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The Emergence of the Osiris Cult in the Italian Peninsula and Its Main Features: A Reassessment

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Abstract: In the Roman period, the cult of Osiris, together with other Egyptian deities, reached the Italian peninsula through the sea trade. Here, his watery nature was especially stressed. Following ancient Egyptian beliefs, Osiris was identified with the yearly flooding of the Nile, which renewed nature and fertilized the fields, and was used in lustration rituals to bring the dead to life as well as to satiate the deceased's thirst. Since Osiris was embodied in this vital fluid, he was perceived as a bearer of life. Far from aiming to collect all the evidence of the cult of Osiris found in the Italian peninsula, the goal of this work is to provide an overview of which forms of Osiris were mainly worshipped there, and what role he held in funerary contexts and beyond, through the analysis of some of the most relevant sources related to his cult and the examinations of the contexts in which he was worshipped.

Keywords: Osiris; Italian peninsula; Isiac cults; water; regeneration

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1. Introduction

The first archaeological evidence of Egyptian culture in the Italian peninsula dates back to the end of the 9th and the first half of the 8th century BC, when original or imitation *Aegyptiaca* were spread in Aegean and western Mediterranean areas by Phoenician, Semitic, Cypriot, and Greek merchants (Malaise 1972b, p. 319; Leclant and Clerc 1972–1991; Hölbl 1998; Versluys 2002, pp. 306–16; Nagel 2019, pp. 857–71). Since the 3rd century BC, the political agreements between the Roman Senate and Lagids, as well as the trade activities—arranged in a system where Alexandria, Delos, Syracuse, Catania and Pozzuoli were the main steps—allowed the penetration of the Isiac cults in the Italian peninsula (Malaise 1972b, p. 256; Tran Tam Tinh 1972, p. 18; Dunand 1973c, pp. 83–115; Lampela 1998; Bricault 2001, pp. 36–54; 2007, p. 265; Fontana 2010, p. 67). As Gasparini (2011, pp. 287–88) said: "Il n'y existe pas de paradigme de fonctionnement universel. Au contraire, les cultes isiaques sont façonnés de manière variable selon les caractéristiques spécifiques des acteurs locaux". However, the first temples dedicated to Egyptian gods in the Italian peninsula were mostly raised by wealthy merchant families near the main trade routes and *emporia* (Malaise 1972b, pp. 78, 258; 1984, p. 1651; Fontana 2010, p. 65).[1] Nevertheless, the reception of these cults by the State occurred slowly (Dunand 2010, p. 50). Although from the 1st century BC a guild of priests of Isis is attested (Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 11, 30; Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 3, 19, 47; Malaise 1972b, pp. 186–87, 362–455; Mora 1990b, p. 74; Takács 1995, p. 52; Fontana 2010, p. 65, no. 14, 31–32), the very first imperial legitimation of Egyptian cults occurred in the Flavian Era (Coarelli 2019; Nagel 2019, pp. 1053–56). This long adaptation phase, which led to the wide spread of the Egyptian deities in the Italian peninsula, was marked by a return to origins (Malaise 1972b, pp. 255, 259; Fontana 2010, p. 66, n. 20). The *Egyptianization* of the Isiac cults, possibly due to the break with the Lagid tradition, allowed for a renewed interest in Osiris (LIMC 7, 1, p. 108; Fontana 2010, p. 53; Nagel 2013, p. 155). According to Hani (1976, p. 198), "l'explication […] est à chercher dans une tendance […] de réaction «égyptisante», pourrait-on dire, et qui vise à opérer en quelque sorte une «reosirisation»

de la religion gréco-égyptienne". This process allowed the spread of the Osiris cult in the Italian peninsula. The classic authors record the main role that the god held in religious practices, including Egyptian mysteries (Dunand 1975, pp. 21–24; Kleibl 2009, pp. 142–45; Bricault 2013, pp. 428–37 and bibliography). Lucan remembers that Osiris was worshipped in Rome along with other Egyptian gods (Lucan, *The Pharsalia*, 8, 993–97); Horace evokes the god in one of his Epistles (Horace, *Epistles*, 1, 17); according to Juvenal, the worshippers gave birds and sweets as offerings to the god in order to appease his rage (Juvenal, *Satires*, 6, 539–41); Ovid prays to Isis and her husband, Osiris, in order to join Corinna (Ovid, *The Amores*, 2, 13, 12); the Apuleius' hero, Lucius, realizes that he was being sought after as a servant of the "invincible Osiris, the great god who is the mighty father of the gods" and in another passage the author recalls that Osiris had his own guilds of *pastophors* in Rome since the Sullan Era, as in the case of his *paredra* Isis (Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 11, 27, 30).

2. The Osiris Forms and Rituals

In the Italian peninsula, the mostly emphasized aspect of Osiris was his watery nature, which lies in ancient Egyptian beliefs. In the Heliopolitan solar doctrine, the dead king was reborn as Ra through lustral washing, identified with the Nun water (Blackman 1918, pp. 117–18; 1921, pp. 47–48; Smith 2003, pp. 330–31). When the pharaoh was associated with Osiris, the washing ritual replayed that of Osiris's embalming (PT 509 §1122; PT 553 §1367; PT 619 §1747; PT 670 §1983; PT 682 §2043; Blackman 1918, p. 118; 1921, pp. 50–51, 67; Morenz 1969, pp. 75–91; Delia 1992, p. 183). The purification through the cool (qbHw) (WB 5, 22, 26–28; Faulkner 1999, p. 278) or fresh (rnpy) (WB 2, 443, 25; Faulkner 1999, p. 150) water, which preceded the libation rituals, aimed to protect the king from nasty beings, and to revive and rejuvenate him (PT 357 §589a; PT 423 §765; Blackman 1918, p. 118; 1921, pp. 49–50, 59–60; Delia 1992, pp. 182–83; Popielska-Grzybowska 2016, pp. 161–65; Kühnemund 2021). According to some spells from the Pyramid Texts, that water came forth from Elephantine, from where it was believed that the Nile sprang, and part of Osiris's corpse was buried (PT 459 §864a-b; PT 665A §1908; PT 690 §2010; Herodotus, *The Histories*, 2, 28; Breasted 1912, p. 103; Junker 1913, pp. 37–40; Möller 1913, 1, 6, 1–4; Blackman 1921, pp. 51–52, 59; Malaise 1985, p. 126; LÄ 1, pp. 792–93; Winkler 2006, p. 132). Therefore, the water mentioned in the offering rituals for the deceased king is the exudation (rDw.w) (WB 2, 469, 5–19) that came from Osiris, identified with the Nile overflow (PT 32 §22; PT 33 §24–25; PT 422 §754; PT 436 §§788–789; PT 455 §848a-b; PT 460 §868b; PT 536 §1291a; PT 553 §1360a-b; PT 619 §1747–1748; PT 676 §2007a-b; Blackman 1918, p. 118; 1921, pp. 52–53, 59, 62, 65, 72; 1925, p. 208; Griffiths 1980, pp. 151–53, 158, 160; Malaise 1985, p. 126; Delia 1992, p. 183; Winkler 2006, pp. 128–33; Popielska-Grzybowska 2016, p. 164). Through that sacred water, the king shared the god's immortality and power (PT 422 §754; PT 213 §134; Griffiths 1980, p. 160). This privilege was extended to every deceased person from the First Intermediate Period (Willems 2006, pp. 149–72). In the Coffin Texts, the deceased was assimilated with Osiris after being washed into the fresh water, which comes forth from the god himself (CT II, 67–69; CT VI, 396; CT VII, 452). The Coffin Texts also show that this "great efflux", possibly the fresh water from the Pyramid Texts, satiated the deceased's thirst (CT V, 17–22; Dunand 1973a, p. 168; Delia 1992, p. 184). This aspect also occurred in some spells in the Book of the Dead, where cool water is also involved in lustration rituals in order to purify and refresh the dead (BD §45; BD §168; BD §173; BD §182; BD §183; Assmann 2004, pp. 5–16). In the New Kingdom, the association of Osiris and water, especially Nile water, previously seen in the Old Kingdom, continues to be attested (Spieser 1997, pp. 211–28). In the Great Stela at Abydos (No. Inv. 757, JdE 48831–Egyptian Museum (Cairo)), addressed to Osiris and other deities by Ramses IV, the king says to the god: "You are the great Nile, who spreads out at the beginning of the seasons. Gods and men live thanks to the humors issued from thee" (Erman 1907, pp. 80–81; Blackman 1921, p. 62; Mariette 1880, p. 2, pl. 54, 7; Korostovtsev 1945, pp. 155–173; PM V, p. 73; KRI VI, p. 22, 12–13). This assimilation is even more evident in the Choiak rites, when the life, death and resurrection of Osiris were dramatized, and purification rituals were performed in order

