ excavations in the area make reliable dating difficult, but some recovered brick stamps found on some of the storage units date the expansion to the height of the Imperial era from the early and late 2nd century. But it is also difficult to judge which storage unit housed grain and which other commodities, or even a combination of both, and Keay even comments that there is in fact no foundation for classifying which *magazzini* housed what

addition to these clusters of *horrea*, Trajan further dug out a canal in order to connect them directly with the Tiber for the easy transport of the stored goods and grain up to Rome.²³⁴

Walking through Portus, the Egyptian traveller would have encountered a few cultic centres in the harbour. Both epigraphical and archaeological evidence point to a sanctuary of Serapis in Portus and an *Iseum* on the south side of the *Fossa Traiana* (Trajanic Canal) on the Isola Sacra.²³⁵ First, through the careful scrutiny of the inscriptions, it is possible to assert that the *Serapeum* at Portus was modelled after the Great Sanctuary of Serapis at Alexandria because the formula of dedications is remarkably similar. According to Taylor, the dedicatory form of address, the title of the priests and the titles of the attendants, as well as the prevalent use of Greek in the inscriptions of both the Alexandrian and Portus *Serapeum*, are all indicative of a close relationship between the two harbours.²³⁶ If the inscriptional formats were similar, it is possible that architectural features were similarly also alike between the two *Serapea*.

products. However, more recently, Paliargo et al. also discovered a set of architectural elements in warehouses that might signal a unit designed primarily for the storage of unpacked goods and wheat: an interlocking system of some of the storage cells, barrel vaults, the easy flow of goods to the street, raised thresholds, and pillars that extended the opening of the walls. According to Keay, only side III of the northern section of the Trajanic hexagonal basin had warehouses with raised floors, and so indicative of the storage of grain. But he also believed that although grain was an important commodity year-round, it is possible that the warehouses accommodated various goods that changed from season to season and from year to year. See also: S. Keay, "The Port System of Imperial Rome," in *Rome, Portus, and the Mediterranean. Archaeological Monographs of the British School at Rome 21*, ed. S. Keay (London: The British School at Rome, 2012), 47.

²³⁴ Casson, "Harbour and River boats of Ancient Rome."

The Isola Sacra is formed by the fluvial path of the Tiber and the canals dug to connect Portus to the river. It not only provided the new harbour with direct access to Rome, but effectively cut off Ostia from harbour traffic engaged at Portus.

²³⁵ H. Bloch, "The Serapeum of Ostia and the Brick-Stamps of 123 A. D. A New Landmark in the History of Roman Architecture," *AJA* 63, 3 (1959): 226; Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 15. Epigraphic source: IG-14, 00914-00921, and CIL 14, 00047; of which IG-14 00916, 917, and 919 were found *in situ* at Portus.

Although archaeological excavations have yet to unearth the sanctuary in Portus, we do know of a possible guild of *cultores Serapis* (devotees of Serapis) that existed there sometime in the early 3rd century because members made a dedication [CIL 14, 00123] of "a *schola* for Isis and Magna Mater" during the reign of Caracalla. Due to its relatively late date, this building has been omitted from the discussion. See also: Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman city life*, 67.

²³⁶ Taylor, *Cults of Ostia*, 74.

McKenzie et al. analyze the Alexandrian *Serapeum*'s archaeological remains (Fig. 4) and collect a number of descriptions by ancient sources - all of which consistently praised its beauty.²³⁷ In general, the 3rd century B.C.E. Alexandrian *Serapeum* was modeled after a colonnaded Greek acropolis (situated on the only natural hill in the city), but contained a Nilometer and birth house reminiscent of Egyptian sanctuaries, as well as a foundation of dedicatory plaques "in accordance with Egyptian custom."²³⁸ The temple proper was approached from the side via a monumental stairway, rather than axially as was common to most *Serapea*, in a central court facing N-NW, again rather than the standard S-SE facing of Egyptian *Serapea*.²³⁹ Additionally, the Alexandrian *Serapeum* had a South Building, with a "T-shaped Building covering the entry to the underground passages, and the passage giving secret access between these two buildings."²⁴⁰ In addition to its architectural features, it is important to note that the Great *Serapeum* of Alexandria was built inside the heart of an Egyptian district in the city.²⁴¹ It was part of the Western Quarter of Alexandria, which encompassed the site of the Serapeum and

According to Zevi, it is very likely that the *Portus Serapeum* was built in Hadrianic times and coincided with the construction of the harbour warehouses, because it would support the idea that the Egyptian grain fleets received protection from their departure at Alexandria to their arrival at Portus. Furthermore, the worshipping of Serapis surged during the time of Hadrian alongside the emperor's own favouritism of the Egyptian cult. See also: F. Zevi, "Parte II. Inscrizioni e personaggi nel Serapeo," in *El Santuario de Serapis en Ostia*. Documents d'Arqueologia Clàssica 4, ed. R. Mar (Tarragona: Universitat Rovira/Virgili, 2001): 176-177.

²³⁷ J. S. McKenzie, et al., "Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence," *JRS* 94 (2004): 104-107.

Ancient Sources: Apth. *Prog.* 12; Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 11.23; Amm. Marc. 22.16.12.

²³⁸ McKenzie et al., "Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence," 111.

A Nilometer is a structure used to measure the clarity and levels of the flooding Nile. The birth house (*mammisi*) is a separate building located within a temple's walls, representative of where the cult deity was born. See also: B. Mendoza, "Egyptian Connections with the Larger World: Greece and Rome," in *A Companion to Ancient Egyptian Art*, ed. M. K. Hartwig (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 416.

²³⁹ McKenzie et al., "Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence," 111; Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 15.

Ancient Source: Strabo (17.1.10)

²⁴⁰ McKenzie et al., "Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence," 111.

²⁴¹ Savvopoulos, "Alexandria in Aegypt," 79-80.

the island of the Pharos.²⁴² Furthermore, it is believed that a pebble mosaic floor east of the *Serapeum* is likely to have been a previous sanctuary to Isis and Osiris, built over by the Great Sanctuary to Serapis in the 2nd century B.C.E.²⁴³ In sum, McKenzie et al. conclude that the Ptolemaic buildings (e.g., colonnade, temple, Stoa, etc.) in the *Serapeum* were ‘classical’ (or ‘Greek’) in appearance, reflecting the Greco-Egyptian blending of the Greek Serapis from the Egyptian gods Osiris-Apis; the sanctuary was ‘classical’ in appearance but decorated with Egyptian sculptures (e.g., Sphinx, scarab, falcon, obelisks, etc.).²⁴⁴ It was such an important testament to the worship of Isis and Serapis that Egyptians from the *chora* (‘countryside’) brought in bulls and other animals for sacrifice, travelling to Alexandria especially to participate in the great festival honouring Serapis.²⁴⁵

Although remains of the Portus *Serapeum* have yet to be found, the epigraphic similarities in the dedications posit at least a common group of worshippers between the two centres, possibly in the early 2nd century and coinciding with the expansion of Portus. It would not be entirely far-fetched to assume some architectural resemblance between the two structures as well, even if only in idea. However, as was just shown, even the Alexandrian *Serapeum* was not entirely customary of *Serapea* in Egypt, on account of its location on the only natural hill in

²⁴² Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 15.

²⁴³ Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 15-16.

Abdelwahed does warn however, that apart from an altar dedicated to Ptolemy II Philadelphus and his wife Arisone (285-246 B.C.E.), there is no real concrete evidence to support that a cult of Isis and Osiris predated the *Serapeum*. They could have shared the space.

²⁴⁴ McKenzie et al., “Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence,” 111.

²⁴⁵ Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 16-17.

Ancient Source: Ach. Tat. (5.2)

Epigraphic source: *P.Giess.* 40.II.21-3 = *Sel.Pap.* 215.

the city, although it clearly drew in native Egyptians in droves during the festival of Serapis at the city.

Conversely, the *Iseum* is archaeologically posited in correlation with a larger complex that also includes a bath. Two 2nd-century broken basanite statues (discussed at length in the following chapter), one of Isis and the other of a bearded serpent found *in situ* at the complex, posits the location as an *Iseum*²⁴⁶, but it is primarily identifiable by an *in situ* inscription to the emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian who decided to restore the temple and *porticus* to the goddess Isis in the 4th century.²⁴⁷ Structurally, the sanctuary in the archeological remains (Fig. 5) is minimal but Bakker summarizes the excavations from 1969-1989 to provide an adequate description of the site.²⁴⁸ Several rooms surround a central, trapezoidal courtyard with *porticus*; to the east are the baths, to the west the main rooms, to the north a huge cistern, and to the south lies the ancient beach. A monumental porch flanked by two columns admitted visitors from the trapezoidal centre to a large rectangular hall. This hall rested between a series of rooms that contained a number of semicircular and rectangular niches for sculptures (small statues). The

²⁴⁶ Two dedicatory inscriptions [CIL 14, 00018 and 00019] are mentioned by Bakker at this time, but they are not found *in situ* at the immediate site. Nevertheless, they posit the presence of Priests and worshippers of Isis at Portus in the late-2nd or early-3rd century. See: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.
O SALUTE IMP CAES [[3]] P F A / UG CAMURENIUS VERU SAC / DEAE ISIDIS CAP / CED ET CETERI / ACI MAGAR DE SUO RESTITU. *For the health, piety, and health of the Emperor Caesar Augustus, the true priest Camuernius and the other worshippers of Isis restored this Megaron (hall) to the goddess Isis of the Capitoline* [CIL 14, 00018].

VOTO SUCCE / CALVENTIA SEVERINA / ET AVRELIA SEVERA / NEPOS MEGARVM / AMPLIAVERVNT. *Under vow, Calventia Severina and her granddaughter Aurelia Severa expanded the megaron* [CIL 14, 00019].

²⁴⁷ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 15.

Keay further cites an inscription from the *Fossa Traiana* that describes the restoration of the temple to Isis in 376-7 by the emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian: DDD NNN VALENS GRATIANVS ET VALENTINIA / AEDM AC PORTICU DEAE ISIDI RESTITUI PRAECEPERUNT / CURANTE SEMPRONIO FAVSTO V C PRAEFECTO ANNONAE. *To Our lords Valens, Gratianus and Valentinianus, Augusti, decided to restore the temple and the porticus for the goddess Isis, with the supervisor Sempronius Faustus, the very famous prefect of the grain-supply* [AE 1961, 00152 = AE 1968, 00086 = AE 1971, 00067].

²⁴⁸ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

original walls (*opus reticulatum*) date to the 2nd century before restorations (*opus vittatum*) appear from the mid-4th century.²⁴⁹

The significance of the layout is minimal, because the *Iseum* acted only as a shrine or small sanctuary in a complex that also functioned as a bathhouse, latrine, and cistern. Therefore, rather than the design, it is the location of the *Iseum* that is most significant. As a reminder, the entirety of the *Iseum* complex also abuts the Trajanic canal. It is on the south-east side of the main road bisecting the island in an area near the U-shaped Trajanic *horrea* specifically associated with grain storage.²⁵⁰ This was unlikely to have been a coincidence as Isis had long since protected the wealthy grain merchants as the nautical goddess of favourable winds, and inventor of sea navigation and of the sail.²⁵¹ Furthermore, a ship launched in her honor for the annual state festival of *navigium Isidis* (a celebration marking the opening of the seas in spring), would traverse the Tiber's length and likely pass the *Iseum* on its way out to sea.²⁵²

The appearance of a *Serapeum* or *Iseum* at Portus should not be unexpected, especially with the harbour's connection to Alexandria. Serapis and Isis served as protective deities of merchants, and ships sailing across the seas. The presence of their cult in the commercial centres echoes the establishment of the cult in Alexandria, from whence the grain fleets departed. Like the Pharos, the sanctuaries help establish a visual connection with Rome's breadbasket.

²⁴⁹ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

²⁵⁰ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 15.

²⁵¹ E. R. Williams, "Isis Pelagia and a Roman Marble Matrix from the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 54, 2 (1985): 111.

²⁵² Taylor, *Cults of Ostia*, 70.

5.2 Section 2: Crossing the Isola Sacra

Having crossed Trajan's canal, probably with a small ferry, and following the Via Flavia-Severiana²⁵³ connecting Portus to Ostia, the traveller is eventually confronted by a row of street-lining tombs (Fig. 6). This main cemetery of Isola Sacra lies on the small strip of land separating Ostia and Portus, formed as a result of the Tiber river fluvial paths and canals heading to the sea. Although another canal was eventually dug to ferry people between the two harbours, a road crossing the island still allowed for pedestrians to walk between the two economic centres of Ostia and Portus with relative ease.²⁵⁴ Thus, an area designated for a cemetery eventually sprang up alongside it and the site flourished around the mid-1st century with some continued entombments dating into 4th century. Townspeople from both Ostia and Portus used the land for the burial of their dead²⁵⁵, and although their appearance is typical of 2nd century architecture, a

²⁵³ If a passerby chose to forgo taking a ferry across the canal from Ostia to Portus, he or she would use the Via Flavia-Severiana. It was a Claudian road (Via Flavia) that was reconstructed by Septimius Severus (Via Severiana) during his reign, and it is while on this road that the *Iseum* would first be passed, next to a series of canal tombs, before the main necropolis would be encountered. I use "Via Flavia-Severiana" on account of the placement of the tombs. When the road was first constructed, several tombs were built along its sides, but when Severus reconstructed the road, it displaced the older row and a new line of tombs took up position at the forefront of the necropolis. Since the back row likely follows the Claudian-era Via Flavia, and the front does the same with the Severan Via-Severiana, I have chosen to combine the names. See: Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 456.

²⁵⁴ According to Germoni et al., remains of a bridge have been found crossing the Tiber from Isola Sacra to Ostia. Unfortunately, there is no mention of dates. There is also no such finds to be found on the Portus side. Although inscription evidence (e.g., *CIL* 14, 00250; *CIL* 14, 00251) points to the presence of at least four different ferrymen *collegia* from the 2nd and 3rd centuries in the area. See: P. Germoni et al., "The Isola Sacra: reconstructing the Roman landscape," in *Portus and its Hinterland: Recent Archaeological Research*, ed. S. Keay, and L. Paroli (London: Archaeological Monographs of the British School at Rome, 18, 2011).

²⁵⁵ When the area was under initial excavation by Calza in the late 1920s, he designated the Isola Sacra necropolis as solely servicing the Portus inhabitants because not only had Ostia already three other well-established cemeteries (Laurentina, Romana, and Marina), but that this particular area was at least 1500 meters from the town. Keay and his team however have uncovered new archaeological evidence that suggest Claudius built the canals separating Portus from the cemetery before the necropolis had even been fully formed: "the cemetery was always physically separated from Portus, as it was from Ostia, and there is no reason why residents in Ostia (a colonia, of which Portus was one district) should not have used it." Bruun also provides an inscription [In Thylander (1952), the inscription referring to Ostia: no. A 50a; two other inscriptions with references to Portus: nos. A 19 and A 92] that confirms the presence of individuals at Isola Sacra who are found to have lived in Ostia as well as Portus, whereas the majority of dedications mention individuals from neither harbour town. See: Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1940), 11-12; S. Keay, and M. Millet, "Portus in Context," in *Portus: An*

few key Egyptianizing elements (e.g., *hypogea*, collective-style chambers, pyramid-shapes, etc.) have cropped up throughout the necropolis.

Calza first uncovered the layout of the main tombs in the first half of the 20th century.²⁵⁶ He excavated two rows that did not entirely run parallel with one another, of which the older tombs (early Trajanic) are nearer the sea. Meiggs believed them “displaced” from the main road because not only are they situated perpendicular to the road proper, but were not built along the Via Flavia-Severiana’s sides.²⁵⁷ The alignment of one cluster is off from that of another and more than one of the back clusters of tombs is set back by almost thirty centimeters from the main group along the road.²⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the later 3rd century Antonine tombs are constructed at the forefront and run almost parallel with the road.²⁵⁹ Meiggs decided this was an “apparent lack of public control” during the Isola Sacra’s development.²⁶⁰ Based on Baldassarre’s ongoing excavations in the 90’s however, it was proposed instead that the Antonine tombs had in fact ‘consumed’ or built over earlier Flavian monuments: “[it] created a false impression of a late occupation exclusively on the margins of the road [and] concealed the early chronology of the site along the sides of the road.”²⁶¹ As a result, although the material evidence already in possession by scholars is late in date, with no tombs earlier than the 2nd century and very few

archaeological survey of the port of Imperial Rome, ed. Simon Keay, Martin Millet, Lidia Paroli, and Kristian Strutt (London: Archaeological Monographs of the British School at Rome, 15, 2005): 298; C. F. M. Bruun, “Water, Oxygen isotopes, and Immigration to Ostia-Portus,” *JRA* 23, 1 (2010): 113; Thylander, *Inscriptions du port d’Ostie*, 57, 34, and 85.

