A Desire for Recognition: Ruler Cult in the Hellenistic Minor Kingdoms

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Abstract

This thesis examines the implementation and success of Hellenistic ruler cults in the minor kingdoms. As an established practice of the period, ruler cults throughout the Hellenistic Mediterranean became one of the essential elements of kingship. The tradition had roots in the heroic honors given to esteemed individuals in Greece during earlier periods, but was only fully realized by the honors given to Alexander the Great and his successors. To further the discussion of ruler cult in these minor states, the thesis includes case studies of three minor kingdoms: Kommagene, Attalid Pergamum, and Syracuse. These three kingdoms represent different temporal and geographical states in the Hellenistic world, and provide three different models for ruler cult in the minor kingdoms. The rulers of minor kingdoms, including the monarchs from Kommagene, Pergamum, and Syracuse, adopted the practice of ruler cult to attempt to further justify and receive recognition for their reigns. Continuity exists amongst the elements of ruler cult throughout the kingdoms, including associations with particular deities, the depiction of the king's genealogy, and the integration of native customs into the cult. The overall uniformity between cult practices in the minor kingdoms speaks to the need for those monarchs to legitimize their power throughout their kingdoms and the broader Hellenistic world.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine l'implémentation et le succès des cultes royaux hellénistiques dans les royaumes mineurs. Ayant été une pratique bien établie de la période, les cultes royaux furent un des éléments essentiels de la royauté à travers le monde hellénistique. Les racines de la tradition provenaient des honneurs héroïques étant donnés aux individus estimés en Grèce dans les périodes précédentes. Cependant, elle était seulement véritablement réalisée par les honneurs conférés à Alexandre le Grand et ses successeurs. Pour approfondir la discussion du culte royal dans les royaumes mineurs, la thèse inclut des enquêtes portant sur trois royaumes mineurs : Kommagène, le Pergame Attalide et le royaume de Syracuse. Ces trois royaumes représentaient des états différents au sens temporel et géographique dans le monde hellénistique; conséquemment ils nous divulguent trois modèles pour le culte royal pour le royaume mineur. Les monarques de ces royaumes, incluant ceux de Kommagène, Pergame et Syracuse ont adopté la pratique du culte royal afin de recevoir reconnaissance ainsi que de justifier leurs règnes. La continuité existait parmi certains éléments de culte royal à travers les divers royaumes, incluant des associations avec des divinités particuliers, la représentation de la généalogie du roi et l'intégration des coutumes locaux dans le culte. L'uniformité générale parmi les pratiques de culte dans les royaumes mineurs nous informe sur le besoin de ces monarques de légitimer leur pouvoir à travers leurs royaumes et l'ensemble du monde hellénistique.

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Introduction

During the Hellenistic period, the institution of ruler cult was a form of divine honors offered to a king. The monarchs typically were associated with a particular deity. The rulers were not deified while living but were afforded honors equal to those of the gods; it was only after a monarch's death that full deification took place. Ruler cult has its origins in hero cults and the occasional cult for living political or military leaders during the Classical period, including Lysander of Sparta, Dion of Syracuse, and Philip II of Macedonia. Prior to the end of the fifth century, heroic honors after death were the sole method used by the Greeks to bestow veneration on their fellow mortals. After this period, honors for living men became more commonplace, though they were still reserved only for the most esteemed individuals. It was not until the rise of Alexander the Great that a true ruler cult developed. While Alexander may or may not have requested cultic honors, it was well known throughout the Mediterranean that divine honors could be used to seek his favor.

The reign of Alexander signified a permanent shift in the development of ruler cult. After his death, divine honors for living monarchs became a common element of Hellenistic kingship. Antigonus I received god-like honors from Skepsis in 311, while the divine honors accorded to him and his son Demetrios by the city of Athens ushered in the definitive establishment of the institution. The rest of the Diadokhoi and their successors followed suit, hoping to legitimize their reigns with cults featuring altars, festivals, and sacrifices. These ruler cults were used by the rulers as a means of projecting their authority and legitimizing their reign. For the cities under their control, on the other hand, ruler cults were a way to invoke the protection and benefaction

of these monarchs. Not only did the Successor dynasties implement ruler cults during this period, but several other monarchs in the Mediterranean and Near East instituted worship amongst their subjects, in direct parallel with the great Macedonian kings of the eastern Mediterranean. Even more so than the Diadokhoi, kings in these minor states adopted the practice of ruler cult as a way to justify their reign and receive recognition on a local scale as well as from the larger Mediterranean community.

This thesis examines the success of Hellenistic ruler cults within the minor kingdoms as both a medium for the interaction between ruler and the subordinate civic community, and for the legitimation of monarchical power. It was, on some level, necessary for a Hellenistic ruler to have a ruler cult, simply because it was an important facet of kingship during this period. Yet the ruler cults in the minor kingdoms are indicative of those monarchs' determination to be considered equal to the kings from the major dynasties. This work focuses on the ruler cults of minor kingdoms in Sicily and Asia Minor by exploring the path from Greek heroic honors to the cults of Hellenistic kings in the smaller kingdoms. To further the discussion of ruler cult in these minor states, case studies are undertaken of three minor kingdoms: Kommagene, Attalid Pergamum, and Syracuse. These three kingdoms represent different temporal and geographical states in the Hellenistic world, and provide different models by which ruler cult can be examined in the minor kingdoms.

Of the three kingdoms in question, Syracuse has generated the largest amount of scholarship. Here, an examination of ruler cult reveals that the veneration of living persons through heroic and divine honors was commonplace even before the Hellenistic period. Thus the ruler cult of Hieron II, the only true Hellenistic king in Sicily, was based upon a long tradition of

according honors to leaders and prominent individuals. The creation of a ruler cult was a product of his path from Syracusan tyrant to Hellenistic monarch. With his predecessor Agathokles setting the precedent of taking the diadem, Hieron II was able to align his kingship even further with other Hellenistic rulers. While Hieron II's ruler cult was only a minor part of his Hellenistic aspirations, it was nevertheless used to prove his legitimacy as a Hellenistic monarch, and was indicative of his desire to be considered an equal by the kings from the Successor dynasties. The cult was in some ways a part of Hieron's effort to be even more Hellenistic than other monarchs of the period. Hieron II was not content to simply be a Roman ally with no real power of his own. In an effort to be like his Hellenistic counterparts in both image and action, he developed foreign relations with powers throughout the Mediterranean and engaged in typical Hellenistic behavior like patronage and competitive euergetism. Ultimately, his success came from his ability to perform different roles for different audiences. He was able to be a loyal Roman ally, a Sicilian *basileus* with ties to the Syracusan aristocracy, and a Hellenistic monarch with divine associations. In light of this, Hieron II cannot be dismissed as a client king trying to puff himself up with attempts at power, but instead should be viewed as a Hellenistic monarch attempting to cement his authority within his own kingdom while managing his relationships with stronger powers. The development of such a prevalent ruler cult in Syracuse was one method by which Hieron proved that his kingdom was a genuine player in the Hellenistic Mediterranean.

The Attalid kingdom and its ruler cult have likewise been studied in great detail. Like many of the monarchs in the major kingdoms, the Attalids also received cult worship from cities beginning in the reign of Attalos I, and later kings were given deification after death. Of the case studies given here, the Attalids were the most successful at propagating and controlling a very

specific political and cultural image at home and abroad. This image was supported through their ruler cult and the propaganda that was associated with the cult worship. The Attalids heavily stressed their victories in battle - especially over the Gauls - and their benefaction of Greek cities. Commemoration of these successes in war were cultivated to emphasize the dynasty's fervent protection of Greece from outside forces. They also created a mythical genealogy that connected the dynasty to Herakles and Zeus. The honors bestowed upon the Attalids from their cult clearly reflected this projected image of the divinely descended protectors of Greece and Asia Minor. This gave the monarchs immense support, both ideologically and practically, for their reigns. In an attempt to rise above their modest roots, the Attalids sought to cultivate a specific image that they could share with the rest of the Hellenistic Mediterranean. To place themselves among other prominent kingdoms, they employed every opportunity to demonstrate their accomplishments as a part of the great tradition of the Greeks. The success of the Attalids' manipulation of myth, altering their lineage and for their history of benefaction of the Hellenes, is exemplified by the ruler cult of the Pergamene kingdom, bringing new purpose to cultic practices as a tool for self-promotion.

Conversely, Kommagene is a kingdom which has received less scholarly attention. The case study focuses on the cult of Antiochus I, which was initiated by the king himself. In the inscription at his largest cult site of Nemrud Dağı, Antiochus gives the details for the practice of his ruler cult, which was the only cult of its kind in the kingdom. Through invented dynastic lineage and a synchronistic Greco-Persian pantheon, he attempted to strengthen his right to reign while solidifying his kingdom's power in the region. Ultimately, Antiochus' cult was unsuccessful and his successors did not continue with his plans; his cult sites were never

functional and he lacked the support from the local population. The unique nature of his cult was never replicated either in Kommagene or elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. Antiochus endeavored to promote his divine nature and to portray himself as the incarnation of Macedonian and Iranian cultural traditions in his kingdom. His cult practices show a monarch seeking recognition for his reign both within his own territory and in a more universal context. Antiochus was aiming not for self-immortality but rather for the increased political power of Kommagene, and thus his ruler cult was used to consecrate himself and his reign.

In the analysis of these three case studies, I discuss patterns that emerged throughout these minor kingdoms in their ruler cults. The origins of the ruler cults proved to be significant for the success of the institution within the individual kingdoms. Kings who instituted ruler cults for themselves and members of their family were received differently than the monarchs of those kingdoms in which cities in developed ruler cults based on their own relations with the kings. The prevalence of festivals as a part of cult practice in the minor kingdoms is also explored, as well as how often the worship of ruler cults were associated with the worship of other deities. Lineage also plays a large role in these kingdoms, as ruler cult became a way in which a monarch could demonstrate his connections with other Hellenistic dynasties, with local aristocracy, and with patron deities.

Part of the purpose of this study is to discuss the similarities between ruler cult in the minor kingdoms and ruler cult in the major kingdoms. Specifically, the ruler cults of the three exemplary minor kingdoms - Kommagene, Pergamum, and Syracuse - were influenced by the practices of the major kingdoms, most often the Ptolemies and the Seleukids, and relations between monarchs played a role in determining the extent of ruler cult in the minor kingdoms.

Ruler cult was used in the major kingdoms to support claims of legitimacy by the kings and to project the divine associations of the dynasties. In addition, a large part of the success of ruler cult for the Ptolemies in particular was the adoption of native customs, especially comparing the kings to local gods rather than just Greek deities. This thesis explores such customs in the minor kingdoms, and reveals significant similarities with larger monarchic states in how the cults were received by the local populace and in turn used to seek favor with the ruling king. The study will shed light on the significance of ruler cult, and establish some connections between cult practice in the minor kingdoms.

Many similarities exist amongst the elements of ruler cult in both major and minor states, including the initial establishment of the cult, the projection of one's lineage through cult practices, and the integration of local customs into the cult. The minor kingdoms were not developing and promoting their ruler cults simply to prove that they were equal to their fellow monarchs in the larger kingdoms. They also attempted to demonstrate their associations with the divine, their great euergetism, and most significantly their authority within their kingdom. In the minor kingdoms this was especially crucial, as many monarchs dealt with powers outside of their kingdom that threatened their authority and made it more difficult to express their power through military prowess or even foreign diplomacy. There was no one model with which to project monarchical authority, but the institution of ruler cult was the most common method of doing so amongst the kings of the minor kingdoms.

As an established practice of the period, ruler cults across the Hellenistic Mediterranean became a vital element of kingship. The tradition had roots in the heroic honors bestowed in Greece, but was only fully realized by the honors given to Alexander the Great and his

successors. The rulers of minor kingdoms, including monarchs from Kommagene, Pergamum, and Syracuse, adopted the practice of ruler cult to attempt to further legitimize their reigns. Continuity exists amongst the elements of ruler cult throughout the kingdoms, including associations with particular deities, the depiction of the king's genealogy, and the integration of native customs into the cult. The overall uniformity between cult practices in the minor kingdoms speaks to the need for those monarchs to continually justify and secure their authority in their kingdom through the interplay of divine and human characteristics associated with ruler cult.

Ruler Cult: Precedents and Practices

The establishment of ruler cults in Hellenistic kingdoms developed out of a long tradition of heroic and divine honors for leaders. After the death of Alexander, his successors developed specific ruler cult practices as a facet of Hellenistic kingship. Initiated either by the king himself or by the cities under his control, the cults lent authority to monarchical reigns and allowed the Diadokhoi to promote themselves and their dynasties. Relationships between monarchs and cities within their kingdoms were largely determined through the implementation and application of ruler cult, with monarchs taking every opportunity to project their power through the cults.

The Greeks began bestowing heroic honors upon mortals - including city founders, generals, and athletes - after their death well before the Hellenistic period. Yet it was not until the fifth century BCE that men began to receive these honors during their lifetimes.[1] The first such mortal was the Spartan general Lysander. Plutarch tells us that after his victory over the Athenians, Lysander was "more powerful than any man had been before him".[2] In response to the return of Samian aristocrats in 404, the Samians erected an altar to Lysander, offered him sacrifices, and renamed the festival of Hera after him.[3] It is possible that other cities in Ionia also afforded him honors.[4] Achievements similar to those of Lysander would later be used to bestow honors, typically reserved for the gods, on other mortals. In this period, however, it is important

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[1] All dates, unless otherwise specified, will be BCE.

[2] Plut. *Lys.* 18.2.

[3] The Lysandreia: Douris FGrH 76 F71 and F26. Plutarch (*Lys.* 18.2-3) seems to believe that Lysander himself initiated the honors. Cf. also Bommelaer 1981: 16-17, 207-208; Cartledge 1987: 82-86.

[4] Habicht 1970: 6; Fredericksmeyer 1981: 152.

to note that unlike with worship for gods, there are no references to a cult statue, a shrine, or rites that were meant to be permanent fixtures.[5]

The honors for Dion I of Syracuse give another instance of heroic honors bestowed on a mortal. At two different times during Dion's rise to power, the Syracusan *demos* hailed him as a god and a savior. The first was when Dion entered the city with the intent to liberate Sicily from the tyrant Dionysius; upon his entrance he was hailed as a god.[6] The second instance occurred after Dion had been exiled from the city after losing the favor of the people. He was recalled after the tyrant's army began attacking the citizens, and after he defeated Dionysius he was welcomed back as a savior. An altar was erected to him, and he also received "honors due to a hero" from the assembly.[7] The example of Dion's honors has spawned a debate amongst scholars as to the validity of the source accounts for pre-Hellenistic honors. It has been argued that such instances are an early indication of future Hellenistic cult practices, though these accounts have also been considered retrojections taken out of context from authors who wished to show precedent for ruler cults.[8] Zahrnt makes a compelling argument that certain titles, especially that of 'savior', belong firmly in the Hellenistic period and are not accurately associate with earlier heroic honors.[9] Yet Dion's honors seem to have been truthfully recorded, at least by Diodorus,

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[5] Chaniotis 2005: 434.

[6] Plut. *Dion* 29: "After Dion had entered the city by the Temenitid gate, he stopped the noise of the people by a blast of the trumpet, and made proclamation that Dion and Megacles, who were come to overthrow the tyranny, declared the Syracusans and the rest of the Sicilians free from the tyrant. Then, wishing to harangue the people himself, he went up through the Achradina, while on either side of the street the Syracusans set out tables and sacrificial meats and mixing-bowls, and all, as he came to them, pelted him with flowers, and addressed him with vows and prayers as if he were a god".

[7] Diod. Sic. 16.20.6; Plut. *Dion* 46.1. Cf. Potter 2005: 417.

[8] Habicht 1970: 8-10, 244-245; for the retrojection argument, see Badian 1981: 42-43.

[9] Zahrnt 2000: 174.

and thus the events provide further evidence for heroic honors given to a living man.[10] In Dion's case, these honors positioned him almost - but not actually - in the realm of the divine, bringing the Greek world closer to honoring mortal achievements in the same way as one would worship a god.

The immediate predecessor of what came to be known as ruler cults of the Hellenistic kings are the cultic honors bestowed on two Macedonian rulers, Amyntas III and Philip II. Amyntas had a shrine, the Amynteion, dedicated to him at Pydna, while his son Philip's honors were far more substantial in nature. Philip received quasi-divine honors at Amphipolis and Eresus early in his reign, and there is evidence pointing to a royal cult at Philippi which may have existed during Philip's life.[11] He had already been worshipped in the city as the founder, a typical practice which continued through the Hellenistic period for kings who founded cities.[12] In addition, an inscription in Philippi lists the king as possessor of sacred land along with gods like Ares and Poseidon.[13] This seems to point to an acknowledgement that the worship of Philip was equal to that of those gods.

It is possible that Philip wanted to establish a royal cult for himself and his family. After his victory at Chaeronea in 338, he had a temple, called the Philippeum, erected in Olympia. The structure prominently featured statues of Philip, his parents, and his son Alexander.[14] While no cult was ever actually practiced at the Philippeum, it is possible that cult worship was indeed

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[10] For a full discussion of the validity of Diodorus' and Plutarch's accounts, see Bosworth 2003: 12-28.

[11] Ael. *Arist*. 38.480; OGI I.8a; Habicht 1970: 12-14.

[12] Chaniotis 2005: 434.

[13] SEG 38.658.

[14] Paus. 5.20.9. The statues were made of ivory and gold, which were common materials for cult statues. A statue of his wife Olympias was added later, likely by Alexander. Cf. Fredricksmeyer 1981: 147.

Philip's intention. Diodorus also describes an incident during a procession just before Philip's death, in which he presented his own image alongside statues of the twelve gods.[15] With this action Philip "had made himself a throned companion of the twelve gods," which presents the possibility that Philip wanted to introduce divine honors for himself.[16] Chaniotis states that Diodorus' account is "controversial", but nevertheless it seems to state that at the very least Philip was promoting his connection with the Greek pantheon, if not actually encouraging the notion of his own divinity. A later passage in Diodorus also insinuates that Philip attempted to project his own status as being on par with those of the deities, and thus was entitled to be worshiped in similar manners. How Philip's contemporaries, as well as the king himself, would have received such claims during this time is unknown.[17]

The worship of Alexander the Great was based on this earlier Macedonian tradition, though it differed in some ways from both Philip's honors as well as the cults of Alexander's eventual successors. His military successes drew comparisons to Herakles and Dionysus, giving him unprecedented status as a mortal conquerer.[18] He was also heavily influenced by eastern practices like the Persian *proskynesis* and divine worship of the Egyptian pharaohs.[19] It should be noted, however, that many aspects of Alexander's worship were regularly adopted by later Hellenistic monarchs. While tracing one's lineage back to gods and heroes was not uncommon,

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[15] Diod. Sic. 16.92.5: "Along with lavish display of every sort, Philip included in the procession statues of the twelve gods wrought with great artistry and adorned with a dazzling show of wealth to strike awe in the beholder, and along with these was conducted a thirteenth statue, suitable for a god, that of Philip himself, so that the king exhibited himself enthroned among the twelve gods" (translated by C.H. Oldfather).

