

ISIS PELAGIA AND A ROMAN MARBLE MATRIX FROM THE ATHENIAN AGORA

(PLATES 21–23)

A MARBLE FRAGMENT¹ (Pl. 21) from the Athenian Agora belies its unprepossessing appearance by offering us assistance in several obscure areas. The piece provides insight into the worship of Isis in Athens, clarifies aspects of the goddess' nautical cult, and expands our knowledge of the use of stone in the Roman metalworking industry.

The marble of the fragment is dark blue with yellow striations, of poor quality and indeterminable origin. The stone was cut into a thin slab, approximately square, with underside and lower edge smooth and the left edge left slightly rough. On the top side, a square field was carefully smoothed before a representation was cut in intaglio to a shallow depth. The upper and right edges have broken away, removing one third of the representation.²

¹ For permission to publish this piece I thank Homer A. Thompson, Anna Benjamin, T. Leslie Shear, Jr., and especially Dorothy Burr Thompson under whom I first studied the object in a seminar at Princeton. I also appreciate the willingness with which J. Gwyn Griffiths shared with me his expertise. Judith Swaddling generously made available to me the stone molds and the matrix-hammered and -cast phialai in the British Museum. Carmen Arnold-Biucchi of the American Numismatic Society was especially helpful with photographs.

The object, ST 527, was discovered March 4, 1952, during the cleaning of the South Stoa, second cut south (K–O 14–16). No useful information can be obtained from the context: mixed late fill (to Turkish) over the east end of South Stoa I. I thank Margot Camp and John Camp for their help with the field notebooks. Dimensions: Pres. H. 13.2 cm.; pres. W. 10 cm.; pres. Th. 2 cm.; depth of intaglio 0.3 cm. max. Dimensions of cast: H. 12 cm.; W. 8.2 cm.

Works frequently cited are abbreviated as follows:

- Alföldi, *Festival* = A. Alföldi, *A Festival of Isis in Rome under the Christian Emperors of the IVth Century*, Budapest 1937
- Bruneau, 1961 = P. Bruneau, "Isis Pélagia à Délos," *BCH* 85, 1961, pp. 435–446
- Bruneau, 1963 = P. Bruneau, "Isis Pélagia à Délos (Compléments)," *BCH* 87, 1963, pp. 301–308
- Bruneau, 1974 = P. Bruneau, "Existe-t-il des statues d'Isis Pélagia?" *BCH* 98, 1974, pp. 333–381
- Bruneau, 1978 = P. Bruneau, "Deliaca," *BCH* 102, 1978, pp. 152–161
- Dunand, I = F. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*, I, *Le culte d'Isis et les Ptolémées*, Leiden 1973
- Dunand, II = F. Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*, II, *Le culte d'Isis en Grèce*, Leiden 1973
- Gwyn Griffiths, *Isis-Book* = J. Gwyn Griffiths, *The Isis-Book (Metamorphoses Book XI) (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain, XXXIX)*, Leiden 1975
- Vidman = L. Vidman, *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae (Religionsgeschichte Versuche und Vorarbeiten XXVIII)*, Berlin 1969

² It is unclear when the damage occurred or whether the breakage was accidental or, less probably, intentional. Although in late antiquity the cult of Isis encountered strong resistance, our piece seems hardly significant enough to invite deliberate mutilation. For an example of attempted dismemberment, see the stele of 337/336 B.C. bearing the law against tyranny (B. D. Meritt, "Greek Inscriptions," *Hesperia* 21, 1952 (pp. 340–380), pp. 354–359, pls. 89, 90). In this instance the cuttings were probably executed in order to separate the representation from the inscription, which, after 322 B.C., would not have been wanted.

Hesperia 54, 2



Cast of ST 527 (Pl. 21:b): Within a square field is a circle formed by closely set drill holes. Inside this frame and standing upon a short ridge for a ground line is a female in right profile, left leg advanced and knees slightly bent. Concentric ridges between and behind the legs suggest windblown drapery; in front of the left leg and extending from thigh to ankle is another ridge terminating in an oval boss. The figure's elbows are bent with the forearms elevated. Each hand grasps the edge of a long piece of inflated fabric that is fringed along its front contour. A loop rises from the maiden's right hand. In the field between sail and frame, and echoing the curve of the punched border, are the letters EIIIE.

Although ST 527 is the first inscribed example of this type, the composition is a familiar one, and the identification of the deity has been known for some time.³ The type first appears on a coin⁴ of Byblos issued under Antiochos IV (215–163 B.C.; Pl. 22:a) and recurs until late Roman times on lamps, gems, reliefs, and especially coinage from many different sites,⁵ among which Athens can now be numbered. The basic elements in the motif are the standing maiden with foot advanced and with arms outstretched and upraised, each hand clasping a corner of a billowing sail. On most of the earliest examples⁶ Isis stands upon a ship's prow, her advanced foot anchors down a corner of the sail,⁷ and there is no mantle billowing out behind her. On later examples, beginning in the 1st century after Christ, a mantle usually blows out behind her back (Pl. 22:b, c),⁸ and the sail may be tied down (Pl. 22:b, c);⁹ sometimes the foot has no contact with the sail.¹⁰ On these later versions there are any number of variations: Isis may be in left or right profile;¹¹ she may gaze ahead or behind her;¹² and there may be a grid pattern on the sail (Pl. 23:c).¹³ On some examples we

³ The major work on this subject is a series of articles by P. Bruneau: see footnote 1 above.

⁴ Bruneau, 1963, p. 303, fig. 3 and E. Babelon, *Les rois de Syrie, Catalogue monnaies grecs* (*Bibliothèque nationale*), Paris 1890, p. 74, no. 575.

