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Siwa's Influence on Alexander the Great's Self-Presentation

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SIWA'S INFLUENCE ON ALEXANDER THE GREAT'S SELF-PRESENTATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Siwa's Influence on Alexander the Great's Self-Presentation

by

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As the most well-known figure in his day, Alexander the Great was almost never out of the public view. This thesis examines the role his visit to the Siwa Oasis played in Alexander's evolving understanding of himself throughout his career and how they correlate with those rare moments in which he was isolated from the public. This includes smaller moments of seclusion which occur after the death of Clitus, following the crisis of the Hyphasis river, during the Mutiny at Opis, and the aftermath of Hephaestion's death.

These changes are most fully evidenced in certain aspects of his public presentation: his sense of his parentage, his indulgence in luxury, his identification with non-Greek government structures, his increasing barbarism and cruelty, his relationship with his soldiers, and his apotheosis. While ancient and modern historians have discussed all these events at length, few have coupled the evolution of Alexander's sense of himself with the periods in which he briefly disappears from public view. By mapping the changes in his self-presentation against the unfolding history of his campaign across western Asia, it is possible to see a causal connection between them.

Most telling of all, however, are the events surrounding Siwa. Isolation spent in the flattery of a new culture altered the king's perspective and going forward he would begin to exhibit these changes through various modes, most importantly, isolation and self-presentation. Shifting from a traditional Homeric king to the Achaemenid successor of Persian land and habits.

(112 pages)

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Siwa's Influence on Alexander the Great's Self-Presentation

Luke Boardman

This thesis analyzes the changes in Alexander the Great's public image and how his visit to the Oracle of Ammon was a catalyst for these alterations. Examining moments of Alexander in isolation, his adoption of ostentatious habits, and enrobing himself in foreign attire and culture reveals a connection to his time in the Egyptian desert where Alexander was promised eventual authority over all mankind. The post-Siwa Alexander used these tools to leave behind the Hellenistic leader and become the Lord of Asia.

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Introduction

"…there are not one but many Alexanders, because every historian, or anyone seriously interested in him, creates an Alexander of her or his own. But that process of solipsistic Alexander-fashioning is by no means simple or straightforward…"
-Paul Cartledge[1]

Alexander the Great is a historical character who has beguiled and intrigued people across cultures, continents, and centuries: his generalship, his philosophical tendencies, and even the ashes and rubble he left in his wake. Alexander's imprint is also visible not only in Alexandria in Egypt but in the many cities he founded.[2] He even changed the geography of our planet, for instance, with the causeway he engineered to siege the island-city of Tyre.[3] But despite all this, there are still large gaps in the historical record concerning him, in particular, the inner workings of his personality, best evidenced in how he presented himself.

As Cartledge correctly asserts, all students who study him arrive at their own conclusions and create their own Alexanders. This thesis represents the Alexander I have discovered, one that has a specific vision of his self-presentation after he visited the Siwa Oasis and carefully managed until his death how that journey was expressed. It is true that his campaigns have been thoroughly examined and researched, but in that process it

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[1] Paul Cartledge, *Alexander the Great: A Hunt for a New Past* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2004), 56. This was originally said by Ulrich Wilcken which was most likely who Cartledge was referencing.
[2] Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, 17.52.
[3] Diodorus 17.30.4-5.

is easy to lose the connection between cause and effect, in particular, where the data show that Alexander retreated from the public eye and scrabbled together some momentary measure of isolation, a state of being that was extremely hard to attain for a man who would come to serve as the King of Macedon, Hegemon of Greece, Pharaoh of Egypt, Great King of Persia, and Conqueror of the East. The constant administration of a large and powerful empire, which involved an almost non-stop litany of envoys, receptions, and negotiations, left him very little alone-time.

However, highlighting and researching these periods of withdrawal from the larger world opens a new path to interpreting and better understanding the inner workings of the king's mind. While studying instances of isolation constitutes only a small piece in the complex jigsaw puzzle that is Alexander's life and legacy, they shed new and important light on his image of himself and his actions when he returned to the public eye. It is the coupled evolution of his sense of who he was after his visit to the Oracle of Ammon with those few moments in which he disappears from public view that this thesis aims to examine.

1. Outline of the Thesis

The first step in understanding anyone's Alexander is establishing the context in which he is being interpreted. The first chapter of this thesis will focus on Alexander's religious, familial, and psychological foundations which will serve as a control of sorts, a basis on which to construct a clearer understanding of the reasoning that underlay the series of images Alexander presented to the public as his life unfolded. It will also include

the evaluation of his biography as it has been provided through ancient sources as well as the different ways in which modern historians have characterized him.

Following that, the second chapter will target and contextualize those moments when he sought refuge from the world and give the necessary background information for the analysis and exegesis of these episodes, that is, how the king's self-image changed because of his visit to Siwa and, in particular, how he attempted to recreate the circumstances of that isolation throughout the rest of his military career. Next, these critical turning points will be examined in depth as to how they factored into his evolving self-presentation. This chapter will also include analysis of the various modes and venues he used to display this perception of himself, focusing in particular on his iconography, dress, and actions, including his emerging habits of barbaric cruelty, increased interest in luxury, and his general (mis)treatment of others.

Chapter 1: Background

1. Analysis of the Ancient Sources

First, however, it is necessary to articulate both the ancient sources extant for Alexander and modern researchers' views about them. To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that all ancient sources for Alexander are secondary, some arguably tertiary. None date to his lifetime or even the period immediately following. Indeed, several were written several centuries later, but they are all we have. With that, those that are complete or even semi-complete constitute our best information about Alexander's life and achievements in the Near East.

Writing in the second century AD, Arrian states in the preface to the *Anabasis of Alexander* that he based his narrative on the writings of Ptolemy and Aristobulus, two men who fought and traveled with Alexander.[4] He also claims that, when he found the two sources in disagreement, he chose what he deemed not only the more trustworthy one but also the account that seemed to him worthier of telling.[5] Also, he often informs the reader when a source is less credible to him and unlikely to be relaying correct facts, sometimes adding why he agrees with one version of a story. While a late work, Arrian provides the fullest extant account of Alexander's accomplishments, which gives him

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[4] F. W. Wallbank, *The Hellenistic World*, (Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 17; Eugene Borza, *The Impact of Alexander the Great: Civilizer or Destroyer*, ed. by Eugene Borza, (United States: The Dryden Press, 1974), 24; Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 269.
[5] Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander,* 1.Praef.1.

precedent as a historian of this period. Thus, his work has been dubbed the "official" tradition.[6]

The other sources include the writings of Quintius Curtius, Diodorus Siculus, and Justin whose works also contain valuable insights and have been titled the "vulgate" tradition.[7] These authors mainly adapted the writings of Cleitarchus, a Persian historian invited by Ptolemy to come to Alexandria after the conclusion of Alexander's campaigns.[8] However, scholars have shown some wariness about the trustworthiness of Justin's account. Wilcken, in particular, in his *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* called it a "wretched excerpt," mainly because of its inaccuracies and inconsistencies when compared to the other sources.[9] Of this work, Borza says "…it is unfortunate that Trogus is lost, for Justin must be a poor reflection of the original."[10] Despite their hesitations, scholars have grouped Curtius, Diodorus, and Justin together due to the consistencies in their accounts and the contrast they provide to sources based on the inextant narrative of Alexander's official court historian Callisthenes, along with the official tradition that underlies Arrian. In fact, it is important to realize that, regardless of the tradition these authors were using, they all had access to and wrote from the work of Callisthenes, which was largely hagiographic and designed to speak well of the king by transmitting pro-Alexander propaganda back to Greece. The record he left behind must have proven useful to later authors, especially for early events in the campaign up to 331 and perhaps even through 329.[11] All extant ancient sources for Alexander surely

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[6] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 270.
[7] Ibid., 270.
[8] Ibid., 278-80.
[9] Ulrich Wilken, *Alexander the Great,* trans. G. C. Richards (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1967), XXiX.
[10] Borza, *Impact of Alexander*, 22.
[11] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 271-273.

depended on this work, along with other eyewitness accounts which no longer exist. That does not mean, however, that these authors did not use other accounts, as in fact Plutarch and Arrian acknowledge having done, though Diodorus does not.[12]

Indeed, in terms of sources, Plutarch is a bit of an outlier.[13] There can be no doubt his writing benefited from a great trove of now lost ancient texts that discussed Alexander, and because of his biographical approach, the narrative he created is, unlike that of the other four, focused more on diagnosing Alexander's character rather than recording the history of his campaigns.[14]

2. Historiography

> Ulrich Wilcken, a well-respected scholar of Alexandrian studies, wrote in 1931:
>
> One soon comes to recognize that he is really dealing with three Alexanders or, rather, Alexander on three sometimes distinct, sometimes not clearly separable planes. The first of these is the mythological-romantic Alexander… The Second Alexander is the historical Alexander… The third Alexander is Alexander the man.[15]

It is undeniable that writers have mythologized and depicted Alexander in legends for centuries, some even during the Macedonian king's day. The dissection of his life into three different spheres has been a widely accepted approach ever since the first modern historian, Johann Gustav Droysen, whose work on Alexander the Great (1833) was set against the backdrop of German unification and the evolution of an absolute monarchy.[16]

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[12] Borza, *Impact of Alexander*, 24.
[13] It should be noted that citations of Plutarch will primarily be referencing the *Life of Alexander*. Any other work used by Plutarch will be explicitly mentioned within the citation, whereas his *Life of Alexander* will be cited as, for instance, "Plutarch, 1.1."
[14] Ian Scott-Kilvert and Timothy E. Duff eds., *The Age of Alexander*, (London: Penguin Group, 1973), 275; Cartledge, *Hunt for a new Past*, 270-271.
[15] Wilken, *Alexander*, iX-Xi.
[16] Glenn R. Bugh, ed*., The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 19.

Those current events clearly influenced his interpretation of Alexander the Great, for he believed him to be an "Inaugurator of a new age,"[17] a man who was looking to unify both Greeks and Persians under a "single god" by presenting himself as divine.[18]

Of course, as the first scholar to work in a new field, Droysen was bound to get some things wrong. Even so, his opinion of Alexander as a "world-mover" is still generally accepted today.[19] To Droysen, Alexander was carrying on his father and predecessor Philip's goals of conquering the East and unifying it with the West and, as he marched to and through Persia, he spread Hellenism and Greek culture across the Mediterranean world. While it is an accurate description of the Macedonian king's career, the foundation Droysen built in Alexandrian studies, and history in general, inspired later classicists and scholars to delve deeper into the sources and extract their own Alexanders as well. Thus, the spheres Droysen presented – romance, history and biography – have shifted and evolved since the 19th century but have maintained the controversial positions scholars still debate today.

Nearly a century later, Ulrich Wilcken asserted in contrast to Droysen that Alexander was just a common man who rose to the occasion that fate had placed before him,[20] a person who acted calmly in unprecedented circumstances, which allowed him to rise above the rest and take hold of the Macedonian state, and eventually the Persian empire.[21] His work provides substantial insights into the nature of Alexander's character, views that coincide with later arguments, as we will see below, such as those of Ernst

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[17] Bugh, *Cambridge Companion*, 9.
[18] Claude Mossé, *Alexander: Destiny and Myth,* trans. Janet Lloyd (Great Britain: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 198.
[19] Ernst Badian, *Collected Papers on Alexander the Great* (New York: Routledge, 2012), XiV.
[20] Wilcken, *Alexander*, XXi.
[21] Ibid., XXi.

Badian. For Wilcken, Alexander was a good leader, a figurehead who founded civilizations and expanded the Hellenistic world, the "personality of quite unique genius, a marvelous mixture of demonic passion, and sober clearness of judgement."[22]

To this day, Wilcken stands alone in his enthusiastic praise of the economic and urbanizing policies of Alexander.[23] However, unlike most later classicists, Wilcken only briefly addressed the topic of Alexander's divinity. While his work does not entirely overlook events like the trip to Siwa and Alexander's attempt to mandate *proskynesis*, he does not use them substantively in any argument which backs or attacks Alexander's motives for self-deification. Nonetheless, Wilcken's work continued building interest in this period of history, especially in German circles from which other modern students of Alexander emerged.

One of these was Fritz Schachermeyr, who wrote two books about Alexander in the critical years of 1944 and 1949, a time in Germany when racial identity was often being discussed, especially among the higher social classes. Applying current events and philosophies to his view of Alexander, Schachermeyr created a pre-Nazi "Führer-like figure"[24] who in mixing the races of Macedonians and Persians had committed an error of "biological sacrilege."[25] To him, "Alexander is a ruthless, ambitious imperialist who over the course of his conquests changed from king to despot,"[26] a view that Schachermeyr who went on to be a great scholar and contributor to this field would later be compelled to renounce.[27] Indeed, by all accounts, Alexander was quite attracted to the notion of the

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[22] Wilcken, *Alexander*, 239.
[23] Ibid., 255-61.
[24] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 248.
[25] Mossé, *Destiny and Myth*, 199.
[26] Ian Worthington, *Alexander the Great: Man and God* (Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 239-240.
[27] Mossé, *Destiny and Myth,* 199.

unity of mankind and, unlike some of his soldiers and officers, staunchly in favor of mixing cultures and races. Recognition of this fact opened the door for one of the most famous scholars in recent history to create a widely accepted vision of Alexander, one in which he is seen in an idealized light.

William W. Tarn, an Englishman, wrote his first volume on Alexander in 1948. For decades, his version of the Macedonian king as a genteel aristocrat was broadly accepted. He created an Alexander molded on the epitome of an upper-class nobleman, a social class to which Tarn himself belonged.[28] This Alexander displayed idealized characteristics and resorted "to violence only when forced to do so."[29] To do this, however, Tarn was obliged to gloss over or leave out events that directly militated against this presentation. Gone were the drunken rages, organized assassinations of friends, and cruel war crimes like the destruction of Thebes. Tarn's Alexander was also "faithful solely to his legitimate wife, never indulging in relations with mistresses, let alone with pretty boys."[30] The truth, as handed down, argued otherwise.

Biases aside, Tarn's work was still an excellently crafted narrative that praised the king's attempt to fuse the races and engender a "Brotherhood of Man." Readers found this encouragement of and subscription to the idea of a "unity of mankind"[31] endearing, especially when combined with his strong presentation of Alexander as a statesman and general.[32] Moreover, Tarn became one of the first scholars to address the troubling issue of the king's self-deification by crafting an alternate view. He pointed to moments when

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[28]Worthington 2004, *Man and God*, 239.
[29] Mossé, *Destiny and Myth,* 199.
[30] Ibid.*,* 199-200.
[31] Worthington 2004, *Man and God,* 239.
[32] W. W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great,* vol. 1, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), 137, 142.

the Macedonian seemed hesitant to assert such a claim, and highlighted the perplexing array of identities he adopted around the world.

> In Egypt Alexander was an autocrat and a god. In Asia he was an autocrat, but not a god. In old Greece he was a god, but not an autocrat. In Macedonia he was neither autocrat nor god, but a quasi-constitutional king over against whom his people enjoyed certain customary rights.[33]

But Tarn was also inconsistent. He acknowledged that Alexander was heralded a god in Greece but then questioned the integrity and true meaning of the deification decree passed by the members of the League of Corinth.[34] Though many scholars have endorsed Tarn's Alexander, the door was open again for a different approach and a new Alexander.

In the 1970's, Ernst Badian attack this idealized Alexander by closely analyzing the sources.[35] In a series of articles, later assembled in his *Collected Papers on Alexander the Great*, Badian again revolutionized the general perception of Alexander. Having studied the source material closely and in a respectful manner, he carefully dismantled the characteristics of many of the Alexanders that had been previously proposed, showing how they were built on misrepresentations of the evidence found in the primary sources. Badian, however, agreed with Tarn about one thing, that the process of deification was politically motivated. He famously said, "Alexander was never universally recognized as a god, nor even universally as 'equal' to one."[36]

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[33] Tarn, *Alexander the Great*, vol. 1, 138.
[34] Ibid., 140; Walbank acknowledged Tarn's view that Alexander pushed deification for political incentives. Walbank, however, stated the exact opposite in 1981 (*Hellenistic World*, 41), saying that "The request for divine honours seems more likely to have been a final step in the direction in which Alexander's thoughts had been moving [i.e. towards godhood] for some time."
[35] Badian, *Collected Papers*, XVii. It was common for professors in academia to publish a book or two, in fact it still is. Ernst Badian was a bit different however, for he refused to write a biography on Alexander the Great. Some assert that the closest he ever came was his piece entitled "Alexander the Great and the Loneliness of Power" found in *Alexander the Great: A Reader*.
[36] Ibid., 380.

Other than that, Badian believed Alexander was fundamentally bent on achieving power and that he was "an imperialist, who had no ideas of a brotherhood of man."[37] According to Badian, Alexander was not marrying off his officers and soldiers for the unity of mankind, or for any altruistic cause, but because he wanted a "…new ruling class of mixed blood, which would be free of all national allegiance or tradition."[38] Alexander had sacrificed friends, generals, and his own life to be "the man who conquered the world … only to lose his soul."[39] An extremely gifted writer, Badian crafts cogent arguments through a skilled analysis of the sources, all of which endowed him with great popularity that was nevertheless counterbalanced by the animus he engendered in his criticism of fellow scholars.

While Badian was still alive and active, Brian Bosworth wrote *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (1993). Towards the end of this work, Bosworth turned to the topic of Alexander's religious intentions, a difficult subject which scholars universally agree will never be fully understood. However, Bosworth introduced a refreshing twist by investigating hero cults in ancient Greece. Curious as to whether that type of worship ever existed for Alexander while he was still alive, or if it was established only after his death, Bosworth came to the conclusion that, while the living Alexander was portrayed with divine attributes, it does not mean that a cult existed or that he was worshipped in his day.[40] At the same time, Bosworth was adamant that

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[37] Worthington 2004, *Man and God*, 240.
[38] Badian, *Collected Papers,* 101.
[39] Ibid., 105.
[40] A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 287-290.

Alexander's attempt to deify himself did in fact made it easier for his successors to establish their own cults during their lifetimes.[41]

In 1997, N.G.L. Hammond published *The Genius of Alexander the Great*, and it is evident that his central drive was to remain as objective and as close to the sources as possible. He wisely states:

> The temptation for the modern writer is to pick and choose from these narratives what suits his own conception of Alexander's personality and to bring the portrayal of Alexander into line with a modern scale of values.[42]

Hammond resurrected the idea that Alexander sought some form of unity among all mankind, an argument that few had made since the days of Tarn. While asserting that the Macedonian believed in this idea, Hammond still maintained the notion that the Greeks were superior to other civilizations.[43] To support this, he points to Alexander's belief that the *oikoumene* ("fatherland") should encompass the entirety of the earth, and that Alexander and his forces should serve as its defenders.[44]

Recycling a different theme, one of the latest authors to discover his own Alexander is Ian Worthington whose *Alexander the Great: Man and God* (2004) revives the question of what drove Alexander's well-documented self-deification: was it more a matter of personal or political ambition? Following Bosworth and Walbank who saw it as a matter of personal choice, Worthington claims that Alexander "thought himself a god on earth, son of Zeus."[45] The introduction to his book affirms as much: "My approach to Alexander is that his pretension to personal divinity is the key to the motives and actions

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[41] Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 290.
[42] N. G. L. Hammond, *The Genius of Alexander the Great* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), IV.
[43] Hammond, *Genius of Alexander,* 199.
[44] Ibid., 202.
[45] Worthington 2004, *Man and God,* Xi.

of his reign."[46] However, a perspective that focuses primarily on Alexander's religious activities rather than all three spheres of his life – character, religion, and legend – serves only to perpetuate old and well-worn debates squeezed dry a hundred years ago. This approach has done little to advance the larger interests of scholarship on Alexander.

In sum, there are many different Alexanders, and he will always be a hotly debated character of history, nor is significant new information about his intentions and goals likely to be forthcoming. Thus, it is only through speculation based on examination of the sources that every scholar, author, and casual reader constructs their own Alexander. Did he think himself a god, as Worthington, Bosworth, and Walbank believed, or should we give credence to Badian's power-seeking Alexander whose ambition drove him and his hapless army all the way to India? After Alexander's death, many different cults based on his divinity emerged, and all of them too had their own Alexanders. He even made his way into the Christian calendar of Coptic Egypt where he was morphed into a saint. Later, he was depicted as a prophet in the Koran.[47]

Study of Alexandrian scholarship follows, as many topics in Classics do, an *ouroboros* cycle – the snake that is eating its own tail – and there is a great need to take a new look at the general's journeys, friendships, and relationships, for only so much speculation is possible about a personage who has been mythologized ever since he crossed the Hellespont and launched a campaign that changed the world. To build on any of the aforementioned Alexanders, one must always start with a foundation. By investigating the core and innerworkings of the king, especially through the lens of those periods when he was able to isolate himself, the opportunity arises to see the external and

[46] Worthington 2004, *Man and God*, Xii.
[47] Cartledge, *A Hunt for a New Past*, 249.

internal pressures that changed foundational characteristics in his view and presentation of himself. That is the goal of this thesis.

