

## The Effect of the Legend of Osiris on the Behaviour of the King Ptolemy Philadelphus

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### Abstract

It is clear that, king Ptolemy "Philadelphus" was affected by the legend of Osiris and what had accrued to the four brothers, Osiris "*Wsir*", Isis "*3st*", Seth "*sth*", and Nephthys "*Nbt-hwt*", and specially what had happened to god Osiris and his beloved sister-wife Isis. Therefore, this effect appeared clearly in the behaviour and deeds of king Ptolemy II "Philadelphus" as manifested in their cases. Firstly in honour of both Osiris and Isis he built the temple of Osiris in the city of Pithom and the great temple of Isis at the Island of Philae. Secondly by his marriage to his beloved sister-wife queen Arsinoe II as the case of Osiris and Isis in the legend. So "Philadelphus" is considered the first Ptolemaic king who married his sister. Thirdly, by honouring and deifying both of his dead father Ptolemy I "Soteros" and his dead mother queen Berenike I and then his deifying his beloved sister-wife queen Arsinoe II. Imitating Isis when she honoured her dead husband Osiris and Horus "*hr*" when he honoured his dead father Osiris and his beloved mother Isis. Thereon both king Ptolemy II "Philadelphus" and his beloved sister-wife queen "Arsinoe II" become representing god Osiris and goddess Isis on the earth. Therefore, this research sheds light on the theme of "The Effect of the Legend of Osiris on the behaviour of king Ptolemy II "Philadelphus".

According to the doctrine of the Ennead of Heliopolis "*Psdt*", - or the company of nine gods of Heliopolis "*iwnw*" - Osiris "*Wsir*", Isis "*3st*", Seth "*sth*", and Nephthys "*Nbt-hwt*", were sons of Geb "*Gb*", "God of the earth" and Nut "Goddess of the sky". The legend of Osiris is considered one of the most important myths from ancient times. It occupies a great rank in the hearts and minds of the Egyptians because it refers to the victory of the good over the evil and the good over the injustice <sup>1</sup>.

According to the legend, Osiris was the elder son of Geb and Nut. So, he is considered the heir of the throne of Egypt and the owner of the whole land. The Egyptian people loved Osiris for his kindness and his endearment. He was the god who taught the Egyptians cultivation, culture, arts, knowledge and all good deeds. Therefore, Osiris occupies part a particular in the hearts and minds of the Egyptians. <sup>2</sup>

Isis "the beloved sister-wife" chose Osiris to be her husband and she preferred him to her another brother Seth. Isis begetten to Osiris their son Horus. For these reasons Seth hated his elder brother Osiris and decided killing him. After the death of Osiris, his brother Seth became the king of Egypt. Isis, the beloved and the loyal wife educated her son to be a strong man. Horus became the man who is capable of revenging his killed father. After many fighting battles between Horus and Seth, Horus managed to defeat his uncle Seth and

recovered the throne of his dead father Osiris. Horus became the king of Egypt and the owner of the land. He was considered the last god-king of Egypt. In the eyes of the Egyptians Isis represents the beloved sister-wife, the loyal widow and the good mother <sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the ancient Egyptians considered the Pharaoh or the King of Egypt “*bsileus*”, a son of the sun god Re and the living image of god Horus, the last god-king of Egypt. The king was considered the living god Horus during his life and Osiris god of the underworld after his death. So, he was considered the heir of the gods on the throne of Egypt. He was also considered the tool of communication between the Egyptians and all the gods of the cosmos, upon whom the welfare of society depended <sup>4</sup>.

As for the Egyptians, Osiris was considered the god of the underworld who helped and protected the dead men during their journey to the other world and gave them the eternity forever. He was the best loved of the Egyptian gods and every man was entitled to regard himself as united with Osiris when he dies. Again Osiris is considered the first mummy. He was resurrected after death, thereby led every Egyptian to hope for a similar event. He was also a nature god, associated closely with the river and the rich soil of the valley. Osiris was the principle of fertility, in opposition to the principle of sterility personified by Seth<sup>5</sup>.

Iconographically Osiris is surrounded by lotuses, sedges, water and pastoral tokens. The splendid cycle of his life and death was a symbolic rendering of the sequence of the seasons and the annual rise and fall of the Nile. As god of every green and growing thing, Osiris passed into the body of every man who ate them. He was also held to be a culture hero, the god who introduced agriculture and the arts of life into Egypt <sup>6</sup>.

