

## CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

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# The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers

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### 1 Introduction: the Paradox of Mortal Divinity

When King Demetrios Poliorketes returned to Athens from Kerkyra in 291, the Athenians welcomed him with a processional song, the text of which has long been recognized as one of the most interesting sources for Hellenistic ruler cult:

How the greatest and dearest of the gods have come to the city! For the hour has 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 laughing. His appearance is majestic, his friends all around him and he in their midst, as though they were stars and he the sun. Hail son of the most powerful god Poseidon and Aphrodite. (Douris *FGrH* 76 F13, cf. Demochares *FGrH* 75 F2, both at Athen. 6.253b-f; trans. as Austin 35)

Had only the first lines of this ritual song survived, the modern reader would notice the assimilation of the *adventus* of a mortal king with that of a divinity, the etymological association of his name with that of Demeter, the parentage of mighty gods, and the external features of a divine ruler (joy, beauty, majesty). Very often scholars reach their conclusions about aspects of ancient mentality on the basis of a fragment; and very often – unavoidably – they conceive only a fragment of reality. Fortunately, in this case the rest of the hymn is preserved:

For the 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; you are not made of wood or stone, you are real.

It is not surprising that this section of the hymn underlines the close and visible presence of Demetrios the God. The visibility of divine power (*epiphaneia*) is an essential feature of Greek religious beliefs. Surprising is rather the obvious inconsistency of these lines, in which doubt is cast upon the existence of other gods, and the hymn's first lines, which welcome Demeter, praise Poseidon as a most powerful god,

and regard him and Aphrodite as Demetrios' divine parents. Inconsistencies in Greek texts with a religious content should not surprise us – not after the series of studies which Henk Versnel has devoted to this phenomenon (1990; 1994). An inscription from Perinthos presents a nice example (*I.Perinthos* 146). It quotes a funerary epigram that denies life after death: 'What is the point of saying "hail, passers-by"? Life is what you see here; a singing cicada stops soon; a rose blossoms, but it soon withers; a skin had been bound, now unfastened it has given up its air; when alive the mortal speaks, when he dies he is cold; the soul is carried away, and I have been dissolved'. And yet this poem is part of the funerary inscription of a member of a cult association of worshippers of Dionysos (the *speire* of the *Sparganiotai*) who must have been initiated in this cult exactly because of its eschatological content. Instead of looking for arguments to clear up the inconsistency in Demetrios' hymn, it is more fruitful to ask what the composer of this text aimed at by diminishing the importance of other gods and underlining the presence, visibility and reality of Demetrios. This becomes clear in the last lines:

And so we pray to you: first bring us 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 have no defence against her (for it is an Aitolian habit to seize the property of neighbours and now even what is far afield). Most of all punish her yourself; if not find an Oedipus who will either hurl down that sphinx from the rocks or reduce her to ashes.

What makes Demetrios divine is his power to offer protection to the Athenians and vengeance against those who had attacked them. In this sense the poem fully corresponds to the Greek idea of divinity, an essential feature of which is not immortality, but the willingness to hear the prayers of men and offer them help in need. Greek religion knows of several gods – notably Asklepios, Dionysos and Herakles – who had ascended Olympos after their death as mortals, and a legion of privileged (and restless) dead who had the ability to provide assistance, especially in war, and received the worship of grateful (or terrified) humans. Extraordinary achievements, such as athletic victory or the successful foundation of a colony, placed some mortals above the common dead and gave them the capacity to be at work even after death. In this sense they overcame their mortality. In the early Hellenistic period, Euhemeros of Messene, a philosopher at the court of Kassandros, gave this idea a theoretical foundation. In his *Hiera anagraphe*, or 'Sacred Narrative', he describes a journey to an island in the Indian Ocean which was the Olympians' land of origin; the Olympians were mortal kings who were worshipped after their death as gods because of their virtues (Euhemeros *FGrH* 63). Of course, there is a difference between the heroized or deified dead and living, divine kings. The protective power of the former manifests itself after their death, whereas the latter were expected to care for their subordinates during their lifetime. Although the cult of kings continued – and sometimes was established for the first time – after their death, there is no reference to the miraculous appearance of a deceased ruler, analogous to the reports of the epiphany of heroes; with the exception of Arsinoe II Philadelphos, protector of

seamen, people do not seem to have appealed to the protection of a deceased ruler. If kings had a claim to divine honours it was because of their achievements and benefactions. This is what the epithets attributed to monarchs indicate: 'the Saviour' (*Soter*, attested, e.g., for Antigonos Monophthalmos and Demetrios Poliorketes, Ptolemy I, Antiochos I, Antigonos Gonatas, Attalos I, Achaios, Philip V, Eumenes I, Seleukos III, Ptolemy IX and Kleopatra), 'the one with the manifest power' (*Epiphanes*, attested for Antiochos IV); or 'the winner of fair victories' (*Kallinikos*, attested for Seleukos II and Mithradates I). Of these epithets, *Soter* and *Epiphanes* (or *Epiphanestatos*) are attested for a large number of deities, while *Kallinikos* is a common epithet of Herakles. What places the kings on the same level with the gods is the protection they offer. This idea is expressed in an epigram from Pergamon (c. 250–220; [SEG 37.1020]; H. Müller 1989) written on the base of the statue of the satyr Skirtos. The statue was dedicated by an admiral of the Attalid fleet, Dionysodoros, to both Dionysos and King Attalos I; such joint dedications to a god and a king are not uncommon (e.g. OGIS 17; SEG 37.612; 39.1232). In the last line the dedicator expresses his expectations: 'may both of you take care of the dedicator'. The expectation that a mortal take care of another person does not necessarily make him divine; but in this case the king and the god are associated not only in their function as protectors of Dionysodoros but also as joint recipients of his dedication. With both 'gods' Dionysodoros had a close personal relationship; he was in the service of Attalos, but he was also the 'gift' of Dionysos (Dionysodoros), the patron god of the Attalids.