3. The Foundation of Alexander's Character

For all we know about Alexander, there are notable gaps of time where the primary sources do not cover or extensively discuss the events around him. One of them is his childhood. Most of the information available regarding this period of his life comes from Plutarch, as one might expect of a biographer, but even he provides only a brief glimpse into how Alexander was raised.

As one might expect of any noble or royal of that time in ancient Macedon, his father Philip II brought in three different tutors to educate the young prince and instill heroic values in his heir. The most famous of these was, of course, Aristotle who not only taught Alexander about philosophy, medicine, and politics but also capitulated to Alexander's love of Homer and bestowed upon him his own annotated version of the *Iliad*.[48] While there seems to be some sort of estrangement between the student and teacher during Alexander's later campaigns, the lessons he learned from the famous philosopher and his other preceptors seem to have proven valuable to the future king,[49] Though their impact appears to have tapered off over time, his search for glory was almost certainly built on the instruction of these tutors, and especially their emphasis on Homeric values (Plutarch, 5.5).

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[48] For more on Aristotle as Alexander's tutor, see Plutarch, 7. The reference to Aristotle's copy of the *Iliad* which Alexander kept under his pillow is found in 8.2.

[49] Plutarch (8.3-4) certainly believes that Alexander was taught by Aristotle to be the ideal man, one who loves knowledge and the arts while also treating people kindly, especially after Alexander obtained the wealth of the Persian Empire.

Another visible aspect of his childhood was the strong relationship and close bond he formed with his mother, Olympias. Plutarch, for instance, cites one of Alexander's many letters to Olympias in which he promises to tell her all the intricate details surrounding his visit to the Oracle of Ammon (Plutarch, 27.5).[50] Other authors describe events where Olympias warns Alexander of secret plots against his life which she has uncovered back in Macedon.[51] Because she outlived him, this intense maternal connection was a constant in Alexander's life, and it was not just Olympias but also the many mother figures he sought who played important roles in his life. For example, he treated Darius' mother, Sisigambis, who was quite fond of Alexander, as a maternal figure after the Persian king abandoned her in the wake of his loss at Issus.[52] She indeed exerted enough power over the Macedonian king to convince him to stop a particularly grueling attack on an enemy who had begged for mercy.[53]

This close bond with his mother also supports some of the characteristics regarding his divine parentage which Alexander expresses in the narratives that survive. His deep respect and devotion to religion must recur in some way to Olympias' involvement in the mystery cults of Samothrace (Plutarch, 2.1), as well as the stories he heard from her which were filled with divine elements surrounding his birth and allusions to his own divine origin (Plutarch, 2.2-3, 3.2). This devotion to religion was not just a personal matter but also pertained to his royal duties since "the Macedonian kingship was

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[50] Plutarch commonly mentions letters either sent from or to Alexander, the validity of the citations to these letters are debatable.

[51] According to Arrian (7.12.5), Olympias apparently convinced Alexander that Antipater was a dangerous threat. This gives birth to suspicion of Antipater's and Cassander's potential poisoning of the king. Also, in Diodorus (17.32.1-2), Olympias warns Alexander of a plot against his life instigated by Alexander of Lyncestia.

[52] Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander*, 3.12.17.

[53] Few others were able to sway Alexander's mind once it was made up, and even close and trusted court attendants like Parmenio had difficulty at times advising the king (Curtius, 5.2.13-15).

in part a priesthood, for the king offered daily sacrifices and presided over religious festivals."[54] Authors often note that he performed sacrifices and funerals for his men before and after battles as well as when crossing rivers. Moreover, Alexander seemed to himself particularly blessed by fortune, the benefaction of divine favor during trying circumstances such as the rains that fortuitously saved him and his friends from dehydration on their journey to see the Oracle of Ammon (Arrian, 3.3.4).

Alexander's relationship with his father had more drama associated with it. Unlike the persistence of the maternal figures in Alexander's life, his connection to Philip died with the man. This is best seen in Alexander's attempts to sever that tie by claiming he was born, not from any human but the Egyptian god Ammon (Diodorus, 17.51).[55] However, the record is clear that Philip II played both beneficial and detrimental roles in Alexander's upbringing. That they shared some characteristics is easy to see. Philip, for instance, was on occasion quite lenient to defeated peoples, especially those who became a part of his rapidly expanding territory.[56] On the other hand, he was also quick to enslave women and children, raze cities, and kill all men of fighting age (Justin, 8.3).[57] All this Alexander did as well, though his behavior was at times more extreme, both kinder or more brutal than his father's. In one way they differed, however, the desecration of temples and shrines was something Alexander could not stomach, whereas Philip showed no remorse in looting and destroying sacred sites (Justin, 8.3.4).

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[54] Carol J. King, "Macedonian Kingship and Other Political Institutions," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, ed. by Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 2010), 380.
[55] This will be discussed in depth later; see below.
[56] Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, 7.6.14-16.
[57] Justin (9.8.12-21) compares many characteristics between Philip and Alexander, highlighting mistakes Alexander learned from but also his contrasting tendencies that may have distinguished him from his father but did not necessarily make a positive difference.

In two notable ways which are certainly rooted in Alexander's youth, they shared ambitions which cemented Philip as an important factor in his son's early development: the campaign against the Persians, and the desire for glory. Before his death, Philip had gathered the supplies and power needed for the invasion of Anatolia with the aim of avenging the Greeks for the destruction Persia had wrought in the fifth century BCE.[58] The second ambition, the quest for recognition, fired Alexander's competitive nature even more and would not let him be seen as his father's inferior. Philip's final day was supposed to be a celebration of his daughter's marriage, but it was also a testament to his victories and success. There, he paraded images of the twelve Olympians along with a statue resembling himself, insinuating that his power was divine and his nature unstoppable. That was something Alexander would emulate again and again later in life (Diodorus, 16.92.5).

There are other divine figures that Alexander attempted to compete with as well. It was not uncommon in antiquity for kings and city-states to have some sort of founding hero from whom they drew their lineage. The Agread dynasty of Macedon was no exception, tracing its line back to Heracles, the son of Zeus (Plutarch, 2.1). Among his many marriages, Philip also linked himself to another such family, since Olympias was an Aeacid, ancestrally tied to Achilles (Diodorus, 17.1.5). This drive to emulate and compete with ancient heroes and divinities was an important part of Alexander's character map and frequently emerges in the records of his life as an important theme.

Among other crumbs of evidence about Alexander's childhood, Plutarch describes a very modest young boy who is not interested in racing others or the sexual appeal of

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[58] Pierre Briant, *Alexander the Great: The Heroic Ideal*, trans. Jeremy Leggatt (New York: Harry N. Abrams INC., 1987), 14.

women but instead infatuated with combat, glory, and heroic figures.[59] In an episode many take as evidence of his growing desire to invade the barbarian world, he was said to have asked Persian envoys about the routes within their empires (Plutarch, 5.1). And, of course, his famous taming of spirited horse Bucephalus, which would turn out to be his most trustworthy companion, not only displayed Alexander's courage and confidence but also a small tick of defiance towards his father who had expressed doubts the horse could ever be domesticated because of its fierce nature (Plutarch, 6.5).

Understanding as best we can the factors in his youth that contributed to Alexander's nature is essential in diagnosing the changes that he illustrated later at critical junctures in his life, the subject of the second chapter of this thesis. So I will now review in broad strokes those important turning points that will be examined more fully later. What follows is a narrative, albeit somewhat gutted, outlining certain aspects of his biography as an adult.

4. Alexander Before Siwa

Alexander's assumption of the throne of Macedon in 336 BCE is where most ancient narratives of the king begin (Arrian, 1.1.1).[60] In order to secure the territories his father had claimed, the young monarch was forced to exert himself both diplomatically and on the field of battle. After taking on the tribes and barbarians to the north and reupping treaties to the south, he confronted a revolt among the Thebans who had been

[59] Plutarch, 4.4-6. The idea of whether Alexander was interested in women is often debated by both ancient and modern authors. Even after Diodorus (17.77.4-7.) and Curtius (6.6.8.) describe Alexander's adoption of Persian harem and concubine practices, many are doubtful as to whether he indulged in these customs or if their inclusion was due to Persian appointed court members who grew up fulfilling this practice for the Persian king and assumed it would be required of them. Cartledge, *Hunt for New Past*, 54.
[60] Any dates mentioned henceforth are Before the Common Era unless otherwise noted.

the hegemons of Greece until the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE. To them, Alexander demonstrated no remorse (Diodorus, 16.86). While he would later raze and enslave other city-states, just as his father had done, his destruction of Thebes was particularly gruesome, leaving long-term consequences. Many later sources characterize him as in general a benevolent and understanding conqueror, often forgiving an enemy who fought valiantly or in a respectable manner. Such was not the case for the Thebans.[61]

Figure 1: Lion of Chaeronea

[61] Cf. Curtius, 8.14.45-46. In this passage, Alexander restores to power Porus, the Indian king, after his remarkable last stand. This is just one example of Alexander's praise for valor and Homeric qualities. He often returned territory to defeated leaders as a token of his admiration of their character.

After successfully rescuing the Macedonian soldiers who were stationed in Thebes and putting down the revolution, Alexander handed the determination of the city-state's fate over to its Boeotian neighbors, peoples whom the defeated Thebans had treated roughly in the past (Diodorus, 17.14.1-4). Their verdict was to raze Thebes, kill most of the men, and imprison or sell the women and children into slavery, a misfortune that had happened to many a conquered nation in the ancient world (Diodorus, 17.13). There is an important point worth noting here, one consistent with Alexander's life-long respect for the divine and the accomplished. Raised as he was and tutored to value Homeric attributes, he often treated religious sites and the buildings of honorable peoples respectfully, even while sacking a city. Thebes was no different. Alexander deliberately left the house of the famous poet Pindar and his descendants untouched (Arrian, 1.9.10).

After securing the borders and city-states at home, Alexander was ready to launch his campaign of Panhellenic redemption against the Persians for their invasion of Greece well over a century prior (Justin, 11.5.6-7). After crossing the Hellespont, Alexander began to consciously craft the image of himself that he hoped to be known for. To ensure that his constant competition with and emulation of Homeric heroes did not go unnoticed, he started this campaign by leaping from the ship he was on and plunging a spear into the Anatolian coast. By doing so, he was claiming that Asia was his (Diodorus, 17.17.2). Confronting no Persian opposition at all, Alexander marched on to Troy, where he honored the Trojan War heroes of legend with athletic games and sacrifices, making a public performance of the personal dedication he made at the Tomb of Achilles while his close companion Hephaestion did the same for Patroclus (Arrian, 1.12).[62] Before leaving

[62] Alexander surely had some authentic desire to sacrifice and honor these heroes, especially since Achilles was a part of his lineage. In "Chasing the Fleet-footed Hero: Alexander at the Tomb of Achilles," David J.

Troy, Alexander also sacrificed to Athena, leaving his armor as a dedication and taking with him a shield from her temple (Diodorus, 17.18.1).

After liberating Greek city-states all down the western coast of Asia Minor, Alexander's next notable stop was the city of Gordium in 333. This site was the purported birthplace of King Midas, and it was here that a prophecy inspired the young Macedonian to climb the steps of the acropolis there and examine an infamous relic, a knot on the yoke of a chariot.[63] It had been foretold that whoever unknotted this rope would become ruler of the entire world, hardly a challenge the aspiring conqueror could pass up (Plutarch, 18.1-2). How he resolved the problem – did he cut the knot in half or slice into it to discover the loose ends? – remains a mystery. In any case, this incident "…shows how Alexander as king was consciously aware of legends and the political power they held, and how as a man he manipulated the perception for his own ends."[64] It would not be the last time he used omens and legends to influence people's view of him.

Later that same year Alexander confronted the Great King of Persia, Darius III, in a battle at Issus that turned out to be a complete rout of the Persians (Arrian, 2.8.1-3).[65] What is significant here are not the particulars of the conflict itself but Alexander's ability to outmaneuver and essentially scare off the Great King (Curtius, 3.11.7).[66] As he did in almost every conflict he oversaw, Alexander approached the situation with this question in mind: what actions would earn him the most public honor, the most *kleos* ("renown")?

Lunt argues that a large part of these various actions at the tomb of Achilles come from Alexander's desire to bring Achilles' shade along for protection and guidance as part of a widespread belief associated with hero cults in which the dead were seen to have influence and impact on the living.

[63] For an entire narrative of Midas' father Gordius becoming king of the area, see Arrian, 2.3.1-6.

[64] Dawn L. Gilley and Ian Worthington, "Alexander the Great, Macedonia and Asia," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, ed. by Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing LTD, 2010), 194.

[65] Previously Darius had sent satraps and generals to confront Alexander, this was their first meeting.

[66] See also Diodorus, 17.33.5.

Far more than when he had encountered and defeated the satraps of Asia Minor at the Granicus River earlier (Diodorus, 17.21.4), this battle cemented his claim for legitimacy as a ruler and a general of the Macedonian army.[67] Now he could say he had gone head-to-head with the Persian army under the direct command of the Great King and won. It is worth noting that, even before the battle began, Alexander encouraged his men through the use of omens and by riding around bolstering their confidence with emphatic speeches in good Homeric fashion.[68]

While the victory at Issus was certainly a turning point in the campaign, not much changed in regard to Alexander's self-presentation. After allowing Darius to flee and escape, when he returned to the battle site and found his men sacking the abandoned Persian camp, he encouraged them to pillage – it was the first taste he and his men had of eastern luxury – but not to rape, a crime he disliked intensely and even handed out punishments for more than once.[69] Over time, indulgence in luxury and the ever growing wealth he captured would go on to play an increasing role in the evolving image of the king (Diodorus, 17.36.4).

It was also in this victory that Alexander captured Darius' family and began to create a maternal connection with Sisigambis, the emperor's mother (Curtius, 3.12.21). In

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[67] The lack of detailed descriptions of battles in this abridged narrative is intentional, due to the lack of relevant character details depicted in a majority of these conflicts. Here, I briefly discuss the Battle of Issus and later will do the same for the Battle of Gaugamela and siege of the Malli. Alexander's character shown in these moments was consistent and unwavering, in particular, his recklessness in the pursuit of glory and his effective generalship which is noted in all five major authors. While these attributes certainly contributed to the image Alexander wished to present, they are consistent throughout all the narratives of varying battles and are therefore of little interest in this context, where the evolution of his self-presentation is under review.

[68] For the use of omens, see Arrian, 2.7.3. For Alexander's inspiration of the troops see Curtius, 3.9.4-10.

[69] For Alexander's attitude against rape, see Plutarch, 12; Alan Fildes and Joann Fletcher, *Alexander the Great: Son of the Gods,* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2002), 97. For his take on looting, see Curtius, 3.11.20-23.

her state of fear, she had accidentally given obeisance to Hephaestion and, when she was corrected, Alexander is said to have told her not to worry, saying "You were not wrong, mother; for this man is also Alexander."[70] The king treated his new captives well, for which he earned the praise of many ancient sources. Diodorus, in particular, says:

> And in the general I would say that, of the many notable deeds Alexander completed, none, I believe, is more worthy of recording in memory than this.[71]

Though not always, Alexander would continue to show generosity when facing a defeated enemy and use this as one of the defining elements of his self-presentation.[72]

After his first major victory against Darius at Issus, Alexander turned south towards Egypt. Here, unlike his campaigns along the Ionian coast, little went smoothly. For instance, once the king arrived at the island city of Tyre, what should have been a short stop and another quick defeat of the enemy was thwarted by Alexander himself who insisted on worshiping Melkarth, a Tyrian deity often associated with Heracles.[73] This compelled his army into a lengthy siege which Alexander's wounded pride at the Tyrians' stubbornness and refusal of his request only prolonged (Arrian, 2.16-17). Over the course of seven months, Macedonian engineers constructed a large causeway defended by towers, ships, and siege machines so that Alexander could conquer the city itself. To keep the troops engaged and their morale high, prophecies and omens were again deployed. From a sea monster smashing into the causeway to blood oozing from bread, omens were deemed favorable by Aristander, the king's principal seer, since they all pointed to the

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[70] Curtius, 3.12.17: *non errasti… mater; nam et hic Alexander est.*
[71] Diodorus, 17.38.4. καθόλου δ' ἔγωγε νομίζω πολλῶν καὶ καλῶν ἔργων ὑπ' Ἀλεξάνδρου συντετελεσμένων μηδὲν τούτων μεῖζον ὑπάρχειν μηδὲ μᾶλλον ἄξιον ἀναγραφῆς καὶ μνήμης ἱστορικῆς εἶναι.
[72] This generosity is an interesting theme which will aid in highlighting the times Alexander continues to be philanthropic or use wealth in a leisurely manner.
[73] Quintus Curtius, *History of Alexander,* ed. by Jeffrey Henderson, trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946) 176, n. a.

eventual capture of Tyre (Diodorus, 17.41.5-6). Alexander even let it be known that he had dreamt Heracles would personally lead him within the walls of the fortified city (Curtius, 4.2.17).

When Tyre was finally breached, an angry Alexander was determined to make an example of this resistance. Though the city was not razed, those who were not killed were enslaved.[74] It is clear religion continued to be very important to his sense of himself, if only because he was willing to delay the campaign's progress by seven months to worship a figure equated with Heracles. With this threat gone, Alexander could safely pursue other endeavors which had no direct or obvious benefit to the campaign. Instead, he went in search of personal renown that resulted in a dramatic change in his self-perception and a wholly new venue for manipulating his public image, he would find this at the Siwa Oasis.

5. Alexander in Egypt

Following the siege of Tyre and a brief beleaguerment of Gaza, Alexander sped on to Egypt where he took control of the whole country without a drop of blood being shed (Diodorus, 17.49.2). After years of Persian rule, the Egyptians were happy to receive a new leader and, upon his arrival, made Alexander their Pharaoh.[75] Thus, only four years after having assumed the throne of Macedon, Alexander found himself in control of

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[74] Diodorus (17.46.4) claims that only men of military age were killed, but according to Arrian (2.24.5) – whose numbers are never to be completely trusted – thirty thousand women and children were sold as slaves.

[75] Stanley M. Burstein, "Pharaoh Alexander: A Scholarly Myth," *Ancient Society* 22 (1991): 139-140, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44079457. Burstein makes an excellent point regarding Alexander's coronation. Not one of the five ancient sources mentions the actual event in which Alexander was publicly declared Pharaoh. While Egyptian reliefs of Alexander worshipping Min make it clear some sort of ceremony occurred, there is only one mention of it in any ancient document, the late and historically unreliable *Alexander Romance* (1.34) which is falsely attributed to Callisthenes.

everything from Greece to the Anatolian coast to Egypt, something no other Greek had ever done before. This dizzying ascent triggered in him the search for a new identity, at least to judge from his next move, a trip in 331 to the Oracle of Ammon at the Siwa Oasis (Arrian, 3.3.1-2).

Figure 2: Relief of Alexander the Great and Amun-Ra in Luxor

After following the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Alexander headed south to a point just east of today's Libyan-Egyptian border, traversing through a dry and barren wasteland for a total of four days (Curtius, 4.7.15). After purportedly receiving the

guidance of two crows that directed him towards the oasis, the king was finally able to complete this journey thanks only to a sudden and rare rain burst that saved his party from dying of dehydration (Curtius, 4.7.14-15).[76]

Among the five surviving ancient accounts, there is a notable disagreement about what happened during this visit. The accounts of Justin, Diodorus, and Curtius provide relatively similar details: Alexander met with the oracle of Ammon, was called the son of the god and, after being corrected for citing Philip as his father since his true paternal lineage was divine, was assured that he had successfully avenged the assassination of his predecessor.[77] Lastly, Alexander's bodyguards asked the oracle if they should provide divine honors to the king, and were informed that Ammon was favorable to the request.[78]

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[76] According to "Siwa Oasis Climate (Egypt): Data and Graphs for Weather & Climate in Siwa Oasis," Climate-Data.org, accessed February 2, 2024, https://en.climate-data.org/africa/egypt/matrouh-governorate/siwa-oasis-32202/, data collected between the years 1991-2021 shows an average of .3 inches of precipitation per year.

[77] Curtius, 4.7.25-28; Diodorus, 17.51.1-3; Justin, 11.11.7-10.

[78] Curtius, 4.7.28; Justin, 11.11.11; Providing that same basic narrative, Plutarch adds an interesting anecdote which sums up the confusion surrounding this event well as to whether the Oracle of Siwa really addressed the king as the son of Ammon. It supports both positive and negative answers to this question, but this evidence is not found anywhere else; see Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 294. According to his account, the oracle of Ammon greeted Alexander as though he were the son of Ammon, just as in other sources, and was also told that those who murdered Philip had been adequately punished (Plutarch, 27.4). And, just as in Justin's and Diodorus' accounts, the god's words emboldened the young king by confirming that Ammon had) "given to him all of mankind to be master of" (Plutarch, 27.4; see also Diodorus, 17.51.1-2; Justin, 11.11.9). Where Plutarch differs from the other sources is his speculation that these citations of divine entitlement resulted from a slip of the tongue. Instead of addressing him as *O paidion* ("O child"), the oracle pronounced these words incorrectly as *O pai Dios* meaning "O son of Zeus" (Plutarch, 27.5). In any case, it is clear that Alexander happily embraced his new divine origin and henceforth made it a central feature of his self-presentation.

