

Religion and Alexander the Great

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ABSTRACT Alexander the Great was religiously both a man of his time and the catalyst for change in the pattern of Greek religious life. He accepted the ubiquity of divine presence in the world and participated actively in the practice of Greek paganism, but he was also imbued with his own importance which evolved over time into a belief in his own divinity. This belief and the desire for such recognition led to the worship of Hellenistic kings as mortal gods.

KEYWORDS Alexander the Great, Macedonia, Ancient Religion, Omens, Gods, Divinization.

Alexander the Great was a critical figure in the evolution of Greek religion but was also a true believer and practitioner of the traditional paganism of his ancestors. It is necessary, therefore, to set Alexander in the context of his time and in the context of Greek religion at that time. Most everyone living in the West has heard of the term ‘fox-hole theist’. Battle has changed many a committed atheist at least for a time into a devout, god-fearing, believer. In the case of the Greek world, such a scenario would in one sense hardly ever apply. It was not just in the horror or fear of actual combat that one would pray to divine powers for protection. The concept of atheism and pure secularism even in the wider and safer civilian world, except for a very few, in the time of Alexander did not exist. Religion and the real presence of the divine were part of the common world view and affected every aspect of a person’s life. Whether in peace or war, gods were not distant. Socrates is supposed to have stated, “the operations of husbandry no less than those of war are in the hands of the gods”, in war, however, this sense of the omnipresence of the divine was greatly enhanced. To continue with the quotation ostensibly from Socrates, “men engaged in war try to propitiate the gods before taking action; and with sacrifices and omens seek to know what they ought to do and what they ought not to do” (X. *Oec.* 5.19). To alter slightly the famous line of Wilamowitz, *Die Götter sind überall*. There was no need to rely on faith to believe in the gods’ existence and power. When all of nature was believed to be divine and sentient, the gods were in many forms there to behold. This common world view dominated military life. Cicero (*Div.* 2.58) comments that these signs from the gods are noticed more frequently in times of war than in times of peace. Placating gods, seeking their assistance, determining their will, and experiencing divine interventions were part of every Greek’s experience especially in war where the stakes were so high. That ‘every Greek’ included Alexander the Great.

Alexander was in many ways a typical Greek. He believed in the gods, their intervention in the lives of human beings, and the importance of signs and omens in predicting the future. However, Alexander was imbued with a belief in his own special

nature. He was the descendant of both Achilles and Heracles, and from early in his life his mother had filled him with tales of his exceptional birth supposedly as the son of Zeus Ammon. While many of the tales may be apocryphal¹, Alexander's personal historian Callisthenes is later supposed to have said, "if Alexander was to have a share of divinity, it would not be owing to Olympians' absurd stories about his birth, but on the account he would write and publish in Alexander's interest" (Arr. *An.* 4.10.2)². Alexander saw himself as more than a mere mortal. He would come to regard himself as the son of the greatest of the Greek gods, Zeus, not just a descendant, and later to demand many of the attributes of divinity³. Such ambitions would be reflected in his gathering legend⁴. Alexander's desires and his historian's willingness to please his employer, likely led to a number of allusions to divine intercessions on Alexander's behalf. On his coastal march in Pamphylia, a sudden change in the wind making the passage possible was seen as divine intervention (Arr. *An.* 1.26.1-2)⁵, and on his journey to the oracle at Siwah, rain quenched the expedition's thirst and when the trail was in danger of being lost in the sand, Callisthenes reported that two crows appeared and called back those who had become lost (Arr. *An.* 3.3.5-6; Plu. *Alex.* 27.2-4; Str. 17.1.43; cf. Curt. 4.7.15; D.S. 17.49.4-6)⁶. The appearance of such interventions in the context of the time would readily be seen as divine actions made all the more believable by Alexander's remarkable success. Alexander was the most powerful single individual to Greek history. This concept of being treated as a mortal god, or *isotheos*, god's equal, was then both the result of Alexander's self-concept and quest for honor and renown, but also derived from the very nature of Greek religion.

For ancient Greeks, there were actually three main, not always very distinct, religious statuses: mortal, god, and hero. Heroes have with some accuracy been described as an intermediary stage between the other two: the intersection of mortal and immortal, man and god⁷. While the actual distinction mortal and divine was conceived as fixed⁸, it was in practice flexible. As Elizabeth Carney has commented, "literature nagged Greeks to remember the distinction between human and divine (e.g. Pi. *I.* 5.14).

¹ Many historians believe them to be created after his arrival in Egypt, but there are also those who accept them, as I do, as having circulated during Alexander's youth (HAMILTON 1969, 5). Arrian (*An.* 3.3.2) states that Alexander went to Siwah in part because he "referred part of his birth to Ammon".

² Those stories: Plu. *Alex.* 2.1, 3, 6-9, 3.3; Just. 11.11.3-4, 12.16.2-5. BOSWORTH 1995, 75 claims that this statement attributed to Callisthenes is "improbable". He states that a courtier and associate would never claim Alexander's fame depended on his history, nor proclaim that the mother of the king's tales were lies. Yet, the historian is described as boorish (Arr. *An.* 4.10.1) and Plutarch (*Alex.* 54.1) proclaims that he had eloquence but no sense. Such descriptions would certainly encompass a belief in his own worth and the lack of any inhibition to say so. Moreover, Callisthenes' later falling out with Alexander was over the king's attempt to introduce prostration into his court ceremony, which does not necessarily negate the previous statement about divinity. Callisthenes was clearly in favor of promoting Alexander's sonship of Zeus, but not willing to proclaim him as divine in his own right with the attendant ritual. Zeus had many sons who remained mortal in their lifetimes such as Heracles, or never achieved god status like Alexander's ancestor Achilles.

³ For a discussion of the evidence and differing opinions, see ANSON 2013, 109-120.

⁴ I have argued elsewhere that much of Alexander's legend was created by the Conqueror himself (ANSON 2021, 14-32). "That he wished to control his image can hardly be doubted given his employment of an historian... a personal sculptor... a painter... and an engraver" (ANSON 2021, 14). It is, therefore, highly likely that Callisthenes was creating a history under the careful eye of its subject and what was written was approved by Alexander himself.

⁵ Plutarch (*Alex.* 17.6-7) sees nothing miraculous here and attributes the story of divine intervention to the exaggerations of many historians. Callisthenes was certainly one (*Schol.* T. Eust. Hom. *Il.* N 29).

⁶ Ptolemy states that the party was guided by two serpents (Arr. *An.* 3.3.5).

⁷ KEARNS 1989, 125.

⁸ BADIAN 1996, 14-15.

They needed reminding”⁹. Heroes were exceptional humans who through their accomplishments transcended their fellows. Being officially declared a hero by some religious authority, usually one of the great oracles, only came after death. An official hero was traditionally accorded religious honors and their cult was most often associated with a particular locality. The Spartan Brasidas was honored by the Amphipolitans for freeing their city from Athenian domination and was formally recognized by them as the city’s *Soter* or savior. After his death, as was commonplace with respect to city-founders, he was honored ‘as a hero’, with a public funeral, annual contests and sacrifices, and the creation of a *temenos*, that is, a sacred enclosure (Th. 5.11.1). The heroic dead were seen as able to affect the living, although not with the same power or ubiquity of one of the Olympian gods. Few achieved the status of hero, and only a couple had moved beyond that limited divine status to that of a fully empowered deity. Heracles was one those who had, and, as noted, was generally recognized as one of Alexander’s ancestors.

Greek religion was relatively conservative in the sense that few cults once established were ever abandoned or dramatically altered, but the very nature of polytheism made possible the addition of heroes, gods, and cults, without endangering the existing heroes, gods, and cults. Practically, gods received worship because they were seen to be in a position to confer benefits or inflict harm on the worshiper. Confusing the issue even more is the extravagant treatment of prominent individuals in their lifetimes. Athletes were not only often heroized in death¹⁰, but also received aspects of such honors while they yet lived. Often statues were erected, hymns extravagantly extolling their ‘godlike’ virtues song, and legends developed of miraculous births and superhuman feats¹¹.

Hero status and posthumous worship were not unknown to Alexander and his contemporaries. City-founders, such as Brasidas, as seen, were typically granted such status on their deaths. Alexander had founded a city, Alexandropolis, while still a teenager and would accordingly be worshipped after his death as its founder (Plu. *Alex.* 9.1). Later, in north Africa and Asia, he founded many cities where he would also be revered as a founder¹². But, it was not common for a living person to receive the physical attributes of worship. Prior to the reigns of Philip and Alexander even claims of such worship are few. Christian Habicht lists prior to Alexander only five such possible individuals who received such honors in historic times, Lysander, Alcibiades, Dion, Amyntas III, and Alexander’s father Philip¹³. None of these goes without challenge from other historians¹⁴, although the case for Lysander does seem unassailable. But, in any case it is with Alexander that the worship of living rulers gets its true kick start, even though it will take some years before any of his Successors is declared a living deity.

Alexander, while pursuing a status beyond mere mortal, was, however, very much tied to the traditions of Greek religion. This is clear in his wide belief in the power of the gods and their signs and omens. These gave insights into the future and were necessary in the Greek practice of war. Divine support was thought necessary for victory. What better indicator of such support than one’s commander being shown by divine signs to be invincible. Earlier and likely apocryphally, the Macedonian king had

⁹ CARNEY 2000, 22.

¹⁰ CURRIE 2005, 120-123.

¹¹ CURRIE 2005, 151-157.

¹² ANSON 2013, 134-140.

¹³ HABICHT 2017, 1-11, 179-183.