to rejuvenate the god (Schäfer 1904; Chassinat 1966–1968; David 1981, pp. 124–25; Mikhail 1984a, pp. 25–44; 1984b, pp. 29–54; Cauville 1988, pp. 23–36; 1997; Eaton 2006, pp. 75–101; Gaudard 2012, pp. 269–86; Pizzarotti 2012, pp. 31–40; Vuilleumier 2016; Kucharek 2017, pp. 117–25; Smith 2017, pp. 232–34; Cauville 2021; Herbin and Christian 2022). Since the flood came forth from the "humors" released by Osiris corpse (Bénédite 1893, pp. 120–21; Erman 1927, pp. 141–45; Goyon 1965, pp. 101–2; Genaille 1983, p. 305; Kettel 1994, pp. 315–30; Centrone 2005, pp. 355–60; Smith 2017, p. 450; Cauville 2021, pp. 33–34), the purpose of the Choiak festival was to replicate the Osirian cycle in order to secure the inundation and consequently a good harvest (David 1981, p. 125; Bonneau 1964, pp. 249–51).[2] For this reason, Osiris was worshipped as the god of vegetation and renewal, in association with the cool water that comes forth from Elephantine (Edfu I, 187, 4–5; Bénédite 1893, pp. 10, 125, pl. XL; Cauville 1983, p. 23; Dendera X, 429, 9–13, 430, 5–7; Cauville 1997, p. 233; LIMC 7, 1, p. 108; Popielska-Grzybowska 2016, p. 164). The connection between Osiris's humors and the Nile flood is also highlighted by the Jumilhac Papyrus (No. Inv. 17110—Musée du Louvre (Pairs). Vandier 1962; Quack 2008, pp. 203–28). According to the text, Osiris's humors were held in a vase, kept in the 18th nome of Upper Egypt (Jumilhac Papyrus 2, 3; 4, 2–3; 8, 3–4; 22, 6–7; Vandier 1962, p. 160, no. 176, pp. 253, 316).[3] The flow rate of the flood depended on the libations offered to it, and the flood water fed the sacred exudation (Vandier 1962, pp. 96, 129–30, 201, n. 611).

Looking at these beliefs, Plutarch wrote: "And thus among the Egyptians such men say that Osiris is the Nile" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 32).[4] He also recalls that, still in Imperial time, the Osirian myth was linked to changes in the Nile's flow rate: "The story told of the shutting up of Osiris in the chest seems to mean nothing else than the vanishing and disappearance of water" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 39). Consequently, the discovery of the Osiris corpse by Isis and his consequent rise were connected with the overflooding of the Nile (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 14–18; Malaise 1972b, p. 221; Bonneau 1964, pp. 245–48; Malaise 1985, pp. 129, 136; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1221–26). The festival that celebrated this event was known as *Inventio Osiridis*, described by Plutarch as follows: "On the nineteenth day they go down to the sea at night-time; and the keepers of the robes and the priests bring forth the sacred chest containing a small golden coffer, into which they pour some potable water which they have taken up, and a great shout arises from the company for joy that Osiris is found" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 39). This festival may have been celebrated in the Italian peninsula starting from the reign of Caligula (Seneca, *The Pumpkinification of the Divine Claudius*, 13, 4; Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Caligula*, 57, 4; Soudas 1, 503; Malaise 1972b, pp. 227, 399; Bricault 2013, p. 390). Mentioned by the Menologium Rusticum Colotianum (CIL I2, 281, 333–334=RICIS 501/0219; Bricault 2013, p. 376) and the calendar by Filocalus (CIL I2, 274, 276, 333–334= RICIS 501/0220; Stern 1953; Bricault 2013, pp. 376–77) by the names *Heuresis* and *Hilaria*, respectively, it continued to be performed in 417 AD, as referred to by Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, who recalled the celebration of the *Renouatus Osiris* at Faleria/Falesia (Rutilius Claudius Namatianus, *De reditu suo*, 1, 371–376; Malaise 1972a, p. 45; 1972b, pp. 224–26; Ratti 2005, pp. 75–86; Bricault 2013, p. 393; Kleibl 2009, pp. 140–41). As Plutarch stressed, during this ceremony a *cista* was involved, which possibly held a special value (Berreth 1931, p. 70; Wittman 1938, pp. 62–65; Müller 1959, p. 107; Griffiths 1975, pp. 222–26; Malaise 1985, pp. 138–39; van Voss 2015, pp. 24–25). Tibullus recalls: "the light basket that shares its hidden sacredness" (Tibullus, *Elegies*, 1, 7, 48). Although no evidence about the contents is available, since the only three-dimensional *cista* found so far is the full specimen from Benevento,[5] it had to keep the fresh water that embodied Osiris (Castiglione 1960, p. 400; Merkelbach 1973, p. 45; Malaise 1985, p. 136).[6] As Plutarch himself stressed, as last ritual act of the *Inventio Osiridis* festival: "they knead some fertile soil with the water and mix in spices and incense of a very costly sort, and fashion therefrom a crescent-shaped figure, which they clothe and adorn […]" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 39).[7] Some scholars speculate that the crescent-shaped figure referred to the moon aspect held by Osiris (Malaise 1985, pp. 138, 142).[8] Therefore, the *cista* had to hold two Osirian symbols: the sacred water as well as the crescent-shape figure, usually

reproduced on the *cista*'s frontside. This is also confirmed by the lower part of a fresco that originally decorated the northern wall of the *sacrarium* of the Iseum in Pompeii (No. Inv. 8929 (=SG 1476; Av 1420; Ar 1181; MCCCLX)–National Archaeological Museum (Naples); Tran Tam Tinh 1964, pp. 143–44, no. 47; Malaise 1972a, pp. 279–81; LIMC 7, 1, pp. 113–14; Sampaolo 1992, p. 60, no. 1.74; Capriotti Vittozzi 2000, p. 137; Bommas 2005, p. 68; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1139–43). Here, a *cista* is depicted in gold, with a crescent in the middle and two serpents/*urei* on the sides. The image sits just below a scene that shows the events following the discovery of Osiris's body by Isis: the goddess drags the boat where her husband's coffin is placed. The scene confirms the important role held by the *cista* in the ritual connected with the *Inventio* of Osiris's body, since it was supposed to contain the embodiment of the god, namely the (Nile) water (Malaise 1985, p. 144). As Plutarch stresses: "Not only the Nile, but every form of moisture they call simply the effusion of Osiris; and in their holy rites the water jar in honor of the god heads the procession" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 36). This jar or *hydria* is already seen in the funerary iconography in Roman Egypt, especially in libation ritual scenes (Koemoth 1999, pp. 109–23; Koemoth and Radelet 2007, pp. 126–46). It was an integral part of rituals performed by adherents of the Isiac cults both in Egypt and the Italian peninsula.[9] Giving a description of the procession performed during the *Navigium Isidis* festival, Apuleius recalls: "[…] a third fortunate priest carried an ancient image of the Great Goddess in the lap of his robe, not in the shape of any beast wild or tame, or bird or human being, but inspiring reverence in its skilled working by its very strangeness, being the ineffable symbol somehow of a deeper sacredness, to be cloaked in awful silence, formed as it was of gleaming gold after this manner: it took the form of a little hollow urn, its surface engraved with Egyptian hieroglyphics, with a rounded base, an extended spout opened slightly like a beak, and a broad curving handle at the opposite side extending backwards deeply from which an asp, coiled in a knot, reared its scaly swollen neck on high." (Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 11, 11).[10] Vitruvius informs us about the contents of the *hydria*: "Hence the priests of the Egyptian worship and teach that all things depend upon the power of water; and when with holy reverence water is brought in a vase to the precinct and to the temple, they throw themselves upon the ground and, raising their hands to heaven, thank the divine benevolence for its invention" (Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, 8, 4). The scene described by Vitruvius is shown perfectly by a fresco from a private context in Herculaneum. It represents a priest, standing with his back to a small temple. He has a shaved head and wears a long tunic and a cloak. This falls from his shoulders to his arms covering his hands, which hold a *hydria* shown to the worshippers (No. Inv. 8924—National Archeological Museum (Naples); Tran Tam Tinh 1971, pp. 29–30, no. 58, Figure 40; Malaise 1972a, pp. 251–53; Swetnam-Burland 2018, pp. 588–90; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1160–63). Following Egyptian beliefs, the exhibition of the *hydria*, possibly performed during special celebrations, was related to Osiris's rise, and the water contained in the sacred vase was intended to be the humors that exuded from his corpse (Callebat 1973; Malaise 1985, pp. 144–46). Moreover, these vases were possibly used to accomplish libations—recalling the original function of the Egyptian *hydriai*—in order to give Osiris back his humors (rDw.w), spread in the Nile water (Wild 1981, pp. 111–12; Malaise 1985, pp. 146–47; Winkler 2006, pp. 131–32; Koemoth and Radelet 2007, pp. 124–43; Koemoth 2019, pp. 125, 128, 133). It is from these sacred vessels that possibly a special form of Osiris morphologically and ideologically derives (Weber 1911, p. 44; Malaise 1972b, p. 206; Wild 1981, pp. 121–23; LÄ 3, 2, p. 315; Koemoth 2019, p. 128.). This idol was described by Rufinus of Aquileia as "a water pot, with tiny feet, a neck drawn in and, as it were, squashed, a bulging stomach, and an equally rounded back" (Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History*, 11, 26). A temple, dated back to the reign of Ptolemy III, was addressed to this form of Osiris at Canopus.[11] He was increasingly worshipped in Egypt and beyond, including in the Italian peninsula.[12] One or possibly two statues of Osiris Canopus come from the Iseum of Campus Martius in Rome, where the god is also attested by figured reliefs on some columns' shafts. A pit found in the Iseum of Pompeii also held a broken Osiris Canopus statue (PAH 1.1.172; Wild 1981, p. 115; LIMC 7, 1, p. 122, no. 36). Two statues of Osiris

