

*Then Let Him Be a God:
The Origin of the Hellenistic Ruler Cult*

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Abstract

There was a trend in the early fourth century BCE that saw the emergence of the ruler cult. Where a mortal king was assimilated with the divine during their lifetime. Unfortunately, only fragmentary, uncertain, evidence survives for these kings. Yet, we truly begin to see a re-emergence of this idea through Alexander the Great. The journey to divinity started to take form through him, but only took shape under the successors of Alexander and the establishment of their cults.

Resumé

Il y a eu une tendance au début de l'IV^e siècle avant notre ère qui a vu l'émergence du culte du souverain. Quand un roi mortel a été assimilé avec le divin au cours de sa vie. Malheureusement, seulement des fragmentaires incertaines survivent pour ces rois. Pourtant, nous commençons vraiment à voir une réémergence de cette idée par Alexandre le Grand. Le chemin de la divinité a commencé à prendre forme à travers lui, mais n'a pris forme que sous les successeurs d'Alexandre et l'établissement de leurs cultes.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	i
<i>Table of Contents</i>	ii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iii
<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Chapter One: The Alexander Model</i>	7
<i>Chapter Two: The Antigonids</i>	39
<i>Conclusion</i>	58
<i>Appendix</i>	64
<i>Works Cited</i>	66

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Introduction

According to Plutarch, Demetrius, the King of Macedon, entered the city of Athens alongside his wife, both dressed as gods. A song of praise was sung for them as they walked through the streets, while sacrifice was given in their honor. This scene is a classic example of ruler worship that can be seen all the way to the Roman Empire.¹ This thesis will examine the origins of the worship of monarchs as living deities and how this phenomenon unfolded in the early Hellenistic Period. Alexander the Great did not introduce a ruler cult, instead he followed some precedents and promoted his divine origins. Only after his death did the first ruler cults begin to emerge.

Scholars disagree as to the origins of the Greek ruler cult. Those such as Sanders argue that it began in Sicily with Dionysius I,² while Bosworth argues that Phillip II received minor worship under the cult of Zeus.³ However, Badian, argues that worship was only given to Zeus and that "*Zeus Philippios*" referred to the Zeus that Phillip worshipped.⁴ It is therefore hard to pinpoint the exact time the ruler cult began, but I will explore the options of Dionysius I, Lysander and Phillip II and see how these "cults" possibly influenced Alexander. Yet, even with Alexander's ruler cult, there is dispute as to when it began. Tarn believes that three major episodes during Alexander's life (Siwah, *proskynesis* and the Final Decree) demonstrated his

¹ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.442.

² Sanders, Lionel J. "Historia." *Dionysius I of Syracuse and the Origins of the Ruler Cult*. 40.3, 1991.275-87.

³ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. 281.

⁴Badian, E. "Alexander the Great Between Two Thrones and Heaven: Variations of an Old Theme." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003. 246.

clear efforts to establish his divinity.⁵ Badian agrees it is possible that Alexander used his material image to indicate his connection to Zeus Ammon, as well to suggest his own divinity.⁶ Although, scholars such as Bowden and Chaniotis believe Alexander's divinity is only a later construct.⁷ Howe as well argues this point and makes a further indication that Alexander's push for divinity during his life was only a political tool initiated by the *Diaodochi* to further their own agenda, with which I agree.⁸

Lastly, even the motivation of ruler cults that began to appear in the early Hellenistic Period is up for debate. Price and Erskine suggest that Antigonos and the other rulers in this period had such a great political power that it could not be accommodated within the framework of the city. The city lacked a way of conceiving of this in the language of a political nature, therefore it transferred to the divine.⁹ However, scholars like Fishwick call these sorts of cults a "shrewd political calculation", which did not hold any theological or legal nature.¹⁰ I tend to agree with Price and Erskine. Greek *poleis* implemented ruler cult in order to earn the

⁵ Tarn, W. W. "Alexander's Deification." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003.258.

⁶ Badian, E. "Alexander the Great Between Two Thrones and Heaven: Variations of an Old Theme." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003.250-251.

⁷ Bowden, Hugh. "On Kissing And Making Up: Court Protocol And Historiography In Alexander The Great's 'Experiment With Proskynesis.'" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*. 56.2, 2013. 74; Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.433.

⁸ Howe, Timothy. "The Diadochi, Invented Tradition, and Alexander's Expedition to Siwah." *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323-281 BC)*. V. Alonso Troncoso and Edward Anson. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016.62.

⁹ Erskine, Andrew. "Ruler Cult and the Early Hellenistic Cult." *The Age of the Successors and the Creation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms (323-276 B.C.)*. Hans Hauben and Alexander Meeus. Leuven: Peeters, 2014.584; Price, Simon. *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.29-30.

¹⁰ Fishwick, Duncan. *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 1992.2.

king's favor, which would as well allow them to benefit politically. However, we must keep in mind the polytheistic religious context of the Hellenistic world. Ancient peoples accepted the existence of many gods, and there is no reason to doubt that the worship of rulers as divine figures was also encouraged by religious motives.

In this thesis, I intend to trace the origin of the ruler cult by tracking its progress in pre-Hellenistic and the early Hellenistic period. I do this by examining rulers pre-Alexander and then tracking cult development through Alexander. Finally, I use the case study of the Antigonids to show how specific cult reaches its true form. I examine epigraphic, statuary, literary and numismatic evidence. I will ensure a critical reading of primary sources, while exploring the explicit or implied evidence that points towards the origin of divine worship in the early Hellenistic Period.

For the purpose of this thesis, a "true ruler cult" will be based upon these the following components: 1) Divine parentage. Divine parentage can be defined as having one or both parents as divinities. By claiming this decent, a ruler places themselves with an immediate connection to the divine. This connection allows the king to initiate a broader recognition and effort to encourage his own worship. 2) Worshipped as a living god. The king was worshipped as a living god, that is to say that sacrifice, prayers and libation was offered to a ruler before their death. This worshipped placed them on the same level of the gods. 3) The worship of the king was widespread, with his cult found in several cities or even spread over his entire kingdom. Suffice it to say that the honors were not isolated and sporadic, but held regularly and were an accepted norm. 4) The worship of the king was initiated by

subjects. Worship and sacrifice was not only at the insistence of the ruler, but the subjects themselves spread, accepted and fostered the king's worship. This shows that the institution of ruler cults became popular and standard post Alexander.

We must first understand the contemporary religious landscape of the Hellenistic period in order to understand the development of the ruler cult. After Alexander's death, rulers tried to legitimize their rule by claiming succession from Alexander and by deifying him. At the same time, philosophers began to argue that these rulers could claim divine rights and divine kingship during their lifetime.¹¹ In his *Sacred Narrative*, Euhemeros of Messene, a philosopher who lived between the fourth and third century, described an island in the Indian ocean that housed mortal kings who had died and were worshipped as gods on account of their *arête* or virtue.¹² It now became a forgone conclusion that all kings would become divine after their death. Alexander himself was worshipped after his death. Indeed, Alexander's posthumous cult was widely supported by Ptolemy I and Antigonus, as part of their push to legitimize his own rule.¹³ While Alexander failed to introduce a ruler cult, his role was crucial in its development. It was also under Alexander's successors that ruler cult, the worship of living men, emerged.

Ruler cult evolved from a pre-existing relationship found in the *polis*, that of the benefactor. The practice of dedicating honors to individuals who spent large sums of money on temples, raised a series of questions concerning who went

¹¹ Koester, Helmut. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.37.

¹² Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. By Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.432.

¹³ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers"; *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. By Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.433-435.

beyond the ordinary the responsibilities on an ordinary citizen.¹⁴ It was the city that determined how honors were bestowed on individuals. We have several decrees concerning benefactors such as Thersippos, who gained the influence of various Macedonian generals after Alexander's death: "...will crown him on three successive days and offer a euaggelia and soteria and a panagyris at publicexpense."¹⁵ Cults to benefactors in the context of an exceptional citizen continued for the next several centuries, yet evolved as an entirely separate entity to ruler cults.¹⁶

In the Hellenistic period, the ruler cult was established at the "initiative" of the *polis*, rather than that of the monarch. Alexander attempted to impose his divine worship on his followers and several cities near the end of his life, and used local tradition to further his own agenda. Alexander used the oracle at Siwah to claim divine parentage, then used *proskynesis* at Bactra to force his worship on his followers. Yet, when Alexander attempted to force his divinity on the city of Athens, they refused. According to Demochares, the Athenian orator, future rulers such as Demetrius did not openly demand worship, while Alexander was desperate for it.¹⁷ Antigonus Gonatas also allegedly rejected the establishment of his ruler cult, but

¹⁴ Potter, David. "Hellenistic Religion." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.416.

¹⁵ OGIS.4.

¹⁶ Buraselis, Kostas. "Appended Festivals" *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*. J. Rasmus. Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.250; Potter, David. "Hellenistic Religion." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.417-419.

¹⁷ Buraselis, Kostas. "Appended Festivals"; *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*. J. Rasmus. Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.250.

later received divine honors in Athens.¹⁸ The difference is important as Alexander supposedly forced himself on the Athenians, while the cult of Demetrius was introduced through the Athenians in a discreet or unforceful manner.

In chapter one I explore early precedents of the ruler cult and several key events in Alexander's life, specifically his visit to Siwah, *prokynesis* and the Final Decree. I will argue that Alexander flirted with the idea of a ruler cult, but did not have a fully implemented cult during his life. He was only able to elevate his position to the rank of "hero" by claiming divine descent from Zeus Ammon. Only after his death is there surviving evidence of his worship. In chapter two I look more broadly at the implementation of the worship of Alexander after his death. I use the study of the early Antigonids, specifically Antigonus and Demetrius, to show the development of the ruler cult. Antigonus was worshipped during his lifetime, but only in a limited sense, while Demetrius enjoyed a fully formed ruler cult, based upon the criteria previously mentioned. In the conclusion, I will speculate the reasoning behind this phenomenon, which I argue are both tangible and political, and why it was implemented so widely amongst different *poleis*.

¹⁸ Ath. 6.253c. Compared to the later actions of Antigonus Gonatas, see Habicht, Christian. "Divine Honours for King Antigonus Gonatas in Athens", *Scripta Classica Israelica*.15, 1996.131-134.

Chapter 1: The Alexander Model

This chapter will discuss how Alexander promoted the image of his own divinity. Alexander was influenced both by early figures in his life and by precedents set by previous rulers. There was a possible trend in the early fourth century towards ruler cults, including those of Lysander, Dionysus I of Syracuse and even Alexander's father Phillip II.¹⁹ Meanwhile, Alexander's divine ancestry was encouraged by Phillip II, his mother Olympias, and his tutor Aristotle. Thus, Alexander's claims to divinity were not original. Whether Alexander believed in his own divine origins we can never know, however, as will be shown in this chapter, Alexander did promote the image.

This chapter will also argue, however, that Alexander was not worshipped during his lifetime, nor did Alexander establish a ruler cult to himself. His divine claims were instead cautious, as he made use of existing cultural institutions and tested the limits of his followers' willingness to accept his divine claims. Alexander was only worshipped as a god after his death, when his cult was promoted by his successors.

Alexander's divine self-promotion will be examined through analysis of three major events during his lifetime: 1) his visit to the temple of Ammon at Siwah, 2) the introduction of *proskynesis*, and, 3) the issuing of two letters to the Corinthian League, one regarding the Decree of Exiles, and another in which Alexander allegedly asked to be considered divine. Analysis of these episodes requires critical

¹⁹ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1988.280; Sanders, Lionel J. "Dionysius I of Syracuse and the Origins of the Ruler Cult." *Historia*.3, 1991.275-87.

interpretation of the surviving ancient literary sources, which were written long after the events from a perspective of hindsight. These sources assume that Alexander openly promoted his own worship, and thus may introduce an anachronistic picture. Tarn believed that these three episodes demonstrate Alexander's clear efforts to establish his divinity.²⁰ Yet, as I will argue that we cannot confirm from these events that Alexander in fact created a ruler cult during his lifetime. Lastly, I will examine the evidence for depictions of Alexander as a god on coins and in statues.

THE LITERARY TRADITION

The majority of the ancient evidence for this chapter is derived from the works of Arrian of Nicomedia, Diodorus of Sicily, Plutarch of Chaeronea, and Justin the historian. None of these were contemporaries of Alexander, although they had access to contemporary sources that are now lost. Arrian referenced the writings of Nearchus, one of Alexander's naval officers, as a primary source for his *Anabasis of Alexander*.²¹ It is as well suggested that Arrian patched information together by referring to the works of Aristobulus of Cassandreia, a Greek historian, and Ptolemy I. Plutarch used Aristobulus, Ptolemy I, and Cleitarchus, as sources for his *Life of Alexander*. Both Justin and Diodorus cite Cleitarchus as well. Cleitarchus was not contemporary with Alexander, though he used the writings of the soldiers who had served under Alexander.