²⁵⁶ Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell’ Isola Sacra*.

²⁵⁷ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 456; L. H. Petersen, *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 196.

²⁵⁸ Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*; Petersen, *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History*.

²⁵⁹ Petersen, *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History*, 86.

²⁶⁰ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 456.

²⁶¹ Petersen, *The Freedman in Roman Art and Art History*, 196.

Trajanic or Hadrianic in date²⁶², around 100 of the funerary structures that have been excavated remain relatively intact and open for interpretation.²⁶³

The first impression any newcomer to the site would likely perceive would be a wall of house tombs only sometimes broken up by an open passageway leading to other tombs in the back. Petersen likens the image to a “street of tombs” and echoes Strabo’s (17.1.10) description of Alexandrian ‘cities of the dead’ with the necropolis of Isola Sacra.²⁶⁴ Although other forms existed, it is these monumental *tombe a cella* (tombs with a room) or ‘house tombs’ that are the largest in size among the funerary forms present at Isola Sacra, and therefore likely the most striking to a passer-by. Subsequently, they have also received the most scholarly attention. These house tombs with a central square space became the typical sepulchral monuments of the early 2nd century and contained one or more burial chambers to house multiple individuals.²⁶⁵ In general, they were made with a red-brick exterior, enhanced by architectural elements (columns, façades, architraves, pediments, etc.), and plasterwork.²⁶⁶ In fact, the house tombs and columbaria (collective sepulchres), share a number of ‘striking parallels’ with the rock-cut hypogeums of Alexandria.

²⁶² Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 17-18.

²⁶³ Petersen, “Questioning Roman Freedman Art,” 76.

These are the originally excavated tombs numbered 1-100 on Calza’s original plans. The study of the 100 monuments on the western side of the Via Flavia-Severiana is conducted because of the good quality of preservation; those on the eastern side of the road are so poorly preserved that an analysis is difficult. An additional 42 tombs (no. 101-143) excavated by Calza along the western side have since been covered over again. Although, the eastern side bears monuments that are badly damaged, Petersen reports that Baldassarre is currently conducting excavations in this area. The 100 tombs Baldassarre numbered based on Calza’s original excavations do not include the roughly 650 cinerary urns, tombs on the eastern side of the Via Flavia-Severiana, nor a series of canal tombs further down the road towards Portus.

²⁶⁴ Petersen, “Questioning Roman Freedman Art,” 77.

²⁶⁵ Torres, *Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica*.

²⁶⁶ Hope, “A Roof over the Dead,” 75.

Borbonus analyzes the collectivity of funerary monuments in the 1st century of Italy, Egypt, and Greece. He discovered that many Hellenistic cities parallel Roman collective sepulchres because the social conditions are broadly comparable.²⁶⁷ Both Ostia and Alexandria were commercial harbour systems that catered to a number of local and foreign travellers, and furthermore, were in close contact with one another. The typical Alexandrian tomb contains *loculi* (burial compartments) and “has a capacity comparable to columbaria” in the Roman world, although Roman columbaria do not directly copy Alexandrian collective tombs.²⁶⁸ Rather, it is their close connections and frequent contact that Borbonus believed assisted in the transfer of funerary customs and comparable architectural forms. For example, the use of a number of niches in a single monument, introduction of subterranean rooms, adoption of cremation or inhumation in areas previously accustomed to only one form of burial rite, the collectivity of monuments so as to include large numbers of people, and a strong epigraphic habit that emphasizes one’s need for personal commemoration.²⁶⁹ These additions did not overturn funerary traditions in either Rome or Alexandria, rather they became markers of association and shared innovation in cultures faced with the challenge of ‘high-capacity’ burials.²⁷⁰ To test this

²⁶⁷ Borbonus, *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome*, 56-57, and 59.

²⁶⁸ Borbonus, *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome*, 57.

²⁶⁹ Borbonus, *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome*, 60-63.

According to Lindsay, columbaria are thought to represent the next rung on a social ladder because although they are still collective burials, like the fields of amphorae or *puticuli* (pits in which a body was dumped), they nevertheless provided an element of individualism with plaque for inscriptional or painted dedication, and admission into a *gens*, *collegia* or funerary society. These columbaria often had a patron (either of the Imperial household or a guild head), and those interred could be related to them (as Borbonus advocates), or, stresses Nielsen, free spaces could be sold individually when available. Funerary societies of business related guilds would charge a monthly contribution to cover the cost of construction of the monument and ensure the last rites were performed for deceased members. See also: H. Lindsay, “The Cost of Dying at Rome,” *Ancient History: Resources for Teachers* 31, 1 (2001): 21-22; Nielsen, “The physical context of Roman Epitaphs and the structure of ‘the Roman family,’” 39-45.

²⁷⁰ Borbonus, *Columbarium tombs and collective identity in Augustan Rome*, 64.

comparison, a few funerary monuments of Isola Sacra and Alexandria that bear remarkable similarities or Egyptianizing features (e.g., Pyramid-shape) will now be addressed.

Of this columbaria-style type, and behind the newer 3rd century monuments, stands tomb no. 86 (Fig. 7 a-c). It is a house tomb (columbaria-style) with numerous *loculi* and a subterranean room that recalls Alexandrian underground sepulchres. Furthermore, it is the tomb in which the ‘Egyptian-sounding’ name Hammonilla [IPOstie-A, 00070]) originates. These characteristics beg a closer inspection of the monument.

Tomb no. 86, which likely once belonged to Clodia Prepusa and Lucius Clodius Atimetus,²⁷¹ is not immediately visible from the main street and our late 2nd-century Egyptian traveller would probably miss it entirely. It is one of the oldest tombs, Trajanic or Hadrianic in date, and likely corresponds with the construction of the new harbour facilities at Portus. The sepulchre itself is part of a long row of tombs, but was once originally detached. In general, the original chamber of the tomb is constructed in small, tightly laid brick bands of *opus reticulatum* style, a widespread form of brick facing well-developed in Ostia from around the middle of the 1st century B.C.E. to the end of the Augustan era.²⁷² In contrast, the enclosure is constructed of brick bands two or three times as thick in *opus reticulatum* style and interspersed with small tufa

²⁷¹ Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 343-345; Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 75-77. CLODIA L LIB / PREPUSA / FECIT SIBI ET / L CLODIO ATIMETO / CONIUGI B M ET / LIBERT LIBERTAB POSTERISQ EORUM / H M H F EX NON S / IN FRONT P XX IN AGRO P XXXX. *Clodia Prepusa, freedwoman of Lucius, made this for herself and her well-deserving husband Lucius Clodius Atimetus, and for their freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants. This monument may not pass to those outside the family. [The tomb measures] 20 feet in front and 40 feet on the side* [IPOstie-A, 00080].

²⁷² Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 35; G. Calza, *Ostia: Historical Guide to the Monuments*, trans. R. Weeden-Cooke (Milan and Rome: Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1926), 46.

Calza explains that due to the lack of change in construction material and style (multi-coloured and sized baked bricks laid with a thin layer of lime and pozzolana), dating buildings in the Ostia and Portus area is difficult for at least a century and a half (from mid-1st and throughout the 2nd century) because there is little to no change in construction style throughout that time.

blocks laid diagonally. This form was more common after the Flavians and throughout the 2nd century with the Antonines.²⁷³ Unusually, a subterranean level is built into the chamber floor and reached via seven steps. It is thought to have occasionally flooded.²⁷⁴ A little unusual in its design, this tomb is analyzed because it has architectural features that echo similar funerary structures found around the Egyptian city of Alexandria, however invisible to the casual passer-by. The subterranean level is a key feature.

Although many necropoleis in Alexandria were subterranean with stairs leading into the depths, the late 1st early 2nd century catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa in particular prove an interesting parallel with tomb no. 86.²⁷⁵ These catacombs were accessed via a set of spiralling stairs roughly twenty meters below the surface of Alexandria's working-class district, and might be reminiscent of the spiralling stairs of the Great Pharos described by ancient Arab authors from the 9th to 15th centuries.²⁷⁶ The rotunda, or circular main chamber, of the catacombs further consisted of a second shaft that led to a deeper subterranean level.²⁷⁷ A set of six stairs descends

²⁷³ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 539-544; Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

²⁷⁴ Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 343-345; Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 75-77.

²⁷⁵ Empereur, *Alexandria Rediscovered*, 156.

The tomb-complex is located to the south-west of the Great *Serapeum* and *Laegion* (racecourse).

²⁷⁶ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 42-43 and 194; Hamarneh, "The ancient monuments of Alexandria," 85-91.

However, it is important to mention that apart from al-Balawi and Ibn Jubayr, references to the interior of Alexandria's Pharos are sparse, further still, that what is known is still vague. It is assumed that the interior contained a spiral staircase because it would help pack animals bring fuel to the second level where a winch or human labour force would bring it the rest of the way.

Ancient source: Abu-l-Hajjy Yussuf Ibn Muhammad al-Balawi al-Andalusi, *Kitāb alif bā*, 2 vols; Ibn Jubayr, *The travels of Ibn Juayr* (English).

²⁷⁷ Empereur, *The Catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa*, 3.

Its location is fairly close to the ancient shoreline of Lake Mareotis, just like tomb no. 86 was close to the shoreline of the Tyrrhenian Sea, and as a result, also had a subterranean chamber that occasionally flooded. Empereur stresses however, that the flooding is a modern problem and makes no mention of it as a problem in the past.

into the Main Tomb in a similar fashion to how descending stairs were designed in Egyptian rock-cut tombs, and how the seven steps descended into tomb no. 86's hypogeum.²⁷⁸

Returning to the Isola Sacra necropolis, both Calza and Baldassarre give a more detailed description of the architectural features in tomb no. 86. The original monument had a set of four stairs leading up to the raised doorway of the main burial chamber with the addition of a furnace on the right hand side and tucked away in the back. Pumice rosettes and lotus flowers decorated the top of two square-brick columns on either side of the chamber. Inside the chamber, a set of seven stairs descended into a subterranean room known as a *hypogeum*, the floor of which was almost always covered by a thin layer of water and contained a black-and-white mosaic (Fig. 8) of a standing male figure (possibly Charon) rowing the seated deceased (female-figure) in an authentic *scapha* (a light rowing boat). If the chamber did indeed flood periodically, it would have been quite the sight. More than likely, the flooded *hypogeum* with mosaic served as a reminder of the Underworld and the crossing of the river Styx. By the mid-2nd century, an enclosure was built that obstructed the tomb from view.²⁷⁹ Returning to the architectural feature, around that same time as the construction of the enclosure a marble sepulchral pillar with two inscriptions was also incorporated. It is on this pillar that the two 'Egyptian-sounding' inscriptions of Hammonilla (IPOstie-A, 00070) were inscribed, and discussed in the previous chapter.

In addition to the subterranean level, the inclusion of a furnace in tomb no. 86 is also noteworthy. It was fully functional and utilized for the preparation of feasts in celebration of the

²⁷⁸ Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 128.

²⁷⁹ Baldassarre et al., dated the earlier sepulchre to 120 CE, but the reuse was probably around 150. They believed the monument was used well into the first half of the 3rd century. See: Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 77.

deceased. In the Alexandrian catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa (Fig. 9), a *triclinium* (dining room) was located to the left of the Rotunda, and was a permanent place similarly designed for the purpose of enjoying meals in honour of the dead. Although Isola Sacra's tomb no. 86 contained a functional furnace for similar purposes, other tombs in the necropolis (e.g., nos. 16, 26, 30, 34, 69, 75, 81, 85, 88, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 100) also enjoyed similar functional accessories, such as gardens, the benches sometimes flanking tomb doors or walls, as well as the precincts with wells and other cooking facilities.²⁸⁰

In addition to the amenities, and the aforementioned subterranean chamber, sometimes the overall shape of a funerary monument is enough of an indicator of Egyptian influences to warrant further analysis. Case in point, there are two single burials and modest-sized graves – tomb nos. 51 and 1 – found intermittently between the larger tombs that our Egyptian traveller would pass. Their architectural elements included pyramidal shapes that might echo the forms of the royal pyramids of Giza in Egypt, or the Pyramid Tomb of Cestius in Rome, or even a few other examples that span the Roman Empire. They are discussed last due to their more 'Egyptianizing' characteristics.

Neither Baldassarre nor Calza have much to say about the small monuments of tomb nos. 51 and 1, respectively, but due to their pyramidal shape they are both worth mentioning for this study.²⁸¹ Like tomb no. 86, tomb no. 51 is not visible from the main road but is rather tucked away behind a cluster of house tombs (nos. 38-46) outlining the presumed Field of the Poor. The tomb stands alone and is a small, mostly squared brick grave of Hadrianic *opus reticulatum* with

²⁸⁰ E. D'Ambra, "A Myth for a Smith: A Meleager Sarcophagus from a Tomb in Ostia," *AJA* 92, 1 (1988): 85; Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*.

²⁸¹ Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 314; Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 109.

a marble pyramidal roof; Calza likens it to a ‘spire’ due to its long base and then pointed roof.²⁸² Attached to the base is a plaque with inscription²⁸³ (dating the tomb to the mid-2nd century) naming the owner Bassus and his brother Myron. Due to the lack of family names for the dedicated and the dedicator, both Thylander and Baldassarre believed the monument to be owned by slaves.²⁸⁴ Returning to the main road, and after having passed the remaining wall of house tombs, tomb no. 1 becomes visible. It shares a lot of characteristics with tomb no 51, but is believed to be slightly earlier in date (still Antonine) because the inscription is indicative of the time period.²⁸⁵ This multi-coloured brick with plaster monument is also of Hadrianic *opus reticulatum* but with sloping sides in a pyramid shape and with small dark marble cap at the top. Unlike tomb no. 51, the base is buried underground so that only the pyramidal top sticks out of the ground. The inscription²⁸⁶ for Caius Annaeus Atticus is the only one of its kind at Isola Sacra because it names the place of origin for the dedicated: Aquitania (France). Furthermore, this is the only tomb that would be readily visible to the Egyptian traveller because it rests on its own and in the open at the end of the long line of tombs from Portus to Ostia.

²⁸² Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 314.

²⁸³ D M / BASSO FECIT / MYRON FRATER / BENE MERENTI / PIENTISSIMO. *To the memory of Myron made [this monument] for his most dutiful and well deserving brother, Bassus* [IPOstie-A, 00044].

²⁸⁴ Thylander, *Inscriptions du port d'Ostie*, A 44; Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 109.

Baldassarre et al., only give it a relative date of having been constructed before tomb 42 (late 2nd century), because the newer monument took away tomb 51's view of the Via Flavia-Severiana. Thylander, however, dates the inscription to the reign of Antoninus Pius between 138-161 C.E.

²⁸⁵ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 198.

²⁸⁶ D M / C ANNAEI ATTICI PICT / EX AQUITANIA PRO DEF / ANN XXXVII DOMESTICI / EIVS PONENDVM CVRARVNT. *To the memory of Caius Annaeus Atticus, a painter from Aquitania, died at the age of 37. His [housemates or slaves] took care to put up this monument.* [IPOstie-A, 00013 = ISIS 00021]

Although not important to this thesis, it is worthwhile to mention here that there is some debate as to whether this man was a painter [pictoris] or a Picton [pictonis], a people in Aquitanian Gaul. I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Nielsen for pointing out the potential discrepancy in how ‘Pict’ was to be translated. See: Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 285; Thylander, *Inscriptions du port d'Ostie*, A 13.