Canopus bearers were possibly part of the sacred furniture of a temple dedicated to the god, placed in the *temenos* of Isis at Benevento. Osiris Canopus images were also found in non-religious contexts such as in Hadrian's residence at Tivoli, in the Circeo area,[13] on the Esquiline Hill (Palazzo dei Conservatori (Rome); BCR 1882, pp. 244–45; von Bissing 1929, pp. 48, 58; Malaise 1972a, pp. 175–76, no. 322b; LIMC 7, 1, p. 121, no. 30), at Rome and in Cagliari (Malaise 1972a, p. 314, no. 4; LIMC 7, 1, p. 122, no. 37). The iconography of the god shows him as a jar, decorated in relief, with a human crowned head. According to the elements embellishing the body, Weber recognized two Osiris Canopus types, possibly showing different aspects of the god: type A adorned with Egyptian figures and type B decorated with spiral fluting or a U-neck garment and horizontal crossbands (Weber 1911, pp. 37–42). These iconographic elements and the jars' shape stressed both the watery and funerary aspects of Osiris Canopus, which were inextricably connected (Weber 1911, pp. 38–39, 48; von Bissing 1936, p. 3; Stricker 1943, p. 6; Fouquet 1973, p. 66; Griffiths 1975, p. 42; Thélamon 1981, p. 207). Given that Rufinus states that the shape of Osiris Canopus comes from the pots used to collect and filter the Nile water (Rufinus of Aquileia, *Church History*, 11, 26), namely Osiris's humors, Thélamon concludes: "Le dieu honoré à Canope est conçu comme une *hydria* qui contient une eau qui est qualifiée de sudor, c'est l'exacte transposition du vase snw contenant les rDw.w" (Thélamon 1981, p. 221; Malaise 1972b, p. 206).[14] However, since the god's images are always full, they never served as water containers (Fouquet 1973, p. 66; Griffiths 1975, p. 230; Wild 1981, p. 116; Dunand 2009, p. 138; Koemoth 2019, p. 146). In any case, his unusual shape possibly referred to his watery nature (Panofsky 1961, pp. 193–216; Fouquet 1973, p. 66). This aspect was strengthened over time as confirmed by some written as well as archaeological evidence that suggest the god developed a marine character, becoming the protector of navigation.[15] As a watery god, Osiris also guarantees the grain supply, since the Nile overflood, main source of fertility, was connected with his raise (Bonneau 1964, p. 245; Malaise 1985, pp. 129, 136; Winkler 2006, pp. 131–33; Koemoth 2019, pp. 148–49). Plutarch stresses: "[…] Osiris is being buried at the time when the grain is sown and covered in the earth and that he comes to life and reappears when plants begin to sprout" and also "the wiser of the priests […] give the name of Osiris to the whole source and faculty creative of moisture, believing this to be the cause of generation and the substance of life-producing seed" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 65, 33).[16] Egyptian written sources as well as classic authors assimilated Osiris with grain (CT IV, 168c–170b; BD §142; Dramatic Ramesseum Papyrus 29–33; Chester Beatty Papyrus 1, 14, 12; Dendera 1, 101, 1.15–17; Dendera 2, 160, 1.10; Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians* 22, 6; Firmicus Maternus, *On the Error of Profane Religions* 2, 6).[17] As a god of moisture from which creative and germinal power comes; Osiris was closely connected to Dionysus (Stracmans 1946, pp. 209–14; Grimal 1969, pp. 42–51; Le Corsu 1968, pp. 17–31; Griffiths 1970, pp. 56–57, 88–89, 299–300, 309–10, 440–41; Hani 1976, pp. 166–81; LIMC 7, 1, pp. 110, 116). Evidences of this association again mainly come from classic authors. Herodotus wrote: "For no gods are worshipped in common by the whole of Egypt save only Isis and Osiris, whom they say to be Dionysus; these are worshipped by all alike" (Herodotus, *The Histories*, 2, 42). Tibullus in the elegy written as a tribute to Messalla, called the god: Osiris in the vocative case and Bacchus in the accusative case (Tibullus, *Elegies*, 1, 7, 27; Alfonsi 1968, pp. 476–77; Grimal 1969, pp. 42–43), alongside this, Plutarch said that: "the Greeks came to identify him (Osiris) with Dionysus" (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 13, 35, 37). The assimilation of Osiris with Dionysus was possibly promoted by the Lagid religious policy (Grimal 1969, pp. 44–48; Le Corsu 1968, pp. 26–27; Hani 1976, pp. 169–80; Coulon 2013, pp. 177–81). The far-reaching link between the two gods is confirmed by the affinities of their mysteries as Diodorus Siculus recalls: "Consequently, the Greeks too, inasmuch as they received from Egypt the celebrations of the orgies and the festivals connected with Dionysus, honor this member (of Osiris) in both the mysteries and the initiatory rites and sacrifices of this god" (Diodorus Siculus, *The Bibliotheca historica*, 1, 22; Cumont 1911, p. 77; Burkert 2004, p. 88). Some archeological evidences proven "une pratique religieuse qui faisait effectivement se côtoyer fêtes osiriennes et fêtes bacchiques" (Coulon 2013, p. 180;

Goddio 2007, pp. 108–11; Yoyotte 2010, p. 38). The association Osiris-Dionysus still persisted in the Italian peninsula, as possibly shown by some paintings decorating the cubiculum of the *Domus dei Cubicoli floreali* (Regio I, insula IX, no. 6) in Pompeii (Le Corsu 1967, pp. 17–25; Hani 1976, pp. 168–69). Still in Pompeii, a statue of Dionysus was found in a niche plastered, placed just behind the *naos* of the *Iseum*. The image situated in a specular position to the core of the Isis temple may suggest that here Dionysus was also assimilated to her paredro (PAH 1, 184; Fiorelli 1860, I, 184; CIL X, 847=SIRIS 483; Ruesch 1908, no. 927; Adamo Muscettola 1992, p. 70, no. 3.7; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1136–37). Furthermore, Osiris continues to be assimilated with Serapis, as in Greco-Roman Egypt. Plutarch recalls: "I would rather make a concession to the Egyptians in regard to Serapis than in regard to Osiris; for I regard Serapis as foreign, but Osiris as Greek, and both as belonging to one god and one power" (Plutarch, *The Isis and Osiris*, 61, 376). The two gods were considered separate deities but related to each other and often worshipped together "as two sides of the same divine puissance" (Cacace 2016–2017, p. 286).[18]

3. Osiris in Italian Funerary Contexts

Therefore, Osiris is a bearer of life. Indeed, through his embodying (Nile) water, he guarantees the fields' growth and the deceased's rejuvenation, causing his resurrection (Goyon 1965, p. 101; David 1981, p. 125; Koemoth and Radelet 2007, p. 135). These conceptions still persist in some written sources, called "cool water" inscriptions, which hold the prayer Ὸ Ὄσειρις δοίη σοι τὸ ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ (Delia 1992, pp. 181–90; Bricault 2013, pp. 68–69; Nagel 2013, pp. 164–68; Gasparini 2016, pp. 128–33; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1104–8). This has been identified in epigraphs dated from the 1st century AD until the late Imperial Era.[19]

The oldest of the five inscriptions found in the Italian peninsula dated back to the end of the 1st century AD. It is an epitaph written on a marble slab that was later reused as a manhole cover in Via Tuscolana in Rome. The text, written in 14 lines engraved with Greek characters 0.3 cm high, is broken in the right section and abraded in the lower part. It reads: [Ἦλθε]ς, τέκνον γλυκύτατον, ἀθάνατον/[εἰς δῶ]μα, ἀείζων Μᾶρκε Ὀρτώριε.

