Mothers of the Gods: A Case for Syncretism in the Cybele and Isis Cults at Pompeii

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Robert Caudill

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ABSTRACT

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A thesis presented to the Graduate Program in Ancient Greek and Roman Studies

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts
By Robert Caudill

The Temple of Isis is perhaps one of the most well-known buildings at the archaeological site of Pompeii: the pinnacle of a sizable amount of evidence attesting to the cult of Isis’ presence at the city prior to its destruction. Less obvious is the presence of the cult of Cybele, which should have enjoyed robust support at Pompeii, but seems to be lacking in ritual space. This thesis examines the idea that perhaps a syncretic convergence between the cults of Isis and Cybele occurring in the first century CE, in the years leading up to the destruction of Pompeii, might be responsible for the seemingly low profile of Cybele at Pompeii. Furthermore, this thesis seeks to answer the particular question of where the ritual cult space for Cybele may have been located at Pompeii by examining the archaeological evidence, at Pompeii and elsewhere, historical record, and mythological background of both Cybele and Isis as well as their associated cults.
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Introduction

The ruins of Pompeii provide not only a fascinating focal point to spur the interest of the public in the Roman past, but also yield useful archaeological materials that offer a glimpse into the daily life of Romans nearly two millennia ago. While the notion that Pompeii is a “moment frozen in time” might be a bit simplistic, the ability to see a city essentially in a state of arrested development near the height of the Roman Empire provides a unique opportunity, particularly in relation to the religious life of the city. In regard to a process that is often destructive to the material culture, the ability to view Pompeii without centuries of evolution of religious infrastructure paving over the past allows for a glimpse into the religious life of a city that does not often remain with other sites. Graffiti and wall paintings bearing the names and images of gods and goddesses certainly do not survive elsewhere in the quantity and quality that they do, or once did, at Pompeii. The remarkably well preserved Temple of Isis is quite possibly the best example of such a temple in the Roman world. Isis’ relatively high profile presence at Pompeii provides contrast to that of another mother god cult from the East: Cybele. The archaeological evidence of veneration of Isis at Pompeii is plentiful and readily apparent while that of Cybele, who seemingly should have enjoyed robust support at Pompeii due to the prevalence of the goddess elsewhere in Campania, is comparatively scant. By examining the data relating to Isis and what traces do remain of Cybele at Pompeii, we attempt to present some viable explanations regarding what would appear to be a lack of Cybele’s larger presence in the city.

In order to address this seeming absence of Cybele at Pompeii, a somewhat larger perspective must be taken, in both an archaeological and wider cultural sense, than the useful
but narrow scope of the excavated archaeological remains at Pompeii. One of the primary arguments of this paper relies on establishing certain connective links between the Roman cults of Cybele and Isis, and in that vein, exploring the wider relationship between the two cults from a mythological background as well as the historical background of their context within the religious life of the larger Roman world may be helpful. It is also useful to bring perspective to the archaeological remains that Pompeii provides by examining archaeological evidence elsewhere in the Roman world, and employing that to bring context to the two cults at Pompeii.
Chapter 1: Cybele and Isis in Campania

The evidence for Isis at Pompeii is pervasive. Images of Isis are found depicted on approximately 20 lararia throughout the city, and paraphernalia associated with the cult, such as sistra and statuettes, are found in a number of houses.¹ The statuettes noted make up only the remaining material, as presumably smaller statuettes of deities, including Isis, would have been removed and taken by fleeing citizens of Pompeii. Amongst a plethora of graffiti are at least two instances of programmata bearing the endorsements of the worshippers of Isis for political candidates, indicating that perhaps at least some status was attached to the cult, insomuch as the political preference of the worshippers would bear enough respectability to warrant it being advertised on a wall. Alternatively, might these messages serve as a sort of “negative campaign ad” aimed at decreasing the respectability of the endorsed candidate, rather than increasing it?² The dedicatory inscription for the Temple of Isis, discussed in more detail shortly, being used for the political capital of the party named as paying for the restoration would seem to indicate that the cult of Isis, or association with the religious framework of the cult, would indeed carry some favorable political weight in Pompeii at the time of the eruption.

The most visually striking and accessible mark that the cult of Isis left on Pompeii is the Temple of Isis, located near the theater and Triangular Forum in Reg. VIII, Ins. 7.³ The temple would have been constructed relatively late in the life of Pompeii, as the dedicatory inscription

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² See CIL IV.581 and the possibility of that graffito and the endorsement of the ‘late night drinkers’ actually carrying a negative connotation rather than positive.
would indicate that it was rebuilt following an earthquake, presumably the large earthquake of 62 CE, although there very well could have been other earthquakes in those twenty years leading up to the eruption. The high wall blocking off the area of the temple from the Via del Tempio Iside retains at least some of the mystic aspect of the cult, largely blocking it off from public view. The cult of Isis, however, would seem to have enjoyed some sort of official or semi-official recognition by that point, as Caligula had dedicated a temple to Isis in Rome, and the Roman conquest of Egypt in the previous century had made the culture and art of Egypt accessible and fashionable. Although the quick restoration of the temple and use of that project as a means of manufacturing political clout would seem to indicate a relatively high profile for the cult in the city, the cult was still an initiate cult to which the general public would not have had the same access as they would have enjoyed with deities of the Roman state religion.

As the nature of the inscription would indicate, a Temple of Isis was extant at Pompeii before the currently standing temple was built following the destruction or damage of the previous incarnation by an earthquake. The presence of an Isis cult and related temple may have extended back to the Samnite period (circa 450 BCE to 80 BCE) of Pompeii, and the Samnite Palaestra (VIII.7.29) may have served as the site of this earlier temple. As early as 105 BCE there seems to have been a Serapeum at Puteoli, and this Egyptian cult’s influence may well have established itself at Pompeii in a similar timeframe. Other evidence of the history of the Isis cult at Pompeii comes in the form of a black glaze bowl from the first century BCE,

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4 CL X, 846.
6 Cinzia Del Maso, Pompeii, 91.
found in a midden outside the Nola Gate, which is surmised as being related to the Isis cult at Pompeii. Further, epigraphic evidence seems to indicate the presence of inhabitants at Pompeii with Egyptian names at that time. The presence of Isis at Pompeii was certainly not a recent development, relative to the eruption, and may have stretched back at least two centuries prior to the destruction of the city.