⁵ Bruneau, 1974, pp. 343–344. Especially useful is the chart on pp. 353–355. Sites yielding objects with this type are Alexandria, Corinth, Delos, Thasos, and now Salamis (see footnote 15 below).

Coins bearing this type come from Alexandria, Anchialos, Amastris, Aspendos, Byblos, Kleonai, Corinth, Ephesos, Iasos, Kyme, Nikomedia, Philadelphia, Phokaia.

⁶ In addition to a coin of Antiochos IV Epiphanes (see footnote 4 above):

1) a coin of Byblos dated 1st century B.C. (J. C. Imhoof-Blumer, *Monnaies grecs*, Amsterdam 1883, p. 443, no. 23 and no. 3 on plate J; Bruneau, 1961, p. 440).

2) a relief of ca. 100–50 B.C. from Delos (Bruneau, 1961, pp. 437–438 and fig. 3 on p. 437; Bruneau, 1974, p. 342, fig. 4 with bibliography on p. 343).

⁷ See Bruneau, 1961, pp. 439–441.

⁸ Plate 22:b: coin of Hadrian from Alexandria, year 18, from the American Numismatic Society. Plate 22:c: coin of Antoninus Pius from Alexandria (R. G. Poole, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum*, XVI, *Catalogue of the Coins of Alexandria and the Nomes*, London 1892, p. 132, no. 1113, pl. XVI).

⁹ See Bruneau, 1974, p. 345 and fig. 7 on p. 342.

¹⁰ Alföldi, *Festival*, no. 397, pl. IV:2; no. 205, pl. V:36; no. 369, pl. VII:3.

¹¹ Plate 22:a and lamp from Delos of 2nd century after Christ (Bruneau, 1961, p. 436, fig. 1).

¹² Bruneau, 1963, p. 303, fig. 3.

¹³ Plate 23:c: coin of Maximus from Phokaia (B. B. Head, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum*, XIV, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Ionia*, London 1892, p. 226, pl. XXIII:18). See also Alföldi, *Festival*, no. 30, pl. I:28; no. 49, pl. II:2; no. 132, pl. III:48.

find the Pharos lighthouse (Pl. 22:b),¹⁴ an elaborate headdress,¹⁵ or a sistrum (Pl. 22:c),¹⁶ elements that unambiguously identify the figure as Isis.

The association of Isis with the sea is well attested in literature and inscriptions from late Ptolemaic through Roman times. Isis was regarded as the mistress of winds, protector of sailors, and inventor of navigation and of the sail.¹⁷ The Ploiaphesia, an annual festival celebrating her nautical prowess, was attended by Apuleius at Corinth,¹⁸ and a Roman version known as the *Isidis navigium* survived into the 6th century after Christ.¹⁹ Numerous inscriptions inform us that in her role as a marine goddess Isis was addressed as Isis Euploia,²⁰ Isis Pharia,²¹ and Isis Pelagia.²² No evidence indicates which of these cult titles

¹⁴ Plate 22:b: coin from Alexandria, Hadrian year 18. See also S. Handler, "Architecture on the Roman Coins of Alexandria," *AJA* 75, 1971 (pp. 57–74), pp. 58–61, pl. 11:2.

¹⁵ T. Oziol, *Salamine de Chypre*, VII, *Les lampes du musée de Chypre*, Paris 1977, pp. 192–193, no. 567, pl. 32.

¹⁶ Bruneau, 1963, p. 303, fig. 3.

¹⁷ The principal sources of information concerning the association of the Hellenized Isis with the sea are various hymns, all ultimately stemming from the same lost text and collectively referred to as the Isis aretalogy. The earliest hymn in the assemblage is that from Andros, dated from the 1st century B.C. to the 1st century after Christ. W. Peek (*Der Isishymnus von Andros und verwandte Texte*, Berlin 1930, p. 100) dates the hymn to the 1st century B.C., but A. J. Festugière ("À propos des arétalogies d'Isis," *HThR* 42, 1949 [pp. 209–234], p. 233) suggests a date of 1st century after Christ. The other hymns are from Kyme, Kyrene, Ios, and Chalkis, and date from the 1st to the 4th centuries after Christ (Peek, *loc. cit.*). Other texts that allude to the nautical sphere of the Hellenized Isis are the hymns of Isidoros, dating from the 1st century after Christ, the Oxyrhynchos hymn of the 2nd century, and the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, dated ca. A.D. 170 (Gwyn Griffiths, *Isis-Book*, p. 10). According to these texts, Isis was regarded as the mistress of winds, protector of sailors, inventor of navigation, and inventor of the sail.

¹⁸ *Metamorphoses* xi.17 (Gwyn Griffiths, *Isis-Book*, pp. 14–20, 90–91). The festival was also celebrated in the 1st century after Christ at Byzantion. See Bruneau, 1974, pp. 340–341 and Vidman, pp. 58–59, no. 130. The Ploiaphesia is also believed to have been celebrated in several other cities where nauarchs are attested, including Eretria by the 1st century B.C. See Bruneau, 1974, p. 341.

¹⁹ Bruneau, 1974, p. 340; Alföldi, *Festival*, pp. 25, 42–47.

²⁰ For Isis Euploia in general see Bruneau, 1974, p. 336.

1) Delos: Bruneau, 1961, p. 445 (*ID*, 2153 of 107/6 or 104/3 B.C. and *ID*, 2132 of uncertain date); 1974, p. 98 (inscription of 2nd century after Christ).