¹⁴ For example, BADIAN 1981, 33-44.

journeyed to Delphi, where in a most unusual fashion the oracle had declared him to be invincible (Plu. *Alex.* 14.6-7). Better still to be under the protection of a divine father. The evidence, however, suggests that Alexander never repudiated Philip as his mortal father. Brian Bosworth's argument that Alexander claimed dual paternity similar to that associated with Heracles is likely (Apollod. 2.4.8-9; Ovid. *Her.* 9.44; cf. Hom. *Od.* 8.601-606)¹⁵. At Opis, the sources present him as extolling the accomplishments "of his father Philip" (Arr. *An.* 7.9.2; cf. Curt. 10.2.12; D.S. 17.109).

Alexander's personal beliefs when paired with seeming endorsement by the gods would certainly promote confidence in one's subordinates. But, these signs from the gods were seldom straight forward, nor were the gods often seen in their true guise. As in the *Iliad*, the gods most often hid themselves from common eyes appearing as regular human beings or as forces of nature. Hera and Athena appear to Achilles, but are invisible to all others (Hom. *Il.* 1.206-219); Athena tricks Hector into standing and facing Achilles by appearing as his brother Deiphobus (*Il.* 22.224-250); divinities strengthen individual warriors as Athena does with Diomedes (*Il.* 5.1-4, 792-839). With respect to the signs and omens mentioned by Socrates, these likewise were often unclear, but rather required those expert in the interpretation of these clues from the gods to reveal their true meaning. To ignore such signs could result in disaster but misunderstanding their meaning could as well. The city of Thebes according to our sources was well warned of the coming destruction at the hands of Alexander. Diodorus (17.10.2-5; cf. Arr. *An.* 1.9.8) lists a number of omens prior to the disaster.

"First there was the light spider's web in the temple of Demeter which was observed to have spread itself out to the size of a himation, and which all about shone iridescent like a rainbow in the sky. About this, the oracle at Delphi gave them the response: 'The gods to mortals all have sent this sign; to the Boeotians first, and to their neighbours.' The ancestral oracle of Thebes itself had given this response: 'The woven web is bane to one, to one a boon'".

Now this sign by itself is ambiguous and similar to the one Delphi gave to Croesus¹⁶. This sign had occurred three months before Alexander's descent on the city. Diodorus, however, continues,

"At the very moment of the king's arrival the statues in the marketplace were seen to burst into perspiration and be covered with great drops of moisture. More than this, people reported to the city officials that the marsh at Onchestus was emitting a sound very like a bellow, while at Dirce a bloody ripple ran along the surface of the water. Finally, travellers coming from Delphi told how the temple which the Thebans had dedicated from the Phocian spoils was observed to have bloodstains on its roof" (D.S. 17.10.4).

Whatever ambiguity that might have existed in the interpretation of the first omen was eliminated by these subsequent signs. These were all interpreted as the gods forecasting great disaster for the city and its inhabitants, but the Thebans ignored all these

¹⁵ BOSWORTH 1980, 271; 1988, 283-284.

¹⁶ Croesus was told that if he attacked Persia, a great empire would fall. He failed to ask which with the result that it was his (Hdt. 1.53).

predictions (D.S. 17.10.6). Alexander destroyed the city and with few exceptions enslaved the population (Arr. *An.* 1.9.9; D.S. 17.14.4; Plu. *Alex.* 11.10-12)¹⁷.

Sacrifices likewise could divulge the future to those who knew how to read the signs, but were also performed to honor the gods, thank the gods for services, and simply to recognize their existence and power. Failure to honor the divine ones could prove fatal. The classic example of the last in the Alexander tradition involves the events leading up to Alexander's murder of his companion Cleitus. Cleitus, in the midst of a sacrifice, left it uncompleted to attend Alexander who had summoned him (Plu. *Alex.* 50.3-4). On learning of the incident, Alexander became sufficiently concerned to consult his seers who declared that it was a bad omen. As a result of this conclusion, Alexander told them to offer sacrifice for Cleitus' safety (Plu. *Alex.* 50.5). The danger awaiting Cleitus was even foretold to Alexander in a dream two days before the incident involving the incomplete sacrifice. In his dream he saw Cleitus with the sons of Parmenion, all in black robes and all were dead (Plu. *Alex.* 50.6)¹⁸. To compound the danger to Cleitus, Alexander neglected sacrificing to Dionysus on the day which by Macedonian tradition was sacred to that deity. Subsequently, during one of the Macedonian more fluid symposia, Alexander and Cleitus got in an argument and Alexander killed his friend and companion (Arr. *An.* 4.8.2-9; Curt. 8.1.22-23, 27-52; Plu. *Alex.* 50.8-10). Later, many blamed the incident on the wrath of Dionysus (Arr. *An.* 4.9.5; Curt. 8.2.6). Unfortunately, the name of the god to whom Cleitus was sacrificing when interrupted is not stated but could have been Dionysus. In any case, the earlier omens warned of what was coming seemingly as a result of Alexander's later failure to honor Dionysus.

One problem with the ubiquity of the divine even in the time of our surviving sources, i.e. late Republic/early Empire, is that our sources assume the reader's knowledge and leave out of their accounts the details that would be so illuminating. So often the phrase is that the daily sacrifice was performed, the sacrificial victims examined, the signs were good or bad. Of course, the great lament of all ancient historians is that our sources are few and often enigmatic. In the case of Alexander and his conquest of the Persian Empire, our sources are few, written hundreds of years after the fact, and hardly fixated on the details of Alexander's routine religious activities. For example, the most common form of worship, the libation, was the pouring onto the ground or an altar a cup of mixed wine. These were accompanied by prayer and performed on numerous occasions. Oaths were often accompanied with libations. Typically these performed with unmixed wine, but also with water and other fluids, and grain. For example, whenever wine was being drunk, part was poured out to honor the gods. This most common of all sacrifices is infrequently mentioned with respect to Alexander. Arrian, our source most replete with references to Alexander's religious activities, reports only four such occasions. Two of these take place in India and are poured in the hopes of securing a safe passage down the tributary rivers to the Indus (*An.* 6.3.1-2). A third is associated with an animal sacrifice to Poseidon for Alexander's safe journey down the Indus (*An.* 6.18.5) The last and the most famous of these four citations concerns Alexander's banquet of reconciliation at Opis. Alexander at a banquet of 9000 Macedonians, Greeks, and Persians, all poured out a libation, praying

¹⁷ Officially the decision to raze the city and sell the survivors into slavery was not made by Alexander, but rather by his Greek allies (Arr. *An.* 1.9.9; D.S. 17.14.4). It is clear, however, if he had wished otherwise, it would have been so (Plu. *Alex.* 11.11).

¹⁸ Philotas (Arr. *An.* 3.26.3; Curt. 6.11.10), Nicanor (Arr. *An.* 3.25.4; Curt. 6.6.18), and Parmenion (Arr. *An.* 3.26.3-4; Curt. 7.2.11), by this time were all dead.

that there would be harmony and friendship between the Macedonians and Persians (Arr. *An.* 7.11.8).

What is especially maddening for anyone attempting to come to grips with Macedonian religious practice is that our sources refer frequently to Alexander sacrificing to those gods for whom it was ‘customary’ for him to offer ‘sacrifice’ (Arr. *An.* 3.9.1, 16.9, 25.1, 28.3; 5.2.9, 8.2, 20.1, 29.1; 6.3.1; 7.14.1, 24.4, 25.2-6; Curt. 4.6.10; Just. 9.4.1). Alexander performed these traditional sacrifices every day whether on campaign or not (Arr. *An.* 7.25.2, 4-5; Curt. 4.6.10; *BNJ* 117 F3a, F3b). Who these particular deities were, and the specifics of the sacrifices can only be conjectured. These ‘customary practices’ were established by the Macedonian king Archelaus who reigned from 413 to 399 (Arr. *An.* 1.11.1). We know that sacrificing included rather precise ceremonial (cf. Arr. *An.* 2.26.4), but there is little description of what this might have been. Moreover, the ceremonial often changed with the respective god (cf. Arr. *An.* 6.19.4). Appropriate clothing was required. According to Pythagoras (D.S. 10.9), “when sacrificing the garments should not be costly but white and clean”¹⁹. Xenophon dressed in his finest warrior’s dress when preparing to sacrifice to the gods for victory (An. 3.2.7). Prior to the battle at Gaugamela, Aristander, Alexander’s chief seer, is found clad in a white robe and displaying a wreath of gold or of laurel (Plu. *Alex.* 33.2; Curt. 4.15.27)²⁰, and at Tyre, “Alexander was sacrificing, wearing garlands, and just about to consecrate the first victim according to the ceremonial” (Arr. *An.* 2.26.4).