The power to offer protection is an essential feature of the king's mortal divinity; this explains why in the earliest phases of Hellenistic royal cult it was not the ruler himself who declared his divinity, but usually the real or potential recipient of his benefactions (cf. section 4 below). Since Hellenistic kings, or at least most of them, resembled the immortal gods in the care they took for humans, they deserved to receive similar expressions of gratitude as the gods. The Greek phrase which is often used to describe the establishment of divine honours expresses no more and no less than this: the king is to receive *isotheoi timai* (e.g. IG 12.7, 506; SEG 41.75), i.e. honours equal to those bestowed upon the gods. Rather than equating the king to the gods, with this phrase the grateful community asserts in a subtle way that the king *is not* a god, even though he receives the same honours from the thankful community. The attribute *theos* ('god') was usually given to a king or a queen only posthumously (e.g. OGIS 246). The sharp distinction between the immortal gods and the mortal recipients of divine honours is clear in a letter of Zeuxis, Antiochos III's governor in Asia Minor, in which he quotes a decree of Herakleia upon the Latmos (SEG 37.859, c. 196). Zeuxis refers to the establishment of a monthly sacrifice for 'the gods (*theoi*), the king and queen, and their children'. The word *theoi* does not comprise the royal family, albeit the latter shares in the same monthly sacrifice. The godlike royals receive godlike honours, but are not gods; their mortality makes all the difference. Even the most divine of rulers, Alexander, is said to have made a bitter joke exactly on his own mortality; when wounded, he assured his companions that what they saw was blood, not '*ichor*, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities' (Plut. *Alex.* 28). As the 'royal journals' report, until the very end of his life Alexander behaved as a mortal, never neglecting to sacrifice to the gods (FGrH 117 F3).

## 2 Historical Development and Local Variants

Long before the beginning of the Hellenistic period the Greeks had been bestowing divine honours upon extraordinary individuals (city-founders, athletes, etc.) after their death, but the first mortal known to have received godlike honours during his own lifetime was the Spartan general Lysandros (Douris *FGrH* 76 F71 and 26): the Samians erected an altar, offered him sacrifices, sang cultic songs and renamed the festival of Hera the Lysandreia (c. 404). These honours foreshadow later developments: in response to the extraordinary achievements of an individual (victory over the Athenians) and as an expression of gratitude for a service (the return of the Samian oligarchs) a mortal received honours that were commonly reserved for the gods. But still substantial differences between the worship of the gods and the honours for the mortal can be observed: there is, for instance, no reference to a cult statue or to a shrine, and there can be little doubt that these rituals were ephemeral. The immediate predecessor of Hellenistic ruler cult is the cult of two Macedonian kings, Amyntas III, to whom a shrine (Amynteion) is said to have been dedicated at Pydna, and his son Philip II. Leaving aside several controversial testimonies concerning a divine cult introduced by Greek cities (Amphipolis, Ephesos and Eresos) and a report that Philip himself insinuated his divinity shortly before he was murdered, by having his (cult?) image carried in a procession together with the images of the twelve Olympians (Diod. 16.92.5), we now have unequivocal evidence for his cult at Philippi, possibly already in existence in his lifetime. An inscription from there concerning the sale of sacred land (*temene*) lists among the possessors not only gods (Ares and Poseidon) and the Heroes but also Philip (*SEG* 38.658; c. 350–300). Of course, Philippi is a particular case, as it was a city founded by Philip II, who was worshipped there as the *ktistes* ('founder') according to a widespread custom which was followed also by the Hellenistic kings in the cities that they founded.

The worship of Alexander is a complex phenomenon, heavily obscured by unreliable anecdotes. Although it was based on an existing tradition, it still differs from both its immediate predecessors and later developments. The very fact that his military achievements had surpassed anything the Greeks had hitherto known made a big difference; in his attack against Aornos the Macedonian conqueror competed with Herakles, who had allegedly failed to take this citadel, and his conquest of India was comparable in the eyes of contemporaries with its mythological precedent, India's conquest by the god Dionysos (Edmunds 1971; Hahn 2000: 16–19, 68–9, 82–6). New too was the influence of non-Greek practices, such as the display of obeisance in the Persian court or the divine worship of the pharaoh. But other facets of the divine worship of Alexander during his lifetime can be paralleled with earlier phenomena and with later Hellenistic developments. That he counted among his ancestors heroes, the sons of gods themselves (Achilles and Herakles), was not uncommon in his world; in Athens the Kynnidai claimed descent from Apollo and the Asklepiadai of Kos were regarded as the descendants of Asklepios; this tradition of consanguinity with heroes and gods was continued by most Hellenistic dynasties, for example with the Ptolemies claiming descent from both Herakles and Dionysos and the Seleukids from Apollo. The divine ancestry of the ruling king also had a long tradition in Egypt, where Alexander as the ruling pharaoh was the son of Ammon-Re; naturally, this belief was adopted by the Ptolemies in their very careful amalgamation

of indigenous Egyptian religious elements and their own distinctive royal ideology. Alexander introduced, however, an additional element in his divinity with the claim that he was the son of Zeus. The date and the circumstances in which this claim was made (after his visit to the oracle at Siwa?) are a matter of controversy, but it should be noted that such a claim was not unknown in Greek history. As late as the fifth century the famous Thasian athlete Theagenes was believed to be the son of Herakles and his colleague Euthymos of Lokroi was regarded as the son of the river-god Kaikinos (Paus. 6.9.2, 6.6.4). Alexander's claim to a direct descent from a god found at least one follower among his successors; a hymn discovered in Erythrai regards Seleukos I as the son of Apollo (*I.Erythrai* 205 = *LSAM* 24B). In most respects the cult of Alexander continued and strengthened the existing traditions. It was established in many cities in Asia Minor, probably already during his campaign, in response to his achievements and his benefactions (Habicht 1970: 17–25) and in content and form it did not differ from earlier cases (erection of an altar and sometimes a shrine, offering of sacrifices, contests (*agones*), dedication of a statue in the temple of another god, establishment of a priesthood, naming civic tribes after him). These separate honours have an entirely different quality from the joint celebration of Alexander's divinity that occurred shortly before his death, when, as a result of a proclamation he had issued demanding divine honours for himself, the cities of the Greek mainland sent sacred envoys to Babylon to honour the king as a god (Arr. *Anab.* 7.23.2).