Although the pyramid-style funerary monuments take on a familiar shape for an Egyptian observer, it is clear at least on tomb no. 1 that the commemorated is not from Egypt; hence, these features are likely more ‘Egyptianizing’ than Egyptian. Toynbee links this particular pyramid design to the late 1st century B.C.E. Pyramid Tomb of Cestius at the Porta Ostiense in Rome²⁸⁷; however, pyramid shapes in general were not unknown in the Greco-Roman world. In fact, Curl mentions the prevalence of pyramid-shaped tombs erected across the Roman Empire, and even cites a similar example to be found in Vienne, France.²⁸⁸ Local legend (12th century origins) asserts that the Vienne Pyramid is of an early 1st century C.E. date and many attribute the monument to Pontius Pilate (the pontifex allegedly exiled by Tiberius for his execution of Jesus); the monument is an approximate 16 meter tall obelisk-like pyramid on a podium.²⁸⁹ Due to Atticus’ origins in France, he might have been familiar with the Vienne example. Although this is pure speculation, not least because of the imprecise date of the Vienne monument, but also because Atticus’ tomb is a comparatively short, square-style pyramid that more closely resembled the Giza pyramids, with podium buried underground. Rather, Curl emphasizes that Egyptian influences (e.g., Pyramid-like shapes), which permeated the Roman Empire, highlight an “all-pervading presence of Egypt outside Egypt.”²⁹⁰ It is similar to the sentiment of *Aegyptiaca Romana* coined by Versluys and Swetnam-Burland in their investigations of Egyptianizing influences outside Egypt. The terms highlight how the Romans placed a heavier importance on Roman-Egyptian iconography as content or style rather than their real origin.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 127-128.

²⁸⁸ Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, 40.

²⁸⁹ J. Knight, *Roman France: An Archaeological Field Guide* (Stroud: Tempus, 2001), 173.

²⁹⁰ Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, 41.

²⁹¹ Versluys, “Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond,” 10-16; Swetnam-Burland, “Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts,” 114-116.

Egyptian and Egyptianizing architectural elements are few at Isola Sacra, but their possible connection to Alexandria or the pyramids still highlight the “all-pervading influence of Egypt” at Ostia and Portus.²⁹² The hypogeum of tomb no. 86 is a prime example, primarily because the architectural features of the monument echo the Alexandrian versions: subterranean chamber, and an abundance of niches and *arcosolia* for the interment of a collective group. The possibility of an interred Egyptian occupant only adds to the association. Tombs with similar Alexandrian architectural examples include tomb nos. 57, 75, 78, 79, 85, 90, 92, and 94, all of which are part of the older monuments consistently dating back to the turn of the 2nd century.²⁹³ Additionally, the pyramid-shapes in tomb nos. 1 and 51, although impossible to designate as ‘Egyptian’, are characteristically Egyptianizing because we know for certain that tomb no. 1 belonged to a man from Aquitania. Nevertheless, of the numbered 100 tombs at Isola Sacra, only 3 tombs show any Egyptianizing elements, with an additional 8 reminiscent of the *columbaria*-style monuments Borbonus discovered to be indicative of similar collective needs in large commercial centres of the Mediterranean. The amount of Egyptian characteristics at Isola Sacra, situated between Ostia and Portus, is surprisingly small.

5.3 Section 3: Business, Leisure, and Worship at Ostia

As the commercial centre for Rome’s harbour systems, Ostia (Fig. 10) contained a mix of buildings catering to business, leisure, and cultic services. Thus, crossing the Tiber from the Isola Sacra, the Egyptian traveller would likely disembark in Ostia’s own harbour district and initially feel as if they had stepped back into the warehouse complexes at Portus. Here, once again

²⁹² Curl, *The Egyptian Revival*, 41.

²⁹³ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 101-103, 89-92, 86-87, 84-86, 77-79, 60-66, 57-59, and 50-54, respectively.

numerous Trajanic *horrea* align with the Tiber (rather than *via della foce* (road “of the mouth” to the south)), and are associated with grain storage (Reg. I,XIX,4).²⁹⁴ However, heading north-west along the *via della foce*, and turning down a street between the wall of shops on the opposite side, one would find the Ostian *Serapeum* (III.XVII.4) and the abutting *Domus del Serapeo* (III.XVII.3) in what Calza referred to as the ‘Oriental quarter’ of Ostia.²⁹⁵ Although the next chapter will look more at the mosaics, sculptures, and paintings of these two buildings, for now, only the architecture and layout will be addressed.

Of the three Serapis-related buildings at Ostia, the *Serapeum* (Fig. 11) is reached first and is the main (and only) monumental sanctuary for the Egyptian gods. Unlike at Portus where the dedicatory formulae were primarily in Greek and similar in form to the *Serapeum* of Alexandria, here, the inscriptions are almost all in Latin. The building’s exterior is equally telling of a more ‘Roman’ building rather than ‘Egyptian’. It is made almost entirely out of tightly laid brick bands of *opus reticulatum* style, with only some of the brick laid diagonally, and almost impossible to differentiate from neighbouring/abutting buildings. In fact, the *Serapeum*’s status as a temple is primarily known because a triangular-shaped marble slab with a dedication to Serapis [IOVI SERAPI] was found on the pediment.²⁹⁶ Brick stamps from the immediate area date the temple

²⁹⁴ A guild complex for a society of grain measurers is in the south-eastern part of the warehouse district (Reg. I, XIX, 1-3). See: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*; F. Bartolini, and R. Turchetti, “I Magazzini cosiddetti Traianei,” *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome* 58 (2000): 26-28.

²⁹⁵ G. Calza, *Scavi di Ostia I: Topografia generale* (Rome: Libreria dello stato, 1953), 138; S. T. A. M. Mols, “The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia,” *BABesch* 82 (2007): 229.

This designation is contested by Mols mainly due to the addition of a *Caseggiato del Serapide* (III.X.3) further to the east and along the *Via delle Foce*.

²⁹⁶ Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman City life*, 66; Bloch, “The Serapeum of Ostia and the Brick-Stamps of 123 A. D.,” 226; Mols, “The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia,” 230.

Both Bloch and Mols refer to this inscription found on a broken marble pediment: IOVI SERAPI. [*dedicated to Jupiter Serapis* [AE 1956, 00076]. It was not uncommon practice to associate or merge the Egyptian deity with the father of the Roman gods in dedications at Ostia, Portus, or even Rome. The temple also contained numerous

to 125-129 C.E., but a fragment of the *Fasti Ostienses* (a marble “calendar of Ostia”) puts the dedication to January 24, 127 C.E. by a Caltilius.²⁹⁷ With the addition of another dedication by a family member (wife?) of Caltilius, Caltilia Diodora, made to Isis Bubastis,²⁹⁸ Keay believed the two inscriptions and the construction of the *Serapeum* are indicative of an immigrant Alexandrian family.²⁹⁹ The temple dedication connects the arrival of the cult of Serapis with the diversion of Alexandrian grain fleets from Puteoli to Ostia.

However, as mentioned previously, the *Serapeum*’s inscriptions are almost entirely in Latin (instead of Greek, as at Portus), and the exterior is nearly indiscernible from the others in the street: these features would be telling of a primarily ‘Roman’ influence. The imaginary Egyptian traveller might have heard of the temple, but recognizing it from the exterior was another thing entirely because the *Serapeum*’s architecture was fairly standard for Ostia (the tightly laid brick *opus reticulatum*). It is even described by Torres as neither monumental nor

Egyptian motifs featuring traditional Nilotic scenes and animals in the courtyard alongside a mosaic picture of an Apis bull in the entrance. But this will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

²⁹⁷ Bloch, “The Serapeum of Ostia and the Brick-Stamps of 123 A. D.,” 226, ref. 4.

Bloch refers to this portion of the dedication from the *Fasti Ostienses*: VIII K. FEBR. TEMPLUM SARAPI, QUOD [...] CALTILIUS P [? - - -] / SUA PECUNIA EXSTRUXIT DEDICATUM T. *On the 9th Kalends of February, Caltilius P(?) constructed (and) dedicated, the Temple of Sarapis with his own money* [CIL 14, 00244 (p 481, 773) [Ces] = CIL 14, 00245 [Fad, Fas] = CIL 14, 04531 [A] = CIL 14, 04532 [Ba] = CIL 14, 04532a [Bb] = CIL 14, 04533 [Cbd, Cbs] = CIL 14, 04534 [Ces] = CIL 14, 04535 [Ch] = CIL 14, 04536 [Fad, Fas] = CIL 14, 04537 [Ga] = CIL 14, 04538 [Gbc] = CIL 14, 04539 [Hc] = CIL 14, 04540 [Qb] = CIL 14, 04541 [Pc] = CIL 14, 04542 = CIL 14, 04543 [J] = CIL 14, 04544 = CIL 14, 04545 [Gf] = CIL 14, 04546 = CIL 14, 05354 [Ebcd] = CIL 14, 05355 [Zz]].

²⁹⁸ It is worthwhile to mention however, that although Caltilia calls herself ‘Bubastiaca’ in the inscription (CIL 14, 00021), it is more likely that it was indicative of her role as priestess of Isis. She has a proper cognomen the Greek Diodora and in the inscription the ‘Bubastiaca’ is put on a line of its own after her full name Caltilia Diodora. The title “Bubastiaca” is furthermore likely to be a reference to the cult of Isis and Bubastis, which the Romans associated with Artemis, because Isis often assimilated with Anubis and Bubastis. There is even another inscription (CIL 14, 04290) at Ostia that connects Isis and Anubis. See: Torres, *Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica*, 39; S. K. Heyab, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 70-73; M. F. Squarciapino, *I Culti Orientali Ad Ostia* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 28-30.

²⁹⁹ Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 15-16.

ornate, but rather similar in design to the many other sanctuaries in the city.³⁰⁰ Only the highly visible dedication to Serapis on the pediment really detailed the building as a temple in the early 2nd century. The Apis bull mosaic in the entryway, discussed further in the next chapter, would have also welcomed worshippers and signalled to outsiders the area's designation as a sacred precinct of Serapis.

Despite the standard appearance of the exterior, the architectural layout of the interior might be a bit more telling of Egyptian influences. On that note, Swetnam-Burland thought it dubious the temple would have been closed to the public at the risk of barring potential initiates and new members.³⁰¹ It was likely that the temple was open most of the time, but closed during rituals or some religious holidays. She further adds that visitors might have even used the temple grounds to conduct financial affairs, a common practice in Egyptian temples especially.³⁰² Definitely a potential draw for our Egyptian traveller. This makes the interior layout all the more intriguing. Hermansen describes it as a SE-facing building with a courtyard that contained a colonnade on both sides, and "the wall opposite the entrance is covered by a temple with halls on either side, the halls being extensions of the colonnades."³⁰³ Like the Alexandrian *Serapeum*, the Ostian version faced the S-SE orientation so that the statue of Serapis would "kiss the sun" during the day; and also like the Alexandrian *Serapeum*, Ostia's temple faced primarily to the SE to orient with the road in front of it.³⁰⁴ Although the design of the colonnade in Ostia's *Serapeum* resembles some Roman temples (e.g., Temple of Mars Ultor), the inclusion of a passageway

³⁰⁰ Torres, *Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica*, 36.

³⁰¹ M. R. Swetnam-Burland, "Egypt in the Roman Imagination: A study of *Aegyptiaca* from Pompeii," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, United States of America, 2002), 169.

³⁰² Swetnam-Burland, "Egypt in the Roman Imagination," 169.

³⁰³ Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman City life*, 66.

³⁰⁴ McKenzie et al., "Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence," 113.

between the *Serapeum* and the *Domus del Serapeo* mimics the aforementioned secret access between the South Building and the T-shaped Building in the Alexandrian *Serapeum*.³⁰⁵

Ultimately, like the Greco-Egyptian characteristics of the Alexandrian *Serapeum*, the *Serapeum* at Ostia contained a mix of ‘Egyptian’ and ‘Roman’ architectural features. It was approached from the front (Roman), and possibly from the side (Egyptian) on account of the passageway from the *Domus del Serapeo*. The complex also had a colonnaded court reminiscent of the Alexandrian example, but the temple proper was designed after Roman models. For all intents and purposes, the exterior was ‘Roman’ but the interior elements had an ‘Egyptian’ flavour.³⁰⁶

Immediately next to the *Serapeum* the Egyptian traveller would have found the so-called *Domus del Serapeo* (Fig. 12). The entire building was made of *opus reticulatum mixtum*, a similar laying of brickwork like the *Serapeum* but with additional layers of tufa blocks laid diagonally between the intersecting horizontally laid brick bands, which was common after the Flavians and through to the end of the Antonine period.³⁰⁷ As a result, it is generally dated to roughly the same time as the *Serapeum* (early to mid-2nd century), but also because the *domus* was originally connected to the temple by the passageway from the *Serapeum*’s antechamber.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ McKenzie et al., “Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence,” 111.

³⁰⁶ A similar case of ‘Romanization’ occurs for the Serapeum of Alexandria at the end of the 2nd century when it loses some of its ‘Egyptian’ characteristics during the reconstruction following a devastating fire in 181. Although the court was widened, the Nilometer was removed, and the birth house replaced; the Roman complex was much less ‘Egyptian’ than the Ptolemaic original although it did contain some ‘classical’ and Egyptian statuary. See: McKenzie et al., “Reconstructing the Serapeum in Alexandria from the Archaeological Evidence,” 111.

³⁰⁷ Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 539-540; Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

³⁰⁸ A floral, polychromatic mosaic found *in situ* at the so-called *domus*, has been dated to 150-175 C.E. by Freijeiro and Romero based on style and decoration, although Becattii dates the same mosaic to 127 C.E. by taking into account the building’s shared passageway with the *Serapeum*. That passageway was covered up between the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. See: A. B. Freijeiro, and I. M. Romero, *Mosaicos de Itálica: Mosaicos contextualizados y apéndices* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Press, 1978), 39-40; Becattii, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 144, n. 284; Becattii, *Scavi di Ostia IV (Tav)*, LXXIV.

Although the passageway from the *Serapeum* entered into the antechamber of the *domus*, a street opening also allowed entry into the building. The street-entry passageway opened into both the antechamber and a large main hall with twice the height of the surrounding rooms (9 x 10 meters) in which the entire floor was covered by a polychromatic mosaic with 68 compartment-style motifs.³⁰⁹ Although it might have originally acted as a building for the members of the religious guild related to Serapis (*cultores*), especially with the spacious hall that could have accommodated large dining groups, by the 3rd century it had become a *domus* with additional rooms, a number of niches, a semi-circular basin, and a heated floor. A porch was even built for the new entrance that still led into the corridor linking hall and antechamber.³¹⁰ Little else is known about this building, and like the *Serapeum*, followed the architectural standard for Ostia; neither monumental nor ornate from the outside.

This building comprises with the *Serapeum* what Calza and Hermansen label as the ‘Oriental’ or ‘Egyptian’ quarter of Ostia. It is a designation derived by associating some of the other buildings in this particular area with ties to Serapis.³¹¹ The *Caseggiato del Serapide* (III.X.3), with its 3rd-century stucco representation of Serapis, and being only two *insulae* (apartment blocks) away from the *Serapeum*, adds to this assumption. However, Mols rightly asserts that only labelling the area as favourable with *Aegyptiaca* would be enough because otherwise scholars would run the risk of “pushing the evidence too far” simply because supporters of the cult of Serapis lived in the vicinity of the *Serapeum*.³¹² Furthermore, the

³⁰⁹ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

This particular mosaic will be analyzed in greater detail in the following chapter.

³¹⁰ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*; Pavolini, *Ostia*, 159; Torres, *Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica*, 35-37.

³¹¹ Calza, *Scavi di Ostia I*, 138; Hermansen, *Ostia: Aspects of Roman city life*, 83.

³¹² Mols, “The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia,” 229-230.