Figure 3: Temple of Ammon in Siwa

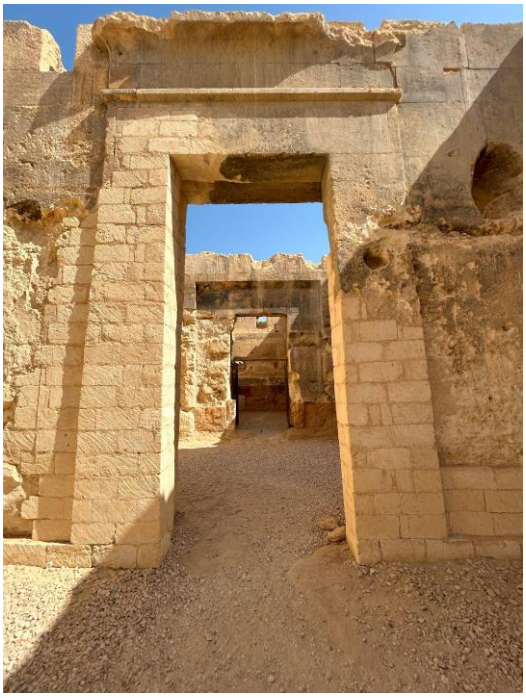

Figure 4: Entrance to the Temple of Ammon

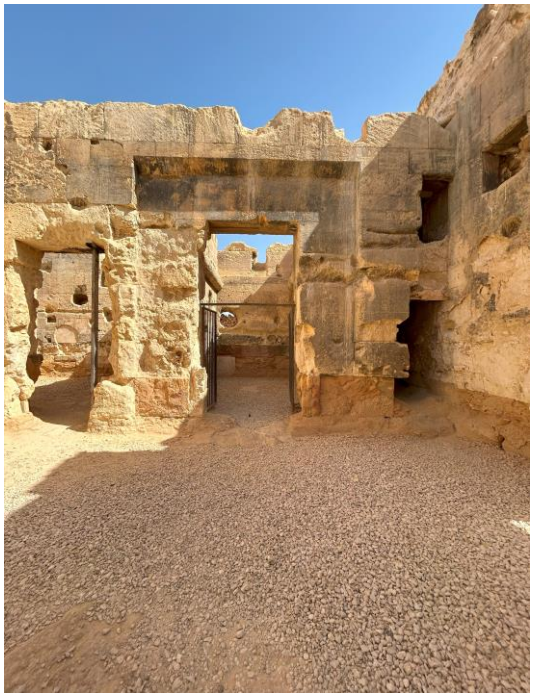

Figure 5: Main Hall of Temple of Ammon

The most surprising account of the visit to Siwa comes from Arrian who, while he can be considered one of the most trustworthy and complete sources, provides only minimal information about this episode.[79] After describing the founding of Alexandria and then the journey to the remote oasis, he writes:

> Here Alexander admired the site and consulted the god [Ammon]; and he heard the great things his soul desired, so he said, and withdrew towards Egypt.[80]

That is all. The fact that it is likely Arrian relied heavily on the now lost works of Aristobulus and Ptolemy strongly suggests both of those writers had little to say about Alexander's visit, and for whatever reason, Arrian did not include data from other sources

[79] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 292.
[80] Arrian, 3.4.5. ἐνταῦθα Ἀλέξανδρος τόν τε χῶρον ἐθαύμασε καὶ τῷ θεῷ ἐχρήσατο: καὶ ἀκούσας ὅσα αὐτῷ πρὸς θυμοῦ ἦν, ὡς ἔλεγεν, ἀνέζευξεν ἐπ᾽ Αἰγύπτου.

that most likely discussed this episode. Known to have been a moral supporter of Alexander, Arrian's intention may have been to avoid any problem the king's assertion of divinity may have caused among the author's target audience in Greece and Rome (Arrian, 7.30.2).

6. The Pursuit of Darius

After founding Alexandria and exploring the Nile, Alexander was ready to continue his war with Darius. Marching through Syria and on into Mesopotamia, the Macedonian finally got his chance to finish off the Persian threat at the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 (Arrian, 3.13). Again, he used omens to encourage his men, and the result was that he scored an overwhelming victory and forced Darius to flee the scene a second time (Curtius, 4.15). However, this time the Persian king's escape would prove problematical for Alexander, because without an official declaration of surrender and the passing of titles, Alexander could not assume the title of Great King of Persia. To mediate this crisis, Alexander bestowed on himself a new title "Lord of Asia" which put him in a class above the Persian king in terms of power and authority. [81]

But before continuing the chase, it was deemed necessary to capture the important Persian cities of Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis. Not only were these venerable sites of great political importance, but they also housed enormous treasuries. Welcomed into Babylon without any substantive resistance, Alexander made sacrifices to the god Baal (Arrian, 3.16.6). His willingness to worship other divinities as a demonstration of religious tolerance was by now a core attribute which the king presented as he passed

[81] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 201.

through different cultures, and increasingly played a public role when he broadcast his decisions.

After Babylon, the army arrived at Susa where, just as in Egypt and Babylon, the reigning satrap handed over the city peacefully. Alexander took the throne, even using Darius' table as a footstool to the dismay of the palace attendants. While the king was at first upset for accidentally offending the cultural traditions of the Persians, Philotas convinced him that he had earned the right to do so by defeating the Persian king (Curtius, 5.2.13-15).[82] What is more important, Alexander now had in hand a vast amount of wealth since, according to Arrian, Susa alone stored about fifty thousand talents of silver.[83] This abundance of wealth and the luxurious lifestyle it afforded, replete with banquets and wine often served neat, would also become a key factor in the presentation of Alexander's evolving image which was spawned from the isolation at Siwa.

Since Babylon and Susa had passed into Macedonian control without incident, it was fair for leaders of Persepolis to expect they would receive the same treatment, but that did not happen. For some reason, Alexander did not feel a sufficient level of respect for the Persian capital. As he had not before, he let his men run free, killing inhabitants, pillaging, and even fighting each other as they let their greed get the better of them (Plutarch, 37.2).[84] Diodorus also describes the rampage of Alexander's soldiers egged on by his description of Persepolis as "the most hostile of the cities of Asia."[85]

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[82] Typically, Alexander was aware of others' cultural tradition and apologetic when he offended them. To wit, when he inadvertently insulted Sisigambis by giving her Macedonian cloth, unaware that Persian women do not work with wool, he apologized for what he had thought would be a generous gift but was actually an affront to his surrogate mother (Curtius, 5.2.19-22).
[83] Arrian, 3.16.7-8; in comparison, Plutarch (37.2) briefly mentions that the wealth of Susa was on par with that of Persepolis, while Curtius (5.2.11) gives the same figure as Arrian.
[84] See also Curtius, 5.6.3-8.
[85] Diodorus, 17.70; ἀπέδειξε τοῖς Μακεδόσι πολεμιωτάτην τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν πόλεων.

Alexander went on to have the palace of Persepolis razed to the ground, an event which is explained in different ways in the ancient sources. Curtius, Diodorus, and Plutarch say an Athenian prostitute named Thaïs convinced an inebriated Alexander to burn the palace down and hold a Dionysian procession.[86] What is most significant here is the growing inclination on the part of the king to engage in unnecessary cruelty, as at the same time he began to indulge more and more in eastern luxury. In comparison to the events of Thebes and Tyre, this is entirely different, as Persepolis can be classified as an outlier because Alexander controlled the city prior to its destruction. These contrasting events will be examined later in more detail.

After the sack of Persepolis, Alexander headed north and resumed his efforts to capture Darius. It was at Ecbatana, the Persian king's summer retreat, that many of the ancient sources, both primary and secondary, stated the beginning of Alexander's moral degradation.[87] This change would be more correctly described as a conscious decision on the part of the king to alter the way he presented himself, for it is only morally degrading from the biased viewpoint that Greek culture is superior to Persian barbarism, which is indeed the perspective several of the ancient authors adopt who recorded this history. The larger reality is that, in order to govern his vast empire, Alexander was compelled to adopt at least some aspects of local culture. In other words, he had to act both in public and in private like the Persian king he had become, and that included capturing Darius III

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[86] Curtius, 5.7.1-3; Plutarch, 38.3-4; Diodorus, 17.72.1-4. This attitude towards the Persian capital was rebuked by Arrian, who does not include the story of Alexander's drunkenness but thought the conflagration was an unnecessary punishment for a crime the Persians had committed generations old (Arrian, 3.8.12).

[87] Hugh Bowden, *Alexander the Great: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 74.

so he could make a persuasive claim to being acknowledged as his true successor and king of the land.

In this venture, Alexander's customary *fortuna* failed him (Curtius, 7.7.29).[88] Before he could reach Darius, disloyal satraps banded together and attacked the Persian king, leaving him to die on a wagon cart in the desert (Arrian, 3.22.1). One of them, Bessus, the satrap of Bactria, declared himself to be rightfully the new king of the Achaemenid Empire and bestowed on himself the venerable name Artaxerxes (Diodorus, 17.73-74).[89] Long before, after the victory at Gaugamela, Alexander had correctly surmised that the legitimacy of his claim to be a Persian king would not go unchallenged. Now his premonition had come true, making it necessary for him not only to continue east and put to rest any other claims to the rule of Asia but also to avenge the despicable murder of Darius at the hands of men whom he thought he could trust. It would have been dishonorable for Alexander, as the new Persian ruler, not to avenge the untimely demise of his predecessor (Justin, 11.15.12). But before that happened, other issues arose that led Alexander to make the puzzling decision to execute members of his own inner circle.

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[88] Plutarch, *Moralia: On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander*, 326.E – 327.B. Here Plutarch argues that fortune did not play as big of a role in his campaigns, and that it was truly the king's *areté* ("virtue") which underlay his success in obtaining such a large empire.

[89] For the adoption of the royal clothing, taking the name Artaxerxes, and claiming the title King of Asia, see Arrian, 3.25.3.

7. Alexander's Emerging Tyranny

The crisis began with Philotas, the son of Philip's general Parmenio, who never had the chance to leave Zarangaean capital in Drangiana (Arrian, 3.25.8.-26.2.).[90] In 330 Alexander learned that Philotas had neglected to tell him about a plot against his life. The sources depict this as nothing more than a simple mistake since Philotas had assumed there was no real danger (Arrian, 3.26). Alexander's response, however, was harsh and swift. Philotas was executed in front of the Macedonian army.[91] Whether Alexander feared his father Parmenio's retaliation or because he simply preferred to staunch any threat that the execution of someone's son would bring, he had the old man assassinated soon after, much to the horror of the veterans in the Macedonian army who felt very close to him (Diodorus, 17.80.1-3). This is a notable turn of events, for Alexander was no stranger to murderous schemes, either as creator or target.[92] More than one historian has pointed to Parmenio's death as another sign of the collapse of Alexander's moral standards and the onset of a series of paranoic episodes tied to his growing megalomania.[93] Whatever the underlying causation, Parmenio's execution would not be

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[90] Before crossing the Hindu Kush and pursuing Bessus, Alexander stopped at the Zarangaean capital to punish Barsaentes, a treasonous satrap who aided in Darius' murder. However, he fled to the Indians, though, they hastily returned the satrap to Alexander, who had him executed.

[91] Curtius, 6.8.25; Diodorus, 17.80.1-3; Arrian 3.26.4. Vulgate sources claim Alexander had Philotas tried in front of his Macedonian peers, though Arrian states he was simply put to death.

[92] For instance, he orchestrated the assassination of Amyntas (Plutarch, 10) and imprisoned Alexander of Lyncestes who had tried to murder him (Diodorus, 17.32.1-2). Of particular note is Justin (11.7.1-2) who mentions that the Lyncestian Alexander was not executed at the time of his imprisonment because Alexander, being away on campaign, feared the reaction from the prisoner's father-in-law Antipater, the regent of Greece and Macedon. Alexander of Lyncestes is reported to have finally been executed at the same time as Philotas. This helps to explain why Alexander had Parmenio assassinated. He simply wanted to avoid the reaction of the powerful and proven general who commanded the loyalty of many soldiers in the Macedonian army.

[93] Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise to Western Power*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2001), 87-88; Charles Alexander Robinson Jr., *Alexander the Great: The Meeting of East and West in World Government and Brotherhood*, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company INC., 1947), 221.

the last purge of his companions that Alexander perpetrated, particularly as he became more and more comfortable putting close friends and court members to death.

Clitus and Callisthenes were next. However, before diving into the narrative behind their demise, it is important to acknowledge the capture and punishment of Bessus. In the summer of 329, the satrap's poor leadership and administrative abilities had provoked the betrayal of his fellow governors who imprisoned him with the intention of turning the self-declared king over to Alexander in the hope that they might earn more lenient treatment from the Macedonian in the wake of Darius' murder.[94] Reports about the treatment of Bessus vary, but Alexander's barbaric reaction is a constant in each, and it is equally clear that Alexander under the influence of Persian culture began dealing out justice in new ways, untraditional for a Greek potentate. In the end, the king proved all too eager to punish Bessus, since it meant his weak claim to the Persian throne would be resolved. Alexander could now take the royal title for himself and continue unabated on his eastward campaign for further glory and honor. However, the conflicts between himself and his men did not end there, nor did the gore.

8. The Demise of Clitus and Callisthenes

Clitus the Black, a member of the companion calvary, had saved Alexander at the Battle of Granicus, but he too would fall due to Alexander's growing taste for foreign customs and ostentation (Curtius, 8.1.20-21). At a banquet in the city of Marcanda in northern Sogdiana, a wine-sodden Alexander ran Clitus through with a spear because the hapless veteran had stated that the successes of Philip II were greater than those of

[94] Arrian, 3.30.1; Diodorus, 17.83.7-9.

Alexander (Arrian, 4.8.5-6). Older members of the Macedonians, especially those who had trained and served under Philip, were deeply devoted to the memory of their former king and general. For loyalists like Clitus, the flatterers who surrounded Alexander went too far when they boasted that the exploits and accomplishments of the son surpassed his father's. Though Alexander initially attempted to retain his composure, his rage boiled over, with the result that he murdered a dear friend in public, indeed a man who had not only rescued him in combat but who was also the brother of the wet nurse who had helped raise him (Curtius, 8.1.20-21).

Alexander was immediately distraught, and even attempted to end his own life by falling on the same spear with which he had killed Clitus. Arrian (4.9.5) says that after the murder the king spent around three days in seclusion, only eventually being drawn out by philosophers among his close circle who convinced him that Clitus had been out of line.[95] Plutarch adds that his drunken rage had resulted from a lack of proper sacrifice to Dionysus on the Macedonian holiday dedicated to that god the day before.[96] In Arrian's eyes, however, the murder was simply an error. He commends the king for admitting his blunder and joins Aristobulus in blaming Clitus (Arrian, 4.9.1-6). Curtius, however, is not afraid to mention that people's right to speak freely about Alexander and other matters was more restricted after this event, and he highlights the king's increasing tendency toward greater aggression against his own people and his friends (Curtius, 8.4.30). It was an open sore and a black mark on Alexander's legacy that would have consequences in the public profile he presented later in life.

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[95] See also Curtius, 8.2.11.
[96] For the Dionysian holiday and Alexander's sacrifice to the Dioscuri, see Plutarch, 50.4

The following year, Alexander again facilitated the execution of a friend. Callisthenes was a court historian placed in charge of writing down the events of Alexander's campaigns, mainly as a form of propaganda to send back to Greece. A Greek from Olynthus who normally supported the king and as such was often considered a flatterer, Callisthenes chose to stand his ground when Alexander demanded that he engage in the Persian custom of *proskynesis* ("bowing forward," literally "dogging forth"), a casual social act regularly performed by Persians in the presence of their king.[97] Many of the Greeks in Alexander's party, however, saw this as blasphemous (Justin, 12.7.1). To them, the only time that taking such a posture was warranted was while making a sacrifice to the gods, not to any mortal.[98] After the imposition of several other Persian cultural traditions, this type of obeisance to the king was for many a step too far. When Alexander then began wearing a mix of Greek and Median or Persian garb, yet another significant alteration in his self-presentation, his Macedonian soldiers were even further offended, especially the veterans (Diodorus, 17.77.4-7).[99] In the end, the Greek king's attempt to add obeisance into the common practice of this court proved a miserable failure. According to all ancient narratives, he was left embarrassed and infuriated. His anger at and subsequent execution of Callisthenes were simply acts of vengeful

[97] Callisthenes' objection to this new practice is interesting in its own right. As a court scribe, he published stories about Alexander discovering his divine nature and experiencing assistance of gods. Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 271-273, even brands Callisthenes a hagiographer who was unafraid to send narratives to Greece full of bias that supported Alexander's assertion of his own divine origin.
[98] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 202-203.
[99] The authors mention the nature of this dress in different ways, though it must have been some combination of the royal Persian diadem and robe. Notably, Alexander refused to wear pants as it was seen as effeminate, essentially preferring to remain Macedonian from the hips down. The soldiers' anger at the death of Clitus was tied to this issue, because, according to Arrian (4.8.4.), Clitus had cited Alexander's barbaric dress in his verbal attack on the king.

exasperation and the general's ever diminishing ability to administer fair rulings and well-earned punishments.

Just prior to this, while Alexander was on a routine hunting trip, a page by the name of Hermolaüs killed the boar, the object of the chase, before the king had a chance to finish it off and for his mistake was punished with a flogging (Curtius, 8.6.7) While this was common practice and the accepted punishment of a servant who stepped out of line in the Macedonian homeland, Hermolaüs became infuriated (Curtius, 8.8.3), for it was a tradition in Macedon that boys became men in their royal circles after the first wild boar kill made without the use of nets. This allowed a youth to recline at feasts and join with other adults in drinking rather than have to sit straight up (Athenaeus, 1.17.f-1.18.a). Therefore, when Alexander punished Hermolaüs for stealing the harvest of a boar during a hunt, it was particularly humiliating for the young page, considering it was his right and should have initiated a celebration.[100]

The page's grudge spread to others of his class and inspired them to foment a plot on Alexander's life. After this was discovered by Ptolemy (Arrian, 4.13.7), the king put his own grudge into play and accused Callisthenes of inciting a revolt, even though he and other members of the court had adamantly refused to be involved in the plot. Nevertheless, Alexander would use their close relationship with these pages as evidence of their role in this cabal (Curtius, 8.7). Moreover, as Curtius notes, while Macedonians who are put on trial were by tradition allowed to defend themselves in public, Callisthenes was not Macedonian and was not permitted to mount any defense. Thus, he

[100] Bowden, *Short Introduction*, 29. According to Curtius (8.8.3), Alexander defended his choice of punishment by noting that the whipping given to the pages was warranted, and not some barbarian practice, and that past Macedonian kings had used it on very same sort of people.

was summarily executed without the ability to speak (Curtius, 8.8.19-22). This unjust punishment also lost the king much support among the Greek intellectuals around him since Callisthenes was Aristotle's great-nephew (Plutarch, 55).[101]

9. Defeat and Grudges

Things only got worse from there. For the first time, Alexander would suffer a defeat, and worse yet, at the hands of his own men. In 326, after Alexander reached the Hyphasis River, known today as the Beas, his army mutinied. It would turn out to be a pivotal moment for Alexander, both physically and figuratively.[102] Denied his desire to keep fighting on, he confronted soldiers who by now were wearing scraps for armor and had become tired of pushing further and further into unknown lands rumored to contain Indian kings with massive armies (Curtius, 9.3.5-15).[103] They refused to cross the Hyphasis, leaving the king to sulk in his tent for several days, furious that they had deprived him of further *kleos*. In the end, Macedonian men stood before the entrance to his tent, wailing and begging the king to come out. When he did, Alexander was forced to accede, and they lavished praise on him for allowing his only defeat to be at the hands of his own forces (Arrian, 5.29.1).[104]

Alexander was not eager to turn back to the west and took the opportunity to leave his mark on the land. For instance, at the site of his most eastern camp, the king decided to play up the scale of his presence:

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[101] See also Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 365.
[102] Fildes and Fletcher, *Son of the Gods*, 132.
[103] See also Arrian, 5.27.
[104] Arrian, Curtius, and Plutarch give similar narratives on this mutiny, the former two providing the majority of details. Diodorus (17.94) and Justin (12.8.10-16), however, assert that Alexander simply failed to convince the troops and then move on with the narrative, painting a picture of a more relaxed and responsive king.