Osiris was not also a national god and his adoration was not also connected with a special place, but was a general god who can be united with any Egyptian god. Therefore his adoration spread everywhere in Egypt. At the places in which the god of the living was Re “*Rc*”, the rising sun, was Osiris the god of the dead, the setting sun. At Memphis “*Mn-nfr*”, where the great god Ptah “*Pth*” represented Hapi or Apis, the living god of the Nile in the shape of a bull that was called Apis-Osiris, Osiris represented the dead bull and was called Osiris-Apis, or Osir-Hapi, and the Greeks called him Serapis or Sarapis <sup>7</sup>.

The Graeco-Egyptian god Sarapis, was a really Egyptian god in origin a local god of Memphis “Osiris-Apis” that was introduced to the Greeks on a Greek figure, as a mixture of Zeus, Dionysus and Pluto. He was usually depicted in a human shape as a bearded Zeus with long hair in sumptuous curls, and was crowned with a grain basket <sup>8</sup>.

With the lapse of time, the adoration of Sarapis spread throughout the Ptolemaic Empire and thence the Mediterranean world. It became one of the important cults in the Aegean Sea. Many temples were built in honor of the holy triad of Sarapis, Isis and Harpokrates. Both the Ptolemaic king and his wife represented Osiris and Isis on the earth <sup>9</sup>.

In honour of god Osiris and during his first visit to the city of Pithom - at the boundaries of the Egyptian land in Wadi El Tomalat, and now “Tell-el-Maskhotta”- the king Ptolemy “Philadelphus” gave his instructions to build two temples; one to Osiris “*Wsir*” and the other to Atum “*Ttm*”, the solar god of Heliopolis. Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” visited the city of Pithom three times during his reign. The first one was in the sixth year of his reign “280/279 BC”, when the work of the canal which connected the Nile with the Red Sea began, and at once he gave his orders to build the temple of Osiris. The second visit was in the twelfth year of his reign “274/273 BC”, and the third one was in “265/264 BC”. At once he assigned to the Egyptian temples “750,000” deben which equaled “3125” talents of silver. <sup>10</sup>

In honour of goddess Isis on one side and for his beloved wife and favourite sister queen Arsinoe II on the other, Ptolemy II "Philadelphus" gave his instructions to build the temple of Isis at the island of Philae in "284/246 BC"<sup>11</sup>.

The island of Philae is known as "*p-ṣrk*", meaning the End or the Limit "*ḏr*". It is situated about four kilometers south of Aswan-Dam. The name of Philae refers to the Graeco-Roman period, and it meant "the beloved". The Ancient Egyptians called it "P-aa-lk", Coptic Pilak which means the end of the southern boundaries. After erecting the High-Dam its temples were removed to the adjacent island of Ajilkea that is somewhat higher. In the ancient times, Philae was one of the great religious centers in Egypt and it was a very popular shrine especially for the tribesmen of the Nubian people "*Mḏ3yw*" of Ancient Nubia. It received annually thousands of pilgrims like Abydos, where it was considered one of the important places to which people travel for cure and treatment<sup>12</sup>.

The chief goddess of the island of Philae was Isis. There were also other gods and goddesses of the cataract to be worshipped as Khnum and Satet. Isis was worshipped as the "great goddess of magic" who had protected her son Horus from snakes, predators and other dangers, thus she would protect the children as well. The ancient Egyptians regarded Isis as the "eye of Re" "*irt-R*" and the Greeks conceived her as a moon goddess. In Greek times she became the protective goddess of the seamen. Her name probably means "*st*", which means "seat" or "throne" therefore, she had originally been the embodiment of the throne. She was regarded as the symbolic mother of the king<sup>13</sup>.

During the Graeco-Roman period, Isis, goddess of many names and functions, including fertility and healing, her cult became popular throughout the Mediterranean. She was also worshipped throughout the Roman Empire including "Rome, Pompei and London", and her cult was one of the several mysterious cults that gained great popularity<sup>14</sup>.

Because of the great status of Isis among the gods, and spreading of her cult inside and outside Egypt, her temple at Philae was the last bastion of ancient Egyptian religion. the place in which the last hieroglyphics were inscribed. In 437 AD, it for long remained the only temple in which the Egyptian priests could still perform the old rites in a period during which the Christianity was spreading.

In 535 AD, the Roman emperor Justinian had the temple closed definitely. The scribes and the priests were exiled, the doors to the inner sanctum were forced, and the temple fell into the hands of the Christian hermits who devastated it. The naos was profaned and the hypostyle hall became a Christian church<sup>15</sup>.