Ἔλεύθερε,/[ἐτῶν] δέκα μηνῶν τριῶν ἡμερῶν τριῶν./ [Νῦν δ]οίη σοι ὁ Ὄσειρις τὸ ψυχρὸν ὖδωρ· οὐκ ἔ – [χει σε] Χάρων,τέκνον, ἀλλὰ Χάος, τὸ σε λαβὼν [ὠκύμ]ορον, ἀλοί δορον, ἄνηβον ἄωρον. χατέλει– / [πες δ]ὲ κληρονομίαν καθημερινὴν μητρὶ/ [καὶ π]ατρὶ ζῶσιν κοπετοὺς καὶ δάκρυα καὶ/[στε]γάγματα καὶ πένθος αἰώνιον./ [Ὀρτώ]ριος Ἤλεις καὶ Ὀρτωρία Εὐτυχὶς σύμβιος/ [ἐκτ]ισαν ἰδίῳ τέκνῳ αἰώνιον νυμφῶνα/ [καὶ ἑα]υτοῖς, θανάτου προσδοκίαν, τοῦτο τὸ/ [μνμ]μεῖον κηπόταφον (*sic*), ἀπελευθέροις ἀπε–/ [λευθέρ ων – – – – – – – – – – – – – – –] (IGUR II(2), 311–312, no. 836=SIRIS 462=RICIS 501/0164. Patriarca 1933, pp. 211–215; von Gonzenbach 1957, p. 15; Malaise 1972a, p. 143, no. 105; Wild 1981, p. 249, n. 154). The two freed slaves (*liberti*) Ortorius Eleis and Ortoria Eutychis pass on the wish that their 10-year-old child, the deceased Marcus Ortorius Eleutherus, would reach immortality. Just after the opening information, the inscription shows the ritual formula concerning the granting of fresh water by Osiris.

The formula appears in a funeral oration on a marble slab found in Rome and possibly dated back to the 3rd century AD. The text, broken on the lower and left side, is written in Greek letters arranged in 12 lines. It reads: Θ(εοῖς) Κ(αταχθονίοις)/ Αὐρηλίᾳ Προσόδῳ/ Διοσκουρίδης ἀνὴρ/ τῆ <ἐ>αυτοῦ συνβίῳ/ χρηστοτάτη καὶ γλυκυτά–/ τη μνίας χάριν/ εὐψύχει, κυρία/ καὶ δοῖ σοι ὁ Ὄσιρις/ τὸ ψυχρὸν ὖδωρ/ ἐπόησε ἑαυτῷ/ καὶ ἀπελευθέρων/ ἀπελευθέροις (No. Inv. 2416 – National Archaeological Museum (Naples); IG XIV, 1488=IGR I, 229=IGUR II(1), 432=SEG XXX, 1177=SIRIS 459=RICIS 501/0178; Zoega 1787, pp. 38, 405; 1797, p. 305, no. 25; Lévy 1927, p. 301; Malaise 1972a, pp. 139–140, no. 93; Wild 1981, p. 249, n. 154; Delia 1992, p. 190, no. 15). The freedman Dioskourides dedicated the epitaph to his wife Aurelia Prosodos, hoping that she would be blessed, and that Osiris would give the fresh water to her.

A similar oration, still found in Rome, was dedicated by Dionyttas to his beloved Korella Aigle. It says: Κορελλία Αἴγλη/ ἐτῶν κα᾽ ταῦτά σοι/ πεποίηκεν/ Διονυττᾶς ὁ σὸς

ἀνήρ/ τῇ ἀγαθωτάτῃ· εὐψύχι/ κυρία· δο(ίη) σοι Ὄσιρις / τὸ ψυχρὸν ὕδορ (*sic*) (IG XIV, 1782=IGR I, 291=IGUR II(1), 720=SIRIS 461=RICIS 501/0199; Lévy 1927, p. 301; Malaise 1972a, p. 140, no. 94). Again, the husband wishes the young deceased happiness, hoping that the god Osiris will give her fresh water.

On the front side of a marble urn, found in the Via Nomentana (Rome), an epigraph in Greek but written with Latin letters reads: D(IS) · M(ANIBVS)/ IVLIA · POLITICE./ DOE SE OSIRIS/ TO PSYCRON/ HYDOR (No. Inv. 1705—Ducal Palace (Urbino); CIL VI, 20616=IG XIV, 1705=IGRR I, 276=IGUR II(1), 628=SIRIS 460=RICIS 501/0198; (Lévy 1927, p. 301; Malaise 1972a, p. 128, no. 55). The text from lines 3 to 5 is written in Greek but with Latin letters and reports the same funerary formula involving the granting of fresh water by Osiris.

The last inscription was found in a tomb in Bivona (near Agrigento). The Greek text was inscribed on gold leaf (*lamella*) and arranged in several lines but only the fifth and the beginning of the ninth can be read. It bears the formula: ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ, possibly a short version of the prayer: Ὁ Ὄσειρις δοίη σοι τὸ ψυχρὸν ὕδωρ (Raoul-Rochette 1838, pp. 577–78; Malaise 1972a, p. 311, no. 1).

These sources show the persistence of ancient Egyptian beliefs. Since the Old Kingdom, the deceased, identified with Osiris, has been restored through liquid (libations), namely his humors (Winkler 2006, p. 131). At a later time, cool water is also mentioned in funerary texts in order to satiate the thirsting dead (CT V, 17–22; BD §168). A formula written on a Qebehsenuef canopic jar, dated back to the Late Period, still involves the granting of fresh water for the deceased (Walters Art Gallery (Baltimore); Steindorff 1949, pp. 16–17; Kettel 1994, p. 329). The spread of the Osiris cult allowed this "fresh water" formula and the concepts behind it to also reach the adherents of Egyptian cults in the Italian peninsula.

4. The Cult Places of Osiris in the Italian Peninsula

The special reverence addressed to Osiris by his adepts is attested by several cult places throughout the Italian peninsula. The evidence from these contexts show that he was worshipped in temples where he was the main recipient of the cult, set very close to the Iseum (Benevento); in sacred areas addressed to a deity assimilated with him (Tivoli); and in a sole temple with his *paredra* (Rome, Campus Martius; Fiesole), as also occurred in the Egyptian sanctuaries.[20]