[16] Fredericksmeyer 1981: 147.

[17] Habicht 1970: 14, n. 3; Cerfaux and Tondriau 1957: 123−125.

[18] Hahn 2000: 16-19, 82-6.

[19] Chaniotis 2005: 434. For more on Alexander's relationship with *proskynesis*, see Fredericksmeyer 1981: 145-146 and Balsdon 1950: 371-382.

Alexander brought the tradition to a new level when he claimed that he was descended directly from Zeus.[20] His successors would later claim descent from Herakles and Apollo in imitation of this. The Ptolemies similarly benefited from the common belief of divine ancestry of Egyptian pharaohs, allowing them to more readily incorporate this element of native religion into their own cultic ideology.[21] The Seleukids also worked divine ancestry into their cult; Seleukos I claimed to be the son of Apollo, with later successors including that connection to the god in their lineage.[22]

The cult of Alexander was established throughout Asia Minor as a result of his campaign as well as his benefactions to cities in the region.[23] Worship consisted of the offering of sacrifices on an altar and occasionally at a shrine. There were also priesthoods associated with the cult, and statues were often dedicated to Alexander in the temples of other gods.[24] Towards the end of his life it has been posited that he even began demanding that divine honors be bestowed upon him, as evidenced by Arrian's description of Greek cities sending envoys to Babylon to worship him as a deity.[25] It is crucial to note the widespread popularity and diffusion of Alexander's cult.[26] It was continually popular in Egypt under Ptolemaic rule, as Ptolemy I as well as later kings greatly

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[20] In 331 the priest of Zeus-Ammon at Siwa referred to Alexander as the son of Zeus, and Alexander adopted that identity for himself; see Fredericksmeyer 1981: 146 no. 4 for the numerous literary references to this event from our ancient sources. Similar claims were made up through the fifth century, including the athlete Theagenes as the son of Herakles and Euthymos of Lokroi as the son of Kaikinos, a river-god. Cf. Paus. 6.9.2, 6.6.4.

[21] Alexander as well was considered to be the son of Ammon-Re, giving further validity to the Ptolemies' later claims.

[22] I.*Erythrai* 205.

[23] Habicht 1970: 17-25.

[24] Chaniotis 2005: 435.

[25] Arrian *Anab.* 7.23.2.

[26] Habicht 1970: 25.

supported the cult in order to legitimize his own rule. Yet the cult remained prominent in areas not under direct monarchical rule. Dedicatory texts at a grave site in Pella speak of the worship of Alexander; his shrine in Priene continued to be kept up through the second century; statues of the king in Erythrai, Ephesos, and Thessaloniki received offerings as late as the second and third centuries AD.[27] Alexander's cult was both a model for later ruler cult practices and a complete exception in its continual prominence throughout the Hellenistic east.

After Alexander's death, ruler cult became one of the elements of kingship that were adopted and epitomized by the Diadokhoi. Yet there were distinct ways in which these cults came to be introduced in the Hellenistic kingdoms. The most widely attested are the cults initiated by a polis, which were formed for almost every monarch during the period. This process is exemplified by the cult of Antigonus Monopthalmos and his son Demetrios Poliorketes in Athens.[28] Portrayed as liberators of the city, a cult was set up with an altar and an annual festival, complete with a procession and sacrifices.[29] A later Antigonid king, Antigonus Gonatas, also received divine honors from Athens around 255 and was recognized as the savior of the Athenians *demos*.[30] The cult of the Antigonids consisted only of this type of polis-initiated cults outside of Macedonia.[31] In the eastern Mediterranean, cities also founded cults for various rulers. One such instance revolves around the cult of Laodike III initiated by Sardis, a discussion of which appears in a letter from the queen. The Sardians built a *temenos*, the Laodikeion, for the

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[27] Pella: SEG 47.933; Priene: I.Priene 108; Erythrai: I.Erythrai 64; Ephesos: I.Ephesos 719; Thessaloniki: SEG 47.960.

[28] Plut. *Demetr*. 8-13; Diod. 20.45.2; Habicht 1970: 44-8.

[29] Chaniotis 2005: 436.

[30] Habicht 2006: 286-287.

[31] Koester 1995: 35.

queen as well as an altar; they also instituted a yearly festival called the Laodikeia on her birthday, which included a procession and a sacrifice to Zeus.[32] These kinds of cults followed a particular pattern of worship for the ruler, as evidenced by the consistent employment of festivals, processions, and altar sacrifices. Regardless of the specific circumstances surrounding the establishment of a cult, the benefaction of a city was a clear path to receiving divine honors for a monarch in this period.

Cults were also established by the kings themselves, either for the worship of a deceased family member or for the ruler himself during his reign. The process of establishing of a cult for a deceased king or queen by the royal family was used most frequently by the Ptolemies. In 279, a few years after the death of Ptolemy I, his son Ptolemy II deified both his father and his mother Berenike as "benefactor gods". When Arsinoe II, his wife and sister, died in 270, Ptolemy II connected the familial cult with that of Alexander's priesthood in Egypt.[33] The cult became one of "sibling-loving gods" *(theoi philadelphoi)*, through which the living rulers of the Ptolemaic dynasty were worshipped.[34] The Ptolemaic cult evolved into an eponymous dynastic cult which highlighted the continuity of the Ptolemies' reign as well as the divine nature of the monarchs.[35] The Ptolemies were also worshipped in the temples of native Egyptian gods after the death of

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[32] Gauthier 1989: 47-49; Sherwin-White 2003: 181-182. The sacrifice was to Zeus Genethlios, a god associated with the royal family.

[33] Chaniotis 2005: 436-437.

[34] Errington 2008: 155.

[35] This is demonstrated with a section of the Rosetta Stone from the reign of Ptolemy V: "…during the priesthood of Aetos, son of Aetos, priest of Alexander and Savior Gods and the Brother-Sister Gods and the Benefactor Gods and the Father-loving Gods and the Manifest and Beneficent God"; cf. OGIS 90.

Arsinoe II. They would receive daily offerings from the local population as *synnaoi theoi* ("temple-sharing gods"), evidence that the cult was largely accepted by native Egyptians.[36]

In the early Hellenistic period, the Seleukids' ruler cult was similar to that of the Antigonids and Ptolemies in that cults for living monarchs were established by individual cities and the deification of deceased rulers was initiated by the royal family. By the time of Antiochus III, however, Seleukid kings began creating cults for themselves. In a letter written to the satrap of Caria in 193/2, Antiochus III asks to appoint a priestess to the cult of his wife Laodike:

> King Antiochus to Anaximbrotus, greeting. As we desired to increase still further the honor of our sister-queen Laodike . . . we have now decided that, just as there are appointed throughout the kingdom high-priests of our cult, so there shall be established in the same districts high-priestesses of her also, who shall wear golden crowns bearing her image and whose names shall be mentioned in contracts after those of the high-priests of our ancestors and of us.[37]

With the mention of the priesthoods, the letter implies that a cult for Antiochus III and his ancestors existed by the end of his reign. An inscription from the reign of Antiochus' successor Seleukos IV demonstrates this, as it lists the Seleukid rulers with their cult epithets.[38] The cult had different priesthoods for each satrapy under Seleukid control, though practice of the cult seems to have been limited to the Greek elite within the kingdom.[39]

Regardless of the origin of the cult, the organization of established ruler cults was very similar to the worship of Greek deities. Common elements, as previously demonstrated, included sacrifices, a procession, and some sort of competition as part of a festival. Cult sacrifices were

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[36] Lanciers 1993: 214-215.

[37] OGIS 224.

[38] OGIS 245: "Seleukos Zeus Nicator and Antiochus Apollo Soter and Antiochus Theos and Seleukos Callinicus and Seleukid Soter and Antiochus and Antiochus the Great."

[39] Chaniotis 2005: 437; cf. Lanciers 1993.

usually offered annually, as well as on a particular day of each month and occasionally to commemorate a particular event or benefaction on behalf of the king. Sacrifices typically required the use of an altar in a *temenos* named after the monarch. Hellenistic rulers rarely received temples as part of their ruler cult; if sacrifices were made to a king at a temple, it was because a statue of that monarch, which was an fundamental part of ruler cult, had been erected in the temple of a deity.[40] Ruler cults usually had a separate and distinct shrine for the monarch, typically in a prominent place within the city. A priesthood would be set up to manage sacrifices and shrines for the cult and, occasionally, to serve as the eponymous official of the city.[41] This process is exemplified in an inscription from Skepsis, which describes the process of setting up honors of Antigonus Monophthalmos: ". . . let [the city] mark off a sacred enclosure (*temenos*) for him, build an altar and set up a cult statue as beautiful as possible, and let the sacrifice . . . be celebrated every [year] / in his honor…"[42]

Cult festivals would typically begin with the *demos* attending a procession.[43] The processions were more elaborate if organized by the royal family, as evidenced by the grand procession given in honor of Ptolemy I by his son.[44] This particular procession, like many other cultic celebrations, was meant to project the monarch's authority to the local population through elaborate spectacle. Festivals also included religious hymns describing the divine nature of the ruler, and the celebrations tended to incorporate athletic and musical competitions to accompany

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[40] Examples include Attalos I in Aigina, Antiochus III and Apollonis in Teos, Attalos III in Pergamum, and Mithradates VI in Delos; cf. Chaniotis 2005: 439.

[41] Occasionally these shrines were set up by the monarchs themselves as benefactions; cf. Chaniotis 2005: 439.

[42] OGIS 6 = Austin 39. This inscription is one of the earliest known instances of divine honors being offered to a living ruler by a Greek *polis*.

[43] OGIS 11.

[44] Kallixeinos of Rhodes, *Athen.* 5.194a-203b.

the festival and continued long after the king's death.[45] The festivals were named after the monarch whom they honored, and typically took place on the ruler's birthday or the anniversary of the accession to the throne.[46] If, however, the cult was initiated after the monarch was deceased, celebrations could take place on the anniversary of the death instead.[47] In some instances the festivals for ruler cult would be appended to an existing celebration of a deity. The first known case of an appended festival is that of Demetrios Poliorketes, whose honors in Athens led to the institution of the Demetrieia. The festival was not simply named after Demetrios but was rather named to incorporate the Dionysia festival as well ('Dionysia in the city and Demetria'), thus demonstrating the connection between Dionysus and Demetrius.[48] A similar festival combining Dionysia and Demetrieia festivals took place in four cities in Euboea.[49] The Seleukid ruler cult also combined Seleukeia festivals with those of Dionysus.[50] Most of these appended festivals were doubly named, with the monarch's festival appearing second; the exception to this occurs in Rhodes with the festival of Alexandreia and Dionysia.[51]

The intentions behind the development of a ruler cult differed depending on the origin of the cult. Hellenistic monarchs certainly took advantage of any benefits that cult practices gave them, but when an individual city initiated the cult its civic interests came into play as well. The establishment of a ruler cult was used by *poleis* to instigate a relationship with a particular

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[45] Chaniotis 2005: 438.

[46] Chaniotis 438.

[47] Habicht 1970: 17 no. 5.

[48] Buraselis 2012: 248-249.

[49] IG 12.9.207. Cf. Habicht 1970: 76-78.

[50] Buraselis 2012: 250-252.

[51] Diod. Sic. 20.84.3; Habicht 1970: 26-8; Buraselis 2012: 254.

monarch or dynasty. These relationships generally developed with the expectation of benefaction on the part of the ruler and gratitude on the part of the city. Epigraphic evidence points to the ruler cult as a medium through which to recognize the past actions of the monarch as a product of their divine nature. A decree from the League of Islanders expresses this sentiment, stating that they were the first people to honor Ptolemy I with divine honors "because of his services to individuals".[52] Hellenistic monarchs were more than willing to fulfill these tacit agreements in return for cultic honors.[53] The relationships were largely hortatory, as cities attempted to secure a ruler's protection by honoring him and publicly demonstrating appreciation.[54] A *polis* would style itself as inferior and weak, with no choice but to rely on the supremacy of the Hellenistic king. It was in this way that the cities could force a monarch to live up to his epithets and protect them, whether through military power or simply through benefaction, and were able to deal with the immense power held by these rulers.[55] The monarchs undoubtedly recognized the negotiation that was occurring, taking every potential opportunity to project their authority by means of these divine honors. Ruler cult thus existed within exists the religious framework but not inherently religious, as is shown by the political and civic nature of the honors and benefactions associated with it.

Ruler cult enforced a certain level of dependence on the part of cities under direct or even indirect control of a king. Having an eponymous priest who tended to the king's cult, or that of his predecessors, gave a ruler more authority in that city, regardless of whether it was a part of

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[52] IG 12.7.506 = Austin 256.

[53] See, as an example, SEG 39.1284B.

[54] For instance, the language in this decree: SEG 1.366 = Austin 132.

[55] Price 1984: 28-30.

his kingdom. Soldiers stationed in Hellenistic garrisons were also used to further dynastic ideology in such cities through the dedications they made to the king and the royal dynasty. Several dedications from soldiers, particularly in the Ptolemaic kingdom, demonstrate what a useful tool a garrison could be in promulgating ruler cult. A garrison in Itanos, for instance, was established during the reign of Ptolemy III; simultaneously the Itanians began offering annual sacrifices to the Ptolemies, and founded a *temenos* for the king and his wife.[56] The cult continued for generations with the help of garrison commanders who made dedications to the monarchs.[57] Whether or not the royal dynasty was pressuring the garrisons to promote their cult, their dedications certainly reminded the local population of the ideological and practical power of the king within the city.[58]

There is some evidence for private worship of Hellenistic ruler cults for both deceased and living monarchs. In certain instances, decrees specifically mention private sacrifices or individual offerings. A decree in Teos specifies that non-citizens should sacrifice in their homes during the festival of Antiochus III and Laodike; an inscription from Iasos instructs newlyweds to bring offerings to Laodike.[59] Typically, however, people who made individual dedications to monarchs were either officials of the kingdom or soldiers; both groups would likely have had ulterior motivations for doing so.[60] One exception to this type of individualistic worship seems to be the cult of Arsinoe II, who was associated with both Isis and Aphrodite. Her cult was hugely

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[56] Chaniotis 2005: 441.

[57] I.Cret.3.4.17. See also the following dedication at Ephesos: SEG 39.1234.

[58] For further discussion of the power of garrisons, cf. Chaniotis 2002.

[59] Teos: SEG 41.1003 II 25-26; Iasos: I.Iasos 4.85-88. Cf. Ma 1999: 29-35.

[60] Examples of dedications: SEG 37.1020; I.Cret. 3.4.17.

popular in Egypt and Cyprus, yet many of the dedications - including a temple and a shared sanctuary - to Arsinoe that survived were made by individuals.[61] On Cyprus alone there are more than twenty private altars for her cult across several cities, and shrines to Arsinoe II have been found as far as Miletos and Eretria.[62] Some monarchs were also worshipped in gymnasia, which could be considered private in that such cult worship would have been largely restricted to young elite men.[63]

That ruler cult was a successful tool for the legitimization of Hellenistic kingship is demonstrated by Roman adoption of the practice. Before the period ended, Greek cities gave divine honors to some Roman generals and provincial magistrates. Both Caesar and Mark Antony likely benefited from the practice of ruler cult, receiving god-like honors and becoming associated with Greek deities.[64] Once Octavian assumed sole authority in Rome, it was a logical progression for the imperial cult to take on the appearance of a Hellenistic ruler cult, at least in the eastern Mediterranean. Even the provincial cult of the emperor took on elements of ruler cult. Augustus was also paired with various deities for worship, including Roma, Zeus, and Apollo.[65] The significance of cult practice from the Hellenistic world was not diminished even as its monarchs lost power and their kingdoms fell.

Ruler cult in the Hellenistic world contained certain staple elements regardless of

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[61] The admiral Kallikrates dedicated a temple to Arsinoe and Aphrodite at Cape Zephyrion. In Halicarnassus a sanctuary was founded for Sarapis, Isis and Arsinoe II Philadelphos; cf. Chaniotis 2005: 442.

[62] SEG 40.763.

[63] Chaniotis 2005: 442.

[64] Chaniotis 2005: 443.

[65] SEG 35.744; Chaniotis 2005: 443.

location, even as specific conditions were implemented by each royal dynasty.[66] Throughout the period the organization and role of ruler cult remained essentially Greek in nature, as it remained true to Greek traditions regarding the worship of deities. In the earliest phases of ruler cult, cities played upon a monarch's mortal divinity to secure protection and benefaction for themselves; later in the period kings began to declare their own divinity and promote their cults via dynastic means. Regardless of its origin the king certainly worked to benefit from the cult once it had been initiated. By accepting and promoting one's own ruler cult, kings were able to gain ideological approval for their reign. Whether initiated by a city or by the ruler himself, Hellenistic ruler cults were a tool for monarchs to validate their rule and maintain control over their kingdoms.

This same pattern remained true for the ruler cults within the minor states, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters. The exhibition of divine ancestry was a common element, especially when a monarch of a minor kingdom could not show a direct genealogical link to Alexander himself. Many cults were initiated by the local populations of these kingdoms, like those in Syracuse and Pergamum; other cults, like that of Antiochus I of Kommagene, were created by the monarch himself in similar fashion to the later Seleukids. While the organization of the ruler cults differed between minor kingdoms, the motivations were largely similar in nature: the desire to justify one's authority and seek recognition as a Hellenistic monarch on the same scale as the Successor dynasties.

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[66] Walbank 1987: 380.

Tyrant Turned King: The Path to Hieron II's Ruler Cult in Syracuse

". . . since he thought that neither in power nor in territory nor in deeds was he inferior to them, he called himself king".[67] Diodorus Siculus describes Agathokles, the first 'Hellenistic' king of Sicily, in such a manner, likening him to the monarchs of the major kingdoms during the late fourth century B.C. Yet it was not until the reign of Agathokles' eventual successor, Hieron II, that one of the key elements of Hellenistic kingship were practiced in the city of Syracuse and across Sicily as a whole. Hieron II's ruler cult, a minor part of his Hellenistic aspirations, is nonetheless telling of an overall desire to be considered a peer of those kings of the more prominent dynasties. In many ways, the cult was part of Hieron's effort to be even more Hellenistic than the kings of the Greek east. The creation of such a cult was a product of the path from Syracusan tyrant to Sicilian *basileus* to Hellenistic monarch, one which Hieron II took purposely despite the external pressures on his kingdom.