Caseggiato's date ranges from the Hadrianic (marble head of Hadrian found *in situ* at the complex) to the early Severan (private dedication of a *sacellum* of Serapis), making its association with the 'Oriental quarter' debateable.³¹³ It is interesting to note that the so-called Oriental quarter does contain a *Serapeum* and is located in the western dock districts of Ostia, not wholly unlike the designated 'Egyptian district' of Alexandria in the Western quarter, which comprises the Great *Serapeum* and Pharos island.³¹⁴

Mols' method of analyzing *Aegyptiaca* references in their primary locations proves the assessment of all Egyptianizing elements at Ostia and Portus requires the same amount of careful consideration, including location and context of buildings rather than just architectonic features. Since this chapter focused on the architectural elements of Ostia and Portus, the particular styles, material, or inscriptional content of the aforementioned buildings have shown at least some kind of link with Alexandria and Egypt. Especially at Ostia where a small cluster of Serapis worshippers may have congregated in the same west end of town as in the Western quarter of Alexandria. The prevalence of Latin in the inscriptional formulae, the typical rendering of the construction material in Ostia's preferred *opus reticulatum*-style, and the general preference of emulating Roman temple compounds, make Noy's epigraphic-heavy assertion in the previous

Mols additionally argues that 'oriental quarters' are generally limited to the peripheral areas of a town, but for the Serapeum, the opposite is true because Ostia and its centre bordered on the Tiber; the Serapeum was "in the vicinity of the centre, only about 375 m removed from the town's forum."

³¹³ J. J. Herrmann, Jr., "Thasos and the Ancient Marble Trade: Evidence from American Museums," in *Marble: Art Historical and Scientific Perspectives on Ancient Sculpture. Papers delivered at a Symposium Organized by the Departments of Antiquities and Antiquities Conservation and Held at the J. Paul Getty Museum April 28-30, 1988*, eds. M. True and J. Podany (Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1990): 83; Mols, "The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia," 229.

³¹⁴ Abdelwahed, *Egyptian Cultural Identity in the Architecture of Roman Egypt (30 BC-AD 325)*, 15-17.

chapter that Egyptians lacked a communal organization at Rome and its environs quite feasible.³¹⁵

Looking at it from another angle, it is clear that the building projects at Ostia and Portus in the 1st and 2nd centuries focused heavily on producing safe and inviting harbours to large transport ships, storage facilities, ease of transport along major roads and waterways, dedication to cults favoured in Alexandria, acceptance of worshippers, and a plethora of Egyptianizing elements scattered among them all. In fact, the dominance of Greek in the dedicatory (to Isis and Serapis) inscriptions at Portus, coupled with the Alexandrian modelled *Serapeum* at Ostia begs some consideration to the assessment. Rather than one key Egyptian feature at each location, it is as a whole that the architectural characteristics spark a realization: Roman Emperors and wealthy businessmen expended great effort in creating a friendly environment for Egyptian shippers of grain at the Imperial harbours in the 2nd century. Although the fleet were primarily of Alexandrian background, the shippers would nevertheless find familiar and welcoming sights on foreign soil.

5.4 Conclusions

The majority of architectural features at Ostia and Portus labeled as ‘Egyptian’ or ‘Egyptianizing’ include the Alexandrian-imitation features of the Pharos and *Serapea*, the Iseum, the *Domus* and *Caseggiato* of Serapis, and at least three tombs in the Isola Sacra necropolis. Also, in addition to the cultic significance of the majority of these monuments, it is important to note that, apart from one or two exceptions, their locations are usually along or near the waterfront. The Pharos greets the arriving grain fleets; the so-called *Iseum* rests along the

³¹⁵ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 251.

Trajanic canal and is passed during the *navigium Isidis*; tomb no. 86 overlooks the sea and contains an hypogeum that occasionally floods; and the so-called Oriental quarter with its Serapis-related buildings, all rest in Region III very near the riverbank. In some form or another, the monuments are either on or near a body of water. The importance of this revelation is two-fold.

First, many merchants arriving into the Imperial harbours will readily identify with the references to the cultic worship of Isis and Serapis, as the mystery religion drew in worshippers of Roman, Egyptian, African, or many other backgrounds. However, considering the Great *Serapeum* and Pharos of Alexandria were mimicked to some extent at Ostia and Portus, those merchants sailing between the two centres were more likely to sense a familiar and welcoming environment outside of Egypt. Secondly, the worship of Isis and Serapis is key to this assessment because the Egyptian gods were worshiped as gods of the Sea and protectors of merchants, the associations more poignantly visible in the following chapter.³¹⁶

In sum, architectural forms (e.g., cultic centres, *domus*, *insula*, sepulchres, etc.) their layout in a given area (e.g., blocks, communities, neighbourhoods, etc.), and their key features (e.g., brick-style construction, shape, cultic or civic elements, etc.) provide clues about the cultural make-up of a society. Some of the 1st and 2nd century architectural elements in the harbours of Rome, as well as the nearby necropolis of Isola Sacra, even show some characterization of an Egyptian influence, albeit primarily from Alexandria. The most visible

³¹⁶ M. Beard et al., *Religions of Rome: Volume 2, A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12.4a (297-298); *IG XII Supp. 14 (Inscr. Kyme no. 41)*; M. Tomorad, "Egyptian cults of Isis and Serapis in Roman Fleets," in *L'acqua nell'antico Egitto: vita, rigenerazione, incantesimo, medicamento. Proceedings of the First International Conference for Young Egyptologists (Chianciano Terme, 15-18 October 2003)*, ed. A. Amenta, M. M. Luiselli, and M. N. Sordi (Roma, 2005): 245.

thread linking Portus and Ostia to Egypt was the worship of Isis and Serapis. Cultic references could be found in each location: the postulated sanctuary of Serapis and so-called *Iseum* at Portus, the temple and *domus* to Serapis at Ostia. In addition to the worship of Isis, the provision of large *magazzini*, markets, and harbour facilities at the Imperial harbours show a concern with the grain-supply and feeding of inhabitants in the capital. And in order to have grain merchants divert from Puteoli, the harbour systems required not just adequate provisions of services and storage facilities, but a friendly environment in which the sailors could engage in business, leisure, and religious activities. How well they actually catered to these sailors will be analyzed in greater depth in the following chapter. The study of iconography on sculptures, paintings, and mosaics in various buildings will hopefully establish symbols associated with particular ideas and attributes of an Egyptian populace.

Chapter Six: Iconographical Evidence

This chapter investigates the Egyptian, and Egyptianizing iconography of sculptural pieces, paintings, and mosaics at the Imperial ports of Rome with comparative examples pulled from Alexandria. Key symbols, motifs, and subjects related to the cultic worship of Isis, Serapis, and other Egyptian gods, have traditionally signalled the presence of an Egyptian and Alexandrian populace. A few select styles and compositional features of traditional Egyptian elements in more than one medium provide clues as to how Egyptians may have identified themselves at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century, but they are often melded with Egyptianizing elements that make it difficult to assess what was cultural to Egypt and what was a fashion trend. For example, references to Isis allude to Alexandria and Egypt, but her compositional rendition could be made up of typical Roman assimilated attributes, such as Isis-Fortuna's association with a *cornucopia* and rudder. Through the systematic analysis of visual imagery at the Imperial harbours, this chapter will further contest Noy's belief in an Egyptian's "lack of communal organization"³¹⁷ in the epigraphic record.

I will look first at the three media in the civic contexts of Ostia and Portus, such as the *Serapeum*, the *Domus del Serapeo*, and the *Caseggiato del Serapide*, the first two of which are located in the so-called 'Oriental quarter' of Ostia. Architectural and now visual evidence would suggest the area as a primary location for the gathering of worshippers associated with Isis and Serapis, worshippers who might be of Alexandrian background.³¹⁸ Select epigraphic evidence provides confirmation. Secondly, I will look at sculptures, mosaics, and paintings at the

³¹⁷ Noy, *Foreigners at Rome*, 251.

³¹⁸ Keay, "Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008)," 15-16; Mols, "The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia," 227.

necropolis of Isola Sacra. Nilotic images, depictions of Serapis, and *emblemata*-style mosaics hint at a possible relationship with Alexandria in Egypt, but might also encompass the more prevalent permeation of Egyptianizing elements within the community of the dead.

6.1 Section 1: Ostia and Portus

Ostia and Portus contain several examples of traditional Egyptian iconic images, like the Egyptian gods, the Nile, and Alexandrian *emblemata* motifs. They are generally found in places of worship (temples), but on occasion can also be found in civic contexts (apartments). Whether locally made or imported, the artists had a number of compositional and stylistic tools at their disposal, and the Egyptianizing elements found at the Imperial harbours are most noticeable with comparable analysis to Alexandrian or other Egyptian models.

6.1.1 Sculptures

Mentioned in the previous chapter, a so-called *Iseum* (Fig. 5) is located along the *Fossa Traiana* and across from the Trajanic basin of Portus. It is part of a large complex that contains a cistern, latrine, and some side baths. The dated inscription (376-377 C.E.) to the Emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian is a strong indicator this area belonged to the cult of the Egyptian goddess.³¹⁹ However, the identification of the *Fossa Traiana* complex as a temple (or sanctuary) to Isis in an earlier period derives largely from a 2nd century statue presumably to the female deity (Fig. 13), which was found in one of the rooms that flanked a central courtyard.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Mols, “The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia,” 227; Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 15.

Similar inscriptions mention a *Serapeum* at Portus but iconography or archaeological remains identifying the sanctuary to Serapis have yet to be found.

³²⁰ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*; Keay, “Portus and the Alexandrian Grain Trade Revisited (2008),” 15.

In some of the rooms, which lined a courtyard in the complex, statues of a bearded snake, and a portrait of Septimius Severus in the likeness of Serapis were also found, but indicate an early 3rd century date. It is outside the boundaries

The female figure is in a snugly draped and slightly billowing tunic with a second garment piece twisted under her bust. The statue is known as a representative of Isis-Pelagia. However, the garb on the statue is not exactly conventional of the goddess, because the typical image of Isis-Pelagia generally consisted of the goddess in a snugly draped and knotted mantle (often fringed) over a second sleeved gown, and with sail in hand.³²¹ Here, the fringed and knotted mantle, as well as the sail, is missing. Her head, arms, and feet are also missing, making identification difficult, but the left knee is bent forward and projecting movement in the typical pose of Isis on the prow of a ship. A comparative piece (Fig. 14) in the Szépművészeti Múzeum, shows a white marble statue of Isis (150 C.E.) that also lacks a billowing mantle or sail, and has a twisted fabric under the bust rather than a knotted mantle.³²² The Hellenistic pose can even be said to mimic the Nike of Samothrace (Fig. 15), dated to c. 180-160 B.C.E, which instead of a mantle, had wings open behind her back as counter-measure for the strong winds whipping her tunic about her legs.³²³ Unlike the Nike of Samothrace however, the statue of Isis in the *Fossa Traiana* complex has nothing billowing behind her. A mantle or sail was typical after the 1st century C.E.³²⁴ The significance of Isis' missing mantle might come with a comparison of the marble matrix in an Athenian Agora, where Williams argues that the nature of the 'sail' is just an extension of the goddess' mantle, and that Roman artisans lacking this knowledge, erroneously gave her a 'second billowing mantle'.³²⁵ Although the 'sail' is missing, this *Fossa Traiana* statue

of this thesis, but nevertheless still help identify the complex as a possible *Iseum*. For the original description, see: F. Zevi, "Il cosiddetto 'Iseo di Porto' e la sua decorazione," *Iside, il mito, il mistero, la magia* (1997), 322-323.

³²¹ E. J. Walters, *Attic Grave Reliefs that Represent Women in the Dress of Isis* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1988), 5.

³²² The piece is currently housed in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest (inv. 3934; 5568). Provenance: Posilippo.

³²³ Williams, "Isis Pelagia and a Roman Marble Matrix from the Athenian Agora," 115.

³²⁴ Williams, "Isis Pelagia and a Roman Marble Matrix from the Athenian Agora," 110.

³²⁵ Williams, "Isis Pelagia and a Roman Marble Matrix from the Athenian Agora," 114-115.

also lacks the second mantle, suggesting that perhaps this Isis from the so-called *Iseum* is an Egyptian rendering. Furthermore, Bakker describes the statue of Isis as made of a type of dark marble (*biglio dorato*) often used exclusively for statues of Egyptian deities.³²⁶

As further comparison, another Isis figure, this time in Ostia, will be addressed. In the Museo Ostiense, there is on display a marble statue of a body of Isis (Fig. 16) recovered from the *Terme del Foro* (I, XII, 6) and dated to 125 C.E.³²⁷ The piece shows a female figure in the more typical costume of the Isis, with the snugly draped and knotted mantle over a second sleeved gown.³²⁸ The head, one arm, and both feet are missing.³²⁹ There exist a few dress and compositional differences between this Isis and the Isis-Pelagia example from the *Fossa Traiana* complex. First, the subtle treatment of the Isiac garb. On the marble statue of Isis from the *Terme*, the knot is most distinctive; on the marble statue of Isis-Pelagia, the knot is hidden (or non-existent) behind a twisted belt under the bust. Second, the rendering of the legs. On the *Terme* Isis, her right knee is bent in the typical Greek portrayal of *contrapposto*, whereas the Isis Pelagia has her left leg stepping out in a forward motion. Lastly, the remains of her right arm reach to her wrist in imitation of holding a *sistrum*. A typical comparative piece can be found in the Musei Capitolini. Found in Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, the Hadrianic (117-138) marble statue of Isis wears the knotted mantle over fringed tunic and her right hand is holding a *sistrum* while

³²⁶ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*;

³²⁷ R. Calza, and M. F. Squarciapino, *Museo Ostiense: Itinerari dei Musei, Gallerie e Monumenti D'Italia* (Rome: Libreria dello stato, 1962), 25 (nr. 26).

There is also a small statuette of Isis at the Museum, but due to its unknown provenance and date, cannot be included in this analysis. For the images, see: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

³²⁸ Walters, *Attic Grave Reliefs that Represent Women in the Dress of Isis*, 5.

³²⁹ There is a head attached to the statue, but it was part of the old collection rather than recovered from the *Terme del Foro*. I have chosen to not include it with the analysis of the statue of Isis.

her left holds the *oinochoe* (wine jug): these characteristics suggest a similar iconographical attribution for the *Terme Isis*.³³⁰

The identification of Egyptian or Roman elements on the two sculptures of Isis at Ostia and Portus rely solely on the interpretation of the manifestation of typical Isiac characteristics. It is especially difficult because Isis had many guises and was known as a deity of *myrionima* (“thousand names”) thanks to the diffusion of her cult in the Ptolemaic era.³³¹ For example, the Egyptian version of Isis represents her as a pharaoh, in pharaonic dress with throne on her head, and name in hieroglyphs; later her iconography included a sun disk between two cow horns after she was assimilated with Hathor, and sometimes a seated child-Horus on her lap.³³² Plantzos adds that the traditional iconography of Isis included the attributes of a lighthouse, *sistrum*, “corkscrew curls”, “Isis-knot”, and/or her pharaonic-borrowed crown of the sun-disk.³³³ Used in the portrayal of Ptolemaic queens in the guise of Isis, the ‘Isis-knot’ in particular is symbolic of the Egyptian deity.³³⁴ Yet, there existed other iconographical representations key to the goddess Isis, such as symbols or postures related to her cultic rituals, identifying her merger with Roman deities. Tiradritti explains that the Romanizing iconography of Isis is quite removed from the Egyptian form; Roman versions always merged the goddess with a Roman deity, Isis-Pelagia (goddess of the sea) and Isis-Fortuna (goddess of fortune) the most popular.³³⁵ Representations

³³⁰ This piece is currently housed in the Capitoline Museum of Rome (inv. MC0744). Provenance: Tivoli.

³³¹ F. Tiradritti, *Isis, The Egyptian Goddess Who Conquered Rome* (Cairo: Exhibition Catalogue, 1998), 12-18. Other guises can also include Isis-Euploia, Isis-Demeter, Isis-Thermuthis, and Isis-Frugiferia, to name a few.

³³² Tiradritti, *Isis, The Egyptian Goddess*, 3

³³³ D. Plantzos, “The Iconography of Assimilation: Isis and Royal Imagery on Ptolemaic Seal Impressions,” in *More Than Men, Less Than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens (November 1-2, 2007)*, eds. P. P. Iossif, A. S. Chankowski, and C. C. Lorber (Leuven Peeters, 2011): 391.