4.1. Benevento

Benevento, a center of international trade between the East and Rome, possibly had a temple dedicated to Isis Pelagia serving the community there since the 1st century BC.[21] The dedication was suggested by the discovery of a fragment of statue of the goddess standing on a ship (No. Inv. 1917—Arcos Museum (Benevento); Müller 1971, pp. 25, 77–80, no. 279; Pirelli 1997b, p. 505, no. V. 190; Nuzzolo 2007, p. 141, no. II.99; Pirelli 2016, p. 97; Avagliano and Nowak 2016, p. 103; Bragantini 2018, p. 251; Bricault 2020, pp. 114–16).[22] This complex, probably a private shrine, was enlarged in the Flavian period.[23] As recorded by the inscriptions on two obelisks, in the 8th year of Domitian reign (AD 88/89), the *legatus Augusti*, Marcus Rutilius Lupus dedicated a temple to Isis "Lady of Benevento" and to her fellow deities, in honor of the emperor coming back from a victorious military campaign in Dacia (RICIS 505/0801; Erman 1896, pp. 149–59; Müller 1971, pp. 14, 62, 76–77; Iversen 1973, pp. 17–20; Colin 1993, pp. 247–60; Bricault 2013, pp. 105–7; Bragantini 2018, pp. 245–47; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1163–64; Cole et al. 2020, pp. 380–433; Prada 2022, pp. 106–77). The text's references to the deities that share the temple with Isis possibly included Osiris Canopus. At a later time, a Canopus was added to the temple complex, to complete and enlarge it. The existence of a shrine specifically dedicated to the worship of Osiris Canopus is confirmed by an inscription on a marble slab, possibly dated back to the 2nd-3rd century AD. The epigraph was a tribute to Caius Umbrius Eudrastus from the guilds of the Martensium infraforanum, thanking the patron of the colony for financing the building of the Canopus (CIL IX, 1685=SEG XXXII, 172=ILS 6504=RICIS 505/0804, de Vita 1754, p. 169; Müller 1971,

p. 26; Pirelli 1997a, pp. 378–79; 2007, pp. 131, 134; 2016, pp. 89, 94; Koemoth 2019, pp. 119, 125–26, 139–40; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1167–68). Although no archaeological evidence of these complexes has been found, several significant finds belonging to their furniture have been brought to light. Some refer unequivocally to the Osiris cult. In 1903 near the convent of Saint Augustine, a red porphyry *cista mystica* was found (Meomartini 1904, p. 113; Marucchi 1904, p. 126; Rotili 1958, p. 9; Müller 1971, pp. 98–99; Malaise 1972a, p. 304, no. 52; Nuzzolo 2007, p. 143, no. II. 104; Nagel 2019, 2, p. 1165). On the front it has a crescent in relief, and on the lid a snake in relief is arranged in a spiral form. On the side, several lines of wicker threads are represented, which possibly allude to the material that was originally used to make these ritual caskets. Since it is full, its function was to evoke the chest that kept the sacred water, embodying Osiris. Two three-dimensional representations possibly also belonged to the rich decorative programme of his temple in Benevento. These are both headless priests standing on a long base. The figures wear long tunics and have a cloak resting on each of their shoulders that covers the forearms and hands (No. Inv. 1922 and 1926—Arcos Museum (Benevento); Meomartini 1904, pp. 107–18; Marucchi 1904, p. 120; Rotili 1958, p. 9; Müller 1971, pp. 88–91; Malaise 1972a, p. 302, nos. 29–30; LIMC 7, 1, p. 127, no. 85; Pirelli 1997b, pp. 507–8, no. V.193–194; Incordino 2007, p. 142, no. II.101; Pirelli 2016, p. 101; Nagel 2019, 2, p. 1165). The attitude is exactly the same as shown by the Herculaneum fresco, but in this case the priests hold a headless Osiris Canopus (type B).[24] The two statues belong to the same type as those hauled up from the Mediterranean seabed near the East Harbor and Abukir Bay by Franck Goddio and his team, which are now housed in the Antiquities Museum in the cultural complex of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (No. Inv. 449—Alexandria National Museum (Alexandria); Dunand 2009, pp. 136–38).[25]

4.2. Tivoli

Osiris Canopus also held a special role in the religious aspect of the Villa Adriana, since two statues of the god come from there (No. Inv. 22852, 125–Gregorian Egyptian Museum (Vatican City); Botti and Romanelli 1951, p. 123, nos. 200–1; von Bissing 1929, p. 43; Malaise 1972a, p. 107, no. 11; Roullet 1972, p. 141, Figure 324; Räeder 1983, p. 174; Bricault 2001, pp. 157–58; Nagel 2019, 2, p. 1117). Moreover, a large area of this imperial residence is known as Canopus-Serapeum (Spartianus, *Augustan History: Hadrian*, 24). It was first interpreted as the canal joining Alexandria to Canopus and his Serapeum (Gusman 1904, p. 154; Roullet 1972, pp. 49–51), then as a cave dedicated to the cult of Osiris-Antinous (Kähler 1975, pp. 35–44; Hannestad 1982, pp. 69–108), and later as a monumental geographic map of Egypt during the flood (Grenier 1989, p. 975). Actually, thanks to the discovery of a semicircular triclinium bed (*stibadium*) placed at the joining point between the canal of the "Canopus" and the exedra of the "Serapeum", the complex has been reinterpreted as a "grotte-*triclinium* dans la tradition des jardins-paysagistes, du à quelque *topiarius* de génie" (Lavagne 1988, p. 610).[26]

Despite no evidence of a devotion addressed to Osiris having been found in the *Villa*—apart from the aforementioned statues of Osiris Canopus—the Osirian influence is well attested in a peripheral area of the *Villa*. There, the fieldworks brought to light a complex consisting in a *temenos* that encloses two rectangular temples, and an exedra leading to a rear structure interpreted by someone as the proper tomb of Hadrian's favorite (Mari 2002–2003, pp. 145–85; 2003–2004, pp. 263–314; 2005a, pp. 4–16; 2005b, pp. 125–40; Mari and Sgalambro 2007, p. 87).[27] The so-called *Antinoeion*, was possibly dedicated to the deified Antinous as well as to other gods of the Egyptian pantheon, as "the presence of numerous basins should be understood in relation to the importance that the lustral water, symbolically assimilated to the water of the Nile, had in Egyptian funerary and cult ritual"(Mari and Sgalambro 2007, p. 92). The Egyptian gods, including Antinous, were also worshipped in the so-called *Palestra* (Mari 2006, pp. 113–39; 2010a, pp. 129–37; 2010b, pp. 156–58; Mari and Sgalambro 2006, pp. 53–68). None of these areas could be considered as a shrine, but they were at least devoted to a "idealisierte *Darstellung* von Kult" of the osirianized Antinous (Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1118–19).[28] Therefore, Osiris was not worshipped

in the Villa Adriana, but his aspects raised in the cult of Hadrian's favorite, to whom the god was assimilated (Malaise 2005, pp. 110–17; Capriotti Vittozzi 2012, pp. 285–87).