The history of tyranny in Sicily was long-established by the time Hieron II came to power. Yet Hieron II and his indirect predecessor Agathokles were not simply continuations of tyrannic tradition but rather Hellenistic kings influenced by the practices of those who had ruled before them. Indeed, there was precedent for the veneration of tyrants and kings of Sicily long before Hieron's rise to power. Gelon, the tyrant of Syracuse from 491-477, was acclaimed as Soter after his victory over the Carthaginians in 480, and his brother Hieron I who succeeded him was given heroic honors after his death.[68] In the fourth century, stronger precedents for

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[67] Diod. Sic. 20.54.1.

[68] Gelon: Diod. Sic. 11.26.6; Hieron I: Diod. Sic. 11.66.4 and Strabo 6.2.3. Hieron I founded cities as well as competed in the Olympic games in order to achieve these honors (cf. Diod. Sic. 11.49.2; Paus. 6.12.1). Serrati makes the point that Syracusan tyrants, including Gelon and Hieron I, looked to the Greeks in the east for acknowledgement (2008: 89).

divine honors developed from the tyrants Dionysius II, who associated himself with Apollo, and Dion, who was given heroic honors and hailed as Soter by both the Syracusan people and the *boule*.[69] Agathokles' immediate predecessor, Timoleon, was even honored with games during his lifetime in addition to being awarded honors after death.[70] It would then not be surprising that Hieron was influenced by these honors just as much as he was by the ruler cults of other Hellenistic monarchs.[71]

While there is no evidence for heroic honors or a ruler cult for Hieron's predecessors Agathokles, he can be credited with laying the foundation for Hieron's own kingship. In the early stages of his rule, Agathokles was described by the sources in language typical of Sicilian tyrants. After initially being exiled by the Syracusan oligarchy, he was elected in 319 as *strategos autokrator*, or, as Diodorus wrote, as general and protector of the peace.[72] Soon after this election a military coup installed him as the tyrant in Syracuse. His leadership changed after the campaign against Carthage from 310-307, as the Sicilian Greeks encountered the ideology of the Hellenistic world for the first time. It was this campaign that led Agathokles to move his power in a more Hellenistic direction by assuming the royal title in 307-306, around the same time that the Successors named themselves *basileis*.[73] During the campaign he also began wearing purple robes; according to Diodorus, his soldiers viewed these as royal clothing appropriate for their commander.[74] Diodorus dates this event to 309, pointing to a change in the viewpoint of the

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[69] Diod. 16.11.2, 16.20.6; Plut. *Dion* 29, 46.1.

[70] Diod. 16.90.1; Plut. *Tim.* 39-5-6.

[71] Serrati 2008: 81.

[72] FGrH 239 F 12; Diod. Sic. 19.5.4-5.

[73] Diod. Sic. 20.54.1.

[74] Diod. Sic. 20.34.3-5.

Sicilian soldiers before Agathokles adopted the title of king. The notable exception amongst this Hellenistic garb is the diadem: Agathokles chose to wear a wreath instead, which was still meant to convey his royal authority.[75] After taking the kingship, sources mention that his wife Theoxene, his daughter Lanassa, and his son Agathokles received royal honors as well.[76]

His coins show similar designs to those of other Successors, especially the Ptolemies.[77] Beginning in 305, Agathokles' coins bear the inscription ΑΓΑΘΟΚΛΕΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ. The choice not to include any specification of territory, including ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ which had previously appeared on his coinage, shows a deliberate attempt to convey that his authority as king had no territorial limits. Images of Athena wearing a Corinthian helmet or holding a spear, as well as thunderbolts, are also commonly depicted on his coinage. These same images had appeared on coinage issued by Alexander the Great, typically thought to convey a claim over all land conquered by Alexander's army, and subsequently by Ptolemy, Lysimachus, and Demetrius Poliorketes as well.[78] The minting of such coins by Agathokles signals the projection of his Hellenistic identity. He sought to be considered as an equal to the Successors, with the same right to rule over *doriktetos chora* (spear-won territory) as the rest of the kings.

Agathokles' rule brought about the initial establishment of Hellenistic traditions in Sicily. While his reign did not differ radically from that of previous tyrants, he did bring Sicily "more

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[75] Diod. Sic. 20.54.1. Diodorus mentions that Agathokles had worn the wreath since before he seized office, and that some believed that he wore it to hide a lack of hair. On Agathokles' refusal to wear a diadem, see Lehmler 2005: 43.

[76] Theoxene: Just. 23.2.6; Lanassa: Plut. *Pyrrh*. 10.5 and Diod. 21.4.1; Agathokles (son): Diod. 21.16.3.

[77] Agathokles' connection with the Ptolemies likely stems from his marriage after 305 to Theoxene, a stepdaughter of Ptolemy I.

[78] Zambon 2006: 82-83.

firmly into the Hellenistic world".[79] He included Syracuse under the umbrella of his proclaimed absolute authority, keeping the popular assembly in the city but also appointing his son as successor.[80] Agathokles' kingship was distinct in that it existed hand-in-hand with the local assembly in Syracuse but also was not tied to any specific lands, like the authority of the Ptolemaic and the Seleukid dynasties.[81] In this way he tailored his rule to fit both Syracusan and Hellenistic customs. The initiation of his kingship - and all of the adaptations that came with it - made Sicily similar, for the first time, to other Hellenistic kingdoms, leaving the door open for Hieron II's eventual adoption of the full gamut of Hellenistic royal practices.

Hieron II rose to power in 275/4, and with his adoption of the diadem in 269 established a rule that called upon the trends of previous tyrants as well as contemporary royal peers.[82] Polybius states that Hieron II was proclaimed king by 'all the allies', making it clear that he ruled over a Sicilian kingdom with Syracuse as the base of his power.[83] For many Hellenistic kings the assumption of the diadem was preceded by a military victory. Skills in battle were markers of good leadership during this period, and thus it is fitting that an aspiring Hellenistic ruler would take the diadem in the context of military success.[84] Polybius states that Hieron II inflicted a

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[79] Serrati 2000a: 110. For a larger discussion of Agathokles' Hellenistic efforts, see Lehmler 2005: 62-83 and 106-120.

[80] Diod. 21.16.3: Agathokles in this passage wants to introduce his son to the popular assembly so that they could confirm his choice of successor. This points to a desire to create a dynasty in Syracuse. Eventually, however, he restored the 'democracy' in Syracuse after his son Agathokles was murdered by his grandson Archagathos (Diod. 21.16.3-4).

[81] This description differs from that of Berve, who argues that Agathokles' authority was that of a 'personal' monarchy which had no relationship with Syracuse but simply conquered lands in the city's name (Berve 1953: 62-8). For a more in-depth rejection of Berve's arguments, see Consolo Langher 2000: 258-261.

[82] Elected *strategos* in 271: Pol. 1.8.1; Paus. 6.12.2; taking the title of *basileus* in 269: IG 14.2 (=Syll.^{3} 427).

[83] Pol. 1.9.8; Serrati 2000b: 117.

[84] For examples of other Hellenistic kings "assuming the diadem", see Pol. 4.48.12, 5.42.7, 5.57.2-5; I Macc. 1, 11.13; Diod. 20.53, 31.15.3, 33.28, 40.1; Plut. *Demetrius* 17-18; Plut. *Pyrrhus* 11. Cf. Strootman 2014: 221.

severe defeat on the Mamertines just before returning to Syracuse and being proclaimed king by the Sicilian people.[85] Such a proclamation, rooted in Macedonian tradition, was par for the course by Hieron's reign.[86]

In 263 Hieron came to be allied with Rome after being besieged by Roman forces in Syracuse during a war with the Mamertines. The terms of the alliance allowed him to keep his rule over Syracuse and parts of eastern Sicily.[87] His treaty with Rome was renewed in 248 for the length of Hieron's reign, which was to last another three decades.[88] Towards the end of his reign, he named his son Gelon as co-ruler, though the partnership was ultimately not harmonious.[89] Gelon sided with the Carthaginians - and against his father - after the battle of Cannae during the Second Punic War, but died shortly afterwards. When Hieron himself died a year later in 215, Gelon's son Hieronymus took the throne. Hieronymus allied himself with Carthage but was assassinated, and Syracuse was eventually taken by the Romans in 211.

During his long reign, Hieron was considered to be the "most loyal supporter of Roman power," in part due to his assistance of Rome during the Second Punic War.[90] His unwavering support as an ally and client king allowed him to maintain peace within his kingdom and bring prosperity to Syracuse through a booming agricultural economy.[91] Under Hieron, Sicily was able

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[85] Pol. 1.9.8.

[86] Strootman 2014: 223. For an example of such proclamations, see Pol. 15.31.2-4, 18.55.3-4.

[87] The rest of Sicily came under Roman purview: Diod. Sic. 23.4.1.

[88] Hieron's treaty before 248 is referred to as a "treaty of peace" or a "truce" in the ancient sources (Pol. 1.17.1; Diod. Sic. 23.4.1; cf. Burton 2011: 147); after 248 it reverted to a φιλια ἀίδιος, a "friendship for all time" (Zonar. 8.16.2). This "friendship" meant that Hieron's indemnity was lifted for the remainder of his rule.

[89] Diod. Sic. 26.15.1.

[90] Livy 26.32.4; Burton 2011: 165-167. For a larger discussion of the relationship between Hieron and Rome, see Burton 2011: 146-148, 165-172.

[91] Serrati 2000a: 111.

to export grain on a massive scale; the large grain stores found at Morgantina which date to his reign demonstrate Syracusan ability to produce significant amounts of grain, thus making exportation likely.[92] Through his tithe system, referred to as the *lex Hieronica* by Cicero throughout the *Verrines*, he greatly enriched the kingdom. While Hieron's authority was largely constricted by his alliance with Rome and his position as a client king, he nevertheless sought to portray himself as equal to his eastern Greek counterparts. Like any Hellenistic monarch, he developed his own relationships, diplomatic or otherwise, with various powers throughout the Mediterranean, including Carthage.[93] He engaged in competitive philanthropy, made possible by the wealth of his land holdings, as was typical in Greek diplomacy at the time. For Hieron, this meant bestowing gifts, especially grain, on the Ptolemies and the cities of Greece, including Rhodes.[94] His court attracted intellectuals and artists to Syracuse, including the scientist Archimedes. He also endeavored to create lasting relationships with the Ptolemaic kings, in keeping with the tradition of Agathokles. Hieron continued treaties with the Ptolemies that had originally been made by Agathokles, and his coinage continued to show similarities to that of the Ptolemaic kings.[95]

The greatest difference between Hieron II and other kings of the period was his lack of independent military activity, due to his initial treaty with Rome in 263. While it has been argued that this transformed him from a true Hellenistic king into a "friendly" or "castrated" ruler, I would posit instead that Hieron's position as a valued ally of the Romans did not prohibit him

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[92] Sjöquist 1960a: 130-131.

[93] Zambon 2008: 88.

[94] Mosch. *ap.* Ath. 5.209b; Serrati 2000b: 118.

[95] Serrati 2000a: 117-118; Serrati 2008: 88; White 1964: 269.

from filling his role as a Hellenistic monarch.[96] He was a shrewd politician, acting both as a Roman client king and a Greek eastern monarch to further his own agenda. While he never acted in open opposition to Rome, Hieron certainly acted in his own interests both in the domestic and foreign spheres. This is demonstrated by the assistance he gave to the Carthaginians during the mercenary revolt from 240-237. Giving aid to an ally's enemies shows that Hieron had some ability to act on foreign policy himself, even if it was only because Rome allowed him to do so. Polybius' claim that Hieron was attempting to maintain an equal balance of power between Rome and Carthage further strengthens the argument that he believed Syracuse had a part, even a small one, in determining foreign affairs.[97] Hieron was not simply a Roman puppet who attempted to substitute euergetic acts for a lack of military strength, but rather a Hellenistic monarch who made use of an alliance to augment the wealth of his kingdom and project his power in other ways.

Coinage shows that Hieron II considered himself every bit a Hellenistic king. Like his eastern counterparts, Hieron used his coinage to propagate his image and was the first ruler of Sicily to be physically represented on coins.[98] After taking the diadem, Hieron added the title ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ to his coinage; several of the larger pieces include the title as well as a portrait of the king with the diadem surrounding his head.[99] Some of his bronze coinage includes his portrait with a laurel wreath instead of a diadem. These coins are some of the first instances of a mortal wearing such a wreath, as it was almost exclusively reserved for the gods up to that

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[96] For the opposing view of Hieron, see Haake 2013: 115-116.

[97] Pol. 1.83.2-4.

[98] Zambon 2006: 89.

[99] Hill 1903: 187-189.

point.[100] Hieron's wife, Philistis, and his son Gelon are pictured on some of Hieron's coinage as well. The portraits of Hieron and his family are remarkably similar to the coinage of the kings and queens of the Greek east, demonstrating the Hellenistic nature of his reign.[101] The inclusion of their portraits on coinage, as well as Syracusan inscriptions which mention Philistis and Gelon, was a conscious effort to establish a Syracusan dynastic lineage similar to those emphasized by other Hellenistic kings.[102]

Some of Hieron's coinage include his abbreviated name, IE, in addition to icons of a club and a bull. These symbols are typically associated with Herakles, a significant deity for both the Ptolemies and Syracusans alike. Herakles was the supposed ancestor of the Dorians, and the bull was particular to Herakles' search for the cattle of Geryon.[103] His popularity in Sicily, as well as much of the eastern Mediterranean, made him a clear choice for Hieron to use as part of his ruler cult. Just as Herakles was referenced on Hieron II's coins, the goddess Demeter was integrated into the numismatic portraiture as well. Worship of the goddess in Sicily was well-established by the time of his reign, as Hieron's predecessors Timoleon and Agathokles used her cults in their expeditions.[104] Hieron depicted Philistis' profile on his coinage with her head veiled by her *himation,* much in the same manner as Demeter is often shown. The symbol of a torch, or an ear

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[100] Hill 1903: 193.

[101] Lehmler 2005: 84-95; Sjöquist 1960b: 54-55.

[102] IG 14.3 (=Syll.^{3} 429). Though Philistis did not have ties to another Hellenistic dynasty - her father was a historian from the Syracusan aristocracy - Hieron's inclusion of his wife in his lineage was purposeful, as she connected him to the Syracusan *demos* (cf. Finley 1968: 111).

[103] Hill 1903: 193; Tzouvara-Souli 1991: 100, 115; Serrati 2008: 87.

[104] Timoleon: Diod. Sic. 16.66.4-5; Plut. *Timoleon* 8. Agathokles: Diod. 20.7; Justin 22.6. For the propagandistic use of Demeter by the two rulers: White 1964: 267-268.

of wheat, is shown behind Philistis' neck.[105] It has been posited that Hieron was attempting to establish a link between his family and the priesthood of Demeter.[106] The portraits of Philistis also bear a strong resemblance to depictions of Ptolemaic queens.[107] While Franke argues that Philistis was simply imitating the coinage of the Ptolemies, it has since been argued much more convincingly that Philistis' connection to Demeter signifies the reception of divine honors during her lifetime.[108] Even if Philistis died before Hieron, she could have been easily deified as part of Hieron's cult. The associations with Herakles and Demeter reveals a shift from traditional tyrannical practices to that of a Hellenistic ruler cult for Hieron II and his family.

Hieron's ruler cult was a further development of his Hellenistic kingship. With the long history of divine honors mentioned earlier that were given to Sicilian tyrants, his own honors would have fit with Syracusan custom as much as they would have with the cults of the eastern monarchs. Hieron and his family received certain honors from the Syracusan *boule*, though they were not meant for deification.[109] In addition, Hieron, like many other rulers from Sicily and the Greek east, associated himself with Zeus.[110] One of the common epithets for the god was Soter, which was used in Sicily as early as the late fifth century. It was also heavily favored among deified monarchs, including Ptolemy I, Antiochos I, Seleukos III and Eumenes II.[111]

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[105] Grose 1923: 347 (no. 105, 110, 11).

[106] White 1964: 269. Justin discusses Hieron's desire for familial legitimacy because his mother was supposedly a slave (23.4.1).

[107] Finley 1968: 112. Philistis' portraits have been likened to those of Berenike and Arsinoe I (Franke 1958) and Arsinoe II (White 1964).

[108] Franke 1958: 77; Serrati 2008: 87.

[109] SEG 37.513, 43.1209; SIG^3 1.427.

[110] The Ptolemies (SEG 51.2279) and the Seleukids (SEG 35.1521, 1832; 43.1279) commonly were connected with Zeus.

[111] Serrati 2008: 84, nos. 21 and 22.

Several of Hieron's building projects within Sicily solidify the relationship between the king and Zeus. Remains of the theater and altar built in Syracuse point to this projected association between Hieron and the god. The theater, the largest of any Sicilian theater and one of the largest in the Greek world, bears inscriptions naming Hieron II along with his wife Philistis, son Gelon, and daughter-in-law Nereis. Along the same wall at the center of the *cavea* are the words 'Zeus Olympios', with the implication that the theater belongs to Zeus.[112] It has also been posited that this inscription signifies the area of seating belonging to either the god or his Syracusan priest.[113] The theater was refurbished between 238 and 215, which is also when the nearby altar was constructed by Hieron II. This great monument was cut from the indigenous rock in the style of a monumental altar to form a platform of approximately 200m in length and over 20m in width.[114] A garden would have stood in front of the altar, with porticoes surrounding the other three sides; the garden included a fountain in the center as well as trees planted in rows throughout the space.[115]

The sheer size of the structure, as well as its placement next to the theater, indicates that the altar was likely built to honor Zeus. Indeed it looked similar to the altar to Zeus in Olympia, as it was built with two staircases on either end rather than one large set of stairs across the front.[116] There is some ambiguity regarding to which particular Zeus the altar was dedicated. Due to the connection with the theater and its inscriptions for Zeus and/or his priest, the monument

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[112] Covino and Serrati 2012: 39-40.

[113] Lehmler 2005: 143; Karlsson 1996: 87; Holloway 1991: 153.

[114] Karlsson 1996: 83; Finley 1968: 120. The width of the altar differs in various sources due to its imperfect formation.