An important difference from the cult of both earlier mortals and that of later kings is the wide diffusion, popularity and persistence of Alexander's worship (Habicht 1970: 25, 185). In Egypt, the cult of Alexander was supported by Ptolemy I as part of his efforts to legitimize his rule, and this worship was continued under the later Ptolemies. But the cult remained popular also in areas in which it was not part of the monarchical ideology. An interesting piece of evidence came to light recently: the ancient visitors to a Macedonian grave of the fourth century in Pella incised on its walls dedicatory texts addressed to Herakles, *Heros Alexandros* and Kassandros; the mention of Herakles in this context rules out the possibility that Alexandros and Kassandros were some ordinary dead; we are dealing with a private worship of Alexander the Great and King Kassandros (*SEG* 47.933). In Priene in the second century private persons repaired his shrine, the *Alexandreion* (*I.Priene* 108, 75); Erythrai's budget in the early second century included funds for sacrifices to his honour (*LSAM* 26, 90); in the second century AD Bargylia replaced (or repaired) a statue of 'Alexander the God' (*OGIS* 3), and priests of King Alexander are still attested in Ephesos in the second century AD (*I.Ephesos* 719) and in Erythrai as late as the third century AD (*IGRR* 1543 = *I.Erythrai* 64). A statue of Alexander dedicated by Thessalonike in the Severan period designates him as 'the great king Alexander, the son of Zeus' (*SEG* 47.960, c. AD 200–250). We can associate with Alexander's worship also a series of contests by the name of 'Alexandreia' or 'Alexandreios agon' that existed centuries after Alexander's death (e.g. in Alexandria, Beroia, Rhodes and Smyrna).

The honouring of achievement, benefaction, military success and protection with divine honours had already a long tradition when Alexander's successors received the title of 'king'. Even 'ordinary' companions were honoured with festivals, as, for instance, Aristonikos for whom the *agon* Aristonikeia was established in Karystos (Athen. 1.19a, *IG* 12.9.207, 41); Philetairos, the Pergamene dynast who never

received the title of 'king', was honoured with festivals in Kyme and Kyzikos (Manganaro 2000). All the Successors were honoured with cults in cities supported or subordinated by their troops, and of course they received the traditional worship as founders in the cities they (re-)founded (e.g. Kassandros in Kassandreia, Demetrios Poliorketes in Demetrias, Lysimachos in Ephesos, the first Seleukids in Antioch on the Maeander and in Mygdonia, Apollonia in Karia and Pisidia, Laodikeia on the Lykos, Nysa, etc.). In the study of royal cult one should make a distinction between the (more widely attested) introduction of the worship of a living king or queen by a *polis* and the establishment of a royal cult by the royal administration. This latter procedure entails two different aspects, the establishment by a king of the worship of a deceased family member (father, parents, wife), a phenomenon attested from the beginning of the Hellenistic period, and, at a much later date, the introduction by the ruler of a cult of himself.

The first procedure, the creation of a cult of the ruler by a *polis*, is best demonstrated by the cult of Antigonos the One-Eyed and Demetrios Poliorketes in Athens, set up after the expulsion of Kassandros' garrison (Plut. *Demetr.* 8–13; Diod. 20.45.2; Polyae. 4.7.6; Habicht 1970: 44–8). Antigonos and Demetrios were regarded as saviours (*Soterēs*) and liberators of the city. A decree introduced the office of the 'priest of the Saviours' (cf. Dreyer 1998), an altar was erected, the names of the benefactors were given to two new tribes (Antigonis and Demetrias), and an annual festival, with procession, sacrifice and *agon*, was founded. A similar procedure was repeated countless times in many cities and for almost every known monarch; the many new inscriptions that come to light usually confirm the same stereotypical practice. One of the most recent finds is a letter of queen Laodike (213 BC), with which she accepts the honours bestowed to her by Sardis. The Sardians decreed the foundation of a sacred enclosure or *temenos* (Laodikeion), an altar, a yearly festival or *panegyris* (Laodikeia) on her birthday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Hyperberetaios, a procession, and a sacrifice to Zeus Genethlios, protector of the royal family; for three days during the Laodikeia Antiochos III granted an exemption from taxes (*SEG* 39.1284–5; Gauthier 1989, nos. 2–3; Ma 1999: 285–8). An instructive example is also provided by the decree of Pergamon concerning the establishment of the cult of Attalos III in the Asklepieion after a victorious campaign: the demos was to dedicate a statue representing the victorious king standing on war booty in the temple of Asklepios Soter, 'so that he may be sharing the temple with the god' (*synnaos toi theoi*); another statue representing the king on a horse was to be erected next to the altar of Zeus Soter; on this altar the eponymous magistrate, the king's priest, and the official responsible for competitions were to burn every day incense 'for the king'; an annual procession and sacrifice celebrated the anniversary of the king's return to Pergamon (*I.Perg.* 246; Virgilio 1993: 23–7). Sometimes the establishment of the cult was sanctioned with the help of an oracle, as in the case of the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphos in Kos (*Iskr. Cos.* ED 61).