> … and he was thinking to achieve these things, wishing to leave the natives evidence of a camp that had once housed both heroic figures and men of great stature, highlighting in particular the great strength of their bodies.[105]

This included the construction of twelve large altars to the gods, expanded trenches and evidence of encampment, along with enlarged huts, stables, and armor for both humans and horses (Diodorus, 17.95.1).[106] If the soldiers of the army had succeeded in squelching their sovereign's ambitions, they would pay for it on the arduous march back to Babylon because "…in spite of such public displays of reconciliation, Alexander would never quite be able to forgive his men for their mutiny at the Beas."[107]

Though the soldiers convinced Alexander to return westward, they still encountered many warlike tribes along their path. The Malli, in particular, would cause trouble in 325, delivering the king his closest brush with death. As he had been doing throughout the campaign, Alexander led the assault on their city, but after climbing the wall, the ladder behind him collapsed leaving him stranded with no aid from his men and nowhere to go but within the fortification. Striking many Mallians down and holding his own valiantly, he was at last struck with an arrow which pierced his lung, and he began to falter (Arrian, 6.9-10). Luckily for the king, his bodyguards were able to reach him, some paying the price for protecting him with their life (Arrian, 6.10.3-4). It is also said that, after pushing within the walls, the Macedonians were so enraged by Alexander's near-fatal wound that they instigated a massacre of the natives who lived there (Arrian, 6.11.1).

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[105] Diodorus, 17.95.2. ταῦτα δὲ πράττειν ἤμελλεν, ἅμα μὲν ἡρωικὴν βουλόμενος ποιήσασθαι στρατοπεδείαν, ἅμα δὲ τοῖς ἐγχωρίοις ἀπολιπεῖν σημεῖα μεγάλων ἀνδρῶν, ἀποφαίνοντα ῥώμας σωμάτων ὑπερφυεῖς.
[106] See also Plutarch, 62.
[107] Fildes and Fletcher, *Son of the Gods*, 132.

But the king did not die and indeed appeared in public soon after – some say on a boat, others at a banquet – to placate the concerns of those soldiers who feared for his life.[108] Alexander's desire to show himself emulating the heroes of the past had always been part of his public persona, and he would continue to make reckless decisions, both in warfare and the administration of his empire, misjudgments that put both himself and his men in unnecessary danger. Indeed, his rash behavior only increased after the Hyphasis mutiny, as is apparent in the long march back to Babylon. The need to be seen as a hero outweighed his good sense and compassion for his men, and as always, he was not afraid to flaunt his self-aggrandizement in public.

The Gedrosian Desert, in between Carmania and the Indian Sea, is notorious for its harsh climate and terrain. Not in spite of this but because of it, no doubt, Alexander deemed it a worthy challenge to cross this inhospitable territory, one more heroic labor to rival the heroes of old, but this time not just figures of Greek lore. In his *Geography*, Strabo mentions a passage from Nearchus' history which sheds some light on Alexander's motives.[109] When the king learned that the tribes that inhabited this region had once forced great leaders like Cyrus and Semiramis to retreat and return home, the former returning with seven men and the latter with fewer than twenty, Alexander could not turn down this challenge to outdo them by leading a successful march through the same desert.[110]

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[108] Arrian, 6.13.2; Curtius, 9.6.1-2; Diodorus, 17.100.1; Plutarch, 63.
[109] Nearchus was a general tasked with taking a sea route that followed the mainland during their return to the west. Just like Ptolemy and Aristobulus, Nearchus also wrote a history of the campaign, which is unfortunately also lost.
[110] Strabo, *Geography*, 15.1.5.

The king quickly found out why these rulers of old had returned with so few soldiers. Many in his army died from starvation and dehydration, some resorted to killing and eating their pack animals, and yet others succumbed to disease or attacks from tribes in the area (Diodorus, 17.105).[111] After so much time and travail together, Alexander's rash decision brought him only grief and shame, says Curtius (9.10.17). Arrian's account contains one of the few favorable descriptions of the general during this period, the moment when he led by example and dumped out a container filled with water his soldiers had brought him to show that he would suffer along with his men and not take advantage of their loyalty (Arrian, 6.26.2-3). While this was indeed encouraging, the simple truth is Alexander should never have taken them on this terrible journey in the first place where the risk in no way could ever match the reward. In the end, to make amends and console their anger and grief, once they reached civilization again, the king sponsored luxurious festivities and a Bacchic victory parade, his way of apologizing (Plutarch, 70).

This celebration was sumptuous. For seven days Alexander and his men marched throughout Carmania, with word sent ahead to have bowls of wine lining the streets and decorate villages with flowers and garlands (Diodorus, 17.106.1).[112] Wealth and ostentation were on full display. Purple cloths adorned the chariots and wagons carrying Alexander and his closest friends (Plutarch, 70.1-2). This gawdy exhibition of Persian gold, food, and customs makes a stark contrast to the Alexander who had entered the

[111] See also Curtius, 9.10.11-12.
[112] Interestingly, Curtius (9.10.24-28) is quick to point out how *Fortuna* favored the king, as this drunken march was never attacked by barbarians who would have had a serious advantage fighting against an inebriated force.

region five years prior with the simple goal of capturing Darius and asserting his claim to the throne of the empire.[113]

After restoring himself with food and wine during the long procession, Alexander soon learned that some of the people he had left as satraps to govern his realm during his eastward trek had either committed crimes or earned the enmity of the people they ruled (Curtius, 10.1.37-39). The king executed these higher officials, including friends and even members of his inner circle. Paul Cartledge fittingly dubs this a "Reign of Terror," as the once judicious general showed himself ready to act on claims that were either inaccurate or poorly supported by evidence.[114] Except for the threat of assassination, this was eerily similar to the way Callisthenes and Philotas had met their ends.

10. The Opis Mutiny and the Death of Hephaestion

After this purge, Alexander continued westward, sailing along the sea where he could (Arrian, 7.1.1). Eventually he navigated up the Tigris and reunited with Hephaestion and his force, and together they headed to Opis, a city on the banks of the same river (Arrian, 7.7.7.). The army, however, was restless and eager to return home to Greece. The idleness and impatience of men who have been tested the way Alexander's had is never a good thing, as Curtius stresses several times, because it allows the spread of rumors, talk of mutiny, and disparagement of their leaders (Curtius, 6.2). The delay at Opis in 324 led to a sense of discontent which quickly boiled over into calls for mutiny.[115]

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[113] Alexander entered Persepolis in early 330, but returned west via Carmania late in 325, finally moving into Pasargadae in early 324.
[114] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 104.
[115] Diodorus, 17.109.1-3; Curtius, 10.2.12; Arrian, 7.8.1.

Put simply, the Macedonians in the army had had it with the king's barbaric pretensions and even mocked his claim that the god Ammon had sired him.[116] Alexander was infuriated at this rebuke, a state of mind into which he now entered more quickly and easily than before. He arrested thirteen Macedonians on the charge of conspiring against him and gave orders to make preparations for their execution (Arrian, 7.8.3). He then reminded his men how they had come to possess the luxuries and wealth they now had, stressing that it was through his leadership they had achieved such glory and honor and conquered so much land and so many people.[117] Adding that he and his father had delivered them from poverty in a weak state like Macedonia, he went on to assert that he had made them heroes and men of high status, that all he had kept were the purple robes and diadem he wore on his head, and that he was the one who had repaid the debts they amassed and had even complied with their wishes when they were reluctant to continue east at the Hyphasis River.[118]

His men were stunned, even more so after he allowed none of them access to him over the next few days, permitting only Asiatic members of the army to visit him in order to exacerbate their sense of guilt.[119] To see him openly favor barbarians after his angry outburst was devastating (Arrian, 7.6.3; 7.8.3). As they had at the Hyphasis, they assembled outside his tent and began to lament, a clear sign of their remorse. At first

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[116] Arrian, 7.8.3; Curtius, 10.2.12-14; Diodorus, 17.108.3; Plutarch, 71.3-4; Justin, 12.11.6.
[117] This verbiage and style are starkly different than that of speeches given before Issus and Gaugamela. There, omens and glory were used to enhance the courage of his men. Here (and at the Hyphasis), however, Alexander held their successes, luxuries, and wealth over their heads as a threat of sorts, with the clear intention of manipulating rather than encouraging them.
[118] Arrian 7.9;7.10; and Curtius 10.2.19-30 provide the best rendition of this address.
[119] Curtius, 10.3.5; Arrian, 7.11.1. Arrian states Alexander isolated himself for two days, not eating or drinking, before allowing the Persian members of the Companions to see him on the third day. There he gave them command over battalions, adding that they would be the only ones allowed to kiss him since he considered them his kinsmen.

holding fast to his decision, Alexander eventually buckled and came outside to them in tears, forgiving their misdeeds and even hosting a banquet (Curtius, 10.2.5).[120]

The rapprochement would not last long. Only a few months after the events at Opis, Hephaestion died. Alexander was convulsed with grief, resulting in even more outrageous behavior. The king called for the temple of Asclepius, the god of healing, to be razed along with the execution of the physician who had failed to cure his boyhood friend and lover (Arrian, 7.14.1-7). Arrian goes on to surmise, saying:

> And I assume it not unreasonable that Alexander cut off his hair over the corpse [of Hephaestion], especially in accordance with his emulation of Achilles, who he had been in an ambitious rivalry with himself since childhood. … And indeed Hephaestion's death had become a large setback to Alexander himself, and I, for my part, expect Alexander himself would have wished to die first rather than to live and experience it, just as I think that Achilles would have preferred to die before Patroclus rather than becoming the avenger of his death.[121]

Over the course of the next two days, Alexander entered another period of isolation, taking no food or drink and administering little care for his body. He then spent an enormous sum building a large pyre for his deceased friend.[122] While Alexander's extreme reaction to Hephaestion's death was anchored in their deep connection, it reveals the king's increasing openness to committing atrocities, spending lavishly, and inflicting unwarranted punishments on those who did no wrong.[123]

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[120] See also Arrian, 7.11.

[121] Arrian, 7.14.4. καὶ κείρασθαι Ἀλέξανδρον ἐπὶ τῷ νεκρῷ τὴν κόμην τά τε ἄλλα οὐκ ἀπεικότα τίθεμαι καὶ κατὰ ζῆλον τὸν Ἀχιλλέως, πρὸς ὅντινα ἐκ παιδὸς φιλοτιμία αὐτῷ ἦν·; Arrian, 7.16.8. ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτῷ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἡ Ἡφαιστίωνος τελευτὴ οὐ σμικρὰ ξυμφορὰ γεγένητο, ἧς καὶ αὐτὸς Ἀλέξανδρος προαπελθεῖν ἂν δοκεῖ μοι ἐθελῆσαι μᾶλλον ἢ ζῶν πειραθῆναι, οὐ μεῖον ἢ καὶ Ἀχιλλέα δοκῶ ἂν ἐλέσθαι προαποθανεῖν Πατρόκλου μᾶλλον ἢ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτῷ τιμωρὸν γενέσθαι.

[122] Arrian, 7.14.8-9; Diodorus, 17.114.1-2. Plutarch, 72.

[123] Plutarch (72) states that the campaign against the Cossaens was an act of revenge, in which he slaughtered and killed everyone except the youth of the community. While the cruelty and barbarity of this action is well supported in the historical record, it was clearly not done out of vengeance. Arrian (7.15.3) and Diodorus (17.111.5-6) narrate this episode simply as a campaign against a small nation near Babylon.

11. The Death of Alexander

At last the army moved on to Babylon. However, before he had a chance to enter the city, Alexander confronted a party of Chaldeans, Babylonian scholars and diviners who made predictions using astrology. They were adamant that the king should not enter the city because the omens foretold of his death if he did (Diodorus, 17.112.1-3). Superstitious as always, Alexander followed their advice and encamped outside of the city walls until philosophers in his court convinced him to ignore the Babylonians' warnings and proceed inside. It is notable that at this point the devout king ignored the suggestions of seers, demonstrating that his by now well-developed desire to do and be seen doing whatever he pleased had come to overrule his habit of obeying prophetic pronouncements. Megalomania had trumped religiosity, one of the few remaining restraints on his public behavior following his visit to Siwa. (Curtius, 4.6.12-18).[124]

The sources make it clear that throughout the campaign Alexander's inclination to adopt cultural traditions grew and became a central part of his self-presentation. This continued up until the end of his life. Indeed, in the late spring of 323, the king would receive one bad omen after another, signs that Chaldean seers interpreted as forecasting impending threats to Alexander's life. All these portents were foreign in nature, many of them Assyrian, demonstrating Alexander's willingness to present himself as open and vulnerable to this alien culture's traditions and beliefs.

For example, when the king's diadem happened to be snatched from his head one day by the wind and landed on the tomb of an Assyrian king, the sailor who retrieved it

[124] See also Diodorus, 17.98.3-4.

wore it on his head when he swam back and brought it to Alexander. This deed earned him two rewards: a talent and decapitation (Diodorus, 17.116.6-7).[125] Another ill-starred omen occurred when the king was by chance absent from the throne and a criminal happened to climb on it. When Alexander was informed of this by his eunuchs, he had the man questioned as to why he decided to sit on the throne, and he simply replied that he just had the thought to do so.[126] The man was put to death, but the horror of this omen lingered on.[127]

Unclear about how to proceed when faced with omens like these, Alexander seems to have reached a psychological crossroads: should he ignore the seers as he did when he entered Babylon or adhere to their advice when their warnings were so dire? The king could not decide between the counsel of his philosophers or his long-standing superstitious nature. In hindsight, it is easy to see that he should have preferred the latter, as his death was imminent, though it is unclear how doing so might have saved his life. His time was coming to an end, and his ever-present companion *Fortuna* was about to abandon him forever (Curtius, 10.1.39-42).

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[125] Some sources say only a flogging. See also Arrian, 7.22.2-4.

[126] Arrian, 7.24.1-4. The narrative as told here comes from Arrian. Plutarch and Diodorus provide varying details, but the main narrative remains the same. The king steps away from the throne and a prisoner, who is named Dionysius in Plutarch, takes his place (Plutarch, 73; see also Diodorus, 17.116.2-4).

[127] Lindsay Allen, *The Persian Empire*, (London: The British Museum Press, 2005), 153; Interestingly, this may have been an Assyrian custom which the original authors and the five surviving narratives did not understand. Evidence about the practice of 'substitute kingship' sheds interesting light on this tale. In times of prophesized danger, Babylonian seers would remove the king from the throne and replace him with a criminal. Lindsay Allen says (*Persian Empire*, 153): "After the disposable 'king' was killed at the end of the danger period, the real king returned, safe from the fatal omens. The changes to the practice of substitute kingship during the Achaemenid period are difficult to trace, but signs of the practice re-emerge in the wake of Alexander's invasion. Arrian and Diodorus report that a condemned man took it upon himself to sit on the throne instead of Alexander, provoking signs of grief among his attendants. Their sources were aware that the incident was somehow customary, but did not understand that it was designed to safeguard the life of the king; in their respective accounts the Alexander historians use the episode instead to foreshadow his death."

Alexander died on June 11, 323.[128] For a few days prior he had been suffering from some sort of illness, leaving little opportunity to put his affairs in order. Most critically, he named no official heir. The fight among his closest comrades over who would rule his empire began almost immediately (Arrian, 7.26.3). Among the factors contributing to his early demise must be cited his great love of wine. Put simply, the numerous banquets and festivities in which he had regularly indulged all through his life – and after obtaining the wealth of the Persian empire, increased tremendously – finally caught up with him.[129] Indeed, on the first night which the illness manifested, Diodorus noted that the king suffered a sudden pain after being convinced to have one last drink (Diodorus, 17.177.1-3).

[128] This date is known because of the daily journals recorded in Babylon. See Figure 6.
[129] Athenaeus in *The Learned Banqueters* (10.434.b) references a work entitled the *Ephemerides*, where either Eumenes or Diodotus mentions that the king's alcoholism was well known and that on occasion he had slept straight for two days and nights. This habit is also corroborated by Curtius (10.5.34), who mentions Alexander's love of wine which might have been moderated by old age had he ever gotten there.

Figure 6: Babylonian Astronomical Diary written in Cuneiform

The Oracle of Ammon had promised the king power over Asia and indeed Alexander's self-presentation as a global conqueror continued up until the end. Before his death, he dreamt of campaigns in the west, showing that, despite all the other alterations to his public persona, he still had the *pothos* to take in the world's wonders.[130] While these plans may be later legends invented after his lifetime, there is no doubt Alexander would not have been content with his empire in Asia. As Arrian attests, in the end he was essentially competing with himself:

[130]Curtius, 10.1.19; Plutarch, 68.1; Arrian, 7.1.2; Supposedly, the king had interest in exploring Saudi Arabia, circumnavigating Ethiopia, and making his way through Heracles' pillars (the Strait of Gibraltar), and from there returning to Greece by going through Spain and Italy. Arrian (7.1.3) states that the reliability of these plans are suspect, as other accounts mention Alexander's desire to go through the land of the Scythians (Europe and Russia), sail to Sicily, and even take on the Romans as reports of their growing fame intrigued him.

> … he would seek far beyond for anything not known, and if not someone else, rather he would be a rival to himself.[131]

Thus, by the age of 32, Alexander had evolved his presentation so drastically that he was no longer competing with his father or Homeric icons but with himself. Had he not died, he would surely have maintained this image curated in the deep solitude of the Siwa Oasis.

12. Conclusion

Figure 7: The Alexander Mosaic, found in Pompeii at the House of the Faun

[131] Arrian, 7.1.4; ἀλλὰ ἔτι ἂν ἐπέκεινα ζητεῖν τι τῶν ἠγνοημένων, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἄλλῳ τῳ, ἀλλὰ αὐτόν γε αὐτῷ ἐρίζοντα.

Over the course of thirteen years, Alexander accomplished unprecedented feats. He became a model for leaders henceforth and was remembered in hero cults, artwork, and the adulation of many aspiring kings.[132] Still an important urban hub today, Alexandria, the city he founded in Egypt, would go on to flourish in his name, a fact Ptolemy ensured by constructing a tomb there where he could be worshipped.[133] Nor can the modern age seem to let go of his image, as Cartledge relates:

> Even in Greece today sailors in distress are said to be confronted by a water-nymph who demands to know 'Where is the great Alexander?' To which the only satisfactory response is: 'Great Alexander lives and reigns.' Indeed. [134]

But what did they want to emulate? His leadership certainly, and without a doubt his success on the battlefield, but what about the tyrannical temper he developed and his adoption of barbarian cultural practices? His taste for ostentatious display, his growing temper, his claim to divine lineage, his assumption of Median dress and gear, his increasing hostility toward his own Macedonian soldiers, and his unending *pothos* to outdo anyone he deemed worthy of competition, are these also worth imitating? While favorable sources like Arrian and Plutarch mention and then excuse his more outrageous acts and pronouncements, how and why did these changes in how he presented himself emerge? These are the questions to be addressed in the second chapter of this thesis where I hope to demonstrate that the evolving image and presentation of the king are tied to Alexander's time spent at Siwa and stimulated by those few brief periods of isolation he experienced while attempting to replicate the success of his Egyptian experience during his illustrious and very public career.

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[132] Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 290.
[133] Fildes and Fletcher, *Son of the Gods*, 158-59.
[134] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 40.

Chapter 2: Change

Modes and Venues

In comparison to the modern age with the long reach of its electronic communication, it was relatively difficult in antiquity to craft an image of oneself and distribute it across a vast empire. However, various methods did exist, and Alexander used them effectively to project his perception of himself to the people of his expanding empire. He was particular not only about how he was portrayed but also by whom, and he appears to have cared deeply about every step of the process involved in the replication of his likeness. For instance, as Plutarch notes, Alexander allowed only representations made by Lysippus to be published as his official portraits (Plutarch, 4.1.).

Figure 8: Bust of Alexander the Great

In other media, coins minted in different locations and at various times show the king in varying apparel and poses. He is also associated with a range of weapons or items that demonstrate different claims he was making at the time, such as the Porus Medallion (see figure 9). His actions and decision-making also constitute a mode of self-presentation, as he was deliberate in his interactions with others, especially those of foreign cultures, and often engaged in interchanges with defeated enemies which were designed to demonstrate various attributes of his character. In this chapter, the various alterations in Alexander's self-presentation, particularly as they relate to luxury, adoption of foreign clothing, his relationship with his soldiers, how he acted, and the evolution of his goals, will be catalogued and analyzed with the aim of demonstrating how they shed important light on the evolution of his perception of himself.

Figure 9: The Porus Medallion. Alexander is pictured on a horse chasing the Indian king Porus on an elephant

Close attention to the primary sources reveals several different moments of isolation (and in the case of a few, the lack of solitude) which served as significant transition points. These may be summarized as follows:

- Alexander's visit of Siwa and the meeting with the Oracle of Ammon;
- his visits to Babylon, Susa, and Persepolis, which occurred in rapid succession;
- the events after he left Ecbatana and captured Bessus;
- the incidents of Clitus, Callisthenes, and *proskynesis*;
- the Hyphasis mutiny;
- the Opis mutiny;
- and finally the death of Hephaestion.