[115] Holloway 1991: 162.

[116] Paus. 5.13.9-10; Serrati 2008: 86.

has been thought to be connected with Zeus Olympios. The people of Tauromenion also dedicated a statue of Hieron at the sanctuary of Zeus in Olympia, giving further credence that the king sought to be linked with Zeus Olympios.[117] Yet there is also some evidence for the altar being dedicated to Zeus Eleutherios. The Eleutheria festival, which called for the sacrifice of hundreds of bulls, would have been well served by the enormous size of the monument.[118] In addition, Zeus Eleutherios had significance in the history of Sicilian political propaganda; the deity was considered to be a symbol of Syracusan democracy, and appeared on coinage issued during the rule of Timoleon and after the death of Agathokles.[119] Regardless of which manifestation of Zeus was honored by Hieron's altar in Syracuse, it is clear that the king was attempting to create a clear link between the god and his kingship. The association between Hieron and Zeus was an important facet of his ruler cult in Syracuse and elsewhere in Sicily.

The connection that Hieron II was trying to promote between himself and the king of the gods seems to have been a success amongst the population of his kingdom, as evidence exists for a ruler cult that links the two entities. A small altar found in Syracuse is a clear example of this cult, bearing the inscription "Zeus Soter Hieron".[120] With the words of the inscription in the genitive case, the text has multiple possible meanings. Two of the translations point to an altar 'of Zeus Soter of Hieron' or 'of Zeus Soter commissioned by Hieron', both of which seem unlikely to be the intended meaning. As argued by Serrati, the altar is too small to have been

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[117] ISE 1.58; Lehmler 2005: 197.

[118] Diod. Sic. 11.72.2.

[119] Karlsson 1996: 86-87.

[120] *BE* 1953: 282; Manganaro 1965: 174. For an image of the altar, cf. Serrati 2008. The inscription reads 'Διὸς Σωτῆρος Ἱέρωνος'. It was originally dismissed by Habicht (1970: 259-262) as being evidence for the existence of ruler cult.

commissioned by Hieron, especially when considering the grandeur of his other building projects, and the design of the lettering looks to be amateur in nature. Thus the inscription is likely meant to read 'Altar of Zeus Soter Hieron'. Even this wording, while more plausible than the alternatives, points to an author other than Hieron. There is no precedent for monarchs writing their own name alongside the god and epithet with which they associate in this manner.[121] These signs thus point to this altar being one for private worship of the king. Two pieces from third century Morgantina provide further evidence for this cult. The first is a second altar, also small, bearing the word 'Zeus'; the second is an amphora with the inscription 'Zeus Soter' written on the neck.[122] The amateur lettering and small stature of the pieces, along with the similarity to the altar found at Syracuse, point to private worship of Hieron II as Zeus Soter.

It has been argued that there is no evidence for a public ruler cult for Hieron II. This position, however, is largely dependent on the overall lack of available source material. Lehmler's suggestion, for instance, that the lack of any mention of a state funeral for Hieron upon his death signifies a lack of ruler cult in Syracuse is unfounded.[123] Private worship suggested by the small altars and the amphora is indicative of a larger, established ruler cult in Syracuse, if not also in other cities as well. While there were precedents for divine honors in Syracuse, the lack of ruler cults before Hieron's reign makes it unlikely that private worship for the king would manifest itself without any public version of the cult. The Syracusan people may have initiated the ruler cult, as there were certainly equivalent examples throughout the

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[121] Serrati 2008: 83.

[122] Altar inscription: SEG 34.961; amphora inscription: SEG 44.1241.

[123] Lehmler 2005: 148-149. The lack of a state funeral does not seem relevant, as Hieronymus was clearly distancing himself from, rather than celebrating, his grandfather's reign, which would explain his motivation for not giving Hieron II a state funeral.

Mediterranean of individual cities or groups initiating cult worship for Hellenistic kings.[124] The cults often used 'Soter' as an epithet, among others, to curry the favor of a monarch or to push him into acting on behalf of the people. It was rarely the monarch who initiated honors, leaving it up to the populace to bestow them on him. But such a movement had to be provoked in some way amongst the kingdom's population for it to reach the point of private worship.[125] In the case of Syracuse, Hieron's kingdom was precariously positioned between two dueling powers, leading the people to establish a ruler cult with both public and private worship for Hieron so as to seek his favor and thus his protection.

This is not to suggest that Hieron neither encouraged such behavior nor actively promoted his connections with Zeus and Herakles. Rather, it is likely that Hieron took advantage of the *demos*-initiated cult and used it to promote his own image as a Hellenistic monarch with divine associations. Indeed, he would have benefited greatly from his ruler cult, as it easily allowed him to project and secure his own power within his kingdom and abroad. The absence of military activity during his reign, largely due to his limited autonomy as a client king of Rome, makes the existence of a ruler cult even more likely. Hieron's cult would have publicized his status as an equal of the kings of the Successor dynasties while compensating for his lack of 'spear-won territory' and military successes.[126] Thus the best evidence for a public ruler cult of Hieron II, in combination with the archaeological evidence for private worship, may be the monarch's desire to be considered one of the Hellenistic rulers in the Mediterranean.

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[124] For a general discussion of these parallels, see Chaniotis 2005: 440-442.

[125] Serrati 2008: 83.

[126] For a discussion of the importance of 'spear-won territory', see Billows 1995: 24–29 and Serrati 2007: 461–497.

When tracing the development of ruler cult in Hieron II's kingdom, it is important to consider the significance of Alexander's influence in the model of power that developed in Syracuse. The traditions of Sicilian tyranny were combined with this new Hellenistic model of kingship, as seen by Agathokles' adoption of the title *basileus* in emulation of the Successors and Hieron's taking of the diadem.[127] Hieron's rule especially should be described as a combination of Hellenistic ideals and local customs. He did not want his contemporaries, either in Rome or in the eastern kingdoms, to think of him as simply the political leader of Syracuse. The numismatic, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence left behind from his reign points to Hieron's conscious effort to portray himself as a great king whose kingdom was the peer of those in the eastern Mediterranean. He undertook building projects, engaged in competitive philanthropy, and amassed a large amount of wealth for his kingdom, all while remaining a loyal ally to Rome. Considering this evidence, the absence of a ruler cult would be quite surprising, given that Hieron was endeavored to make himself into a Hellenistic king through any possible means.

Beyond the act of taking the title of king, Hieron attempted to suggest divine dimensions to his power through connections to specific deities. Like many of his royal peers, he encouraged the use of symbols with divine associations to evoke authority beyond those of a mortal king. Such features were used to augment his own divinity and thus his monarchy. The use of divine symbols on Hieron's coinage allowed him to project that divinity onto the members of his family, thus linking them all to deities. Hieron made every effort to associate himself with Zeus and Herakles which, combined with the archaeological finds of private altars, points to the development of a ruler cult in Syracuse. The cult itself may not have been inaugurated by

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[127] For the larger discussion of Alexander's contemporary impact, cf. Dench 2005: 301.

Hieron; in fact it is likely that the people of Syracuse attempted to invoke Hieron's favor with the development of public and private cult worship for the king. Regardless of its origin, the king certainly worked to promote the cult once it had been initiated. Hieron's ruler cult, combined with his coinage and building projects, solidified his connection with Zeus and Herakles, and lent validity to the idea that his divine honors put his reign on par with the kings of the Greek east. At the same time, Hieron and his predecessor Agathokles were certainly influenced by the practices of those who had ruled before them. Hieron was careful to harken back to elements of Syracusan history throughout his reign. This was crucial for his success, because he was expanding upon many of the established traditions in Syracuse and southeastern Sicily while creating his own Hellenistic monarchy.

As the only truly Hellenistic king of Syracuse, Hieron II was not content to merely be a Roman ally with empty powers. He presented himself in both image and action as one of his Hellenistic counterparts. Like any such monarch, he developed his own foreign relations with various powers throughout the Mediterranean while doing his best to cement authority in his own kingdom. Hieron's success came from his ability to play multiple parts on the ancient stage. He was able to be simultaneously a loyal Roman ally, a Sicilian *basileus* with ties to the Syracusan aristocracy, and a Hellenistic monarch with divine associations. While it is easy to dismiss Hieron as a client king who tried to fill his power void with euergetic acts and honors, one should instead see Hieron as a monarch who asserted his power into any arena he could, in whatever way he could. Developing a prevalent ruler cult in Syracuse, the first and only of its kind, was one such way to achieve his Hellenistic aspirations and to prove that Sicily was still a significant power in the Mediterranean.

Defenders of Hellas: The Attalid Dynasty and their Ruler Cult

Of the minor Hellenistic kingdoms, the Attalids were perhaps the most successful at subtly propagating and controlling a specific political and cultural image. Their ruler cult, along with the other types of cult worship in the kingdom, fed into this portrayal. The creation of the dynasty's propaganda, centered around victories in battle and benefactions of cities, was tied to the foundation of the Attalid mythological lineage. The honors afforded to the Attalids throughout their widespread cult worship reflected the desire of the dynasty to be seen as the divinely descended protectors of Greece and Asia Minor.

The first of the Attalid dynasts to take the diadem was Attalus I, after his success over the Galatians in 238/237; his victory allowed him to claim this conquest as the foundation of his kingship. This was typical of royal propaganda, especially in the Macedonian tradition, and attempted to place Attalus on footing equal to other Hellenistic kings.[128] Attalus did recognize his ancestors' role in the formation of the kingdom: he continued to mint the portrait-coins of the dynasty's founder Philetairos that were made by his uncle and immediate predecessor Eumenes I.[129] On these coins, Attalus retroactively gave Philetairos the diadem as well as a victory wreath.[130] He also connected his own military achievements with those of Philetairos in a series of dedications on Delos, linking his success on the battlefield with the man who had initially

[128] See Billows 1995: 24-30 for the connection between the concept of 'spear-won land' and royal propaganda previous to and during the Hellenistic period.

[129] Strabo 13.4.1-2; Kosmetatou 2005: 161-162.

[130] Strootman 2005: 123; Evans 2012: 138.

achieved autonomy for Pergamum.[131] Attalus continued the traditions established by Philetairos and Eumenes, especially regarding the public image of the dynasty, which had been carefully constructed and aggressively maintained. The practices of Attalus I and his successors were cultivated to remain in line with the public portrayal of both past and present Attalid rulers.

Unabashed self-promotion existed hand-in-hand with cults in the Attalid kingdom, with one building upon the other's success. Victories over the Celts helped deliver some of the most significant Attalid propaganda. When Attalus I came to power in 241, the Celts were feared by the Greeks in central Anatolia due to frequent looting, extortion and kidnapping.[132] Three or four years into his reign, Attalus refused to pay tribute to the Gauls any longer; the Celts attacked the kingdom but the Pergamene army was ultimately victorious.[133] Because of his triumph over the Celts, Attalus I added the titles of King and Savior (*Soter*) to his name.[134] Attalus was at this time still under the suzerainty of the Seleukid kingdom, but it was this victory that sanctioned Attalus' taking of the diadem and gave him the necessary authority to take the place of the powerful but remote Seleukids as the dominant leader and protector of Asia Minor.[135] In fact, in the decade after his initial success over the Celts, he fought victorious campaigns against the Seleukid governor of Asia Minor, Antiochus Hierax, and the Galatians.[136] Attalus I also solidified his

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[131] For the dedications, *IG* 11.1105-10. Attalus I credited Philetairos, and not Antiochus Soter, with having driven out the Gauls from western Asia Minor in 275 (Strootman 2005: 123). For a more complete history of Philetairos' achievements, see Strabo 13.4.1-2 and Hansen 1971: 14-38.

[132] OGIS no. 765; Livy 38.16.13.

[133] Livy 38.16.13; Hansen 1971: 28-33.

[134] Pausanias 1.8.2. Attalus also became known by the name of 'Galatonikes'; cf. Strootman 2005: 123.

[135] Polybius 18.41.7; Allen 1983: 32; Strootman 2005: 122-123. It should be noted, though, that the Seleukids had influence within the Attalid kingdom through Attalus I's rule. Freedom from Seleukid influence occurred after the Treaty of Apameia, with changes to regional administration, titles and functions of officials, and new royal coinage. For more on Seleukid influence and authority in the region of the Pergamene kingdom, see Allen 1983: 13-83.

[136] Hansen 1971: 38-45.

kingdom's standing by entering into "an entangling relationship" with Rome which was meant to reinforce Attalid influence in Greece and Asia Minor.[137] Like his father before him, Eumenes fought the Celts multiple times during his reign. The first war, between 185 and 183, resulted in the titular submission of the Gauls to Attalid supremacy, prompting Eumenes to take the epithet of *Soter* as well.[138]

It is important to note that the military successes against the Seleukids were not promoted nearly as heavily as the victories over the Celts. Rather than promote the fact that some of these battles were fought by Greeks against other Greeks, the Attalids focused on the annihilation of the 'barbarians'.[139] This story, repeated by the ancient sources, fails to acknowledge that it was the Hellenistic powers who brought the Gauls into Anatolia in the first place, often as mercenaries. The Seleukids struggled with Celtic extortion during the early to mid-200s as well, even as the Celts filled the ranks of their armies; Antigonus Gonatas and Ptolemy II fought against them as well.[140] But the Attalids were better able to divert public attention from their part in the attacks, and were able to frame their military achievements in a more positive light than other contemporary rulers. In the Attalid rendition of the story, they appeared as the champions of the Greeks in Asia Minor, especially as the Gauls posed a fair threat to their autonomy during the period.[141] For example, a prophecy recorded by Pausanias attests that the Galatians would cross the Hellespont: ". . .They shall ravage Asia; and much worse shall God do / To those who

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[137] Kosmetatou 2005: 163.

[138] Allen 1983: 150-151; Strootman 2005: 128.

[139] Kosmetatou 2005: 172.

[140] Strootman 2005: 115-116.

[141] Kosmetatou 2005: 171.

dwell by the shores of the sea / For a short while. For right soon the son of Cronos / Shall raise them a helper, the dear son of a bull reared by Zeus, / Who on all the Gauls shall bring a day of destruction".[142] The so-called son of the bull is meant to be Attalus I, and is a manifestation - or perhaps even a consequence - of his victory.

One of the key aspects of the Gallic propaganda was the creation of public victory monuments. Attalus set up a massive memorial on the Athenian acropolis detailing famous battles - a Gigantomachy, an Amazonomachy, the Battle at Marathon between the Greeks and the Persians - with the inclusion of his own attacks on the Gauls. The connection between the Gigantomachy and the fighting of the Gauls harkens back to a long tradition, especially prevalent during the period of the Persian Wars, of highlighting the war between civilization and barbarism.[143] In Pergamum itself, altars were built to honor 'King Attalus the Savior', decorated with large dedicatory statues of suffering Gauls.[144] The depiction of the king as the savior of the Greeks from barbarians was the predominant theme of the Attalid dynasty for almost a century, recurring throughout the reigns of Attalus and his successors. Both Attalus I and Eumenes II were thought of as benefactors to the Greeks and were honored as such, with divine honors for their family and festivals in their names.[145] In Athens, they were actually made into eponymous heroes, replacing Antigonus I and Demetrios I who had been deified in 307.[146] The Attalids had

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[142] Pausanias 10.15.3. Pausanias claims that this prophecy was given by an oracle at least a generation - 25-30 years - before the actual event (10.15.2).

[143] Kosmetatou 2005: 170; Whitaker 2005: 172.

[144] Statues like the Dying Gaul and the Suicidal Gaul were placed on a base in the Athena District; each one celebrated a specific battle between 233 and 228-223 fought by Attalus against the Galatians. Cf. Strootman 2005: 123; Attanasio et. al. 2011: 577-578; Ridgeway 1990: 289-90.

[145] For specific honors, see Strootman 2005: 129.

[146] It is likely that this is only marginally connected with their Gallic victories. Cf. Strootman 2005: 129 no. 106.

stepped into a power vacuum left by the Seleukids - and the Antigonids, to some extent - and as such became a recognizable power in the Aegean.[147]

The *pièce de résistance* of Attalid self-promotion was the Great Altar of Pergamum. While Attalus I began the building programs of his dynasty, it was Eumenes II who was truly responsible for the many projects that transformed the acropolis at Pergamum into an "architectural celebration of Attalid might".[148] The acropolis was composed of three terraces: the first housed the enlarged *temenos* of Athena; the second supported a new religious precinct where the Great Altar was constructed; and the third accommodated the royal tombs.[149] The Great Altar was certainly a showpiece of Attalid success; based on its location below the citadel, Eumenes II clearly meant for it to be the central monument in the expanded Pergamum. The altar was never completely finished, likely because of Eumenes' death. It has been posited that Attalos II never completed the project because he had other priorities - and because it was his brother's name on the inscription.[150]

Made of marble, the altar stood forty feet high and contained large sculptures depicting a Gigantomachy.[151] The outer walls of the Great Altar showed the Olympian Gods, including Herakles, fighting Titans and Giants, a clear analogy to the Greeks fighting against the Celts.[152] The Gigantomachy that was depicted referred not to one battle in particular but rather was meant

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[147] Strootman 2005: 128.

[148] Strootman 2005: 127, 130; Kästner 1998: 140.

[149] Strootman 2005: 130.

[150] Käster 1998: 142-143.

[151] Lucius Ampelius, *Liber Memorialis* 8.14 - this is the only ancient text of which we know that definitively deals with the Great Altar.

[152] Hellenism fighting barbarism: Gruen 2000: 18.

to encompass the many Attalid successes against the Gauls on behalf of the Greeks. Indeed it harkened back to the previously mentioned monument erected by Attalus I in Athens, establishing a direct link between the Athenian and Pergamene acropoleis.[153]

The inside of the altar is decorated with a smaller relief that depicts the story of Telephos, who is the son of Herakles and Auge. Telephos was the *heros ktistes* of Pergamum, and the Attalids claimed to be his descendent.[154] It was necessary for the Attalids to create a state mythology to match those of other Hellenistic kingdoms, and part of that was the construction of dynastic genealogies. They could not trace direct lineage back to Philip II or Alexander the Great, so their only other option was rooted in myth. The Attalids were able to connect themselves to Telephos through Alexander the Great's son Herakles who had briefly lived in Pergamum in the late fourth century.[155] Telephos also had roots in Arkadia, as one of the myths about Herakles' son centered around his birthplace of Arkadia and his adventures with the Achaians.[156] The Attalids could present themselves as the legitimate heirs of the human Herakles, which was reinforced by the adoption of Telephos as the dynasty's forbearer. On the inner altar, the hero Herakles was featured prominently as Telephos' father. This mythical link developed by the Attalids and prominently shown on their Great Altar was an important facet of their ruler cult. It was significant that the Attalids, like other Hellenistic kings, stressed their connection with Herakles.[157] He possessed many attributes - his divine heritage, his physical strength, and his

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[153] Later Attalid rulers, specifically Eumenes II and Attalus II, also undertook building programs in Athens. Both built stoa, Eumenes on the acropolis and Attalus on the agora.