The second procedure, the deification of a deceased king or queen by the royal administration, is best attested in the Ptolemaic kingdom. When Ptolemy I died in 283, his son and successor Ptolemy II declared him a god; the same honour was bestowed upon Ptolemy's widow Berenike in 279. The deceased royal couple was worshipped under the name *theoi soterēs* (the saviour gods). When Arsinoe, Ptolemy II's wife and sister died (July 270), her cult was introduced in the temples of all the

native gods; her death may have also prompted Ptolemy II to attach his cult and that of Arsinoe to the cult of Alexander, adding the name of the 'Brother-Sister Gods' (*theoi Philadelphoi*) to the title of Alexander's priest; his successor did the same, and the other kings followed this example. Thus this cult in Alexandria was transformed into an eponymous state cult; the reference to its eponymous priest in the dating formula of documents fulfilled an important symbolic function, underlining both dynastic continuity and the monarchy's divine nature. Thus the text of the Rosetta stone under Ptolemy V reads: 'during the priesthood of Aetos, son of Aetos, priest of Alexander and Saviour Gods and the Brother-Sister Gods and the Benefactor Gods and the Father-loving Gods and the Manifest and Beneficent God' (*OGIS* 90). In addition to this cult, the Ptolemies were also worshipped as 'temple-sharing deities' (*synnaoi theoi*) in the Egyptian temples and received daily libations and incense offerings (Lanciers 1993: 214–15; cf. Huss 1994). Their Greek cult-names (Soter, Euergetes, Philadelphos, Philopator, Philometor, Epiphanes, Eucharistos) sounded Greek to the Greeks, but at the same time captured many of the tenets of Egyptian titulary and allowed the native population to recognize in them their pharaoh (Koenen 1993); in general, the native population accepted the ruler cult.

The third procedure, the establishment of cult of the living monarch in the entire kingdom by the ruler himself, is best documented in the kingdom of Seleukids. In the early Hellenistic period the cult of the Seleukids did not differ substantially from that of other monarchs: cults of the living kings and queens were established at the initiative of individual cities, and the deification of the deceased monarch was a standard procedure from the time of Antiochos I. The first Seleukid king who established his own cult during his lifetime was Antiochos III the Great. A series of letters to the provincial governors that request the nomination of a high priest in the provinces for his wife Laodike mention an already existing high priest for the cult of Antiochos himself and for that of his ancestors (*RC* 36; *SEG* 37.1010); this office (*archiereus*) was introduced in 209 (Lanciers 1993: 218–19; Ma 1999: 288–92; H. Müller 2000). When the Attalids took over the largest part of Asia Minor (188/187) they retained the institution of the high priest for their own dynastic cult (*SEG* 47.1519). In the Seleukid kingdom the ruler cult seems to have been limited only to the Greek population (Lanciers 1993).

Things were different in the realm of the Antigonids, where the Greek traditions were strong. The cult of the monarch was widespread, but only as a *polis* institution; even Antigonos Gonatas, who for a long time was believed to have rejected the establishment of his cult in cities under his control, is now known to have received godlike honours in Athens (Habicht 1996).

At the periphery of the Hellenistic world, where the non-Greek element was predominant, ruler cult was sometimes based on an elaborate theological background, as is the case with Kommagene, where Antiochos I introduced cult reforms that combined Iranian cultic elements with his royal ideology. But these forms of divine worship of the king are different in nature from the cult as it was established by and practised within the Greek cities. The organization and content (section 3 below) as well as the role of ruler cult in the Hellenistic world (section 4 below) are essentially Greek phenomena, both in the sense that they continue Greek traditions and in the sense that they are related to the interaction between Hellenistic rulers and Greek cities.

### 3 Organization and Content

The organization of ruler cult was from its very beginning modelled after the worship of the gods. It was centred around the ritual of the sacrifice (*thysia*) which is one of the indispensable elements of a Greek festival (*panegyris*, rarely *heorte*); additional elements were the procession (*pompe*) and an athletic or musical competition (*agon*). The festivals in honour of kings and queens were named after the person they intended to honour (Attaleia, Eumeneia, Alexandria, Ptolemaia, etc.). When the cult was established during the lifetime of a ruler or a member of the royal family, the rituals usually took place on his or her birthday – similarly, the birthday of a deity is the day of its major festival. Exactly as in the worship of the gods, a sacrifice was offered not only annually, but every month on the same day. When the cult was introduced after a person's death, it was celebrated either on the anniversary of the death (Habicht 1970: 17 n. 5) or on the birthday (Habicht 1998 on *I.Didyma* 488). Other important occasions were the anniversary of the accession to the throne, the anniversary of a victory, or the day the new magistrates assumed office; for example, during the reign of Ptolemy III the 25<sup>th</sup> day of every month was 'the day of the king', a festival which commemorated the king's accession to the throne on 25<sup>th</sup> Dios 246 (*I.Louvre* 5); in c. 246/244 Ilion established a 'good-tidings-sacrifice' (*euangelia*) for Seleukos II (*I.Ilion* 35). Occasionally the celebration of the ruler was appended to an already existing festival. In addition to the monthly and annual sacrifices, a particular achievement or benefaction could be the occasion for the offering of an extraordinary sacrifice.

The festival began with a procession to which all the citizens were invited, wearing wreaths and their best clothes (e.g. *OGIS* 11; *SIG*<sup>3</sup> 372). The city processions could not compete in glamour with those organized by the royal administration but they were influenced by them. The most impressive procession was the one organized by Ptolemy II in honour of his deceased father; its description by Kallixeinos of Rhodes is the fullest description of an ancient celebration (in Athen. 5.194a–203b, Rice 1983). Highlighting the royal family's affinity to the gods, this Ptolemaic procession demonstrated the king's political and military supremacy as it progressed through the streets of Alexandria; the population was here the audience for a lavishly-staged spectacle, in contrast to the city processions which enlisted the inhabitants as active performers. Religious songs too would be sung at festivals; an inscription from Erythrai, for instance, preserves part of a hymn which calls Seleukos a son of Apollo (*I.Erythrai* 205 = *LSAM* 24B). The city festivals for kings offered an additional opportunity for the organization of athletic and musical contests which very often survived long after a king's death. At Laodikeia on the Lykos the annual athletic *agon* Antiocheia, named after the founder of the city, Antiochos II, continued to be celebrated into the second century (*I.Laodikeia* 5); and in Pergamon the cult of the deceased ruler was still practised long after his death, even after the end of the dynasty (Virgilio 1993). Our most detailed evidence for the organization of a festival comes from the decree of the Euboian cities about the Demetria in honour of Demetrios Poliorketes (*IG* 12.9.207).