While the ‘customary gods’ of Macedonia are never fully identified, a perusal of sacrifices where gods are noted gives some idea of whom they were. Both Zeus and Heracles would appear to be likely part of this group. Alexander “sacrificed the traditional sacrifices to Olympian Zeus” (Arr. *An.* 1.11.1)²¹. Alexander is also said routinely to sacrifice to Heracles²² and later in the expedition to Ammon (Arr. *An.* 6.3.2)²³. There was also a ‘regular’ Macedonian festival dedicated to Dionysus (Arr. *An.* 4.8.1-2; Curt. 8.2.6)²⁴, and evidence exists of a Macedonian cult of Dionysus²⁵. Alexander in Carmania on his return from India also celebrated a *komos* in honor of the god (Arr. *An.* 6.28.2; Curt. 9.24-29; D.S. 17.106.1). There are also ‘other gods’, unnamed, to whom Alexander regularly sacrificed and evidence exists that sacrifices were offered to a wide array of divinities, including Athena and Poseidon (Arr. *An.* 1.11.7; Curt. 4.13.15; 7.9.1; 8.2.40, 11.25; D.S. 17.17.9), Artemis (Arr. *An.* 1.18.2), the Dioscuri (Plu. *Alex.* 50.5), Asclepius (Arr. *An.* 7.14.6), amongst others, and even the entire twelve Olympians (Arr. *An.* 5.29.2; Just. 11.5.4, 6, 12). Of these, Athena is likely also to have been a deity to whom Alexander customary sacrificed. She receives sacrifices on five stated occasions and is associated with Zeus or Heracles each on one instance (Arr. *An.* 1.11.7; Curt. 4.13.15, respectively). Apollo may also have been part of a group, the others being Zeus, Heracles, Dionysus, Athena²⁶, not perhaps as

¹⁹ See KARATAS 2020.

²⁰ The source for this information may be Callisthenes: KING 2004, 24.

²¹ Sacrifices to Zeus are offered eight additional times in Arrian (*An.* 1.4.5, 11.7-8, 17.5; 2.3.4, 6; 3.4.2; *Ind.* 21.2, 36.3, 9). Other references are found in Diodorus (17.16.3).

²² Sacrifices to Heracles are offered seven additional times in Arrian (*An.* 1.11.7; 2.15.7, 16.7, 24.6; 3.6.1; 6.3.2; *Ind.* 36.3). Other references are found in Curtius (3.12.27), Justin (11.10.10), and Diodorus (17.46.6).

²³ Sacrifices to Heracles are offered five additional times in Arrian (*An.* 1.4.5, 11.7; 2.14.6; 3.6.1; 7.11.6). These sacrifices are often associated with those to Zeus.

²⁴ The later murder of Cleitus was tied to Alexander not celebrating the traditional festive day (Arr. *An.* 4.8.2-9; Curt. 8.1.22-23, 27-52; Plu. *Alex.* 50.8-10).

²⁵ GREENWALT 1994, 3-8; CHRISTENSEN–MURRAY 2010, 431-43; FULINSKA 2014, 45-63.

²⁶ FREDRICKSMEYER 2003, 261.

established by Archelaus, but likely included during the reign of Philip²⁷. That monarch at least in his propaganda liked to advertise his defense of Apollo. He was responsible for the defeat of the Phocians in the Third and Fourth Sacred Wars, and in the Battle of Crocus Field had his troops wear laurel wreaths so to appear as the holy defenders and as avengers of the god (Just. 8.2.3). While we might today look at this as purely theatrical, likely to both the Macedonians and the Phocians it was exactly what it appeared to be holy soldiers attacking blasphemers. It is reported that the move strengthened the Macedonians and weakened and demoralized the Phocians. In addition to the Olympians, it is likely that the moon, sun, and earth were also traditional Macedonian deities. In the Treaty of the League of Corinth both the sun and the earth are specifically referenced as being sworn by (*GHI* 76: l. 2), and the sun, moon, and earth are also referenced in the later treaty between Philip V and Hannibal (Plb. 7.9.2)²⁸. It is unlikely that all of the gods noted here were daily worshipped, but not impossible.

In addition to customary sacrifices and those to major deities, sacrifices were often made to local deities as well. Prior to the Battle of Issus, Alexander offered sacrifice to the tutelary gods of the place (Curt. 3.8.22). On the march, it was especially important to offer sacrifice before crossing any obstacle, the sea²⁹, or rivers (*X. An.* 4.3.18)³⁰. Alexander offered sacrifices before crossing the Danube in 335³¹, the Tanais (Jaxartes) in 329 (*Arr. An.* 4.4.2-3), the Indus (*Arr. An.* 5.3.6), the Hyphasis (*Arr. An.* 5.28.4), the Acesines (*Arr. An.* 5.29.5), and the Hydaspes (*Arr. An.* 6.3.1). Sacrifices were also made to the gods of the various rivers he crossed, as the Danube (*Arr. An.* 1.4.5), the Hydaspes (*Arr. An.* 6.3.1), and to local heroes (Protesilaus: *Arr. An.* 1.11.5; Priam: *Arr. An.* 1.11.8; Jason: *Str.* 11.14.12; and in general, the heroes of the Trojan War: *Plu. Alex.* 15.3). Alexander also came to worship foreign deities. These include Apis and Ammon in Egypt (*Arr. An.* 3.1.4; *Ind.* 18.12) and Marduk in Babylon (*Arr. An.* 3.16.5).

Much of our information about the actual performance of these sacrifices has to be pulled from different Greek societies and different times to try and obtain a full picture of what were likely the practices in the time of Alexander. In particular, Xenophon's *Anabasis* provides many insights into the importance and practice of sacrificing, but his work was written in the first half of the 4th century BC. In spite of the difficulties with respect to religion and Alexander, it is clear that his army was accompanied by seers, sacrifices were not only made before every battle to determine predicted success or failure and to solicit divine support, but also at the start of each day whether a battle was to occur or not. For example, before starting an activity it was seen as advisable to seek insights from the gods. Alexander at the Oracle at Siwah asked among a number of things to which gods should he sacrifice (*Arr. An.* 6.19.4). Xenophon (*An.* 3.1.6) before starting out on the expedition of the 10,000 asked Apollo of Delphi to which

²⁷ Our sources report that due to many Tyrians having collectively dreamed that Apollo was leaving their city during Alexander's siege to join the Macedonians chained his statue to its pedestal. Alexander after the city's capture removed the chains (*Plu. Alex.* 24.6-7; *Curt.* 4.3.21-22; *D.S.* 17.41.7-8, 46.6).

²⁸ Prior to the Battle of Gaugamela, during the occurrence of a partial eclipse of the moon, Alexander sacrificed to the Moon, the Sun, and the Earth, "who were all said to cause an eclipse" (*Arr. An.* 3.7.6).

²⁹ Xenophon (*An.* 4.5.4) reports that in the midst of a snowstorm sacrifice was offered to the wind for it to abate. Of course, there is the famous account of the offering of Iphigenia for the crossing to Troy (Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*).

³⁰ Greek mountains were not worshipped, even though supernatural occurrences often took place on them and many were sacred to particular deities: LANGDON 2000, 463.

³¹ While there is no specific reference to such a sacrifice before the crossing, it is most probable. There was certainly one afterward (*Arr. An.* 1.4.5). After the crossing, Alexander after having defeated the Triballians, on the banks of the river, sacrificed to Zeus the Preserver, to Heracles, and the river itself for permitting the crossing, Alexander had one of his soon to be famous *pothoi*, longings, that overcame him on occasion to go somewhere or perform some act.

gods he should sacrifice to ensure a successful operation and a safe return, and the entire ‘Ten Thousand’ pledged to sacrifice to Zeus and other gods when they reached safety (X. *An.* 3.2.9). When that goal was achieved, the sacrifices were duly performed (X. *An.* 4.8.25). Alexander routinely sacrificed “as custom prescribed” at the start of every day (Arr. *An.* 7.25.2-5 = *BNJ* 117 F3a). It was even seen as important by the ancient Spartans at least to get in your supplication before anyone else did “before the dawn of day” (X. *Lac.* 13.3). Apparently they believed, the gods were influenced by the first come, first served rule. It was also customary to offer sacrifices before marching out of camp (X. *An.* 3.5.18; 4.3.9; 6.5.17), attacking a fortification (cf. X. *HG* 4.7.7) or founding a city (Arr. *An.* 3.1.5). Xenophon (*An.* 6.4.9, 19) offered sacrifices before sending troops out to gather provisions. In this particular episode, the sacrifices were initially favorable, but later they were unfavorable and many ignored the later signs with the result that 2000 troops proceeded to gather provisions anyway. This group was attacked and 500 of the scavengers were killed (*An.* 6.4.24). The lesson here appears to be that omens change with time and it is a good idea to repeat them when possible. The will of the gods or just their foreknowledge of outcomes made every undertaking a justification for a sacrifice.

This ubiquity of sacrifice could involve a great many animals. This added to the logistical problems of supplying a large military force on the move. Again, with respect to the Spartans, it was customary for them to bring along flocks of sheep and goats for these sacrifices in case there might not be animals available on campaign (Paus. 9.13.4). When on campaign and foraging for provisions sacrificial animals were part of that quest (X. *An.* 4.4.9). It is not mentioned if Alexander did the same as the Spartans, but it would appear that during parts of his expedition at least this would be likely and necessary. Alexander, however, does not appear to have had problems obtaining animals for his needs, sacrificial or otherwise³². But then pastoralism was a long-established practice in the Near East. On one occasion, Alexander required 10,000 animals, probably sheep, for a sacrifice honoring his friend Hephaestion (D.S. 17.115.6). Alexander was able to reward a loyal satrap with the gift of 30,000 cattle (Curt. 8.4.20), and received from a loyal Indian monarch 3,000 cattle and over 10,000 sheep (Arr. *An.* 5.3.5; Curt. 8.12.11).