[154] Strootman 2005: 132.

[155] Kosmetatou 2005: 167.

[156] Gruen 2000: 22.

[157] Robert 1984: 12.

reputation as a savior from monsters - with which the rulers wanted to be associated. Herakles was also closely linked to Zeus and Athena, two deities with whom the Attalids linked their rule.[158] Because of this, he is meant to be representative of the Attalid monarchy on the Gigantomachy frieze.[159] Herakles was both *heros* and *theos*, a deified man and a god, and popular amongst other Hellenistic monarchs, making him a superb model for the Attalid ruler cult.

Between the propaganda surrounding Attalid victories over the Gauls and the creation of a mythical lineage, there were clear impetuses for the evolution of ruler worship in the kingdom. Beginning during the rule of Attalus I, Pergamene rulers were the recipients of diverse, widespread cult practices within their kingdom and in the surrounding areas. Despite Attalus' taking of the diadem in 238/237, there is no indication of an organized ruler cult in the kingdom during his reign.[160] There is, however, evidence of the cult of Attalus I in Greece, including the Aegean islands, and in Asia Minor.[161] It was only after the Peace of Apameia in 188 that the ruler cult became standardized in the Attalid kingdom, with regular priesthoods and the practice of posthumous deification.[162] The Peace enlarged Eumenes' kingdom significantly, making it the largest and most powerful state in Asia Minor.[163] As Polybius states, Eumenes II "made his own dominions such as to rival the greatest contemporary power".[164] It thus makes sense that the year

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[158] Robert 1984: 11-12.

[159] Strootman 2005: 133.

[160] Allen 1983: 148.

[161] Hansen 1971: 454.

[162] Kosmetatou 1993: 143; Allen 1983: 148.

[163] Thonemann 2013: 2.

[164] Polybius 32.8.3.

188 would mark the beginning of royal cult activity as a result of the increase in Attalid power and authority. It was also after 188 that Attalids began to posthumously be called gods.[165] The Attalids encouraged sacrifices given in Greece and Asia Minor, as was typical in the late Classical period. By 188 two types of cult worship commonly existed for the Attalids inside and outside of their kingdom: eponymous festivals, and the worship and deification of Attalid rulers.

Eponymous festivals were quite common during the reign of the Attalids. They were the earliest known cult worship for the dynasty, taking place even before Attalus I took the diadem. The festivals were named after the honored ruler (Philetaireia, Attaleia, Eumeneia), and the Attalids may have initiated and/or sponsored the cult worship for themselves and for their predecessors.[166] Some festivals were celebrated on a fairly local scale, usually to thank a ruler for their benefaction or protection; others took place in major sanctuaries. Through these festivals the king and his successors were able to establish and endorse their standing among the Greeks in the southern mainland and the Peloponnese.

The first of such eponymous festivals include several instances of the Philetaireia, after the founder of the dynasty. One took place in the gymnasium of the city of Kyzikos during the second century, but was likely instituted earlier; another took place in Delos and was celebrated at least five times annually.[167] The festival in Delos was possibly created by Eumenes I after Philetairos' death. Epigraphic evidence shows that sacrifices were offered to the ruler.[168] It is

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[165] Hansen 1971: 455. Attalus I was posthumously given the epithet of *theos*; cf. Allen 1983: 149. The exception is on the island of Miletus (Allen 1983: 145).

[166] Kosmetatou 1993: 144, 148.

[167] Kyzikos inscription: CIG 3660, I. 15; Delos inscriptions: see Kosmetatou 1993: 145, no. 12. For general description, cf. Hansen 1971: 453.

[168] IG XI, 2.287; ID I, 366; ID II, 396.

possible that the sanctuary at Delos was responsible for organizing the Philetaireia, but it seems more likely that the Attalid kings were the ones who ensured its uninterrupted occurrence. In any case, neither version of the festival can be fully reconstructed given the scarcity of evidence, nor can we compare the practices between the two. One can posit, however, that the festival at Delos had a wider audience due to the renown of the sanctuary, and thus was more likely to be sponsored by the Attalids as a propagandistic event. Indeed, inscriptions continue to mention the Philetaireia through the reign of Eumenes II.[169] It would make sense then that eponymous festivals that took place in major sanctuaries would have received continual sponsorship from the Attalid dynasty for as long as they had the power to do so.

The Eumeneia of Pergamum is the only festival that can be associated with Eumenes I; it likely began during his lifetime and took place on an annual basis. Attalus I, on the other hand, certainly enjoyed greater honors in Greece and Asia Minor than his predecessors. The earliest example of his namesake festival was in Kos. It was an annual festival, celebrated on the sixth day of the month Cameios, and involved athletic competition and various religious events. The location of the festival was likely connected to the Asklepion in the city, as the Attalids sought to make connections between their sanctuary in Pergamum and other great sanctuaries of Asklepios. Other examples of festivals named for the first Attalid king can be seen at Delos and Delphi. The Attaleia at Delos were again celebrated annually, likely in conjunction with the Delian Philetaireia. The festival at Delphi, however, seems to have come about because of Attalus' financial and military benefaction of the sanctuary. In addition to the festival, the Aetolians who controlled Delphi honored Attalos I with Attaleia, a city named for him in 204/3 as well as

[169] ID II, 421, 424, 435, 438, 442. The festivals went on for as long as they could sponsor them: ID II, 455. Cf. Kosmetatou 1993: 147.

favorable oracles predicting victories over the Gauls.[170] Thus, it is probable that the eponymous festival was instituted in the same vein as Attalus' other Delphic honors.

Of all the Attalid kings, Eumenes II was granted an impressive number of eponymous festivals, seemingly because of his aggressive foreign policies. Eumeneia occurred in Athens, Aigina, Telmessos, and Kos, in addition to other cities. Most of these festivals were annual, and often were centered around the local gymnasiums. The festival on Andros was instituted as thanks to Eumenes II because he renovated the gymnasium. Taking place on his birthday, it was supported jointly by the city, Eumenes himself, and several private citizens.[171] The Eumeneia at Sardis was connected with the Panathenaea there, which allows some certainly regarding the practices that took place. The festival, celebrated every four years, included an assembly as well as musical and athletic events. It was clearly an important festival, as two decrees from Delphi equate the festivities to those of the Pythia and the Olympia.[172]

Eumenes II, following in his father's footsteps, continued to support the Delphic sanctuary; his brother Attalus II did as well. Eumenes gave money for the purchase of grain, while Attalus donated money for the education of Delphian children. For this, the sanctuary rewarded them with festivals in their honor (the Eumeneia and the Attaleia respectively). They were held on two successive days, with athletic contests, processions, and public banquets.[173] This was the most prominent Attaleia honoring Attalus II.[174] By sponsoring these Delphic

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[170] Regarding the city of Attaleia: IG IX2 1.95; regarding the favorable oracles, see the earlier discussion of a Gallic prophecy (pages 3-4, note 15). Cf. Kosmetatou 1993: 149-153.

[171] Kosmetatou 1993: 154-155.

[172] These inscriptions are dated after 182; cf. *Syll.*[3] 630; Kosmetatou 1993: 156.

[173] The festivals were on the twelfth and thirteenth of the month Heracleios; cf. Hansen 1971: 459.

[174] Attalus II was also honored with a festival at Kyme; he sponsored a festival on Andros for his brother once Eumenes II had died. See Kosmetatou 1993: 158.

festivals, the Attalids continued to advertise themselves on a large scale. The eponymous festivals spread rapidly throughout Greece, differing from city to city. It is likely that there were more festivals for which we currently do not have evidence, especially since their existence depended entirely on the relationship between Pergamum and an individual city and on the Attalids' willingness to finance the honors for themselves.

More traditional practices of ruler cult were also common in the Attalid kingdom. The elevation of a ruler to heroic status occurred most often when cities developed political relationships with Pergamum. This type of worship varied from city to city: some would present sacrifices on a small altar devoted to the king, often with a specific priest to look after the offerings; other cities would unite the cult of the Attalid rulers with preexisting cults of local deities. The worship of the royal family was almost always practiced in the gymnasium.[175] The offering of sacrifices was made possible by the existence of altars inside the gymnasia. During the Hellenistic period, many gods were often worshipped inside the gymnasium, including the mythical Attalid ancestor Herakles. While inscriptions concerning ruler cults for Hellenistic kings in gymnasia are not always clear, there is significant evidence to support Attalid worship on altars inside gymnasia.[176]

As previously mentioned, Attalus I was made into an eponymous hero of the Athenian tribe Attalis in 307. A priesthood was developed in conjunction with this, which then disappeared when he was removed as a hero around 200.[177] In Sikyon, Attalus was given great honors: a

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[175] Hansen 1971: 465.

[176] IGR IV 294; OGIS 339; OGIS 764. For the discussion of cult worship in gymnasia, see Aneziri and Damaskos 2004: 247-271.

[177] Kosmetatou 1993: 160.

priesthood, an annual sacrifice, a gold-plated statue, and a colossus placed inside the temple of Apollo.[178] Delos set up a posthumous priesthood for Eumenes II, as did Teos and Magnesia.[179] Attalus II received a priesthood in Sestos, but also took care to establish cults honoring his predecessors, instituting priesthoods for Philetairos and his brother Eumenes posthumously.[180]

The creation of the enlarged kingdom in 188 occasioned the institution of a direct form of ruler-cult, centered chiefly on Pergamum and Teos. The cult arose from a new practice of recognizing members of the royal family as becoming gods when they died. Attalus III, successor of Attalus II and the last Attalid king, associated himself with such cults, especially those of the founder Philetairos and his father Eumenes II.[181] It was also Attalus III, however, who departed from tradition and deemed himself to be equal to the gods. In an inscription found at Elaea, a statue of the king was created and placed in the temple of Asclepius Soter so "that the king may dwell in the same temple with the god".[182] Another statue was to be placed next to the altar of Zeus Soter where it would "stand in the most conspicuous spot of the market place"; offerings to the king were to be sacrificed daily on the altar as well.[183]

Royal women also had their place in this form of Attalid cult worship. The Attalids followed in the footsteps of the Seleukids and the Ptolemies by incorporating the dynasty's wives and mothers into the cult and setting up priesthoods for them. The first priesthoods we know of after 188 are for those of Apollonis, wife of Attalus I and mother of Eumenes II and Attalus II,

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[178] Polybius 18.16; Allen 1983: 147; Kosmetatou 1993: 161.

[179] In Teos and Magnesia, Eumenes' wife Stratonike was honored as well; cf. Kosmetatou 1993: 161.

[180] Kosmetatou 1993: 162.

[181] Kosmetatou 1993: 162-163.

[182] Upon her death Apollonis was proclaimed to have "changed her abode to that of the gods"; cf. Hansen 1971: 467.

[183] Hansen 1971: 467.

and Stratonike, wife of Eumenes II.[184] Apollonis was deified as Apollonis Eusebes Apobateria after her death.[185] The city of Teos held annual ceremonies in her honor, including sacrifices, the pouring of libations, and choral dances. The priests of Aphrodite and of Eumenes' queen Stratonike were responsible for overseeing the festivities for the deified queen. After 188, when she had been betrothed to Eumenes, Stratonike received her priesthood at Teos.[186] Statues of the queen were also erected in Pergamum and on Delos around this time; they were likely begun when the betrothal was announced in order to be finished by the time Stratonike had married Eumenes II. In Pergamum, Apollonis and Stratonike were associated with Hera Basileia, whose temple was located just above the Gymnasium of Pergamum.[187] Apollonis was also the beneficiary in death of the only ruler cult temple in the Attalid kingdom; it was constructed for her by her sons in her home city of Kyzikos.[188] Both Apollonis and Stratonike were well-regarded by the Attalids as being important members of the dynasty. Apollonis, while not born into a royal family, was beloved even by literary sources of the period.[189] Stratonike on the other hand came from the royal house of Cappadocia, and provided a welcome alliance between her family and the Pergamene rulers.[190] Like other Hellenistic dynasties in the Greek east, the Attalids incorporated their royal women into the ruler cult, stressing the importance of these additions to their bloodline.

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[184] Allen 1983: 150.

[185] Kosmetatou 1993: 163.

[186] Stratonike received a priesthood when she was first betrothed to Eumenes II but was not called a god; cf. Allen 1983: 150.

[187] The temple has been dated to the reign of Attalus II. Cf. Evans 2012: 130; Kosmetatou 1993: 164.

[188] Hansen 1971: 289, 456.

[189] For instance, Pol. 22.20.

[190] Allen 1983: 206.

Much of the ruler cult worship in the Pergamene kingdom followed traditions typical of the Seleukids, but one practice was particular to the Attalids alone. Within their kingdom, cities would create religious guilds to tend to the ruler cults. Kraton, the leader of the Dionysian *technitai,* led the unions in Teos that were responsible for the cults of Eumenes II and Attalus II.[191] He later moved to Pergamon and created the *Attalistai*, another guild with similar responsibilities as the one in Teos. This guild seems to be originally founded during the reign of Eumenes II, having been called *Euemenistai*.[192] In their line of duty, the guilds would perform sacrifices during festive processions and hold dinners. The guilds were not simply in charge of the cult of the dead king, yet there is an absence of any mention of a priesthood for Attalus II, who was still living. That being said, there was no evidence of the guild providing a priesthood for the deceased Attalus I either. Allen posits that the guild was established in order to honor Eumenes in his lifetime, and that the priesthood associated with it was not an eponymous position.[193] This seems to be a likely scenario, especially if we presume that the honors were consistent with those of the guild at Teos.

Little is known in archaeological or literary/epigraphical sources about the precincts dedicated to the cults of the Attalid kings. An Attaleion mentioned in an honorary decree from the second century was found in Aigina; another Attaleion was mentioned in inscription from Teos as being near the theater of Pergamum.[194] The two buildings differed in usage: the former

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[191] Kosmetatou 1993: 164-165.

[192] OGIS 325; Allen 1983: 152.

[193] Allen 1983: 152.

[194] Aigina: OGIS 329; Teos: OGIS 326.

contained an altar in the central court and was likely used to house the Attalids when they came on official visits, whereas the latter housed a religious guild responsible for the ruler cult.[195] The Eumeneion of Philetaireia, which was built to honor Eumenes II, is also mentioned in an inscription from Pergamum, but scholars are unclear where the precinct was actually located.[196] A *temene* meant to honor Eumenes - and possibly called a Eumeneion - was set up in Miletus. The city offered him yearly sacrifices on the king's birthday, but epigraphic evidence shows that he donated money for these celebrations to take place in his name.[197]

The "Temenos of the Ruler Cult", located in Pergamum, is the only other building that can be archaeologically connected with Attalid cult worship. It was located to the south of the palace and was built in three phases. The first phase can be dated to the rule of Attalos I, while the second occurred during the reign of Eumenes II. The third phase has been pinpointed to the years between 138-133, which dates the last stages of construction to Attalus III. Inside the *temenos* was a so-called "cult room" with a niche for images of the kings.[198] Two colossal heads - one identified as Alexander the Great, the other as Attalus I - were discovered in the structure, leading scholars to believe that it was dedicated to the dynastic cult. The attribution of one of the portraits to Attalus I has been generally confirmed by scholars, though there is some disagreement as to when the statue was made. The head is largely idealized, representing a deified rather than true-to-life portrait of the king.[199] Alexander the Great is thought to be

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[195] OGIS 326, l. 20-21; Kosmetatou 1993: 167.

[196] Hansen 1971: 235 no. 2, 464; Kosmetatou 1993: 167-168.

[197] Allen 1983: 114-121; Kosmetatou 1993: 168-169.

[198] Kosmetatou 1993: 170.

[199] Hansen 1971: 351-352.

depicted on the other stone head; it is similar in style and size to the Attalus statue. Even so, there is little certainty regarding this theory, due to the inconclusive evidence that remains.[200]

The Attalid dynasty, driven to rise above their modest roots, sought to cultivate a specific image that they could share with the rest of the Hellenistic world. In order to earn their place among the prominent kingdoms of the period, the Attalid kings availed themselves of every opportunity to present their accomplishments amongst the great deeds of the Hellenes. The victories of Attalus I and his successors over the Gauls allowed the dynasty to tout themselves as the benefactors of the Greeks.[201] By connecting the Gallic attacks to those of the Giants and the Amazons on his public victory monuments, Attalus I was able to send the message that his victories were not unique or extraordinary but rather than they followed in a long line of great Hellenic achievements.[202] The establishment of the Attalids' mythical lineage, as shown on the Great Altar, engineered a similar result. The Telephos myth proved the relationship between Philetairos' successors and the Greek deities, specifically Herakles and Zeus. Like the Attalids against the Gauls, Telephos had defended his homeland against invaders; such a connection could only prove that heroic blood flowed in Attalid veins.[203] Not only did the dynasty have a storied past, they were also able to trace connections between their divine descent and that of rival powers. This created both ancient and current ties to the religious and cultural traditions of the major Hellenistic kingdoms as well as the Greek *poleis*.

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[200] Allen 1983: 153; Hansen 1971: 352. Scholars are divided on the accuracy of the identifications of the heads, especially the one supposedly depicting Alexander the Great.

[201] Both the Attalids and the Antigonids claimed this role during various periods. Cf. Allen 1983: 181.

[202] Gruen 2000: 25.

[203] Scheer 2005: 224.

Such self-representation, subtle or not, helped advance the dynastic claims of the Attalids, especially in the realm of their ruler cult. Unlike the Seleukids, whose cults were largely created by members of the dynasty rather than cities under their control, Attalid assertions were legitimated through the honors bestowed upon them by Greek cities.[204] Kings sponsored their own honors and encouraged their cult worship for a reason: it played an important role in their image. The rulers were certainly more than happy to advertise their relationships with the prominent sanctuaries at Delos and Delphi. From Philetairos to Attalus III, the Attalid dynasts seemed to be on a mission "to establish an international reputation as a connoisseur of Hellenic culture and religion".[205] Yet from the literary and epigraphic evidence we possess, the cult practices do not seem to be forced on those who take part. Perhaps their propaganda was successful enough to have duped those who participated in the cult worship. It seems more likely, though, that the Attalids appealed to the 'common man' enough that their cult was popular throughout Greece and Asia Minor. They did so through the promotion of their victories over the Gauls, their demonstration of a mythical lineage that had roots in Greece, and their consistent benefaction of Greek cities.