This temple of Isis at Philae which was built by king Ptolemy "Philadelphus" (284-246 BC), is considered the main building in the island. Its base "the sanctuary" and the main constructions were erected by Ptolemy "Philadelphus" and were decorated in the reign of his son Ptolemy III "Euergetes I" (246-221 BC)<sup>16</sup>.

The forecourt of the temple is flanked by two colonnades and it is irregular in shape since the second pylon is set at an angle to the first. The inner pylon was raised by Ptolemy XII "Neos Dionysos", although the gateway was built earlier "probably by Ptolemy VIII "Euergetes II". The short, wide, open court leads to a pillared hall "sometimes termed hypostyle hall or pronaos", several vestibules and finally the sanctuary of Isis. The court, with a single column on each side, would have been separated by screen walls from the pronaos. Three vestibules lead to the core of the temple or the sanctuary of Isis in which is the pedestal of her boat rested, it was put there by Ptolemy III "Euergetes I" and his wife

Berenice (230 BC). Stairs lead to roof chambers in which the mystery of the resurrection of Osiris was celebrated <sup>17</sup>.

Besides the main temple of Isis, there are a number of smaller buildings like the temple of Hathor that is situated on the east of the second pylon and was built by Ptolemy VI "Philometor" and developed by Augustus. It consists of a colonnade hall and a forecourt. Hadrian's gateway is on the West side of the temple near the second pylon, built by emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD). Trajan's kiosk was built by emperor Trajan in (105 AD), it is also known as pharaoh's bed <sup>18</sup>.

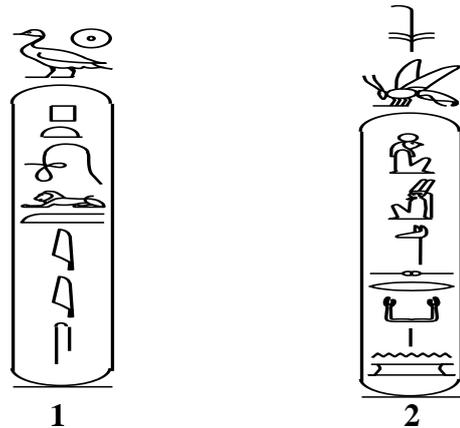
It can be noticed that, because of the effect of the legend of Osiris on the behaviour of king Ptolemy "Philadelphus", he built this temple particularly in honour of goddess Isis.

There is a similarity in the good family relationships that prevailed in the legend between Osiris and his beloved sister-wife Isis with those between the Ptolemaic king Ptolemy "Philadelphus" and his beloved sister-wife Arsinoe II.

This similarity was the main reason in which king Ptolemy "Philadelphus" chose goddess Isis to be the owner of his great temple at the island of Philae. This temple was also built in honour of his beloved sister-wife Arsinoe II.

The Greek title of "Philadelphus" expressed the good familiar relationship that existed between king Ptolemy II "Philadelphus" and his sister-wife queen Arsinoe II that means "Beloved of his Sister" <sup>19</sup>.

This is an example of the Pharaonic titles that were borne by the Ptolemaic Monarch Ptolemy II "Philadelphus" including the birth name and the coronation name of him :-



**Ptolemy II "Philadelphus"** <sup>20</sup>

**1- The birth name**

*"s3-Rc" ptwlmys*

*"Son of Re" Ptolemaios*

**2- The coronation name**

*"nsw-bity" wsr k3 n Rc mry-Imn.* <sup>21</sup>

*"King of Upper and Lower Egypt", The powerful soul of Re, beloved of Amun.* <sup>22</sup>

It can be noticed that, the fifth title "s3-Rc", "Son of Re" usually precedes the birth name of the born king. It was written before the actual name of the king that was written inside an oval ring in order to distinguish it from other titles. This title proved the divine birth and the pure divine blood of the king who was considered the direct descendant from god Re.

The fourth title "nsw-bity", "King of Upper and Lower Egypt" preceded the coronation name of the crowned king in his coronation day <sup>23</sup>.

One of the scenes that decorated the Northern wall of the first vestibule of the temple of Isis at Philae, is the coronation scene that represents the king “probably Ptolemy Philadelphus” crowned by both Atum “the great god of the Innead of Heliopolis” and Monthu “the war god of Thebes”<sup>24</sup>.

One could ask that, in this coronation scene particularly why king Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” is crowned by gods Atum and Monthu? Or in other words, why he is not crowned by goddesses Nekhbet and Wadjet as usual?

