

Katerina Tzanavari

A WREATH-CROWNED MALE HEAD FROM VERIA

The marble head examined here was found in the 1960s during work on the city's north wall. The pictorial features of the figure and some of the morphological details permit comparison with male funerary portraits of the age of Hadrian, made by a workshop that was active in Veria in the Late Hellenistic and Imperial period. The figure is crowned with a diadem of eight rose blossoms, placed symmetrically on a central stem. This characteristic flower is associated with Isis and suggests that the figure portrays a priest of her cult.

While it is not yet clear when or in what circumstances this sanctuary was established in the city, the cult of the Egyptian gods there is known from finds of grave goods (terracotta figurines from the mid-second and first century BC, offerings in female and infant graves depicting Isis, Isis-Tyche and Eros-Harpocrates) and votive monuments (inscribed altars and tablets with imprints of feet). According to the inscriptional evidence, in the imperial age the cult of Isis was an official cult of the city, and a priesthood serving the cult of Isis Locheia (Isis as protector of women in childbirth) is also attested.