The Attalids' ruler cult was a facet of their reign in keeping with Hellenistic monarchical practices. As with other dynasties during this period, the ruler cult gave the Attalid monarchs ideological support for their authority. Most of their honors centered around the commemoration of victory in war or the gratitude for a benefaction, but all were carefully cultivated to promote the image of the Attalids as powerful protectors of Greece and Asia Minor. Indeed, the Attalid

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[204] For Seleukid-initiated cults, see Chaniotis 2005: 437.

[205] Gruen 2000: 21.

ruler cult was largely based around the manipulation of myth, both in terms of genealogy and euergetism. The deliberate execution of Pergamene promotional tactics was the source for, and often a result of, the Attalid ruler cult in its many forms.

The Folly of Antiochus I: The Ruler Cult of Kommagene and the Empire that Could Have Been

"I came to believe that of all good things, piety alone is the most secure acquisition and also the most pleasant enjoyment for men".[206] So opens the body of the cult inscription at Nemrud Dağı, one of the sanctuaries of Antiochus I of Kommagene. In this inscription, Antiochus gives the details of both the creation and practice of his ruler cult, the first - and last - of its kind in the Hellenistic kingdom of Kommagene. Antiochus' cult practices point toward a monarch seeking recognition for his reign in a universal context. Through invented traditions, he attempted to strengthen his rule while increasing the political power of his kingdom. Antiochus' cult was ultimately unsuccessful due to an absence of support from his successors and the local population, as well as the lack of fully functional cult sites. His approach was not necessarily idiosyncratic when compared to other Hellenistic monarchs at the time, but Antiochus' ruler cult was unique and never replicated.

As of the mid-second century BCE, under the control of the satrap Ptolemaeus, Kommagene had existed as a vassal state of the Seleukids for several decades.[207] The Kommagenian leadership grew into an autonomous dynasty, connected to the Seleukids through dynastic marriages.[208] It did not become an independent kingdom for another several decades, until Mithridates I Kallinikos entirely separated from Northern Syria during the civil war

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[206] N. lines.11-14. For Greek text, see Sanders 1996: 207-213. For full English text, see Appendix One.

[207] The date given for the beginning of this satrapy by Diodorus Siculus is 163/162 (XXXI.19a). Unlike previous scholars have attested, I believe that Ptolemaeus did not break away from the Seleukid kingdom but rather he gained more independence as a local administrator in the region. I agree with Engels regarding his argument that the Seleukids created a system of feudalism in their empire, which leads me to believe that Ptolemaeus' power was strengthened through his relationship with the Seleukid monarchy to such an extent that he became an independent ruler. Cf. Engels 2011: 20.

[208] Strootman 2011: 83.

between the last of the Seleukids in 80.[209] Mithridates I had married Laodike Thea Philadelphos, Antiochus VIII Grypos' daughter in c. 100, thus solidifying his royal status and allowing him to forge his own kingdom under the protection of the Seleukids.[210] Even in the new kingdom, however, Seleukid influence was strongly felt, and continued to be prominent in Antiochus' later ruler cult.[211] Antiochus I came to power around 69. The kingdom's geographical placement gave it greater importance than perhaps was deserved, as Kommagene was often a pawn in the struggle between Rome and Parthia for control of the region. It has been posited that Kommagene's continued independence between those two powers had much to do with Antiochus I himself.[212]

Antiochus was eager to assert himself as a powerful player in the region but was cautious enough to do so under the auspices of Roman friendship. He included the title *philoromaios*, or friend of the Romans, on most inscriptions that he commissioned, including at cult sites.[213] Antiochus' use of such a title has been debated, though Ferrary and Versluys convincingly argue that calling himself a *philoromaios* was simply another facet of being a Hellenistic king.[214] It appears unlikely that it had anything to do with his client relationship with Rome, as Antiochus seemed to have no trouble keeping the Romans away, or at least was able to manage their involvement in Kommagenian affairs.[215] Indeed, Antiochus I maintained a good relationship with

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[209] Goell, in Sanders 1996: 20.

[210] Strootman (forthcoming): 4.

[211] Use of royal names, epithets, coinage, and even city organization are other examples of similarities between the Seleukids and the new dynasty in Kommagene. Cf. Rostovtseff 1998: 848-849, 976.

[212] See Goell, in Sanders 1996: 20.

[213] Facella 2006: 228-229.

[214] Ferrary 1988: 501 n.19; Versluys 2013: 50.

[215] Versluys 2013: 50.

Rome for over a decade, illustrated by his receipt of the *toga praetexta* during Caesar's consulship.[216] He was also given cities, including his cult site of Zeugma, by Pompey.[217] Even with his so-called friendship with Pompey, he was not warmly regarded by all in Rome. Cicero writes that Antiochus I faked his friendship with the Romans while concealing his sympathy for the Parthians.[218] It is more likely that Antiochus sought to be on good terms with both Rome and Parthia by being a 'friend' to Rome and by giving one of his daughters in marriage to the Parthian king.[219] His kingdom's independence depended on him being somewhat of a placating party to both powers. In doing so, Antiochus was able to strengthen his reign within his own borders.

Antiochus set up at least thirteen cult sites, mostly clustered around the capital Samosata.[220] Of these sites, at least ten were *temene* which were re-appropriated from the worship of various divinities.[221] The *temene* served as branches of the larger cult sites, which were deemed *hierothesia*. The differentiation between the *temene* and the *hierothesia* existed mainly in the fact that burial did not occur at any of the *temene*.[222] The *hierothesia* were originally thought to have been named for the burial mound, but the physical aspect of the burial

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[216] Facella 2006: 237.

[217] This was not just a move of friendship on Pompey's part. By giving Zeugma (an important city both economically and politically in the region) to Antiochus he could control the area through the Kommagenian monarch without having to waste Roman military power. Cf. Facella 2006: 234, 236.

[218] Cicero, *Ad fam.*, 15.4.4.

[219] Cassius Dio 49.23; Facella 2006: 237.

[220] Facella 2006: 252.

[221] Facella 2006: 251-252; Crowther and Facella 2003: 41; Wagner 2000: 14. These sites included Selik, Adiyaman, Ancoz, Çaputlu Agaç Küllük, Direk Kale, Doliche, Kilafik Höyük, Samosata, Sofraz Köy, and Zeugma.

[222] Facella 2006: 251.

did not truly define the sites.[223] Rather, each *hierothesion* was a sanctuary that happened to also have a burial component. The *hierothesia* included Arsameia-on-the-Euphrates, Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios, and Nemrud Dağı, the most famous of the sites because of its impressive trove of cult evidence.[224]

The *nomos* inscription at Nemrud Dağı is crucial to an understanding of the underlying practices of Antiochus' cult. All cult inscriptions bearing his name, including the *nomos* inscription, give the litany of titles and epithets as well as a basic summary of Antiochus' immediate ancestry.[225] After expressing his piety, the inscription explicates his decision to incorporate Greek and Persian deities into his cult pantheon.[226] This is a departure from anything previously seen in either culture. The head deity was a combination of Zeus and the Persian Ahuramazda, with the name Zeus-Oromasdes. Zeus-Oromasdes did not have a female counterpart like the normal Greek or Persian pantheons did. Hera did not share many characteristics with the goddess associated with Ahuramazda, so Antiochus replaced a Hera-esque goddess with the patron goddess of Kommagene who could be made similar to both traditions.[227] He also created the combination of Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes, and re-appropriated Herakles, Ares, and Artagnes into one war god.[228] The names of gods were

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[223] It is unknown whether ἱεροθέσιον was coined during the reign of Antiochus. Perhaps the word was appropriated to serve as an all-encompassing term for the large cult sites, which do not follow any particular archaeological style; cf. Facella 2006: 253-254.

[224] For site plan of Nemrud Dağı, see Appendix Two.

[225] N, lines 1-11; cf. Dörrie 1964: 29-32.

[226] N, lines 24-35.

[227] See Facella 2006: 285.

[228] N, lines 53-56; cf. Jacobs 2000: 45-46.

integrated to create one Greco-Persian pantheon of "super-gods".[229] As they had roots in multiple cultures, they were meant to be viewed as superior to the older, individual beings of whom they were comprised. This was not an accident: by combining deities from both Greek and Persian pantheons, Antiochus was able to appeal to both the Greek elite in the kingdom and other elites throughout the greater Mediterranean world. His pantheon, as part of the larger synchronistic cult, showed his familiarity with the traditions of Hellenistic kings - proving that he belonged amongst them - and connected his position as rightful heir of the Seleukids and the Persians, both storied ruling powers. In this way his ruler cult was meant to serve as a medium between the king and the elite community, demonstrating for authorities inside and outside of Kommagene that his rule had validity. In addition, Antiochus' ability to combine various ethnic elements into his pantheon speaks to the fact that cult practices could utilize the malleability built into polytheistic religion.

Statues of these gods were created in colossal stone form, with Antiochus' own placed amongst them.[230] Antiochus also installed many images of the ruler shaking hands with these new gods at his cult sites. This was a play on the concept of *dexiosis*, which in Greek culture was typically a living person shaking hands with another person on their way to the underworld.[231] Such was not his intention, however. From an inscription found at a *temenos* at Zeugma, the depictions of his *dexiosis* with the new gods reveals his divine right to rule:

> I set up in sacred stone of a single compass alongside images of the deities the representation of my own form receiving the benevolent right hands of the gods,

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[229] Gotter 2013: 219.

[230] N, lines 57-67.

[231] Crowther and Facella 2003: 52.

> preserving a proper depiction of the undying concern with which they often extended their heavenly hands to my assistance in my struggles.[232]

Antiochus depicted himself in such a way on four *stelai* on the northern terrace of Nemrud Dağı, of which three are in good enough condition to be interpreted. Zeus-Oromasdes, Herakles, and Apollo-Mithras were each chosen for his portrayals of *dexiosis.* In these images the size of the gods vary. Zeus is much bigger than the king, though their heads are at the same height because Zeus is sitting. Herakles is slightly larger than Antiochus, and Apollo-Mithras is slightly smaller. The differences in the gods' sizes may point to the relative importance that Antiochus ascribed to them, as he was eager to show himself in good standing with these major deities. These *stelai* show the king adopting iconographic details of the gods with his dress.[233] In the image of Antiochus shaking the hand of Zeus, which is the largest *stele* of the set, both the king and the god have tiaras adorned with thunderbolts. Antiochus' diadem and boots feature thunderbolts as well. The king adopts symbols of Apollo-Mithras with the tiara depicted on that *stele*, which has five feathers on top as well as images of lions and olive wreaths. On the *stele* with Herakles, the god holds his *leonte* and his club in typical fashion. The king's dress is no longer visible, but it seems likely that he would have had a lion and wine leaves decorating his attire.[234] Assuming the state of preservation has no bearing on the *stelai*, these images are more elaborate than most other *stelai* in the complex, showing great attention to detail and significant knowledge of iconography specific to the individual gods.

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[232] From an inscription at Zeugma: BEc, ll. 18-21. Translation from Crowther and Facella 2003: 47. For naming, see Crowther and Facella 2003: 45, note 6.

[233] See Moormann and Versluys 2002: 87.

[234] Moormann and Versluys 2002: 88.

Even with the detailed imagery provided, these portrayals of *dexiosis* at Nemrud Dağı are rather ambiguous. While it remains unclear exactly what Antiochus was attempting to demonstrate through these images, the key may be the inscription from Zeugma. Antiochus seems to be flaunting alliances with the gods through *dexiosis*, thus proving his importance on a scale larger than Kommagene. The gods he chose to portray belie this intention. An 'alliance' with Herakles shows a connection to Olympus and thus the Greek pantheon; in addition, a parallel can be made between the rise of the gods after their defeat of the Titans and the rise of Kommagene after the defeat of larger Mediterranean and Near Eastern powers. Apollo, from the combined Apollo-Mithras-Hermes-Helios deity, was a revered god of the Seleukids, an important connection to make if one wishes to create an empire similar to the Successor kingdoms. Yet Antiochus was always careful not to place himself on par with the gods, demonstrating that the *dexiosis* was a contract amongst unequals.[235]

The *nomos* inscription at Nemrud Dağı included a multitude of rules for the maintenance of Antiochus' cult. He stipulated that the cult was to be furnished with the appropriate property, income, and priests to carry out sacred observances.[236] Antiochus set two dates, the 16th of Audnaios and the 10th of Loos[237] - his birthday and the day of his accession to the throne, respectively - as days of festivals and celebrations, as well as provisions for the priests to observe those same dates each month. In addition, Antiochus created two other festival days "because of

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[235] Mittag 2011: 153.

[236] N, lines 67-82.

[237] These months are part of the Common Macedonian calendar, whose months happen to be coincident with those of the Julian calendar. Cf. A.E. Samuel's *Greek and Roman Chronology: Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity* (1972).

the multitude of offerings and the magnificence of the celebration" in his honor.[238] This allowed for twenty-six observances of the cult each year, far more than what is attested for other ruler cults.[239] Typically, cult rituals took place on the ruler's birthday and on that same day of every month as well.[240] Observing rituals more than twice as often as other cults speaks to Antiochus' need to 'legitimize' his rule. He had to prove his worth as king more than other Hellenistic rulers who had stronger claims to monarchy, which translates into these cultic practices.

Antiochus required his subjects to observe the religious days of his cult. In the *nomos* inscription, Antiochus lays out the procedures for these celebrations, which include altar offerings, musicians dedicated solely to his cult, and feasts for the Kommagenians who are required to attend these celebrations at the nearest cult site.[241] Such strict procedural edicts exist, almost word-for-word, in part at other cult sites including Zeugma, Doliche, Selik, Samosata, and Arsameia-on-the-Nymphaios.[242] Antiochus wanted to leave nothing to chance; by providing instructions for the maintenance of his cult, he attempted to ensure the longevity of this vital aspect of Hellenistic kingship within Kommagene.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the cult site at Nemrud Dağı are the *stelai,* on both the East and West terraces, detailing Antiochus' ancestral lines, both paternal and maternal. On the front of each *stele* is the relief of a figure who represents one of Antiochus' ancestors; on the back is an inscription giving Antiochus' royal titles as well as the name of the ancestor.[243] A

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[238] N, lines 82-105.

[239] Kropp 2013: 309.

[240] Chaniotis 2005: 438.

[241] N, lines 132-191.

[242] For textual similarities between inscriptions at the cult sites see Crowther and Facella 2003: 56.

[243] Dörner, in Sanders 1996: 254-255, 306-307, 322.

small altar, made of two stone blocks with a capping block across the top, was in front of each *stele*.[244] The paternal *stelai* show Antiochus' links to the Achaemenid line, while the maternal demonstrates his Macedonian and Seleukid heritage. Antiochus I's claim to Achaemenid heritage begins with Darius the Great and ends with his father, Mithridates Kallinikos. Fifteen ancestors are included, all of whom are male. One of the included ancestors is the satrap Ptolemaeus, who set events in motion for Kommagene to become its own kingdom.[245]

On the maternal side, seventeen ancestral *stelai* are thought to have existed on the East and West terraces; there are fragments of the majority of the *stelai* on the West terrace, and a good portion of the *stelai* of the East terrace.[246] Only four of the ancestral names can be definitively read: Alexander the Great (*stele* 1), Demetrios II Nicatore (*stele* 11), Antiochus VIII (*stele* 13), and Isais Philostorgos (*stele* 16).[247] Because of the especially fragmentary nature of the remaining *stelai*, there are multiple interpretations of the maternal genealogy that Antiochus I was trying to produce. Laodike Thea Philadelphos, Antiochus' mother, was likely honored on the Seleukid *stelai*.[248]

With the maternal *stelai* Antiochus was looking to connect himself with the late Seleukid rulers of the area. Including more ancestors on the Seleukid side not only extended his lineage back to Alexander the Great, but it also confirmed - and convinced the viewer of - his (supposed) Macedonian heritage. This is not the only example of Antiochus attempting to play up his

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[244] Dörner, in Sanders 1996: 255.

[245] Ptolemaeus is listed as the thirteenth Persian ancestor (out of the fifteen) on the East terrace *stelai*; on the West terrace, nothing has been recovered of the thirteenth relief or inscription. Cf. Dörner, in Sanders 1996: 271-272, 300.

[246] For detailed descriptions of the maternal ancestral *stelai*, see Dörner, in Sanders 1996: 307-355.

[247] Various interpretations of Isais Philostorgos' role exist: Dörner believes she is the wife of Samos II, where Jacobs believes she is the wife of Antiochus I (cf. Facella 2006: 271-272).

[248] Strootmann (forthcoming): 4.

Macedonian roots. Antiochus, like other Near Eastern monarchs, adopted the title *philhellen*, a clear sign of his positive inclination towards the Greeks. It is also notable that the inscriptions at his cult sites are only in Greek, as are all royal inscriptions in Kommagene. As we have no evidence for a Kommagenian population with a good understanding of Greek, it seems clear that Antiochus wanted to demonstrate his knowledge of and comfort with Greek culture.[249] The inclusion of more Seleukid ancestors also cemented Antiochus' right, and the right of his children, to rule Kommagene. The transmission of kingship through women, especially in the Seleukid dynasty, goes back to the Diadochoi. Many Diadochs attempted to marry Alexander's sister Kleopatra such that their sons would be legitimate heirs of Macedonia. Antiochus' Seleukid connection through his maternal ancestry resembles this practice, which may be why so many women were included in his ancestor gallery on the maternal side.[250]

Regardless of the exact list of ancestors at Nemrud Dağı, Antiochus' demonstrated descent from both the Achaemenid and Seleukid dynasties is "perhaps the ultimate weapon" in his play for recognition.[251] Claiming genealogical ties from a previous dynasty - in this case two dynasties - is not an uncommon ploy. Yet usually only the nearest male ancestors and the original leader of the dynasty were included.[252] Antiochus I took his 'Ancestor Gallery' to an extent that was unmatched. Like the combination of both Greek and Persian gods into his cult, Antiochus used his (imagined) dually ethnic lineage to strengthen his right to rule. By playing up the Greco-Persian nature of his genealogy, Antiochus was seeking to convince the viewer of his right to rule

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[249] Cf. Facella 2005: 89-90, 93.

[250] See Strootman (forthcoming): 5-6.

[251] Fowler and Hekster 2005: 31.