Perhaps one of the most curious aspects of cultic worship at Pompeii is what would appear to be a distinct lack of definitive evidence suggesting organized cultic worship of Cybele occurring at the time of the eruption. Most evident is the apparent absence of a temple or any identified religious space directly associated with the goddess. Given the agricultural nature of Campania, Cybele has understandably left her mark elsewhere in the region quite clearly. A further theory for a particularly strong presence of Cybele in Campania, in general, is the Greek roots of the region, which may have brought Cybele worship to the area long before the official importation of goddess and her cult to Rome in 204 BCE. Worth noting is that no direct archaeological evidence supports the theory of a pre-204 BCE entrance of Cybele to Campania, as all finds have dated to Imperial Rome. Still, there exists ample archaeological and epigraphic evidence to support a strong presence of Cybele in Campania at the time of the eruption, as well as for many years after.

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence noting Cybele’s presence in Campania comes from Herculaneum, found at the entrance to the palaestra. Like the inscription marking the rebuilding of the Temple of Isis after an earthquake in the years prior to the

8 De Caro, “The First Sanctuaries,” 79.
9 De Caro, “The First Sanctuaries,” 77-79.
10 Maarten J. Vermaseren, Cybele and Attis: The Myth and the Cult (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), 64.
eruption, a similar inscription was found at Herculaneum, only this time marking the rebuilding of the Temple of Cybele following an earthquake. In this case, Vespasian was the benefactor of the rebuilding of the temple, with the temple being dedicated in the year of his seventh consulship (76 CE).\textsuperscript{12} Although the temple to which this inscription refers has not been found, the inscription gives clear indication of its existence, and given the very incomplete excavations of the city, it is not difficult to believe that the temple has just yet to be uncovered. The restoration of the Temple of Cybele at Herculaneum in the years leading up to the eruption shows, as the Temple of Isis at Pompeii does there, that the cult of Cybele was active in the city around the time of the eruption. Not only was the temple important enough to be restored with some expediency, but also to be done so with the emperor’s name attached to it as the head of the Roman state, rather than that of a local benefactor. Unlike Pompeii, where the restoration of the Temple of Isis before the Temple of the Capitoline Triad might reveal insight into the context of the greater religious life there, the lack of other important religious architecture at Herculaneum does not allow for similar suppositions to be made regarding the context of the restoration of the Temple of Cybele. Regardless of what it does not reveal, this find does exhibit the presence of an organized cult of Cybele with a temple; something that does not appear to be present at Pompeii.

Also worth exploring with regard to Vespasian’s patronage of the Cybele temple at Herculaneum is the emperor’s interest, and the interest of subsequent emperors of the Flavian Dynasty, in cults of eastern origin (Egyptian, Anatolian, Near Eastern), and in particular in the

\textsuperscript{12} CIL X, 1406.
cult of Isis.\textsuperscript{13} Josephus notes that Vespasian and Titus spent the night in the temple of Isis at Rome before their triumph following the sack of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{14} Vespasian’s favorable link to the Egyptian deities seems to extend back further, to the period during the beginning civil wars of 69 CE, when Vespasian traveled to Alexandria to secure Egypt, and in the process received a number of favorable auspices after making offerings to the god Serapis there.\textsuperscript{15} Under Vespasian’s turn as emperor, the Temple of Isis appeared for the first time on Roman coinage, and the goddess seems to have become a sort of patron goddess for the emperor in the same manner as Apollo had been to Augustus.\textsuperscript{16} This understated but clear reverence for the Egyptian gods seems to have continued through the reigns of both Titus and Domitian, with the latter being responsible for the restoration of the Temple of Isis at the Campus Martius and the erection of obelisks at the temple of Isis at Beneventum.\textsuperscript{17} Vespasian certainly had the East to thank for his rise to power in 69 CE, and with that in mind, his predilection towards eastern gods, such as Cybele or Isis, does not seem wholly out of place. It would explain his taking a particular interest in being the patron of the temple to Cybele in Herculaneum. Vespasian’s preference does seem to be more specifically inclined towards the Egyptian gods, though, and perhaps the rebuilding of the Cybele temple in Herculaneum was more in line with that inclination, rather than more generally towards eastern gods.

\textsuperscript{16} Liebeschuetz, \textit{Continuity and Change in Roman Religion}, 181.
\textsuperscript{17} Liebeschuetz, \textit{Continuity and Change in Roman Religion}, 181.
Other sites in Campania reveal the likely presence of additional temples to Cybele as well as evidence of active cults to the goddess.\(^{18}\) An inscribed plate found in Lake Patria points to a temple to Cybele at either the nearby Hamae or Liternum, as varied interpretations of the inscription alternatively attribute the likely location of the temple.\(^{19}\) A dedicatory inscription dated October 9, 251 CE and found at Cumae lists 87 *dendrophores*, priests associated with Cybele and the *Megalesia*, and presumably is evidence of an active cult at Cumae, though the list of priests may be for the larger Cumae-Baia and Puteoli area.\(^{20}\) Another inscription from Baiae marks the election of a new priest of Cybele for Cumae on August 17, 289 CE, and refers to a temple to Cybele in that city.\(^{21}\) A statue base from Suessula honors a priest to Cybele and his contributions to the town.\(^{22}\) Similar epigraphic evidence points to the likely presence of cults and/or temples at Puteoli and Capua as well as towns such as Carinola, Rufrae, and Venafrum.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{18}\) Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis*, 64.  
\(^{19}\) Vermaseren, *CCCA IV*, 1.  
\(^{21}\) Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis*, 64, 107.  
\(^{22}\) Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis*, 64.  
\(^{23}\) Vermaseren, *Cybele and Attis*, 64.
Chapter 2: Cybele at Pompeii

The epigraphic evidence of Cybele along the Bay of Naples, and through Campania in general, seems particularly rich, but is noticeably lacking at Pompeii. Pompeii, however, is not without evidence of Cybele; a number of representations of Cybele and her consort Attis have been found at Pompeii. A total of forty-eight probable objects and painted representations of Cybele and Attis have been identified from Pompeii, with an additional eight objects that cannot be definitively linked to Pompeii, but that may have originated at the site. Among those forty-eight objects, only nineteen have a definitive provenance and an identifiable find location. Only eleven of the nineteen objects or paintings with known provenance seem to be definitively Cybele or Attis, with the remaining eight having some doubt attached to their identification. Curiously, the number of Attis representations outnumbers those of Cybele by greater than double, with thirty-three objects or paintings being attributed to Attis, while only fifteen can be attributed to Cybele: and only eight of the fifteen are identified as Cybele with some reasonable degree of certainty.