The offering of the sacrifice required an altar, which was usually erected in a sacred precinct (*temenos*) which bore the king's name (e.g. Philetairion in Iasos). An important difference between ruler cult and the cult of the gods is that temples

(*naoi*) were rarely dedicated to rulers, either living or dead; only literary sources refer to temples of kings (of Alexander in Athens, of Seleukos I in Lemnos, of Ptolemy II in Byzantion) and only in the context of the *polis* cult. Little is known about the architectural form and decoration of the *temene* and temples, and only a few excavated buildings have been tentatively identified as places of ruler worship (Radt 1989: Pergamon; Borchhardt 1991: Limyra). The erection of a statue was an intrinsic part of the honours, but it is often difficult to distinguish between honorific and cult statues. When the documents designate the king's image as an *agalma* (not an *eikon* or an *andrias*) they usually refer to a cult statue. One of the earliest epigraphic testimonies for ruler cult, a decree of Skepsis in honour of Antigonos Monophthalmos (*OGIS* 6, trans. in Austin 32), expresses the establishment of divine honours with the phrase 'let the city mark off a sacred precinct for him, erect an altar and set up a (cult) statue as beautiful as possible'. The Hellenistic kings were often worshipped as 'temple-sharing gods' (*synnaoi*) through the erection of their statue in the temple of other deities (e.g. Attalos I in Aigina and Sikyon, Antiochos III and Apollonios in Teos, Attalos III in Pergamon, Ariarathes V in Athens and Mithradates VI on Delos: Schmidt-Dounas 1993–4). In Hellenistic Egypt not the living kings, but only the deceased ones seem to have received a cult as *synnaoi* in the temples of other deities (Fishwick 1989). In general, Hellenistic cities preferred to honour a king by establishing a separate shrine for him, naturally in the city's most prominent place. Sometimes the sanctuaries of rulers were the places where public documents are inscribed; it seems quite natural that in Arsinoe in Cilicia public documents were inscribed in the sanctuary of the queen to whom the city owed its name, Arsinoe II (*SEG* 39.1426). Sacrifices and shrines in most cases required the existence of a special priest; the priesthood of Eumenes II, for example, was one of the many priesthoods offered by Kos for sale (*Isr. Cos.* ED 182). In the long list of the city's priesthoods at Seleukeia in Pieria two priests of the rulers feature (*OGIS* 245, c. 187–175): one for the deceased kings (Seleukos Zeus Nikator, Antiochos Apollon Soter, Seleukos Kallinikos, Seleukos Soter, Antiochos, Antiochos Megas) and another for the living monarch (Seleukos IV). Sometimes the priest was the eponymous official of the city (e.g. the priest of Lysimachos in Kassandrea, the priest of Seleukos I in Dura-Europos, the priest of Antiochos III and his homonymous son in Xanthos).

#### 4 Historical Significance

In order to understand the historical significance of Hellenistic royal cult one should rather exclude the cult of Alexander from the discussion; his exceptional achievements and his personal idiosyncrasies probably confuse the general picture. It would be tempting to claim that the royal cult was introduced in the beginning of the Hellenistic period in order to provide Alexander's successors with the legitimacy they lacked. Indeed, there can be little doubt that the Hellenistic kings exploited their cult in order to underscore the charismatic nature of their rule. But do the results of the royal cult necessarily explain the intentions behind its introduction? How can we explain the fact that to best of our knowledge in the early Hellenistic period the cult of living monarchs was always established at the initiative of *poleis* and not at the initiative of monarchs? Unlike the cult of Alexander which was imposed on the *poleis* towards the end of his life – Hypereides uses the verb *anankazo* ('force, compel')

twice with regard to Alexander's cult in Athens (6.21) – there is no such reference with regard to the successors; on the contrary, Demochares (*FGrH* 75 F1) reports that Demetrios Poliorketes was deeply annoyed at the flattery of the Athenians. Do we solve this problem by simply suspecting that the *poleis* introduced ruler cult as a response to the monarch's expectations or to the discreet requests of his friends? Were the Hellenistic cities and their political leaders the passive recipients of royal commands or suggestions? It is mainly the epigraphic evidence that compels us to look for an explanation for civic ruler cult not in the intentions of the monarchs but in the interests of the *poleis*. The relevant inscriptions suggest that royal cult was an instrument used by the *poleis* in order to establish a close relationship with a monarch and directly express both their gratitude for past and their expectation of future benefactions. The *narratio* of the relevant decrees explains the cult not as recognition of superhuman, godlike achievements, but as recognition of past services. This idea is clearly expressed in a decree of the League of Islanders: 'the Islanders were the first to have honoured Ptolemy Soter with godlike honours because of his services to individuals' (*IG* 12.7.506, trans. in Austin 218; cf. *IG* 12.5.1008; *I.Cret.* 3.4.4). Similarly, the kings and queens responded to these honours by promising to consider the interests of the cities. Eumenes II, for example, writes to the Ionian League: 'the honours I accept kindly and having never failed, as far as it lay in my power, to confer always something of glory and honour jointly upon you all and individually upon your cities, I shall now try not to diverge from such a precedent' (*RC* 52; cf. *RC* 22; *SEG* 39.1284B).