³³⁴ Plantzos, “The Iconography of Assimilation,” 392-396.

³³⁵ Tiradritti, *Isis, The Egyptian Goddess Who Conquered Rome*, 26-32; M. Lipka, *Roman Gods: A conceptual approach* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 84.

of Isis-Pelagia had the deity often represented on the prow of a ship (on knee bent in forward motion) and depicted with a lighthouse, billowing sails, and/or a rudder. As Isis-Fortuna, she was often represented frontally (sometimes in Greek *contrapposto*-pose) and generally represented with *sistrum* or *situla* (the Egyptian musical instrument traditionally associated with Hathor³³⁶), and/or cornucopia. In general however, the ‘Romanized’ Isis’ iconography would generally include symbols associated with Roman goddesses, such as the cornucopia, a rudder, *oinochoe* (in this case, the jug is used to hold the waters of the Nile), or bundle of wheat.³³⁷

Likely, the marble statue of the deity in the *Iseum* was a representation of Isis-Pelagia, and despite her missing limbs, the *Terme* marble is likely to represent Isis-Fortuna. The significance of the detailed analysis echoes the revelation discovered in the previous chapter. As the Greek dedicatory formulae at the Portus *Serapeum* should suggest a community of Alexandrians, the possible Egyptian rendering of the Isis-Pelagia at the *Iseum* helps to further establish the community at Portus. This is especially true of the Isis-Pelagia iconographical attributes common to Egypt. Similarly, the Romano-Egypto characteristics of Isis-Fortuna at the *Terme*, can be seen as a Romanized version of an Egyptian deity, not wholly unlike the Roman architectural features of the Ostian *Serapeum*. Like the *Serapeum*, Isis-Fortuna was rendered characteristically Roman but shared Egyptian iconographical attributes (“Isis-knot”). According to Griffiths, the origins of Isis-Fortuna can even be found in Alexandria as Isis-Thermuthis and the snake-head goddess of fertility Agathe Tyche, “who was distinctively the goddess of Alexandria.”³³⁸

³³⁶ Walters, *Attic Grave Reliefs that Represent Women in the Dress of Isis*, 20.

³³⁷ Tiradritti, *Isis, The Egyptian Goddess*, 12-18.

³³⁸ J. G. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros. The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses, Book XI)* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 242. Griffiths uses a combination of inscriptional and iconographical study as an Egyptologist and Classicist.

Isis had a strong presence at the Imperial harbours. Most interesting perhaps, is the existence of both forms of Isis worshipped so near to one another. A similar situation is exemplified at Luxor where just a few kilometers apart, two versions of Isis were worshipped. In a 2nd century temple to Serapis (commissioned by Antoninus to commemorate Hadrian) rested a limestone statue of Isis-Fortuna, and on the western bank in a shrine stood 'Isis of Uret' in her traditional Pharaonic garment.³³⁹ In sum, although the Egyptian deity acquired new iconography in places outside Egypt, at Ostia and Portus she still retained some of her traditional Egyptian imagery in the 2nd century. A possible indication of an Egyptian group of worshippers, rather than just Roman.

Although not as drastic, other Egyptian gods accepted by Romans went through a similar process of assimilation. The god Serapis, for example, was possibly a Greek invention that assimilated characteristics of Egyptian Osiris and Apis (=Oserapis/Serapis).³⁴⁰ Representations of Serapis, and of Osiris, can still be found conclusively at Ostia and will be analysed in greater detail below.

A representation of Serapis will be addressed first. A small 2nd-century marble statuette (Fig. 17) of the god almost entirely intact was found in a shop on the Via della Foce.³⁴¹ The heavily bearded and robed god is regally seated on his throne, his right arm outstretched with

Ancient sources: Vadabeek (*Isifiguur*, 58 f), the Hymns of Isidorus from the 1st century B.C.E. (*SEG* 8, 548-550).

³³⁹ Tiradritti, *Isis, The Egyptian Goddess*, 32.

³⁴⁰ L. Kahil, "Cults in Hellenistic Alexandria," in *Alexandria and Alexandrianism: Papers Delivered at a Symposium Organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and Held at the Museum April 22-25, 1993*, eds. M. True, and K. Hamma (Malibu: Getty Museum, 1996): 77. It is well-known that Serapis was very likely devised on the orders of Ptolemy I in order to unify the Greeks and Egyptians, but both Plutarch (*Vit. Alex.* 76), and Arrian (*Anab.* 7.26.2) mention a temple to Serapis existing before the reign of the Ptolemies.

³⁴¹ Calza and Squarciapino, *Museo Ostiense*, 45 (nr. 2); C. Auffarth, "The Materiality of God's Image: Olympian Zeus and Ancient Christology," in *The Gods of Ancient Greece: Identities and Transformations*, eds. J. N. Bremmer, and A. Erskine (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 473, ref. 13.

fingers just brushing a three headed dog. Additionally, the statuette appears very life-like and fleshy with the appearance of the garb (tunic-like chiton with himation draped over the left arm and across the lap), and the posture as a fairly typical rendition of the deity.

Comparative analysis for the images of Serapis can be found in Egypt. For example, a 2nd century sculpture of the god in Sycamore wood (Fig. 18) and covered by plaster was found in Theadelphia missing both arms but retaining head, and is preserved in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria.³⁴² Although the carved lines of his dress appear rigid and ‘wooden’ in appearance, the statue visually identifies the typical representation of the deity. In the ancient sources, the famous statue of Serapis in Alexandria is described in detail by the 5th-century C.E. Macrobius (*Sat.* 1.20.30).³⁴³ Having lived in Alexandria for eight years, he describes the famous statue as carved from dark marble with a bowl or basket atop his head to symbolize abundance, and with a three-headed creature by his side. The heads represent a lion, a wolf, and a dog. The coils of a snake keeps them all together, with the head returning to the god’s right hand in order to keep the monster in check. Returning to the Ostian example, the similarities to the statuette are plain to see: the bowl atop head, the three-headed dog, and the coiled snake. Stambaugh’s iconographical research identifies this portrayal as characteristic of the Alexandrian model in the Great *Serapeum*, and both Calza and Squarciapino remark that the statuette is the best representation of the 4th century B.C.E. Bryaxis original in Alexandria.³⁴⁴

³⁴² McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 246 (fig. 412).

³⁴³ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 202.

³⁴⁴ J. E. Stambaugh, *Sarapis Under the Early Ptolemies* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 14-18; Calza and Squarciapino, *Museo Ostiense*, 45 (nr. 2).

It is possible that the Greek dog of the underworld was blended with Egyptian Anubis due to the god’s role as a ‘conductor of souls’. Diodorus Siculus (1.96.6), in the 1st century B.C.E., makes a similar mistake. Nevertheless, Stambaugh remarks that the earliest identification of Cerberus with Serapis falls in the reign of Claudius in numismatic studies.

The Egyptianizing elements for Serapis are much more difficult to pinpoint than the iconography associated with Isis because very little (if any) of his iconography has changed over time. All that could be said with assuredness is that at least one worshipper at Ostia remained faithful to his or her devotion³⁴⁵ by commissioning the most familiar representation of Serapis. Due to the appearance of the Serapis statuette, it is highly possible the commissioner (or artist) of the piece was familiar with the cult and temple in Alexandria.

In addition to the popular cult figures of Isis and Serapis however, there was also a single example of a votive Osiris in Ostia. The dark granite statuette of Osiris (Fig. 19) with hieroglyphs on the back, is housed in the Museo Ostiense.³⁴⁶ Although a little worn, it is clearly apparent that the statuette wears the Egyptian *atef* crown, is in his typical garb as a mummy with only head and arms exposed, and holds the crook and flail: this is the typical guise of Osiris as lord of the dead.³⁴⁷ The figurine is a highly problematic piece because it remains uncatalogued at the museum, has no date, and simultaneously lacks an exact provenance. I have chosen to include it for three key reasons: the dark granite composition is characteristic of Egyptian cultic statues (like the Isis Pelagia example), the use of hieroglyphics is characteristic of Egypt (priests

³⁴⁵ In a niche of the back wall of the *Caseggiato del Serapide* (III, X, 3), there is also a stucco relief of Serapis (Fig. 13) but both head and arms are missing. Although the building is Hadrianic, Mols uncovered evidence to support the small shrine to Serapis was actually dedicated at the turn of the 3rd century. Additionally, a 4th century C.E. marble statue body of Serapis with missing head was found near the Temple (II, VII, 5) on the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni*. Unfortunately, since both are out of the bounds of this thesis they were not included in the analysis, but the two additional representations are indicative of a continued interest in the cult. See: Mols, “The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia,” 229, ref. 24; Calza and Squarciapino, *Museo Ostiense*, 22 (nr. 16).

³⁴⁶ Alongside the Osiris statuette is a carved scarab of the same material: the scarab beetle is carved to show the basic delineation between head and body, with the addition of three legs positioned as to give the illusion of lift or movement. It is highly likely the statuette and scarab were found at Ostia, but their exact location is unknown.

³⁴⁷ Bommas describes similar representations of Osiris, remarking further that the painted colour of his body also affected the symbolism of a piece. In our case the dark granite might be indicative of Egypt as a ‘black land’ and therefore, of fertility. See: M. Bommas, “Isis, Osiris, and Serapis,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, ed. C. Riggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 419-420.

in particular), and the Osiris figurine is similar to Egyptian copies in bronze of the Pre-Roman period in Egypt. For example, two comparative pieces of Osiris with similar features can be found in museums. The first is a bronze statuette of Osiris (Fig. 20) with hieroglyphs on the bottom (dated to the Late Period, circa 664-332 B.C.E. in Egypt). Like the Ostian Osiris, the bronze figurine wears the double *atef* crown, is in the guise of a mummy, and bears the crook and flail crossed over his chest, but with hieroglyphic text on the trapezoidal base.³⁴⁸ The second example is a statue of Osiris (Fig. 21) in greywacke (dark granite) with hieroglyphic text on back and pedestal (dated to the Late Period, circa. 664-525 B.C.E.), and again in the guise of a mummy with double *atef* crown and bearing the crook and flail.³⁴⁹

The presence of the Osiris statuette at Ostia is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, according to Bommas, mummification was not typically³⁵⁰ observed outside Egypt, making the Osiris figurine uncharacteristic to Italy.³⁵¹ There are however two known images of Osiris outside Egypt: an oil lamp from the Athenian agora (mummified Osiris), and a Pompeian painting of a sacred sanctuary (mummified Osiris on a pedestal).³⁵² Secondly, the presence of an Osiris statuette at the harbours is not entirely surprising. According to Plutarch (*Mor. De Is. et Os.* 28), it was common for Osiris to identify with Dionysus and for Serapis with Osiris because it was part of their syncretic nature, and so the statuette of Osiris might be associated with the

³⁴⁸ The piece is currently housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale/Museo Egizio in Florence (Inv. 3687). Provenance: unknown.

³⁴⁹ The piece is currently housed in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Inv. 29.1131). Provenance: Giza.

³⁵⁰ Toynbee cites an example of a young girl mummified and buried just outside Rome in the middle of the 2nd century. See: Toynbee, *Death and Burial in the Roman World*, 41-21.

³⁵¹ M. Bommas, "Pausanias' Egypt," in *Cultural Memory and Identity in Ancient Societies*, ed. M. Bommas (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011): 96.

³⁵² Bommas, "Pausanias' Egypt," 96, ref. 101 and 102; Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina*, 144-146.

worshippers of Serapis.³⁵³ Osiris was also tied to Egyptian Isis, and in the Roman world, acted as “protector of the family store-room, a god of agriculture ... [and] the god of the deceased members of the family,” so that the deity was much like the Roman *Lares* by the end of the 1st century B.C.E.³⁵⁴ Rather, the appearance of a statuette of Osiris with Egyptian hieroglyphics at Ostia may be seen as indicative of foreigner priests from Egypt. This assertion derives from the understanding that not just anyone could read Egyptian hieroglyphs, even in Egypt, and it was the Egyptian temples that held extensive archives of papyri in the traditional languages.³⁵⁵

Ultimately, the statuette of Osiris from Ostia does not have a date, but is addressed solely because of its unique character on Italian soil. Osiris was not a foreign concept to the Romans, but iconography of the god was especially rare outside Egypt, making this particular piece an important addition to the analysis of Egyptians in Ostia and Portus. The use of dark granite, familiar style to bronze originals from Egypt, and its iconography all symbolize a familiarity with the Egyptian Osiris.

In general, iconography representative of ‘Roman’, ‘Egyptian’, or ‘Egyptianizing’ elements are difficult to assess, not least because each designation is a social definition, cultural, and/or art-historic. The cultic sculptures of Isis, Serapis, and Osiris are perhaps the most readily analyzed because they include numerous representations on Imperial coins, are described by ancient sources, and are sometimes recovered from traditional Egyptian temples. At Ostia, the

³⁵³ E. Manders, *Coining Images of Power: Patterns in the Representation of Roman Emperors on Imperial coinage, A.D. 193-284* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 237-238.

³⁵⁴ J. Alvar, *Romanising Oriental Gods: Myth, Salvation and Ethics in the Cults of Cybele, Isis and Mithras*, trans. R. Gordon (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 192. Additionally, Apuleius (11.24-27) connects the worship of Osiris with the worship of Isis, with the god standing at the highest grade in Isis’ mysteries.

³⁵⁵ Versluys, “Understanding Egypt in Egypt and Beyond,” 9.

cultic representations of Isis are generally a blend of Roman and Egyptian elements (perhaps, a form of visible syncretism) whereas the representations of Serapis, and Osiris remained largely unchanged from their Egyptian models. As such, the cultic iconography of the sculptures are especially telling of an Egyptian community because some of the symbols, or stylistic renditions of symbols, can be traced back to Egypt rather than rely solely on Roman norms.

6.1.2 Paintings

Sculptures provide some of the best evidence for Egyptian iconography due to their good preservation, but are still in fragmentary condition. Other media, like paintings and mosaics, often help fill in the gaps. Of the information available about paintings at Portus or Ostia however, little of it refers to Egypt or Alexandria in the first two centuries. For example, although references to Isis exist at the Hall of Grain Measurers (*Aula dei Mensores* (I, XIX, i.3)), and at the *Caseggiato del Seripide* (III.X.3), in both buildings the visual elements actually date to the 3rd century or later and are therefore outside the scope of this thesis.³⁵⁶

6.1.3 Mosaics

A relationship with Alexandria in the 2nd century is more readily present in the mosaic motifs at Ostia. Although the subject matter of mosaics is almost boundless, including any figure, motif, or symbol against a simple background, again the potential references to Egypt are of particular interest here.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁶ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*; Mols, "The Urban context of the Serapeum at Ostia," 229; Walters, *Attic Grave Reliefs that Represent Women in the Dress of Isis*, 20;

³⁵⁷ K. M. D. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa: Studies in Iconography and Patronage* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 8.

Although the interpretation of the material evidence becomes a bit more complex, descriptions of colour ('black and white', 'polychrome'), imagery ('geometric', floral, mythological), and location ('Imperial Palace', 'House of Serapis') are all available and will be taken into account. With limited examples of mosaics at Portus however, the discussion will focus on the tiled motifs at Ostia.