4.3. Rome, Campus Martius

Some architectonic elements of the aforementioned Villa Adriana's complexes were possibly introduced by Hadrian in the rearrangement of the Serapeum at Rome (Sist 1997, pp. 298, 301; Mari and Sgalambro 2007, pp. 92–96).[29] He monumentalized and redefined the spaces constructed by Domitian, as shown by coins dated back to 94–96 AD. (Mattingly and Sydenham 1962, 2, p. 345, no. 238, Table 67, 4; Malaise 1972a, p. 193, no. 344; Hill 1989, pp. 29, 122; Lembke 1994, pp. 32–33, 50–58, 62–63, 182–83; Darwall-Smith 1996, p. 145; Ensoli 1998, pp. 413–14; Quack 2003, p. 57; Ranucci 2009, p. 362). At this time, the complex was not specifically dedicated to Serapis, but rather to Egyptian cults in general, including Antinous (IG XIV, 961=IGUR 98= SIRIS 383; Malaise 1972a, pp. 134, 195, no. 75, 353; Mora 1990a, I, p. 439, no. 376; Lembke 1994, p. 141, no. 4; Ensoli 1998, pp. 424, 429; Malaise 2005, p. 113; Mari and Sgalambro 2007, p. 96). The area was only entirely addressed to the cult of Serapis under the Severans, who possibly restored the complex after a destructive accident (Lembke 1994, pp. 65–73, 147–57; Ensoli 1998, pp. 420, 425; Giovagnoli and Ten 2017, p. 139). Indeed, the first explicit mention of the Serapis temple is shown on a lintel dated back to the reign of Septimius Severus and Caracalla (CIL VI, 40599. Mancini 1925, pp. 236, 239; ACS, Arch. Gatti, Tacc. XV, folio 950; Gatti 1943–1944, p. 157; Räeder 1993, pp. 175–96; Ensoli 1998, pp. 420–21, 425; Takács 1995, pp. 114–18; Giovagnoli and Ten 2017, pp. 139–43). The fragments of the Severan Marble Plan of Rome, also known as Forma Urbis Romae (FUR), show a semicircular peristyle exedra (Carettoni et al. 1960; Malaise 1972a, pp. 192, 210; Roullet 1972, p. 27; Mari and Sgalambro 2007, p. 92). Its inner space has been identified as the core of the Serapeum itself (Coarelli 1996, p. 109; Mari and Sgalambro 2007, p. 93).[30] L. Sist believed that a basin—a sort of nymphaeum—was set there, confirming the value of the water in rituals addressed to Serapis, clearly related to Osiris (Sist 1997, pp. 303–4). The god was worshipped in the temple of his *paredra* Isis from the very beginning (Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 11, 26). Despite the first mentions of the Iseum at Campus Martius, dated back to the Julio-Claudian Period (Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Tiberius* 1, 2, 37; Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 1, 77), a shrine was already dedicated to the goddess in 43 BC at the behest of Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 47, 15, 4; Coarelli 1984, p. 473; Le Glay 1987, pp. 548–49; Mora 1990b, pp. 87–88; Fontana 2010, p. 42).[31] The Iseum was especially replanned by Domitian after the fire in 80 AD. (Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Domitian* 5; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 66, 24, 2; Eutropius, *Summary of Roman History* 7, 5). Actually, the prostyle tetrastyle temple in Egyptian style is shown on coins dated back to 95–96 AD (Mattingly and Sydenham 1962, p. 346, nos. 239–40, Table 67, 5–6; Bakhoum 1995, p. 36, n. 1; Bricault and Veymiers 2019, pp. 145–52). In the reconstruction offered by Roullet, the Iseum stood in a large courtyard surrounded by a portico. A dromos ran through the middle of the courtyard, leading to the entrance of the temple itself, where the goddess was venerated along with other gods, such as Osiris (Malaise 1972a, pp. 192, 211–12; Roullet 1972, pp. 29–30, 32, 47). A statue of Osiris with an image of Isis was found in the same area where Canina identified the Iseum façade (Fea 1790, I, p. 222, no. 112; de Clarac 1850, p. 230; Canina 1852, pp. 348–51; Lumbroso 1875, p. 53; Marucchi 1883, pp. 44–45; Lafaye 1884, pp. 220–22; Roullet 1972, p. 90, no. 115; Malaise 1972a, p. 200; Lembke 1994, pp. 230–31, no. 23).[32] A head of an Osiris Canopus statue in green stone was noted by Aldovrandi in the first studio in Cardinal Carpi's house. It has been assumed that it belonged to the sacred furniture of the Iseum Campense although its provenance has never been confirmed (Aldrovandi 1556, p. 203; Boissard 1597, I, p. 108; Roullet 1972, p. 98, no. 145; Wild 1981, p. 119; Lembke 1994, pp. 248–49, no. 56).[33] These findings support the hypothesis that the god was worshipped in the Iseum, possibly inside the *cella* of his paredra (Roullet 1972, p. 99). The main role performed by Osiris in the Isis temple at Campus Martius is attested by the famous columns with figured reliefs on the shafts (*columnae caelatae*) (No. Inv. 42178bis (ME2178bis)–National Archeological Museum (Florence); No.

Inv. MC002, MC0012, MC0013–Capitoline Museums (Rome); the location of a fourth column is currently unknown. Colin 1920, pp. 279–83; Roullet 1972, pp. 57, no. 16, 58, nos. 17–19; Malaise 1972a, pp. 195, no. 352, 196, no. 357, 198, no. 368, 203, no. 386; Kater-Sibbes and Vermaseren 1975, no. 278; Ensoli Vittozzi 1990, pp. 59–70; Bongrani 1993, pp. 67–73; Lembke 1994, pp. 186, no. 3, 187, nos. 4–5, 188, no. 6, 189, no. 7; Curto 1998, pp. 389–96). Malaise and Ensoli believed they were part of the temple itself, whereas Roullet located them in the portico within the courtyard, and Lembke placed them at the entrance of the Iseum's peribolos (Malaise 1972a, p. 211; Roullet 1972, pp. 99, 57–58, nos. 16–19; Lembke 1994, p. 20; Ensoli 1998, p. 420). Their iconography reproduces processions or rituals possibly performed in the Isis temples, which show a considerable familiarity with Egyptian models (Quack 2003, p. 60; Nagel 2019, 2, pp. 1065–73).[34] A frieze, carved around the shaft, shows eight priests arranged in pairs and standing face to face on footstools. The reliefs on the columns kept at the Capitoline Museums show, among the ranks of the officiants, two priests, belonging to the same iconographic type of minister's statues found in Benevento, bearing Osiris Canopus images. The exhibition of these statues, among the religious symbols held by the other officiants, confirms the main role of the god in the temple of Isis at Campus Martius.[35]

4.4. Fiesole

Osiris and Isis were also possibly worshipped together in the Roman colony of *Faesulae*, located at the junction of the trade routes between the north and south of the peninsula. In February 1883 two statues, several architectural elements and some wall remains were found near the convent of the English Sisters of St. Jerome, between the church of St. Alexander and the Episcopal Seminary (De Marco 1981, p. 23, Figure 15; Guidotti 1997, p. 368). The two statues that made up a sole statuary group show a larger image of a seated headless goddess, holding a bunch of spikes and a situla (No. Inv. 21—Civic Archaeological Museum (Fiesole); Galli 1914, p. 77, no 21, Figure 52; Reinach 1912, III, p. 125, 7; Malaise 1972a, p. 44, no. 2; De Marco 1981, p. 23, Figure 15; Bricault 1993, pp. 38–39; Guidotti 1997, pp. 368, 480). On the base an inscription was wrote by a Roman veteran, Gargennius Maximus, in favor of his brother, Gargennius Macrinus, to Isis Regina, Lady of Taposiris Magna (CIL 1544=ILS 4352=Syll. 564=RICIS 511/0102; Bricault 1993, p. 46). The dedication explains the painful pose of the statue worshipped in Taposiris Magna, where an Osiris tomb was possibly placed (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 21; Kees 1932, IV A, 2, pp. 2259–60; Malaise 1972a, p. 44, no. 2; Bricault 1993, pp. 45, 47; Guidotti 1997, p. 368). The god is represented on the second statue, which unfortunately only survives in the form of a base and two feet of the god carved on it (No. Inv. 20—Civic Archaeological Museum (Fiesole); Malaise 1972a, p. 43, no. 1; 1972b, p. 161; De Marco 1981, p. 23, Figure 15; Guidotti 1997, p. 481). The identification of the statue with Osiris is therefore confirmed by the inscription, that reads DOMINO OSIRI / [C.(AIUS)] GARGENNIVS SP(URII) F(ILIUS) SCA(PTIA TRIBU) MAXIMVS / VETERANVS NOMINE FRATRIS SVI / M(ARCI) GARGENNI SP(URII) F(ILII) SCA(PTIA TRIBU) MACRINI VETERANI (CIL XI, 1543=ILS 4351=Syll. 563=RICIS 511/0101). We can imagine that Gargennius Maximus became an adherent of the cult of Isis and Osiris after his stay in Taposiris Magna while returning from the military campaigns against the Parthian Empire during the reign of Septimius Severus (Malaise 1972b, pp. 188, 437). Both statues date back to the end of the 2nd and beginning of the 3rd century AD (Malaise 1972a, pp. 43–44; Guidotti 1997, p. 368). They possibly belonged to the ritual furniture of a shrine dedicated to Isis and Osiris, built just on the way to Florence (De Marco 1981, p. 23, Figure 15; Bricault 1993, p. 38; Guidotti 1997, p. 368; Kleibl 2009, p. 289; Bricault 2013, p. 66).