A common feature of Hellenistic decrees is the so-called hortatory formula, which usually states that a city honours a benefactor in public in order to demonstrate its gratitude and thus encourage others to behave in a beneficial way (e.g. *SEG* 1.366, trans. Austin 113: 'so that we may be seen to be honouring good men and encouraging many citizens to follow the same course of action'). The same strategy of delicate negotiations between *polis* and benefactor explains to a great extent why it is the *polis* which takes the initiative in introducing the cult of the living king. In order to encourage royal liberality, the cities accepted for themselves the image of the inferior, weak and needy, constructing in exchange for the monarch an image of supremacy and unlimited power. This theatrical behaviour underlies many aspects of the fragile balance of power between the monarchic aspirations and the pretensions of urban populations (Chaniotis 1997a: 252–3; cf. Ma 1999: 179–242). By compelling the king to live up to his godlike image, the *poleis* secured for themselves his protection. This is, of course, not to say that the monarchs did not recognize the potential inherent in these honours and did not actively promote their cult. Eumenes II again provides a characteristic example when accepting honours from the Ionian League in 167/166: 'In order that for the future, by celebrating a day in my honour in the Panionian Festival, you may make the whole occasion more illustrious, I shall present you with an adequate income from which you will be able to remember us suitably' (*OGIS* 763, *RC* 52, trans. Welles). As a religious phenomenon the ruler cult corresponds to the mentality of *do ut des* that characterizes the relations of the Greeks to their gods, in general (cf. Grotanelli 1991).

Within their kingdoms the royal cult gave the monarchs, especially the Ptolemies and the Attalids, an additional ideological support for their power. It also allowed the native population to participate in a worship in which it would have been able to

recognize familiar elements both in the cult practice and in the religious vocabulary. The interdependence of Greek and native elements has been observed in Ptolemaic ruler cult: in 263 the quota of produce (*apomoira*) from vineyards and orchards not attached to the temples, which had previously been paid to the native Egyptian temples, was diverted to the cult of Arsinoe II (Clarysse and Vandorpe 1998) and the dates of dynastic festivals often followed Egyptian traditions (Koenen 1993).

In cities under the direct or indirect control of a monarch, the existence of a priest of the living king or his ancestors underlined this position of dependence. In Xanthos, for instance, the priest of Ptolemy IV Philopator, Berenike and Ptolemy V was one of the eponymous priests of the city (*SEG* 38.1476, 206/205), and in both Nagidos and Arsinoe the cults of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe II were of central importance (*SEG* 39.1426, c. 238). In such dependent cities an important instrument of monarchical power was the garrison; the commander and his soldiers became bearers of the dynastic ideology, primarily through their dedications addressed to, for the welfare of, or in honour of the king and members of the royal house. In Thera all dedications addressed to the deified Ptolemaic kings, in which the names of the dedicators are known to us, were initiated by members of the garrison. The role of garrisons in the promulgation of the royal cult can be seen best in Itanos on Crete, precisely because the dynastic cult is a peripheral phenomenon on this island. A Ptolemaic garrison was established there during the reign of Ptolemy III at the latest. During his reign the Itanians dedicated a *temenos* to the king and to Queen Berenike and established annual sacrifices; in the relevant document Ptolemy is praised for protecting the city and its laws (*I.Cret.* 3.4.4, c. 246?). Once established, the dynastic cult could be continued, obviously under the care of the garrison commanders, the *phourarchoi*. It is the commander of the garrison, a Roman, who made a dedication to Ptolemy IV Philopator and Queen Arsinoe (*I.Cret.* 3.4.17, c. 217–209). It is less certain that the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies in Cyprus was established by the garrisons (Bagnall 1976: 68–73), but it was certainly promoted by them. In Ephesos, a commander of troops and the soldiers made a dedication to Ptolemaios II, Arsinoe II and the Theoi Soteres (i.e. Ptolemy I and Berenike) after having offered a sacrifice to them (*SEG* 39.1234). With such actions – whether guided by the royal administration or not – the garrisons reminded the local population that there was a divine element inherent in kingship and made the presence of the king felt in the city (Chaniotis 2002).

Although royal cult was primarily promoted by cities and kings, it did not possess only an official character. The private worship of the dead or living monarch was explicitly requested in some decrees. In Teos, for example, the inhabitants of non-citizen status were asked to celebrate the festival for Antiochos III and Laodike and offer sacrifices in their houses (*SEG* 41.1003 II 25–6) and to bring first-fruit offerings to the king's cult statue (II 53–5); the water of a fountain dedicated to Laodike was to be used in sacrifices, purifications and wedding rituals (II 70–83). At Iasos, the newlyweds were obliged to offer a sacrifice to Laodike (*I.Iasos* 4.85–8; Ma 1999: 329–35). In a few cases we know of dedications made to Hellenistic kings and queens by individuals (e.g. *OGIS* 17). Usually these individuals were soldiers or officials in the royal administration who expressed in this way loyalty, solidarity with the monarch, gratitude or hopes for patronage (e.g. *SEG* 37.1020; *I.Cret.* 3.4.17). The expression of loyalty and gratitude also explains the worship of sovereigns by the