The previous chapter had a traveller disembark at the harbour district of Ostia and travel down to the so-called ‘Oriental quarter’ believed to be influenced by Egyptian mariners. Here two buildings, the *Serapeum* (III, XVII, 4), located just off the Via delle Foce, and the connected *Domus del Serapeo* (III, XVII, 3), likely housed the worshippers of Isis and Serapis. Their habitation of the area produced a myriad of tiled images reminiscent of Egypt. In the *Serapeum* temple complex, the porch is decorated with a 2nd-century black and white mosaic of the bull Apis (Fig. 22) with the aforementioned triangular inscription (‘IOVI SERAPI’) above it.³⁵⁸ The bull is a typical symbol of Egyptian iconography because the sacred animal is representative of the god-king Apis and his assimilation with Osiris (=Oserapis/Serapis). Hadrian even dedicated a black marble statue of the bull at the *Serapeum* in Alexandria (Fig. 23).³⁵⁹ Due to the god’s association with rebirth in the form of a bull, the image likely welcomed newcomers and initiates with the message of comfort. Behind this porch is a courtyard with another 2nd-century black and white mosaic, but with images typical of Nilotic scenes (Fig. 24 a-e).³⁶⁰ Although it is in a fragmentary state, images associated with Egypt and the Nile can still be discernible: hippopotami, crocodiles, water-lilies, ibises, and turtles. In the *Domus del Serapeo*, a large dining hall was once connected to the *Serapeum*’s antechamber passageway and the floor was covered by an early 2nd-century polychrome mosaic with 64 square ‘compartments’ (*emblemata*) of which only 16 have survived (Fig. 25).³⁶¹

³⁵⁸ Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*; Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, 357; Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 152f, no 290 (Pl. CI).

³⁵⁹ McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 184 (fig. 312).

Epigraphic Source: A. Rowe, “A short report on Excavations of the Greco-Roman Museum made during the Season 1942 at ‘Pompey’s Pillar’,” *Bulletin de la socie archaeologique d’Alexandrie* 35 (1941-2): pl. 32, and 37.

³⁶⁰ Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 150-151.

³⁶¹ Torres, *Christian Burial Practices at Ostia Antica*, 35-36; Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

Although common all over, the use of *emblemata*-style tile images is worth further discussion. A Greek inscription from Apateira clearly points to Alexandria as a famous source of *emblemata* at the end of the 1st century, but the inscription sadly does not mention to where they were destined.³⁶² Even the interpretation and differentiating of Alexandrian panels from others of the same type poses problems. In particular, Daszewski mentions that the Egyptian and Ostian panels do not often show any typical Egyptian motifs (e.g., Nile imagery, Egyptian gods, idyllic water scenes, etc.), and so interpretation is left up to the scholar who ‘senses’ whether an image is Egyptian or not.³⁶³ Differentiating between culturally Egyptian or Alexandrian elements is also problematic. Ostian examples further employed a habit of following Alexandrian *tesserae* practices. They used varying styles, different materials and had remarkably similar techniques when laying tiles; they also employed the use of familiar motifs, of which mythological or faunal became the most prevalent.³⁶⁴ Despite their iconic appearance however, it is not a guarantee that an Alexandrian, or even Egyptian traveller, who was familiar with the mosaics employed across the province, would recognize the Ostian examples as originating from Alexandria. As a result, it is really only possible to suggest that *emblemata*-type mosaics might have been imported or the examples copied, because they originate from Alexandria and similar styles turn up in Ostia. The

Scenes of birds, theatre-masks, plants, and vessels surrounded by a triple guilloche border, and the entire mosaic is enclosed by a double meander pattern. They are not typical Egyptian or Egyptianizing images. For a full description, see: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 143-149.

³⁶² W. A. Daszewski, *Corpus of Mosaics from Egypt I: Hellenistic and Early Roman Period* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1985), 15-16.

A piece of text from Apateira in the valley of the Kaystros (Ephesos). It is an inscription in three fragments from a heroon and dated to the 1st century through the careful analysis of the letters. It is composed entirely in Greek but Daszewski reproduces it in its entirety.

³⁶³ Daszewski, *Corpus of Mosaics from Egypt I*, 18-19.

³⁶⁴ Daszewski, *Corpus of Mosaics from Egypt I*, 18.

Daszewski stresses the import of these *emblemata* because as of yet, there is no evidence for Alexandrian workshops at Ostia, nor even Alexandrian artists.

trading partnership between Ostia and Alexandria would further make the importation of easily transportable mosaics seem quite probable, but the varied images and lack of typical Egyptian motifs would likely only make a fleeting recognition of them by an Alexandrian.

Moving along, and leaving the ‘Oriental quarter’, the Egyptian traveller might at some point head straight for the market district of Ostia. At the *Piazzale delle Corporazioni* (Forum of Corporations), *statio* (room) inscriptions or visual representations present in the floor mosaics help to identify numerous mercantile occupations along the eastern side (the western side is poorly preserved and almost entirely destroyed).³⁶⁵ Mosaics of ships, dolphins, or lighthouses likely refer to shipping, but similar images accompanied by inscriptions indicate the general foreignness of the traders.³⁶⁶ Of all the identifiable *stationes* however, of which are approximately 60, nos. 27 and 40 are the only rooms which allude to Egypt. For a population that was heavily reliant on outside sources of grain, although numerous other references to the commodity exist here (*stationes* nos. 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 17, 19, 21, 33, 34, 38, 53, 55, and 56), only *stationes* nos. 27 (Fig. 26) and 40 (Fig. 27) can hesitatingly be assumed to represent Egypt, with only no. 27 referencing Alexandria specifically.³⁶⁷ *Statio* no. 27 contains a black and white mosaic that depicts a long river (possibly the Nile) with two branching tributaries (to form a delta), a bridge which spans the top half, three ships, and two flanking columns; surrounding the image is an enclosed double-strand guilloche. Very little remains of the mosaic from *statio* no.

³⁶⁵ La Piana, “Foreign Groups in Rome during the First Centuries of the Empire,” 262-263; Frank, “The people of Ostia,” 491; Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 125.

Brick stamps date the construction of the *Piazzale* to 112 C.E.

³⁶⁶ Frank, “The people of Ostia,” 491.

³⁶⁷ For a more detailed analysis of the *stationes*, see: Becatti, *Scavi di Ostia IV*, 64-85.

For an overview, see: Bakker, *Ostia: Harbour City of Ancient Rome*.

40 apart from three black lines and the letters ‘XANDRIN’, the last four of which are barely legible. Becatti dated *statio* no. 27 to 150 C.E., and *statio* no. 40 to circa 190-200 C.E.

There are precious few other mosaics in Ostia that might allude to Egyptian presence in the harbours. Ashby describes two mosaics, both as parts of the *Terme di Nettuno* (II, IV, 2) complex near the Via dei Vigili.³⁶⁸ It is directly west of the *Piazzale* and dated to 50 C.E. based on brick-stamps. Here, a large latrine (vestibule 2) to the left of the entrance (vestibule 1) contains a mosaic representing the Nile (Fig. 28). Although in fragmentary condition, two scenes are still discernible. On the right, a crocodile chases a pygmy amidst some reeds, and on the left, a boat floats among the reeds with what might be another one or two pygmies on board. Further allusions to Egypt (female head with crocodile on collar (Fig. 29 a-b)) are found in the attached small bath on a black and white mosaic personifying the major Roman grain provinces, which also included Spain (wreath of olive leaves), Africa (trunk and ears of elephant protruding from hair) and Sicily (gorgon’s head in centre of three-cornered triangle ‘*triquetra*’).³⁶⁹

The visual representations of the Nile itself, like the one described in the *Terme*, became dubbed “Nilotic” scenes. These mosaics often contain images of exotic and wild pleasures acted out by Pygmies, in addition to idyllic water scenes and references to trade.³⁷⁰ Since the images originate from Alexandria, scholars generally associate the motif as an allusion to the daily life

³⁶⁸ T. Ashby, “Recent Discoveries at Ostia,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 2 (1912):169-174.

³⁶⁹ Ashby, “Recent Discoveries at Ostia,” 169-174.

Unfortunately, Ashby does not provide an image for the mosaic of the Nile, nor does he go into further detail regarding its description. Yet, Ashby does describe and provide both drawing and photographs of the mosaic with personification of Egypt. It is part of a larger mosaic piece that contains eight heads in total, four on either side of a central picture with a circle of four dolphins, and surrounded by both geometric patterns as well as numerous ships (a bird’s eye view). The whole mosaic is then enclosed in an elaborate triple meander border.

³⁷⁰ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 195.

of Egyptians.³⁷¹ Their ‘Egyptian’ association however, is questionable. For example, although it is the only known example predating the Kingdom of Egypt and the founding of Alexandria, Pappalardo mentions an early example of a Nilotic-style fresco that originated at Akrotiri from the island of Thera, and is dated to the 16th century B.C.E.³⁷² In this fresco (Fig. 30), the artist emphasizes the natural landscape: a blue river runs its course through the motif, framed by palms and exotic flora, a bird (possibly a duck), a griffin, and at least two other animals. In contrast, the Nile mosaic of Palestrina (Fig. 31) is dated anywhere from the mid-2nd century B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E. (comparative pieces are unknown) and is the most extensively detailed motif of Nilotic imagery.³⁷³ Compositional highlights include a mountainous landscape at the top that is populated by hunting Ethiopians, and the flooding of the Nile at the bottom with Egyptians engaged in festivities possibly celebrating prosperity and fertility.³⁷⁴ These scenes more or less depict realistic images of the Nile during the annual flood, which was generally a time of rejoicing, rebirth, and prosperity.³⁷⁵ Nevertheless, their ‘Egyptian’ quality is questionable because the motifs contain a limited number of elements (fisherman, boats, beasts, birds, vegetation) that are generally more preoccupied with personifying the Roman idyllic ideal of the Nile.³⁷⁶ This association becomes even more important when, around the late 1st century,

³⁷¹ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 213.

³⁷² Pappalardo and Ciardiello, *Greek and Roman Mosaics*, 86.

³⁷³ Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina*, 16.

³⁷⁴ K. M. D. Dunbabin, *Mosaics of the Greek and Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50.

³⁷⁵ Meyboom and Versluys, “The meaning of dwarfs in Nilotic scenes,” 171.

They further mention that Nilotic scenes are rare, with perhaps around 130 left preserved for study. Pappalardo and Ciardiello examine the most famous example of this scene as it was found in Palestrina, dated to the 2nd century B.C.E., and dubbed the ‘Nile Mosaic’. The subject matter exemplifies an Egyptian expedition that follows the course of the Nile (or the Nile’s eastern tributary, the Blue Nile) from Ethiopia to the Nile Delta and showing an abundance of life and richness of culture. See also: Pappalardo and Ciardiello, *Greek and Roman Mosaics*, 86.

³⁷⁶ Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements*, 97.

pygmies and dwarfs replaced depictions of what might have been common Egyptians in the Nilotic motifs.³⁷⁷

The black-and-white mosaic of the *Terme* is a prime example of this trend. Taking itself less seriously, the mid-1st century black and white rendering of a crocodile chasing a naked pygmy does not exactly evoke awe. Nevertheless, Clarke related the image of pygmies to themes of Egypt, the Nile and, by extension, the worship of Isis.³⁷⁸ Furthermore, these scenes were part of the regular repertoire of artists, and it was generally an easy way for a patron to emphasize his connection to Egypt and Egyptian religion.³⁷⁹ His conclusion derives from extensive analysis of multiple pygmy scenes in tombs and in a few civic centres. Yet, although Isis was associated with Alexandria (*Pharos*), abundance, agriculture, and the sea (or water in general), there are no iconographic representations (cultic symbols like the *sistrum*, rudder, cornucopia, etc.) of the Egyptian deity or her priestesses in any of these mosaics. The presence of pygmies in the mosaics might serve as forms of ‘entertainment’ in Roman society, with representations of pygmies as ‘*pueri minuti*’ (small children) or ‘Cupid punished’ appearing in numerous non- Nilotic motifs.³⁸⁰ It would be better to say the mosaics alluded to Alexandria, but they did not necessarily require cultic significance, especially if the Nilotic images were such standardized motifs in an artist’s repertoire.

³⁷⁷ Meyboom and Versluys, “The meaning of dwarfs in Nilotic scenes,” 171.

³⁷⁸ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 209.

³⁷⁹ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 209.

³⁸⁰ See: W. J. Slater, “Pueri, Turba Minuta,” *BICS* 21 (1974); H. S. Nielsen, “*Delicia* in Roman Literature and the Urban Inscriptions,” *AnalRom* 19 (1990); M. George, “Cupid Punished: Reflections on a Roman Genre Scene,” in *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture*, ed. M. George (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2013). Ancient source: *Dig.* 40.2, 16; *Suet. Aug.* 83; *Suet. Dom.* 4.2; *Cass. Dio* 48.44.3, and 67.15; *Hdn.* 1.17; *Stat. Silv.* 2.2.72-75, and 5.5.66-69.

6.1.4 Discussion

References to Egyptian gods appear to be a common theme throughout the visual content at Ostia and Portus. After all, both Isis and Serapis were protectors of sailors. In particular, Isis was worshiped as a goddess of the sea (particularly, safe travels) and as a goddess of grain; a ship was even launched in her honor at the state festival of *navigium Isidis*. We are also told by Lucian (*Navig.* 7-10) that one of the largest Roman grain ships to ever sail between Alexandria and Portus in the 2nd century was known as "the Isis."³⁸¹ Beard et al. even mention the 1st to 3rd century aretalogy from Memphis in which Isis proclaims herself a foremost God of everything from law to childbirth to agriculture and to the sea: "[...] I am she who invented crops for humans [...] I am mistress of rivers, winds and sea [...] I calm and agitate the sea [...] I am mistress of seamanship. I make the navigable unnavigable whenever I decide."³⁸² As her consort, Serapis too was associated with the sea, and Aelius Aristides (*Or.* 45.23) remarks: "Serapis is great on the sea, and both merchantmen and Warcraft are guided by him."³⁸³

The connection Ostia and Portus made to Isis and Serapis, and, by extension, Alexandria, is not something that can be carelessly dismissed. By building *Isea* and *Serapea* at the Imperial harbours, that in one form or another echoed the great Serapeum of Alexandria, and decorating the various cultic buildings and civic centres with images representative of Egyptian iconography, the Romans were essentially creating visual and physical connections to their grain

³⁸¹ Taylor, *Cults of Ostia*, 71-72; Lionel Casson, "The Isis and Her Voyage," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 81 (1950): 43-45.

³⁸² Beard et al., *Religions of Rome: Volume 2, A Sourcebook*, 12.4a (297-298); *IG XII Supp.* 14 (*Inscr. Kyme* no. 41).

The dating of an aretalogy is difficult. Moyer ascribes the difficulty to the Hellenization of 'putative Egyptian original' in 'Greek poetical idiom'. As a result, the date range is wide but definitely belonging to the early stages of the Empire on account of the tone difference from earlier centuries. See also: I. S. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 181.

³⁸³ Tomorad, "Egyptian cults of Isis and Serapis in Roman Fleets," 245.

territory of Egypt. It might have stemmed from political motivations, but the social implications created by the visual elements were just as equally integral to the relationship built up between harbours of Ostia, Portus, and Alexandria. Another way to see these elements would be to investigate the funerary realms, because tombs can be seen as records of a given city's social changes.

6.2 Section 2: The Isola Sacra necropolis

The tombs at Isola Sacra contained sculptures, wall paintings, and mosaics of various styles and motifs, from the simplistic to the truly elaborate. However, unlike in the civic centres of Ostia and Portus, the necropolis does not provide as extensive an iconographical program with Egyptian symbols, and comparative studies in Alexandria and Egypt must be more elaborate as a result where applicable. In this way, hopefully an Egyptian or Egyptianizing iconographical program at Isola Sacra will be determined. Cultic images, like those at Ostia and Portus, will act as primary targets of interpretation but aspects of aquatic life (Nilotic images, idyllic water scenes), funerary motifs, wild animals (panthers, stags, lions), and personifications of nature (Nile, Egypt, seasons, the winds, Ocean) will also be highlighted if found. In particular, this section will focus on those motifs reminiscent of Egyptian or Alexandrian symbolism, such as images of Egyptian deities, Nilotic scenes, and stylistic similarities (*emblemata*, mixed Egyptian-Greek funerary trends).

6.2.1 Sculptures

Funerary monuments contain a variety of sculptural types that range from full statues, to busts and portrait heads, sarcophagi and stone urn reliefs, and exterior window reliefs. Subject matter is likewise also varied and can include realistic portraiture of adults and children,

mythological figures, funerary scenes, motifs of daily life, and so on.³⁸⁴ Yet, subject matter that pertains to Egypt or Alexandria in sculpture form is unavailable at Isola Sacra. Themes associated with grain or trade are plentiful, but the association with a specific province or territory would be pure speculation and furthermore, might not necessarily have anything to with Alexandria or Egypt.