1. Siwa Oasis

I will begin with a personal note. Alexander's visit to the remote oasis in 331 intrigued me enough to convince Utah State University to provide the funds for a research trip centered around a journey to Siwa. Being nearly the same age as the king when he made the trek helped me form closer ties to the leader. What I found at Siwa was a place that provides an intense sense of seclusion. While I was there, it became clear just how isolated this location is still today, and it was probably even more so in the ancient world.

Figure 10: The Siwa Oasis from the Temple of Ammon

Figure 11: The Siwa Oasis with the Temple of Ammon visible above the trees

The trek I took into western Egypt would have been very similar to Alexander's, a trip that followed the coast from Alexandria to Marsa Matruh – a distance of 179 miles – where the traveler takes one last glance at Mediterranean waters before making a 200-mile expedition into the Egyptian-Libyan Desert.[135] Having a paved road to follow made my journey easier and faster than any such journey would have been in antiquity.

Even though he was accompanied by a trained guide, the sources report that Alexander experienced shifting sands and a lack of landmarks that nearly got him and his fellow travelers lost (Arrian, 3.4.4.). Thus, for the king, his *pothos* to see the oracle skirted disaster, prevented only by what was later determined to be divine intervention, a sudden rain shower which is very unusual in this region.[136] In the end, however, he found a lush, isolated haven in the middle of land that looks like a desolate moonscape. Alexander almost certainly had never in his life experienced isolation to this degree, nor would he ever again.

How long he spent at Siwa is not recounted in any of our surviving sources, but Curtius notes that the journey took four days, affirming that, at minimum, this trip entails eight days of travel, and probably several more, during which time Alexander was not only physically and emotionally separated from the body of his men, but for the first and only time he was geographically distant from them as well (Curtius, 4.7.15).[137] More

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[135] "Directions from Alexandria, Egypt to Marsa Matruh, Egypt." Google Maps. Accessed March 8, 2024. Google.com/maps; "Directions from Marsa Matruh, Egypt to Siwa Oasis, Egypt." Google Maps. Accessed March 8, 2024. Google.com/maps. According to Google Maps, walking from Alexandria to Marsa Matruh would take sixty-five hours to complete. From there, the journey to Siwa would take seventy-one hours. This path is mentioned by Arrian (3.1-3) and Plutarch (26), whereas Curtius (4.7.6) and Diodorus (17.49.2) claim he traveled from Memphis to Siwa, founding Alexandria after his visit to the Siwa Oasis.

[136] Many of the authors state that Alexander's trip to the oasis was completed with divine intervention, citing rain bursts and animal guides; see Arrian, 3.3.4; 3.4.5-6; Curtius, 4.7.14-15.

[137] Rolfe (*Quintus Curtius: History of Alexander*, 229, n. h.) has reckoned that the entirety of the trip took a minimum of twenty days.

significant is what transpired in the wake of this pilgrimage, Alexander's dawning perception that he was divine.

Various reasons for this journey into the desert have been given, as well as different motivations for promoting his own deification. For well over a century, scholars have argued about the purpose of Alexander's claim to godhood, in particular, whether it was more for political gain or the product of personal narcissism.[138] Either way, after his three weeks or so of isolation in the desert, he emerged the son of Ammon and informed his men of his new status. Curtius, who took a dim view of this episode, says:

> With a true and sane appraisal, these empty responses could have undercut any confidence in the oracle, but those whom *Fortuna* has forced to have trust in her alone, for the most part she makes them greedier for more glory than they are able to achieve. Therefore, he [Alexander] not only allowed himself to be called the son of Jupiter, he demanded it, and although he wished to glorify himself with this title, he destroyed the renown of his actions and deeds. And the Macedonians, who were indeed used to the rule of a king, but because they lived in a larger shadow of liberty than others, resisted his affectation of immortality more stubbornly than benefited themselves or the king.[139]

Prior to this visit, there are small hints and suggestions of heaven's intervention directing Alexander's understanding of his mortality, which seemed to be ratified after the visit to Siwa.[140] First and foremost, this claim to divinity would eventually create a rift between him and his men, especially many of the veterans who were still loyal to Philip

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[138] See the Historiography.

[139] Curtius, 4.7.29-32 (Translated with help from the Utah State University Latin Lab); Vera et salubri aestimatione fidem oraculi vana profecto responsa eludere potuissent, sed Fortuna quos uni sibi credere coegit magna ex parte avidos gloriae magis quam capaces facit. Iovis igitur filium se non solum appellari passus est, sed etiam iussit rerumque gestarum famam, dum augere vult tali appellatione, corrupit. Et Macedones, assueti quidem regio imperio, sed in maiore libertatis umbra quam ceteri degentes, immortalitatem affectantem contumacius, quam aut [i]psis expediebat aut regi, aversati sunt.

[140] Many of these indications come from rumors surrounding his birth, many provided by his mother, Olympias (Plutarch, 2-3). Omens surrounding his birth also added to this foundation, where Philip received news of three victories on the same day (Plutarch, 3.5), and Magi believed the burning of the Artemis temple in Ephesus was a sign Artemis had abandoned the site to go attend to the birth of the conqueror of Asia (Plutarch, 3.3-4). For more see Ian Worthington, "Man and God," in *Alexander the Great: A Reader*, ed. Ian Worthington (New York: Routledge, 2012), 331.

and who became incensed at the cultural changes Alexander began effecting to his image (Curtius, 6.6.9-10). To claim then that no mortal man was his father, as he did, but that instead a mystical foreign god had sired him was a further slap in the face of his Macedonian veterans.[141]

The king's assertion of divine parentage was also controversial to many other Greeks, not because they deemed it blasphemous to elevate a man to divine status but because Alexander himself made this claim rather than having earned it through the praise of others.[142] As mentioned above, there was not much precedent in this age or earlier for anyone but Homeric heroes to be deified, especially during their lifetime. After death, the founders of many Greek *poleis* had come to be worshipped for their service to their city-state and were often mythologized or put into legend.

However, none of these figures received the worship of people who lived in their lifetime, though some, in particular Philip and Lysander, came close to making such a claim. In the fifth century, for instance, the Spartan general Brasidas had declared himself a founder-hero after he liberated Amphipolis from Athenian control but, because he had died soon thereafter in battle having displayed great *kleos*, he had received religious worship only posthumously.[143] Similarly, another Spartan commander, Lysander, also received this type of worship, being honored by the people of Samos when they changed

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[141] Although the Greeks saw Ammon as a counterpart to Zeus, ancient narratives frequently specify Alexander's decision to call his divine procreator Ammon. Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 54, argues that, despite Greek tradition, Alexander did not see Ammon as an incarnation of Zeus.

[142] Cartledge (*Hunt for a New Past*, 239-40) argues that by ancient Greek standards it was not necessarily blasphemous to believe that divine worship should be directed toward a living man. Instead, it was the circumstances which surrounded the veneration that made the different spheres (mortal and divine) easier to merge. For example, and as will be discussed shortly, the fifth-century Spartan general Lysander's political ties to Samos and the liberation he won them blurred the lines somewhat. Lysander was also rather charismatic and circumlocutory about his desires, whereas Alexander takes the word and confirmation of the Oracle of Ammon at face value and imposes the worship of himself on those around him.

[143] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 238-9.

the name of their festival originally held in the honor of Hera to that of Lysander and began celebrating a "Lysandreia" annually.[144]

Although able to claim descent from the bloodline of Heracles, Philip had never made a direct declaration of his divinity either and had only subtly hinted at the idea by building a Philippeum in Olympia and parading his own statue among the gods on the very day he was assassinated (Diodorus, 16.92.5).[145] Alexander's competitive nature and desire to outperform others' achievements played two roles here in leading him to fulfill this *pothos* to see the Oracle of Ammon. First, as was written by Arrian (3.3.1-2), he could emulate his legendary ancestors Perseus and Herakles who had supposedly visited the Oracle of Ammon on their respective quests.[146] Second, he was attempting to surpass Lysander and Brasidas, as well as his own father's achievements. Having already gone further and done more than Philip as the king of Macedon, he could now officially outrank him in another respect with the oracle's recognition of him as a god. This fed into his mother's belief that mysterious circumstances surrounding her son's birth had indicated some sort of divine role in his creation. That opened the door to an affirmation that he was superior to Philip (Plutarch, 3.2).

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[144] Several events in Lysander's life volley back and forth between divine and heroic veneration. In fact, the renown of the commander became so great that Plutarch says (*Life of Lysander* 18.2-3): "And in truth, at this time, Lysander seemed more powerful than any of the Greeks before him had been and he was thought to proclaim a pretentious pride greater than his might. For, as Duris writes, he was the first of the Greeks to whom cities built altars and offered sacrifices to as a god, and the first whom hymns were sung to." See Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 240.

[145] The Philippeum in Olympia is a *tholos*, a Greek building that holds more sacred value rather than secular structures.

[146] Andrew Collins, "Alexander's Visit to Siwah: A New Analysis," *Phoenix* 68, no. 1/2 (2014): 67. https://doi.org/10.7834/phoenix.68.1-2.0062; In addition to the reasons given above, Collins argues that the reason Alexander did not seek out the oracles at Delphi and Dodona is due to their Hellenic ties. In other words, if Alexander were to have sought out these oracles for the same questions, Greek opinion – a negative one perhaps, due to the current Macedonian occupation – might have led to his being denied these rights or receiving less-than-favorable predictions.

Figure 12: The Philippeion in Olympia, Greece

Siwa also represents another notable trend in Alexander's changing self-presentation, his growing distance from his own army. For one, it shows that the king felt safe enough in Egypt to travel without his army, instead accompanied by only a small entourage of his closest companions (Curtius, 4.7.3).[147] Furthermore, it would be the first and last period of isolation from the Macedonians that consisted of more than a canvas-tent wall and set of guards. This outlier is highly intriguing, since the change in self-presentation that came from this period of isolation was arguably the biggest and most important transformation ever in Alexander's life, not just because it was an earthshattering decision that broke religious and cultural traditions but because it shows

[147] See also Diodorus 17.49.2.

that isolation was a state that allowed the king to formulate his plan for executing a successful evolution in his public image. The decision to accept the title of "Son of Ammon" directly impacted the rest of the campaign and at the same time damaged the relationship he had with his Macedonian troops and Greek followers. Not only did Alexander leave Siwa claiming to be a demigod and the designated ruler of the world, but this drastic shift in his self-presentation marks the first significant break with tradition, in many ways dwarfing all others to come.[148] As will be shown below, Alexander repeatedly attempted to recreate the success he found in the isolation of the oasis, though he never quite achieved this level of enormous change nor the extent of the seclusion again.

2. In the Aftermath of Siwa

Because of this experience, Alexander post-Siwa was better equipped to manage and alter his image as he pleased, as can be seen in the adroit manipulation of propaganda and iconography subsequent to his visit to the oracle.[149] Having defeated Darius III a second time at Gaugamela and taking the title of Lord of Asia, he was able to capture in quick succession three major cities previously under Persian control: Babylon, Susa and Persepolis. It is notable that during this stage of his conquests there are no recorded periods of isolation; however, smaller changes worth noting took place, mainly a slow but consistent redirection in his self-presentation, much of it informed by the barbarian world and foreign wealth to which he was being increasingly exposed. Alexander's susceptivity came from his newly acquired titles – Son of Ammon and Lord of Asia – and produced a

[148] Curtius, 4.7.25-26; Curtius is quite barbed here, adding remarks that Alexander had forgotten his mortality and that the oracle was only flattering the king.
[149] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 90.

need to change his habits because of his need to prove he fit the new roles he had assumed. No Son of Ammon or Lord of Asia would see themselves as socially equal to their subjects and would certainly indulge in greater leisure time through his newly acquired wealth. The king officially began taking steps to present himself as a reflection of the Alexander that he had first manifested while isolated in the Egyptian desert.

Alexander's time in Babylon, for instance, provides a good example of the different portraits of the king painted by ancient sources. As is typical of him, Arrian is rather quick to the point, focusing on Alexander's philanthropy and the kindness he directed to the Chaldeans in the rebuilding of their temples to Baal and improving their city's condition (Arrian, 3.16.4). Plutarch, quite the apologist, often pushes back against the stereotypes into which other authors had placed the general. For instance, in his *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch defends the Macedonian's notorious drinking habits and instead claims he slowly enjoyed his cups of wine, using them as a means of socializing rather than becoming inebriated (23).[150]

Curtius, on the other hand, after giving a long-winded description of Babylon and its wonders, is the first to cite a new trend in Alexander's behavior, the pursuit of wealth. Making it clear throughout his work that he has issues with Alexander's impulsiveness, drinking, and adoption of Persian culture, Curtius goes on to accuse the Macedonian of letting this newfound interest in luxury impair the discipline of his soldiers (5.1.36).[151]

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[150] Plutarch dedicates an entire chapter to Alexander's philanthropic deeds (Plutarch, 39), asserting that the king was naturally generous and this habit only increased exponentially as his wealth grew. Plutarch even mentions a letter in which Olympias asks Alexander to find other ways to be so philanthropic, since she worried he would eventually give everything away. The reliability of these letters is suspect, as I have noted above, because only Plutarch mentions them with any frequency. There is also a notable story in which Alexander is said to have given a court member of Darius more land to watch over, who after declining it told Alexander, "…now you have made many Alexanders," a nod toward the general's generosity.

[151] Citing the Babylonian tradition of prostitution in combination with idleness and drunken debauchery, it is clear Curtius disliked Alexander's change in administrative practices (Curtius, 5.1.36-39). This was not

Luxury is a mode in which the king presented himself, and over the course of his campaign his ostentatious indulgences were avenues in which he displayed the character of ruler he had created in isolation at Siwa.[152]

The king ultimately made his way to and past Susa without any major controversial alterations in his public persona. However, the story of Alexander and Darius' table provides insight into smaller details concerning his changing presentation.[153] The king clearly was conflicted over whether he should abide by foreign cultural practices as he had done previously at Babylon and would continue to do in Afghanistan and India, or whether he should simply do as he wished (Diodorus, 17.66.5-7).[154] Alexander decided at that moment to relish his new throne by resting his feet on the table of his defeated predecessor, adhering to Philotas' advice, and enjoying what he was convinced was rightfully his.

One might expect the pattern of Alexander's magnanimity to continue as he entered the Persian capital of Persepolis, but this was not the case. Four of the five sources detail a wine-fueled banquet which led to an unsober decision to burn the city down, although, surprisingly, Arrian, not Curtius, is the outlier here.[155] He states that

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the first time this author mentions the damage idleness can do to an army (6.2). To him, Alexander had become more complacent and interested in material pleasures. Other authors also point out the evolving drinking and dining habits of the king as his time spent with wealth lengthened, however, this was not atypical of Macedonians. Trogus notes similarities between Philip's and Alexander's drinking habits, but the comparison is not noticeable until later in Alexander's life (Justin, 9.8.15). As his behavior changed, so did the type of wine he was consuming, a purer, unmixed kind. Plutarch also mentions that the further along in his journey, and the more wealth he obtained, suppers and banquets increased in grandeur, stating that sums could reach even ten thousand drachmas (Plutarch, 23.6).

[152] Although the king had come across a large amount of money after securing a Persian baggage train in Damascus (Curtius, 4.1.4) and looting the enemy camp following his victory at Gaugamela (Diodorus, 17.64.3), nothing compared to the treasuries of Susa and Persepolis. It also did not begin to affect his decision-making concerning his image until these great treasuries had been come into his possession.

[153] See footnote 83 for the wealth of Susa.

[154] See also Curtius, 5.2.13-15.

[155] Alexander would later admit remorse for this act of arson, just as he had done before with Thebes; see Arrian, 6.30.1; Curtius, 5.7.10-11.

Alexander came to this decision deliberately and even ignored the warnings of Parmenio who advised him not to destroy his newly won property, all of which makes an interesting comparison to Philotas' nearly contemporaneous argument in Susa. The king, however, had a desire to punish the Persians for the atrocities they had committed in Greece long ago, something Arrian cites as unnecessary and cruel considering the Persian Wars had occurred over a century prior (Arrian, 3.18.11-12). His narrative provides an evolved presentation of the changes Alexander had begun at Siwa, one that shows Alexander deciding to forgo his earlier benevolent tendencies toward Persians and instead opening the door to the brutal, more tyrannical behaviors soon to follow.

Although Alexander had razed cities like Thebes before and enslaved the population of Tyre, Persepolis was different. Just as Parmenio suggested, why destroy a city won without violence, one that also served as an important treasury and location for his growing empire? The answer in large part depends on Alexander's changing presentation following Siwa. Thebes' destruction had been put up to vote by the surrounding Boeotian neighbors and Tyre received their harsh punishment after embarrassing the king and stalling his ambitions. Persepolis, however, was simply a victim of the debauchery made explicit in the Vulgate sources, a new habit of the Macedonian king-turned-tyrant egged on by the affirmations of a foreign priest and god. The Vulgate authors agree that a prolonged banquet full of drinking, partying, and other celebratory vices led to the conflagration of the palace.[156] Curtius argues that despite all the good qualities held by the king, Alexander's fondness of wine reveals a deep flaw in his character:

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[156] Since he agrees with Curtius and Diodorus in his account, it appears that Plutarch was using the vulgate tradition for this part of his narrative.

> But those good qualities he had of mind, his famous character by which he surpassed all kings, his courage in the face of danger, his quickness in creating and carrying out plans, his honorable treatment of those who surrendered, his mercy towards captives, his moderation in indulging in pleasures that were permitted and customary, he stained all of these with an intemperate desire for wine.[157]

Thus, without any effective obstacle to his expression of this behavior, indulgence in these vices began to control his thinking. Now imbued with increasing wealth and a growing love of wine, Alexander began to display ever more intemperance in public, another notable evolution in his image as he attempted to play out a narrative first adopted at the oasis.

Worse yet, his new habits were contagious. The soldiers of his army also developed a taste for greed, almost certainly under the influence of their king's evolving presentation. Alexander incited the plundering of Persepolis by painting the city in pejorative terms (Curtius, 5.6.1).[158] Diodorus and Curtius both mention the fighting in the streets of Persepolis between the Macedonians and the Persians (Curtius, 5.6.4-8). The former's account is particularly notable:

> The Macedonians spent the day plundering and they were unable to fulfill their greedy desire for more. For there was such extravagance of greed according to their plunder of these things, so that as a result they fought against each other killing many of those taking much more of the loot than is appropriate to them. And some dividing the richest of the things being found with their swords were gathering them as private belongings. And others, disputing belongings, cut off the hands of those arguing with them, being carried away with passion. They took the women with them, clothing and all, bringing them from captivity into slavery against their will. Persepolis passed the other cities in misery by the same amount as it had risen above them in wealth.[159]

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[157] Curtius, 5.7.1 (Translated with help from the Utah State University Latin Lab); Ceterum ingentia animi bona, illam indolem qua omnes reges antecessit, illam in subeundis periculis constantiam, in rebus moliendis efficiendisque velocitatem, in deditos fidem, in captivos clementiam, in voluptatibus permissis quoque et usitatis temperantiam haud tolerabili vini cupiditate foedavit.

[158] See also Diodorus, 17.70.1-3.

[159] Diodorus, 17.70.4-6; Οἱ δὲ Μακεδόνες ἐνημερεύσαντες ταῖς ἁρπαγαῖς τὴν ἄπληστον τοῦ πλείονος ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ἐδύναντο πληρῶσαι. τοσαύτη γὰρ ἦν τῆς πλεονεξίας ὑπερβολὴ κατὰ τὰς τούτων ἁρπαγὰς ὥστε καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους διαμάχεσθαι καὶ πολλοὺς ἀναιρεῖν τῶν τὰ πολλὰ τῆς ἁρπαγῆς ἐξιδιοποιουμένων·

Alexander was able to reel in his men, but the damage was done. Curtius and Diodorus agree in their accounts that roughly 120,000 talents were looted from the capital.[160]

The alteration of his presentation can be seen through his desire for leisure and luxury, a longing that led the king to sponsor greed and obsession among his troops. Alexander had had his rule over Asia already confirmed to him via prophecy at Siwa and now came to understand how engrained ostentation and luxury were among previous tyrants of the area. Adopting these habits was a natural nextg step in fulfilling his preconceptions formed during his visit to the Oracle of Ammon. Also by this point, his famous tolerance of foreign culture has by all appearances begun to slip away, since his derogatory claims against Persepolis make Alexander appear to be acting in more barbaric and foreign fashion, marking a strong contrast to the generous and philanthropic king who had entered Babylon years prior.