Dionysiac associations, for instance in Pergamon (Radt 1989) and in Athens (*IG* 2<sup>2</sup> 1330). Things are different in the case of Arsinoe II who was posthumously assimilated with Isis and Aphrodite and became one of the most popular goddesses in Egypt and on Cyprus. Two of the earliest attestations of Arsinoe's cult are private dedications: the Ptolemaic admiral Kallikrates dedicated a temple of Arsinoe/Aphrodite at Cape Zephyrion, near Kanopos, and in Halikarnassos Chairemon established a sanctuary of Sarapis, Isis and Arsinoe Philadelphos; Kallikrates' dedication underscores the worship of Arsinoe as a patron of sailors, an aspect which may be explained either in the light of her assimilation with Aphrodite Euploia or in the light of Arsinoe's maritime policy (Malaise 1994). From Cyprus we know of more than twenty altars for the household cult of Arsinoe in various cities; her cult was continued for a century after her death (Nicolaou 1993; Anastasiades 1998). Altars for the cult of Arsinoe Philadelphos have been found in private houses as far away as Eretria and Miletos (*SEG* 40.763; *Milet* I.7, nos. 288–9); their owners may have had trade contacts with Egypt. Occasionally, we get insights into the practice of ruler cult; for instance, in a village in the Delta an association of farmers honoured the benefactor Paris by crowning his statues on the festive days (*eponymoi hemeraï*) on which sacrifices to the kings were offered (Bernand 1992: no. 40; 67 and 64 BC). At the border between public and private cult we find the cult of the ruler in the gymnasium, often in gymnasia that had received royal benefactions. Here where the young men, especially those of the elite, were educated and imbued with the values of their community, ruler cult played a crucial part.

Ruler cult established a close relationship between the subject and the object of a benefaction; it was quite natural that it influenced a similar relationship between *poleis* and benefactors who did not possess royal status. Already at the beginning of the Hellenistic period friends of Demetrios Poliorketes received heroic honours in Athens (Habicht 1970: 55–8). A new interesting document from Laodikeia on the Lykos (*I.Laodikeia* 1, c. 267) attests divine honours for Achaios, a member of the Seleukid family, and his officials Banabelos and Lachares; they were honoured by the inhabitants of Neon Teichos and Kiddiou Kome with the establishment of their cult for their services during a war against the Gauls. A yearly sacrifice of an ox was to be offered to Achaios Soter in the sanctuary of Zeus in Baba Kome, a sacrifice of three rams to Lachares and Banabelos Euergetai in the sanctuary of Apollo in Kiddiou Kome. Long after the abolishment of the Attalid monarchy, the Pergamenes modelled the divine honours bestowed upon their benefactor Diodoros Paspáros after the honours they had decreed for king Attalos III (*OGIS* 332, c. 139–133). The honours included the erection of cult statues, the establishment of a *temenos* and a temple, the celebration of a festival, the appointment of a priest, the creation of an eponymous tribe and his praise as a founder or *ktistes* (Radt 1986; Virgilio 1995).

The success of ruler cult both as a medium for the communication between ruler and subordinate civic community and for the legitimation of monarchical power can be best seen in the fact that it continued long after the end of the Hellenistic period as part of the ideology of the Principate. The Greek cities used this familiar instrument from the very beginning of their relations with Roman generals: T. Quinctius Flaminus was the first Roman to have received godlike honours (in Chalkis), and others followed. Provincial governors, in particular, were honoured in the same way Greek cities used to honour monarchs (Halfmann 1987). Late Ptolemaic Egypt played a

very important part in the transmission of the ruler cult to Rome. It is probable that Caesar received divine honours in Alexandria (Fishwick 1987), and it is certain that Mark Antony was assimilated with Dionysos and Herakles (Heinen 1995). The Kaisareion in Alexandria, whether first dedicated to Divus Julius, Mark Antony or Octavian, presents an early example of a shrine for a Roman general. It is not surprising that in the Greek East, the cult of Octavian/Augustus was modelled after Hellenistic traditions. Exactly as Hellenistic sovereigns were assimilated to Greek divinities (e.g. Seleukos I-Zeus, Antiochos I-Apollo, Arsinoe II-Isis, Demeter and Aphrodite, etc.) so too was Augustus, especially to Zeus (*SEG* 46.754; 47.218; Reynolds 1996) and Apollo (Mavrojannis 1995); the story that Octavian's father was Apollo himself was probably created sometime after the sea battle at Actium (Kienast 1982: 376) and recalls similar traditions about Alexander and Seleukos. His reluctance to accept the erection of temples to his honour can be explained by the fear of opposition in Rome, but is also paralleled by a similar reluctance on the part of Hellenistic monarchs. Octavian accepted instead the construction of a temple of Dea Roma in Pergamon (29 BC), where he was worshipped as a *synnaos theos* by the representatives of the province of Asia; the provincial emperor cult was established later in other provinces as well and became one of the most important social and cultural institutions of the Imperial period in the Roman East. The model of a joint cult of Roma and Augustus was also followed in Athens (19 BC?). In other cities cult statues of Augustus were set up in the temples of other divinities, for instance in the temple of Zeus in Kalindoia (*SEG* 35.744) and of Apollo in Delos (Mavrojannis 1995). Other honours (e.g. tribes and months named after him, *agons*, the epithet *Soter* in Athens) followed Hellenistic models. His iconography can also be seen against the background of the iconography of Hellenistic sovereigns (La Rocca 1994), and the ceremonial context of the *agons* which were organized in honour of Augustus and the later emperors can be traced back to the cult of mortals in the Hellenistic period (Herz 1997).

At some time between 27 BC and AD 14, still during Augustus' lifetime, the citizens of Ioulis on Keos dedicated a building, probably a Sebasteion located near the sanctuary of Apollo. The dedicatory inscription states that the building was dedicated for the well-being of Theos Kaisar Sebastos (Divus Caesar Augustus); as if it were not strange enough that a dedication was made for the well-being of a 'god' (Theos), the dedication is addressed not only to the Olympian Gods but also to the Theoi Sebastoi, i.e. to Divus Augustus himself and to Livia (who bears here the unofficial title of an Augusta). Augustus' cult is Hellenistic in this respect too: it was no less paradoxical than the mortal divinity of Hellenistic kings.