Comparatively, however, sculptural examples at Alexandrian necropoleis which feature Egyptian, Egyptianizing, and Roman iconography, abound. For example, on either side wall of the anteroom in Kom el-Shuqafa, niches with Egyptian-style *naos* contain one statue each, a man (Fig. 32) and woman (Fig. 33), in Egyptian poses but with Roman attributes. Venit describes them at length but only key details will be highlighted here.³⁸⁵ The Egyptian-style elements include the skirt worn by the man and a diaphanous garment worn by the woman. Typical Roman features are to be found in the particular hairstyles of the couple, which shows the man as beardless and with short curly hair. With the additional broad face, treatment of the muscles and wrinkles, and the ‘high cap of hair’, Venit likened the portraiture to a fashion trend which followed the emperor Vespasian’s facial structure, even if the curly hair-style was more reminiscent of his later successor Domitian.³⁸⁶ The woman is adorned with wavy hair split down the middle and pulled back to frame her face, such as was common during the Julio-Claudian era.³⁸⁷ Additionally, Venit and Empereur both mention the discovery of another female head (in

³⁸⁴ For an excellent overview of the sculptural content of the necropolis, see: Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 187-261.

³⁸⁵ Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 129.

³⁸⁶ Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 129, ref. 885-886.

³⁸⁷ Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, ref. 888.

Comparable Roman examples include female portraiture from Claudius’s family: Antonia Minor (mother), Messalina and Agrippina Minor (wives), and Antonia Claudia (daughter).

the Rotunda of the Main Tomb) with features similar to Julia Titi (daughter of Emperor Titus and mistress to Domitian) and Domitia Longina (Domitian's wife).³⁸⁸ The iconographical features of the sculptures have led Venit to date the tomb to the early Flavian period, whereas Empereur argues for end of the Flavian and early Hadrianic period.³⁸⁹

Other sculptural decorative elements are just as telling of the relationship between Alexandria and Rome at Kom el-Shuqafa. In the Main Tomb, a portico and *pronaos* exhibit Egyptian (papyri-form bases and capitals with mixed acanthus and lotus buds), Greek (Medusa heads combined with cobras, a Serapis-Agathodaemon hybrid wearing the double crown of Egypt while holding the caduceus and thyrsus of Hermes and Dionysus), and Roman elements (Anubis dressed as a Roman soldier (Fig. 34)).³⁹⁰ In the chapel, next to the traditional Greco-Roman garlands and bunches of grapes are bas-reliefs depicting traditional Egyptian elements of the worship of the Apis bull and the mummification of Osiris by Horus, Thoth and Anubis (Fig. 35 a-b).³⁹¹ Such harmonizations in sculpture paid homage to two aspects of Egyptian life: first, the Egyptian desire to protect and celebrate the dead entombed within, and second, the laudation of the Roman Empire under which Alexandria now fell. As a result, the commercial centre's

Tuck provides a great overview of Julio-Claudian era Imperial women in portraiture: S. L. Tuck, *A history of Roman Art* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 164-166. Kleiner and Matheson provide several comparable Roman examples of Imperial women in portraiture: D. E. E. Kleiner, and S. B. Matheson, *I Claudia: Women in Ancient Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1996), 53-102. Grossman provides comparable examples in Athens in the funerary record: J. Grossman, *Funerary Sculpture: Volume 35 of The Athenian Agora* (Athens: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2014), 171-190.

³⁸⁸ Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 129 ref. 889; Empereur, *The Catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa*, 4.

³⁸⁹ Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 129; Empereur, *The Catacombs of Kom el-Shuqafa*, 4.

Both attribute a possible 'lag in fashion beyond Rome' in response to the mixed Roman-styles that range from the mid-1st to early 2nd century.

³⁹⁰ J. A. Corbelli, *The Art of Death in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Princes Risborough: Shire Publications Ltd, 2006), 17.

³⁹¹ Empereur, *Alexandria Rediscovered*, 156.

relationship with Rome can be said to have served to further the internationalism of the decorative funerary content.

Sculpture-content at Isola Sacra did not turn up similar preoccupations or stylistic considerations after the assimilation of Egypt into the Roman Empire. However, it will be shown that paintings and mosaics did provide owners an opportunity to incorporate subtle Egyptianizing elements.

6.2.2 Paintings

In general, paintings at Isola Sacra do not portray clear-cut Egyptian or Egyptianizing elements. However, a few tombs at Isola Sacra bear wall paintings that do hint at Egyptianizing motifs in the area with iconographic elements in the form of idyllic scenes and water scenes reminiscent of the Nile.

The first is tomb no. 26, and although it is dated to end of the 2nd or beginning of the 3rd century based on iconography and architecture, it does contain two relatively well-known funerary elements visible on opposite walls.³⁹² On the left wall, a near-intact Nile-inspired scene of aquatic animals is represented on the lower niche (Fig. 36). ‘Nile-inspired’ because among the reeds are ducks swimming leisurely, perched on rocks, and there is even one with spread wings chasing a cupid-figure who had taken refuge on some other rocks nearby. In Hachlili’s studies of Nilotic iconography in ancient mosaic pavements, she discovered that “the most concentrated repertoire of types of birds” predominantly included ducks, doves, geese, and swans.³⁹³ She also concluded that recurring images were a feature of Nilotic scenes, of which showcased ducks

³⁹² Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 148-151.

Unfortunately, there are no inscriptions identifying the occupants.

³⁹³ Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements*, 106.

were portrayed a number of times, and thus the waterfowl could reliably indicate a Nile motif.³⁹⁴ It is by no means a common motif at Isola Sacra but a few other tombs bear similar displays and choice of themes.

For example, tomb no. 19, dated to 140-150 C.E. based on iconography and architecture, has painted into the *arcosolium* of the back wall a pastoral scene of ducks in the reeds between two hippocampi (Fig. 37), while several niches were decorated with satyrs, garlands, a portrait of a man and woman, and another portrait of a man with a horse.³⁹⁵ Tomb no. 43, dated to the end of the 2nd century based on decoration, once again has depictions of an idyllic water scene with ducks among the reeds on one wall (Fig. 38), with only a lion hunt on the wall opposite (no longer visible).³⁹⁶ It is worthwhile to mention however, that this tomb also contained a black-and-white mosaic of two ships heading to a four-tiered lighthouse, with Greek inscription indicative of a peaceful afterlife or possible safe harbours.³⁹⁷ Lastly, tomb no. 80, dated to 140 C.E. based on decorative content, also exhibits the same kind of Nilotic imagery: ducks among the reeds (Fig. 39), as well as mythological scenes (e.g., Apollo and the satyr Marsyas, Venus and Paris, etc.) and a wild hunt.³⁹⁸ In addition to the idyllic motif of ducks in the reeds, these three

³⁹⁴ Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements*, 106.

³⁹⁵ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 166-170.

The inscriptional content of this tomb (on memorial tablet and urn, respectively) identifies the owners as Caius Torquatus Novellus (IPOstie-A, 00249 = ISIS 00032) and his son Lucius Torquatus Novellus (IPOstie-A, 00250 = ISIS 00033 = AE 1992, 00223).

³⁹⁶ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 114-115; Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 150-151.

Unfortunately, the lion-hunt scene has severely deteriorated and is no longer visible. Calza's brief description is all that remains of the painting. Other decorations in the tomb are also in similar condition but even Calza could not describe them. The inscriptional content identifies only one individual, Ostensa Filumentius (IPOstie-A, 00314 = ISIS 00048 = AnalEpi p 285 = AE 1987, 00177m).

³⁹⁷ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 114-115.

The inscription is ODE PAUSYLIPOS [IPOstie-A, 00314 = ISIS 00048 = AnalEpi p 285 = AE 1987, 00177m.]. Baldassarre translates it as this is a place that is free from "*affani*," which can be taken as troubles, cares, or worries.

³⁹⁸ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 82-84.

Unfortunately, this tomb has no inscriptional content to identify the occupants.

examples all include a hunting scene of some kind. Clarke believed that the Nilotic imagery remained an important reference to Alexandria, with which I agree, and that animal hunts referenced ‘the *paradeisoi* [‘parks’ or ‘paradise’] of the Hellenistic dynasts.’³⁹⁹ It would appear that rather than to reference Egypt, it is possible that these tombs featured instead ‘Egyptianizing’ elements.

Of all the tombs, only no. 30, dated to 160 C.E. based once again on iconography and architecture (and is comparable to tombs attached on either side), hints of cultic Egyptian content. The niches of the main burial chamber contain a painting of the head of Serapis (Fig. 40) as well as paintings of mythical scenes featuring the gods Zeus and Hera, and Mars and Venus.⁴⁰⁰ Although the quality is poor, the discernible image of Serapis is of his head alone, showing the characteristic long hair and beard with bowl or basket sitting atop. It is the only representation of Serapis at the necropolis. He is rendered alongside other Roman gods, and the tomb itself lacks inscriptional content identifying the owners. Likely, this motif too might be Egyptianizing, rather than purely Egyptian, in content because renditions of Serapis alongside other Roman gods (or assimilated with them), was not uncommon practice in the Roman Empire.

Comparatively, of the most prominently decorated tombs in Alexandria, the 1st century B.C.E. to 2nd century C.E. catacombs of the so-called Hall of Caracalla (Fig. 41) incorporated a great deal of elaborate Egyptian and Greco-Roman decorative schemes. Inside the chambers, two separate ‘Persephone tombs’ provide examples of two superimposed registers (Fig. 42), which

³⁹⁹ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 213.

⁴⁰⁰ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 142-145.

The inscriptional content of this tomb is minimal, but identification of a window-relief with the name Lucifer Aquatarius (IPOstie-A, 00169a = ISIS 00305 = AnalEpi p 284 = AE 1987, 00177i) and a mosaic with the name Antonia Achaice (IPOstie-A, 00020 = ISIS 00041) have been found. Baldassarre et al believe that Lucifer was an Aquatarius, a water-bearer, because carved amphorae abound on the tomb.

present one Egyptian and one Greco-Roman rendering of the theme of death and resurrection common to the middle of the 1st century C.E. In both, the upper registers exemplify traditional Egyptian themes with the mummification of the dead by Anubis, while the lower registers show the typical Greco-Roman theme of the Abduction of Persephone.⁴⁰¹ So, while the upper registers show the formal representation of Anubis attending the mummification of the deceased, the lower registers illustrate the ‘free’ and ‘spontaneous’ Greek forms of Persephone abducted by Hades. By the 2nd century of the Roman period, when many of the burial chambers were decorated, this type of Greco-Romano-Egyptian blending of cultural motifs was common in Alexandria and can be seen as an active response to multiple cultural factors by a cosmopolitan city.⁴⁰² They provide a visual testament to the social history of Alexandria during the Roman occupation because when the people sought to reconcile shifting political alliances with traditional Egyptian mortuary beliefs, the images that cropped up in the tombs exhibited both Greco-Roman and culturally ‘Egyptian’ aspects.⁴⁰³

The same painted iconographical program could not be found at Isola Sacra; however, the few instances of Nilotic motifs and the inclusion of a single reference to Serapis does exhibit at least an interest in Egyptianizing elements. Although the scarcity of the duck-in-the-reeds painted motifs cannot be quantified as a display, or preoccupation, of Egyptian and Roman assimilation habits, the repetitive Egyptianizing content at least suggests artisans were familiar with Nilotic scenes throughout the 2nd and into the 3rd century. Yet, this form of the Nilotic

⁴⁰¹ Török, *Culture and History of the Ancient Near East*, 82.

⁴⁰² Riggs, “Facing the Dead,” 98; McKenzie, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt*, 145-146.

⁴⁰³ Venit, *Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria*, 6.

imagery and the one encountered thus far in Ostia, are vastly different. In the next sub-section on tiled floors, the recurring theme crops up again and will be compared more extensively.

6.2.3 Mosaics

Mosaics at Isola Sacra are abundant and the subject matter is diverse. They have no set motif and range from basic geometric pattern, to elaborate scenes of various subject matter. Once again, the Egyptian or Egyptianizing content (particularly, Nilotic images) will be the main focus here.

Of particular interest to this study of Egyptian iconography, is tomb no. 16 (Fig. 43) dated to 150-160 C.E., which contains a black and white floor mosaic picturing the river Nile with several animals managed by pygmies in front of the chamber proper.⁴⁰⁴ Clarke provides an excellent description of the mosaic, which I will summarize here.⁴⁰⁵ Using the entrance of the enclosure as a point of reference, the bottom of the mosaic is decorated with different reeds, above which is a boat with two ithyphallic pygmies battling a crocodile. Above them and on the left is the image of two other pygmies on a boat amongst reeds set parallel to the border. To the far right is the remaining ithyphallic pygmy carrying two baskets/buckets on a pole across his shoulders and walking parallel with the border towards the actual structure of a well in the uppermost corner of the enclosure. A pygmy hippopotamus and palm tree are in-line and greet the visitor as they leave the chamber proper. At the very centre of the mosaic however and facing

⁴⁰⁴ Baldassarre et al., *Necropoli di Porto*, 172-180; Calza, *La Necropoli del Porto di Roma nell' Isola Sacra*, 124-128.

Dates are based on the style, and iconography of decoration. The lettering in the inscription (IPOstie-A, 00090 = ISIS 00029 = EFinlandia p 125 = AAntHung-1995-237) on the entrance to the cornice is from the 4th century after the period of reuse.

⁴⁰⁵ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 210-212.

the visitor seeking entrance to the chamber, is the remaining image of a head of Oceanus (with his crown of lobster claws and tentacles), but only the left side of the face remains.

As at the *Terme di Nettuno* in Ostia, this mosaic is rendered in black and white tile and its subject matter weighs on the lighter side rather than on the elaborate or majestic. It can be said then, that two versions of the “Nilotic” motif existed in an artist’s repertoire. Firstly, scenes that more or less depict realistic images of the Nile – like the Nile Mosaic of Palestrina or the aforementioned ducks-in-the-reeds painted motifs – which generally symbolized annual floods and signaled a time of rejoicing, rebirth, and prosperity.⁴⁰⁶ Secondly, scenes that often contained images of exotic and wild pleasures acted out by Pygmies – like the *Terme* or *Isola Sacra* examples.⁴⁰⁷ Clarke believed that the Nilotic motifs featuring ‘naughty pygmies’ and other exotic imagery added a layer of festivity and laughter to the context.⁴⁰⁸ Furthermore, Tybout stresses that the pygmies could be seen as “charming” and “witty” scenes; the Roman people did not even consider the images of pygmies as indigenous populations of Egypt.⁴⁰⁹ Rather, Romans believed them to exist between myth and reality, at the edges of the known world (such as India, Thrace, and the source of the Nile).⁴¹⁰ So that although Egyptian *deliciae* are mentioned in Roman society by both Statius (*Silv.* 5.5.66, and 2.1.72) and Martial (4.42) in the 1st and 2nd

⁴⁰⁶ Meyboom and Versluys, “The meaning of dwarfs in Nilotic scenes,” 171.

They further mention that Nilotic scenes are rare, with perhaps around 130 left preserved for study. Pappalardo and Ciardiello examine the most famous example of this scene as it was found in Palestrina, dated to the 2nd century B.C.E., and dubbed the ‘Nile Mosaic’. The subject matter exemplifies an Egyptian expedition that follows the course of the Nile (or the Nile’s eastern tributary, the Blue Nile) from Ethiopia to the Nile Delta and showing an abundance of life and richness of culture. See also: Pappalardo and Ciardiello, *Greek and Roman Mosaics*, 86.

⁴⁰⁷ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 195.

⁴⁰⁸ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 195.

⁴⁰⁹ R. A. Tybout, “Dwarfs in Discourse: the functions of Nilotic scenes and other Roman Aegyptiaca,” *JRA* 16 (2003): 514-515.