2) Gaza: uncertain reading of lines 98–99 in *Oxyrhynchus*, pp. 197, 215; see also Bruneau, 1974, p. 336.

3) Also on lamps as a general epithet. See C. Picard, "Lampes d'Isis Pélagia et Euploia: à Délos et ailleurs," *RA* 1962, pp. 228–230.

²¹ For Isis Pharia in general see Bruneau, 1961, pp. 444–445 and Bruneau, 1974, pp. 349–351.

1) Alexandria: Dunand, I, p. 111; Handler, *op. cit.* (footnote 14 above), pp. 58–61.

2) Balanea (Syria), Nubia, Ostia, Philae, Rome: Bruneau, 1974, p. 349.

3) The epithet also appears in literature (Bruneau, 1974, p. 349) and on coins of Helena which have on the reverses images of Sarapis, Harpocrates, and various types of Isis including that with the sail (*idem*, p. 350).

²² For Isis Pelagia in general see Bruneau, 1974, p. 337.

1) Mytilene: Vidman, p. 134, no. 259 (= *IG* XII 2, 113).

2) Iasos: Bruneau, 1963, p. 304 (= Vidman, p. 141, no. 274).

3) Saguntum: Bruneau, 1963, p. 304 (= Vidman, p. 323, no. 764).

4) Rome: Vidman, p. 199, no. 396 (= *CIL* VI, 8707).

5) Corinth: See Bruneau, 1974, p. 337 for discussion of inscription that is Vidman, p. 20, no. 34. Pausanias, II.4.6 (Schubart, ed., p. 113): . . . ἐς δὲ τὸν Ἀκροκόρινθον τοῦτον ἀνιοῦσιν ἐστὶν Ἰσιδος τεμένη, ᾧν τὴν μὲν Πελαγίαν τὴν δὲ Αἰγυπτίαν αὐτῶν ἐπονομάζουσιν, . . .

should be assigned to the type of our fragment, but following Bruneau, it has become conventional to address her as Isis Pelagia. The motif on the Agora marble is by far the most common Isis type having a marine theme, but other types associating Isis with navigation are known,²³ none of which, unfortunately, can be linked with a specific epithet.

The distinctive stylistic features of the representation on the Agora marble are the slim, elongated body and the weightless, swaying effect created by the two bent knees. Also noteworthy is the narrow sail edged with fringe. Coins of Hadrian (A.D. 117–138; Pl. 22:b) and Antoninus Pius (A.D. 138–161; Pl. 22:c) clearly represent an earlier stage in the evolution of the type.²⁴ In contrast to the Agora maiden, the figure is more robust and exhibits a definite distinction between weight-bearing and relaxed legs, while the sail is handled in a more detailed fashion with its concave interior and distant edge clearly described. Nearer ST 527 is a coin from Corinth issued under Lucius Verus (A.D. 161–169; Pl. 23:a).²⁵ Comparable features are the slender proportions of the body and the narrow profile of the sail edged with shallow ridges that correspond to the fringe on our representation. The long unbroken ridges of drapery isolated by deep and regularly spaced valleys are weakly echoed by the linear handling of the Agora marble. Worked in the same style are images on coins issued under Faustina the Younger (ca. A.D. 161–180),²⁶ Commodus (A.D. 180–192; Pl. 23:b),²⁷ Diadumenus (A.D. 218),²⁸ and Maximus (A.D. 238; Pl. 23:c).²⁹ The upper time limit for the representation on ST 527 is established through examination of coins of the mid-3rd and 4th centuries issued under Valerian (A.D. 253–268)³⁰ and Helena (early 4th century),³¹ where the handling of the type is clearly later. On these coins the body is squatter and the form concealed by the garment folds, while the figure stands in the midsection of a ship which occupies one third of the coin's field. Such a contrasting treatment leaves little doubt that the Agora representation finds its closest counterparts among coinage of the second half

²³ For Isis in pose of Tyche with rudder, see Bruneau, 1974, pp. 349–350, fig. 10, and see also p. 380. For Isis seated on ship's rudder nursing Horos see A. Alföldi, "Die alexandrinischen Götter und die Vota Publica am Jahresbeginn," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 8–9, 1965–1966 (pp. 53–87), p. 65.

²⁴ Compare other coins from this period with this type: J. G. Milne, *Catalogue of Alexandrian Coins*, Oxford 1933, p. 34, no. 1416, pl. 3 and p. 47, no. 2001, pl. 3. Poole, *op. cit.* (footnote 8 above), p. 132, no. 1119, pl. XVI.

²⁵ Plate 23:a is from F. W. Imhoof-Blumer and P. Gardner, *Ancient Coins Illustrating Lost Masterpieces of Greek Art. A Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias*, repr. Chicago 1964, p. 17, pl. D: LXIV (= F. Imhoof-Blumer and P. Gardner, "Numismatic Commentary on Pausanias," *JHS* 6, 1885 (pp. 50–101), p. 66, pl. LI).

²⁶ W. H. Waddington, *Recueil général des monnaies grecques d'Asie Mineure* I, i, Paris 1904, p. 149, no. 120, pl. XX:25 from Amastris. See example that is not specifically the type of ST 527, because the sail is attached to a mast, but is close in style: Bruneau, 1974, p. 350, fig. 11 and p. 351.

²⁷ Plate 23:b is from G. F. Hill, *A Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum*, XXVI, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia*, London 1910, p. 100, pl. XII:10 from Byblos.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104, no. 46, pl. XII:15. Compare another coin issued under Diadumenus from Aspendos: F. Imhoof-Blumer, *Kleinasiatische Münzen. Sonderschriften der oesterreichischen archäologischen Institutes in Wien*, Vienna 1902, pl. X:31.