The large number of objects would seem to indicate that Cybele and Attis were indeed known in Pompeii and that there was likely the presence of some practicing adherents to the cult there. A terracotta figurine of Cybele riding a lion was found in the tablinum of the Casa della Caccia di Tori (VI.16.28). Vermaseren notes that it has alternatively been identified as a

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24 These numbers are compiled from a survey of the catalogue of objects presented in Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 12-27.
25 Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 12-27.
26 These numbers are compiled from a survey of the catalogue of objects presented in Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 12-27.
Venus figure, but he is quite sure that the representation is indeed Cybele. While drawing any definitive conclusions from this find is difficult, the figurine’s presence in the *tablinum* of the house would seem to indicate that some importance was attributed to the object, or to the figure represented in the object, by the owner of the house. Additionally, two other small terracotta figures of an enthroned Cybele are also noted as likely having come from Pompeii, though they have no provenance and cannot be conclusively attributed to Pompeii. A bronze *olla* handle depicting Cybele with a *tympanum* and *cornucopia* is also described as having come from an unknown location in Pompeii. These four artifacts could be interpreted as votive objects associated with cultic worship of Cybele, but the private location of the first and the unknown location of the latter three do little to answer the question about public or semi-public ritual space attributed to Cybele worship. Though depictions of Attis can be useful in establishing the presence of the cult, most Attis-related objects have either unknown provenance, are not established as being depictions of Attis with near certainty, or were found in private residences. In this vein, they are not especially helpful beyond, perhaps, confirming that Attis seems to have been known at Pompeii.

The most common manner of Cybele’s appearance in Pompeii is a painting on the walls. Four of these painted representations leave little doubt as to their depiction of the goddess. An additional five, all within private residences, have some characteristics to suggest they may

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27 Vermaseren, *CCCCA IV*, 16.
30 The tabulations of images, by the author, are based on Vermaseren’s catalogue of Cybele and Attis related objects from Pompeii in *CCCCA IV*. The determination as to the level at which an object is definitively identifiable as being Cybele is that of Vermaseren, while the determination as to the public or private nature of the context of the image is made by the author based on the description of the provenance of the image provided by Vermaseren.
be Cybele, but also leave some doubt as to whether it is she.\textsuperscript{31} Two additional wall paintings that have since been removed from Pompeii, and are of unknown provenance, also definitively depict the goddess.\textsuperscript{32} The four in situ paintings have perhaps the most to reveal about the nature of the cult of Cybele in Pompeii. Of the four paintings, only one of them is located in a definitively private area: a painting of Cybele among a sacred landscape and uraeus snakes in the triclinium of the House of Octavius Primus (VII.15.12).\textsuperscript{33} The location of the painting would again suggest that the owner of the house has some attachment to the goddess and was perhaps an adherent to her cult.

Despite the location in the triclinium, Giuseppe Fiorelli describes the painting as “un sacello di Cibele” in his Descrizione di Pompei.\textsuperscript{34} Also of interest is the apparent use of the uraeus snakes in the painting; while snakes certainly aren’t a unique motif, particularly in household shrines, the specific description of the snakes as being “uraeus” would seem to indicate a distinctly Egyptian influence. Moreover, the uraeus was specifically a primary symbol of Isis.\textsuperscript{35} As uraeus snakes are a sign of Isis and specifically associated with her, the usage with Cybele would seem to indicate, at the very least, some sort of Egyptian influence in the painting, or perhaps even the melding of the iconography of Cybele and Isis to indicate some sort of convergence between the two.

The painting itself seems to have long since faded from the site, though there is a 19\textsuperscript{th} century representation available that generally fits the description (figure 2). Some details

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{31} Found in the following sites at Pompeii (with CCCA numbers in parenthesis): VI.8.3 (32), VI.8.23 (33), VI.9.6 (34), VII.3.28 (37), IX.10.1 (43). From Vermaseren CCCA IV, 14-19.
\textsuperscript{32} Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 20-21.
\textsuperscript{33} Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 16.
\textsuperscript{34} Quoted in Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 16.
\textsuperscript{35} R. E. Witt, Isis in the Graeco-Roman World (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), 84.
\end{footnotesize}
present in the Vermaseren (and Fiorelli) description seem to be absent from this reproduction, bringing into question the quality and condition of the original wall painting when the reproduction was made. If some details had already faded by the time the reproduction was made, that might account for their seeming absence. If Vermaseren’s interpretation, which seems to be based primarily on Fiorelli’s description, is correct, however, the image would be a notable combination of Cybele with Isis imagery, particularly if this is, as Fiorelli describes it, evidence of a shrine to Cybele. Vermaseren puts the date of this wall painting at around 70 CE, making it a relatively late painting in the life of Pompeii.36 Also worth noting in this context is one of the tentatively, but not definitely, identified Cybele images with unknown provenance. In this painting (figure 3), dated to about 20 BCE, an image of a seated goddess with a scepter and tympanum ringed by serpents (uraeus serpents?) is identified as “possibly” being Cybele. Also included in the scene is a pedestaled caryatid supporting a beam, with two additional serpent-ringedy tympana, and the corner of a building, also possibly part of a temple, with the image of a sphinx with the head of Serapis.37 Again, this would seem to be an example of Cybele imagery being mixed with imagery more typically associated with Isis, which, at this particular site, may hold some significance. Worth nothing among the indefinite images of Cybele mentioned earlier is a painting alternatively identified as either Cybele or Hera seated on a throne with a scepter and possibly a tympanum in the House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6).38 Also discovered at that same location was a marble head of Isis similar to that of one found in the cella of the Temple of Isis, though the exact location within the residence of neither the

36 Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 16.
37 Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 45.
38 Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 15.
The description Cybele painting does bear some resemblance to an image found on the wall of a cubiculum (room 33) of the house, which may be the image that Vermaseren is referring to (figure 4). Though not nearly as good an example as imagery of the two goddesses being mixed within the very same painting, the presence of both a possible image of Cybele and a marble statue of Isis in the same household may provide some evidence of overlap in veneration of the goddesses.

The remaining three Cybele paintings are located in areas of varying public access. Vermaseren notes a painting of Cybele sitting on a throne flanked by seated lions with a cornucopia in her hand and wearing a modius in a niche of a shop “facing the passage to the theatre and the Odeon.” The exact location of this shop is unclear from his description, as it is simply listed as being in Reg. I, Ins. 7. The most likely candidate, given this description, seems as though it would be the taberna at I.7.18, which is at the eastern end of Vicolo del Menandro, which becomes the Via del Tempio d’Iside after it crosses the Via Stabiana. The Via Tempio d’Iside does give access to the theater, though not direct access to the Odeon, and also, worth noting, to the Temple of Isis.

Another possible location might be the shop at I.7.15. This shop is on the corner of Via di Castricio and Vicolo di Pasquius Proculus, the latter of which, after a turn, eventually winds up on the unnamed vicolo that leads across the Via Stabiana to the theater and Odeon. In either case, the location would be in the same relative area, with perhaps less than 20 meters

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41 Vermaseren, *CCCA IV*, 13
separating the two possibilities on Vicolo di Pasquius Procolus.\(^2\) The location inside the shop would allow for some degree of public viewing of the niche, which may have been some sort of shrine or lararium for the shop.