5. Conclusions

In Roman time, the marked effort of a "reosirianization" of the Greek-Egyptian religion allowed the spread of the Osiris cult, which was received early in the Italian peninsula. There, his watery nature was especially stressed. This aspect, attested since the Old King-

dom, is developed during the Late Period and recorded by classic authors. Osiris is the Nile since the humors (rDw.w) that have exuded from his corpse are the yearly flood of the Nile (Winkler 2006, p. 132; Smith 2017, p. 450). Through the libation rituals, performed with this water, Osiris gets back his corporal fluids, completing the revivification process.[36] The restoring of Osiris, with which every deceased is identified, is the religious counterpart of "the macrocosmic revivification process, the inundation, a natural event that was ritualized in the resurrection process" (Winkler 2006, p. 132). These beliefs were fully assimilated by the adepts of the Isiac cults, as this revivifying water took on a special role in the rituals performed in the Italian peninsula. During the *Inventio Osiridis* festival, which celebrated the discovery of Osiris's corpse, Plutarch informs us that some priests carried a sacred *cista* holding a golden coffer, into which the hidden sacredness—as Tibullus calls it, namely the potable water—was poured (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 39; Tibullus, *Elegies*, 1, 7, 48). A number of Isiac processions or veneration scenes, described by classic authors and represented on reliefs and frescos, show some ministers among the ranks of priests with veiled hands bearing or exhibiting the *hydria* (Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, 11, 11; Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, 8, 4; Fuhrmann 1941, p. 597; Malaise 1972a, pp. 234–35, no. 441, 251–53; Tran Tam Tinh 1964, pp. 95, 138, no. 37; 1971, pp. 29–30, no. 58, Figure 40). It possibly contained (Nile) water, intended as the embodiment of Osiris (Malaise 1985, p. 144). The *hydriai* were handled in exactly the same way as the sacred images of Osiris Canopus, one of the main forms of the god that spread throughout Italy. Represented as a full jar, recalling his watery nature, he was usually carried in a procession, held only with covered hands and exhibited to the worshippers for veneration. Therefore, sacred images, rituals and furniture suggest that Osiris is water. For this reason, the role of this sacred fluid in Egyptian temples in Italy is pivotal. As noted by some authors, it was sometimes drawn from the Nile itself (Servius, *The commentary on Virgil*, 4, 512; Juvenal, *Satires*, 6, 526–527). Afterwards, the Isis complexes were provided with basins, in some cases filled by rain, from which water was drawn to be used during rituals and festivals (Wild 1981, pp. 130–47). As seen, at Tivoli a number of these facilities were found in the so-called *Antinoeion* and were intended to be used in lustral washing. A basin, possibly set within the inner space of the Serapeum's exedra at the Campus Martius in Rome, was reserved for the washing of and sprinkling over priests and referred to the ritual value of the water and its connection with the cult of Serapis and Osiris, as well (Wild 1981, p. 134; Sist 1997, p. 304). A cult was definitely addressed to Osiris within the temple of his *paredra*, as Apuleius recalls, and some archaeological evidence proves it. An image of the god and two statues of Osiris Canopus were found in the neighborhood of the Iseum Campense. A special devotion was addressed to this form of the god since it was also represented on the reliefs embellishing the shafts of two columns, belonging to the temple. The subjects shown there hold the same attitude as two statues found in Benevento. They are two priests with veiled hands, each carrying an Osiris Canopus. The god was the main recipient of the cult who performed in the Canopus, built by the chief of Martenses. It was a guild of veterans coming from Canopus that had taken part in the Trajan military campaigns in Dacia. As an imperial favor for their service, they had the opportunity to settle in the Samnium and to worship the god of their town of origin (Koemoth 2019, pp. 119, 139–40). In Faesulae, the cult of Isis and Osiris of Taposiris Magna was introduced by two veterans, as well. Like many Romans who stayed in Egypt for military service, they began to worship local deities for inclusion reasons (Dunand 1973a, pp. 182–83). Once they came back to their homeland, they continued worshipping these gods, allowing their spread throughout the peninsula. As other Egyptian gods, the cult of Osiris penetrated through the Italian peninsula mainly thanks to merchants, soldiers, and freedmen (Cumont 1911, p. 81; Coarelli 2007, p. 61). The five so-called "cool water" inscriptions found in Italy were mainly written by freedmen (Gasparini 2011, pp. 264–67). The formulas involved in these Roman epigraphs show a familiarity with the Pharaonic religious tradition, especially concerning the value of water that came from Osiris in restoring the deceased.[37]

Therefore, the evidence examined show that through water, which he dispensed, Osiris is perceived in the Italian peninsula as a revivifying god who guarantees spiritual and material fertility with his creative and germinal power and restores the deceased, satiating his thirst and getting back the bodily efflux he lost at the moment of death (Dunand 1973a, p. 168; Wild 1981, pp. 124–25; Genaille 1983, p. 298; Spieser 1997, pp. 213–27; Winkler 2006, pp. 131–32; Koemoth 2019, pp. 148–49). These concepts partially retained traces of their origin and show a rooted knowledge of Egyptian beliefs, which were selectively appropriate to fit specific religious needs through new architectonic structures (i.e., Canopus), revised ritual practices (i.e., *columnae caelatae*), and specific forms of cult (i.e., Osiris Canopus) (Nagel 2013, *passim*; Gordon and Gasparini 2014, pp. 41–43; Gasparini 2016, pp. 136–38; Nagel 2019, 2, p. 1167).[38]

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Notes

1 Bricault (2000, p. 205) postulates that these cults spread thanks to Egyptian merchant communities settling in the Italian peninsula.

2 Whereas Malaise (1985, p. 132) believes that these rites had no agrarian value at that time. This aspect became pivotal when the festival began to be celebrated close to the harvest season, due to the shift of civil calendar dates.

3 Several written sources, dated back to the Greek-Roman Period, attest that different vases were used to hold Osiris's humors in various nomes (Pantalacci 1981a, §214; 1981b, pp. 57–66; Beinlich 1984, pp. 130–32, 246, 284, 318; Goyon 1985, p. 42, no. 24; Kettel 1994, pp. 320–21, n. 46–50).

4 This assimilation between Osiris and the Nile is referred by several other authors: Aelianus, *On the Characteristics of Animals*, 10, 46; Porphyry in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 3, 11, 51; Salutius, *On the Gods and the World*, 4.

5 Monuments representing *cista* are scarce. Some *cista* are shown in relief on marble altars, sarcophagi, and frescoes. A terracotta *cista*'s lid as well as a mold fragment have been also found. For an overview of this sacred furniture see (Malaise 1972a, p. 280; 1985, pp. 135–43; Wild 1981, pp. 103–13).

6 Several other hypotheses were made about the *cista* contents: Griffiths (1975, pp. 224–25) suggests that these vases contained a reproduction of Osiris's phallus, while other scholars believe that it contained serpents (Müller 1959, p. 107; Le Corsu 1977, pp. 129, 144, 191).

7 The ritual described possibly lies in two ceremonies performed at Dendera (Chassinat 1966–1968, I, pp. 41–58, 62; RÄRG, 391–392; LÄ 3, 744–746; Griffiths 1980, pp. 167–70; Malaise 1985, p. 137).

8 About Osiris and the moon see Wittman 1938, p. 65; Derchain 1962, pp. 44–46; Hani 1976, pp. 204–15; Cauville 2021, *passim*.

9 Clement of Alexandria (*The Stromata*, 6, 4, 37) provides a precise description of the Osiris procession performed at Alexandria: "And behind all walks the Prophet, with the water-vase carried openly in his arms".

10 About the *Navigium Isidis* festival see Malaise 1972b, pp. 217–21; Griffiths 1975, pp. 31–47; Bricault 2006, pp. 134–50; 2013, pp. 379–84.

11 About the temple see SB, V, 8296; Strabo, *Geography*, 17, 1, 17; Bernand 1970, pp. 236–37, no. 7; Dunand 1973b, pp. 112–13; Hani 1976, pp. 198–99, n. 7; Goddio 2009, pp. 16–17. About the god see Weber 1911, pp. 29–48; von Bissing 1929, pp. 39–59; Panofsky 1961, pp. 193–216; Tran Tam Tinh 1971, pp. 33–38; Fouquet 1973, pp. 61–69; Griffiths 1975, pp. 227–32; Wild 1981, pp. 113–23; LÄ 3, 2, pp. 115–16; Kayser 1992, pp. 207–17; LIMC 7, 1, pp. 116–31; Kettel 1994, pp. 315–30; Koemoth 2019, pp. 117–49.

12 At Luxor, the cella of the Iseum/Serapeum kept a large Osiris Canopus statue (Leclant 1951, pp. 454–56; Golvin et al. 1981, pp. 130–31). In the cella of the Iseum at Ras el Soda (Alexandria), two statues of Osiris Canopus (type A and B) stood together with that of Isis (Adriani 1940, pp. 143–44, pl. LII-LIII). In the so-called temple E of Soli (Cyprus), a statue of the god was found upright on the cult platform (Westholm 1936, pp. 101–2, no. 329, pl. XXIII; Kleibl 2007, pp. 142–44, fig 11; 2009, pp. 254–57).

13 A statue of Osiris Canopus possibly comes from the Domitian villa (No. Inv. 199–Gregorian Egyptian Museum (Vatican City); Botti and Romanelli 1951, p. 122, no. 199; Malaise 1972a, p. 61, no. 2), while another was found on the Circeo promontory (Villa Torlonia (Rome); Roullet 1972, p. 97, no. 144a; Curto 1985, pp. 46–49; LIMC 7, 1, p. 121, no. 32).