On his campaign Alexander was not only concerned with the living, he offered numerous sacrifices to the ‘chthonic gods’ on behalf of the dead³³. As part of the ritual concluding a battle, the defeated sought permission from the victor to collect their dead and for the victors to raise a monument to their dead and offer a sacrifice thanking the gods for the victory. Philip II followed this exact pattern after his victory at Chaeronea (D.S. 16.86.6). If successful, whatever the undertaking, Alexander offered sacrifices in thanksgiving (Arr. *An.* 4.3.13; 5.1.1; 7.14.1, 24.4; cf. X. *An.* 3.2.9). Alexander, after a setback during his first attempt to pass the Persian Gates (Arr. *An.* 3.18.1-9; Curt. 5.3.17-4.4), contemplated taking an alternative route that was ‘safe and open’, but was ashamed to leave those killed unburied (Curt. 5.4.3). From a prisoner he learned of a path that led to a position above the Persians and the pass was turned (Curt. 5.4.10-14; Arr. *An.* 3.18.2-9).

³² Alexander’s logistical problems were few (for example, Curt. 6. 6. 19): “Even when his forces were in trouble, food could be sent from the bases to restore their fighting capacity. In one famous case, a local noble, Sisimithres, drove “a large number of pack animals and 2,000 camels, plus flocks of sheep and herds of cattle” to Alexanders starving force. After Alexander’s men had eaten their full and packed six days of cooked food... (LACEY 2023 [forthcoming]).

³³ Just. 9.7.10; Arr. *An.* 2.12.1; 6.2.1; D.S. 17.14.1, 115.6; Curt. 3.2.19, 12.13; 4.8.9; 6.6.18-19; 8.2.40; cf. X. *An.* 4.6.27.

It was believed that the dead who lacked proper rites could remain and haunt the living³⁴. Proper burial was necessary for war dead to transfer them from the gods above to those below³⁵. These sacrifices could be quite elaborate, although none could surpass that for his ‘second-Alexander’, his companion Hephaestion, in which the sacrifice consisted of 10.000 victims (D.S. 17.115.6). Of course, his dead friend had been elevated by the god Ammon of Egypt to heroic status (Arr. *An.* 7.14.7).

In consequence of the belief that all things happened according to the will of the gods or fate, divination was an accepted way to determine the future. Divination was one of the many gifts to mankind supposedly given by Prometheus (A. *Pr.* 484-499). The role of sacrificing, portent and omen reading, continued well beyond the reign of Alexander. Onasander (*Strat.* 10.25-26), in his first century AD manual on the duties of a general, states,

“The general should neither lead his army on a journey, nor marshal it for battle, without first making a sacrifice; in fact, official sacrificers and diviners should accompany him. It is best that the general himself be able to read the omens intelligently; it is very easy to learn in a brief time, and thereby become a good counsellor to himself. He should not begin any undertaking until the omens are favorable...”.

Throughout his campaigns Alexander followed basic Greek practice of sacrificing before every action and interpreting, or more usually having others do so, omens and portents. Even his later claims of Zeus as his father and later proclaiming himself worthy of worship, though unusual, were not out of the context of Greek religion. In spite of such claims, while suffering mightily at the end of his life, he did not fail to perform his daily sacrifices (Arr. *An.* 7.25.2-5 = *BNJ* 117 F3a).

It is, however, also clear that Alexander was very much aware of the value of the interpretation of omens and signs as instruments to influence his army. Curtius (4.2.17) strongly implies that Alexander may not have been above invention to strengthen his soldiers’ enthusiasm³⁶. He states that Alexander was by no means inexperienced in working upon the minds of soldiers. As Xenophon states with respect to the behavior of armies as dependent on the piety of their commanders (X. *HG* 3.2.7). Of course, the second doesn’t necessarily imply the first statement. The lunar eclipse prior to the Battle Gaugamela filled Alexander’s army with dread. But, either Aristander interpreted it as a very favorable sign from the gods (Arr. *An.* 3.7.6, 15.7), and/or Egyptian priests did so (Curt. 4.10.1-7), and the great fear in the army was dispelled. Curtius comments, “Nothing sways the masses more effectively than superstition... They obey the seers better than they do their leaders” (4.10.7). Any lack of credibility in Alexander or his

³⁴ JOHNSTON 1999, 9-10, 83-84, 127-133.

³⁵ LANNI 2008, 476.

³⁶ This view is similar to that found in Cicero (*Div.* 2. 33. 70): “[the ancients] believed that augury was an art useful in seeing things to come –for the ancients had erroneous views on many subjects. But we see that the art has undergone a change, due to experience, education, or the long lapse of time. However, out of respect for the opinion of the masses and because of the great service to the state we maintain the augural practices, discipline, religious rites and laws”. Curtius’ comments on divination with respect to Alexander, calling reliance on omens “the mockery of human minds” (7.7.8), is likely more reflective of contemporary Roman views than those of Alexander (KING 2004, 33). Carol King, however, believes that Alexander over the course of his expedition had changed his attitude towards divination (KING 2004, 170, 179). This may be the case and explain the disappearance of Aristander from the narrative after 328 BC, although he must by this time have been an older man and may simply have died. One source clearly has him surviving Alexander (Ael. *VH* 12.64). However, if this is the case then clearly near the end of his life he had a major eclipse.

divining advisors would have been catastrophic. A particular sacrifice where the pressure on the interpreter must have been enormous occurs on the Hyphasis. Here, Alexander's army demonstrated an army-wide reluctance to proceed further east into India. When Alexander is unable to induce enthusiasm, ultimately sacrifices were performed regarding an advance to the east which came back as unfavorable. Indeed, the official reason for the turning back was these sacrifices (*Arr. An.* 5.28.4)³⁷. Relying on the unfavorable sacrifices, Alexander then is neither showing fear of such an advance, nor giving in to the wishes of his soldiers. He is obeying the will of the gods³⁸. He was not above manipulating an interpretation. On two occasions, Alexander is reported to have changed the calendar to accommodate his wishes. Prior to the Battle on the Granicus, when reminded that the Macedonian king during the month of Daesius was not to take an army into the field, he proclaimed that the current month was a second Artemisius (*Plu. Alex.* 16.2). In this second attempt at calendar manipulation, Plutarch (*Plu. Alex.* 25.1-3) reports that Alexander was attempting to save the reputation of his chief seer Aristander who predicted that Tyre would fall to Alexander on the very last day of the current month, which was that very day. If the latter's prediction might appear to be false, this might shake the confidence of the army. To avoid such a circumstance, Alexander proposed to call the current day instead of the 30th which it actually was, the 28th. This insertion of two extra days proved unnecessary for the city did fall that day after Alexander had accelerated his attack (*Plu. Alex.* 25.1-3).

This sort of manipulation was apparently not taken ill by the gods. The letter of the omen was followed and who is to say that was not what the gods intended. However, it is also reported that on one occasion Alexander interfered with the interpretation of a victim's entrails to bolster his soldiers' enthusiasm (*Frontin. Str.* 1.11.14). This statement would appear to run counter to what we know of Alexander's general religiosity³⁹, and, in fact, this incident is reported elsewhere in association with the Spartan king Agesilaus (*Plu. Apoph. Lac. Ages.* 77 = *Mor.* 214e-f), and its association with Alexander is generally rejected⁴⁰. Justin (11.11.6) also reports that Alexander bribed the priest at the Temple of Ammon at Siwah to proclaim his divine birth⁴¹. Again, this claim like that in Frontinus has no support in other sources. It is likely that both Roman sources were expressing some contemporary Roman views concerning divination in general⁴² and that Alexander must then have been using divination as a means to manipulate his troops and was not a true believer. The evidence is, as will be seen, otherwise.

It would have been even worse than changing the calendar, if a commander was believed to be misrepresenting the signs from the gods deliberately. When Xenophon was thought to be 'cooking the books' so to speak, he invited virtually the entire army to view his next sacrifice (*An.* 6.4.20). This example shows the danger of such a suspicion, but it also indicates that the common soldier was not unfamiliar with the process and what constituted the most obvious good and bad signs. This basic

³⁷ It has been suggested that Alexander did not wish to proceed further and tricked his army into this reluctance to proceed: SPANN 1999, 62-74. HECKEL 2003, 147-174. HOWE-MÜLLER 2012, 26-34 believe the entire incident owes much to the developing Alexander Romance, but see CARNEY 2015, 57-58, and ANSON 2015, 65-74, who believe the incident is much as described in our sources.

³⁸ ANSON 2013, 171-174; 2015, 65-74.

³⁹ On Alexander's religiosity see EDMUNDS 1971.

⁴⁰ KING 2004, 126 n. 5.

⁴¹ Bribing an oracle was not unknown, but certainly was not sanctioned. The Athenian Cleisthenes had bribed the Delphic oracle (*Hdt.* 5.66.1).

⁴² See *Cic. Div.* 2.33, 57-58, 70.

knowledge is also shown, when Alexander to encourage his troops, even with no evidence that the troops were doubting his word, ordered the sacrificial victims to be shown to the soldiers “so that the soldiers need not depend on what was reported, but seeing with their own eyes might have good hope concerning the coming danger” (Polyaen. 4.3.14). The favorable interpretation of the partial lunar eclipse that preceded the Battle of Gaugamela was also presented to the army (Curt. 4.10.4). While bad omens could be ignored and the operation could go forward, in the minds of the soldiers this would be done without much enthusiasm. Another aspect is that since the results were told to the king, he could easily suppress those he did not want revealed. Some results could be hidden. It is unlikely that anything as obvious as the interpretation of the actions of the Sacred Geese or Chickens by the Romans could be ignored. Here the favorable sign was the desire of the chickens or geese to eat and the unfavorable, their avoidance of food. Here, of course, if a favorable decision was required, the chickens would be starved before the formal ceremony and gorged before a desired unfavorable result⁴³. In Alexander’s world, while chickens’ appetites, as with most anything, might be seen as an occasional omen, there are no reports of Alexander keeping with him a flock of birds of any kind for divination purposes. The sacrifices and the examination of the circumstances of the sacrifice along with analyses of the internal organs of animals were the chief ways to discover the will of the gods, although birds and flights of birds were recognized as having omen potential; no domestic flocks were apparently kept for such purposes.