²⁰ Tarn, W. W. "Alexander's Deification." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003.263-264.

²¹ Arrian. *Anab* .17.6

Unfortunately, the historical accuracy of these sources is highly questionable, especially when dealing with the topic of Alexander's divinity and the establishment of his ruler cult. Indeed, the Diadochi themselves may have invented the entire tradition that Alexander promoted his own divinity in order to support their own claims.²² Hobsbawm presents three criteria for determining if a claim is an "invented tradition". According to Hobsbawm, a tradition that legitimizes existing institutions, and/or promotes socialization (the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior) is likely to be an invented tradition.²³ Alexander's worship appears to fit these criteria, and thus it is not a stretch to imagine that the Diadochi invented the tradition that Alexander was worshipped as a god in order to further their own legitimacy. As Howe puts it:

...we see Alexander building his own mythos, inventing his tradition, and consolidating a political tool. The Diadochi and the new society they created appropriated, expanded and embellished this mythos, in an effort to do much the same thing as Alexander had done- create a system by which they might consolidate their control and legitimate their rule.²⁴

If the Diadochi invented the tradition that Alexander was worshipped during his lifetime, this casts serious doubt on the surviving literary evidence.

Nevertheless, we should not completely disregard the available literary evidence. Arrian, Plutarch, Diodorus, and Justin contain "kernels of truth" in their writings. Each of these authors share significant factual elements that occurred

²² Howe, Timothy. "The Diadochi, Invented Tradition, and Alexander's Expedition to Siwah." *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323-281 BC)*. V. Alonso Troncoso and Edward Anson. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016.59.

²³ Hobsbawm, Eric John. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015.9.

²⁴ Howe, Timothy. "The Diadochi, Invented Tradition, and Alexander's Expedition to Siwah." *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323-281 BC)*. V. Alonso Troncoso and Edward Anson. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2016.62.

during Alexander's life, and this overlap probably represents authentic historical material. Very often the details of their accounts do not coincide. This is where a critical approach must be used, one that digs beneath the surface to find which source probably contains the most plausible details. These sources must be approached with caution and with a critical eye. In general, Quintus Curtius Rufus' account is the least trustworthy and therefore my analysis does not rely heavily on his work. Instead, the subsequent chapter relies more on Diodorus, Arrian and Plutarch. Of these three, Diodorus is likely the most trustworthy, since he wrote approximately 100 years before Plutarch and Arrian. Thus, my analysis will lean on Diodorus when available. However, I must use Plutarch and Arrian frequently since they often provide more details about Alexander's life. Although these sources provide more details, I will remain cautious and adhere to the methodology of the "kernel of truth" during the process of rebuilding the events of Alexander's life.

POSSIBLE PRECEDENTS FOR DIVINE KINGSHIP

In various other sources, we find several famous examples of Greeks raising living men to a divine status. These individuals were Dionysius I of Syracuse, Lysander of Sparta, and Phillip II of Macedon. These figures began a trend of experimentation with deification in the early fourth century that eventually led to the widespread acceptance of ruler cults. There is only fragmentary evidence to support the claim that Dionysius I was considered divine during his lifetime.²⁵ Dio Chrysostom (*Disc.* 37.2) claims that Dionysius was portrayed as Dionysus: "As for the others, they all were broken up, except of course the statue of Dionysius, the

²⁵ Sanders, Lionel J. "Dionysius I of Syracuse and the Origins of the Ruler Cult." *Historia*.40.3, 1991.275-87.

elder of the pair portrayed wearing the attributes of Dionysus". According to Athenaeus (6.251f), he could have acquired the idea of a ruler cult from a Persian flatterer. The idea of a ruler cult spread to other areas of the Greek world and was picked up by Lysander and Phillip. This information may have been spread through the travel of *theoria* to and from Delphi.²⁶

After the battle of Aegospotami, Lysander was said to have been honored as a god by the people of Samos. The Samians erected altars and gave him sacrifice, while a festival was named in his honor. Plutarch indicates that the Lysandreia festival and Lysandrian cult was established at Samos during his lifetime: "And when Antimachus of Colophon and a certain Niceratus of Heracleia competed with one another at the Lysandreia in poems celebrating his achievements, [Lysander] awarded the crown to Niceratus, and Antimachus, in vexation, suppressed his poem".²⁷ We cannot argue that Lysander was worshipped as a god during his lifetime just because the poems of Antimachus of Colophon and Niceratus of Heracleia were dedicated in his honor. However, epigraphic evidence concerning Lysander suggests that he was.²⁸ It is clear that Lysander was elevated above the rank of a mortal due to his deeds in battle, but we cannot confirm if it was during his lifetime,²⁹ as unfortunately our sources cannot be trusted.

Plutarch received his information from the historian Duris of Samos, whom he describes as a poor historian: "At any rate, Duris does not usually keep his

²⁶ Malkin, Irad. *A Small Greek World: Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011.115.

²⁷ Plut., *Lys.* 18.4.

²⁸ Habicht, Christian. *Gottmenschen und griechische Städte*. Beck: Munich, 1970.243-244.

²⁹ Habicht, Christian. *Gottmenschen und griechische Städte*. Beck: Munich, 1970.243-244.

narrative based upon the truth, even in the absence of material that affects him directly.”³⁰ But even if the games were established in Lysander’s name, this does not necessarily imply that Lysander was worshipped as divine. Games in Ancient Greece were normally held in dedication to the gods. Pan Hellenic games dedicated to Zeus were held every four years, with the Olympia the most famous example. Yet, other games were dedicated to men as well, specifically funeral games that celebrated the lives and accomplishments of the deceased.³¹ The Spartan general Brasidas was honored with annual games after his death in 422 BCE,³² only seventeen years before the battle of Aegospotami and the creation of the Lysandreia. The Lysandreia was, however, not a funeral game or even a new festival, but rather a pre-existing celebration of Hera that was re-dedicated to Lysander in his honor.³³ Because we cannot confirm that the Samians began the worship of Lysander through the Lysandreia before his death, we cannot argue for Lysander as a living deity.

Phillip II was probably deified, as Isocrates advised him that a ruler should be assimilated with the divine.³⁴ He urged Philip to wage a new war against Persia, and claimed that once the Persian Empire was conquered, there would be nothing left for him, but to become divine.³⁵ Philip was associated with the cult *Zeus Philippios*, but it is debated whether Phillip received libation at this cult during his lifetime. Bosworth argues that while the cult was mainly directed at Zeus, while

³⁰ Plut., *Per.* 28.

³¹ Roller, Lynn E. "Funeral Games For Historical Persons". *Stadion*. 7, 1981.1-18.

³² Thuc. 4.78.5.2.

³³ Walbank, Frank William. *The Hellenistic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge U, 2008.213.

³⁴ Isoc., *Ep.* 9.72.

³⁵ Isoc., *Ep.* 3.5.

Phillip received minor worship as well.³⁶ Badian, however, argues that worship was only given to Zeus and that “*Zeus Philippios*” referred to the Zeus that Phillip worshipped.³⁷ Unfortunately. There is no material evidence to settle the matter.

Arrian (*Anab.* 1.19.11) claims that the Ephesians introduced a statue of Philip in the temple of Artemis, but even if true, this does not necessarily confirm that Philip was worshipped during his lifetime. Diodorus (*Hist.* 16.92.5) states that on the day Philip was murdered, the same his daughter was to be married, a statue of Philip was placed next to statues of the twelve Olympians gods in the wedding procession. This appears to have been some sort of divine claim, yet Philip’s murder would have pre-empted any official announcement of his divine status.³⁸ This episode remains a tantalizing clue as to Philip’s own possible divine self-promotion.

Thus, the evidence for ruler cult before Alexander is limited and ambiguous. It is not possible to show that rulers were worshipped as gods during their own lifetime, but it is clear they were worshipped after their death. If this was the case, it makes a valid argument that supports a slight influence on Alexander’s own ambitions to be worshipped as the first living man. Not only were these figures influential, but those in his early life as well.

³⁶ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.281.

³⁷ Badian, E. "Alexander the Great Between Two Thrones and Heaven: Variations of an Old Theme." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003. 46.

³⁸ Fredricksmeyer, Ernst. "Alexander's Religion and Divinity." *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*. Joseph Roisman. Leiden: Brill, 2003.255.

ALEXANDER'S ALLEGED DIVINE LINEAGE

Alexander's parents both claimed heroic lineage: Philip from Heracles, Olympias from Achilles.³⁹ Isocrates, as previously mentioned, urged Philip to wage a war against Persia, and claimed that once completed, there would be nothing left for him but to become divine. After Philip's assassination, Alexander completed the conquest of Persia, possibly with the words of Isocrates in his mind. Alexander's direct influences, however, were his tutor Aristotle and his mother Olympias.⁴⁰

Aristotle directed Alexander's education and made him focus on the *Iliad's* martial valor. Aristotle's *Hymn to Virtue* suggest Aristotle's interest in the *Illiad*, which played well in to Alexander's heroic ancestry to Heracles and Achilles:

Stout Heracles, and Leda's twins, did choose/Strength-draining
deeds, to spread abroad thy name:/Smit with the love of thee/
Aias and Achilleus went smilingly. /Down to Death's portal, crowned
with deathless fame.⁴¹

We have one of Alexander's indirect influences supporting the idea that a mortal can break through to divinity through his actions, while a direct influence supports heroic valor on a grander scale. Alexander put great deal of importance on his martial valor and heroic lineage. Moreover, Alexander allegedly visited the tomb of Achilles, clearly as an effort to celebrate his divine ancestry:

Furthermore, the gravestone of Achilles he anointed with oil, ran a race by it with his companions, naked, as is the custom, and then crowned it with garlands, pronouncing the hero happy in having, while he lived, a faithful friend, and after death, a great herald of

³⁹ Plut., *Alex.* 3.2.

⁴⁰ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.281; Fredricksmeyer, Ernst A. "Alexander, Zeus Ammon, and the Conquest of Asia." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*.121, 1991.200.

⁴¹ Arist., *Virtue*. 10-14.

his fame.⁴²

With this, we can say Alexander's paid respect to Achilles, and maybe even his lineage. Another event that supports the pride for his heroic lineage occurred during his visit to *Ilium*, when he made a sacrifice to Priam in order to remove the sacrilege of his ancestors.⁴³

Adding to his so-called heroic lineage was Olympias' claim that Alexander was not Phillip's son, but the son of Zeus. She claimed that she dreamt that a thunderbolt struck her womb before her wedding night,⁴⁴ while Phillip claimed to see a snake next to his wife in bed, which he thought was a god.⁴⁵ The thunderbolt was a well-known symbol of Zeus, while a serpent was one of the symbols of Dionysus. These two accounts of the story would change which deity "fathered" Alexander, which is relevant in regards to his future association with Zeus Ammon. Based on the accounts presented by his parents, Alexander, thus was not only instructed on his heroic lineage, but that he was also the direct descendant of a god. Alexander, as the son of a god, would not have been considered divine. He would have been considered similar to a hero in a Homeric Hymn,⁴⁶ and therefore would not receive worship until after his death, when a hero cult could be created.

After the death of Philip, Alexander began to pursue the idea of his divine birth, coupled with the knowledge of his heroic ancestry:

Alexander longed to equal the fame of Perseus and Heracles;

⁴² Plut., *Alex.* 14.8.

⁴³ Arrian. *Anab.* 1.11.

⁴⁴ Justin., *Epit.* 11.

⁴⁵ Plut., *Alex.* 2.6.

⁴⁶ Collins, Andrew. "Callisthenes on Olympias and Alexander's Divine Birth." *Ancient History Bulletin*.4.26.3, 2012.1.

the blood of both flowed in his veins, and just as legend traced their decent from Zeus, so he too, had a feeling that in some way he descended from Ammon.⁴⁷

If Arrian can be trusted, we can see that Alexander took the idea of his ancestry and his divine birth quite seriously. During his early life, these figures were a constant influence in his belief of his divine birth.⁴⁸ Alexander would refer to these early life experiences and place them into context during the events at the oracle of Ammon, the feast of Bactra and the letters to the Corinthian league.