The most public of the Cybele images is a panel depicting a procession as part of a larger artistic program decorating the front of the Taberna della Quattro Divinita at IX.7.1 (figure 5).\(^3\) The painting depicts a statue of an enthroned Cybele with gilded lion cubs at her feet, upon a ferculum that has presumably just been set down by some of the processional participants. The Cybele statue is draped in purple robes and wearing a turreted crown and carries a patera. A scepter, branch, and tympanum are also present on the litter with the statue (figure 6). A total of eighteen other figures are present in the scene holding sacrificial instruments, ritual objects, and musical instruments. A small altar and candelabra are present on the extreme right of the scene, closest to the statue of Cybele and the litter bearers. Two figures with a syrinx and cymbals are painted to the extreme left of the scene, broken from the main scene by the presence of niche containing a herm of Dionysus.\(^4\) Explanations for the presence of Cybele on this store front have ranged from the theory that store was a meeting place for the worship of Cybele to an expression of the owner’s religious preferences or even an advertisement and demonstration of the wares that could be purchased in the shop, identified as a felt-maker’s shop.\(^5\) One interpretation posits that the processional imagery is a representation of the shop-owner’s membership in the wool-worker’s collegium and the collegium’s participation in the

\(^2\) Distance calculated using scale and satellite pictures provided by Google Maps.


\(^4\) Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 17-19.

Megalesia festival of Cybele, which would have involved a procession of the cult statue as depicted in the painting.\textsuperscript{46}

The evidence for this last theory comes from the larger artistic program on the storefront, as well as other paintings and graffiti along the Via dell’Abbondanza, and data regarding the participation of collegia in festivals and processions in Rome. Like the painting in the House of Octavius Primus, Vermaseren dates this wall painting to around 70 CE as well.\textsuperscript{47} If Vermaseren’s dating is correct and the theory regarding the processional painting holds at least some truth to it, then the conclusion can be drawn that the Megalesia was indeed being celebrated and processions to Cybele were occurring around the time of the eruption. If processions to Cybele were occurring around the time of the eruption, the cult statue used in such processions would have needed to be housed someplace, although the statue has not been found and no housing for it has been identified.

The final painting of Cybele comes from the Temple of Isis itself. Very little information regarding its exact location within the temple exists, and the description is very basic, noting only that the image is of Cybele seated and holding a sistrum.\textsuperscript{48} Stefano de Caro’s catalog of the finds from the Temple of Isis, however, does not seem to include any pictorial representations that match Vermaseren’s description of the Cybele painting, although Vermaseren is describing an image that is no longer extant in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples seems possible.\textsuperscript{49} Given the presences of Cybele in a wall painting at the Temple of Isis, and the inclusion of imagery related to Isis in the painting of Cybele at the House of Octavius Primus,

\textsuperscript{46} Potts, “The Art of Piety and Profit,” 65-70.
\textsuperscript{47} Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 19.
\textsuperscript{48} Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 17.
the presence might suggest that there may be some relation between the two goddesses at Pompeii. A relationship such as this is not completely without precedent either archaeologically or through the mythological and literary tradition.
Chapter 3: Convergence in the Cults of Cybele and Isis

The first point to consider is the manner in which Isis and Cybele made their way into Roman religious life. In Book 29 of Livy’s History of Rome, Livy relates a story regarding the official importation of the Cybele cult to Rome in 204 BCE.50 According to Livy, the Mater Idea was brought to Rome from Pessinus in order to drive the foreign foe (Hannibal) out of Italy, as prophesied by the Sibylline Books, and confirmed by the presentation of a gift to the oracle of Delphi. As Vermaseren points out, however, the importation of the cult could have had more practical motivations. In 213 BCE, several years before the decision was made to import Cybele from Asia Minor, Livy describes the state of religious affairs in Rome as being rather dire; namely that people were turning away from the traditional Roman practices altogether, and in some cases embracing foreign practices and superstitions due to the protracted war with Hannibal and the Carthaginians.51 Vermaseren’s interpretation of the link between these two events is that the importation of Cybele was intended to steer the religious climate of Rome in a particular direction, furthering the link between Rome and Troy (in particular with relation to the noble families in Rome that would claim direct lineage), and in creating political capital with King Attalus of Pergamum.52 The weight of some of these points is validated by modern scholars, who argue that, by the time consideration was given to importing Cybele in 205 BCE, there was little danger of Hannibal posing any real threat to Rome, and so the ostensible reasoning given in Livy was not especially relevant. Rather, the suggestion is made that the

52 Vermaseren, Cyble and Attis, 38-39.
timing had more to do with the conclusion of the First Macedonian War, and an attempt by the Romans, again, to consolidate political capital with King Attalus, their ally in the First Macedonian War, by using him as an intermediary in the importation of Cybele, as well as to express Rome’s Trojan roots in the region and put other political entities on notice that the Romans intended to remain active in the region. The importation of Cybele into the Roman religious framework would, in light of these analyses, seem to be more of a carefully crafted political maneuver than the reasoning stated in Livy.

Isis’ entry into the Roman world is much less definitive and official. Archaeological evidence, which includes a funerary inscription denoting a priest of Isis dated to between 90 and 58 BCE, suggests that Isis worship would likely have been occurring at least by the first half of the first century BCE. Other evidence may solidly provide an even earlier date. A sistrum is noted as being used as a control mark for a denarius of C. Vibius Pansa dated to 90 BCE. The presence of a Serapeum at Puteoli, dated to 105 BCE, indicates Egyptian-influenced religious practice in Campania in roughly the same time period. Pompeii, which became a Roman colony in 80 BCE, also boasts a wealth of evidence indicating Isis worship had been occurring there for some time prior, and could have contributed to the spread of the cult in the Roman world after it was brought under the control of Roman power. Again, a temple to Isis may have been present at the site of Pompeii’s Samnite Palaestra (VII.7.29), dating back to the Samnite period.