According to Curtius (7.7.8), the examination of the entrails was the duty of the *mantis*, the seer, done in private without the presence of anyone, even Alexander. The *mantis* would after inspection give his evaluation to, in this case, Alexander. The central figure in Macedonian religion was the king⁴⁴. Like in Spartan worship, a king was the chief priest and offered all public sacrifices. The king presided over all sacred festivals⁴⁵. Both the Spartan and the Macedonian royal families claimed divine descent from Zeus and Heracles (D.S. 14.13.8; Arr. *An.* 3.3.2; 4.7.4, 10.6, 11.6; D.S. 17.1.5; Plu. *Alex.* 2.1). Such ancestry in the eyes of the populace in general and the army in particular meant better access to the gods and better reliability of their responses. In Macedonia, there was no professional priesthood the king made the sacrifices and obtained the favor of the gods for his countrymen⁴⁶.

The most significant use of sacrifice in all its many roles was prior to military engagement. During the Classical Age it was claimed that this was usually done at least twice, before forming into battle formation and later once in line. In part, these were traditional practices, part of his duties as King, whether in peace or in war. Before battle, sacrifice was also made in two forms⁴⁷. Greek armies offered *hiera*, ‘sacrifices taken for divination purposes before an enterprise’, and *sphagia*, ‘supplicatory and propitiatory’ sacrifices during the battle: the difference in scheduling hinged on the different functions of these rites. In the first case, internal organs were examined: “*hiera* are the sacred parts of the sacrificed animals,” especially the liver. Haruspicy was seen as a skill for which there were manuals available for consultation⁴⁸. If the reading was

⁴³ See SHELDON 2005, 15.

⁴⁴ HAMMOND 1979, 133-156.

⁴⁵ Arr. *An.* 1.11.1; 3.1.14, 16.9, 25.1; 4.4.1; Plu. *Alex.* 29.1; D. 19.192-193; D.S. 16.91.4; Ath. 13.572 d-e.

⁴⁶ Arr. *An.* 3.16.9; 5.3.6; 6.3.2; 7.25.2; Plu. *Alex.* 23.3; D.S. 17.16.3, 18.1; Just. 9.4.1.

⁴⁷ PRITCHETT 1971, 109-115.

⁴⁸ See FURLEY–GYSEMBERGH 2015.

negative, the army did not leave camp⁴⁹. On the other hand, *sphagia* were “last-minute sacrifices to invoke the gods’ continued favor”⁵⁰. The major claimed difference between the two is that the *Hiera* could be performed well in advance of the actual battle or activity. There would be time to examine entrails as well as other signs, such as how the animal fell or how the blood flowed, at some leisure. It would also be possible to repeat the sacrifice in the hopes of getting a different response. The Spartan commander Dercylidas wishing to besiege Cebren repeated his sacrifices for four days without receiving a favorable response, but subsequently received one and the city surrendered to him (X. *HG* 3.1.16-19). With respect to the *sphagia*, there was likely little to no time for repetition or for the examination of the internal organs of the sacrificial animal⁵¹. This made it difficult with the battle soon starting to repeat what was seen as an unfavorable sacrifice. While this was likely the same procedure in the Hellenistic period, our late sources for Alexander, if Greek, most often simply refer to the sacrifice simply as *thusia*, generic for offering or sacrifice, and the Latin sources, as a *sacrificium*. The terms *hiera* (Arr. *An.* 3.1.5; 4.4.3) and *sphagia* (Plu. *Alex.* 25.1-2; Arr. *An.* 6.19.5; *Ind.* 20.10) occur seldom in our sources and do not conform in their usage to the above definitions.

While the performance of the sacrifices was most often the duty of military commanders or in this case the king, it was the specialists, the *Manteis*, who could read the portents (X. *An.* 6.4.13, 5.8; 7.1.37). Such individuals were ubiquitous in Greek society whether in peace or war. The Athenians had diviners present during every assembly and council meeting and always started such meetings with a sacrifice, and all magistrates took oaths attended by sacrifices⁵². With respect to Alexander, Aristander of Telmessus was the *mantis* extraordinaire⁵³. Telmessus was known for its diviners (Arr. *An.* 2.3.3). Aristander, according to later tradition, foretold Alexander’s future greatness (Plu. *Alex.* 2.2-3, 14.9; Arr. *An.* 1.11.3). He was then another legacy to Alexander from his father Philip. Aristander is referenced in Arrian eight times, seven times in Plutarch’s *Life of Alexander*, six times in Curtius⁵⁴. His subsequent reputation was associated with that of the most famous mythical masters of divination (Clem. *Al. Strom.* 1.21.134). He was, however, not the only *mantis* associated with Alexander and noted in our sources (Curt. 5.4.1-2)⁵⁵. Alexander’s entourage would eventually include Egyptian astrologers (Curt. 4.10.4, 13.15), Babylonian priests (Arr. *An.* 3.16.5; D.S. 17.112.2; Plu. *Alex.* 57.4, 75.1), and Persian *Magi* (Plu. *Alex.* 18.6.8; Arr. *An.* 7.11.8). On one occasion, Alexander accepted a spontaneous prophesy from a Syrian woman (Arr. *An.* 4.13.5-6; Curt. 8.6.16-17)⁵⁶.

⁴⁹ PRITCHETT 1971, 113.

⁵⁰ PRITCHETT 1971, 111.

⁵¹ On these practical distinctions, see JAMESON 1991, 204-205. While PRITCHETT 1979, 73 claims that only the first included divination, while the second was entirely supplicatory, JAMESON 1991, 205-206 accurately proclaims that both could and often did involve divination.

⁵² PRITCHETT 1979, 65.

⁵³ See GREENWALT 1982; KING 2004; NICE 2005.

⁵⁴ Neither Diodorus nor Justin make direct reference to Aristander, although some have taken Diodorus’ reference to a diviner named Alexander as a mistake for Aristander (D.S. 17.17.6) See below.

⁵⁵ Greek seers named in the histories are Demophon (Arr. *An.* 7.26.2; Curt. 9.4.27-29; D.S. 17.98.3-4), Cleomantis (Plu. *Alex.* 50.5) or Cleomenes (Arr. *An.* 7.26.2; for Cleomenes being the correct name, see HECKEL 2006, 89), Peithagoras (Arr. *An.* 3.16.4; 7.18.1-5; Plu. *Alex.* 73.3-4; App. *BC* 2.152), and a doubtful Alexander (D.S. 17.17.6, 18.1; regarded as a mistake for Aristander, KING 2004, 57; HECKEL 2006, 21). There were likely many others.

⁵⁶ According to Aristobulus, this woman had for some time followed Alexander about and in fits of seeming divine possession she made predictions. At first, she was a figure of amusement, but when her

Omens and portents fill the accounts of Alexander's campaign, and there is little doubt that Alexander as well as his army were true believers in signs, omens, and divination. On Alexander's supposed visit to the Oracle at Delphi, he arrived on a day that was unlawful to deliver an oracle. Not deterred, Alexander proceeded to drag the Pythia to the temple. "Overcome by his ardor, she said 'Thou art invincible, my son!'" That was all Alexander wanted to hear. Alexander, interpreting the utterance himself, proclaimed it was a spontaneous prophecy (Plu. *Alex.* 14.6-7). Prior to the battle on the Granicus, a statue of Ariobarzanes fell to the ground and was interpreted as demonstrating that Alexander would win a great victory within the borders of Phrygia (D.S. 17.17.6-7). A bird flying above and even perching on Alexander's head was interpreted as indicating a plot against the king's life (Arr. *An.* 1.25.6-10)⁵⁷, another bird flight was a sign to avoid a naval battle (Arr. *An.* 1.18.6-9), a raven drops a clod of earth indicating Gaza would be captured, but Alexander needed to take special care of his person (Arr. *An.* 2.26.4, 27.2; Plu. *Alex.* 25.4-5; Curt. 4.6.12)⁵⁸, a lunar eclipse seen by Aristander as a favorable sign (Arr. *An.* 3.7.6, 15.7; cf. Plu. *Alex.* 31.8; Curt. 4. 10. 1-7)⁵⁹, and blood appearing to flow out of broken bread (Curt. 4.2.14; D.S. 17.41.7). In the case of the last, Aristander declared that, if the blood had flowed into the bread that would have been a bad sign, but since it flowed out all would be well, since it indicated the fall of Tyre to Alexander. Aristander was popular with Alexander because he had a valid, positive, explanation for most everything, and he forecast ultimate success for whatever Alexander wished to attempt. Danger might be involved, but the forecast was always in some fashion favorable. Perhaps, the most generic of all his predictions regarding the campaign was the omen near the Oxus River where springs of water and oil were seen. Aristander interpreted the omen proclaiming that the spring of oil was a sign of difficulties to come, but to end in victory (Arr. *An.* 4.15.7-8; Plu. *Alex.* 57.5-9; cf. Curt. 7.10.14)⁶⁰. At Gaza, Aristander predicted that the city would be captured but that day Alexander needed to be very cautious (Arr. *An.* 2.26.4; Plu. *Alex.* 25.4; Curt. 4.6, 11-12). Alexander was in fact seriously injured in the siege (Arr. *An.* 2.27.2; Plu. *Alex.* 25.5; Curt. 4.6.17-21). Similarly, at the Tanais, when the omens were not favorable, Alexander sacrificed again and this time Aristander said that it would be very dangerous

predictions continued to be correct, she gained access to the king at any time, day or night (Arr. *An.* 4.13.5-6).