3. After Ecbatana

With the introduction of Persian opulence into Alexander's repertoire of public attributes, the alterations he made to his image of himself began to accelerate, well evidenced in the rash and sudden shifts that would come to earn him less and less favorable public opinion. These transformations are abundantly manifest in Alexander's

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τινὲς δὲ τὰ πολυτελέστατα τῶν εὑρισκομένων τοῖς ξίφεσι διακόπτοντες τὰς ἰδίας ἀπεκόμιζον μερίδας, ἔνιοι δὲ τὰς τῶν ἐπιβαλλόντων τοῖς ἀμφισβητουμένοις χεῖρας ἀπέκοπτον, συνεκφερόμενοι τοῖς θυμοῖς· τὰς δὲ γυναῖκας σὺν αὐτοῖς τοῖς κόσμοις πρὸς βίαν ἀπῆγον, τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν δουλαγωγοῦντες. Ἡ μὲν οὖν Περσέπολις ὅσῳ τῶν ἄλλων πόλεων ὑπερεῖχεν εὐδαιμονίᾳ, τοσοῦτον ὑπερεβάλετο τὰς ἄλλας τοῖς ἀτυχήμασιν.

[160] Curtius, 5.6.9-10; Diodorus, 17.71.1.

actions, dress, and his relationship with his fellow Macedonians, both those in his court and the soldiers of his army.

Bessus' betrayal of Darius had thrown a wrench in Alexander's goal of achieving an undisputed claim to the Persian Empire. The decision to create a new title, Lord of Asia, may have been a smart preemptive strategy but did not preclude his need to capture his rival. After discovering Darius' body, Alexander demonstrated that he had not forgotten his past noble treatment of enemy elites by ordering a proper burial for the dead king and promising gifts for the capture of the traitorous Bessus (Diodorus, 17.83.8-9). At the same time, however, his behavior and attire were becoming more and more overtly eastern, a change which disturbed his Macedonian veterans.[161]

This was another large step towards showing Alexander's increasing comfort with presenting a more barbarian appearance in public. Curtius does not mince words:

> But here he [Alexander] openly unfettered his impulses and exchanged his steadiness and moderation, virtues very important in every one who has experienced fortune at its highest, for pride and lust. Considering his traditional customs and the appropriately moderate discipline of Macedonian kings, and civility to be things too trivial for a person of his standing, he adopted the haughtiness of the Persian court, which is on par with the power of the gods; he demanded that people worship him and throw themselves on the ground [providing obeisance], and little by little he sought to instill servile behaviors in these conquerors of so many nations and make them just like captives, not even fearing the omen which would imply a transfer from the insignia of the conqueror to the dress of the conquered, and put on his head a purple crown accented with white, the type Darius had. In doing so, he claimed that he was wearing the spoils of the Persians, but he also adopted their customs and in his insolence he imitated their haughtiness and habit of spirit.[162]

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[161] Curtius, 6.6.1-5; Diodorus, 17.77.4-7; Justin, 12.3; Arrian, 4.7.4; Plutarch, 45. Alexander's adoption of Median clothing started somewhere between the death of Darius and the execution of Philotas. The vulgate authors set this cultural shift in the timeframe noted above, while Arrian and Plutarch mention the Median dress for the first time only during or after the capture of Bessus.

[162] Curtius, 6.6.1-5 (Translated with help from the Utah State University Latin Lab); Hic vero palam cupiditates suas solvit continentiamque et moderationem, in altissima quaque fortuna eminentia bona, in superbiam ac lasciviam vertit. Patrios mores disciplinamque Macedonum regum salubriter temperatam et civilem habitum velut leviora magnitudine sua ducens, Persicae regiae par deorum potentiae fastigium aemulabatur; iacere humi venerabundos ipsum paulatimque servilibus ministeriis tot victores gentium

Diodorus concurs:

> And indeed after these things it seemed he had succeeded in the endeavor and was able to hold the kingdom without difficulty, began to emulate the Persian luxuriance and ostentation of the Asian kings. But first he began appointing Asian-born magistrates to his court, then he ordered newly appointed men to be bodyguards, and among whom was Darius' brother Oxathres. And then he placed on himself the Persian diadem and put on himself a very white tunic and the Persian girdle and the other things except the pants and the sleeves. And he also gave to the companions purple stole and gave to the cavalry Persian clothing.[163]

imbuere et captivis pares facere expetebat. Itaque purpureum diadema distinctum albo, quale Dareus habuerat, capiti circumdedit vestemque Persicam sumpsit, ne omen quidem veritus, quod a victoris insignibus in devicti transiret habitum. Et ille se quidem spolia Persarum gestare dicebat, sed cum illis quoque mores induerat, superbiamque habitus animi insolentia sequebatur.

[163] Diodorus, 17.77.4-6; Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα δόξας ἤδη κεκρατηκέναι τῆς ἐπιβολῆς καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν ἀδήριτον ἔχειν ἤρξατο ζηλοῦν τὴν Περσικὴν τρυφὴν καὶ τὴν πολυτέλειαν τῶν Ἀσιανῶν Βασιλέων. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν περὶ τὴν αὐλὴν εἶχε ῥαβδούχους Ἀσιαγενεῖς, ἔπειτα τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους τῶν ἀνδρῶν δορυφορεῖν ἔταξεν, ἐν οἷς ἦν καὶ ὁ Δαρείου ἀδελφὸς Ὀξάθρης. εἶτα τό τε Περσικὸν διάδημα περιέθετο καὶ τὸν διάλευκον ἐνεδύσατο χιτῶνα καὶ τὴν Περσικὴν ζώνην καὶ τἄλλα πλὴν τῶν ἀναξυρίδων καὶ τοῦ κάνδυος. διέδωκε δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἑταίροις περιπορφύρους στολὰς καὶ τοῖς ἵπποις Περσικὰς σκευὰς περιέθηκε.

Figure 13: Recreation of the Median attire. Designed by Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and sewn by Rebecca Southall.

It is clear Alexander was intentionally presenting himself in a mixed Persian-Macedonian fashion, an obvious attempt to appeal to the separate cultures but also to exemplify the ruler he was told he would become at Siwa. However, comparing Diodorus and Curtius reveals that this was not simply a matter of adorning himself with new clothing, but rather it carried deep cultural meaning that assuredly offended the Macedonian troops, especially the veterans. Where Curtius asserts Alexander was

abandoning everything that he previously stood for, closing the door on his roots so that he could follow his passion and present himself in a more foreign-looking manner, Diodorus notes that Alexander's lust for Persian luxury had led him to assume outlandish clothing and try to enforce the same on his companions. Again, the desire to indulge in leisure and the pleasures that came with foreign opulence led him to barbarize his image by wearing expensive, high-quality clothing symbolic of tyranny, a marker of his eventual rule over all mankind, as the oracle at Siwa had predicted (Plutarch, 27.3-4).

Another noticeable change was the fewer number of attempts he made to execute fair judgments. Plutarch says that the king progressively became harsher, quick to accept falsehoods in accusations, as exemplified by the deaths of Philotas and Parmenio. He notes that "…and he was utterly changed, listening to malicious things and was dangerous and inexorable, because he loved his reputation over his life and kingdom."[164] Alexander's interactions and experiences on the Anatolian coast had not been particularly different from those which he had had earlier in Greece. But when the king left the Greek-speaking world and entered regions under Egyptian and Persian influence, his interest was piqued and he clearly developed a desire to imitate their culture. Whether this was for political purposes or self-interest matters little, for while he may still have claimed to be a Macedonian, in the end he decided to adopt aspects of foreign culture and replicate his experience at Siwa regardless of the consequences.

This newfound temper and poor quality of justice started to become a mainstay in the king's identity. His close friend Philotas was the first victim, after having made a costly mistake that was amplified by Alexander's growing paranoia. This execution was

[164] Plutarch, 42.2; καὶ μάλιστα κακῶς ἀκούων ἐξίστατο τοῦ φρονεῖν καὶ χαλεπὸς ἦν καὶ ἀπαραίτητος, ἅτε δὴ τὴν δόξαν ἀντὶ τοῦ ζῆν καὶ τῆς βασιλείας ἠγαπηκώς

on balance not that extraordinary, and when compared to the deaths to come, arguably among the more justifiable. However, what really shows Alexander's changing image is his decision to assassinate Parmenio, Philotas' father (Arrian, 3.26.3). Although a reasonable motive also lay behind the paranoia that prompted that decision – Parmenio commanded much loyalty among the veteran troops and could easily have led a revolt against Alexander (Arrian, 3.26.4) – the king showed no remorse in taking down friends, even those within his closest circle.

Moreover, it was at this point that Alexander began having the letters of his men inspected for any hint of disloyalty or dissent, especially concerning his decision to execute Parmenio. Those who did were grouped together in a separate company apart from the other men, evidently to keep this defiant batch from corrupting the rest (Diodorus, 17.80.1-3).[165] Long gone was the once open and welcoming environment inside the Macedonian camp as men were now monitored and their thoughts controlled by the king, or so he believed. In fact, Plutarch notes the general atmosphere of dread that developed among Alexander's friends after this incident, a stark sign of the change in how he conducted himself as a judge (Plutarch, 49.5). A barbaric tyranny was now the front he presented.

Soon after these events, Persian traitors from Bessus' own court finally handed the rebel satrap over to the king, and he stood before Alexander in chains. This ended the threat of any rival claimant to the throne of Asia (Arrian, 4.7.3). Ancient narratives vary about the treatment of the would-be usurper, but a theme of barbaric cruelty runs through all of them. Arrian, for instance, asserts that Alexander instructed Ptolemy to leave the

[165] See also Curtius, 7.2.35.

hapless satrap bound without clothes and attached to a pole via wooden collar for his army to pass by and look down upon (Arrian, 3.30.3). When Alexander finally reached him, he held a council and ordered the tips of his ears and nose be cut off. He then sent him off to Ecbatana where he was executed before an audience of Medes and Persians (Arrian, 4.7.4).

The vulgate tradition — Curtius, Diodorus, and Justin — all agree that Bessus' torture and punishment were left up to Darius' brother Oxathres.[166] Although Alexander did not administer the punishment in person, Curtius provides details in line with Arrian's account, adding that his body was bound to a cross and pierced with arrows by barbarians (Curtius, 7.5.40).[167] Nor does Diodorus restraint his language, depicting an eerily similar fate to that of the mythological character Pentheus who, in Euripides' play, is torn apart at the hands of his mother and aunts. As Diodorus says:

> Alexander went so far as to honor these men with gifts, and he handed over Bessus to the brother of Darius and the other relatives to take out their vengeance on him. And they laid upon him every violation and torture and, chopping up his body into small pieces, they scattered the remains all around.[168]

Plutarch's version of these events, as Arrian also notes, is equally graphic:

> And when Alexander came near [Darius' body] he was visibly troubled by what happened and untying his cloak he threw it over the body and covered it. And when later having found Bessus he dismembered him; with straight trees having been bent into the same spot, a part of the body was fastened to each, then when each were let go and began moving with force, the part of him tied to it followed.[169]

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[166] Curtius, 7.5.40; Diodorus, 17.83.9; Justin, 12.5.11

[167] Justin, no doubt, did not find any details about the torture in Pompeius Trogus' history, for he does not include any particular punishments administered to Bessus.

[168] Diodorus, 17.83.19; ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς τούτους μὲν ἐτίμησεν ἀξιολόγοις δωρεαῖς, τὸν δὲ Βῆσσον παρέδωκε τῷ ἀδελφῷ τοῦ Δαρείου καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις συγγενέσιν εἰς τιμωρίαν. οἱ δὲ πᾶσαν ὕβριν καὶ αἰκίαν προσενεγκάμενοι καὶ τὸ σῶμα κατὰ λεπτὸν συγκόψαντες τὰ μέλη διεσφενδόνησαν.

[169] Plutarch, 43.3; Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ὡς ἐπῆλθεν, ἀλγῶν τε τῷ πάθει φανερὸς ἦν καὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ χλαμύδα λύσας ἐπέβαλε τῷ σώματι καὶ περιέστειλε. καὶ Βῆσσον μὲν ὕστερον εὑρὼν διεσφενδόνησεν, ὀρθίων δένδρων εἰς ταὐτὸ καμφθέντων ἑκατέρῳ μέρος προσαρτήσας τοῦ σώματος, εἶτα μεθεὶς ἑκάτερον, ὡς ὥρμητο ῥύμῃ φερόμενον, τὸ προσῆκον αὐτῷ μέρος νείμασθαι.

These narratives, none of which have included such graphic descriptions of torture up to this point, herald an interesting shift in Alexander's impulsive decision-making.[170]

Arrian shares his disgust with this sort of punishment and ends his description of this episode by highlighting Alexander's decision to adopt Median dress:

> But I do not approve this excessive punishment of Bessus. I regard the mutilation of extremities to be barbaric and despiteful treatment, and I agree that Alexander was lead into the emulation of both Median and Persian luxuriance and the nature of barbarian kings not living equally with subjects. And I do not at all approve that, even as a descendant of Heracles, he substituted clothing of the Medes for the Macedonian ones and he exchanged the tiara of the Persians, the ones he conquered himself, for the one he was wearing for a long time.[171]

While Arrian's mortification, however, is quickly glossed over with a passage flattering the king, it is clear the desire to imitate Persian power, wealth, and culture marks a dramatic shift in Alexander's self-presentation (Arrian, 4.7.5).

This emulation of foreign potentates manifested in other ways as well. First is the development of a quick temper, characteristic of Persian royalty, and the onset of paranoid and megalomaniacal thinking.[172] The death of Clitus, which was soon to follow, is a prime example of this. What lay behind this evolution in Alexander's public face is hard to say, though it may have simply been the consequence of his desire to emulate Persian ways and customs. Of course, the allure of asserting absolute power over his

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[170] This episode was not the first extant example of torture Alexander had approved; however, it was some of the most gruesome depending on the selected author. The previous punishments, mentioned by Curtius (6.9) and Plutarch (49.6), do not describe Philotas' torture in detail, only that Alexander wanted more answers out of the son of Parmenio.

[171] Arrian, 4.7.4; καὶ ἐγὼ οὔτε τὴν ἄγαν ταύτην τιμωρίαν Βήσσου ἐπαινῶ, ἀλλὰ βαρβαρικὴν εἶναι τίθεμαι τῶν ἀκρωτηρίων τὴν λώβην καὶ ὑπαχθῆναι Ἀλέξανδρον ξύμφημι ἐς ζῆλον τοῦ Μηδικοῦ τε καὶ Περσικοῦ πλούτου καὶ τῆς κατὰ τοὺς βαρβάρους βασιλέας οὐκ ἴσης ἐς τοὺς ὑπηκόους ξυνδιαιτήσεως, ἐσθῆτά τε ὅτι Μηδικὴν ἀντὶ τῆς Μακεδονικῆς τε καὶ πατρίου Ἡρακλείδης ὢν μετέλαβεν, οὐδαμῇ ἐπαινῶ, καὶ τὴν κίταριν τὴν Περσικὴν τῶν νενικημένων ἀντὶ ὧν αὐτὸς ὁ νικῶν πάλαι ἐφόρει ἀμεῖψαι οὐκ ἐπηδέσθη.

[172] The sources show that both Darius and Bessus demonstrated outbursts and rash decisions, especially when enraged. For Darius' outbursts, see Diodorus, 17.30.4-5; for Bessus', see Curtius, 7.4.19. It is unclear where Curtius got his information regarding the events of Bessus' outburst, but characterizing him in such a way demonstrates that Curtius thought Alexander was becoming more barbaric and foreign.

subjects might have also been enticing to Alexander, but there can be no doubt that the king's increasing paranoic tendencies played into this change as well.

Whatever the rationale, by adopting Median attire and Persian ostentation, Alexander was certainly taking big steps in altering the way he presented himself. However, it also appears he was interested in imitating Persian practices in terms of punishment.[173] A high degree of loyalty was expected of followers of the Persian king, and it was seen as a serious crime to betray this trust.[174] Alexander clearly followed this practice in punishing Philotas for not alerting the king to a potential assassination attempt. Similarly, he tortured and executed Bessus in accordance with the traditional response expected of a Persian king who faces threats from a would-be rival.[175] In this context, the appropriation of Median dress makes perfect sense. Indeed, Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire and a historical figure whom Alexander idolized, was also known to have worn Median attire, and to have pressured his companions to do the same, the way Alexander did.[176] In the king's blind passion to amplify the renovation of his image that had begun at Siwa, barbarity, luxury, and foreign imagery snaked into the new construction of his character, which only further alienated Alexander from his men's favor. With this, the door was wide open to further changes in his self-presentation, as he and his army rolled east into foreign and even more exotic lands.

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[173] A. B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great*, Canto ed. (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1988; United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 108; The tortures mentioned above are attested in other sources as typical avenues of punishments administered by Persian kings. Bessus' donning of the upturned tiara officially labeled him a would-be usurper, giving Alexander the opportunity to follow the Achaemenid precedent for punishing such criminals. Bosworth states that Fravartish's claim to be the king of Media during Darius I's reign is a prime example of this. Just like Bessus in Arrian's and Curtius' histories, he was chained and bound, left to the whim of nature, and then taken to Ecbatana and impaled.
[174] Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.118.2.
[175] Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 108.
[176] Xenophon, *Cycropaedia*, 8.1.40.

4. Death of Clitus and Callisthenes' Rejection of *Proskynesis*

By 328, numerous foreign habits had been cemented into Alexander's presentation. Flatterers were rampant within his court, to the point that his friends became annoyed (Plutarch, 23.4-5). They found themselves in a frustrating cycle of not wanting to emulate the characteristics of these sycophants, but also not desiring to fall behind in the king's favor. This need to pander to the king and his acceptance of this behavior engendered negative, though unstated resentment. As a result, his favor among Macedonians began to wane, and his growing tendencies to drink heavily, indulge in lavish luxury, and imitate Persian habits weighed heavily on the minds of his veterans (Curtius, 8.1.22). The Vulgate authors go so far as to mention Alexander's adoption of the custom of the king having a royal harem, in this case one that supposedly numbered around 365 concubines, a consort for each day of the year.[177] This potent mix of outlandish adulation, drunken excess, and ostentatious display set the stage for the murder of his companion Clitus.

As noted in the first chapter, the debacle began when the commander expressed his dissatisfaction with how Alexander was treating the Macedonians and Philip's memory since Siwa, where he replaced his natural father with a more godly parent. That led to a deprecatory comment about the king's assertion of his own divinity, which Clitus connected to the disrespect he claimed was being shown to not only Alexander's father

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[177] Curtius, 6.6.8; Diodorus, 17.77.6-7; Justin, 12.3.10-12. There is debate among scholars regarding Alexander's sexual habits and display. Cartledge in *A Hunt for a New Past*, 54, argues that the harem was simply a show of luxury and not actually something Alexander used. Diodorus (17.77.7) comments that Alexander only sparingly enjoyed some of the barbarian customs he adopted, such as his dress and concubines, and tended to maintain his regular routine among his Macedonian men in an attempt to keep the peace with them. For my purposes here, whether or not the king exploited this harem sexually matters little. He was still presenting his wealth by displaying it publicly.

but also the gods inasmuch as he was surrounding himself with flatterers and presenting himself in a barbaric manner (Arrian, 4.8.4-5). Lastly, speaking for the veteran members among the Macedonians, he angrily stated Alexander had fallen into the habit of claiming glory achieved at the cost of other's blood (Plutarch, 50).[178] Plutarch puts these words into the mouth of a drunken, irate Clitus:

> He [Clitus] said, "Not even now are we delighted, Alexander, because we have been provided payment such as this for our hard work, and we deem those having already died blessed, before having to see Macedonians beaten with Median rods and begging Persians in order to visit with our king." … Clitus did not let up, instead urging Alexander to speak before all the things he wished to say, or not to summon men to supper who were free and spoke their minds, but to live with barbarians and slaves who would perform obeisance to Persian girdle and white tunic of his. [179]

Clitus would die for these words.[180] In a spasm of anger and complete loss of control over his impulses, the king leapt up and murdered his friend. No hidden political scheming occurred here as it did with Philotas and Parmenio, and would soon follow with Callisthenes and the Pages. It was his indulgence in wine and the vices that characterized Persian banquets which provided Alexander with the means to kill not just by decree but now with his own hands.

After the murder of Clitus, Alexander retreated into isolation. For how long depends on the source – Curtius (8.2.11) claims he spent three days by himself – but all remark on Alexander's immediate remorse for his actions. Certainly, the king did not

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[178] See also Curtius, 8.1.29-30.