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54 Orlin, Foreign Cults in Rome, 204.
of occupation prior to the establishment of a Roman colony there. Evidence of Egyptian pottery at Pompeii, possibly related to Isis worship, is also dated to sometime in the first century BCE.\(^{56}\)

The unclear manner of Isis’ entry into Roman religion only serves to underscore the “unofficial” manner in which the cult was becoming integrated into the religious practice of the Romans, in contrast to Cybele’s ceremonious welcome to Rome. Some similarities, though, are reflected in the possibly political undertones that may have played into the popularity of the cult’s following in Rome, as well as the political reaction to the cult in the first century BCE. Over the course of the third and second centuries BCE, ties between Ptolemaic Egypt and Rome were becoming closer, and with that came inevitable cultural exchange, as well as a growing interest in Egypt by the people of Rome as Egypt became a more important figure in the Roman world and as Rome gained more power and influence over Egypt. Agricultural trade became an important link between Alexandria and Rome in that time frame, and interest in the Hellenized Isis cult (linked with the agricultural trade that would sustain Rome as well as the safety of the vessels that brought it), particularly in port cities that received the Egyptian merchants and trade ships like Ostia and Puteoli (the latter of which had come under direct Roman control at the start of the second century BCE), may have grown out of that.\(^{57}\) These trade links, again, may be coupled with the previous existence of the established Hellenized Isis cult in areas of Magna Graecia that would only later come under direct Roman control, such as Pompeii. By the time the archaeological evidence would seem to support a definite presence of the cult in

\(^{56}\) Stefano De Caro, “The First Sanctuaries,” 77-79.

Roman areas, Egypt had entered the forefront of Roman politics with the bequest of the Egyptian territories to Rome by Ptolemy Alexander in 87 BCE.\textsuperscript{58}

Although the means by which each of these two cults entered into the Roman world is largely different, another similarity is able to be drawn when considering the political reaction to the Isis cult in the Roman world. Tertullian recalls an account by Varro, of how in 59 BCE, worship of the Egyptian gods Isis, Serapis, Harpocrates, and Anubis was banned by senatorial decree and their altars torn down on the Capitoline Hill. The altars were then restored by popular support, and although the decree against the altars was upheld, the Consul Gabinius allowed sacrifices to be carried out to Isis and Serapis.\textsuperscript{59}

Cassius Dio writes that there was a senatorial decree, a few years later in 53 BCE, to tear down the temples of Isis and Serapis, including those constructed by citizens for their own use.\textsuperscript{60} Seemingly rebuilt following this episode, the temples were again ordered to be destroyed in 50 BCE, but the workmen refused to do so. Again in 48 BCE, the shrines and altars to the Egyptian gods on the Capitoline were destroyed.\textsuperscript{61} These events, notably, all occurred well before the anti-Egyptian stance of the Augustan age, which was seemingly fueled by the war with Mark Antony and Cleopatra.

What could be occurring, however, might be more similarly on par with the events that, by some accounts, may have resulted in bringing Cybele to Rome. Just as Livy tells of Romans turning to foreign gods in 213 BCE, the same thing would seem to be happening in the late first century BCE, with Roman religious tastes, particularly those of the lower classes, embraced the

\textsuperscript{58} Orlin, Foreign Cults in Rome, 205.
\textsuperscript{59} Tertullian, Ad Nationes I, Trans. Q. Howe, Book X.
\textsuperscript{60} Cassius Dio, Roman History, vol. III, (Loeb Classical Library, 1914), 40.47.3.
\textsuperscript{61} Dillon and Garland, 158.
Egyptian deities, which had not yet been assimilated into the state religion.\textsuperscript{62} The first half of the first century BCE also saw an increasingly destabilized political situation, with civil wars and conspiracies plaguing the Republic until reaching a critical point when the senatorial attacks on Isis became more frequent at the midpoint of the century.

In the case of the third century BCE, Cybele was brought in to redirect the Roman people’s appetite for foreign religious practice, which was borne out of the political instability accompanying the Second Punic War, into a state-recognized cult that could also double as a political tool. In the case of Isis, however, the political instability perhaps proved to be too much of an obstacle to allow for a constructive channeling of foreign worship, and instead of directing the Roman desire for foreign cult worship, it was simply subjected to limiting actions, much in the way the Bacchic cult was at the start of the second century BCE. After all, the secret rites of mystery cults provided a means for the gathering of people outside the purview of the government. At times of political instability, this could be seen as especially dangerous to the establishment. Again, although seemingly very different in their entrance into Roman life, Cybele and Isis both exemplify the manner in which Romans reacted to foreign religious influence, both in the populace as well as in the ruling parties.

Both Cybele and Isis share the epithet of being mother gods. Cybele’s other Latin names by which she is referred, \textit{Magna Mater} and \textit{Mater Deum}, literally mean “Great Mother” and “Mother of the Gods.” Isis is occasionally found to have such titles attached to her as well, with an Alexandrian priest of “Isis the Great Mother of the Gods” being attested in the second

\textsuperscript{62} Discussion concerning the class standing of followers of Isis in Orlin, \textit{Foreign Cults in Rome}, 206-207.
century BCE, and a dedication at Delos to “Isis, Mother of the Gods, Astarte.”\textsuperscript{63} In Book XI of Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses}, the narrator Lucius has a vision of Isis, who tells him of all the other names she is known by, including the “Mother of gods at Pessinus” to the Phrygians, a reference to her and Cybele being one and the same.\textsuperscript{64} With Apuleius writing in the century following the destruction of Pompeii, and possibly being an initiate of the cult, this could indicate at least some association between the goddesses within the cult of Isis by that point. Though \textit{Metamorphoses} is a literary work, there would seem to be some value to the depiction of the practices of the Isis cult, and therefore it would not be unreasonable to believe that this association may actually have been made by adherents.\textsuperscript{65}

The mythological backgrounds concerning Cybele and Isis also offer some points of convergence to consider. The mythological story of Cybele and her consort Attis involves the latter going mad and castrating himself, resulting in his death. Cybele then repents her actions, which caused Attis’ madness, and asks Zeus to grant that Attis’ body “should neither rot nor decay.”\textsuperscript{66} The idea of Attis surviving, though not necessarily being resurrected, is an idea that carried on into the Roman adaptation of the cult; that Attis is “saved from dissolution” and that “his disappearance is neither total nor final.”\textsuperscript{67} When the Romans adopted Cybele, a “strong emphasis” was put on fertility, which, according to Roller, was not necessarily an aspect that

\textsuperscript{63} R.E. Witt, \textit{Isis in the Graeco-Roman World}, 131.
had previously been associated with Cybele in her earlier incarnations.\footnote{Lynn E. Roller, \textit{In Search of the God Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele} (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 318.} Attis, though not necessarily deified, also has some impact on the idea of fertility in the cult of Cybele, as his cycle of sleep and reawakening in the mythological context is likened to seasonal changes as they pertain to agriculture.\footnote{Gasparro, \textit{Soteriology}, 59-60.} A strong similarity is present with the cult of Isis, as her husband Osiris is killed and then dismembered by his brother Set. Isis eventually restores his dismembered body, except for the phallus, and he is restored to life by the gods.\footnote{Griffiths, \textit{Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride}, 12-35.} Like Attis, Osiris’ restoration from death brings about the equation with seasonal fertility cycles. Furthermore, both Osiris and Isis are associated with the seasonal flooding cycle and fertility of the Nile River and the plains.\footnote{Witt, \textit{Isis in the Graeco-Roman World}, 86. Griffiths, \textit{Plutarch’s De Iside et Osiride}, 177, 372.}