⁵⁷ Aristander's reasoning here is interesting. He interpreted the sign as not only indicating a plot but also that it would be discovered. He based this on the nature of the swallow, "a domestic bird, friendly to man, and more talkative than any other bird". BOSWORTH 1980, 162 comments: "In Aristander's view the twitterings of the benevolent swallow were most likely to portend the revelation of a conspiracy". BADIAN 2000, 57-58 declares the whole episode to be an invention to arrest the Lyncestian, thereby making the omen or at least its interpretation a deliberate fabrication, but then Badian also doubts the entire episode of the sons of Aeropus conspiring against Philip (BADIAN 2000, 54). This flies in the face of the testimony of our sources. While Badian says the brothers had nothing to gain, since they were not Argeads and therefore not eligible for the throne, but then why did Alexander desire to kill them? They may have had a personal grudge against the king and/or hoped through the assassination to place Amyntas Perdicca on the throne (ANSON 2020, 175-176).

⁵⁸ In point of fact, Alexander was seriously injured in the assault (Arr. *An.* 2.27.2; Curt. 4.6.17; Plu. *Alex.* 25.8).

⁵⁹ Curtius states that it was Egyptian seers who interpreted the eclipse. They declared that the sun represented the Macedonians and the moon the Persians who would be eclipsed by the Macedonians in battle. Curtius declares that Alexander believed that the Egyptians were the most skilled in reading the heavens (Curt. 4.10.4).

⁶⁰ Curtius presents a much different account. Soldiers had been sent to dig a well but without success. Later a spring was discovered near Alexander's tent and since they had been late in discovering it, they proclaimed that it had suddenly appeared and the king himself also wanted this to be seen as a gift from the gods.

for Alexander to cross the river, but the operation would be successful. While Alexander ignored the warning and did cross successfully, he later became dangerously ill (Arr. *An.* 4.4.3-9), or so says Arrian. Curtius (7.7.3-29) states that Aristander did indeed change his earlier prediction, even commenting that now he had never seen more favorable entrails. Aristander predicted the fall of Tyre, but stated it would be only after great effort (Arr. *An.* 2.18.1; Curt. 4.2.14). Perhaps, the most interesting non sacrifice was at the Persian Gates where Aristander declared that sacrificing in the current crisis was “untimely” (Curt. 5.4.1-2). This was one of the few times when the outcome if the struggle continued was very doubtful even to Alexander.

In his other readings, Aristander often suggests that the operation would be difficult, but Alexander would succeed in the face of grave danger to his person. Given Alexander’s general success and his penchant for facing danger, most of these predictions were reasonably obvious, especially if the prediction also implied danger for Alexander. On those occasions where Alexander did suffer harm, the seer would appear infallible. Of course, one might ask how many times the same prediction was given but not recorded, and how many times Alexander, while facing great danger, avoided it and returned virtually unscathed, but thankful for the warning. One wonders if Aristander predicted the danger on the Granicus where Cleitus saved Alexander’s life (Arr. *An.* 1.15.8; Plu. *Alex.* 16.11; D.S. 17.20.7; Curt. 8,1.20). Maybe this was a usual prediction which was given here as well but not recorded by our sources. Given Alexander, it is likely that he would be exposed to great danger. Declaring the possible danger to the king also meant, if he was killed or badly injured, as *mantis*, you were covered. The suggestion here is that seers were skilled at reading portents, entrails, and omens in the context of the situation. They were trained observers and as such better able to ‘understand’ what the gods intended. Even before setting foot in Asia there was the report that a statue of Orpheus in Pieria had begun to perspire. Aristander declared that the omen indicated that Alexander’s campaign would succeed (Arr. *An.* 1.11.2; Plu. *Alex.* 14.9). Forgetting for the moment that this tale could well be apocryphal, the omen and its interpretation suggest much with respect to the role and practice of the *mantis*. Arrian reports that there were many interpretations of this omen, but Aristander’s was accepted. Our seer’s reasoning is interesting. He argued that the omen was an indication that the writers of epics and songs and odes would in the future be engaged in the hard work of praising Alexander’s exploits.

Not too surprisingly, multiple interpretations were obviously possible for every omen. For example, perspiring statues did not always elicit such an interpretation as the one offered for the perspiring statue by Aristander. Among the many signs of the coming destruction of Thebes, statues in the city, when Alexander arrived to begin the siege in 335, began to sweat (D.S. 17.36.4). Most are familiar with the different interpretations of the Delphic proclamation to the Athenians to defend themselves behind a wooden wall, which Themistocles as it turned out correctly interpreted as built ships (Hdt. 7.143.2-3; 8.51.2). With respect to Alexander, the appearance of a whale during the siege of Tyre led to two different interpretations. Tyrians saw it as a sign they would succeed in resisting Alexander’s siege; the Macedonians, a sign of success (D.S. 17.41.5-6). The Macedonians obviously interpreted it accurately.

Alexander himself on occasion interpreted the signs himself. When Parmenion had witnessed an eagle perched astern of Alexander’s ships, he declared that this was a sign for the Greeks to attack the Persian fleet. Alexander declared that Parmenion’s reading of the omen was highly improbable. To fight a superior fleet with an inferior one was ‘irrational’. Alexander, since the bird was on land, interpreted the omen as showing that he was to defeat the Persian fleet on land (Arr. *An.* 1.18.6-9), which is exactly what he

did⁶¹. Where different interpretations were presented, human ‘rationality’ could come to the rescue. While in Sardis and contemplating building a Temple to Zeus a storm appeared and Alexander took it to be a sign that Zeus approved his plan (Arr. *An.* 1.17.6). As the chief priest and king, in any case, it was Alexander’s decision to follow the advice, even of *manteis*, or not. As noted above, Alexander, when he wished to cross the Tanais and the sacrificial signs were initially unfavorable, repeated the sacrifices, and this time the results declared that the crossing would be dangerous personally to Alexander. He decided to attack across the river anyway, and personally suffered as a result (Arr. *An.* 4.4.1-9). Arrian reports that Aristander resisted Alexander’s attempts to have the seer “interpret the sacrifices in any way contrary to the signs from heaven” (Arr. *An.* 4.4.3). Since it was interpretation, asking the seer to think again what it meant was not the same as falsifying the omen. Later, when Alexander learned from the seer Demophon that attacking a particular city of the Mallians would involve him in great personal danger (D.S. 17.98.3-4; Curt. 9.4.27-29), Alexander berated the seer not so much for the prediction but rather that he made it a public pronouncement, which Alexander thought would discourage his troops. Of course, Alexander proceeded and as a result of his actions suffered a serious wound (Arr. *An.* 6.10.1-11. 8; Plu. *Alex.* 63; Curt. 9.4.30-5.20; D.S. 17.99.3; Just. 12.9.4-13; App. *BC* 2.152). These sort of risks Alexander was willing to make, achieving success in the midst of great personal danger. It certainly fit his self-image⁶². Supposedly Alexander’s favorite line from the *Iliad* (3.179) was “both things is he: both a goodly king and a mighty warrior” (Plu. *Mor.* 331c). Plutarch even suggests that Alexander gloried in his wounds.

Besides interpreting sacrifices, other forms of portents⁶³ and omens, dreams could also require proper interpretation since these were often seen as guides to the future. These were viewed as unsolicited natural occurrences. As with formal sacrifices, the interpretation of these was the proper responsibility of the *mantis*. Dreams were seen as an important way for the gods to inform recipient of the future, but not all dreams were regarded by the ancients as predictive. Those presented in our accounts of Alexander are all determined to be such. The literary motif of predictive dreams notwithstanding, judging from Xenophon’s personal descriptions of two dreams, certain dreams perhaps those that remained clear and distinct after waking may have been generally thought to foreshadow the future. After the disaster that followed Cyrus’ death, Xenophon (*An.* 3.1.11-25) had a dream in which a clap of thunder signaled that a bolt of lightning had struck his father’s house, setting it ablaze. Xenophon judged the dream to be a sign from Zeus. As with sacrificial divination, dreams were, as seen above, open to multiple interpretations. Xenophon interpreted his father’s burning house as saying that Zeus was warning him that if the Greeks did not make decisions to leave and do so rapidly, they might be cut off and unable to escape. As with any kind of divination, dreams were subject to manipulation and even, perhaps, with outright creation. Aristander had previously been associated with Alexander’s father and it was he who supposedly interpreted Philip’s dream regarding Alexander’s conception that he would be “lion-like” (Plu. *Alex.* 2.4). While interpreting omens and sacrificial signs were physical and there was a certain degree of common knowledge regarding what was favorable and unfavorable, dreams, while their content was subject to interpretation, could not be independently verified as having truly occurred. Certain of

⁶¹ ANSON 2013, 151.

⁶² On Alexander’s self-image, see ANSON 2021, 14-32.

⁶³ Portents in modern parlance are usually reserved for signs of immediate success or peril while omens suggest something to happen in the more distant future.