THE VOYAGE TO SIWAH

Alexander further promoted his own divine status when he travelled to Egypt and visited the temple of Ammon at Siwah, who was worshipped by the Greeks from the time of Pindar (*Pythian*. 4.29.) When Alexander visited Siwah, a priest of Ammon called him the son of a god. Alexander used this event to begin shaping the idea of his own divine origins.⁴⁹ Alexander's first step towards divinity involved the use of a religious institution to confirm a rumor, possibly invented by Alexander, which was already in circulation. The entire Siwah episode is sprinkled with inconsistencies throughout the authors, therefore it is quite difficult to discern the truth through the narrative. We can, however, conclude that Alexander visited Siwah, received an oracle from the priests concerning what he wanted to know, and later founded Alexandria.

⁴⁷ Arrian. *Anab.* 3.4.

⁴⁸ Plut., *Alex.* 3.3-4.

⁴⁹ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge England: Cambridge UP, 1988.283; Robinson, C. A., Jr. "Alexander's Deification." *The American Journal of Philology*. 64.3, 1943.288; Wilcken, Ulrich. *Alexander Zug in Die Oase Siwa*. Berlin: Verlag Der Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 1928.822.

Ancient authors disagree why Alexander went to consult the oracle at Siwah. Arrian suggests that Alexander wished to consult the oracle due to his heroic ancestors, since he believed that Heracles himself had visited the temple,⁵⁰ while Justin argues that Alexander consulted the oracle to learn whether his ancestors were divine or mortal.⁵¹ There is, however, no evidence to support the contention that Alexander's ancestors had ever visited the temple, except the testimony of Callisthenes, the historian of Alexander, who wrote an exaggerated history. One such example was the speech of Alexander to the Thessalians:⁵²

On this occasion, he made a very long speech to the Thessalians and the other Greeks, and when he saw that they encouraged him with shouts to lead them against the Barbarians, he shifted his lance into his left hand, and with his right appealed to the gods, as Callisthenes tells us, praying them, if he was really sprung from Zeus, to defend and strengthen the Greeks.⁵³

It is possible that Alexander wanted to use Callisthenes' account to present a specific image of himself to his audience. It would only make sense for Alexander, due to the influences in his early life, to be portrayed in the role of an epic hero, similar to that of the Iliad.⁵⁴ However, it is difficult to accept this story as evidence of Alexander's self-promotion, but more of a later exaggeration of events.

Alexander was intrigued with the idea of his divine parentage, while at the same time used it as a tool to set himself up to be named as the son of Zeus at the temple of Ammon. Alexander possibly used this event to gain political power in

⁵⁰ Arrian. *Anab.* 3.145.

⁵¹ Justin., *Epit.* 11.11.

⁵² Pownall, Frances. "Callisthenes in Africa: The Historian's Role at Siwah and in the Proskynesis Controversy." *Classical Association of South Africa*. 5, 2014.59.

⁵³ Plut., *Alex.* 33.1.

⁵⁴ Pownall, Frances. "Callisthenes in Africa: The Historian's Role at Siwah and in the Proskynesis Controversy." *Classical Association of South Africa*. 5, 2014.60.

Egypt, yet there is no direct ancient evidence to support this argument.⁵⁵ Regardless of Alexander's real purpose, both sources inform us that Alexander journeyed to the temple of Ammon. Yet the details of the journey to Siwah, according to the sources, cannot be trusted. For example, Plutarch and Callisthenes' account of the journey to Siwah is marked with miraculous events and signs of divine intervention:

For, to begin with, much rain from heaven and persistent showers removed all fear of thirst, quenched the dryness of the sand, so that it became moist and compact, and made the air purer and good to breathe. Again, when the marks for the guides became confused, and the travelers were separated and wandered about in ignorance of the route, ravens appeared and assumed direction of their march, flying swiftly on in front of them when they followed, and waiting for them when they marched slowly and lagged behind. Moreover, what was most astonishing of all, Callisthenes tells us that the birds by their cries called back those who straggled away in the night, and cawed until they had set them in the track of the march.⁵⁶

Indeed, Alexander probably travelled through the desert during the rainy season, and even then, his likely route would have followed the coast before bending toward Siwah rather than a straight march through the desert.⁵⁷ Arrian states that Alexander's entourage was led by serpents rather than birds,⁵⁸ undoubtedly a romanticized reference to his childhood.

According to Justin and Plutarch, Alexander first met with the priests outside of the temple of Ammon. During their greeting, the priest's accidental mistranslation

⁵⁵ Robinson, C. A., Jr. "Alexander's Deification." *The American Journal of Philology*. 64.3, 1943.286.

⁵⁶ Plut., *Alex*. 31.1.

⁵⁷ Dio 7.49; Pownall, Frances. "Callisthenes in Africa: The Historian's Role at Siwah and in the Proskynesis Controversy." *Classical Association of South Africa*. 5, 2014.61. Siwah is an oasis in the middle of the desert, where the supply of water is limited. It is possible for birds to have been seen traveling towards the temple and be interpreted as a divine intervention: Stoneman, Richard. "Son of Ammon." *Alexander the Great*. London: Routledge, 1997.49.

⁵⁸ Arrian. *Anab*. 3.2.146.

of Greek gave Alexander an excuse to be named as the son of Zeus Ammon.⁵⁹

Fredricksmeyer argues that Alexander was greeted as the son of Amon-Re because of his rule over Egypt as pharaoh.⁶⁰ Alexander immediately thought of Ammon as meaning Zeus Ammon, rather than Amon-Re and therefore used this miscommunication to claim he was the son of Zeus Ammon. However, since there is no evidence that Alexander was crowned as pharaoh before his journey, it is unlikely that he was greeted as the son of Ammon-Ra.⁶¹ Thus, the more likely scenario is that the priest mistranslated Greek, which gave Alexander the ability to confirm his mother was speaking the truth of his divine birth. One key question we must ask: who was there to record this conversation? In this case the greeting was made in the exterior of the temple, where Alexander was with his entourage, however, these next conversations are difficult to confirm as it is not known if others entered the private chambers with Alexander.

Alexander further asked the priests to confirm his parentage. The most important of his questions was if all his father's murderers had been punished for their crimes.⁶² The reply of the priest confirms that they were in fact punished, but goes a step further and confirms that Philip was not his true father, but that Alexander had a divine birth (Dio 17. 51.4): "Silence! There is no mortal who can plot against the one who begot him. All the murderers of Philip, however, have been

⁵⁹ Justin., *Epit.* 11.11; Plut., *Alex.* 27.5. The cause of this mistake stems from the similarity between the phrase "O Paidion" and "O Paidios", the first can be translated as "O my son", while the second meaning "O son of Zeus" (Plut., *Alex.* 27.8).

⁶⁰ Fredricksmeyer, Ernst A. "Alexander, Zeus Ammon, and the Conquest of Asia." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*. 121, 1991.199.

⁶¹ Badian, E. "Alexander the Great Between Two Thrones and Heaven: Variations of an Old Theme." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003.246.

⁶² Plut., *Alex.* 27.5-6.

punished". Alexander would have bribed the priests, which is the more likely scenario. Justin specifically states this conversation was pre-determined (Justin., *Epit.* 11.11): "...[Alexander] instructed the priests, by messengers whom he sent before him, what answers he wished to receive". Arrian, who in his discussion of the incident, states that Alexander received the answer he was looking for, which neither proves nor disproves priestly collusion.⁶³ According to Plutarch, it was not possible for Alexander to send messengers ahead to Siwah due to the terrible conditions in the Libyan Desert:

The journey thither was long, full of toils and hardships, and had two perils. One is the dearth of water, which leaves the traveler destitute of it for many days; the other arises when a fierce south wind smites men travelling in sand of boundless depth.⁶⁴

Plutarch paints this terrible picture of Alexander's journey, an almost glamorized one. He portrayed Alexander as facing terrible odds to meet with the priests who would name him the son of a god, but which of these scenarios is the most accurate? If Alexander received the answer he desired, then the priests could have hoped a more generous offering to the temple would be made, which was in fact the case: "Then Alexander made splendid offerings to the god and gave his priests large gifts of money,"⁶⁵ perhaps in order to set up an alliance with the priestly class of Egypt.⁶⁶ Alexander took the opportunity to bribe the priests at Siwah with splendid offerings also to support in his divine parentage.

⁶³ Arrian. *Anab.* 3.148.

⁶⁴ Plut., *Alex.* 2.26.10.

⁶⁵ Plut., *Alex.* 2.27.7.

⁶⁶ Robinson, C. A., Jr. "Alexander's Deification." *The American Journal of Philology.* 64.3, 1943.286.

We can, however, not trust the details of these conversations because they took place in private. Alexander was the only one out of the party to enter the shrine (Dio 17.51): "When **Alexander** was conducted by the priests into the temple and had regarded the god for a while..." The accounts of this visit vary widely and efforts to find a "kernel of truth" within them are probably futile.⁶⁷ If anything, Arrian is probably the most correct when he states that Alexander only heard what he wished to hear (*Anab.* 4.148), while Diodorus explicitly says he was named the son of Ammon.⁶⁸ All that can be said with certainty is that after the visit to Siwah, Alexander founded Alexandria and he appears to have received word from the priest—or he claimed to have received this information—that he was descended from Ammon Zeus. Yet claiming divine descent does not imply that Alexander sought divine honors during his lifetime. Yet, an action such as *proskynesis* could support this.

THE INTRODUCTION OF PROSKYNESIS?

According to Arrian, in 327 BCE Alexander introduced the practice of *proskynesis* among his followers. The practice was introduced, we are told, in the context of a discussion of Alexander's divinity,⁶⁹ and if this is accurate, would point to Alexander promoting his own divine image and worship. *Proskynesis*, according to Herodotus, was the Persian greeting of paying homage to a Persian of higher status by throwing one's self on the ground,⁷⁰ yet elsewhere in Egypt, where one passed by another, they lowered their hands to their knee in a sort of bowing

⁶⁷ Stoneman, Richard. "Son of Ammon." *Alexander the Great*. London: Routledge, 1997.49.

⁶⁸ Dio 17.51.

⁶⁹ Arrian. *Anab.* 4.10-12.

⁷⁰ Hdt. 1.134.

gesture.⁷¹ The most accurate portrayal of the gesture to a Persian King is shown in a pair of reliefs found in Darius' audience hall at Persepolis, where the person "bends forward in a bow, lifting his face towards the king and putting his hand to his lips in a gesture of respect to the king"⁷², which the Greeks interpreted as worship. The act of *proskynesis* for the Macedonians was only performed for the worship of a deity, rather than a monarch.⁷³ A Greek would bow towards an altar, or an area of worship, in order to pay their respects to the gods.⁷⁴ Thus, if Alexander introduced the practice of *proskynesis* among the Macedonians, this would be clear evidence that he was pushing the idea of his ruler cult, which several modern scholars agree upon.⁷⁵ However, the whole *proskynesis* debate is ambiguous and the implementation of divine worship by Alexander was more likely a later construct. This lends to my argument that Alexander did not implement his own ruler cult, and it was only under his successors that Alexander's ruler cult formed. Yet in order to verify this, we must examine the *proskynesis* episode, but now with a more critical view.

According to Arrian, Alexander had the philosopher Anaxarchus float the idea of Alexander's divinity during a feast at Bactra. At Alexander's urging,

⁷¹ Hdt. 2.80.

⁷² Bowden, Hugh. "On Kissing And Making Up: Court Protocol And Historiography In Alexander The Great's 'Experiment With Proskynesis.'" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*. 56.2, 2013.59.

⁷³ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.284; Green, Peter. *Alexander of Macedon: 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography*. Berkeley: University of California, 1991.373.

⁷⁴ Diog.Lives.37-38; Theo.Char.16.5.

⁷⁵ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.284; Green, Peter. *Alexander of Macedon: 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography*. Berkeley: University of California, 1991.373.

Anaxarchus present two arguments for Alexander's divinity. First, his deeds compared to those of Dionysus and Heracles. Second, he expressed the need for a solely Macedonian deity. According to Arrian and Plutarch, Anaxarchus debated with Callisthenes, while Curtius makes Cleon of Sicily the opposing speaker. Diodorus makes no detailed mention of the event, but rather states Alexander adopted Persian dress.⁷⁶ Therefore, I must look at the events through the other vulgate sources. We can assume Arrian followed a specific tradition, which is also found in Plutarch, that contrasts two philosophers against one another. In this case, we have Anaxarchus arguing with Callisthenes. When we examine the debate that is presented, these arguments could not have taken place during Alexander's life, which suggests that this element is part of a created tradition.