²⁹ See footnote 13 above.

³⁰ W. Wroth, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum*, XVII, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Troas, Aeolis, and Lesbos*, London 1894, p. 116, no. 116, pl. XXIII:1 from Kyme.

³¹ M. Bernhardt, *Handbuch zur Munzkunde der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Halle 1926, p. 9, pl. 22:5; Alföldi, *Festival*, no. 9, pl. I:7 and no. 369, pl. VII:3.

of the 2nd century and beginning of the 3rd century. Compatible with this dating is the form of the inscription: the epsilon was frequently used in the spelling of the deity's name from the 2nd century after Christ.³²

The coins assist us in restoring the original appearance of the tondo. On the analogy of contemporary coins, it is likely that there was a windblown mantle behind Isis' back. The missing section could also conceivably have carried an inscription, since on coins bearing only the word Isis the letters are distributed in a more spacious fashion around the tondo.³³ No parallel for ST 527 exists, however, because coins bearing its type are uninscribed or have unrelated inscriptions. The epithet Isis Faria appears on several Roman coins that do not bear this type,³⁴ but on these coins the word Isis appears in the area corresponding to our missing section. An inscription from Ethiopia dated A.D. 139³⁵ addresses the deity as FARIA ICIC, a phrasing compatible with the Agora composition but nowhere associated with a representation of Isis. The original form of the inscription, therefore, remains uncertain.

The model from which the artist of the Agora marble worked was probably a coin whose circular field and serrated edging are echoed in the punched tondo of the fragment. Moreover, the fact that the artist initially prepared a square surface into which he then worked his tondo betrays his unfamiliarity with the circular field, which must, therefore, have distinguished the model. In fact, the square rather than cursive handling of the epsilon and sigma finds a numismatic parallel in the lettering of Isis' name on a coin from Byblos of the 1st century B.C.³⁶ Also analogous to coinage is the nominative of the inscription, whereas we would expect the dative had the artist followed a dedicatory relief. Certainly, too, our artist was working from a small-scale model, the details of which he did not fully understand. The loop in the figure's right hand is surely derived from the sistrum³⁷ which Isis carries on several coins (Pl. 22:c). Similarly the curious ridge with boss in front of her left leg may be a faint echo of the end of her Isis knot (Pl. 22:b) or a vestige of the distant contour of the sail, which on coins of the late 2nd century after Christ appears as an isolated ridge, because the adjacent billowing midsection of the sail is no longer clearly delineated (Pl. 23:b).³⁸ The fact that the lower edge of the sail is neither tied down nor anchored beneath Isis' foot, following the logical and conventional arrangement, seems to provide additional testimony of the artist's confusion but could also reflect a misconception present on the model, since the mistake is attested on contemporary and later coinage. The Agora representation, therefore, clearly displays numismatic ties, but because no coin bearing both the type and the inscription of this fragment is known, we must entertain the possibility that

³² Vidman, p. 13, no. 21 of 1st to 2nd centuries after Christ (*IG II/III*³, 4068); p. 14, no. 22 of mid-2nd century after Christ (*IG II/III*³, 4070); p. 19, no. 33b, of ca. A.D. 220.

³³ Hill, *op. cit.* (footnote 27 above), pp. lxiv, 97, pl. XII:6 of 1st century B.C., with image of headdress of Isis.

³⁴ H. Cohen, *Description historique des monnaies frappées sous l'empire romain couramment appelées médailles impériales*, VIII, 2nd ed., Leipzig 1930, pp. 70–73, nos. 19, 20.

³⁵ *CIG III*, p. 506, no. 5119.

³⁶ See footnote 33 above.

³⁷ Alföldi, *op. cit.* (footnote 23 above), pl. 8:2; R. E. Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, Ithaca 1971, figs. 60–67 opposite p. 224. See Poole, *loc. cit.* (footnote 24 above).

³⁸ See footnote 27 above.

the artist was copying a lamp, itself surely ultimately inspired by a coin. In either case, the artist has tried to enlarge the scale of his model, an endeavor that betrayed the level of his expertise. Both the unskilled craftsmanship and the evidence for a misunderstood model suggest that the artist did not look very far afield for inspiration, and thus it is likely that the Agora marble was worked at about the same time as the model that inspired it.

In seeking the model for the matrix, we should bear in mind that the Agora fragment was probably carved in the vicinity of the Agora, for such mediocre material and undistinguished workmanship would hardly warrant the trouble of importing the piece. But because no other examples of the Isis type have been found in Athens, and because our artist was obviously unfamiliar with the image, the model from which he worked probably came from outside the city. The close similarity between the representation on ST 527 and that on coins of Corinth suggests that the artist was following a Corinthian coin (Pl. 23:a) or one of the Corinthian lamps³⁹ that carried this motif in comparable style and that are known to have been exported during the 2nd and 3rd centuries after Christ. Corinth was a well-known center for the nautical cult of the goddess Isis,⁴⁰ whose lavish festival is described vividly by Apuleius.⁴¹ Indeed, an impressive temple recently uncovered at Kenchreai is generally agreed to be the one that figured in this ritual.⁴² It is quite plausible that a souvenir coin or inexpensive lamp carried by a returning participant became available to an Athenian artist ever receptive to new motifs and well aware of the popularity of the deity in his own city.