[179] Plutarch, 51.1-3; "Ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ νῦν," ἔφη, "χαίρομεν, Ἀλέξανδρε, τοιαῦτα τέλη τῶν πόνων κομιζόμενοι, μακαρίζομεν δὲ τοὺς ἤδη τεθνηκότας πρὶν ἐπιδεῖν Μηδικαῖς ῥάβδοις ξαινομένους Μακεδόνας, καὶ Περσῶν δεομένους ἵνα τῷ βασιλεῖ προσέλθωμεν." … τοῦ δὲ Κλείτου μὴ εἴκοντος, ἀλλὰ εἰς μέσον ἃ βούλεται λέγειν τὸν Ἀλέξανδρον κελεύοντος, ἢ μὴ καλεῖν ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἄνδρας ἐλευθέρους καὶ παρρησίαν ἔχοντας, ἀλλὰ μετὰ βαρβάρων ζῆν καὶ ἀνδραπόδων, οἳ τὴν Περσικὴν ζώνην καὶ τὸν διάλευκον αὐτοῦ χιτῶνα προσκυνήσουσιν…

[180] Arrian, 4.8.8-9; Curtius, 8.1.50-52; Plutarch, 51; Justin, 12.6.1-4. Due to a lacuna in the text, there is no narration from Diodorus about the death of Clitus.

want his constituents to see him as some drunkard who was easily goaded by his anger into slaughtering those close to him. Yet as the campaign progressed and the more time he spent immersed in Persian culture, his public temper continued to worsen.

There are some interesting aspects about this event which affected Alexander's presentation moving forward. In Plutarch's version of events, the king was finally convinced to leave his isolated mourning by the philosopher Anaxarchus, who told him that as king he could decide between right and wrong, just as Zeus is said to have Justice and Law sitting beside his throne (Plutarch, 52.4). This would later provide a foundation for the odd judiciary decisions Alexander began making after escaping the Gedrosian Desert (Arrian, 4.9.1-6). At the same time, however, Arrian praises Alexander for admitting his error and showing true remorse for his rash action. He blames both Clitus and Alexander's botched sacrifice as the instigating forces that drove Alexander to give into his anger and intoxication.[181]

It is Curtius' citation of remorse and isolation that are most compelling here, for it was not the words of a philosopher or the will power of Alexander that drew him out of isolation. What ended Alexander's seclusion this time was the actions of his own Macedonian men who denounced Clitus' actions as criminal and called the murder a justifiable homicide (Curtius, 8.2.11-12). Along with the king's proclamation of remorse and his expressed willingness to die for what he did, they also realized that without Alexander they were at the mercy of the barbarians all around them. As will happen again when Alexander is injured in the Mallian campaign, the king's death would have left his men stranded, and as a bid to provide him the excuse he needed to rally after the murder,

[181] Alexander was supposed to sacrifice to Dionysus as it was a Macedonian holiday, but instead he offered worship to the Dioscuri (Arrian, 4.9.5).

they chose to make Clitus the wrongdoer. Thus, in effect Alexander manipulated his relationship with his men and ensured he could continue forward in full confidence that they would remain loyal to him.[182] Here for the first time Alexander used isolation not only as an attempt to step back and replicate the isolation of Siwa but also to control his army. He would repeat this behavior again, though with less success, at the Hyphasis river and during the mutiny at Opis.

Despite the happy outcome, this move was not without its costs, especially in regard to his reputation. Alexander had struck fear into the hearts of his friends (Curtius, 8.2.7). In fact, by all appearances, freedom of speech would disappear entirely following the incident.[183] For example, when Alexander married the Sogdian princess Roxane, some of his friends lamented that he now had a father-in-law amongst foreigners and yet they were forced to pretend they supported the general's decision (Curtius, 8.4.30). As Ernst Badian puts it:

> … the death of Clitus was the end of freedom. Alexander now regularly wore an adaptation of Persian Royal Dress, and before long he married an Iranian Princess. This would have been unthinkable a few months earlier.[184]

Badian is exactly right. In the span of one year, Alexander had gone from chasing Bessus and ensuring his claim on the Persian Empire to adorning himself in their clothes, participating in their luxuries, and turning his blade, along with his anger, on his own men. Attempting to bring the vision of himself, which he fostered in the Egyptian desert, to fruition Alexander had let his desires run rampant.

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[182] Ernst Badian, "Alexander the Great and the Loneliness of Power," in *Alexander the Great: A Reader*, ed. Ian Worthington (New York: Routledge, 2012), 364.
[183] It is also notable that despite Curtius' assertion that there was an end to free speech after Clitus, Coenus would later stand up at an assembly and speak against Alexander's plan to proceed eastward, a freedom that Alexander was unhappy with, at least according to Arrian (5.28.1).
[184] Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 365.

Between 331 and 328, there are no recorded moments of solitude for Alexander who focused instead on obtaining the renown and wealth worthy of a demigod and Persian king. But the death of Clitus and the subsequent period of isolation had galvanized the king's understanding of the power of seclusion and of what had made his reemergence from Siwa as a demigod at that time relatively untroublesome and successful. From Clitus onward, once tension arose and conflict occurred, he would retreat inside his tent and barricade himself from any access. It seems clear he wanted to emulate the success he had found years before in the aftermath of Siwa, though he never did.

Following this affair, Alexander seems to have reconciled with both his men and his actions. Campaigns against local tribes continued in Sogdiana and the relationships between him and his men were, at least on the surface, healthier, but all this came crashing down once again when Alexander attempted to introduce into his court more Persian customs in the form of *proskynesis*. This practice carried great significance for both Greeks and Persians, however its application drastically varied between the two cultures. As noted in the first chapter of this thesis, *proskynesis* for the Greeks was strictly means of religious worship, often performed at altars or before the statues of gods.[185] For the Persians, on the other hand, it had a more social dimension. Inferiors were expected to provide this sort of obeisance to a superior, with the king at the top of the social hierarchy who could expect the gesture from all his subjects.[186]

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[185] Pierre Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. Peter T. Daniels, (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 223.
[186] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 202.

The Greeks in Alexander's army protested openly against his adoption of this practice, maintaining that the Macedonian king and his men were by tradition social equals when they interacted with each other.[187] Besides, there was a religious taboo forbidding the performance of such an act before a living human. Alexander's men saw this as an extension of their king's hubristic claim to divinity, a boundary Alexander had crossed long ago at Siwa and had been toying with ever since. Insisting on *proskynesis* further tested the dwindling tolerance of his followers (Arrian, 4.12.1). Moreover, the Macedonians and Greeks within Alexander's court were not expecting, nor happy with, the idea of sharing a custom with Persian court members, lamenting that they had to perform a social act which implied their inferior standing to a king with whom they saw themselves as relative equals, even though it was abundantly clear by now that Siwa that changed Alexander's perspective on this matter and the king no longer made any sincere attempt to respect them as peers. To then provide this service alongside the peoples they had spent the last seven years fighting and conquering went beyond the pale.[188]

The reason Alexander introduced this custom is debatable, whether it served a religious purpose or it was his way of blending cultures. In any case, it made a great impact on his self-presentation.[189] The attempt was so egregious that it inspired disdain even in Alexander's Greek historian Callisthenes whose entire purpose in recording the history of the Macedonian campaign was to make Alexander's achievements and deeds

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[187] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 203.
[188] Ibid., 203.
[189] Curtius notes the introduction of *proskynesis* this way, making it clear that it was distasteful to him (8.5.5): "And now having put everything in order, he thought the time was ripe for what he had once conceived in his depraved mind, and began to think about how to appropriate divine honors. He wished not only to be called, but also to be believed to be the son of Jupiter, as if in that way he could control (his men's) hearts and tongues…"

look positive to the Greeks back home.[190] Adamant that giving the king divine honors was detrimental to his image, Callisthenes' reaction that it was the duty of future generations, not the deified himself, to provide a godly title to those who earned it infuriated Alexander (Curtius, 8.5.15).

Their relationship never recovered. Alexander held a grudge against Callisthenes for what he deemed a rebellious act. Curtius goes on to add:

> With the Persians venerating him [Alexander] with obeisance, Polypercon, who was reclining beside the king, began to suggest, jokingly, to one of them who was touching the ground with his chin that he hit it harder against the ground, and that elicited anger from Alexander, which at that time he could not keep in. And so the king said, "You won't venerate me with obeisance then? Or do you think this is your private joke about me?" And he [Polypercon] answered that the king was not worthy of either ridicule or contempt. Then the king dragged him down from his couch, and threw him onto the ground, and after he lay there prone, he [Alexander] said, "See? You've done the same thing you were ridiculing someone else for doing a second ago." Then he ordered him to be taken into custody, which brought an end to the banquet.[191]

Alexander's rage regarding this failed attempt to enforce *proskynesis* persisted for years. Indeed, concerning Cassander, the son of the Macedonian general Antipater, Plutarch records an event which took place only shortly before the king's death:

> Cassander had just recently arrived [in Babylon] and having seen some barbarians making obeisance [to Alexander], because he had been raised as a Greek and has not seen something like this before, he laughed falling forward. But Alexander became enraged, and violently grabbing him by the hair with both hands he struck Cassander's head against the wall.[192]

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[190] See footnote 97 for more about Callisthenes' hagiographic purposes.

[191] Curtius, 8.5.22-24 (Translated with help from the Utah State University Latin Lab); Quem venerantibus Persis, Polypercon, qui cubabat super regem, unum ex eis mento contingentem humum per ludibrium coepit hortari, ut vehementius id quateret ad terram, elicuitque iram Alexandri quam olim animo capere non poterat. Itaque rex: "Tu autem," inquit, "non veneraberis me? An tibi uni digni videmur esse ludibrio?" Ille nec regem ludibrio nec se contemptu dignum esse respondit. Tum detractum eum lecto rex praecipitat in terram et, cum is pronus corruisset: "Videsne," inquit, "idem te fecisse, quod in alio paulo ante ridebas?" Et tradi eo in custodiam iusso convivium solvit.

[192] Plutarch, 74.1-2; … Κάσανδρος ἀφῖκτο μὲν νεωστί, θεασάμενος δὲ βαρβάρους τινὰς προσκυνοῦντας, ἅτε δὴ τεθραμμένος Ἑλληνικῶς καὶ τοιοῦτο πρότερον μηδὲν ἑωρακώς, ἐγέλασε προπετέστερον. ὁ δὲ Ἀλέξανδρος ὠργίσθη, καὶ δραξάμενος αὐτοῦ τῶν τριχῶν σφόδρα ταῖς χερσὶν ἀμφοτέραις ἔπαισε τὴν κεφαλὴν πρὸς τὸν τοῖχον. Plutarch (74.4) also describes Cassander's long-lasting fear of Alexander after this occasion.

The sources make it clear that any attempt on Alexander's part to reconcile himself with his men and reset his presentation by attempting to duplicate the events at Siwa had failed. He soon returned to acting like the short-tempered, Achaemenid king he had become.

If Macedonian disgust with Persian traditions were not obvious before, after this episode and the conspiracy of the Pages everything would come out into the open. Alexander exemplified his quick temper and worsening judgement by indicting Callisthenes as a co-conspirator in that plot. Bosworth attributes Alexander's change of public policy to the flatterers around him and the king's own belief in his godhood, citing the adoption of *proskynesis* as a definitive moment in his presentation of himself as divine.[193] Worthington suggests that by instituting this custom Alexander may have hoped to create some form of common social address, just like he had when he devised the title "Lord of Asia," seeing it as an attempt to unite the different customs and beliefs of the peoples he now ruled.

However, Alexander knew the connotations and consequences of demanding *proskynesis* and that it "… implied worship of a living man," and so we are left with the same question Bosworth posed earlier, why he adopted this social practice which was abhorred by so many of his men.[194] Worthington emphatically agrees that the intention behind this decision was Alexander's belief of his own divinity and his overwhelming desire to present himself in this light, a passion that can be traced back to that first

[193] Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 287.
[194] Worthington, "Man and God," 331.

moment of isolation where Alexander spent close to a month drinking in the flattery of the oracle at Siwa and adapting his identity to fit a new mold. [195]

5. The Hyphasis Mutiny

After the grueling campaigns in India, the Macedonians were in rough shape. By this point, however, Alexander had become disconnected from his men and so infatuated with the search for *kleos* that he provoked his troops' reluctance to follow him. Just as he did in Ecbatana, Alexander reminded the men of the successes they had obtained, and the obstacles they had surmounted (Curtius, 9.2.12-34).[196] He also gave them a glimpse into his own drive for glory, when he reaffirmed his competition with and emulation of Heracles and Dionysus, noting that under his command and daring they had captured the Aornus rock that the former had failed to take and continued past the Nysa founded by the latter (Arrian, 5.26.5-6).[197] If they turned around now, he said:

> Then indeed our many toils will be unprofitable, or otherwise we will start from the beginning with both new toils and hazards. But you all must remain, Macedonian men and allies. Those toils and hazards are the beauty of deeds of war, and it is pleasant to both live with virtue and to die leaving behind immortal honor.[198]

Alexander needed to persuade the soldiers to continue, for he knew without their loyalty he would not only be able to enhance his glory.

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[195] Worthington, "Man and God," 331-32.
[196] For the full speech at Hecatompylus, see Curtius, 6.3.
[197] This is in stark contrast to the speeches Alexander gave earlier at Issus and Gaugamela where he instead used omens and belittlement of the enemy to encourage his men. He was now holding over their heads the luxuries and glory they had achieved in a clear attempt to bait them into yielding to his will.
[198] Arrian, 5.26.4; καὶ τότε δὴ ἀνόνητοι ἡμῖν ἔσονται οἱ πολλοὶ πόνοι ἢ ἄλλων αὖθις ἐξ ἀρχῆς δεήσει πόνων τε καὶ κινδύνων. ἀλλὰ παραμείνατε, ἄνδρες Μακεδόνες καὶ ξύμμαχοι. πονούντων τοι καὶ κινδυνευόντων τὰ καλὰ ἔργα, καὶ ζῆν τε ξὺν ἀρετῇ ἡδὺ καὶ ἀποθνήσκειν κλέος ἀθάνατον ὑπολειπομένους.

When inviting the attending officers to speak and attempt to convince the king to turn back, a courageous Coenus spoke of their desire to return home, to see their families, and to enjoy the wealth and luxuries they had obtained in these dangers. With this, Alexander's disconnect with his soldiers became even starker, especially when Coenus suggested that the king could return home and enlist younger, more eager soldiers for a return trip to India, or even set his sights on Carthage or Europe, surrounded by men who strove after the same sort of glory he did (Arrian, 5.27). The crowd erupted in agreement, and Alexander had no choice but to concede defeat, though not without attempting to get his way in some other fashion.

Rankling at their refusal to bend to his wishes, the king again isolated himself, refusing anyone access except for servants (Curtius, 9.3.18). The secluded tantrum lasted three days, but finally he emerged from his tent and yielded to the inevitable. This period of isolation reveals some interesting new details about the inner workings of Alexander's mind. First, he barred even his most trustworthy friends from his company, including the *Hetairoi* (Arrian, 5.28.3). In the wake of the assassination plot and his growing paranoia, this more radical moment of seclusion bespeaks his willingness to go public with his distrust of those closest to him.

Second, as Badian notes, this was an attempt to repeat the situation with Clitus, where the king's withdrawal from his troops was designed to plant guilt in their minds and make them concede to his desires.[199] The army's success this time in standing their ground infuriated the general, as it proved he did not possess the unwavering loyalty he thought he had obtained in the aftermath of the Clitus affair. The Alexander that emerged

[199] Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 365; in the case of Clitus, it was their willingness to proclaim Clitus as the one in the wrong that freed Alexander of any guilt for his offense.

from this solitude understood that he had to turn around and present a façade of reconciliation with his men in order to retain any willingness on their part to follow him. This served only to reaffirm his disdain for those subordinates who obstructed his attempt to reign over all of mankind as he was told in Siwa he would. While Alexander may have portrayed himself as a compliant leader after emerging from his tent, a commander willing to listen and give in to his men's demands, he never got over this mutiny at the Hyphasis. Just as with Callisthenes, he maintained a fierce grudge which deafened his ears to fair trials and just punishments.

Soon after their retreat from the Hyphasis River, Coenus died. We are told it happened while he was preparing to sail down the Hydaspes and was felled by a mysterious illness. Alexander saw to it that he was given a luxurious funeral (Arrian, 6.2.1).[200] Worthington argues that Alexander's earlier handling of the Callisthenes affair was eerily similar:

> When we think of Alexander's reaction to Callisthenes, it is hard not to see his hand at work in the death of Coenus … those at Alexander's court would have made a connection between Coenus's demise and the king – and what happened to those who defied him.[201]

A small but important detail, this episode shows Alexander losing his temper in the aftermath of one of his first failures. His tyrannical tendencies were starting to become more frequent and barbarian cruelty a more overt aspect of his public presentation.

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[200] See also Curtius, 9.3.20.

[201] Ian Worthington, *Alexander the Great: Man and God* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 217; Worthington also mentions that perhaps the grandeur of the funeral for Coenus was simply a way to cover up Alexander's hand in his death and its suspicious timing. Badian (*Collected Papers*, 433) also notes the fortune of Alexander here, and says that he is able to prevent any suspicion by giving Coenus the splendid funeral.

Alexander's grudge, however, was not just against Coenus but the whole Macedonian army, as his risky, rash, and unnecessary decision to fight the Mallians and push through the Gedrosia Desert showed. Curtius mentions the disgruntlement of the soldiers who were expected to fight against the most war-like tribes of India for the sole purpose that Alexander could say he had gone further than Heracles and Dionysus (Curtius, 9.4.15-23). Badian notes:

> During the next few months, he gave the men harder fighting and marching than ever before, though from a military point of view it was now unnecessary. And it is clear from our accounts that they no longer followed him as eagerly as before.[202]

Furthermore, his desire to earn glory with his own hands resulted in his closest brush with death thus far. A reckless jump over the walls of a city he was attacking nearly left the entirety of his army without a leader in India.

Curtius relates a version of the narrative where Craterus and the Companions intervened with Alexander, and desperately tried to get him to see the dangers inherent in the risks he was taking (Curtius, 9.6.6-15).[203] Craterus argued that, had he fallen in combat against Darius or in pursuit of obtaining the Persian throne, his rashness could be seen as excusable, but to die in some obscure Indian village at the hands of some foreign militia was simply foolhardy. Curtius is blunt: Alexander's behavior against the Malli added more to his reputation for rashness than to his glory (Curtius, 9.5.1).

Despite this injury, and others prior, Alexander never allowed injury to heighten his sense of his own mortality. As Worthington asserts, "it is a sign of Alexander's

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[202] Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 365-66; Badian, *Collected Papers*, 433, argues that the injury was actually beneficial in increasing the loyalty of his men, which was only to be undone soon thereafter by his decision to go through the Gedrosian Desert.
[203] For the conversation with Alexander, see Curtius, 9.6.6-14.

megalomania and then belief in his own godhead that he never seems to have recognised the implications of his wounds."[204] Nevertheless, Plutarch relates a story, the only author to do so, in which the king showed his men that from his wounds he bleeds mortal blood, not ichor, the substance believed to flow through the bloodstreams of gods (Plutarch, 28.1-2).[205] All the same, in attempting to present himself as a deathless warrior, he, much like his idol Achilles, inadvertently displayed his mortality all too well and recklessly endangered himself.

All the evidence makes it clear that Alexander's grudge against his men persisted despite their concern for him which was all too visible in their desire to see for themselves the king post-recovery at a large and luxurious banquet (Diodorus, 17.100.1).[206] Then, under the guise of competing with Semiramis and Cyrus, he marched his army through the same desert that had humbled those figures of history and legend and had made them turn around (Arrian, 6.24.2-3). The incomprehensible rashness of this decision is completely out of tune with his former self.[207]

For instance, while he was in search of isolation and solitude at Siwa, the king still had the presence of mind to leave his men behind where no lack of provisions and conditions would endanger them. Why the later Alexander thought it was necessary to

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[204] Worthington 2014, *Man and God*, 281.
[205] It seems Plutarch cannot decide whether to excuse or promote Alexander's claims to godhood. For example, Plutarch (14.4) includes the claims of the Delphi oracle which had once called Alexander *aniketos* ("invincible").
[206] Here, Diodorus (17.100) includes a story about the fight between Dioxippus the Athenian and Coragus the Macedonian. After Dioxippus wins but was subtly retaliated against and fell on his sword, Alexander shows great remorse, realizing that the flattery and falsity in his court had led to the death of an innocent soldier.
[207] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 104; Cartledge is also surprised by these actions: "What is remarkable is Alexander's uncharacteristically irrational reaction to it. He appears to have wanted to make the soldiers pay heavily for their disloyalty (as it seemed to him) by imposing on them an unnecessarily wearying and bloody progress to the mouth of the Indus followed by a march back to Iran through the baking desert of Gedrosia (the modern Makran, in Baluchistan). This proved a serious error of judgement."

test his men in this way on the return from India is unfathomable, unless one takes into account his changing view of himself and how he wanted to be seen. A disaster like the Gedrosian march had to have been the last thing he wanted to see linked to his reputation. Badian summarizes the situation this way:

> He was well informed of the nature of that region; but the test turned out to be more severe than he had expected, and after incredible sufferings, worse than any endured in actual fighting, the remnants of the grand army straggled to safety in the cultivated land south-west of the plateau. Naturally, the King was quick to suspect treason as the cause of the disaster; and to his increasing distrust there was now added the need to find a scapegoat. The result was a bloody purge that went on for months.[208]

Escaping from the desert included two things of note. One was the luxurious procession that lasted seven days and left the army vulnerable and weak from overdrinking (Curtius, 9.10.24-28). Second was the beginning of what Cartledge, as we noted above, refers to as a reign of terror, in which Alexander set aside any notion of justice or proper punishment he had before and in his paranoic megalomania began to act on tenuous and false accusations.[209]

As noted in chapter one, the ostentatious procession following their survival of the desert was nothing short of magnificent. In fact, ostentatious displays of this sort only increased as the army indulged in more and more luxuries and put their hands on ever greater plunder. It is not a surprise then that opulence and extravagance continued to work their way into the public image Alexander issued late in this life. To this was added the terrorizing of elites like those he had left in charge of various parts of his realm. In his description of the execution of the satrap Astaspes at the end of the Dionysiac festivities,

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[208] Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 366.
[209] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 104.