14 This speculation possibly relies on the representation of a procession placed on the basement of the central room of the east Osiris chapel, set on the roof of Hathor temple at Dendera. It shows gods and goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt holding a canopic jar that kept Osiris's remains, worshipped in their nome. Among them, there are also Osiris's humors. PM VI, 99 (66)–(71), (72)–(77); Pantalacci 1981a; 1981b, pp. 57–66; Goyon 1985; Pantalacci 1989, pp. 327–37; Cauville 1988, pp. 23–36; Kettel 1994, pp. 315–16.

15 A Callimachus epigram (VI, 148) recalls the lamps offered to the god of Canopus in order to ensure his protection during sea trade voyages. Another inscription from the Serapeum A in Delos recalls that a worshipper offered the tithe of his earnings in sea trade to Osiris (IG XI, 4=RICIS 2020/0125). A poem, engraved on a stela found in the Iseum in Thessalonica, identifies Osiris as the inventor of the very first ship (IG X 2, 108=RICIS 113/0506). A statue of Osiris Canopus (no. Inv. CGC 38.861—Egyptian Museum (Cairo)) kept in the necklace the hieroglyphic mr(yt) "canal-port" (Faulkner 1999, p. 112). Also Pliny (*Natural History*, 7, 56, 206–209) identified Osiris as an inventor of navigation. About the marine character of Osiris and Isis possibly developed in the religious context of Canopus see Frankfurter 1998, pp. 162–63; Koemoth 2019, pp. 145–49; Bricault 2013, p. 68. About the ship-shaped lamps used in Isiac rituals see Bricault 2006, pp. 123–34.

16 The same idea is stated in Porphyry in Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 3, 11, 50.

17 About Osiris as a god of vegetation see (Frazer 1907, p. 330; Breasted 1912, p. 23; RARG, p. 572; Bonneau 1964, pp. 249–52; Malaise 1972b, p. 204; Hani 1976, pp. 155–58; LIMC 7, 1, p. 108).

18 On the topic see also Nagel 2013, pp. 152–57; Smith 2017, pp. 399–403.

19 One comes from Saqqara (Botti 1900, p. 275, no. 85; Breccia 1911, p. 183, no. 375); five come from Alexandria (Botti 1899, p. 50, nos. 3, 7; Botti 1900, p. 274, no. 84, p. 503, no. 459; Breccia 1911, pp. 170–71 no 332, p. 173 no. 341; Lévy 1927, p. 300; Łukaszewicz 1989, pp. 195–96); one in Carthage (SEG IX, 829=SIRIS 778=RICIS 703/0111; Malaise 1972a, p. 311; Laporte and Bricault 2020, p. 38); and one in Caesarea Maritima (RICIS 403/0401; Neguev 1971, pp. 262–63, no. 39; Lifshitz 1977, pp. 504–5; Lehmann and Holum 2000, pp. 139–40, no. 158, pl. CIV.)

20 Ras el Soda (Adriani 1940, pp. 143–44, pl. LII-LIII); Canopus (Dunand 1973b, p. 112); Luxor (Leclant 1951, pp. 454–56); Behbet el Hagar (Pirelli 2007, p. 134).

21 For Isis Pelagia see Bricault 2020.

22 For an overview on Isis Pelagia see Bruneau 1961, pp. 435–46; 1963, pp. 301–8; 1974, pp. 333–81; 1978, pp. 109–71; Bricault 2020.

23 For the importance of Isis in the Flavian's political-religious ideology see Capriotti Vittozzi 2011, pp. 237–59; Bülow Clausen 2012, pp. 93–122.

24 According to Pirelli (1997b, p. 508, no. V. 194), the Canopic figure held by the specimen no. Inv. 1926 represents a female deity because it lacks the beard clearly visible on the twin statue.

25 The Canopus-bearer's iconography is well attested thanks to several monuments found in Egypt and beyond (No. Inv. 20275—Graeco-Roman Museum (Alexandria); No. Inv. 4309—Graeco-Roman Museum (Alexandria); No. Inv. 54.709–Walters Art Gallery (Baltimore); Sn–Museo del Tesoro di Sant'Eulalia (Cagliari)). For an overview see Dunand 1998, pp. 189–94; LIMC 7, 1, pp. 127–28; Gallo 2002, pp. 21–24.

26 About the topic see also Picard 1962, pp. 16, 145; des Gagniers et al. 1969, pp. 16, 145.

27 Renberg (2010) and Grenier (2008) reject this idea, whereas Bragantini (2018, p. 233, n. 74) deems possible a funerary or commemorative function of the complex.

28 For Antinous see LÄ 1, p. 323; Mayer 1991; Vout 2005, pp. 80–96; Mambella 2008.

29 Ensoli (1998, pp. 424–30) believes that the construction of the Serapeum was carried out by Hadrian himself.

30 Lembke (1994, pp. 21–25) placed the temple within the peribolos. Ensoli (1998, pp. 413–17, 430–31) speculated about the collocation of the Serapis temple in the Porticus Divorum.

31 *Contra* Bricault and Veymiers 2019, pp. 140–42, who believe that the temple was built by Vespasian. For further information on the Iseum Campense see Castagnoli 1941, pp. 65–66, Table II; Gatti 1943–1944, pp. 117–63; Carettoni et al. 1960, pp. 97, 99–102, Table XXXI; Malaise 1972a, pp. 187–214; Roullet 1972, pp. 23–35; Roncaioli 1979, pp. 81–96; Bongrani 1993, pp. 67–71; Lembke 1994; Ensoli 1997, pp. 306–8, 391, 393, 422–23, 582–83; 1998; Kleibl 2009, pp. 260–64; Fontana 2010, pp. 41–46; Pfeiffer 2019, pp. 187–91; Lembke 2019, pp. 29–40; Nagel 2019, 2, pp.1056–62.

32 "*Nella fabbrica nuova del convento de' padri di s. Domenico alla Minerva oltre l'essersi trovata una statua d'Iside e Osiride di marmo egittio […] l'obligo d'haver visto queste curiosità antiche della Minerva l'ho al padre Reginaldo Lucarino, che venne a darne conto a casa, a mio fratello, e ci condusse sul luogo a veder il tutto, e questo fu la mattina dei 30 di marzo 1642.*" Cassiano dal Pozzo, *Memoriale*, cod. 5 E, 10.

33 Another Osiris Canopus statue possibly comes from the Iseum Campense: No. Inv. 88–Gregorian Egyptian Museum (Vatican City). Botti and Romanelli 1951, p. 124, no. 202; Roullet 1972, pp. 140–41, no. 314, Figure 32; LIMC 7, 1, p. 121, no. 29.

34 A similar scene is represented on a relief kept at Klein Glienicke (Postdam). Schede 1926, II, pp. 60–61, Figure 4; Goethert 1970; Roullet 1972, p. 64, no. 51.

35 Quack (2003, pp. 62–63) postulated that another proof of the performing of rituals in honor of Osiris in the Iseum at Campus Martius was the discovery of some water clocks (Lembke 1994, pp. 246–48), which he links with the cult of the god (Quack 2002).

[36] "L'eau est l'agent actif de la régénération d'Osiris dont les humeurs sont fertiles" Coulon 2014, pp. 315–16.

[37] The "cool water" corresponds to the Latin *refrigerium* which literally means "to cool again". The concept was also assimilated by Aramaic and Jewish beliefs and possibly through them passed into the Christian idea of *refrigerium*, which from Tertullian begins to mean spiritual restoring and joy after death (Cumont 1911, p. 102, n. 90; De Labriolle 1912, p. 219; Parrot 1937, p. 56; Deonna 1939, p. 74; Mohrmann 1961, p. 89; Ingle 2019, p. 88). For the Aramaic and Jewish sources see CIS II, 141; Enoch, XXII. 2, 9.

[38] For other important sources concerning Osiris in Italy that have not been quoted here see Malaise 1972a, p. 33, no. 5M, p. 34, no. 1, p. 84, no. 102, p. 114, no. 9, p. 140, no. 96, p. 137, no. 87; Roullet 1972, p. 97, nos. 141–43; Sfameni Gasparro 1973, p. 46, no. 90; Gallo 1994, pp. 67–87.

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