Anaxarchus' first argument concerns the deeds of Alexander during his conquests of the East, and how these deeds surpassed the exploits of his supposed ancestors Heracles, and the god Dionysus.

From the Persian Gulf our expedition will sail round into Libya as far as the Pillars of Heracles. From the pillars all the interior of Libya becomes ours, and so the whole of Asia will belong to us, and the limits of our empire, in that direction, will be those, which God has made also the limits of the earth.⁷⁷

Heracles was considered a mortal hero during his life, but was given divine rights upon death, while Dionysus was considered an immortal god in his own right. This passage refers to the travels of Dionysus in the East and how Alexander surpassed Dionysus by going further than the god had. If Alexander surpassed the deeds of an immortal divinity, he could be worshipped as a god during his life.

⁷⁶ Dio 17.77.

⁷⁷ Arrian. *Anab.* 5.26.

The second argument was that to worship a local deity, instead of those that originated outside of Macedonia. Dionysus and Heracles, though important religious figures, had no connection to Macedonia: "Dionysus belonged to Thebes, and Heracles to Argos...there would be greater propriety in the Macedonians paying divine honors to their own king".⁷⁸ This argument would aid in the creation of a religious unity in Alexander's empire, while allowing Alexander to complete the vision of his mortal divinity. Because Alexander surpassed the deeds of the god Dionysus, and of Heracles, a hero who was given divine worship on death. Alexander used this intellectual approach to probe his Greek followers concerning his own divinity. He used these logical arguments to attempt and sway his followers with this idea of his worship, but in the end, it was resisted.

The main figure of resistance to Alexander's claim to divinity was Callisthenes. He opposed this proposal, as he believed Alexander was only the son of Zeus, and therefore did not deserve to be worshipped as a deity. Callisthenes' opposition was successful, as the Macedonians agreed with his sentiment.⁷⁹ However, it is difficult for us to trust this dialogue ever occurred. We must first look at the historical context of sources, specifically Plutarch and Arrian, while as well inspecting the personality of Callisthenes that has been preserved to us.

First let us look at the argument presented by Callisthenes in opposition to Alexander's divinity:

Anaxarchus, I openly declare that there is no honor which Alexander is unworthy to receive, provided that it is consistent with his being human; but men have made distinctions between

⁷⁸ Arrian. *Anab.* 4.22.

⁷⁹ Arrian. *Anab.* 4.10.

those honors which are due to men, and those due to gods...⁸⁰

Callisthenes argues that there is a clear distinction of sacrifice between that of a hero and that of a god. The issue with this argument is that the cult practice during this period does not coincide with a differentiation between the sacrifice to a god and the sacrifice to a hero.⁸¹ Worshipers during the early Hellenistic period would perform a sacrifice and eat in the same manner to both hero and god cults, thus showing that the argument that Callisthenes presents in opposition to Alexander is a later construct.⁸² If we indeed look further in to this matter, the use of the term “the divinity” within Arrian only begins to appear in Greek inscriptions circa 200 BCE,⁸³ which further suggests that the arguments presented by Callisthenes were created well after the events at Bactra. Callisthenes, especially in the depiction by Curtius, is presented as a philosopher being killed by a tyrant, much in the same manner as the philosopher Seneca was forced to commit suicide under the command of the Emperor Nero in 65 AD.⁸⁴ By overlaying the character of Seneca onto Callisthenes, Curtius and Arrian play into a major debate in the early Roman Empire, which was the granting of divine honors to the emperor of Rome. Therefore, historically we

⁸⁰ Arrian. *Anab.* 4.22.

⁸¹ G. Ekroth, *The sacrificial rituals of Greek hero-cults in the Archaic to the early Hellenistic periods, Hellenistic periods.* Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique, 2002.341.

⁸² Bowden, Hugh. "On Kissing And Making Up: Court Protocol And Historiography In Alexander The Great's 'Experiment With Proskynesis.'" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*.56.2, 2013.74.

⁸³ Bowden, Hugh. "On Kissing And Making Up: Court Protocol And Historiography In Alexander The Great's 'Experiment With Proskynesis.'" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*.56.2, 2013.75.

⁸⁴ Bowden, Hugh. "On Kissing And Making Up: Court Protocol And Historiography In Alexander The Great's 'Experiment With Proskynesis.'" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*.56.2, 2013.75.

cannot accept the debate over *proskynesis* between Alexander and Callisthenes at Bactra as fact.

One other issue that has caught my attention is the behavior of Callisthenes during symposiums, which would place this confrontation in a new light. Callisthenes' internal character was mentioned several times throughout the works of Plutarch, specifically, his inappropriate behavior and refusal of invitations to symposiums: "and when he did go into company, by his gravity and silence made it appear that he disapproved or disliked what was going on."⁸⁵ A more appropriate example of his actions during a symposium was when he was asked to make a speech supporting the Macedonians, then a speech to critic them. For his speech in support of the Macedonians, Callisthenes was praised, while his critic granted him hatred from the crowd.⁸⁶ We can therefore conclude that Callisthenes was an awkward and terrible guest at symposiums. His character plays perfectly in to the debate at Alexander's symposium, where the issue of *proskynesis* was presented.⁸⁷

Arrian and Plutarch build up to the eventual rejection of *proskynesis* by Callisthenes. Let us assume that this introduction was not in fact an attempt at claiming divinity, but a game at a symposium. Symposium games were quite common, ranging from Kottabos to intellectual debates, yet would someone with the character of Callisthenes feasibly not participate in this? It has been suggested by Bowden that Alexander asked his friends to participate in *proskynesis* to emphasize

⁸⁵ Plut., *Alex.* 5.53.

⁸⁶ Plut., *Alex.* 5.53.

⁸⁷ Bowden, Hugh. "On Kissing And Making Up: Court Protocol And Historiography In Alexander The Great's 'Experiment With Proskynesis.'" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies.* 56.2, 2013.68.

the distance between them, and then to reward them with a gesture of “closeness”, with specific reference to the kiss.⁸⁸ This “performance”, was the Macedonians playing the game as Persian characters in a private event with no indication of Persian presence.

Another possible interpretation of this episode derives from Plutarch’s hint that the *proskynesis* was offered not to Alexander but rather to the hearth in the center of the symposium:

Chares of Mitylene says that once at a banquet Alexander, after drinking, handed the cup to one of his friends, and he, on receiving it, rose up so as to face the household shrine, and when he had drunk, first made obeisance to Alexander, then kissed him, and then resumed his place upon the couch.⁸⁹

It was a normal occurrence for a Greek to pay respects to the goddess Hestia, who presided over the hearth and household. The building in which the symposium was located was most likely the Prytaneum, or the central hearth of Bactra. In my interpretation, this would make sense for a person to give their first respects to the Prytaneum and then to the king. The problem with this suggestion is that in Arrian’s account of the story, the cup is only passed to those who agreed to perform the *proskynesis*, and there is no mention of the hearth.⁹⁰ The hearth in Plutarch’s version above is only brief, yet could play a special role. The very mention of the hearth could very well mean nothing, or could shift the entire events at Bactra all together,

⁸⁸ Bowden, Hugh. "On Kissing And Making Up: Court Protocol And Historiography In Alexander The Great's 'Experiment With Proskynesis.'" *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*. 56.2, 2013.71.

⁸⁹ Plut., *Alex*. 54.3.

⁹⁰ Arrian. *Anab*. 4.12.3.

but it is not possible to confirm this as there is no true significance.⁹¹ Plutarch's particular detail regarding the hearth, coupled with the ambiguous wording could very well be where the tradition of *proskynesis* rose from. However, while a possible interpretation of this information, I do not agree with as only Plutarch mentions this detail in a larger context. Whether this was a game at the symposium, a made-up story altogether or the worship towards the Prytanum, rather than Alexander, is not clear. If this were a game, Callisthenes refusal to play fits perfectly with his character as a poor guest at a symposium. Whether this was in fact a game, or a true attempt at declaring his own divinity, Alexander dropped the subject of prostration: "[Alexander] told the Macedonians accordingly to forget the matter; the need to prostrate themselves would not in future arise."⁹²

However, Callisthenes "opposition" only delayed Alexander's bid to divinity. According to Arrian, Plutarch, and Justin, another instance of prostration arose. This time, when Alexander proposed *proskynesis*, the Macedonians agreed to perform it.⁹³ Callisthenes was the only one out of all the Macedonians in attendance, to refuse the giving *proskynesis* to Alexander. We have the majority of Greek followers agreeing to perform this "divine" favor towards Alexander, thus giving him what the Greeks interpreted as divine honors. This would be the case if the sources were interpreted literally, however, as mentioned the episode of *proskynesis* is unclear.

Ancient sources do not agree on whether or not Alexander succeeded in his implementation of *proskynesis*. Arrian has one account of *proskynesis* failing, while

⁹¹ Bosworth.*Commentary*.2.89.

⁹² Arrian. *Anab.* 4.11.

⁹³ Arrian. *Anab.* 4.11; Justin., *Epit.* 12.7; Plut., *Alex.* 5.54.

the next has every Macedonian except Callisthenes perform it. Plutarch supports this latter account:

...and when [Callisthenes] had drunk, first made obeisance to Alexander...As all the guests were doing this in turn, Callisthenes took the cup, the king not paying attention, but conversing with Hephaestion, and after he had drunk went towards the king to kiss him; Demetrius, surnamed Pheido, cried: "O King, do not accept his kiss, for he alone has not done thee obeisance."⁹⁴

On the other hand, Justin's account shows that several Macedonians opposed it (Justin., *Epit.* 12.7): "Among those who refused to obey, the most resolute was Callisthenes...The custom of saluting their king was however retained by the Macedonians, adoration being set aside". What is clear from the ancient sources is that Alexander did in fact attempt to introduce *proskynesis* to the Macedonians, yet our trust in the sources must be minimal due to the anachronisms present. If we trust the vulgate sources to their word, Alexander did this knowing Greeks would eventually give him divine honors due to the confirmation of his divine parentage and due to the great deeds he performed that surpassed those of Dionysus.⁹⁵ Alexander then thus used Anaxarchus and the Persian tradition of prostration as a means to pursue his divinity, but when the process was not quick enough, he expedited it through the Final Decree.

We now know that the story of *proskynesis* is full of inconsistencies and the whole scene could very well have been a later construction. However, I accept that Alexander did in fact broach the subject of his followers performing an act of obeisance. Even so, it is not clear that Alexander demanded this behavior to

⁹⁴ Plut., *Alex.* 5.54.

⁹⁵ Arrian. *Anab.* 4.10.225.

promote his own worship as a living god, rather than as a simple act of submission. Again, there is simply not enough evidence from this episode to support the commonly held view that Alexander instituted his own ruler cult.

THE FINAL DECREE

After his visit to Bactra, Alexander allegedly sent letters to Corinth in which he issued two decrees. In the so-called Decree of Exiles, he ordered: "While the Olympic Games were being celebrated, Alexander had it proclaimed in Olympia that all exiles should return to their cities, except those who had been charged with sacrilege or murder..."⁹⁶ Although Alexander was the leader of the Corinthian league, he was not allowed to issue this decree, as it interfered with the internal affairs of the Greek city-states.⁹⁷ A second was then reportedly sent, which contained the so-called Final Decree. This decree asked the Corinthian League to recognize Alexander's divinity. Scholars dispute the existence of this second letter. Early scholars tended to believe that a second letter was in fact sent to the league,⁹⁸ while more recent scholars do not find enough evidence to support the existence of this second letter.⁹⁹ This question is critical, since the existence of a second letter containing the Final Decree would be the strongest direct evidence that Alexander promoted his own divinity and, possibly, his own worship.

⁹⁶ Dio 17.109.

⁹⁷ Tarn, W. W. "Alexander's Deification." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Edited by Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003.263.

⁹⁸ Green, Peter. *Alexander of Macedon: 356-323 B.C. A Historical Biography*. Berkeley: University of California, 1991.452.; Tarn, W. W. "Alexander's Deification." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003.264.

⁹⁹ Bosworth, A. B. "The Divinity of Alexander." *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.289; Balsdon, J.P.V.D. "The "Divinity" of Alexander." *Alexander the Great: The Main Problems*. G. T. Griffith. Cambridge: Heffer, 1966.385.