The Agora matrix has provided us with enough information to restore the original scene and to determine the appearance and form of the model by which it was inspired. The matrix also enables us to advance one step further, to visualize the prototype from which the later versions were derived. The fringe along the front edge of the sail clearly identifies the fabric as the deity's mantle, whose fringed border is well known. The significance of the fringe is twofold. First, the marble allows us at last to confirm the theory that Isis ingeniously and magnanimously fashioned the sail from her own mantle.⁴³ The fringe also settles another ambiguity, for it has never been certain whether the mantle behind Isis' back in later examples of this motif was an original feature of the type.⁴⁴ Now that the sail can be identified as the deity's mantle, it becomes clear that the second mantle is a later accretion. The second mantle eliminates the altruism of the gesture, since a goddess with two mantles could spare one with little deprivation to herself; the second mantle also obscures the meaning of Isis' action, since few deities normally equip themselves with a spare mantle for nautical use. The second mantle must be a Roman contribution added to provide symmetrical balance to the composition. We can add one further conclusion: given the makeshift origin of the sail, it is logical that the mantle would not originally have been outfitted with

³⁹ See also Bruneau, 1961, pp. 435–436 and fig. 1 on p. 436, dated A.D. 150–200 from Delos.

⁴⁰ Pausanias, II.4.6 (see footnote 22 above). Dunand, II, p. 18.

⁴¹ See p. 111 above with footnote 18.

⁴² J. Hawthorne, "Cenchreae, Port of Corinth," *Archaeology* 18, 1965 (pp. 191–200), pp. 197–199; R. Scranton, "Glass Pictures from the Sea," *Archaeology* 20, 1967 (pp. 163–173), pp. 163–171; R. Scranton and E. S. Ramage, "Investigations of Corinthian Kenchreai," *Hesperia* 36, 1967 (pp. 124–186), p. 125.

⁴³ Bruneau, 1961, p. 443, following Roussel. See also Bruneau, 1974, pp. 347–348.

⁴⁴ See footnote 8 above.

ropes to secure it to the deck but must have been held down by the goddess' foot.⁴⁵ Only in later versions of the composition was the mantle embellished to resemble a ship's rigging.

In seeking the ultimate prototype for the Isis Pelagia type, we cannot fail to notice the similarity of the Isis type to the Nike of Samothrace, dated *ca.* 180–160 B.C.⁴⁶ The Nike also alights on the prow of a ship with one leg advanced, her massive wings producing a counter-thrust to the powerful breezes that send her garments billowing back around the body. By contrast, our Isis turns her back upon the wind, and, in an amusing reversal of a familiar convention (seen, for example, in the Nike of Paionios), she holds her mantle not above her head to engulf picturesquely the facing wind but rather in front of her to harness for mankind's use the wind's violent force. Although the conceit expressed by this arrangement is admittedly clever, the equation of the two figures is hardly original, since both Isis and Nike were traditionally winged, associated with winds and ship prows, and carried connotations of triumph. In fact, by late Hellenistic times Isis and Nike were often conflated, as documented, for example, by an inscription from Delos dedicated to Νίκη Ἰσιδι,⁴⁷ an amulet in Rome, inscribed NEIKAHEILIC,⁴⁸ and a Campanian gem.⁴⁹

Particularly noteworthy in a comparison of our type with the Nike of Samothrace is the close similarity between the two compositions, even to the folds of fabric flowing past the body, in the case of Isis, moving exactly opposite to the direction of the wind. This illogical detail is a strong argument that an image of a Nike served as a prototype for the Agora Isis. Also of significance is the fact that in both examples the advanced leg is relaxed, thereby lending to each figure a centrifugal effect that is characteristic of sculpture from the late Hellenistic period, when pedantic artistic allusions were in vogue and when Isis and Nike were commonly assimilated. It would thus appear that the prototype of the Agora Isis originated during the 2nd century B.C., inspired either by the Nike of Samothrace or by a type of late Hellenistic Nike derived from a work that may be reflected in a coin struck at Salamis around 295 B.C. by Demetrios Poliorketes.⁵⁰ A 2nd-century date also coincides precisely with the date of the earliest surviving example of the type, a coin of Antiochos IV (215–163 B.C.) from Byblos (see p. 110 above). Since Plutarch tells us that Byblos was the destination of Isis' first sea voyage, the appearance of the image on the coin has a logical explanation and incidentally establishes the tradition of the voyage at least as early as the 2nd century B.C.

The medium of the prototype has been the subject of debate, but Bruneau⁵¹ has argued most persuasively that the prototype was not a sculpture, because no copies in the round are known and because the complexity of the composition is best suited to a two-dimensional

⁴⁵ See discussion in Bruneau, 1974, pp. 344–346.

⁴⁶ C. Havelock, *Hellenistic Art*, 2nd ed., New York 1981, pp. 136–137, no. 123.

⁴⁷ A. Rusch, *de Serapide et Iside in graecia cultis*, Berlin 1906, p. 44.

⁴⁸ *Inscriptiones graecae Siciliae et Italiae*, G. Kaibel, ed., Berlin 1890, p. 617, no. 5.

⁴⁹ Witt, *op. cit.* (footnote 37 above), p. 122.

⁵⁰ *The Search for Alexander: An Exhibition*, New York 1980, pp. 114–115, no. 32.

⁵¹ Bruneau, 1974, pp. 356–381, esp. pp. 380–381; Bruneau, 1978, pp. 152–161; J. G. Szilágyi, "Un problème iconographique," *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 32–33, 1969, pp. 19–30; L. Castiglione, "Isis Pharia. Remarque sur la statue de Budapest," *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 34–35, 1970, pp. 37–55.

medium. The possibility that the prototype was a painting is supported by the fact that examples of the type appear only in low relief. The appearance of the image first in a painting might also explain why the motif was not well known for some time after its creation and did not receive its most lavish numismatic treatment until the 2nd century after Christ, on coins from Alexandria (Pl. 22:b). For the location of this painting, a primary candidate is naturally Alexandria where two temples to Isis are known to have existed, one that was almost certainly in the Sarapieion but is still unlocated,⁵² and another on the island of Pharos, the lighthouse of which accompanies the Isis type on several coins. This last locale would seem the obvious one given the numismatic association and the wordplay of *φάρος* and sail, but the wordplay alone could have been the reason for the inclusion of the lighthouse on the coinage.