⁴¹⁰ Swetnam-Burland, “Egypt in the Roman Imagination,” 147-149.

centuries⁴¹¹, images of misbehaving pygmies in Egypt or even in Alexandria do not exist.⁴¹² The locations of the two pygmy mosaics at Ostia also aid in the identification of these particular forms as invoking laughter, because the *Terme* motif was located in a latrine, and the Isola Sacra example decorated the ground in front of a tomb chamber. They were meant to “bestow apotropaic laughter” on those who encountered the images.⁴¹³ Comparatively, the Nile Mosaic of Palestrina was found in a grotto as a floor mosaic decorating what might have been a temple to the goddess Fortuna.⁴¹⁴ Meyboom further remarks that upon discovery, the floor of the grotto was designed to collect water seeping through the porous rock of the mountainside, and so the mosaic was covered by a thin layer of water.⁴¹⁵

The two versions of the Nilotic scenes probably still symbolized peace and abundance as a whole, and could both still allude to the Nile because the river acted as a symbol of fertility and rebirth.⁴¹⁶ After all, Nilotic scenes that used pygmies still evoked iconographical associations of fertility and abundance (humorous copulation), just as much as the Palestrina motif illustrating

⁴¹¹ E. Bartman, “Eros’s Flame: Images of Sexy Boys in Roman Ideal Sculpture,” *MAAR. Supplementary Volumes*, Vol. 1, *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity* (2002): 266 and ref. 85.

⁴¹² J. R. Clarke, “Three uses of the pygmy and the Aethiops at Pompeii: Decorating, “othering”, and warding off demons,” in *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World*, ed. L. Bricault, M. J. Versluys, and P. G. P. Meyboom (Leiden: Brill, 2007): 161.

The Egyptians knew about ethnic or historical pygmies (dwarfs, etc.), as a roughly 1000 B.C.E. Egyptian text (British Museum Papyrus No. 10474) shows: “Beware of robbing a wretch or attacking a cripple. Do not laugh at a blind man, nor tease a dwarf, nor cause hardship for the lame. Don’t tease a man who is in the hand of the god.” In fact, the Egyptians had a dwarf god named Bes, and circa 2520 B.C.E. the dwarf Seneb in Giza was a leader/overseer of other dwarfs in the Imperial palace. However, Clarke stresses that it was not the ‘dwarf’ or Egyptian ‘*deneg*’ that Romans imported in their ‘pygmy motifs’, but rather the Hellenistic concept of a hunchback, the Greek ‘*pygmos*’, or Aethiops – types of *fascinum* for the Romans and an amusement to the human viewer because these characters were generally engaged in acts of misdemeanor. See also: E. A. W. Budge, *Egyptian Tales and Romances: Pagan, Christian and Muslim* (London: Routledge, 2013); V. Dasen, *Dwarfs in Ancient Egypt and Greece* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2013).

⁴¹³ Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 212.

⁴¹⁴ Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina*, 8-9.

⁴¹⁵ Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina*, 8.

⁴¹⁶ Meyboom and Versluys, “The meaning of dwarfs in Nilotic scenes,” 173.

the happy state of Egyptians in a unique landscape with predictable flood waters. However, Clarke's assessment of their role as 'easy' allusions to Isis is pure conjecture. Isis was a goddess of many names and many attributes, but not one iconographical symbol is apparent on these mosaic examples. She might be vaguely associated, especially with the Palestrina mosaics due to its location in a temple to Fortuna and in a grotto that occasionally allowed for the seepage of water, but assuming the pygmies engaged in 'naughty' behavior as representatives of the goddess is a stretch of the evidence. Especially when no comparable pieces featuring pygmies exist at Alexandria, much less in other parts of Egypt.

Rather, allusions to Alexandria and Egypt in this medium appear only with the *emblemata*-style mosaics mentioned earlier at Ostia. In fact, the majority of *emblemata* motifs in the area come from the necropolis of Isola Sacra.⁴¹⁷ They are all found in the sand fillings of the tombs, generally in trays, made up of small polychrome tesserae and often framed by dentils or plain bands. Although fragmentary, Daszewski provides a few example scenes, like the Labours of Hercules, a marine *thiasos* (retinue of Dionysus), fish, horse and rider, and fowl (partridge, ducks); all the mosaics are dated to the early part of the 2nd century except for the mosaic of a horse and rider, which is dated to the 1st century.⁴¹⁸ The motifs might not show any Egyptianizing content, but as mentioned before, it is their possible origins that make them interesting.

⁴¹⁷ Daszewski, *Corpus of Mosaics from Egypt I*, 16-17.

⁴¹⁸ Daszewski, *Corpus of Mosaics from Egypt I*, 17;

6.2.4 Discussion

In sum, it is the Nile-inspired water scenes that are in greater abundance at Isola Sacra rather than cultic images of Egyptian deities. For the Egyptians, the Nile was a sacred river with the flow and ebb of the floods regulated by Isis and monitored by the priests of Elephantine.⁴¹⁹ Allusions made to the river in Nilotic motifs could by extension juxtapose a variety of symbolic relationships, but due to the lack of actual Isiac attributes in the images, would run the risk of association by subjective interpretation. Octavian's annexation of Egypt in the 1st century B.C.E. also introduced a plethora of new Egyptian or Egyptianizing motifs (idyllic, birds, reptiles, etc.) that brought a foreign land of wonders into the diverse sphere of Roman life (public, private, religious, etc.).⁴²⁰ However, unlike at the Imperial harbours, the images described at Isola Sacra have no firm association to culturally Egyptian people. Even the Egyptianizing content is ambiguous, although a few specific cases (Serapis, pygmies, idyllic ducks) would postulate the familiar iconography at least existed in an artist's repertoire. This perhaps is even more telling because traditionally, scholarship has had a tendency to associate certain Egyptianizing features with Egyptians, whether as visitors, citizens, or artisans. But the content of the tombs does not specifically reference purely Egyptian iconography, and the Egyptianizing trends have been shown to have little or no parallels in Alexandrian tombs.

6.3 Conclusions

Egyptian symbolism at the Imperial harbours stems a great deal from the cultic sphere where the worship of Isis and Serapis manifested itself in centres dedicated to the Egyptian

⁴¹⁹ Pappalardo and Ciardiello, *Greek and Roman Mosaics*, 86.

For example, the 'Alexander Mosaic' from Pompeii contained a Nilotic frieze suggested by Pappalardo to allude to Isis, who took on the trappings of Fortuna and assured Alexander's victory.

⁴²⁰ Pappalardo and Ciardiello, *Greek and Roman Mosaics*, 87.

deities; comparatively, at Isola Sacra the iconography is far less elaborate but far more telling. A community of Egyptians, as Noy already stated, did not exist. However, it is important to realize that although diverse, references to Egypt and Alexandria are present in the local area. At Portus, there is a shrine to the Alexandrian goddess Isis Pelagia with *Egyptian* attributes. At Ostia, further visual elements (largely cultic) alluding to either Egypt or Alexandria are dispersed among sanctuaries, shops, bath complexes, and a *domus*. Although largely concentrated, they are nevertheless not limited to a single location. Lastly, at Isola Sacra, Egyptianizing idyllic Nile-themed water scenes and Nilotic ‘naughty pygmies’ can be found but the motifs are not concise indicators of an Egyptian populace buried at the necropolis. Ultimately, it is perhaps best to state that although Egyptians may have lacked a sense of communal organization, the constant interaction among local residents with the Egyptian, and most likely Alexandrian, visitors have left telling iconographical information in the Imperial harbours and its necropolis in the 2nd century.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

This study has attempted to demonstrate the visibility of Egyptians at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century. More readily visible however, and categorized as non-Egyptian in ancient legal documents, Alexandrians tend to dominate the scarce evidence available. Alexandria's primary point of departure for the Egyptian grain fleets adds to the difficulty of the study. However, a major fault in this assessment is the identification of 'Egyptians' and 'Alexandrians' in the written record, because a mix of Roman, Greek, Egyptian, and Jewish individuals lived at the Egyptian commercial hub. Architectural and iconographic evidence adds to this blending of cultures with the analysis of buildings and artwork that exhibit 'Egyptian', and 'Roman' characteristics in Alexandria and the Imperial harbours. It is for such revelations that this present study sought to bring together and analyze Egyptians exclusively at Ostia and Portus through ancient sources, the epigraphic records, architectural features in the immediate areas, and the iconography generally perceived as Egyptian in nature.

Egyptians frequented Ostia and Portus because the Alexandrian grain fleets provided valuable resources for the capital of the Roman Empire. In addition to Egypt's role as Rome's breadbasket, Alexandria was centrally located to trade with the cultures and civilizations of the Mediterranean as well as the focal point for people beyond the Red Sea (e.g., interior of Africa, India, Malaysia, China, etc.). After Egypt became assimilated into the Roman Empire, Alexandria became a 'second Rome'. Emperors actively sought ways to entice shipments to the capital even while elite Romans saw the actual culture as detrimental to the fabric of Roman society. Yet, Egyptians and their goods continued to flow into the Imperial Harbours, making their way up the Tiber to the heart of the Roman Empire.

As Egypt was the main proviso of grain in the first two centuries, Portus was potentially created with Alexandria and its shippers in mind. Although Rome had other harbour systems capable of servicing the large Egyptian fleets, many were located over 100 km from the capital. Due to a potential risk of famine, emperors took action and designed a large man-made harbour system specifically to receive the ships weighing over a certain tonnage, namely, the grain fleets from the provinces. Egypt was not the only source of goods in the Mediterranean. In fact, other societies actively traded at the capital, but as shippers of grain, Egypt was a primary breadbasket until the 2nd century when Africa Proconsularis began to overshadow it. Physically, Carthage was much closer to Rome than Alexandria, and both the epigraphic and archaeological materials show an abundance of Africans in the Imperial harbour systems. However, construction of temples, cultic statues, funerary monuments, and iconographic symbols familiar to Egyptians were still being produced in the 2nd century. Despite “Romanizing”, “Hellenizing”, or even “Egyptianizing” characteristics on many of these pieces, some of them were still fundamentally Egyptian in design or principal. Epigraphic content might lack Egyptian content, but the architecture and iconographic materials adequately suggest a discrepant group of Egyptians at the Imperial harbours.

The comprehensive approach resulted in a corpus of Alexandrian, Egyptian, Egyptianizing, and Romanizing materials across all fields of study during the investigation of Egyptian influences at Ostia and Portus in the 2nd century. Whereas past epigraphic-centric studies have uncovered vague signs of Egyptians in a broad area, this study brought together epigraphic, stylistic, and compositional features that reflected the incorporation of Egyptian elements into the harbour systems. It resulted in a corpus of materials across cultic and civic domains. Although the study ran the risk of increasing the potential for error in the analysis of

particular sources, and subjective interpretation of architecture and artwork, the comprehensive accumulation of all available references to Egypt more than adequately covers the gaps created by each field of study. Thus, this comprehensive approach called into question previously understood assumptions about the definitions of Egyptians and Alexandrians because epigraphic content identifies *both* outside Egypt, and architectural/iconographical features include a similar mixing of Egyptian and Alexandrian elements in the Imperial harbours.

The examples of the materials in this study were evaluated using a combination of methodologies. The analysis of inscriptions followed the practice of identifying key references to foreigners (i.e., Latin *ex-, natione, civitas*); architectural features combined an analysis of layout, composition, and style; and iconographical elements were subjected to rigorous cross-referencing with comparative materials that included gestures, material, and typologies. Rather than make assumptions about common representations (i.e., Nilotic images, statues of Isis, names, etc.), this study conducted a thorough evaluation of all 1st and 2nd century materials at Ostia and Portus perceived as Egyptian or Alexandrian, in order to reveal the function and identification of a specific piece. In general, although Egyptians in Rome have been shown to lack a communal organization in the epigraphic record, and scholarship has extended this assumption to the Imperial harbours, variations of epigraphic, architectural, and iconographical material in Ostia and Portus have called into question the interpretation. For, the appearance of 2nd century Egyptian architectural and iconographical elements is revealing of the fundamental problem associated with the assertion. Egyptians might have lacked communal organization, and thus made discovery of their identities outside Egypt fairly difficult, but they nevertheless made their presence felt. At Portus there is a predominance of Greek inscriptions that follow the epigraphic formulae of dedications found at the Great *Serapeum* of Alexandria, and a statue of

Isis-Pelagia with Egyptian and Roman characteristics was discovered at a shrine located on the Trajanic canal. At Isola Sacra, an 'Egyptian-sounding' occupant of one of the tombs rests in a sepulchre with architectural features that link to Alexandrian underground catacombs. At least two other tombs show a remarkable resemblance to the Giza pyramids although it is definitively known that at least one of the interred hails from Aquitania. Several more incorporate Nilotic motifs reminiscent of the Nile and Alexandria. At Ostia, in the epigraphic, architectural, and iconographic analyses, there are numerous cultic references to Egyptian deities. Although the cult of Isis and Serapis welcomed people of every background, the character of the cultic worship (architecture and iconographic content) show a preoccupation with Alexandrian and sometimes truly Egyptian norms. There is also the appearance of traditional Egyptian gods at Ostia and Portus, such as priests of Anubis and a statuette of Osiris. Clearly, even by limiting the boundary of evidence to the pre-3rd century materials, this study has still managed to produce a corpus of data indicative of Egyptian content at the Imperial harbours.

That Egyptians chose to settle in the Imperial harbours of Rome is interesting, because many others chose instead to reside in the capital of the Roman Empire. There, Egyptian civic and cultic centres have also been found. While part of the reasoning that Egyptians and Alexandrians chose to reside at the harbours could have had to do with the fact that they were merchants associated with trade and shipping, it seems clear that their needs in a more cultural and cultic manner have been addressed as well. The businessmen were able to meet their needs in the 2nd century because emperors had made it clear they were not only welcome, but that their shipments were necessary for the feeding of Rome.

Nevertheless, Egyptians were not limited to Egypt. Of those who left the Roman province, and what few have been documented, many chose to live at Rome rather than at Ostia

and Portus. This thesis focused on the Egyptian presence at the Imperial harbours instead of incorporating the wider region of Rome and its environs for several reasons. Most particularly, the Imperial harbours contained buildings that mimicked in plan or idea Alexandrian counterparts, and even the reasoning behind the construction of Portus was specifically to entice the grain fleets. The majority of those in the 1st and early 2nd century belonged to Egypt, the breadbasket of Rome. This fact, in addition to the abundance of excavated material and their relatively excellent level of preservation, meant that the commercial centres were the subject of continuous historic studies on funerary, economic, and political writings. That being said, while having been analyzed as suppliers of grain throughout the 1st to 4th centuries, and studied in the epigraphic records of Rome, Egyptian influence and presence on Italic soil was not the primary subject of those works and thus a worthy topic of analysis.

Just as there was opportunity to investigate Egyptians at the Imperial harbours, there is room for further work on Egyptians who existed outside the boundaries of Egypt. It is entirely possible that Egyptians who travelled with the grain fleets across the Mediterranean, whether as labourers, slaves, shippers, learned scholars, or family, may have chosen to settle in new towns and cities. A number even chose to live in Rome. Due to Rome's relatively lax policies on cultural norms (e.g., the ability to worship native gods, etc.), wealthy patrons were capable of erecting buildings that harken back to their homeland. This is not limited to Egyptians, as Africans, Persians, Gauls, Germanics, and any number of other cultural groups created their own space in the Roman landscape. These foreign groups created space for themselves in much the same way as Egyptians, and may or may not have likewise created subtle communities not immediately apparent in the traditional epigraphic records.

Being Egyptian gave no special status to an individual in the Roman Empire. Being Alexandrian enabled an individual to leave the Egyptian province and travel (leisure or business) across the Mediterranean. In the 2nd century, both groups coexisted with Romans and Jews at Alexandria, and found their way to the Imperial harbours of Rome. Although much more difficult to quantitatively measure in the epigraphic record, Egyptians were able to make their presence felt in the architectural and iconographical schemes of both the cultic and civic domains in Ostia and Portus. As such, while Egyptians lacked a communal organization at Rome, they nevertheless created places of welcome and familiarity for themselves at Ostia and Portus where they could congregate and mingle, not wholly unlike the Egyptian district in the Western Quarter of Alexandria where legally-identified Egyptian peoples lived, worked, and worshiped. In conclusion, although few in number, evidence of Egyptian individuals deso exist at the Imperial harbours in the 2nd century.

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