Curtius concludes "…thus in no way did [Alexander's] cruelty obstruct his luxury, nor his luxury his cruelty."[210]

Even worse was Alexander's growing tendency to make hasty, unfair, and arbitrary judgments, where he again targeted higher-ups, acting on vain suspicions and accusations, even forcing some to dismiss mercenary troops in fear of a potential rebellion (Diodorus, 17.106.3). Making no attempt any longer to hide his barbarian idiosyncrasies, he openly ruled through whim and reflex, and from there it did not take long for him to begin purging satraps, even his own Macedonian officers.

One such officer was Coenus' brother Cleander, another victim of Alexander's "reign of terror." After being accused of robbing temples and making Alexander look bad as he led his forces to resupply the main army, Cleander had been one of the men who was sent to execute Parmenio (Curtius, 10.1.1-5). In a weird echo of that same affair, Alexander ruthlessly had six hundred of the men under Cleander killed, and their officers chained (Curtius, 10.1.8). The dramatic shift in his temper cannot have escaped the notice of his court and friends, especially in contrast to the earlier Alexander who was well known for forgiving others' errors, as when he showed mercy to his childhood friend Harpalus who had defected prior to Issus. (Diodorus, 17.108.4-6).[211] According to Cartledge and Badian, this abrupt turn in his demeanor points to a palpable change in Alexander's temper.[212]

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[210] Curtius, 9.10.30; adeo nec luxuriae quicquam crudelitas nec crudelitati luxuria obstat.
[211] Though, he too began to fear the king's newfound tyrannical tendencies and once he heard of Alexander's return from India, he fled to Greece fearing punishment for lavishly spending much of the Babylonian treasury the king placed him in control of (Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 105).
[212] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 200; Badian, *Collected Papers*, 65.

Suddenly everything was different. No longer could one expect to speak their peace or argue their case before the king, for now all good advice fell on deaf ears. Curtius expresses it this way:

> He [Alexander] began to impose punishments on a whim, and likewise to believe the worst of people; for success can alter a person's nature [without realizing it] and very rarely does anyone [who has great luck] look out for their own good. For the same man, a little bit before, had not allowed the sentencing of Alexander of Lyncestes who had been indicted on two charges, and had permitted more humble defendents to be acquitted against his own wishes since others thought they were innocent, and returned their kingdoms to enemies he had defeated. Toward the end of his life, he had devolved so far from who he really was that, although his mind had once been unfailingly adverse to lust, he gave royal power to some, on the advice of a prostitute, and others he killed.[213]

This terror-fueled tension led right into the next mutiny and another round of isolation designed to manipulate his men.

6. The Opis Mutiny

The Opis Mutiny was a critical turning point in the evolution of the image Alexander presented to the world. Even though the difficult trek across the Gedrosian desert was now a thing of the past, the animosity between the king and his soldiers remained a factor in all of Alexander's public business. Things had begun well. Alexander released some of his troops who were older or physically disabled and paid off any outstanding debts they had incurred (Curtius, 10.2.8-11).[214] But this did little to restore the camaraderie they once had. The real problem was the introduction of Persian

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[213] Curtius, 10.1.39-42 (Translated with help from the Utah State University Latin Lab); Coeperat esse praeceps ad repraesentanda supplicia, item ad deteriora credenda; scilicet res secundae valent commutare naturam, et raro quisquam erga bona sua satis cautus est. Idem enim paulo ante Lyncestem Alexandrum, delatum a duobus indicibus, damnare non sustinuerat, humiliores quoque reos contra suam voluntatem quia ceteris videbantur insontes, passus absolvi, hostibus victis regna reddiderat; ad ultimum vitae tantum ab semetipso degeneravit, ut invicti quondam adversus libidinem animi, arbitrio scorti aliis regna daret, aliis adimeret vitam.

[214] See also Arrian, 7.8.1; and Plutarch, 71.

units into the army, making it look like Alexander was dismissing his veterans, no matter how handsome the payments for their service. This led his men to fear they were being replaced, and they were not shy about expressing their dissatisfaction to the king.

Nor were their concerns entirely misplaced. Prior to the Opis Mutiny, Alexander was not just flaunting foreign imagery and wealth. He began to push foreign customs on the *Hetairoi* and ordinary soldiers within his army, in an attempt to change their presentation so that it conformed better with his own ideal image he first began crafting while at the Siwa Oasis. First, Alexander hosted a mass wedding ceremony, where eighty-seven officers, along with the king himself, took Persian brides.[215] Arrian adds that, after officiating over these wedding ceremonies which were conducted according to Persian customs, Alexander gave dowries to more than ten thousand lower-ranking soldiers (Arrian, 7.4.8).[216] Many of these officers would later abandon their foreign wives after Alexander's death, a clear indication of their disdain for the king's policies about intermeshing Greek and Persian culture.

Second, Alexander's enthusiasm for Peucestas, a soldier who had jumped inside the Mallian wall to protect Alexander after his near-fatal arrow wound and later joined the general in assimilating his behavior and apparel to Persian tradition, also aggravated

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[215] This event is critical in the argument for the "Brotherhood of Man" put forth by Tarn, who believed Alexander was adopting Persian customs and traditions in order to unite the diverse peoples under his kingdom (W. W. Tarn, "The Policy of Fusion," in *Alexander the Great: A Reader*, ed. Ian Worthington (New York: Routledge, 2012), 285.). Bosworth, inspired by Badian, has recently discredited this thesis by using textual analysis and paying close attention to the sources (A.B. Bosworth, "Alexander and the Iranians," in *Alexander the Great: A Reader*, ed. Ian Worthington (New York: Routledge, 2012), 303-304). While Alexander may not have sought to fuse Persian and Macedonian culture on a grand scale, Cartledge admits that he may have hoped to create a mixed nobility (Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past,* 105).

[216] Cartledge, *Hunt for a New Past*, 105.

many of the Macedonians (Arrian, 6.30.2-3; 7.6.3).[217] It was already difficult to come to terms with their king's decision to wear Median dress but to see another Greek leader follow in his steps only fueled their indignation.

Lastly, the appearance of the *Epigoni* ("Successors"), a group of boys around the same age who were raised in cities Alexander had founded all across his territory, also contributed to the Macedonians' fear of being replaced. That, however, was not the only issue surrounding the *Epigoni*. Since they were children of the conquered, though they dressed in Macedonian armor and trained in a Greek style of warfare, Alexander's soldiers saw this as disrespectful to their native culture. All in all, the institution of the *Epigoni* rankled the Macedonian soldiers who took this as evidence that their leader was attempting to reduce his dependency on the troops who had been with him from the beginning (Arrian, 7.6.1-2).[218]

These weddings, Alexander's support of Peucestas, and the creation of the *Epigoni* led to another mutiny, and it was Alexander's new public presentation of himself that his men were attacking. As they were holding an assembly, the king's claim of divine parentage became a sore point, inspiring some of the mutineers, speaking sarcastically, to tell Alexander to continue without them and carry on with his father Ammon (Arrian, 7.8.2.).[219] No longer willing to put up with their negative attitude, Alexander acted like the short-tempered tyrant he had become. In a pique of anger, he executed thirteen Macedonians on impulse, and just as he had done at Hecatompylus and the Hyphasis, he

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[217] Praising his bravery, Alexander later made Peucestas a satrap. According to Arrian, Peucestas was the only Macedonian in the Greek army who capitulated to the king's desire for his men to act and look more eastern and even try to learn how to speak the Persian language.
[218] See also Plutarch, 71, who says the Macedonians were full of fear, believing Alexander would no longer acknowledge them.
[219] See also Diodorus, 17.108.3 and Justin, 12.11.6.

went on to remind his men that they owed to him the luxury and success they had obtained, for without his leadership they would not have the glory and treasures they had accrued (Arrian, 7.9). He had always been their king; now he was their Persian king.

Playing on their sense of guilt and threatening them with further executions, Alexander entered isolation for several days (Arrian, 7.11.1).[220] This is interesting on a number of counts. As before, he was creating distance in order to manipulate his men's decisions. After all, it had worked to some extent following Clitus' murder and the mutiny at the Hyphasis, but this was a different situation and Alexander was a different person now. When he then made a speech in front of the Persians praising their loyalty and culture, he lent credence to his Macedonian troops' belief that they would soon be replaced (Curtius, 10.3.7-14). They caved in. Wailing and begging, they implored the king to accept their apology, which he did (Plutarch, 72.3-5).[221] Thus, he succeeded in maintaining his new outward appearance of barbarian clothing, image, and beliefs, while also retaining the loyalty of his men. Isolation was now a formidable weapon, arguably his best.

The Opis Mutiny constitutes a critical moment in the king's evolving self-presentation. On the one hand, he exhibited some of the by now all too familiar traits of cruelty and tyrannical anger that he had slowly taken on over the course of the campaign. In making his men bargain for forgiveness, he was deliberately manipulating them with the threat of making their deepest fears come true. On the other hand, however, more like the old Alexander, he also reconciled with his troops and showed great compassion after

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[220] Arrian mentions two days of isolation – without food or drink or any other care for his body – with the third including his meeting with Persian troops and eventual reconciliation with the Macedonians. Plutarch (71) notes the same, except for the meeting with the Persians.

[221] See also Arrian, 7.11.3-9; Curtius, 10.4; Diodorus, 17.109.1-3; Justin, 12.12.1-10.

their display of remorse, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, after he presented sympathy in public. Alexander's reaction to the Opis mutiny highlights the various ways he used seclusion as a tool of war to manipulate the opinions of others and how they saw him, but also his desire to continue changing his image in an attempt to push his new public persona further, just as he originally did after visiting Siwa.

7. The Death of Hephaestion

The Opis Mutiny occurred only a year before the king's demise and in between those two events, Hephaestion's death would spark one last bout of isolation. For the first time in a long while, there was no open conflict between him and his men. This time, the changes made to his public image would come from the seclusion itself. The death of his childhood friend – and lover, or so rumor said – hit the king hard, and his reaction reflected his deteriorating mental state, as he "… now approached more and more closely to insanity."[222]

This death and the concomitant isolation did not generate any shocking change in Alexander's self-presentation but instead built off tendencies already well under way, especially the foreign habits he had adopted. It will come as no surprise that his temper and paranoia drastically increased following the loss of his most trusted companion.[223] After two days of mourning in seclusion, Alexander lashed out recklessly in various ways. Arrian is transparent here, informing his reader that the sources differ on how Alexander grieved, but the theme of rash anger and impulsive decision-making is clear

[222] Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 368.
[223] Ibid., 368.

and notable (Arrian, 7.14.2).[224] According to some accounts, Alexander had the doctor who had treated his friend executed for malpractice, though this was unjust since all evidence pointed to Hephaestion's intense drinking as the reason he died (Arrian, 7.14.4).[225] While Arrian concedes that Alexander probably did not have the temple of Asclepius in Ecbatana burned to the ground, as later rumor said, he was still inclined to trust the report that Alexander hesitated to give Greek emissaries a votive offering to Asclepius, stating "Not even Asclepius was kind to me, not saving my companion whom I consider equal to my own life."[226]

Plutarch paints an even grimmer picture. Following the death of his faithful companion, he campaigned relentlessly against the Cossaeans, a warlike tribe nearby, about whom Plutarch says:

> And thus using war as a consolation for his grief, he went on just as if on a hunt and chase of men and trampled the nation of the Cossaeans, cutting the throat of them all from the youth upwards. And this was called an offering to the death of Hephaestion.[227]

Besides lashing out at innocent parties, Alexander's self-presentation at the burial of Hephaestion also featured displays of Persian luxury and ostentation. The king had his

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[224] Arrian also mentions that the actions of Alexander varied on the authors' opinion of Hephaestion and Alexander. For his period of isolation, see Arrian, 7.14.8.

[225] See also Plutarch, 72, whose narrative includes the execution of the physician Glaucus, calling him *athlion hiatron* ("a wretched physician").

[226] Arrian, 7.14.5-6; καίπερ οὐκ ἐπιεικῶς κέχρηταί μοι ὁ Ἀσκληπιός, οὐ σώσας μοι τὸν ἑταῖρον ὄντινα ἴσον τῇ ἐμαυτοῦ κεφαλῇ ἦγον. In regard to the source which narrates Alexander's destruction of the Ecbatana temple dedicated to Asclepius, Arrian (7.14.5) says he finds this unlikely because it is barbaric and uncharacteristic of Alexander. Yet is this not exactly who Alexander has become? No longer a pious king from northern Greece, he has begun slaughtering his own friends out of anger and megalomania. If a younger Alexander had burned down an entire city (Thebes) and palace (Persepolis), what was to stop his older self from doing the same in this, his greatest moment of grief?

[227] Plutarch, 72.3; τοῦ δὲ πένθους παρηγορίᾳ τῷ πολέμῳ χρώμενος, ὥσπερ ἐπὶ θήραν καὶ κυνηγέσιον ἀνθρώπων ἐξῆλθε καὶ τὸ Κοσσαίων ἔθνος κατεστρέφετο, πάντας ἡβηδὸν ἀποσφάττων. τοῦτο δὲ Ἡφαιστίωνος ἐναγισμὸς ἐκαλεῖτο. Arrian (7.15.1-3) also talks about this campaign, although he does not directly mention the cause or reason for the attack on the Cossaeans. He specifically notes that this mountainous tribe was attacked during the winter, which would have made the fighting all the harsher and more miserable.

friend's body taken to Babylon, where extravagant athletic and musical games were held, and an expensive funeral pyre erected (Arrian, 14.7.10). Both Arrian and Plutarch state that the festivities and pomp surrounding these rites cost upwards of ten thousand talents, dwarfing any other expense the king had incurred up to this point (Plutarch, 72.3-4).[228] There, the latter also describes Alexander's decision to hire Stasicrates, a man who was known for building magnificent, though ostentatious, monuments. There can be little doubt the king dreamed up these extravagant measures during his period of seclusion, and it was no concern to him if his soldiers or anyone thought ill of the gaudy and outlandish excesses he paraded in public.

Alexander was also undaunted in mixing Macedonian and Persian customs of mourning. He ordered the Persians to extinguish the Sacred Fire, a practice reserved for the death of one of their kings, which was later considered a bad omen, similar to his wearing the attire of those he had conquered (Diodorus, 17.114.4). The tails and manes of donkeys and horses were cut, a ban on music in the camps was enforced, and the battlements around nearby cities were torn down (Plutarch, 72.2). In addition, a general state of mourning was mandated throughout the empire (Arrian, 7.14.9).

Other attributes added to his image at this time show that Alexander's belief that he was a divine being only grew stronger after Hephaestion's death. As part of the funeral rites, the king demanded that his friend be honored as a god as well. Besides that, Alexander sent messengers to the Oracle of Ammon to ask what status could be given to Hephaestion, but the answer he received depends on which authors you consult. Arrian (7.23.6) and Plutarch (72) say only a hero, not a god, with which their Alexander appears

[228] See also Arrian, 7.14.8; Arrian (7.14.10) stated that over three thousand performers were present for the previously mentioned games as well.

to have been content. Diodorus (17.115) and Justin (12.12.11-12), however, claim the response was that Hephaestion was worthy of being worshiped as a deity, which, of course, had direct bearing on where Alexander himself saw himself on the divine spectrum.

In many ways, this final moment of isolation in Alexander's life bookends his journey to Siwa, where he asserted his divinity for the first time. Now in this, his last year of life, the king again insisted on the apotheosis of not only himself but his close friend by sending envoys to Greece who demanded they both be worshipped as denizens of heaven.[229] Bosworth states the case succinctly:

> In the last year of his life Alexander seems to have promoted his divinity more explicitly and aggressively. The catalyst was the death of Hephaestion in the autumn of 324. Alexander immediately established a hero cult for his friend and had the institution formally ratified by an oracle from Siwah.[230]

Worthington agrees and adds:

> "…if he [Hephaistion] were a demigod, that made Alexander god on earth. Hephaestion was not the king's equal, and Alexander could not elevate his friend to the same divine level as himself."[231]

Some cults were formed along the Anatolian coast, but what matters here is Alexander's decision to effect these changes in his public façade.[232] What had started with a period of isolation in the Egyptian-Libyan desert, reached its fullest expression after the mournful seclusion following best friend's death. Step by step, Alexander had taken on the appearance of deity, and now the self-portrait was all but complete.

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[229] Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 367.
[230] Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 288.
[231] Worthington 2004, *Man and God*, 206.
[232] Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire*, 289-90.

Figure 14: Alexander depicted with the horns of Ammon and wearing the royal diadem

Conclusion

The fact seems to be that Alexander, amid the grandeur of divine dreams, had no real purpose left. He had won all the power he could. There was nothing left that was worth doing… Alexander illustrates with startling clarity the ultimate loneliness of supreme power.
-Ernst Badian[233]

His legend began in his own lifetime, at his own doing. He was responsible for the exaggerated reports of his battles, and for the stories that made him out to be great. He wanted posterity to know about him in this way, and posterity took him up throughout the centuries. The same posterity that can add to him can also question him, and even take away from him.
-Ian Worthington[234]

To conclude, the importance of isolation – especially the time spent in Siwa – was pivotal in Alexander's changing image. The month he spent in the Egyptian desert marks the first dramatic turning point in the king's alteration of his sense of himself. No longer the king of Macedon, but instead the Son of Ammon, then the Lord of Asia, he started down a path toward a new definition of his kingship and identity. From there, Alexander would attempt to use seclusion to replicate the change his experience at Siwa provided in varying ways, whether it was to manipulate and control the loyalty of his men or plan his next cultural innovation, as he did with the attempt to add *proskynesis* to the protocol of his court.

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[233] Badian, "Loneliness of Power," 368.
[234] Worthington 2004, *Man and God*, 220.

The most significant factor in these moments away from the public eye, however, was the way he used solitude to reset relationships and placate animosity towards his post-Siwa characteristics. Except for the trip to the oasis, every moment of isolation occurred after tensions had risen, tempers flared, and conflict erupted. Alexander would then seclude himself for a few days, gather his thoughts, prepare new plans and, in the case of those isolations that followed the affair with Clitus and the Hyphasis and Opis mutinies, he would then reconcile with his men, but only after some time and always with an eye toward how he could manipulate their feelings and behavior. Sometimes heartfelt, his concessions were more often a façade.

Finally, after the death of Hephaestion, the king returned to the facet of his image which had started it all, his deification. It was this moment when Alexander's persistence in emulating the isolation at Siwa became clear. The alterations he began to make to his self-presentation after leaving Egypt built slowly, some aided by shorter bouts of solitude, though these, unlike the visit to Siwa, were often attached to cycles of conflict with this men, calculated remorse, and the manipulation of their feelings and opinions.

The Alexander I found through my studies is similar in character to the Alexanders Badian, Worthington and Cartledge imagined and constructed. I fundamentally agree with the way they describe Alexander's change in habits and actions, in particular, his shift from Homeric king to Persian tyrant. In fact, it is thanks to these scholars that I investigated the Romance of Alexander in the first place and saw its role in my analysis. While many of them have deliberated about what happened at Siwa and which ancient texts tell the most truth about this obscure moment, the gap in the historical record surrounding this event has resulted mostly in speculation and scholarly silence.

However, I believe Alexander repeatedly thought of the events that took place during that initial period of seclusion and either attempted to recreate its success or simply fulfill the idealized divine character he had fabricated there, in the presence of only the oracle itself and a few trusted friends. Whether Alexander claimed divinity, attempted to unify Persians and Greeks through marriage, or enrobed himself in foreign attire for political or personal reasons is beyond the scope of this thesis. His true motives behind these actions will never truly see the light of day, unless new evidence surfaces which seems unlikely, leaving the argument to continue its *ouroboros* cycle.

In sum, Alexander the Great's presentation of himself to the public evolved from a young, ambitious, outgoing, generous king from northern Greece, a general who was beloved of his troops, and even some of his enemies, and had a Homeric-style desire to earn *kleos*, into a foreignized, tyrannical Lord of Asia who wore Median clothing, insisted on being called a god, and carelessly murdered innocent people. Put simply, in an attempt to carry out the changes his isolation at Siwa had stimulated, Alexander birthed a monster whose impact on civilization still resonates around the world today.

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