Some evidence also exists to suggest the possibility of a wider intersection of imagery between the two goddesses. A variety of different iconographic examples of Cybele and lions, in particular Cybele riding or being pulled in a chariot by a lion or lions can be found throughout the Mediterranean world. Within the riding type, there are specifically the images of Cybele riding a lion in a side-saddle pose as the lion is shown bounding towards the right of the image. This type of iconography appears commonly within the Roman context, including in terracotta oil lamps from various parts of the empire (figures 7 and 8) to larger marble statues (figure 9) and smaller bronze statues and even in coins (figure 10). While these examples are all from the second century CE or later, there is evidence to suggest that this iconographic image was used in conjunction with Cybele even earlier, with Cybele/Rhea being identified as the goddess riding a lion in a similar pose on the Pergammon Altar, constructed in the second century BCE (figure
This intersects with Isis during the reign of Vespasian, when a coin was produced that included an image of the *Iseum Campense* on the reverse of the coin (figure 12). On the pediment is an image that bears a striking resemblance to the images of Cybele riding a lion, but is identified by Turcan as being Isis riding the dog Sothis.\(^2\) Fourth century *vota publica* coins also bear the images of Isis seated on Sothis in a similar manner, this time clearly holding a cornucopia as well (figure 13), which brings it even more in line with many of the Cybele images of this type.\(^3\) The significance, if any, of this parallel in imagery is not readily apparent, but it does provide what would appear to be an additional point of convergence in the cults, even if that convergence is just on a superficial level. The incomplete and fragmentary nature of the archaeological record makes it difficult to determine the exact time when each of these cults begins using this type of image, but would seem to stretch back to at least around the time of her importation to Rome with Cybele, and to be in use by the middle of the first century CE with Isis, as that cult was gaining a much wider acceptance after the crackdowns of the Late Republican and Augustan ages.


\(^3\) Witt, *Isis in the Graeco-Roman World*, 179.
Chapter 4: Archaeological Evidence

Worth noting is that the overall similarity in mythological themes are not necessarily unique to the Cybele or Isis cults, but that such themes are a common occurrence in other mystery cults as well.\textsuperscript{74} The purpose in directly comparing the two is in prefacing the notion that perhaps the shared elements of the two cults might, in some places, create conflation between the two cults and the two goddesses: that perhaps one possible explanation for the lack of a dedicated temple to Cybele in Pompeii is that the Temple of Isis may have served as a ritual space for the Cybele cult as well. In his series of books on the Cybele (and Attis) cult, Maarten J. Vermasern provides some examples in which there would appear to be an association. An inscription marking the rebuilding of a temple at Malcesine notes a dedication to both Cybele (Matri Deum) and Isis for the temple. In this instance, there appears to have been a single temple to both the goddesses, and that they were sharing a ritual space in some capacity. The date for this inscription is unknown, so where the inscription falls in the timeline is unclear, but would seem to provide an example of the cults of Isis and Cybele interacting in a convergent manner.\textsuperscript{75} While a shared space of this nature would not seem to be especially out of the ordinary, one would suspect at least some sort of relationship between the deities sharing space. Vermaseren further notes a temple of Isis at Eritria that housed and shared space with Cybele.\textsuperscript{76} Other less clear archaeological evidence includes a sanctuary of Isis at

\textsuperscript{74} Gasparro, \textit{Soteriology}, 63.
\textsuperscript{75} CIL V, 4007. Additional information from Vermaseren, \textit{CCCA IV}, 102.
\textsuperscript{76} Vermaseren, \textit{Cybele and Attis}, 126.
Cyrene in which two Pentelic marble statues of Cybele were found.\textsuperscript{77} If the statues’ being placed in the sanctuary was the original context (and they were not stored or placed in the sanctuary sometime in the intervening centuries), their presence might indicate some relationship between the worship of the goddesses. Vermaseren, however, provides little additional evidence regarding the circumstances of the discovery and so some speculation would need to be used in this instance. An inscription dated 83 BCE from Athens notes the presence of a shared cult of Agdistis, Serapis, and Isis at Rhamnous.\textsuperscript{78} Although the exact nature of Agdistis’ relationship to Cybele is somewhat unclear and different interpretations have been offered by both modern and ancient scholars, Agdistis is definitively related to Cybele, perhaps even being an epithet of the goddess.\textsuperscript{79} Also at Rhamnous, two votive inscriptions to Agdistis and Isis dating to the second and third centuries CE have been found.\textsuperscript{80} The legacy of shared space may go back even further, as a Hellenistic shrine to Cybele and Attis at Amphipolis, in Macedonia, was found to contain votive figures and a relief of Cybele, as well as a dedicatory inscription to Isis, Serapis, and Adonis.\textsuperscript{81} Again, the documentation provided for the Amphipolis example gives little contextual detail, and so only provides tentative evidence, but still lends some possible credence to the idea of convergence between the cults in this manner. At Ostia, a marble funerary altar for Lucius Valerius Firmus, dated to the second century CE, commemorates the deceased as a priest of Isis and the Mother of the Gods beyond the Tiber

\textsuperscript{78} Inge Neilson, \textit{Housing the Chosen: The Architectural Context of Mystery Groups and Religious Associations in the Ancient World} (Turnhout: Brepols Publisher n.v., 2014), 136.
\textsuperscript{79} Gasparro, \textit{Soteriology}, 34.
\textsuperscript{80} Neilson, \textit{Housing the Chosen}, 136.
While this may not show any direct correlation between the two cults, as membership or priesthood in several mystery cults does not seem to have been out of the ordinary, this example would at least seem to indicate some overlap in interest between Cybele and Isis. The epigraphic evidence would seem to be clearer; the inscriptions provide clear evidence of an association between Cybele and Isis, and in light of that evidence, the archaeological finds become a little more reliable despite the lack of context provided.