Alexander's recorded dreams suggest outcomes that favor Alexander. During his siege of Tyre, Alexander dreamt that Heracles was welcoming him into the city. The dream was interpreted by Aristander as showing that after much labor the city would fall to Alexander (Arr. *An.* 2.18.1; Plu. *Alex.* 24.5; Curt. 4.3.17). In another dream again connected to Tyre, Alexander dreamt that he saw a satyr who eluded his grasp but was finally caught (Plu. *Alex.* 24.8-9). The interpretation was as with the previous interpretation, much effort but ultimate success. Curtius (9.8.26-27) relates a dream where a serpent reveals to Alexander a poison cure. The founding of Alexandria was also associated with a dream. An old man appears in his dream quoting Homer. "Now, there is an island in the much-dashing sea, in front of Egypt; Pharos is what men call it" (Plu. *Alex.* 26.5). The rest as they say is history. Neither Alexander, nor Aristander, were cavalier in their use of dreams or interpretation of them. Dream interpretation was an art. Like haruspicy much of the interpretation was a learned skill requiring intelligence and likely a dash of 'rational thought'. They were, it is true, often used as literary devices to drive a plot⁶⁴, and it is not impossible that some may have been invented either by our surviving historians or their sources to do the same. But, dream interpretation were part of the repertoire of a *mantis* and books existed listing dream images and their meanings (Artem. *Proem.* 2.44)⁶⁵.

Almost every natural occurrence had the potential of being a sign. There was not much that could not be seen as such. For many of these the interpretation was commonly known. A sneeze, for example, was considered a lucky omen. After the murders of the generals, while Xenophon was addressing the soldiers, someone sneezed and all immediately did obeisance to Zeus from whom it was believed that the omen came (*An.* 3.2. 9). Prior to the Battle of Gaugamela, an eagle was sighted flying about Alexander's head, and while Aristander declared it "a sure sign of victory", the sighting was a clear sign to the army in no need of a professional interpretation (Curt. 4.15.27; Plu. *Alex.* 33.2-3). While many of these required no special skill in interpreting, other signs were less obvious and required a *mantis*. In his planning of his Alexandria in Egypt, Alexander wished to create for his builders an outline of the fortification but had nothing to use to mark the borders. Ultimately, the outline was made using ground grain poured along the ground. Two prophecies came from the use of this meal. In the first, given by Aristander, the use of the grain indicated that the city would be prosperous especially "in the fruits of the earth" (Arr. *An.* 4.3.1-2; Str. 17.1.6). A second omen occurred when birds appeared and devoured the grain. While initially concerned that this was an evil omen, Alexander was assured by his '*manteis*' that this was a favorable omen showing that the city would have abundant resources and be like a mother for men of many nations (Plu. *Alex.* 26.8-10; Curt. 4.8.6).

Much of Alexander's campaign with respect to religion would appear quite normal to Greeks fighting in any era, but certain aspects were quite unusual. While holy wars had been fought in the past, these were against Greek opponents. Philip's and subsequently Alexander's campaign was launched as revenge on the Persians for their destruction of Greek religious sites during the invasion of 480-479⁶⁶. Philip had emphasized his service to the god Apollo during the Third and Fourth Sacred Wars, even during the Third having his soldiers wear laurel wreaths to show themselves as holy warriors (Just. 8.2.3). This same king had presented a statue of himself following a procession of statues representing the twelve Olympians shortly before his

⁶⁴ DEVEREUX 1976, 250-251.

⁶⁵ HUGHES 2000, 1-18; KING 2002, 79-80.

⁶⁶ See SQUILLACE 2010, 69-80, 260-264.

assassination (D.S. 16.92.5, 95.1). Many interpretations have been placed on this act by modern scholars, but the lack of comment in the speeches of the Athenian orators and in particular Demosthenes, would suggest that it did not raise any eyebrows. The likelihood then is that Philip was presenting himself as the champion of the gods, not as one of the Olympians himself⁶⁷. While proclaiming the upcoming invasion of the Persian Empire a war of revenge and its proposed leader as the agent of the gods was certainly employing propaganda designed to get much of the Greek world behind the invasion. It was clearly meant to instill the army with a sense of purpose and belief in the gods' support. Philip, of course, was assassinated before he could lead his expedition, leaving that to his son and heir Alexander. Alexander was to continue the war as one of revenge and, like his father, to emphasize his role as the gods' chosen instrument. While likely apocryphal, the trip to Delphi with the proclaimed omen of invincibility would strengthen his standing with his army. In fact, any such seeming endorsement of success would have been welcomed by the troops. Favorable omens had preceded each of Alexander's great battles against the Persians: Granicus (D.S. 17.17.6-7; Plu. *Alex.*16.2), Issus (Curt. 3.8.22)⁶⁸, and Gaugamela (Curt. 4.15.27; Plu. *Alex.* 33.2-3). Without a doubt his 'undoing' of the Gordian Knot was certainly designed to emphasize that same invincibility. Alexander had completed the task that foretold his conquest of Asia. When combined with Alexander's success on the Granicus, his soldiers must have been much emboldened. After the success at Issus and subsequently Tyre and Gaza, Alexander's invincibility must have seemed proven beyond doubt. While victory was not a guarantee of protection for each individual soldier, defeat was most surely a promise of personal disaster.

“There was no convention requiring fighters to show mercy to enemy combatants defeated in battle. This was true even if they attempted to surrender. The victor had the option of killing the enemy soldiers on the spot, enslaving them, or exchanging them for ransom”⁶⁹.

The most fascinating aspect of the intersection of Alexander's campaign, his personal pursuit of glory and religion occurred in Egypt. Here, Alexander had one of his famous *pothoi*, longings, that overcame him on occasion to go somewhere or perform some act. His crossing of the Danube (Arr. *An.* 1.3.5) and his undoing of the knot at Gordium (Arr. *An.* 2.3.1) were both the results of these *pothoi*. After his triumphant entrance into Egypt, Alexander journeyed into the Libyan desert to consult the Oracle of Zeus/Ammon. This oracle proclaimed Alexander not just a descendant, but an actual son of Zeus⁷⁰. It is here, where his use and abuse of divination may be most clearly seen. After entering Egypt, Alexander was accepted as the legitimate ruler or pharaoh of the country, making him in official Egyptian iconography at least a living god⁷¹. As such, he was by definition the son of Ammon/Ra. The oracle at Siwah was both an

⁶⁷ See ANSON 2020, 163-165.

⁶⁸ While the outcome of the sacrifice is not stated, it appears almost certain that it was favorable.

⁶⁹ LANNI 2008, 480; see ANSON 2023, forthcoming.

⁷⁰ ANSON 2013, 97-109.

⁷¹ While it is unlikely that Alexander underwent the very elaborate coronation rites of a pharaoh of Egypt, but temple evidence certainly makes clear he was the acknowledged ruler of Egypt. In inscriptions discovered in Luxor in Thebes, Alexander is described as “Horus”, “the beloved of Ammon”, but most typically as the “son of Amon-Ra” or the “son of Ra”, in any translation into Greek of the Egyptian greetings or ceremonials, Ammon or Zeus would have been used for Amon-Ra or Ra: LEPSIUS 1972, pls. 32, 82-83; Ab. IV, pls. 3-5; ABD EL-RASIQ 1984; VON BECKERATH 1984, 232-233; DERCHAIN 1996, 91-99.

Egyptian and a Greek oracle. For Egyptians, the god was Ammon/Ra; for the Greeks, Zeus/Ammon. Siwah was acknowledged in the Greek world as one of the chief oracles of Zeus. As I have contended elsewhere, Alexander saw the situation as a sign from the gods. He had come to believe that he had a divine father like his ancestor Heracles and now he could receive oracular acknowledgement of it. Not to mention, in the eyes of his soldiers such parentage with its accompanying parental support would increase not just his confidence but that of his soldiers as well. His trip to the oracle was with the full knowledge that the priest would have to acknowledge him, the pharaoh, as the son of Ra, who was in the Greek mind, Zeus. There was no bribe of the priests as declared by Justin (11.11.6), but rather, like his calendrical changes (see above), a manipulation of circumstances. He may even have seen this *pothos* as a summons from the gods to have this status recognized. This episode presents the very nature of Alexander's religiosity. He was taking advantage of the situation, his position in Egypt and an Egyptian/Greek oracle, but all in fulfilling the fate set forth for him by the gods⁷². He had been declared invincible, if not at Delphi, then at Gordium. His military accomplishments set him above every Greek mythical hero. A special acknowledgement of all his accomplishments would seem fitting and, as noted, at this point in his campaign, likely welcomed by his troops. Being the son of Zeus was not a claim to divinity as such, children of divinities did not automatically become divine either in life or death. Achilles never became a god and Heracles only after his death. As long as Alexander did not attempt to introduce any change in his relationship with his army or its commanders, it could be exploited to instill confidence in those under his command. While Philip could point to himself as Apollo's defender, Alexander could claim the support of the greatest of the Greek gods. While there is much evidence that later, after the great battles of the campaign, the journey down the Indus, and with his return to Iran and later Babylon, his soldiers had soured on his expanding pretensions and were offended at his appropriation of Iranian dress and customs, in the beginning of the campaign with the final outcome in doubt, the reaction of the rank-and-file to Alexander being acknowledged as the son of Zeus must have been seen as sign from the gods of success in their endeavors. Before the Battle of Gaugamela, while addressing his troops, according to Callisthenes, Alexander raised his right hand and prayed to the gods that, if he was the son of Zeus, to strengthen and defend the Greeks (Plu. *Alex.* 33.1). This and the appearance of the eagle above Alexander's head "filled the troops with great courage" (Plu. *Alex.* 33.2-3).

Twice already the success of Alexander's campaign had been proclaimed. Arriving at Gordium in Asia Minor, Alexander had a *pothos* to go to the Acropolis (Arr. *An.* 2.3.1). At Gordium in the palace on the acropolis was a wagon with an elaborate knot connecting its yoke. The belief was that anyone who could untie the knot would rule Asia. Failing in his attempt to untie the knot, he either sliced through it with a sword or loosed the pin (Arr. *An.* 2.3.6-8; Curt. 3.1.14-18). That evening a convenient thunderstorm was taken by Alexander and his companions as a sign that the king had indeed successfully fulfilled the omen (Arr. *An.* 2.3.8)⁷³. Every such apparent divine endorsement of the campaign would have strengthened the morale of his army.