In the ceremonies of the coronation it was accustomed to that the king was crowned by two goddesses Nekhbet "*Nhbt*" and Wadjet "*W3dt*". Both Nekhbet and Wadjet "*Nhbt*" and "*W3dt*" represented the "*nbtj*" “Two Ladies” or the “Two Protective Goddesses” of Egypt before the unification. Nekhbt "*Nhbt*" was the goddess of El-Kab City beside Nekhn "*nhn*" - “Hierakonpolis”- the religious capital of Upper Egypt. She was depicted in the form of a vulture. Wadjet "*W3dt*" was the goddess of Buto beside **Pe**-city, - now “Tell-el-Pharaein” in “Kafr-el-Sheikh” - the religious capital of Lower Egypt. She was depicted in the form of a snake. Therefore, when the king was crowned by Nekhbt and Wadjet this indicated the king’s control over the two lands of Egypt Upper and Lower<sup>25</sup>.

It might be that, in this coronation scene both of Atum and Monthu replaced Nekhbet and Wadjet according to the desire of king Ptolemy "Philadelphus". Probably the king preferred god Atum to be his crowning god because Atum was "the great god of the Innead of Heliopolis", or "the great god of the legend of Osiris".

As god Osiris married his beloved and favourite sister goddess Isis, Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” married his beloved and favourite sister queen Arsinoe II. Although he was married before her to his first wife Arsinoe I, he fell in love of his beloved sister Arsinoe II and married her in spite of that she was older than him by many years.

From the ancient times, the Egyptian kings used to marry their sisters for keeping the purity and the holiness of the royal blood. The ancient Egyptians practiced this kind of marriage which not only kept the purity of the royal blood, but also it had occurred among their deities as Osiris and Isis, Seth and Nephthys<sup>26</sup>.

So, the marriage of the king to his sister was considered a perfect royal marriage, or in other words, pure divine blood. Therefore, the Egyptian Pharaohs preferred this kind of marriage. The Ptolemies also preferred it to keep the purity of the royal blood, to guarantee their authority over the throne, and to show their imitation to the Pharaohs. However the Greeks refused this kind of marriage because they considered a kind of dissipation<sup>27</sup>.

The Ptolemies preferred to marry their sisters since the reign of Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” until the end of the reign of Cleopatra VII. Except both Ptolemy III “Euergetes I” who married his cousin Berenike II "daughter of king Magas" and Ptolemy V “Epiphanes” who married Cleopatra I. Cleopatra was the daughter of king Antiochus III king of Syria, who first brought this name to the house of Ptolemy. Ptolemy V had no sisters to marry. At the same time he wanted to support and improve the relationship between the two states by this marriage. Therefore, Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” is considered the first Ptolemaic king who married his beloved sister-wife “Arsinoe II”<sup>28</sup>.

As goddess Isis honoured and lamented about her dead husband god Osiris she searched his cut body throughout Egypt and buried his limbs ; Horus honoured both his dead father Osiris and his beloved mother Isis.

In 279 BC, Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” deified his dead father Ptolemy I and his mother Berenike I under the name of “Theoi-Soter“, that means “two saviour gods”. He joined their adoration with the adoration of Alexander <sup>29</sup>.

In Alexandria, a great festival called the Ptolemaieia was held in 279/8 BC by Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” in honour of his dead father Ptolemy I “Soter I”. There were grand processions with exotic animals, sacrifices, banquets, athletic games, and musical contests, lasting for perhaps a full month <sup>30</sup>.

Around 268 BC, after the death of his beloved sister-wife queen Arsinoe II, Ptolemy “Philadelphus” deified her and established a cult in her honour. Then he deified himself with her adoration. So, the living king and the deceased queen came to be worshipped together under the name of “Theoi-Adelphoi” that means “brother-sister loving gods”. Therefore, Ptolemy II founded this adoration for himself during his life and for his beloved wife Arsinoe II after her death <sup>31</sup>.

From the point of view of some scholars like, “Tarn” and “Husson” who mentioned - according to “Hibeh 199 papyrus”- that, Arsinoe II was deified during her life with her husband Ptolemy II “Philadelphus” in 272/271 BC, not after her death in 270 BC <sup>32</sup>.

In any case, whether Arsinoe II was deified during her life or after her death, she enjoyed perfect honour. Her statues were to be set up in the temples throughout the land alongside the already present deities. She was identified with goddesses, most often Isis and Aphrodite-Hathor, and she was treated as an individual deity <sup>33</sup>.

From the point of view of some scholars like, “Tarn” and “Walbank” both the Ptolemaic king and his wife represented Osiris and Isis on the earth <sup>34</sup>.

Thereon, both king Ptolemy “Philadelphus” and his beloved sister-wife queen “Arsinoe II” represented god Osiris and the goddess Isis on the earth.