## FURTHER READING

*Sources.* The evidence for ruler cult is being continually increased through new epigraphic finds that supplement and modify our understanding of the worship of Hellenistic kings or certain of its aspects. It had long been believed, e.g., that Antigonos Gonatas did not accept divine worship, but a new find from Rhamnous (*SEG* 41.75) not only demonstrated that this was the case in Athens, but also urges us

to reconsider other evidence as well, e.g. from Ios (*IG* 12 Suppl. 168; Habicht 1996). The new epigraphic evidence published from 1987 onwards is presented in the *Epigraphic Bulletin for Greek Religion in Kernos* (6, 1991 and subsequent years).

*Historical background:* This has received much attention in recent years, especially hero cult and heroization (Kearns 1989, 1992, Antonaccio 1994, Larson 1995, Lyons 1997, Johnston 1999), the predecessors of ruler cult, e.g. for Lysandros, Amyntas III and Philip II (Habicht 1970: 3–16), the ideological/philosophical background (Piérart 2001). The cult of Philip II now seems certain (Habicht 1970, Fredricksmeyer 1981), despite the sceptical remarks of Badian 1981. In the case of several dedications to a king Philip it is disputed whether they refer to Philip II or Philip V (*SEG* 47.917, Hatzopoulos 1996: no. 78). The divinity and cult of Alexander the Great, the exact date of its introduction (c. 332, 327 or later), the role of the oracle of Ammon in Siwa, the initiative of cities, Alexander's own understanding of his divinity and the consanguinity with Zeus, are still matters of dispute, and the controversial statements of the sources add to the confusion (e.g. Strabo 14.1.22, Ehippos *FGrH* 126 F5). To give but one example, the reciting of a Homeric verse (*Iliad* 340: 'ichor, that which runs in the veins of the blessed divinities') in connection with the blood running from Alexander's wounds, is sometimes attributed to the king himself, sometimes to a companion, sometimes as an (self-)ironical remark, sometimes as flattery (F. Jacoby, *FGrH* IID Kommentar: 519). New finds rarely add something new. The cult of Hephaestion as a hero, not as a god, seems now to be confirmed by a relief stele from Pella; it is dedicated to Hephaestion soon after his death (late fourth century), and the text designates him an *heros* (Voutiras 1990, Despini et al. 1997: no. 23). It is also possible that the divine honours decreed by the Greek cities originated in Alexander's wish to introduce the posthumous cult of Hephaestion, a wish to which the Greek cities may have responded with the joint introduction of both Hephaestion's cult as a hero and that of Alexander as a god (Habicht 1970: 28–36). On Alexander's divinity: Balsdon 1950, Habicht 1970, Edmunds 1971, Fredricksmeyer 1979, Badian 1981, 1996, Cawkwell 1994. The cult of the sovereign has, naturally, received more attention in Egypt (e.g. Lanciers 1988, Koenen 1993, Huss 1994, Bingen 1997, Melaerts 1998, Quaegebeur 1998) and in the Seleukid kingdom (e.g. H. Müller 2000). For the cult of Antiochos I of Kommagene, at the periphery of the Hellenistic World: Şahin 1991, Waldmann 1973, 1991, Schwertheim 1991, Allgöwer 1993, Dörner 1996. For Pergamon see Schwarzer 1999.

*Organization and content:* The best presentation of the development and content of the Hellenistic ruler cult is still that offered by Habicht 1970, cf. Price 1984: 23–53, Walbank 1987. Specific aspects, such as the festivals established by or for kings (Hintzen-Bohlen 1992), sacrificial practices (Lanciers 1993), cult officials (Minas 1998 on the Kanephoros of Arsinoe II) or the archaeological evidence (Bergmann 1998, Kotsidou 2000), have been discussed in a plethora of studies. A very instructive example of a decree establishing the royal cult is that of Teos for Antiochos III and Laodike (*SEG* 41.1003; Herrmann 1965a; c. 204/3). One of the most important pieces of evidence is Kallixeinos on Ptolemy II's procession (in Athen. 5.194a–203b): Dunand 1981, Rice 1983, Köhler 1996, Walbank 1996, D. J. Thompson 2000. Its

date is still a matter of controversy: Foertmeyer 1988, Habicht 1992, Hazzard 2000: 59–79.

*Historical significance:* The important part played by the *poleis* in the establishment of the ruler cult has been underlined by Habicht 1970: 160–71. The integration of the ruler cult in a system of exchange (cf. Ma 1999: 178–242, esp. 219–26) is paralleled by the similar role of the imperial cult in the Roman East (Price 1984: 65–77). Stevenson 1996 has argued more recently that the figure of the ideal benefactor underlies the cult of mortals in the Greco-Roman world. The early stages of the emperor cult in Roman Egypt, especially its forerunners – the Ptolemaic ruler cult, the cult of Caesar, the establishment of a Kaisareion in Alexandria for Julius Caesar – are discussed by Grenier 1995, Fishwick 1987, Heinen 1995, Huzar 1995, and Ruggendorfer 1996. Useful overviews of the cult of Augustus are presented by Kienast 1982: 202–14 and Clauss 1999; cf. Fishwick 1987–92, Bosworth 1999. For a detailed bibliography on this subject, Krause et al. 1998: 399–412. Clauss 1996 argues that Julius Caesar and Augustus were regarded as gods during their lifetime not only in the eastern provinces, but also in the western part of the Empire, even in Rome. The origins of the emperor cult in Asia Minor have been recently illuminated by a series of studies by Campanile (1993, 1994a, 1994b); cf. S. Price 1984, Friesen 1993, Herrmann 1994. Among other areas, the cult of Augustus in Athens has received much attention, because of the abundance of sources: Clinton 1997, Mavrojanis 1995, Hoff 1996, Spawforth 1997. A very interesting aspect of Hellenistic and Imperial ruler cult is the *adventus* of the monarch: Lehnen 1997; it is possible that the ceremonial *adventus* has influenced early Christian liturgy (K. Berger 1991).