The main evidence for the Final Decree is Arrian (*Anab.* 7.13): “Successive delegation from Greece also presented themselves, and the delegates, wearing ceremonial wreaths, solemnly approached Alexander and placed golden chaplets on his head, as if their coming were a ritual in honor of a god.” Yet Arrian’s account does not coincide with those of Diodorus, Justin and Plutarch, who all say that only regular embassies visited Alexander.¹⁰⁰ Diodorus does report embassies visited Alexander for religious reasons (Dio 17.113): “Alexander drew up a list of the embassies and arranged a schedule of those to whom first he would give his reply and then the others in sequence. First he heard those who came on matters concerning religion...”. Diodorus does not mention that the embassies approached Alexander as a god. Therefore, we cannot use our vulgate sources as evidence for this decree, but other sources point to the proposal of Alexander’s divinity.

Dinarchus, an Athenian logographer and contemporary of Alexander, confirms that there was a controversy over the issuing of divine honors to Alexander:

At one time he made a proposal forbidding anyone to believe in any but the accepted gods and at another said that the people must not question the grant of divine honors to Alexander.¹⁰¹

We can date this speech to approximately 324BCE, but we cannot confirm if the divine honors were granted, nor if people were already in the process of worshipping him. Athenaeus claims that the Final Decree was proposed by Demades rather than by Alexander himself (Ath. 6.251.B): “I wonder, for my part, how the Athenians could have let [Epicrates of Athens] go without bringing him to trial,

¹⁰⁰ Dio 17; Justin., *Epit.* 12.8; Plut., *Alex.* 10.72.

¹⁰¹ Din., *Demo.* 1.94; Hyprides., *Demost.* 5.7. supports this.

seeing that they fined Demades ten talents for proposing a decree naming Alexander a god..." If Alexander proposed his Final Decree, then there would have been no need for a decree from Demades. Yet, we have a small piece of evidence that supports the decree, which comes in the form of a response from the Spartans: "If Alexander wishes to be a god, let him be a god."¹⁰² This line is quite significant as it implies that Alexander wanted to be worshiped as a god and had requested to do so. As with all of Alexander's sources, this source is not a contemporary one, as it was written in the second to third century CE. Therefore, we cannot fully put our faith in to this one line. Concerning the evidence presented, we cannot confirm if Alexander issued this Final Decree, but there is a possibility Alexander was worshipped just before his death. Therefore, we can assume Alexander pushed his divinity through his own institutional power, but it was not fully implemented. Instead, we should look to another source of evidence, material evidence, to track his journey to divinity.

NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE

We cannot say for certain that Alexander issued an official decree to his empire, but he could have used coinage to promote belief in his divinity. Coinage was used as a medium for widespread propaganda and Alexander used the images on his coins in order to portray a specific message. As ruler, Alexander was the sole source of coinage for his kingdom, where a gem sculptor named Pyrgoteles was allegedly chosen in order to best represent his image.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ael, *VH*. 11.19.

¹⁰³ Pollitt, J. J. *Art in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.25.

When Alexander first ascended the throne in Macedonia, he issued “Eagle Tetradrachms” similar to that of his father, Phillip II. These coins had the same weight scale of Phillip’s coinage at approximately 14.45g,¹⁰⁴ however there are differences in the symbolism. The image of the eagle does not match any of Phillip’s coinage on record, however on the obverse, a head of Zeus appears on his tetradrachms attributed to the Pella mint.¹⁰⁵ What is interesting to note, is that the symbol of the eagle does appear before the coinage of Phillip, specifically silver coins of Amyntas III (393-370 BCE) and Perdiccas III (364-360 BCE).¹⁰⁶ We can attain from Alexander’s choice of imagery and coinage weight, that at the start of his reign, Alexander was in no way original. An interesting question to pose from this information: did Alexander’s interest in Zeus Ammon as well stem from the practice of Macedonian kings? This is a difficult question to answer based solely on coinage and how much the integration of a classical Zeus melded with the form of Zeus Ammon. What we know from the evolution of Alexander coinage is that only after the conquest of Persia did he begin to use more heroic symbolism.

In 325 BCE, Alexander minted silver coins in Alexandria depicting himself as Heracles wearing the lion headdress.¹⁰⁷ This matches with the earlier discussion of Alexander’s claim to descent from Hercules. In doing so, Alexander portrays himself more than a man, yet it is difficult to say if he portrays himself as the son of Zeus, or

¹⁰⁴ Dahmen, Karsten. *The Legend of Alexander the Great on Greek and Roman Coins*. New York: Routledge, 2007.33.

¹⁰⁵ Dahmen, Karsten. *The Legend of Alexander the Great on Greek and Roman Coins*. New York: Routledge, 2007.34.

¹⁰⁶ Dahmen, Karsten. *The Legend of Alexander the Great on Greek and Roman Coins*. New York: Routledge, 2007.34.

¹⁰⁷ Pollitt, J. J. *Art in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.26; See Image 1.

solely as a hero due to his great conquests. As we have seen previously in this paper, Alexander had an affinity for his ancestry, especially to that of Heracles and Achilles. By representing himself as Heracles, he matched his conquests to that of his ancestor. Another interesting angle we can inquire about when thinking of this coinage is are the events that presented themselves at Siwah. If Alexander believed he was in fact the son of a god, similar to that of Heracles, it is possible for him to use this image to represent his divine parentage. Yet, what is important is that these coins do not show Alexander as god. Rather, only posthumous coinage of Alexander depicts him wearing the horns of Zeus Ammon: these coins were issued by Lysimachos between 306 to 281 BCE.¹⁰⁸ In other words, numismatic evidence does not support the contention that Alexander promoted his own ruler cult.

The obvious implication of this image is that Alexander was portrayed as a divinity, however, with there is a disappointing aspect to this find. This coinage was issued posthumously by a successor of Alexander, whom represented him as a divinity. Thus, there is only the confirmation of the worship of Alexander after his death.¹⁰⁹

ALEXANDER AS ZEUS BY APELLES

We cannot confirm Alexander's worship through the issuing of coinage, however, coinage is not a specific indicator to Alexander's divine status. Alexander was only referenced as the son of Zeus in coinage, but there is evidence supporting Alexander's use of artistic representations to support his divinity, notably

¹⁰⁸ Pollitt, J. J. *Art in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.26; See Image 2.

¹⁰⁹ Pollitt, J. J. *Art in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.26.

“Alexander as Zeus” by Apelles.¹¹⁰ Pliny the Elder states that the famous artist Apelles painted a picture of Alexander as Zeus within the Temple of Artemis of Ephesus. The painting is said to depict Alexander seated on a throne wielding the lightning of Zeus. It was placed within the temple of Artemis at Ephesus according to Pliny the Elder: “Apelles... painted Alexander the Great holding lightening in the temple of Diana at Ephesus for twenty talents of gold”.¹¹¹ Badian argues that it is possible that Alexander used this image in order to indicate his connection to Zeus Ammon, as well to suggest his own divinity.¹¹² This receives support from the testimony of Strabo (citing Artemidorus of Ephesus, an author writing c. 100 BCE), who reports that the people of Ephesus referred to Alexander as a god:

Now Alexander, Artemidorus adds, promised the Ephesians to pay all expenses, both past and future, on condition that he should have the credit therefore on the inscription, but they were unwilling, just as they would have been far more unwilling to acquire glory by sacrilege and spoliation of the temple. And Artemidorus praises the Ephesians who said to [Alexander] that it was inappropriate for a god to dedicate offerings to gods.¹¹³

One may question where Artemidorus got this information. Moreover, while the people of Ephesus in his day may have believed it, this does not mean these words were spoken in Alexander’s time. Lastly, even if we accept that the story refers to an authentic conversation between Alexander and the people of Ephesus, it nevertheless does not say much about Alexander’s own efforts to promote his own ruler cult. Rather, the anecdote shows only that the people of Ephesus flattered

¹¹⁰ See Image 3, a possible later Roman copy.

¹¹¹ Pliny, *Nat.* 35.92.

¹¹² Badian, E. "Alexander the Great Between Two Thrones and Heaven: Variations of an Old Theme." *Alexander the Great: A Reader*. Ian Worthington. London: Routledge, 2003.250-251.

¹¹³ Strab. 14.1.22.

Alexander by calling him a god. The painting, if historical, does suggest that Alexander associated himself with Zeus, but that is as far as we can go. This last phrase gives us pause when reading: "And Artemidorus praises the Ephesians who said to [Alexander] that it was inappropriate for a god to dedicate offerings to gods."¹¹⁴ Artemidorus gives us a first century BCE view of Alexander's interaction with the Ephesians, which can be very much skewed by the successors representation of Alexander. It is impossible to say if the refusal of Alexander was in order to remain polite or if the Ephesians truly believed Alexander to be a god. What we do have from this passage is partial evidence to the acknowledgement of Alexander's divine status. However, it is hard to accept this notice as authentic. At the point when Artemidorus is writing, Alexander was worshiped posthumously as a divinity, especially regarding the goddess Fortune, and it would only be understandable to reference Alexander as a god in the story that was presented. Then we must ask, why did the Ephesians not want Alexander to pay for their temple? The idea of being independent of an external power, such as Alexander, is a reasonable guess.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there is little evidence to support that Alexander explicitly claimed to be divine and introduced his own worship. Alexander's divine ancestry was encouraged by the early figures in his life such as his father Phillip II, his mother Olympias, and his tutor Aristotle. Alexander's actual belief in this divinity, as presented by these individuals, can be put in to question. We cannot clearly see if

¹¹⁴ Strab. 14.1.22.

Alexander himself thought that he was divine, or used this idea to further his agenda. What must be focused on, rather, was his promotion of divinity and worship during his lifetime. It was those close to him that first presented the idea of his divinity.

Philip claimed descent from the hero Heracles, while Olympias claimed descent from Achilles.¹¹⁵ Aristotle influenced Alexander's education and made him focus on these heroes in order for him to emulate their martial valor. Olympias, in addition, claimed Alexander was not the son of Phillip II, but the son of Zeus.¹¹⁶ Alexander, thus not only was raised to know of his heroic lineage, he also that he was the direct descendant of a god. Alexander used this information at a young age, which allowed him to have the idea of his superiority to others in his mind. The mindset placed in Alexander at an early age is quite plausible. There is an acceptable amount of evidence that shows Alexander acknowledged his heroic ancestry and divine parentage, yet we cannot prove Alexander issued a blanket decree to the Corinthian League to declare him a god.

In fact, several key episodes during Alexander's reign that have been cited as evidence of the promotion of Alexander's divinity, such as his visit to Siwah and his alleged demand of *proskynesis* by his companions. Put simply, these episodes, when examined closely, do not fully support the assertion that Alexander claimed to be divine or that he demanded to be worshipped as a living god. Instead it can only suggest a minor dabbling in the divine and indeed no ruler cult for Alexander existed during his lifetime. Rather, Alexander's worship probably began only after

¹¹⁵ Plut., *Alex.* 3.2.

¹¹⁶ Plut., *Alex.* 3.2.

his death. It is likely that Alexander's successors manipulated the historical tradition, in effect creating the notion that Alexander was worshipped during his lifetime, in order to further their own divine worship.

Chapter 2: The Antigonids

Antigonus crowned himself and his son Demetrius as kings after the battle of Salamis in 306 BCE.¹¹⁷ Soon after, they were granted divine honors both at Skepsis and Athens. Antigonus was a Macedonian nobleman and general under Alexander. After Alexander's death, he claimed most of the territories in Anatolia and Western Asia Minor, which allowed him to form the Antigonid Dynasty. His aim was to reunite Alexander's former empire by becoming the sole successor, while the other *Diadochi* vied for personal power.¹¹⁸ Because of his conquest of Greece, a coalition of the successors rose to face Antigonus, which ended with the battle of Ipsus in 301 BCE.¹¹⁹ Antigonus was killed, while his son Demetrius continued with what was left of the Antigonid kingdom.

This chapter will track the development of the Hellenistic ruler cult under the first two Antigonid kings. The reign of Antigonus I and Demetrius provides clear evidence, both literary and epigraphic, for the implementation of ruler cult, which involved the worship of a living king as a god. Both Antigonus and Demetrius were granted sacrifice, and libation by several *poleis*. However, as I will demonstrate, it was only with the worship of Demetrius that the ruler cult emerges to its fullest form.

¹¹⁷ Meeus, Alexander. "Confusing Aim and Result? Hindsight and the Disintegration of Alexander the Great's Empire." *Hindsight in Greek and Roman History*. Anton Powell and Emily Baragwanath. Swansea: Classical of Wales, 2013.130.

¹¹⁸ Meeus, Alexander. "Confusing Aim and Result? Hindsight and the Disintegration of Alexander the Great's Empire." *Hindsight in Greek and Roman History*. Anton Powell and Emily Baragwanath. Swansea: Classical of Wales, 2013.114.