In excavations between 1999 and 2001 in the commercial center of Mainz (formerly Mogontiacum), Germany, a portion of a sacred area was discovered which contained a sanctuary to Isis and Cybele. While no temple structure seems to be present at the site, a complex of structures enclosed by a large wall was found, presumably to block the view of the general public (similar to the privacy wall around the temple of Isis at Pompeii) and is identified as sacred space to Isis and Cybele by way of the votive deposits and dedicatory inscriptions to the two goddess found there. This enclosed sanctuary appears to be a single complex with joint sacred space used by adherents of both Cybele and Isis and is purportedly the only known example of a shared cult center of both goddesses outside of Italy. The foundation of this sanctuary dates to the last third of the first century CE, and continued in use with various phases of building until the third century CE. A *tabella ansata* with a dedication to Magna

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83 See Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass* Book 11.22, in which the priest of Isis is named Mithras, indicating the possibility of the priest’s involvement in both the cults of Isis and Mithras.
85 Witteyer, *The Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna*, 4-5.
86 Witteyer, *The Sanctuary of Isis and Mater Magna*, 5.
Mater for the building of the enclosure wall mentions construction during Vespasian’s rule.\textsuperscript{88}

Other inscriptions, including one dedicated to Magna Mater by a treasurer of the imperial procurator in Mogontiacum under Vespasian, add securely to this dating.\textsuperscript{89} This dating is particularly relevant, as the construction of this joint sanctuary in Mainz during the reign of Vespasian coincides with the same time period as the final days of Pompeii and the reconstruction of the Temple of Isis there. Besides the privacy enclosure, the sanctuary in Mainz shares another structural similarity to the Temple of Isis at Pompeii: the presence of a centrally located well within its walls.\textsuperscript{90} The well is thought to have possibly served the function of housing sacred water for the performance of ceremonies, in much the same function as the \textit{purgatorium} associated with the Temple of Isis at Pompeii. If the practice of sharing a cult center between Isis and Cybele had reached a city on the edge of the empire by the end of the reign of Vespasian in 79 CE, then the sharing of ritual space between these two particular goddesses may not have been a completely unknown practice much closer to Rome, in Pompeii, by that time.

More than just being concurrent with the final decade of Pompeii’s life, the sanctuary in Mainz, as well as the Temple of Isis at Pompeii and temple to Cybele at Herculaneum, share the distinction of being constructed during the reign of Vespasian. During this time, the Isis cult in particular gained renewed attention and unprecedented acceptance from the highest levels in the Roman world, as was previously discussed. On their own, these sites could perhaps be seen as just individual testaments to this renewed interest, as the Mainz sanctuaries and the Cybele sanctuaries...
temple at Herculaneum both specifically bear the name of Vespasian; and the use of the
restoration of the Temple of Isis as a means for political advancement may be as good a
barometer as any in determining a favorable political climate surrounding the cult of Isis in
Italy. As a group, however, perhaps these are indicative of closer relationships between the
Cybele and Isis cults developing during the period of 69-79 CE in particular.

The Mainz site shows a relationship in the combined sanctuary space to the two
goddesses. Coupled with the other examples that would seem to demonstrate a pattern (albeit
extremely incomplete, as the archaeological record is wont to be) of shared ritual space
between Cybele and Isis, Mainz is particularly useful because of the definitive timing to the
reign of Vespasian and the final years of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The Herculaneum example
is problematic due to the lack of an actual temple, or any temples for that matter, being found,
but the patronage of Vespasian could indicate, among other things, the particular interest of
Vespasian in Cybele by way of his well-documented interest in Isis. If Isis and Cybele were
indeed more closely associated with each other during the time of Vespasian (see also the
discussion on the intersection of imagery during Vespasian’s reign on page 23) to the point that
the goddesses are sharing ritual space elsewhere, then the lines between the two could have
been becoming increasingly irrelevant.
Conclusions

The wall painting depicting Cybele at the Temple of Isis at Pompeii could indicate that some sort of relationship existed between the Cybele and the Temple of Isis. While other gods and goddesses are present in the iconography found at the Temple of Isis, they all have some link to either Isis or Osiris. Even the Venus Anadyomene statue found at the temple could be indicative of syncretism of the Isis cult with other Graeco-Roman cults (Cybele amongst them) concerned with fertility and regeneration. 91 Cooley notes that the presence of other gods would not necessarily be out of place in a temple, however, as smaller shrines to other gods may have been present. 92 Of course painted image that is a cohesive part of the larger artistic program is somewhat different from a small statue. The possibility also exists that the Cybele image was misidentified, and that the image in question was actually an image of Isis. Although some shared imagery between the goddesses might lead to this confusion, particularly in the more Romanized or Hellenized image of Isis, the definitively identified Isis images would seem to provide a solid comparison, and it seems unlikely that Isis would be incorrectly identified in the artistic program of a temple dedicated to her.

The placement of the public and semi-public images of Cybele also presents a possible connection between Cybele and the Temple of Isis. The three images that would have had some degree of public exposure, those not located in private houses, are all clustered within a few insulae of each other (figure 15). While still adhering to Potts’ theory that the processional

92 Cooley and Cooley, Pompeii, 83.
scene at IX.7.1 is a representation of the owner’s participation, via his *collegium*, in the procession, that does not necessarily preclude the notion that the façade of the shop would have been along the processional route as well. The Via dell’Abbondanza is a major thoroughfare in the city, also with access to the forum, so it would seem logical that it might serve as at least a part of the route for a religious procession.

The second public image of Cybele is located at I.7.18, which is essentially directly down the Vicolo di Paquius Procolus from the IX.7.1 image. That image, in turn, is then directly down the Vicolo del Menandro/Via del Tempio d’Iside from the Temple of Isis and the final image of Cybele. While a nearly impossible theory to verify or deny, perhaps the public uses of Cybele have some connection to a fragment of the processional route for the goddess, emanating at the Temple of Isis. The nature of processional routes and related religious ceremonies at Pompeii is quite unknown, as little archaeological evidence exists that might shed definitive light on such matters and there is insufficient literary reference to Pompeii in general. The Cybele image at I.7.18 could very likely be related to the shop owner’s religious preference and have no larger connection to the cult other than the owner’s veneration of the goddess. If the paintings do, however, represent a more deliberate association with an area of the town that might be more closely related to the cult, the placement of images could provide additional support to the idea that the Temple of Isis may have provided a cult space for Cybele.

The Temple of Isis also provides what would seem to be a suitable space for the worship of Cybele in its proximity to the theater of the city. Livy notes that in 194 BCE, dramatic performances were added to the festivities of the *Megalesia* by the curule *aediles* Aulus Atilius
Serranus and Lucius Scribonius Libo.\textsuperscript{93} In Rome, these theatrical performances were apparently performed in a theater near the \textit{Scalae Caci} on the south side of the Palatine Hill, near to the temple to Cybele on the Palatine.\textsuperscript{94} Being close to a theatrical venue does not seem to be a requirement, as not all temples are found close to theaters; the Campus Magna Mater area at Ostia Antica is a clear example of the infrastructure associated with Cybele not being located in an area close to the theater of Ostia. But the specific location at Ostia could be due to the special significance the area of the Campus Magna Mater had to the formal reception of the cult of Cybele there in 204 BCE, which was also prior to the introduction of the theatrical aspect of the Megalesia. The lack of temples dedicated to Cybele available in a larger urban context makes it difficult to assess any deliberate pattern of placement of temples close to theaters, but, given the precedent of the primary temple to the goddess on the Palatine Hill, a reasonable assumption may be that proximity to theatrical facilities could influence placement somewhat, and with that in mind, the Temple of Isis would serve as a suitably close location to the theater at Pompeii.