A final point merits consideration. While several Greek texts tell us that Isis invented the sail, nowhere do we find the statement that she did so by using her mantle, an omission that could mean that the source of the aetiology lies not in literature or cult but in the prototypical work we have been discussing. An artistic origin of the tradition might explain why it was so little known even to artists that the fringe is almost always omitted from representations of the type. More important, if the prototype were indeed as innovative as we suspect, it would represent an extraordinary example of a Hellenistic monument that has elaborated upon mythic tradition.

The Agora marble was used to make a relief, and certainly one of metal, since terracotta reliefs were manufactured in clay molds. The question is whether our object is a mold into which molten metal was poured or a matrix into which a metal sheet was hammered.⁵³ A stone mold is usually recognized by a tubular or funnel-shaped pour hole that extends from the representation to the edge of the stone;⁵⁴ often these pour holes show signs of burning or retain traces of molten metal.⁵⁵ Occasionally, one also encounters channels linking the intaglio carving with the edges; these are the risers by which hot gases escaped.⁵⁶ An

⁵² C. Bradford Welles, "The Discovery of Sarapis and the Foundation of Alexandria," *Historia* 11, 1962 (pp. 271–298), p. 297.

⁵³ For the technique of matrices and molds see D. K. Hill, "Ancient Metal Reliefs," *Hesperia* 12, 1943, pp. 97–114; R. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery*, 2nd ed., Berkeley/Los Angeles 1980, pp. 13–15; H. Maryon, "Metalworking in the Ancient World," *AJA* 53, 1949 (pp. 93–125), p. 124; D. E. Strong, *Greek and Roman Gold and Silver Plate*, Ithaca 1961, pp. 81–84; R. Laffineur, *L'orfèvrerie rhodienne orientalisante*, Paris 1978, pp. 24–25 with bibliography. E. Pernice ("Untersuchungen zur antiken Toreutik," *ÖJh* 7, 1904, pp. 180–197) concluded after unsuccessful attempts that sandstone molds could not be used for bronzecasting. In his own extensive modern experiments, however, R. F. Tylecote has shown beyond doubt that if coated by soot (or lampblack) a sandstone two-piece mold can very successfully cast 12% tin bronze when heated to 200° centigrade; see *Bulletin of Historical Metallurgy*, Group 7, 1963, pp. 1–5.

⁵⁴ E. T. Vermeule, "A Mycenaean Jeweler's Mold," *BMFA* 65, 1967 (pp. 19–31), p. 21, fig. 3:a, b. R. Wartke, "Vorderasiatische Gussformen aus den staatliche Museen zu Berlin," *Forschungen und Berichte, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin* 20–21, 1980 (pp. 223–258), p. 223; J. C. Waldenbaum, *Archaeological Exploration of Sardis, VIII, Metalwork from Sardis: The Finds through 1974*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, nos. 949, 950, p. 143, pl. 54.

⁵⁵ Wartke, *op. cit.*, p. 223; R. Higgins, *Roman Crafts*, D. Strong, ed., London 1976, p. 59, fig. 67; E. Poulsen, "The Manufacture of Final Models of Roman Mass Produced Pail Handle Attachments," *Bronzes hellénistiques et romains. Tradition et renouveau. (Actes du V^e colloque international sur les bronzes antiques)*, Lausanne 1979, p. 242; A. Mutz, *Die Kunst des Metalledrehens bei den Römern*, Basel 1972, p. 38.

⁵⁶ Wartke, *op. cit.* (footnote 54 above), p. 224.

important characteristic is the absence of isolated depressions within the representation, because the metal must flow continuously throughout the entire depressed area in order to solidify into a single object.

When the Agora fragment is judged by these criteria, it becomes clear that it cannot be a mold and thus is likely to be a matrix. The discovery is especially interesting, because few matrices are known at all and those that exist are almost exclusively of bronze.⁵⁷ An examination of a mid-7th-century bronze matrix from Corfu,⁵⁸ the reliefs from which would have been used for jewelry, and a Roman bronze matrix for a cuirass pteryx in Baltimore,⁵⁹ reveals that distinguishing features of a matrix are the shallow depth of the intaglio representation and the absence of undercutting which can impede the removal of the metal relief from the matrix. A representation cut in intaglio into a matrix need not exhibit the linked depressions in a mold where the metal must flow continuously. Instead, elements of the representation may be completely isolated by the smooth, unworked surface, which will translate onto the hammered metal sheet as the smooth background of the relief. This last feature is especially prominent on the Agora marble, where the composition consists almost entirely of discrete units and where the individual drill holes of the border correspond on the cast to a circle of isolated dots. Because ST 527 satisfies the requirements of a matrix and lacks the pour holes, risers, and other characteristics of a mold, there can be little doubt about its use.