¹¹⁹ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ubiquitous War." *War in the Hellenistic World: A Social and Cultural History*. Chaniotis. Malden: Oxford, 2005.5-6.

After Alexander's death, Hellenistic rulers, including Antigonos and Demetrius, tried to legitimize their rule by claiming succession from Alexander.¹²⁰ At the same time, philosophers such as Euhemeros of Messene began to argue that these rulers could claim divine rights and divine kingship.¹²¹ In his *Sacred Narrative*, he described an island in the Indian ocean that housed mortal kings who had died and were worshipped as gods on account of their *arête* or virtue.¹²² Although Alexander did not initiate a ruler cult during his own lifetime, he left a legacy that influenced subsequent Hellenistic rulers. Where Alexander failed, his successors, Antigonos and Demetrius, implemented their own ruler cults during their lifetime. Soon after Demetrius, the "true ruler cult" arose in many cities across the Hellenistic world for almost every other known monarch. Though, there was significant progress made through the cult of Antigonos.¹²³

THE ANCIENT SOURCES

The main source for this chapter is Plutarch's account of the life of Demetrius. However, we must again be cautious with the information this text provides as Demetrius is the focus of the *Life of Demetrius*. Thus, we can conclude that Antigonos is mentioned much as an afterthought when discussing his divine honors, and only usually in unison with his son Demetrius. In addition, as mentioned in the first chapter, Plutarch wrote in the first to second century AD. He used Duros

¹²⁰ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 2003.433-437.

¹²¹ Koester, Helmut. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. 37.

¹²² Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. By Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.432.

¹²³ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. By Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.436.

of Samos as his main source for his *Life of Demetrius*, in addition to unknown secondary sources.¹²⁴ Duros, the eventual tyrant of Samos, was best known for his histories of Macedonia and Greece until the death of Lysimachus and the *Annals of Samos*. Even Plutarch recognized that Duros was an untrustworthy source.¹²⁵ Therefore, we are forced to reconstruct the literary evidence of Antigonos and Demetrius through a later author, who used an unreliable source.

Fortunately, two important inscriptions provide clear evidence of the ruler cult of Antigonos I and Demetrius, and will supplement our literary evidence: 1) The Letter of Antigonos to Skepsis and 2) Skepsis honors king Antigonos. These two inscriptions will be the key to understanding the reason behind the appointment of divine status to Antigonos and Demetrius, as well as confirmation of their divinity.¹²⁶ Lastly, I will also examine numismatic evidence relevant to the divine claims of Antigonos and Demetrius.

ANTIGONUS I MONOPHTHALMOS

In 311 BCE, Antigonos negotiated a peace treaty with Kassandros, Lysimachos and Ptolemy. In this negotiation, Antigonos ensured that Greek freedom and autonomy would be maintained and protected. For the Greek pols, autonomy was an essential aspect in their freedom. Antigonos backed up this promise by expelling foreign garrisons from the cities. The result was that the relevant Greek cities drew closer to each other and forged closer ties to the Antigonid dynasty.

¹²⁴ Sweet, Waldo E. "Sources of Plutarch's Demetrius." *The Classical Weekly*.44.12, 1951.177-81.

¹²⁵ Plut., *Alcibiades*. 32; *Demosthenes*., 23; *Eumenes*., 1.

¹²⁶ Erskine, Andrew. "Ruler Cult and the Early Hellenistic Cult." *The Age of the Successors and the Creation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms* (323-276 B.C.). Hans Hauben and Alexander Meeus. Leuven: Peeters, 2014.579.

After the negotiations with the other Diodochi, Antigonos issued a general letter to the Greek cities. A copy of the letter was discovered in 1899 at Skepsis, inscribed on a marble *stele*. It was discovered with a second *stele* that contained the response of the people of Skepsis, which will be discussed shortly. Antgonus' letter reads: "We have written into the treaty that all Greeks are to swear to aid each other in preserving their freedom and autonomy, thinking that while we lived in all human expectation these would be protected..."¹²⁷ Antigonos' letter mentions his negotiations with the Diodochi, but does not make divine claims. However, by championing their freedom, Antigonos earned the gratitude of the demos of Skepsis, who in their response (recorded on the second *stele*) granted Antigonos divine honors: "...what he has done concerning the peace and autonomy of the Greeks. Be it resolved by the demos: since Antigonos has been responsible for great goods for the city and for the rest of the Greeks, to praise Antigonos and to rejoice with him over what has been done..."¹²⁸ The term here is ambiguous, as "to praise" could mean to celebrate, rather than to worship as a god. However, based on previous evidence, the demos of Skepsis had already issued a divine decree to Antigonos. A cult was already in place with annual sacrifice, *agon* and the wearing of garlands.¹²⁹ With this new decree, an altar and a statue was as well incorporated:

ἀποδιδούς ὧν προείληφεν ἀγαθῶν· ἀφορίσαι αὐτῶι τέμενος
καὶ βωμὸν ποῆσαι καὶ ἄγαλμα στῆσαι ὡς κάλλιστον· τὴν δὲ θυσίαν
κα[ὶ] τὸν ἀγῶνα καὶ τὴν στεφανηφορίαν καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν παν[ήγ]υριν
γίνεσθαι αὐτῶι καθ' ἕκαστον ἔτ[ος, κα]θάπερ καὶ πρότερο[ν]

¹²⁷ OGIS, 5-6.

¹²⁸ OGIS, 6. 1.8-17.

¹²⁹ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. By Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.436.

συνετέλειτο.¹³⁰

We have a clear indication that an altar and a statue were made for Antigonus, suggesting that he was to worship as an entity above that of a mortal man. Logically, we can then use this to favor the use of “praise” in a divine fashion. Thus, we have clear evidence of a ruler cult dedicated to a living Hellenistic monarch, however one that was instituted by the populace of one of his subject cities.¹³¹

In addition, Antigonus and Demetrius were given divine honors in Athens. In 307 BCE, Antigonus and Demetrius overthrew Demetrius of Phaleron, who had been appointed by Cassander to govern Athens. Once freed of their governor and with their autonomy restored, the Athenians declared both Antigonus and Demetrius as their saviors and champions, and legislated a cult in their honor. This is discussed by Plutarch:

They also decreed that the figures of Demetrius and Antigonus should be woven into the sacred robe, along with those of the gods; The sacred robe, for instance, in which they had decreed that the figures of Demetrius and Antigonus should be woven along with those of Zeus and Athena.¹³²

The placement of these men alongside of the gods, indicates that their statue was above the status of mortal. Another aspect that adds to their worship was the creation of golden statues in their likeness. In Athens: “A vote was put in to place to create gold statues of Antigonus and Demetrius in a chariot near those of Harmodios and Aristogeiton, to crown them both at a cost of 200 talents and to set up an altar

¹³⁰ OGIS, 6. 1.20-26.

¹³¹ Erskine, Andrew. "Ruler Cult and the Early Hellenistic Cult." *The Age of the Successors and the Creation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms* (323-276 B.C.). Hans Hauben and Alexander Meeus. Leuven: Peeters, 2014.584.

¹³² Plut., *Demetr.* 10.12.

and call it the altar of the saviors.”¹³³ Harmodios and Aristogeiton assassinated the Tyrant Hipparchus, which led to a restoration of Democracy in Athens in 514 BCE. By placing the statues of these two men next to Harmodios and Aristogeiton, we can argue that both Antigonus and Demetrius were honored for saving Athenian democracy.¹³⁴ These points are crucial in understanding the evolution of the ruler cult based on a political nature, by both restoring and maintaining Greek autonomy. Both at Skepsis and Athens, we see an incorporation of these men in to the religious landscape based on their political actions, which can help to explain the evolution of the Hellenistic ruler cult. Therefore, with a divine decree before and a divine decree after the decree of 311, we can make a stronger argument for “praise” to mean divine worship.

The initiation of Antigonus’ ruler cult is an important aspect in developing Hellenistic ruler cults with the seamless transition to the worship of a Hellenistic man as a god. Scholars such as Price suggest that Antigonus and the other rulers in this period had such a great political power that it could not be accommodated within the framework of the city. The city lacked a way of conceiving of this in the language of a political nature, therefore it transferred to the divine.¹³⁵ However, Fishwick, calls these sorts of cults a “shrewd political calculation”, which did not hold any theological or legal nature.¹³⁶ I tend to agree with Price in this situation, as

¹³³ Plut., *Demetr.* 8.13.

¹³⁴ Simpson, R. H. "Antigonus the One-Eyed and the Greeks." *Historia: Zeitschrift Fur Alte Geschichte* 8.H.4, 1959.391.

¹³⁵ Price, Simon. *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.29-30.

¹³⁶ Fishwick, Duncan. *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 1992.2.

it is clear that these men were given a divine status in Skepsis and at Athens due to their political accomplishments, rather than used by them for gain. However, the full implementation of the ruler cult during the reign of Demetrius began to see a shift towards a more political calculation, rather than solely religious.

NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE I: THE COINAGE OF ANTIGONUS

Coins issued by Antigonos suggest much about the divine claims. Four standard coins were issued by Antigonos during his rule, 1) Gold coinage with images previously used by Alexander, 2) Silver tetradrachm with the head of Heracles 3) Silver Pan head tetradrachms and 4) Poseidon head tetradrachm.¹³⁷ Unfortunately, due to the images used, there is no evidence to suggest that Antigonos used coinage iconography to promote his divine image. This is not surprising, as it was not Antigonos who promoted his ruler cult, but rather the people in select cities. We must as well take in to consideration that divine iconography on coinage only started to appear after Antigonos' death. With Alexander, coinage with his divine image only appears ca. 306-281 BCE and was issued by Lysimachos, while divine imagery on the coinage of Demetrius, which held the attribute of small horns on his head, date from ca. 290/289 BCE.¹³⁸

It was not in the mind of Antigonos to issue coinage iconography with his own divine image. This is because of a two-prong reasoning. The first is that the earliest evidence of these images only appeared after his death. Secondly, it was not Antigonos that was proliferating his cult, but the people of Skepsis and Athens.

¹³⁷ Ekaterini, Panagopoulou. *Antigonos Gonatas: Coinage, Money and The Economy*. University College London, 2000.10-13.

¹³⁸ Pollitt, J. J. *Art in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.31.

Therefore, if Antigonos wished to have his divine image on coinage, it would have been through the respective mints of those cities and he would have had to set the precedent. It is only with the reign of Demetrius that we reach the full transition to Hellenistic ruler cult, as we will discuss next.

DEMETRIUS THE BESIEGER

The first verified example of a festival to a living Greek appeared during the second half of Demetrius's rule. This festival, mentioned by Plutarch, was originally a festival for Dionysus, yet was adapted and re-named to celebrate both Demetrius and Dionysus.¹³⁹ Fragmentary evidence indicates that the festival was "Dionysia in the city of Demetrieia", which hints at the simultaneous honoring of Dionysus and Demetrius, a god and a divine king.¹⁴⁰ We cannot confirm that this was a joint festival, as our sources do not survive in Athens after Demetrius lost control of the city in 288 BCE. It is easier to assume that because his name is placed along with Dionysus in the title of the festival that it implies worship. This connection of mortal and divine calls to mind Alexander's connection to Ammon, as discussed in chapter one.¹⁴¹

Festivals dedicated to Demetrius not only took place in Athens, but in several cities in Euboea as well. The Demetrieia appeared in Euboea between 294-288 BCE under the rule of Demetrius. Four cities, Oreos, Chalcis, Eretria and Carystus, issued

¹³⁹ Plut., *Demetr.* 12.2.

¹⁴⁰ Buraselis, Kostas. "Appended Festivals." *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*. J. Rasmus. Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.248; Dinsmoor, William Bell. *The Archons of Athens in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1931.7-8.

¹⁴¹ Buraselis, Kostas. "Appended Festivals." *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*. J. Rasmus. Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.249.

a decree, that arranged the worship of Demetrius.¹⁴² The decree declared that festivals be celebrated in each of the cities named “Dionysia and Demetrieia”. Our most abundant evidence is found preserved in the regulation of the *agones*, or competitive events.¹⁴³ Throughout the festivals, these events were coordinated in series with existing local contests and the further put the obligation of artists of Dionysus to be involved as well. These events, which give us a significant view in the festival, show us a larger picture of the worship of Demetrius. The “Dionysia and Demetrieia” festivals were not celebrated at the same time, but worked in conjunction with one another. The original festival of the Dionysia would move from city to city on the pre-set dates through the year, while the Demetriea would follow in reverse rotation on those dates.¹⁴⁴ Thus the festival honoring Demetrius was held separately from those honoring Dionysus, which allowed offerings to be made specifically for him. Buraselis argues that under Demetrius and the implementation of these festivals, there is either an open or camouflaged instigation of these festivals in the Euboean league.¹⁴⁵ The league was “forced” to reorganized their already existing festival system to form a rotation in unison with four new Demetrieia and the worship of Demetrius.¹⁴⁶ Buraselis pushes the point too far. It was the Athenians who took the initiative to grant Demetrius divine honors, as a

¹⁴² IG. 11.9.207.