The evidence for the cult of Cybele sharing ritual space with the cult of Isis at the Temple of Isis is tentative and circumstantial, at best, but it does provide a plausible explanation to the question of why no temple dedicated to Cybele seems to be present at Pompeii. The lack of a cult statue for Cybele is certainly not an uncommon issue at Pompeii, as only the cult statue of Jupiter has been found and identified, though other cult statues clearly would have been present in the city.\textsuperscript{95} Further, the possibility exists that the cult statue of

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\textsuperscript{93} Livy, \textit{The History of Rome}, XXXIV.54
\textsuperscript{94} Vermaseren, \textit{Cybele and Attis}, 125.
\textsuperscript{95} Cooley, \textit{Pompeii}, 83.
\end{flushleft}
Cybele was wooden and would not have survived, no matter where it was housed in the city. The evidence would seem to indicate that Cybele worship was occurring at Pompeii in the years leading up to the eruption, in both a private and public manner, and that processional festival activity for Cybele was alive and well. If processions of the cult statue were occurring, then there must have been a sacred space in which the cult statue was kept.

An alternative explanation might also be that the temple space to Cybele was simply someplace outside the walls of Pompeii that has not been discovered yet. Vermaseren notes that Cybele was associated as a hill goddess in Campania, and evidence suggests that at Capua she was worshiped at a shrine to Jupiter in the mountains. The previously mentioned statue base from Suessula was found several kilometers outside the town and might indicate that the temple to Cybele was at a hill site near to where a later church was built. Several sanctuaries associated with Pompeii have been found outside the walls of the city, including one to Dionysus, two to Neptune, and one to Jupiter Meilichios, though the latter’s association with the dead necessitated a site outside the walls and amongst graves. In the case of Dionysus, the location may have to do with the archaic nature of the sanctuary, which would have preserved it through the period in which Bacchus worship was banned by the state, as well as the period of banishment itself, in which Bacchic worship may have been driven outside the city. With the vast amount of countryside surrounding Pompeii that still lies buried beneath ash and pyroclastic flow debris, the potential for the presence of any undiscovered ruins would seem high. So, while that possibility cannot be ruled out, an extramural temple would be

96 Vermaseren, CCCA IV, 36-37.
difficult to find given the extreme topographic changes caused by eruptions of Vesuvius over the last 2,000 years as well as the presence of modern infrastructure in the area surrounding the ancient site of Pompeii.

Alternatively, a sizable contiguous section within the walls of Pompeii has yet to be excavated, leaving the possibility that a ritual space to Cybele has yet to be uncovered. Given that the religious structures in Pompeii seem to be very definitively clustered around the forum and the triangular forum and theater area, a temple being found outside those areas does not seem especially high. Temples, as important parts of the civic life of the city, would typically be centered around the urban centers unless there was particular reason for them not to be, such as being sufficiently distanced from the state religion or some geographic or logistical issue necessitating that some other location be used.\textsuperscript{99} The inscription from Herculaneum would indicate that Cybele was sufficiently accepted within the religion of the state at the time; and so, barring an archaic location for the temple away from these centers, the likelihood of finding a temple to Cybele within the walls of Pompeii, but in the unexcavated portion away from the public centers, seems low.

Wherever Cybele’s place of worship may be, the evidence clearly shows little doubt that Cybele was indeed being venerated in Pompeii, despite the surface appearance that she was not. Though much of the evidence indicates that some degree of private worship was occurring, the painting at IX.7.1 indicates a public aspect to the cult that must also have been active in the ten to fifteen years preceding the eruption of Mount Vesuvius as well. Further first-hand analysis of both the site and artifacts associated with Cybele from Pompeii would certainly be

needed to make any sort of definitive assertions regarding where the cult space for Cybele may
have been in Pompeii. An examination of the documentation of artifacts related to the Cybele
cult recovered at Pompeii, and analysis of the relationship between Cybele and the well-
established Isis cult through the archaeology of other sites and literary sources, does provide at
least some point of reference and possibility for the cult space of Cybele at Pompeii.
Figure 1 – Map of Some Sites Mentioned in Chapter 1 – Author edits to map from http://www.naplesldm.com
Figure 3 - Image of Cybele or Hera from the House of the Dioscuri (VI.9.6), Pompeii, Italy. Carratelli, *Pompei: Pitture e Mosaici*, Vol.VII, 833.
Figure 4 – Reproduction of Painting From Pompeii. National Archaeological Museum Naples, Italy, Inv. No. 8845. Vermaseren, CCCA IV, Plate XIX.

Figure 5 – Cybele Procession from the Shop of the Four Divinities. Pompeii, Italy. Studyblue.com.
Figure 6 – Detail of Cybele Procession from the Shop of the Four Divinities. Pompeii, Italy. Vermaseren, *CCCA IV*, Plate XVII.

Figure 7 – Yellow terracotta lamp. Paris, Louvre, Inv. No Camp. 4405. Vermaseren, *CCCA VIII*, Plate LXXXII.
Figure 8 – Red-painted grey terracotta lamp from Rome. Cologne, RGM, inv. No Wo 2063. Second century CE. Vermaseren, *CCCA III*, Plate CXCIV.

Figure 9 – Statue of Cybele Riding a Lion in Greek marble from Nettuno. Rome, Villa Doria Pamphili. Second century CE. Vermaseren, *CCCA III*, Plate CCXCVIII.
Figure 10 – Bronze coin of Geta from Hadrianopolis. Source: http://www.forumancientcoins.com/moonmoth/reverse_cybele.html

Figure 11 – Rhea or Cybele Riding a Lion, from the Pergamon Altar, Pergamonmuseum, Berlin. Source: Wikimedia Commons.
Figure 12 – Coin of Vespasian showing façade of the *Iseum Campense*. Turcan, Plate 11.

Figure 13 – *Vota publica* coin depicting Isis seated on Sothis. Fourth century CE. Witt, Plate 64.
Figure 14 – Funerary Altar of Lucius Valerius Firmus. Vatican City, Vatican Museums, inv. No 10762. Vermaseren, *CCCA III*, plate CCLXVI.
Figure 15 — Portion of street plan of Pompeii showing the location of the public and semi-public Cybele wall paintings. Locations bolded. Point 1: Shop façade. Point 2: Shop niche. Point 3: Temple of Isis. Map credit to Jackie and Bob Dunn of Pompeii in Pictures website <www.pompeiiinpictures.com>.
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