⁷² BADIAN 1981, 66 believes that "among the mysteries communicated to him by his divine 'father' at Siwah there must have been an explicit promise ... that he would become a god in his lifetime".

⁷³ Previously at Sardis, Alexander was contemplating building a Temple to Zeus when a storm came up with crashes of thunder and violent rain. Alexander took this as a sign of approval from Zeus (Arr. *An.* 1.17.6).

Alexander would later sour his relations with his army and many of his commanders. After Alexander had conquered the Persian heartland, his war of revenge became one of conquest and the Macedonian king increasingly took on autocratic airs. He was now not just the King of Macedonia and the Hegemon of the League of Corinth, he was the self-proclaimed King of Asia⁷⁴. His relationship with his army became transformed by the change in the very nature of the war. More mercenary in their relationship to their king and more reluctant to take on increasing risks. Moreover, the king had progressively taken on the airs of an autocrat and had become more and more frustrated with his Macedonians and the Macedonian traditions of monarchy⁷⁵. While the process had begun well before, certainly after Alexander's return from India, he had accelerated his incorporation of Asian units into his army. The Macedonians had angered Alexander by their reluctance on the Hyphasis to proceed eastward into India. The estrangement had begun earlier in 327 with the king's attempt to introduce into his court ceremony the Persian practice of *proskynesis* or prostration. While there have been attempts to associate this attempt with political matters, Alexander's court now was like the modern united nations, with Persians enjoying prominent positions. It is clear, however, in the discussion found in our sources of the events leading up to its attempted introduction, that the practice was to establish a very different relationship between king and subjects than was the traditional case in Macedonia. According to Arrian (*An.* 5.10.6-12.5), an arranged discussion was initiated in a symposium by Anaxarchus who argued that "there was far greater justification for regarding Alexander as a god than Dionysus and Heracles". He argued that Alexander had achieved more than even many of the gods and was a native Macedonian, while Dionysus was a Theban and Heracles an Argive, and thereby Alexander was more worthy of worship by his countrymen than these other deities. A similar discussion had earlier led to the murder of Cleitus (*Arr. An.* 4.8). Here, in the midst of heavy drinking, the discussion had turned to a comparison of Alexander's achievements with those of Castor and Pollux, Heracles, and even his mortal father Philip. Cleitus became enraged at the belittling of the deeds of the legendary heroes and Philip, and declared that Alexander's victories had not been his alone, but these were the achievements of the Macedonians at large. With both men well intoxicated, the discussion grew increasingly violent and in the end Alexander stabbed Cleitus to death. What these incidents show is that Alexander wanted to be recognized with many of the honors reserved by tradition only to the gods.

Perhaps in association with his divine pretensions, near the time of his death, Alexander showed signs of becoming excessively superstitious (*Plu. Alex.* 73.5, 75.1)⁷⁶. Omens interpreted as predicting his impending death now appeared. The Indian philosopher Calanus while going to his own funeral pyre greeted many but refused to approach Alexander, stating that "he would meet him in Babylon and greet him there" (*Arr. An.* 7.18.6). The seer Peithagoras likewise predicted his death (*Arr. An.* 7. 18.3; *Plu. Alex.* 73.3-5)⁷⁷. These were followed by the warnings of the Babylonian priests (*Arr. An.* 7.16.5-17.6; *Plu. Alex.* 73.1-2; *D.S.* 17.112.2-3; *Just.* 12.13.3-5). While Alexander did believe that some of these warnings were simply attempts by the

⁷⁴ FREDRICKSMEYER 2000, 136-149.

⁷⁵ ANSON 2013, 166-172.

⁷⁶ Curtius (4.6.12) even proclaims that for a time Alexander was not affected by superstition. Curtius is not, however, clear on this issue. He later states that this "excessive superstition" was seen in Sogdiana (*Curt.* 7.7.8; cf. *Plu. Alex.* 57.4), but later in India, he has Alexander proclaim: "that anything could be a greater hindrance than a seer enslaved by superstition?" (9.4.29). This may be a product of Curtius' own skepticism (see KING 2004, 30).

⁷⁷ He previously is reported also to have predicted Hephaestion's death (*Arr. An.* 7.18.2).

Babylonian priests to keep him out of their affairs (Arr. *An.* 7.17.1)⁷⁸, he nonetheless took them seriously, but finally circumstances obliged him to ignore them. He entered the city without apparent consequences, but new troubling omens appeared. On entering the Babylon, Plutarch (*Alex.* 74.2) reports that a flock of ravens appeared and fought one another with some falling dead at Alexander's feet. While sailing, a breeze blew Alexander's diadem off his head and into a patch of reeds which grew near the tombs of prior kings (Arr. *An.* 7.22.2-3). Additionally, the sailor sent to retrieve the diadem swam back with it on his head to keep it dry. It was reported in some unnamed sources that it was not some sailor who retrieved the ribbon but Seleucus, the future Diadoch, and that this portended Alexander's death and the former's eventual success (Arr. *An.* 7.22.5). These omens were in the source tradition followed by the episode of an obscure individual sitting on the royal throne (Arr. *An.* 7.24.1-3; cf. Plu. *Alex.* 73.7-9; D.S. 17.116.2-4). When asked why he had done so, his response was that the idea had just come to him⁷⁹. This, of course, gave the incident even greater weight as a sign. Who but the gods would have put such an idea into his head? Alexander's response to these unfortunate signs was to sacrifice to the gods "who avert evil" (D.S. 17.116.4)⁸⁰. Plutarch (*Alex.* 75.1) has Alexander in Babylon virtually emersed in superstition. While this view has been challenged⁸¹, the evidence does suggest that Alexander had become suspicious of certain omens and their interpretations, the great number of foreboding signs referenced by our sources, including by Aristobulus, Alexander's companion, must have had their effect on Alexander. I do not think, it was business as usual⁸². However, as Carol King points out, Alexander did have every reason at this point in his campaign to be suspicious of his companions and of the *manteis*, whether foreign or domestic. There had previously been a number of plots against his life⁸³.

In the final analysis, Alexander was a true believer in Greek religion and practice⁸⁴, but also consumed with his own divine pretensions. These two aspects, as shown, were not at odds given the wide parameters of Greek religious thought and practice. They did, however, offend many in his expedition. The tradition of Macedonia was of a king who was a first among equals, not a living god. Even here the main difficulty was that Macedonians did not wish to act as if they were in the presence of a divinity. They as free men did not want to prostrate themselves before their king. Those who followed after Alexander's death were not so squeamish. Especially in the Greek cities, old and new, where the power of the dynasts who arose after Alexander's death seemed to exceed that exhibited by the gods themselves. These dynasts came to receive routinely the honors associated with the divine. The extremes of this grandiose honoring of the living is found in the Athenian treatment of the new 'god' Demetrius. He and his father were both declared savior gods, with a priest to this new worship, the place where Demetrius first landed in Athens was consecrated and an altar erected, all their envoys

⁷⁸ Alexander had ordered the reconstruction of the Temple of Bel which had been destroyed by the Persians, but the project had not proceeded expeditiously (Arr. *An.* 7.17.1-2).

⁷⁹ Plutarch (*Alex.* 73.7) declares that the man was wearing the royal diadem and the king's robes. In this rendition of the event, the man claimed that Serapis had ordered him to wear the robe and diadem.

⁸⁰ These are not specifically mentioned. Hecate is referenced as such a goddess by Plutarch (*Quest. Con.* 7.6 [= *Mor.* 708f]). Most often the reference is as found here, gods who avert evil. (X. *HG* 3.3.4; Paus. 2.11.1).

⁸¹ HAMILTON 1973; KING 2004, 220-221.

⁸² KING 2004, 221 states that "Alexander practiced divination at the end of his life in much the same way he had always performed his customary religious duties". The change, in fact, if Curtius is to be believed, may have been from deep personal belief, to questioning, back to deep personal belief.

⁸³ ANSON 2013, 166-171.

⁸⁴ As proclaimed by Arrian (*An.* 7.28.1).

were to be called sacred deputies (Plu. *Demetr.* 10.3-11.1). In the words of Peter Green honors usually reserved for the gods became an extravagant recognition for the living.

“Sacrifices, sacred enclosures, tombs, statues, prostration (*proskynesis*), hymns, altars, and other such divine appanages are all, as Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1361a34-6) specifically states, simply marks of honor, the gesture itself, not its recipient (whether god or man), is the important thing, that is, mortals were simply sharing ‘some of the gods’ divine prerogatives”⁸⁵.

They were “honoring these rulers as ‘gods’ —not because they thought them immortal, but because they were receiving from them what, in the circumstances, only what gods could give”⁸⁶. In this respect, Alexander’s religious legacy was then little more than a broadening of the ranks of those who received divine honors. As with so much involving Alexander, his true religious significance was not anything intended. His conquests became the catalyst for what became known as the Hellenistic Age. New cults arose in the new lands under Greek administration, such as those of Isis and Serapis, but the old remained as well. Sacrifice and divination and the cults of gods honored by Alexander himself continued virtually without change, unlike the new mortal deities whose divine honors and privileges typically ended with their demise.

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⁸⁵ GREEN 1990, 402.

⁸⁶ MIKALSON 1998, 303.

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