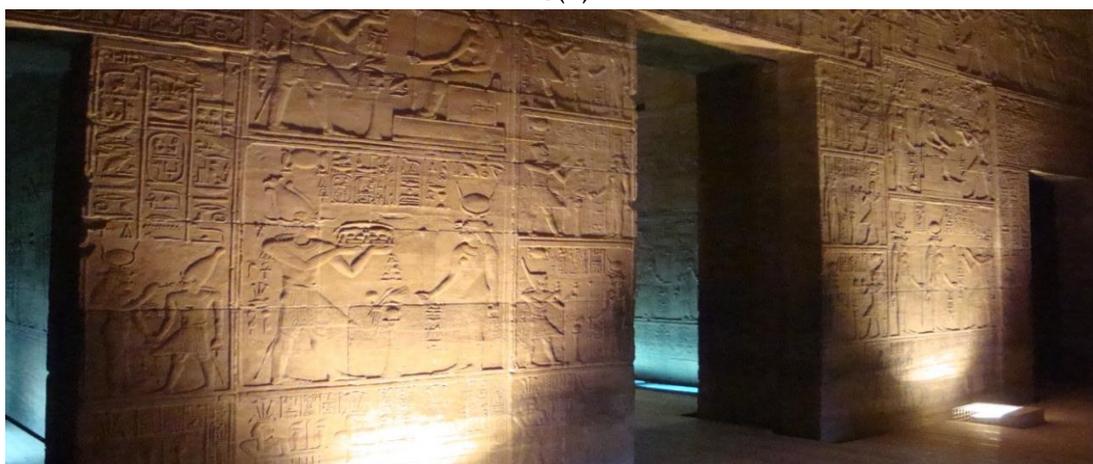
**Figures\***



**Fig(1)**



**Fig(2)**



**Fig(3)**



Fig(4)



Fig (5)

PLATES

Making Offerings Scenes of the king Ptolemy II “Philadelphus”

Philae Temple

The Inner Vestibule before the Sanctuary of the Temple

“The Researcher”

\* Photographs by the author

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### تأثير أسطورة أوزيريس في سلوك الملك بطلميوس "فيلادلفيوس"

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#### المخلص

يلقي هذا البحث الضوء علي موضوع " تأثير أسطورة أوزيريس في سلوكيات وتصرفات الملك بطلميوس "فيلادلفيوس" حيث انه من الواضح أن الملك بطلميوس الثاني "فيلادلفيوس" قد تأثر باحداث أسطورة أوزيريس التي وقعت مع كل من الأخوة الأربعة أوزيريس وإيزيس وست ونفتيس وبالأخص تلك التي حدثت مع كل من أوزيريس وزوجته الحبيبة إيزيس. وهذا التأثير قد ظهر بجلاء في أفعال وتصرفات الملك بطلميوس "فيلادلفيوس" علي النحو الآتي، أولا من خلال اهتمامه بإقامة المنشآت الدينية لكل من الإلهين متمثلة في تشييده معبد لأوزيريس في مدينة بيثوم وأخر لإيزيس في جزيرة فيلة والذي يعتبر المعبد الرئيسي المهم في الجزيرة. ثانيا من خلال زواجه من أخته الحبيبة الملكة أرسينوي الثانية تأثرا بالأسطورة التي تم فيها التزاوج بين كل من الإلهين أوزيريس وأخته الحبيبة إيزيس وبذلك يعتبر الملك بطلميوس الثاني "فيلادلفيوس" أول ملك بطلمي يتزوج من أخته. ثالثا من خلال تكريمه وتأييده لكل من أبويه الملك بطلميوس الأول والملكة برنيقي الأولى ثم تكريمه وتأييده لزوجته الحبيبة الملكة أرسينوي الثانية مثلما حدث في الأسطورة حين قامت إيزيس بتكريم ودفن أعضاء جسد زوجها المتوفي أوزيريس ومثلما قام حورس بتكريم كلا أبويه أوزيريس وإيزيس. وبناء علي ذلك فإن كلا من الملك بطلميوس الثاني "فيلادلفيوس" وزوجته وأخته الحبيبة الملكة أرسينوي الثانية كانا يمثلان كلا من الإلهين أوزيريس وزوجته وأخته الحبيبة إيزيس علي الأرض.

#### معلومات المقالة

##### الكلمات المفتاحية

بطلميوس الثاني  
"فيلادلفيوس"؛ أسطورة  
أوزيريس؛ الملكة  
أرسينوي الثانية.

#### (JAAUTH)

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