[252] Gotter 2013: 220.

as a descendent of both the Macedonians and the Persians.[253] These nods to Greek and Persian history and tradition further reinforced his ancestral cult, tapping into deities common to each culture and joining them under his reign.

In later inscriptions, including the *nomos* inscription at Nemrud Dağı, the evolution of Antiochus' cult can be extrapolated from within the text itself. He begins by first representing himself as a typical Hellenistic king. Giving his titles and epithets, he praises his own actions (ll. 20-24). He then brings in relationships with the gods of his pantheon, which are both Greek and Persian in nature. It is through this that he can assert himself as the only man whom the gods look down upon with favor (ll. 59-67). The evolution in the cultic inscriptions show that Antiochus was trying desperately to assert himself within his own kingdom and, more importantly, outside of his domain, even as he was faced with external limitations on his influence and power.

The penultimate section of the *nomos* inscription states that Antiochus' demonstration of piety was meant to guide his children and grandchildren and that they should continue to "emulate this fair example by continually increasing the honors appropriate to their race".[254] Yet despite his wishes and the impressive infrastructure behind his cult, it was not continued by the rest of the dynasty after Antiochus' death. Antiochus' successors used his *hierothesia* simply as a mausoleum rather than a tomb-sanctuary as Antiochus had intended.[255] This may have been a necessity rather than a conscious choice on the part of Antiochus' successors, as it is possible that

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[253] This is apparent even with his title μὲγας βασιλεύς. It refers back not only to Alexander and the Seleukids but also to the Achaemenid dynasty, each of whom considered themselves to be "King of the World"; cf. Gotter 2013: 220.

[254] N, lines 217-220. The whole section is in lines 212-228.

[255] His son, Mithridates II, built his own *hierothesion* but also used it as nothing more than a tomb. Cf. Kropp 2013: 364.

the *hierothesia*, including Nemrud Dağı, were never developed into fully functional cult sites.[256] The colossal head of Antiochus on the northern terrace at Nemrud Dağı was never attached to the statue's torso, nor were there any Hellenistic ceramics found on the site as offerings. No traces of the stone tables meant for the celebratory feasts were ever found.[257] Most significantly, there was not even space in the site for the worshippers Antiochus expected - and required - to attend the bi-monthly festivals in his honor.[258] Even his pantheon was abandoned; his successors stopped using the syncretistic gods and resorted to typical Greek deities. Whatever the case, it is clear from epigraphic evidence that the ruler cult ended with Antiochus. While it is true that his cult project would have been both expensive and difficult to sustain,[259] it seems more likely that it was not maintained because of the instability of the region amidst clashes between Rome and Parthia. Within almost two decades of Antiochus' death, the Roman emperor Tiberius had annexed the kingdom and instituted his own imperial cult in the region.[260] In addition, the prestige of the kingdom may have suffered under Mithridates II, leaving Antiochus' successor little choice but to adapt his own cult to the situation.[261]

The cult that Antiochus worked to establish could have been an effective stratagem. He strived to create cohesion around his person through the ruler cult. His claim to Greek and Achaemenid genealogical roots was purposeful, even masterful. Antiochus' supposed descent from Alexander the Great allowed him to claim the same right to rule as the kings of the major

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[256] See Sahin 1991: 120-121 note 59.

[257] N, lines 146-148.

[258] Kropp 2013: 310.

[259] Facella 2006: 311.

[260] Kropp 2013: 364.

[261] See Wagner 2000: 23-24 on the simpler style of tombs that Mithridates II built at Karakus.

dynasties. In presenting himself as a successor to Alexander's legacy, he could define himself as a 'legitimate' Hellenistic monarch. It was in the same vein that he used his descent from Darius the Great in his paternal line: again Antiochus was portrayed as a successor to an old regime with a storied past. It did not matter that his connection to both Alexander and Darius was questionable at best; the public image that Antiochus I shaped for himself was determined by the consciousness of Macedonian and Achaemenid past - whether real or imagined - shared between the monarch and his public.[262] The key to his legitimacy was the invented tradition of the "fortunate roots" of his ancestry.[263] Indeed the stress laid by Antiochus on his dual descent was meant to convince the viewer of the divine nature of the king and to push acceptance of the dynastic cult in honor of himself, his Greco-Persian deities, and his successors.[264]

Even with Antiochus' inclusion of a local Kommagenian goddess in his cult pantheon, the barrier between Antiochus' court and the local population was surely felt. The emphasis of Antiochus' Macedonian heritage was purely an exhibition for the king and the Mediterranean elite, and Iranian/Persian traditions were constructed to underscore the kingdom's ancient roots.[265] Yet no facet of Antiochus' religious reforms actually reflected the culture of the local population. Of the physical evidence that exists from Kommagene, coinage from later kings like Antiochus IV give a better sense of Kommagenian identity than does the material culture of Nemrud Dağı. Antiochus I seems to have minted coins, but only one has been identified to this date. The obverse of this coin has a king wearing an Armenian tiara, and the reverse contains a

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[262] Fowler and Hekster 2005: 33.

[263] N, lines 30-31.

[264] Facella 2005: 88-89.

[265] Canepa 2010: 13.

lion which is similar to the 'Lion Horoscope' relief at Nemrud Dağı.[266] The obverses of Antiochus IV's coins show the king and his family, while the reverses read "of the Kommagenians". Yet even this demonstrates little about the local population of the kingdom, as the coins center around the monarchy by merely stating that the kings are "of" Kommagene.[267] Both the coins and Antiochus' cult are dynastic instruments that give scant information about those who were meant to use them. The invented traditions of Antiochus did not assimilate into local culture because they were not considered "Kommagenian" by the kingdom's native inhabitants.[268] The gods of Antiochus' pantheon were artificial in the sense that they meant nothing to those supposed to worship them, creating a dichotomy between the ruler cult and the local religious culture. Thus, as seen by the lack of religious activity at Nemrud Dağı, Antiochus' attempt to change the religious fabric of the kingdom held no appeal for the Kommagenians.

Rather than using his ruler cult to strengthen his rule over the ethnic groups within his kingdom, Antiochus was looking beyond the 'borders' of Kommagene. A power vacuum had been left in the area by the fall of the Seleukids, and Antiochus' attempts to prove his genuine, even divine, right to kingship seems to point to goals that extend beyond his kingdom. He was certainly trying to expand his kingdom, but it is very possible that Antiochus was also looking to replicate the empires of the Successors. His use of universalistic language in his *nomos* inscription was not just an empty boast to compensate for lack of real power, nor were his ties to

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[266] See M. Facella's chapter "Coinage and the economy of Commagene" in S. Mitchell's *Patterns in the Economy of Roman Asia Minor* (2005) and R.D. Sullivan's "Diadochic Coinage in Commagene after Tigranes the Great" (*The Numismatic Chonicle* 13, 18-39) for more information.

[267] Versluys 2013: 58. See also K. Butcher's *Roman Syria and the Near East* (2003): "Some sort of communal identity among the Commagenians of the first three centuries AD might be implied by the use of the Greek term "of the Commagenians" on royal and later civic coins of the region, but it is far from clear whether this identity was expressed in any other ways, still less that there was a distinct Commagenian culture" (278).

[268] Versluys 2013: 64.

Seleukid and Persian figures simply for legitimization.[269] Instead, Antiochus may have been attempting to cement his own imperial agency within Kommagene before extending his *basileia* throughout the ruins of the Seleukid empire. It is only with hindsight that scholars can see Antiochus would have had little chance to succeed in his efforts to do so.

Antiochus was aiming less for immortality of self and more for the strengthening and extension of political power of his own kingdom. His cult was a comprehensive attempt to sanctify his person and to depict his reign as existing without alternative.[270] Antiochus sought to portray himself as the incarnation of the successes of two extraordinary cultural traditions. Yet the division of allegiances - between Rome and Parthia, between Greek and Persian, between elite and local - proved to be too much for his successors, making the ruler cult an ultimately futile endeavor.

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[269] N. lines 45-46: 'the common consecrated seat of *all* the gods' (emphasis my own); also, the use of 'Great King' in inscriptions (see note 46).

[270] Gotter 2005: 221.

Ruler Cult in the Minor Kingdoms: Summary Conclusion

As an established practice of the period, the use of ruler cults across the Mediterranean became a vital aspect of Hellenistic kingship. The tradition had roots from the Classical period of Greece and was brought into full force by Alexander the Great and his successors. The rulers of minor kingdoms, including those of Kommagene, Attalid Pergamum, and Syracuse, adopted the practice of ruler cult as a way to legitimize their reign. Many similarities exist amongst the elements of ruler cult, including the ways in which the cult was established, the projection of one's lineage, and the integration of local customs into the cult. Associations between the king and a particular deity or deities were also a common practice. The uniformity between ruler cults in the major kingdoms and corresponding cults in the smaller monarchies speaks to the need for any and all Hellenistic rulers to continually justify their authority and strive for recognition both within their own territory and on the broader scale of the Mediterranean world.

Relationships between the monarchs of major and minor kingdoms certainly played a role in the development of ruler cults in the latter. Political and social connections between the dynasties of the Diadokhoi and rulers of smaller kingdoms throughout the Hellenistic Mediterranean were developed in various ways. In some instances, the influence of a dynasty like the Seleukids was strongly felt for many generations, whether because of familial ties through marriage or because the kingdom had previously been under Seleukid purview. Both Kommagene and Pergamum were created out of Seleukid vassal states, and the monarchs of those kingdoms were certainly impacted by that connection. For kings like Hieron II of Syracuse, any influence from other Hellenistic rulers, particularly the Ptolemies, came from years of

diplomatic relations and gift exchanges. The impact from these relationships manifested itself through many mediums of Hellenistic kingship, and the practice of ruler cult was no exception.

Projecting one's lineage was key to the success of Hellenistic rulers, and as seen by the case studies of Kommagene, Pergamum, and Syracuse, the kings often did so through their ruler cults. In the cases of Antiochus I and the Attalids of Pergamum, they quite literally promoted their storied ancestry in conjunction with cult practices. Antiochus' cult site on Nemrud Dağı includes *stelai* that detail his paternal and maternal lineage, the former linking back to the Achaemenid line and the latter demonstrating his Macedonian and Seleukid heritage. His paternal Achaemenid lineage begins with Darius the Great and ends with Antiochus' father Mithridates Kallinikos, while including several important Kommagenian figures like the founder Ptolemaeus as well as members of the current dynasty. The Kommagenian leadership was connected through marriage to the Seleukids, who make up many of the figures on Antiochus' maternal bloodline. The maternal *stelai* at Nemrud Dağı demonstrate Antiochus' desire to associate himself not only with the Seleukid dynasty but also with Alexander the Great and his Macedonian heritage. The prominent inclusion of such ancestry in his ruler cult was meant to cement Antiochus' right, and that of his children, to rule his kingdom.

The Attalids could not claim descent from such storied mortal dynasties, so they set about creating a mythical lineage worthy of Hellenistic monarchs. While the cultic practices of Attalus I and his successors were cultivated to honor both past and present Attalid rulers, thus ensuring a strong dynastic connection between kings, they could not trace their lineage directly back to Philip II or Alexander the Great like many of the Diadokhoi. Thus, they created their dynastic

genealogy with Telephos, the *heros ktistes* of their kingdom and Herakles' son.[271] The Attalids first established their relationship to Alexander the Great's son Herakles, who had lived in Pergamum. By presenting themselves as the legitimate heirs of the human Herakles, they could adopt Telephos as the dynasty's forbearer and thus connect themselves to the god Herakles. They then broadcasted this mythical genealogy by means of the Great Altar in Pergamum, physically demonstrating the relationship between Attalus I's successors and the Greek pantheon.

Hieron II of Syracuse could not claim descent from a Hellenistic dynasty either, and his ruler cult emphasized his lineage the least out of the three kingdoms. He did, however, attempt to establish a particular dynastic bloodline that emphasized his connection to the Syracusan people. He married his wife Philistis not for her connections to a Hellenistic dynasty but rather for her link to the aristocracy of Syracuse through her prominent father.[272] Hieron included Philistis' likeness on coins and her name in inscriptions promoting his rule as part of a conscious effort to establish a Syracusan dynasty pedigree similar to those emphasized by other Hellenistic kings.

Claiming genealogical ties to notable figures, whether human or divine, was certainly an important aspect of Hellenistic kingship, but was even more crucial for rulers of the minor kingdoms. Instituting one's rule in a less established kingdom required a distinguished lineage, and thus linking oneself to another Hellenistic dynasty or to a god was not uncommon. Antiochus I, with his 'Ancestor Gallery' to demonstrate his largely invented connections to two storied dynasties, was certainly unmatched in this regard. In a similar fashion the Attalids, with their imagined bloodline that included the god Herakles, were attempting to firmly convince any

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[271] Strootman 2005: 132.

[272] Finley 1968: 111.

viewer of the Great Altar of their right to rule. Hieron II was, in fact, the only ruler among these three kingdoms to present an accurate and unembellished genealogy for himself and his family. Yet all three sets of rulers used their ancestral ties to reinforce their ruler cults and thus their power within their kingdoms.

Ruler cults could be established either by the kings instituting rites for themselves and members of their family, or by cities instituting cults based on their own relations with a particular king or dynasty. As in the major kingdoms, it was much more likely in the minor kingdoms that a city would establish a ruler cult for the king, which would then be promoted or even financed by the king himself, than a king establishing his own cult. In Syracuse, for instance, the *demos* likely initiated the ruler cult for Hieron II, which eventually expanded into both public and private worship. The evidence found for private cult practices, including small altars, is indicative of an established public cult in Syracuse and perhaps across Sicily as a whole. In addition, the use of 'Soter' as an epithet for Hieron signifies the initiation of cultic honors by the Syracusan populace, as the name was typically bestowed upon monarchs when seeking their protection. Hieron then used this cult to project his own power and promote his connections with Zeus and Herakles.

Starting with Attalus I, rulers in Pergamum became the recipients of a diverse, widespread ruler cult within their kingdom and in the surrounding areas. Yet there were no organized cult practices in the kingdom until 188. After this, ruler cult became standard practice in the Attalid kingdom, with regular priesthoods for the monarchs and the practice of posthumous deification. The Attalid cult was initiated by cities within their kingdom, Greece, and Asia Minor, consisting primarily of two types of cult worship: eponymous festivals and

deification of Attalid rulers. Once the cult was in place, the monarchs financially sponsored their own honors and developed extensive building project to promote their honors. In addition, the Attalids advertised their relationship with the sanctuaries of Delphi and Delos. Attalid self-representation as the protectors of the Greeks and the victors over the Gauls helped advance their ruler cult within and outside of their kingdom. As with many other Hellenistic kingdoms, the cult lent Attalid monarchs ideological support for their authority.

The key to a successful ruler cult was getting the population to adopt the cult practices, which generally was easiest if the people themselves instituted the cult in the first place. In Kommagene, however, Antiochus I instituted his own ruler cult that attracted little to no local support. He set up at least thirteen cult sites, with the largest at Nemrud Dağı. The *nomos* inscription at that site included a multitude of rules for the maintenance of Antiochus' cult. Antiochus required his subjects to observe the religious days of his cult and laid out specific procedures for these celebrations, which included altar offerings, musicians dedicated solely to his cult, and feasts for the Kommagenians who were required to attend. Such strict procedural edicts exist at most of Antiochus' cult sites, as he wanted his ruler cult to function in a very particular way in order to ensure the longevity of this vital aspect of Hellenistic kingship within Kommagene. But Antiochus' successors abandoned most of his cultic practices, likely because of the lack of feasibility and the overwhelming monetary strain to maintain it. Yet even if the dynasty had continued to implement Antiochus' cult, the local population was never on board and thus the cult was never truly slated for success. Even with the inclusion of a local Kommagenian goddess in the cult pantheon, no facet of Antiochus' religious practices accurately reflected the culture of the local population. The invented traditions of Antiochus never

assimilated into local culture because they were not considered "Kommagenian" by the kingdom's native inhabitants. Had Antiochus been able to get the local population of Kommagene to support and participate in his ruler cult, perhaps it would have outlasted his reign. The recipients of the cult were thus crucial to its success. Certainly the *demos* differed between communities in terms of their language, geographic location, density, and rurality. But their acceptance of ruler cult and its practices was the ultimate determinant for the longevity of the cult. Indeed, one could go as far as to say that a successful cult depended on the initiation of the honors by the people rather than by the ruler. This would explain why cults like that of Antiochus I of Kommagene ultimately failed, because they were created not by the local populace but by the monarch himself and thus had no real power in the minds of the people.[273] The bottom-up approach was adopted by the Attalids and Hieron II, as well as most other Hellenistic monarchs, allowing for greater success for their ruler cults.

Cult practices were often associated with the worship of Greek deities. Major and minor kingdoms alike promoted their associations with certain gods in an effort to project their power as a godlike figure. Kommagene's Antiochus I serves as an example of this type of connection. Antiochus portrayed himself in various images of *dexiosis* with syncretistic deities like Zeus-Oromasdes, Herakles, and Apollo-Mithras. These *stelai* with the *dexiosis* images show Antiochus with iconographic details of the gods, including Zeus' thunderbolts and Herakles' lion costume.[274] He also portrayed the size of the gods differently - Zeus and Herakles are larger than Antiochus, while Apollo-Mithras is smaller - which likely points to the importance ascribed to

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[273] An exception to this would be dynastic cults, like those created by the Ptolemies, especially where there was already a tradition of ruler worship before the Hellenistic period.

[274] Moormann and Versluys 2002: 87-88.

them by Antiochus. The king seems to be showing his alliances with the gods through these images, demonstrating his connection to the Greek pantheon as well as his proving his importance on a larger scale.

Herakles was a particularly important deity with whom Hellenistic kings connected themselves. He was the patron ancestor of the Macedonian kings, and was immensely important to the Antigonids as well as the Ptolemies and Seleukids. Herakles possessed many attributes, including his divine heritage, his physical strength, and his reputation as a savior from monsters, with which Hellenistic rulers wanted to be associated. This was no different in the minor kingdoms. Antiochus I was not the only monarch to develop a connection between Herakles and himself; the Attalids also linked themselves to the god. The Great Altar of Pergamum had several depictions of Herakles, including an image of his fight with the Titans and Giants on the outer walls of the altar, which was meant to remind the reader of Attalid victories against the Celts. The inner sections depict a smaller relief of Herakles' son Telephos. In the palace at Pergamum, which had been occupied by both the Antigonids and the Attalids, there was likely a cult room dedicated to Herakles.[275] Within the Greek pantheon, Herakles was also closely connected to Zeus and Athena, two deities with whom the Attalids were also linked. The Attalids stressed their connection to Herakles through their lineage as well, as previously discussed. It was important for the Attalids to stress their connection with Herakles as he was both a deified man and a god. Being popular amongst other Hellenistic monarchs, Herakles served as a superb model for the Attalid lineage and ruler cult.