Few stone matrices, however, have been recovered or identified. Vermeule proposes that the Mycenaean-Minoan steatite molds also functioned as matrices, but there is no general agreement on this point.⁶⁰ From the classical period only a very few stone matrices are known:⁶¹ several Archaic scraps from Olbia,⁶² used in jewelry; a possibly 5th-century example for a diadem, from Corinth;⁶³ and a Hellenistic fragment for a bowl.⁶⁴ The closest parallel to our piece is a Roman marble matrix,⁶⁵ whose present whereabouts is unknown (Pl. 23:d). The slab was worked on two sides, a feature common to matrices and observed on the Corfu bronze. Each side bears various motifs, most of which are heads. Especially

⁵⁷ For a discussion of bronze matrices, see a forthcoming article in *JWalt* 42–43, 1984–1985.

⁵⁸ H. S. Jones, "A Greek Goldsmith's Mould in the Ashmolean Museum," *JHS* 16, 1896 (pp. 323–334), pp. 323–324. Higgins, *op. cit.* (footnote 55 above), pp. 15, 102, pl. I: B and C, dated *ca.* 650 B.C.

⁵⁹ E. R. Williams, "A Bronze Matrix for a Cuirass Pteryx," *AJA* 81, 1977, pp. 233–235.

⁶⁰ Vermeule, *op. cit.* (footnote 54 above), p. 25 and note 5 on p. 31. Laffineur, *op. cit.* (footnote 53 above), p. 25; H. Blümner, *Technologie und Terminologie der Gewerbe und Künste bei Griechen und Römern* IV, Leipzig 1884, p. 237. See also S. Xanthoudides, «Μήτραι ἀρχαῖαι ἐκ Σητείας τῆς Κρήτης», *Ἐφ' Ἀρχ* 1900, pp. 26–49 and C. Seltman, *Approach to Greek Art*, London 1948, pl. 2 for two more examples, possibly functioning as both matrix and mold.

⁶¹ A stone matrix re-used as a mold will be discussed in a forthcoming article. See footnote 57 above.

⁶² T. Hackens, *Studies in Ancient Jewelry (Publications d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie de l'Université Catholique de Louvain XIV)*, Louvain 1980, pls. VII, VIII.

⁶³ G. Davidson (*Corinth, XII, The Minor Objects*, Princeton 1952, pp. 307–308, no. 2661, pl. 126) tentatively suggests a 5th-century date but notes the similarity with a later matrix that may be Frankish (pp. 307–309, no. 2662, pl. 127).

⁶⁴ I. Kriseleit, "Antike Guss- und Treibformen," *Forschungen und Berichte, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin* 20–21, 1980 (pp. 189–198), p. 197, fig. 7.

⁶⁵ T. Schreiber, *Die alexandrinische Toreutik (Abhandlungen der k. sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften XIV, v)*, Leipzig 1894, p. 285, W. Also in A. Caylus, *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques, romaines et gauloises* IV, Paris 1762, pp. 293–294, nos. II and III on pl. LXXXIX.

noteworthy is one image consisting of a circle of drill holes enclosing a profile of a bearded wreathed head; the inspiration is obviously a Roman coin, and the parallel with the Agora matrix is striking. It appears, therefore, that there existed in Roman times the practice of copying numismatic types into stone matrices; it also seems that stone matrices were not uncommon during the Roman period, possibly because the more frequent use of stone in metalcasting entailed an availability of the material that proved inviting to the metal hammerer. Since metalworkers were probably not very adept sculptors, the unexceptional carving of our piece is explained.

The matrix was used to produce small votive reliefs of bronze, silver, or possibly gold. The dedication of small votive reliefs was a common ancient tradition,⁶⁶ and similar reliefs were dedicated to Demeter and Kybele in the 4th century,⁶⁷ and, during the Roman period,⁶⁸ to Kybele and Sebazios. The Agora matrix, however, takes on special interest because it illustrates a custom alluded to by Juvenal: "et quam votiva testantur fana tabella plurima; pictores quis nescit ab Iside pasci?" (*Satires* XII.26–28).⁶⁹ The practice is more fully explained by the scholiast, who tells us that rescued sailors dedicated plaques to Isis in appreciation for her protection during danger at sea: "quam naufragio liberati ponunt; antiquitus enim solebant qui naufragio liberati essent pro voto pingere tabellas et in templo Isidis ponere."⁷⁰ In the cosmopolitan milieu of the Athenian Agora, one can well imagine grateful sailors adhering to this tradition or superstitiously purchasing an inexpensive relief in anticipation of a forthcoming voyage.

The Agora fragment provides the first evidence for the worship in Athens of the nautical Isis. Furthermore, the fact that the matrix was intended for multiple production of reliefs implies an expectation that there would be considerable demand for the product, hardly surprising since by the 2nd century after Christ Isis had been happily domiciled in Athens for several centuries. In the Piraeus, the worship of the Egyptian form of Isis can be traced as far back as the 4th century B.C.,⁷¹ while in Athens, official cults of Sarapis and the Hellenized Isis were established in the 2nd century B.C.,⁷² when her growing appeal is well attested in coinage⁷³ and inscriptions.⁷⁴ During the 1st through 3rd centuries after Christ,

⁶⁶ For the practice of dedicating votive offerings in connection with distress at sea, see W. H. D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings*, Cambridge 1902, pp. 226–231.

⁶⁷ See *Treasures of Ancient Macedonia: Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki*, K. Ninou, ed., Thessaloniki, n.d., p. 105, no. 447, pl. 62 and p. 106, nos. 452 and 453, pl. 60; *The Search for Alexander* (footnote 50 above), p. 128, nos. 51, 52.

⁶⁸ C. Picard, "Sur un 'naiskos' inédit au musée du Caire," *MonPiot* 49, 1957 (pp. 41–65), p. 44, fig. 1; p. 56, fig. 6; p. 59, fig. 7. E. Will, *Le relief culturel gréco-romain* (Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome CLXXXIII), Paris 1955, pl. III.