¹⁴³ Buraselis, Kostas. "Appended Festivals." *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*. J. Rasmus. Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.249.

¹⁴⁴ Habicht, Christian. *Gottmenschentum und griechische Städte*. Münche:Auflage, 1970.76-78.

¹⁴⁵ Buraselis, Kostas. "Appended Festivals." *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*. J. Rasmus. Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.250.

¹⁴⁶ Buraselis, Kostas. "Appended Festivals." *Greek and Roman Festivals: Content, Meaning, and Practice*. J. Rasmus. Brandt and Jon W. Iddeng. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012.250.

way for them to win his favor and protection. According to Athenaeus, the Athenian orator Demochares said that Demetrius did not openly demand that the Athenians worship him, whereas Alexander was desperate for it.¹⁴⁷ Demetrius did not impose his cult on anyone, but rather it was the local communities themselves who spontaneously began to grant increasingly divine honors to the king.

Regardless of whether Demetrius imposed his cult on Athens or whether the Athenians spontaneously instituted his worship, the surviving epigraphic evidence suggests that the cult was instrumental to the *polis*. It allowed for the establishment of a mutual symbiotic relationship with the “divine” monarch. Demetrius offered Athens protection and retribution against their enemies, while the monarch received divine honors, in anticipation of future benefactions. As Chaniotis argues, by having the honor “come from the *polis*”, Demetrius removed pressure from himself and allowed for a mutual exchange to occur on a grander scale.¹⁴⁸ This exchange can be seen in the *Hymn to Demetrius*.

THE HYMN TO DEMETRIUS

According to Plutarch, when Demetrius returned to Athens between 291-290 BCE with his wife Lanassa, a hymn was sung for them as though the city were greeting a god:

How the greatest and dearest of the gods are present in our city! For the circumstances have brought together Demeter and Demetrios; she comes to celebrate the solemn mysteries of the Kore, while he is here full of joy, as befits the god, fair and

¹⁴⁷ Ath. 6.252f. Compared to the later actions of Antigonos Gonatas, see Habicht, Christian. “Divine Honours for King Antigonos Gonatas in Athens” *Scripta Classica Israelica*.15, 1996.131-134.

¹⁴⁸ Chaniotis, Angelos. “The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers.” *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.439-440.

laughing. His appearance is solemn, his friends all around him and he in their midst, as though they were stars and he the sun. Hail boy of the most powerful god Poseidon and Aphrodite! For other gods are either far away, or they do not have ears, or they do not exist, or do not take any notice of us, but you we can see present here, not made of wood or stone, but real. So we pray to you: first make peace, dearest; for you have the power. And then, the Sphinx that rules not only over Thebes but over the whole of Greece, the Aitolian sphinx sitting on a rock like the ancient one, who seizes and carries away all our people, and I cannot fight against her — for it is an Aitolian custom to seize the property of neighbors and now even what is afar; most of all punish her your-self; if not, find an Oedipus who will either hurl down that sphinx from the rocks or reduce her to ashes.¹⁴⁹

Here, Plutarch presents us allegedly with a word for word version of the Hymn to Demetrius. We must be careful as this is the only source that contains this hymn, and we cannot confirm Plutarch's sources. This is a type of hymn known as a *prosodion*, or a processional hymn, which became popular during the Hellenistic period.¹⁵⁰ Because the mysteries were being celebrated, we find Demeter and Demetrius present at the same time.¹⁵¹ Women and children lined up on the side of the streets, while priests and priestesses waited on both sides of the gate to greet him and his wife.¹⁵² It is unknown whether the whole population of Athens, including the priestly class, participated in his hymn, or only the priests. By knowing who participated, we would be able to gauge the overall acceptance of Demetrius

¹⁴⁹ Plut., *Demetr.* 12.

¹⁵⁰ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.161.

¹⁵¹ Mikalson, Jon D. *Religion in Hellenistic Athens*. Berkeley: U of California, 1998.89-90.

¹⁵² Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.168.

worship. We must take in to consideration that Demetrius could have paid a chorus to perform this hymn for his procession. What we do know from this hymn is that the city participated in his arrival.

It is possible that the performance of this hymn was a response to the Aetolians, who snubbed Demetrius when they did not invite his kingdom to compete in the Pythian games. According to this argument, Demetrius created his own set of games in Athens several weeks later, which coincided with the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries.¹⁵³ Plutarch offers another explanation:

For someone else, outdoing Stratocles in servility, proposed that whenever Demetrius visited the city he should be received with the hospitable honors paid to Demeter and Dionysus, and that to the citizen who surpassed all others in the splendor and costliness of his reception, a sum of money should be granted from the public treasury for a dedicatory offering.¹⁵⁴

Plutarch insinuates that that the Athenians granted Demetrius these divine rights whenever he entered the city. However, the first lines of the hymn specifically identify Demetrius and the goddess Demeter present together. This helps us to further connect Plutarch's claim of Demetrius modeling himself on Dionysus.

Demetrius, was already closely associated with the god, but the image of his procession in Athens matches that of the arrival of the god Dionysus. The celebration of the annual arrival of Dionysus occurred in the spring where his voyage from the sea and coincides with the celebration his marriage with the Basilinna.¹⁵⁵ Both Demetrius and the god journeyed from the sea, and like the god, he was also recently married. We have a clear connection once again to the worship

¹⁵³ Venning, Timothy. *A Chronology of Ancient Greece*. Pen & Sword Military, 2015.202.

¹⁵⁴ Plut., *Demetr.* 12.1.

¹⁵⁵ Deubner, Ludwig. *Attische Feste*. S.I: Wissenschaftliche Buchegesellschaft, 1966.135-137.

of Dionysus and the worship of Demetrius using the traditions already set in place. However, we cannot confirm that this entry to the city was the action of receiving a god. I argue that the procession was in fact modeled on receiving one. Perhaps a later example can be used cautiously to shed light on this case:

For he was met, not only by all the magistrates and the knights, but by all the citizens with their children and wives. And when the two processions met, the warmth of the welcome given by the populace to the Romans, and still more to Attalus, could not have been exceeded. At his entrance into the city by the gate Dipylum the priests and priestesses lined the street on both sides: all the temples were then thrown open; victims were placed ready at all the altars; and the king was requested to offer sacrifice. Finally, they voted him such high honours as they had never without great hesitation voted to any of their former benefactors: for, in addition to other compliments, they named a tribe after Attalus, and classed him among their eponymous heroes.¹⁵⁶

With this almost identical welcoming, we can have a further confidence in the accuracy of Plutarch's account, even to the point where he used Polybius as a source to coincide with the welcoming of Demetrius. Both Demetrius and Attalus received essentially the same welcome in Athens. Although we have no real mention of the priests asking Demetrius to make sacrifice, and there is as well no mention of temples being opened in Athens on his arrival, which often represented a divine presence in the city.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, Demetrius was offered prayers, incense and

¹⁵⁶ Polyb. 16.25.3-5.

¹⁵⁷ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.168.

libation.¹⁵⁸ The main difference between these two greetings are as such: 1) a hymn was sung for Demetrius and 2) sacrifice was offered to Demetrius. This, if true, implies his worship in a similar vein to the worship of Dionysus. We must however be cautious as the meaning of this welcoming may have changed over time, as seen with Attalus, yet I still argue that Demetrius was received as a god in Athens, as both his parents were considered divine.

The hymn refers to Demetrius as the *pais* of Poseidon and Aphrodite. The word can mean “the son of”, but in some contexts, it can refer to a worshiper or servant, which would turn the wording of this hymn in to something completely different.¹⁵⁹ However, the use of the word in contemporary religious texts strongly suggest the meaning “son of” rather than “servant.” For example, the first line of the Erythraean hymn for Seleukos reads: “Praise with hymns during the libations Seleukos, the son of the dark-haired Apollo, whom the player of the golden lyre himself begot.”¹⁶⁰ This contemporary hymn, uses the word *pais*, from here we can argue for Demetrius’s hymn to mean “son”. This connects the belief that Demetrius was considered the son of two divinities.¹⁶¹ If so, then Demetrius was worshipped

¹⁵⁸ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.166.

¹⁵⁹ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.184.

¹⁶⁰ IE.205.B.

¹⁶¹ Ath. 6.253c.

as the son of these two deities.¹⁶² The claim of divine parentage recalls Alexander's assertions. Demetrius' choice of Poseidon as divine parent is worth discussing. He perhaps associated with the god of the sea to accentuate his own naval exploits. Claiming descent from Poseidon after a great naval victory was a common theme during the Hellenistic period, as a king's divine "father" was never known for certain.¹⁶³ This claim made no difference as others such as Alexander claimed descent from Zeus Ammon and Seleukos later claimed descent from Apollo. Consider as well that Theseus, the legendary founder of Athens, was Poseidon's son. Demetrius may have used the mythological king as a model for his own divine parentage.¹⁶⁴ Having a king in their city who was the son of Poseidon would have resonated with Athenians and helped to accept the presence of Demetrius as king.¹⁶⁵

It is assumed that Demetrius promoted Aphrodite as his mother due to his beauty and success in love, but in normal circumstances, Hellenistic rulers only had a divine father, but not a divine mother.¹⁶⁶ Even to place Aphrodite as the mother of Poseidon's child is quite odd, as no known romantic connection existed between

¹⁶² According to Plutarch (Plut., Demetr. 2,) there were rumors that Antigonos was not his real father.

¹⁶³ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.184.

¹⁶⁴ Plut., *Thes.* 6.

¹⁶⁵ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.185.

¹⁶⁶ Marasco, Gabriele. "Democare Di Leuconoe: *Politica E Cultura*" *Democare di Leuconoe: politica e cultura in Atene fra IV e III sec.* Giorgio Pasquali. Firenze: Università Degli Studi Di Firenze, 1984.202-203.

them found in the existing mythology. Demetrius' naval victory at Cyprus probably provides the connection, as the island was associated with Aphrodite.¹⁶⁷ These associations, especially that Poseidon can be seen through surviving material evidence.

NUMISMATIC EVIDENCE II: THE COINAGE OF DEMETRIUS

Demetrius initially issued coins similar to those of Alexander, which included the images of Zeus and Heracles.¹⁶⁸ These images played into his claim of his heroic ancestry, rather than divine parentage.¹⁶⁹ However, Demetrius went further, also issuing coinage depicting himself with divine attributes, something Alexander never did. Tyre was the only city to mint coins for Demetrius. The imagery on the coinage of Demetrius held the attribute of small horns on his head that date from ca. 290/289 BCE,¹⁷⁰ well into reign.¹⁷¹ The horns are identical to the horns of Poseidon, alluding to his claim of divine parentage.¹⁷² The king placed Poseidon on the obverse more than any other god on his coinage. He also minted coins with

¹⁶⁷ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.185.

¹⁶⁸ Brenk, Frederick E. "Heroic Anti-Heroes. Ruler Cult and Divine Assimilations in Plutarch's "Lives" of Demetrios and Antonius." *Relighting the Souls: Studies in Plutarch, in Greek Literature, Religion, and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998.68.

¹⁶⁹ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers." *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*. By Andrew Erskine. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.434.

¹⁷⁰ Pollitt, J. J. *Art in the Hellenistic Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986.31.

¹⁷¹ See Image 4.

¹⁷² Brenk, Frederick E. "Heroic Anti-Heroes. Ruler Cult and Divine Assimilations in Plutarch's "Lives" of Demetrios and Antonius." *Relighting the Souls: Studies in Plutarch, in Greek Literature, Religion, and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998.69.

images of Heracles, Zeus and Athena, similar to those used on Alexander's coinage.¹⁷³

The earliest known coinage with the portrait head of Demetrius, which survives at Ephesos, dates to between 301 to 295 BCE. Demetrius is not portrayed with horns. However, later images after his death depict Demetrius with the horns of a bull, while in a fighting or sitting stance in a Poseidon-like fashion.¹⁷⁴ Demetrius was clearly worshiped as a god during his lifetime and allowed portraits of himself as a god to be made while living. Both show a clear development of ruler cult from the time of Alexander and Antigonus.