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[275] Kutbay 1990: 3. It is thought that the Antigonids would have created this heroon dedicated to Herakles when they occupied the palace. Various pieces of epigraphic, archaeological, and numismatic evidence demonstrate the importance of the god to the Macedonians; cf. Kutbay 1990: 5, no. 11).

Hieron II of Syracuse perhaps had the most direct mythical connection to Herakles out of the three case studies presented. Many of Hieron's coins bear icons associated with Herakles, including a club and a bull. Herakles was the mythical ancestor of the Dorians, and the bull was particular to the story of Herakles' tenth labor, or the search for the cattle of Geryon. After stealing Geryon's cattle, Herakles made his way back to Greece. In the process of this journey one of the bulls in the herd broke away and swam to Sicily, and so Herakles had to travel through Sicily to retrieve the animal.[276] His mythical connection to Sicily made him a perfect deity for Hieron with whom to associate himself. Herakles' cult was widespread in Sicily, as we know from Diodorus' account of the cult practices in his hometown of Agyrion.[277] Hieron also associated himself with Zeus, perhaps even more so than with Herakles. Hieron adopted one of Zeus' epithets, Soter, as his own, and honored Zeus with the large altar he built in Syracuse. The connection that Hieron II was trying to promote between Zeus and himself was seemingly well received amongst the population of his kingdom, as archaeological evidence exists for a ruler cult that linked the two. The king was attempting to create a clear link between Herakles, Zeus, and his own kingship. The association between Hieron and the two gods was an important facet of his ruler cult in Syracuse, especially because of the prevailing popularity of the two deities in Sicily.

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[276] For references to this, see Hesiod, *Theogony* 980; Apollodorus, *Library*, 2.5.10; Diod. Sic. 4.22.6, 4.23.1-4; Paus. 3.16.4-5.

[277] Diod. Sic. 4.24.6: "Now the inhabitants, in pursuance of these rites, call the gate, at which they come into the presence of the god and offer him these sacrifices, "The Heracleian," and every year with the utmost zeal they hold games which include gymnastic contests and horse-races. And since the whole populace, both free men and slaves, united in approbation of the god they have commanded their servants, as they do honor to him apart from the rest, to gather in bands and when they come together to hold banquets and perform sacrifices to the god." (Translation by C. H. Oldfather)

A large part of the success of ruler cult for the Ptolemies and Seleukids was the adoption of native customs, especially comparing the kings to local gods rather than just Greek deities. This practice was adopted in part by kings in the minor kingdoms, especially those in the eastern Mediterranean. While the Attalids did not necessarily employ this tactic, Antiochus I of Kommagene created an unprecedented synchronistic pantheon of Greek and Near Eastern gods as part of his cult. He combined Zeus and Ahuramazda as the head deity and incorporated a local Kommagenian goddess into the pantheon as a pseudo-Hera. He also combined several other Greek and Persian deities into themed gods - a war god, a god connected to the sun, and so on - in the hopes of creating "super-gods". With his pantheon Antiochus hoped to appeal first and foremost to the Greek elite within his kingdom, but also to the local population of Kommagene. The synchronistic gods also connected his cult with the traditions of Hellenistic kings stretching back to Alexander as well as the storied Persian dynasties.

Hieron II did not adopt any non-Greek deities as part of his ruler cult, but he was careful to appeal to the native traditions of Sicily when promoting it. Like his connection with the beloved Herakles as well as his promotion of his wife's Syracusan ancestry through coinage and inscriptions, Hieron used elements of Syracusan history as part of his ruler cult. There was also a long tradition of the veneration of Hieron's predecessors in Sicily. Many of the tyrants were given heroic or divine honors as well as the epithet of 'Soter'. Thus, it is not surprising that Hieron would have included such tradition as part of his own ruler cult, as it would have given further weight to his authority in Syracuse and across Sicily.

The practical aspects of ruler cult in the major and minor kingdoms were largely similar across the Hellenistic Mediterranean. Cults were initiated under differing circumstances but

almost all incorporated elements surrounding familial lineage, divine associations, and native traditions. Regardless of the origin of the ruler cult, the portrayal of the the king as a divine figure depended on the recognition of the monarch as godlike. This could be done in a variety of ways: honoring the king as a god, sacrificing to him, proclaiming him a god, and viewing his person as that of a god.[278] The success of this portrayal was contingent upon the decision by the population of the kingdom to actively recognize the monarch's divine status, and show their acceptance through expressions of gratitude through the giving of honors and divine epithets.

The kings exploited their cults to underscore the justified nature of their rule. Yet the monarchs in the minor kingdoms needed to promote their authority even more so than kings in the major dynasties, and thus had even more of a need for a legitimizing factor like ruler cult for their reign. This cultic aspect of validation had two functions within the minor kingdoms. The first was for those monarchs to be seen as equals to the 'direct' descendants of Alexander. Having a ruler cult was another practice that allowed you to prove that you were just as Hellenistic as a king connected a dynasty of the Diadokhoi. But kings were not simply promoting their cults for the benefit of their fellow rulers. Monarchs also attempted to demonstrate their own generosity, their divine associations, and ultimately their power to the local populations within their kingdoms. This was especially true in the minor kingdoms where outside forces, especially Rome, made it difficult to express power in more traditional and militaristic ways.

This need to prove oneself as a king in both micro and macro contexts would have been a difficult task, which is likely why ruler cult was such a popular tool for Hellenistic monarchs within the minor kingdoms. With their cults they could promote their authority through a number

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[278] Versnel 2011: 486.

of mediums. Genealogical connections could be demonstrated and exploited, whether they were rooted in familial ties or invented bonds; associations with deities were stressed to convince the viewer of the divine nature of the king and of the power he held. The cults were designed to appeal to the Greek elite within the kingdoms, but the native populations were also included through varied nods to local traditions and customs. Ultimately, ruler cult served to justify the monarch's rule and project his authority throughout his kingdom and also the broader Hellenistic world. Examining the ruler cults of the minor kingdoms provides a vehicle for understanding the fundamental aspects of the practice during this period, and is invaluable for an comprehensive appreciation of Hellenistic monarchical power in its many forms.

Appendix One: The *Nomos* Inscription from Nemrud Dağı

Text from D.H. Sanders (ed.), *Nemrud Dagi. The Hierothesion of Antiochus I. of Commagene. Results of the American Excavations Directed by Theresa B. Goell* (Winona Lake 1996):

(1) The Great King Antiochus, the God, the Righteous One, the Manifest [Deity], the Friend of the Romans and the Greeks, the Son of King Mithridates Callinicus and of Laodice the Brother-loving Goddess, the Daughter of King Antiochus Epiphanes, the Mother-loving, the Victorious, has recorded for all time, on consecrated pedestals with inviolable letters the deeds of his clemency.
(11) I have come to believe that, for mankind, of all good things piety is both the most secure possession and also the sweetest enjoyment. This judgment became, for me, the cause of fortunate power and its blessed use; and during my whole life I have appeared to all men as one who thought holiness the most secure guardian and the unrivaled delight of my reign [or kingdom]. By this means I have, contrary to all expectations, escaped great perils, have easily become master of hopeless situations, and in a blessed way have attained to the fullness of a long life.
(24) After taking over my father's dominion, I announced, in the piety of my thought, that the kingdom subject to my throne should be the common dwelling place of all the gods, in that by means of every kind of art I decorated the representations of their form, as the ancient lore of Persians and of Greeks - the fortunate roots of my ancestry - had handed them down [to us], and honored them with sacrifices and festivals, as was the primitive rule and the common custom of all mankind; in addition my own just consideration has further devised still other and especially brilliant honors.
(36) And as I have taken forethought to lay the foundation of this sacred tomb, which is to be indestructible by the ravages of time, in closest proximity to the heavenly throne, wherein the fortunately preserved outer form of my person, preserved to ripe old age, shall, after the soul beloved by God has been sent to the heavenly thrones of Zeus-Oromasdes, rest through immeasurable time, so I chose to make this holy place a common consecrated seat of all the gods; so that not only the heroic company of my ancestors, whom you behold before you, might be set up here by my pious devotion, but also that the divine representation of the manifest deities might be consecrated on the holy hill and that this place might likewise not be lacking in witness to my piety.
(53) Therefore, as you see, I have set up these divine images of Zeus-Oromasdes and of Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and of Artagnes-Heracles-Ares, and also of my all-nourishing homeland Commagene; and from one and the same quarry, throned likewise among the deities who hear our prayers, I have consecrated the features of my own form, and have caused the ancient honor of great deities to become the coeval of a new Tyche. Since I thereby, in an upright way, imitated the example of the divine Providence, which as a benevolent helper has so often been seen standing by my side in the struggles of my reign.
(67) Adequate property in land and an inalienable income therefrom have I set aside for the ample provision of sacrifices; an unceasing cult and chosen priests arrayed in such vestments as are proper to the race of the Persians have I inaugurated, and I have dedicated the whole array

and cult in a manner worthy of my fortune and the majesty of the gods. I have decreed the appropriate laws to govern the sacred observances thus established for everlasting, so that all the inhabitants of my realm may offer both the ancient sacrifices, required by age-old custom, and also new festivals in honor of the gods and in my honor. The birthday of my natural body, the sixteenth of Audnaios, and the tenth of Loos, the day of my accession to the throne, I have consecrated to the manifestation of the great deities, who were my guides in a prosperous beginning and have been the source of universal blessings for my whole kingdom. Because of the multitude of offerings and the magnificence of the celebration I have consecrated two additional days, each of them as an annual festival. The population of my empire I have divided up for the purpose of these assemblies, festival gatherings, and sacrifices, and directed them to repair by villages and cities to the nearest sanctuaries, whichever is most conveniently located for the festival observance. Moreover, I have appointed under the same title that, in addition to the observance just named, my birthday on the sixteenth and my accession on the tenth shall be observed every month by the priests.

(105) Now that these regulations have been established, to be observed continually as the pious duty of men of understanding, not only in my honor but also in the blessed hope of their own good fortune, I have, in obedience to the inspiration of the gods, ordered to be inscribed upon sacred, inviolable stelae a holy law, which shall be binding upon all generations of mankind who in the immeasurable course of time, through their special lot in life, shall successively be destined to dwell in this land; they must observe it without violation, knowing that the stern penalty of the deified royal ancestors will pursue equally the impiety occasioned by neglect as that occasioned by folly, and that disregard of the law decreed for the honor of the heroes brings with it inexorable penalties. For the pious it is all a simple matter, but godlessness is followed by backbreaking burdens. This law my voice has proclaimed, but it is the mind of the gods that has given it authority.

(124) The priest who is appointed by me for these gods and heroes, whom I have dedicated at the sacred tomb of my body, on the topmost ridges of the Taurus range, and who shall at a later time hold this office, he, set free from every other duty, shall without let or hindrance and with no excuse for evasion keep watch at this memorial and devote himself to the care and the proper adornment of these sacred images.

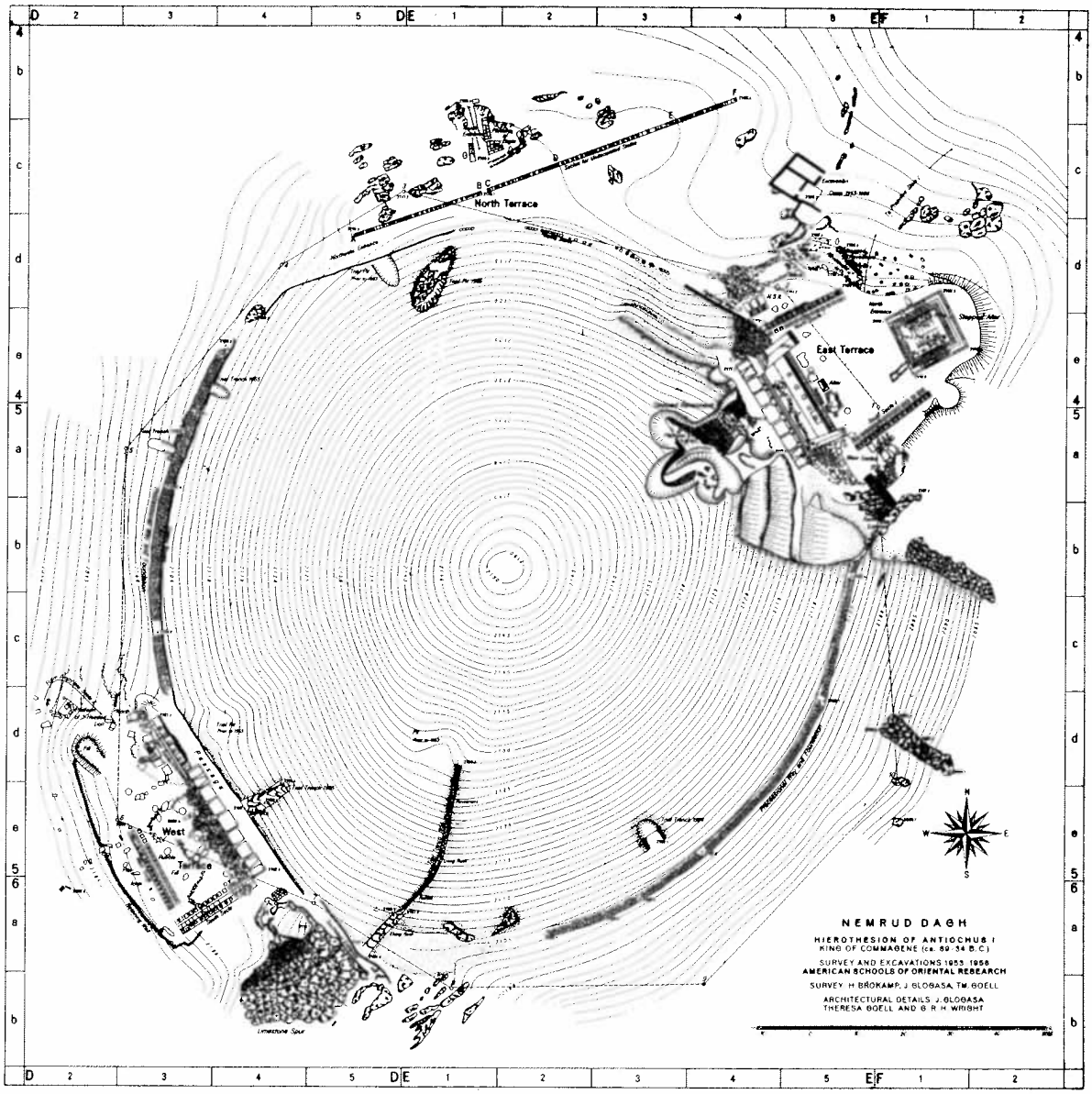
(132) On the birthdays which I have established forever as monthly and annual festivals of the gods and of my own person, throughout the whole year he shall, himself decently garbed in Persian raiment, as my benefaction and the ancestral custom of our race have provided, crown them all with the gold crowns which I have dedicated as the sacred honors due the deified ancestors; and out of the income from the villages, which I have designated for the sacred honors of the heroic race, he shall offer on these altars rich additional offerings of incense and aromatic herbs, and also splendid sacrifices in honor of the gods and in my honor, in worthy wise setting up sacred tables with appropriate foods and filling jars from the winepress with precious drink (that is, wine mixed with water). He shall hospitably welcome the whole of the assembled people, both the native and the foreigners who stream hither, and he shall provide for the common enjoyment of the feast by the assembled multitudes, in that, as is the custom, he shall take for himself a portion, as a gift in honor of the priestly office, and then distribute the rest of my benefaction to the others for their free enjoyment, so that during the holy days everyone may

receive a never failing sustenance and may thus be able to celebrate the festival without running the risk of malicious calumny. The drinking cups, which I have dedicated, are to be used by them as long as they remain in the holy place and participate in the general assembly for the feast.
(161) The group of musicians whom I have chosen for the purpose and those who may later be consecrated, their sons and daughters, and also their descendants shall all learn the same art and be set free from the burden of every other responsibility; and they are to devote themselves to the observances which I have established to the end, and without any evasion are to continue their services as long as the assembly requests it. No one, no king, or ruler, no priest or official shall ever make slaves of these *hierodules*, whom I have, in accordance with the divine will, consecrated to the gods and to my own honors, or their children or the descendants of their children, who shall continue their family to all later time; he shall neither enslave them to himself nor alienate them to anyone else in any way, nor injure one of them, nor deprive him of this ministry; but the priests shall take care of them, and the kings, officials, and all private persons shall stand by them, and the favor of the gods and heroes will be laid up for them as a reward for their piety.
(191) It is equally not permitted for anyone to appropriate or to alienate the villages which I have dedicated to these gods, to sell them or to devote them to some other purpose, or in any way to injure those villages; or to reduce the income from them, which I have dedicated to the gods as an inviolable possession. Nor shall anyone go unpunished who shall devise in his mind against our honor some other scheme of violence or of disparaging or suspending the sacrifices and festal assemblies which I have established. Whoever shall presume to rescind or to injure or guilefully to misinterpret the just tenor of this regulation or the heroic honors which an immortal judgment has sanctioned, him the wrath of the daemons and of all the gods shall pursue, both himself and his descendants, irreconcilably, with every kind of punishment.
(212) A noble example of piety, which it is a matter of sacred duty to offer to gods and ancestors, I have set before the eyes of my children and grandchildren, as through many others, so too through this work; and I believe that they will emulate this fair example by continually increasing the honors appropriate to their line and, like me, in their riper years adding greatly to their personal fame.
(232) For those who do so I pray that all the ancestral gods, from Persia and Macedonia and from the native hearth of Commagene, may continue to be gracious to them in all clemency, and whoever, in the long time to come, takes over this reign as king or dynast, may he, if he observes this law and guards my honor, enjoy, through my intercession, the favor of the deified ancestors and all the gods. But if he, in his folly of mind, undertakes measures contrary to the honor of the gods, may he, even without my curse, suffer the full wrath of the gods."

Translated by Donald H. Sanders

Appendix Two: The Site Plan of Nemrud Dağı

Image from D.H. Sanders (ed.), *Nemrud Dagi. The Hierothesion of Antiochus I. of Commagene. Results of the American Excavations Directed by Theresa B. Goell* (Winona Lake 1996):



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