⁶⁹ Ed. Hermann, p. 80; Bruneau, 1961, p. 446.

⁷⁰ *Scholia ad Sat.* XII.26–28 (ed. Wessner, p. 195). See also Tibullus, 1.3.27–28: nunc, dea, nunc succurre mihi.—nam posse mederi picta docet templis multa tabellis tuis— (ed. Putnam, p. 20). One of these votive paintings may be from House IX. 3. 15 in Pompeii; see V. Tran Tam Tinh, *Essai sur le culte d'Isis à Pompéi*, Paris 1964, p. 53, no. 59, p. 148, pl. XVII.

⁷¹ In general, see T. A. Brady, "The Reception of the Egyptian Cults by the Greeks (330–31 BC)," *University of Missouri Studies* X, 1935, pp. 20–42. For Isis in the Piraeus see Vidman, p. 3, no. 1 (= *IG* II/III², 337). Dunand, II, pp. 4–5.

⁷² Dunand, II, p. 9; Vidman, p. 6, no. 3 (= *IG* II/III² 4692).

⁷³ S. Dow, "The Egyptian Cults in Athens," *HTHR* 30, 1937 (pp. 183–232), p. 207 (a coin of 110/109 B.C.).

⁷⁴ J. J. Pollitt ("The Egyptian Gods in Attica: Some Epigraphical Evidence," *Hesperia* 34, 1965

Isis enjoyed tremendous favor in Athens, as witnessed by the many individuals who were named for the deity,⁷⁵ by her images on terracotta lamps,⁷⁶ and by the representations of both Isis and her devotees on grave stelai.⁷⁷ The divinity appears to have enjoyed at least two temples: one as yet unlocated, on the slopes of the Akropolis,⁷⁸ and the other one almost certainly in the Sarapieion,⁷⁹ which was in the area today occupied by the Metropolitan church.

The significance of the Agora matrix has been shown to be multifaceted. This battered fragment constitutes the first record of the existence in Athens of the nautical cult of Isis and therewith provides further testimony to the popularity of the goddess in Athens during the Roman period. Second, the Agora matrix is the only known matrix with this type, and thus the piece corroborates the custom described by the scholiast to Juvenal⁸⁰ of dedicating to Isis votive reliefs. Third, the representation on the matrix establishes beyond doubt the hitherto unconfirmed tradition that the sail was fashioned from Isis' mantle and therewith assists in restoring the prototypical work from which our image was derived. And finally, the Agora fragment offers further evidence for the sparsely documented use of stone matrices in the Roman period.

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[pp. 125–130], pp. 125–128) discusses two inscriptions of the 1st centuries before and after Christ. See also Dow, *op. cit.*, p. 208 (E.M. 649, inscription of 116/5 to 95/4 B.C.).

⁷⁵ Dow, *op. cit.* (footnote 73 above), pp. 223–224, 231.

⁷⁶ J. Perlzweig, *The Athenian Agora*, VII, *Lamps of the Roman Period*, Princeton 1961, p. 121, no. 805, pl. 18 (mid-3rd century) and p. 119, no. 780, pl. 18 (early 4th century). C. Grandjouan, *The Athenian Agora*, VI, *Terracottas and Plastic Lamps of the Roman Period*, Princeton 1961, p. 44, no. 46, pl. 4; p. 75, no. 942, pl. 26; p. 77, nos. 1010, 1011, pl. 28; p. 78, nos. 1019–1024, pl. 29 (all 3rd to 4th centuries).

⁷⁷ A. Conze, *Die attische Grabreliefs*, Berlin 1911–1922, pp. 54–61, nos. 1954–1972, pls. 420–425.

⁷⁸ Dunand, II, p. 13; Vidman, p. 8, no. 7 (= *IG II/III*², 4994), p. 11, no. 16 (= *IG II/III*², 4771).

⁷⁹ Dunand, II, note 3 on p. 133; Vidman, p. 10, no. 11 (= *IG II/III*², 4697); Pausanias, 1.18.4 (ed. Schubart, p. 37).

⁸⁰ See p. 118 above.



a. Agora ST 527



b. Cast of Agora ST 527

ELLEN REEDER WILLIAMS: ISIS PELAGIA AND A ROMAN MARBLE MATRIX

PLATE 22



a. Coin of Antiochos IV Epiphanes from Byblos. Courtesy, Bibliothèque Nationale: inv. no. 575



b. Coin of Hadrian from Alexandria, year 18. Courtesy, American Numismatic Society



c. Coin of Antoninus Pius from Alexandria. Courtesy, Trustees of the British Museum: inv. no. 1113



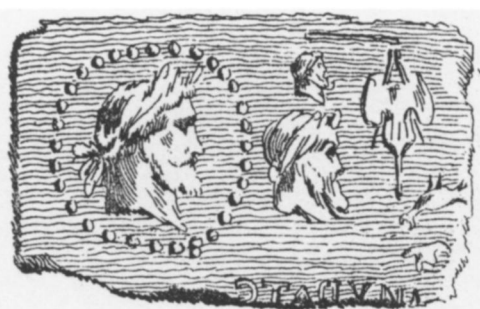
a. Coin of Lucius Verus from Corinth (*JHS* 6, 1885, pl. LI)



b. Coin of Commodus from Byblos (G. F. Hill, *op. cit.* [footnote 27 above], pl. XII:10)



c. Coin of Maximus from Phokaia. Courtesy, Trustees of the British Museum: inv. no. 156



d. Marble matrix, location unknown (A. Caylus, *op. cit.* [footnote 65 above], pl. LXXXIX)