CONCLUSION

The cult of Antigonus was created during his lifetime both at Skepsis and Athens in response to his championing of Greek freedom and autonomy. His figure was woven into a sacred robe, alongside the gods at Athens, while an annual sacrifice with *agon* and the wearing of garlands was implemented at Skepsis. It was not as widespread and lacked several important features such as divine iconography, mass festival worship and a hymn sung for the divine ruler.

The Athenians issued a decree that allowed for the erection of an altar, annual festivals with sacrifice and libations in his honor. This type of relationship between Demetrius and the city helped to form a bond of communication and

¹⁷³ Brenk, Frederick E. "Heroic Anti-Heroes. Ruler Cult and Divine Assimilations in Plutarch's "Lives" of Demetrios and Antonius." *Relighting the Souls: Studies in Plutarch, in Greek Literature, Religion, and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998.70.

¹⁷⁴ Brenk, Frederick E. "Heroic Anti-Heroes. Ruler Cult and Divine Assimilations in Plutarch's "Lives" of Demetrios and Antonius." *Relighting the Souls: Studies in Plutarch, in Greek Literature, Religion, and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998.71.

mutual interest between the worshiper and the “divine”. This model of ruler cult formed a basis for Hellenistic rulers, yet it was through the posthumous creation of Alexander’s ruler cult that Demetrius’ own cult was molded and evolved.

Demetrius’s cult grew from those of Alexander and Antigonus, as he used similar, if not the same methods of image and parentage. Alexander adopted a Persian dress, which he wore during the feast of Bactra and his introduction of *proskynesis*. Demetrius moved forward from this base by changing his own outer appearance, not only in dress, but with make-up and hair dye. When Demetrius went in to public, his image and attitude were such as what would be expected of a god. Alexander never was portrayed to play this theatrical role as he presented himself in the same fashion as any other Persian or Greek ruler in most instances. Demetrius acted the role of a divinity, while Alexander did not completely follow through with his own. However, we know that Demetrius copied Alexander’s image more closely when it came to coinage and the attributes of divine parentage.

Demetrius copied the same style of coinage and dress of Alexander by integrating his image with divine attributes. The most obvious attribute used was the horns of Poseidon, exactly as Alexander used the horns of Zeus Ammon, his perceived divine father. Demetrius, like Alexander, claimed his true father was not mortal, but a god. He used to his advantage rumors that Antigonus was not his father, but Poseidon was.¹⁷⁵ This action was like Alexander’s and how he used the rumors that Zeus Ammon was his father as his mother, Olympias, always circulated the rumor that he was not the son of Phillip. A failure on the part of Demetrius and

¹⁷⁵ This is an odd rumor to spread, considering Antigonus was worshiped both in Athens and at Skepsis.

his over-reaching of divine parentage was something that he was not careful of. He used his victory near Cyprus in conjuncture with his naval exploits to force an unrealistic connection between the two divinities, something Alexander played with in a more reasonable manner.

Demetrius and Antigonus did not always follow this mode. They improved on the formation of cult by allowing the Athenians to create one for him. Alexander's "cult" was presented to be implemented through him without the consideration of the backlash from his followers. Alexander's cult was based on an achievement for himself and the great deeds he completed during his lifetime, rather than allowing one form in a more natural manner. Alexander pushed his followers, yet he did not do it in the proper manner. He attempted to sway individuals and those in his empire to worship him, while Demetrius and Antigonus used another method. Instead they used the *polis* to his advantage by having them introduce a cult "themselves". By doing so, it seemed like it was their own idea to worship and not forced upon them as would a tyrant.

Demetrius and Antigonus used the model of Alexander's posthumous cult to form the basis of his own, as image and parentage were evolved from and used in a successful manner. Alexander did not push a divine cult during his lifetime. Demetrius implemented his cult to follow the route of a mutual relationship. He used mutual exchange to offer Athens protection and retribution against their enemies. By using the model of Alexander created by Antigonus and exploring new aspects of cult worship, Demetrius implemented a successful ruler cult during the Hellenistic period with the effort mainly facilitated by the Athenians

Conclusion

Alexander the Great did not create the first ruler cult. He used precedents of previous ruler such as Lysander, Dionysius I and his father Phillip to flirt with the idea of his divinity. The process of worshipping a living king as divine was only accelerated through Alexander and his attempts at initiating a cult, but they ultimately failed. Alexander's posthumous cult was promoted by his followers in order to further their own divine worship and legitimacy. Antigonus I and Demetrius the Besieger were among the first to receive divine worship as rulers. Under Antigonus, worship with sacrifice was initiated under two *poleis*, while Demetrius enjoyed the first true Hellenistic ruler cult. His cult was more widespread and included annual sacrifice with festivals in his honor. Although worship was introduced by the populace, Demetrius played the role of a living god by listening to and answering prayers. This type of cult became popular amongst rulers during the Hellenistic period, which was due to a gradual shift in the mindset and worship of deities.

The worship of a ruler as divine evolved with the ideals of Hellenistic worship of divinities. As mentioned, it was more likely that mortal men were worshiped during their lives for being exceptional, while it became the norm for kings to hold a ruler cult for themselves.¹⁷⁶ This new mentality evolved Kings could be physically present, intervene in matters and answer prayers, while the gods were distant and only conceptual. It is within the *Hymn for Demetrius* that we find that

¹⁷⁶ Gotter, Ulrich. "The Castrated King, Or: The Everyday Monstrosity of Late Hellenistic Kingship." *The Splendors and Miseries of Ruling Alone: Encounters with Monarchy from Archaic Greece to the Hellenistic Mediterranean*. Nino Luraghi. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2013.219.

these three aspects present themselves and help to explain the origin of his ruler cult. The *Hymn for Demetrius* states:

How the greatest and dearest of the gods are present in our city...
For other gods are either far away, or they do not have ears, or they
do not exist, or do not take any notice of us, but you we can see present
here, not made of wood or stone, but real.¹⁷⁷

The fact that Demetrius is in front of them physically is key to his worship. Belief in idols which represent gods had declined, as the Olympic deities were not physically present in the mortal realm.¹⁷⁸ They instead turn to a physical god, to Demetrius, someone who was of higher status and able to be there with them, yet was “born” of them. It was in this period that the physical presence of gods and goddesses became more desperate. We can find this by looking to the writings found in Maroneia

Thrace ca. 100 BCE, where the physical presence of the goddess Isis was requested:

Isis, exactly as you listened to my prayers concerning my
eyes, now come to listen to your praise and come to fulfill a
second prayer. For your praise is more important than the eyes
with which I saw the sun. With these eyes I can see your
adornment. I am convinced that you will certainly be present.
For if you came when you were invited to save me, how can
you not come in order to be honored?¹⁷⁹

There is almost a desperate request for the presence of Isis during worship. A sort of hope that she will come once more, something that we know is not in the realm of possibility for the accustomed deities. Worshippers had to essentially compete for

¹⁷⁷ Plut., *Demetr.* 12.

¹⁷⁸ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.174.

¹⁷⁹ Loukopoulou, Louisa D. *Inscriptiones Antiquae Partis Thraciae Quae Ad Ora Maris Aegaei Sita Est*. Athenis: Diffusion De Boccard, 2005.383-385.

the divinity to be present during their worship with prayers, hymns and sacrifice.¹⁸⁰ To be visited by a deity through the completion of a prayer or vow was a privileged, one that not everyone was able to experience. This is how the belief in non-physical deities began to twain, while the worship of physical beings, such as kings, began to rise. It is through this knowledge we should look at the hymn and see how the presence of Demetrius plays in to the factor of his worship. Because Demetrius is physically present, he can “answer” prayers and even protect the people who worship him, which was a manifestation of what Hellenistic people desired from the Olympian and Eastern deities.

When a miracle happens or a prayer is answered, there are few and far between due to the coincidence of the occurrence. It makes it increasingly difficult for a person to worship a divinity when these occurrences do not happen very often. However, when we have a king stood before the worshipper, it was more plausible that their prayer would be answered. If there is a god who answers prayers versus a god who does not, then it is logical to worship the one that does. In the *Hymn to Demetrius*, Demetrius could answer the prayers of his worshipers.¹⁸¹ The last prong of the city implementing a ruler cult involved image, not on a medium.

Demetrius, for example, had to present himself as a divinity in both a kind yet powerful fashion that would have his enemies fear him, but his worshippers adore him. The Pythagorean Diotogenes refers to this and essentially sets out guidelines

¹⁸⁰ Dickey, M.W. "Who Were Privileged to See the Gods?" *Eranos*. 100, 2004. 109-127.

¹⁸¹ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens*. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.174.-175;Plut., *Demetr.* 12.

for a ruler to present themselves in a divine fashion. Diotogenes instructed a king to act as though he was a god by instilling others with majesty and kindness.¹⁸² In order for this two-fold approach to be realized, the king must act in a sort of theatrical behavior. This is similar to how Demetrius entered Athens and went to the theater for a staged appearance to the Athenian public. We know that Demetrius could pull-off this sort of public appearance to the people through his hymn.¹⁸³ Demetrius presented himself as benevolent to his people, which aided the foundation of his worship. Yet, it was not only the way in which he presented himself that was required for him to play the role of a god, but a sort of theatrical dressing as well. According to sources, he dyed his hair blonde and covered his face and body with make-up and cream in order to appear more kind and benevolent to his worshippers.¹⁸⁴ One aspect of increasing importance is that god's physical presence was often required for worship, whether at a festival or during prayer.¹⁸⁵

Demetrius was someone who could be there physically, where one could touch or see his presence, this helped those who worshipped his cult come to terms with his divinity. A divine presence that can be seen and that can listen to and answer prayers played a major role in the continued worship of the cult of Demetrius, not only for himself, but of other Hellenistic rulers.¹⁸⁶ Yet, we know some

¹⁸² Stobaeus., *Anth.* 4.7.62.

¹⁸³ Plut., *Demetr.* 12.

¹⁸⁴ Douris., *FGrHist.* 76.F.10.

¹⁸⁵ Chaniotis, Angelos. *War in the Hellenistic World: A Social and Cultural History*. Malden : Oxford, 2005.143-144.

¹⁸⁶ Chaniotis, Angelos. "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrios Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality." *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at*

of these ideas were not original, as Demetrius modeled his cult based on Alexander's invented tradition.

To discuss more in depth, the presence of Alexander with his followers is not necessary, as it is obvious that he was physically present and could "answer" prayers if asked. However, there is no evidence of individuals requesting anything of Alexander, but we do have the instance where Alexander attempted to impose his gratitude by offering to re-build the temple of Artemis at Ephesus. The Ephesians refused his offer by making an excuse that Alexander could not help them build the temple as "it was inappropriate for a god to dedicate offerings to gods."¹⁸⁷ Alexander was not even able to push his benevolence on others, which shows how the mind-set of worship during his life was completely different to a Hellenistic religion more contemporary with Demetrius. Yet another aspect, the wearing of certain garments brings us more of a connection between him and Demetrius.

Alexander adopted a Persian dress, which he wore during the feast of Bactra and his introduction of *proskynesis*.¹⁸⁸ Alexander changed his outer image to match the previous Persian kings, who received divine worship, yet did not go as far to change the appearance of his face or hair. We have Alexander as the first of the kings to change their outer appearance, yet there is no evidence that Antigonus attempted something similar. Instead his son, Demetrius, moved forward from this base by changing his own outer appearance, not only in dress, but with make-up and hair dye. This step pushed Demetrius closer to what would have been considered a

Athens. Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrzej S. Chankowski, and Catharine C. Lorber. Leuven: Peeters, 2011.176-177.

¹⁸⁷ Strab. *Geo.* 14.1.22.

¹⁸⁸ Arrian. *Anab.* 8.382.

divine image. Alexander never played the theatrical role of a divinity, he instead presented himself in the same fashion as any other Persian ruler. When Demetrius went in to public, his actions and attitudes were such as what would be expected of a god. His kindness, smile and laugh played a role in altering his human image in to a divine one, something that Alexander, nor even Antigonus accomplished. It is therefore with Demetrius that we find the origin of the first Hellenistic ruler cult.

Appendix:

Image 1



https://www.penn.museum/sites/greek_world/pottery_big-61.html

Image 2



<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-the-Great/images-videos>

Image 3



<http://www.ehw.gr/asiaminor/forms/fLemmaBodyExtended.aspx?lemmaID=7333>

Image 4



<http://www.forumancientcoins.com/catalog/roman-and-greek-coins.asp?vpar=18&zpg=67388>

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