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The role of learning institutions in Ptolemaic Alexandria

Jeffrey J. (Jeffrey Jay) Cunningham
Western Washington University

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THE ROLE OF LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN PTOLEMAIC ALEXANDRIA

By

Jeffrey Jay Cunningham

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Moheb A. Ghali, Dean of the Graduate School

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair, Dr. Steven Garfinkle

Dr. Peter D. Diehl

Dr. George Mariz

MASTER'S THESIS

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Jeffrey Jay Cunningham
May 14, 2010

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The Faculty of
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ABSTRACT

Hellenistic monarchs were fervently competitive with one another in the pursuit of political and cultural dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean. These rulers used their power, influence, and patronage to promote themselves as worthy successors of Alexander by building massive monuments and glorious capital cities; this is how they legitimized their rule. The ruler's attempt to outshine their opponents became a key feature of Hellenistic urbanism, typified in the city of Alexandria. One of the key reasons why Alexandria was able to become the dominant city in the Hellenistic World was the existence of learning institutions such as the Great Library, Mouseion, and Serapeum, all fostered by the Ptolemaic Dynasty. Rival libraries, sponsored by foreign royal patrons, challenged the Great Libraries' supremacy in the scholastic realm. These libraries were paradigms of Hellenism in many ways. This thesis will explore the role of these learning institutions within the city of Alexandria itself, as well as their wider implications in Hellenistic society.

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Introduction

In 331 BC,¹ Alexander the Great of Macedon was welcomed into Egypt by the populace as a liberator and immediately crowned pharaoh.² He then began the construction of an eponymous city that was destined to become the envy of the entire Mediterranean world and beyond. Alexandria was a coastal city on the Nile Delta that would serve as the administrative capital of the newly conquered province of Egypt. However, Alexander died in 323 and his death ushered in the Hellenistic Age. He and his men had conquered the entire Persian Empire. Alexander's successor generals, the *Diadochoi*, divided his expansive empire amongst themselves, establishing independent kingdoms in the newly conquered areas. Greeks and Macedonians building new polities in the lands of the former Persian Empire signaled the emergence of what is called Hellenism: a blend of Greek and Near Eastern cultures. This blending occurred when new Greco-Macedonian elite imposed Greek culture on their Near Eastern subjects. In spite of this, the natives of these ancient kingdoms carried out many of their long established traditions. This resonated with the new overlords as they used these traditions and customs to legitimize their rule. As a result, Greek and Near Eastern cultures fused into Hellenistic culture. Alexandria became the capital of the Ptolemaic kingdom and enjoyed its position as the most prominent and culturally dominant city in this newly created Hellenistic world.

The different Hellenistic kingdoms were intensely competitive with one another in the pursuit of political, military, and cultural dominance. Hellenistic royal families

¹ All subsequent dates are BC unless otherwise stated. In order to avoid any possible confusion with the first century AD, I have included BC for all first century dates.

² "The Egyptians had long been opposed to the power of the Persians, believing their rule had been avaricious and arrogant, and Alexander's prospective arrival had inspired them to hope." Quintus Curtius Rufus, *The History of Alexander*, trans. John Yardley (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1984), 66.

used their influence and patronage to promote themselves as worthy and legitimate successors of Alexander. This was accomplished in part through the building of glorious capital cities. These cities became nerve centers of the Hellenistic kingdoms, economically, politically, and culturally. However, they were also places for the kings to express themselves and demonstrate their wealth and power, to their subjects and to foreign rulers. Thus, gigantic monuments and cultural institutions were developed. These institutions had a profound effect on the urban landscape of the Hellenistic world.

Hellenistic city building and urbanism are important ideas that underlie many concepts throughout this work. One of Alexander's most renowned and lasting policies as king and conqueror was the establishment of many cities during his conquests. Hellenistic kings emulated Alexander and continued to build many new cities in this period. Most of the prominent cities in the Hellenistic world were built on new sites. However, the significance lies not merely in where the cities were built, but *how* they were built. The conquerors used the Greek *polis* as their physical model of city building. This was a familiar and efficient way of organizing cities. The *polis* city structure also stressed Greek culture on their foreign subjects. Greek culture was emphasized through institutions commonly seen in the Archaic and Classical Greek world, such as the *agora*, gymnasium, and theater. However, the *polis* changed; it had to accommodate Near Eastern urban conventions, such as the palace. There was a blending of urban styles. This is a concept known as Hellenistic Urbanism. Alexandria was the model city for Hellenistic Urbanism. It embodied many aspects of Hellenism, from its fabulous temples dedicated to syncretized Greco-Egyptian gods, to its powerful ruling family and their lavish palace, to the glorious Pharos Lighthouse. However, Alexandria's power lay not

only in these tangible monuments of power; it also had a potent and abstract weapon on the cultural battlefield: the Mouseion and Great Library.

One institution that we see growing in prominence in Hellenistic cities is the library. Libraries had a profound impact on how the Hellenistic *polis* took shape. These libraries and other learning institutions were built under the patronage of the Hellenistic rulers and were used to wield great cultural power in a number of ways. One way they were used as tools of power was through competition with other Hellenistic monarchs. The greatest library in the Hellenistic world would bring the ruling family controlling it extraordinary cultural prestige. These learning institutions also provided the Hellenistic dynasties with able intelligentsias and the technological breakthroughs that resulted from their work. These learning institutions were also used as expressions of power through the imposition of Greek culture on the native elites that they conquered. However, the library had its roots in both Greek and Near Eastern cultures. The patrons also fostered a sense of cosmopolitanism through the presence of documents from all over the Hellenistic world. Therefore, Hellenistic libraries represented a blending of cultures and were paradigms of Hellenism.

These learning institutions were powerful symbols in the Hellenistic world. They demonstrated the wealth, power and capacity of Hellenistic rulers to foster knowledge, both to their own subjects, as well as to rival sovereigns in foreign lands. Ptolemaic Alexandria represents the pinnacle of this phenomenon. The largest, most famous, and comprehensive learning institutions in the Hellenistic world were the Mouseion and Great Library of Alexandria. One of the key reasons why Alexandria was able to

establish itself as the preeminent city in the Hellenistic Age was the existence of these institutions, patronized by the Ptolemaic dynasty.

These assertions will be expounded in four chapters. Chapter 2, entitled “Alexander, Hellenism, and Hellenistic Urbanism” will begin with an account of Alexander’s life, placing emphasis on aspects of his life that are relevant to the idea of Hellenism. Alexander’s conquests created the Hellenistic world. As a result, many aspects of Hellenism have their roots in actions he took in his lifetime. The process of Hellenization was spread to all aspects of society: political, linguistic, military, social, religious, and urban institutions. The later sections of Chapter 2 focus on exploring these different aspects of society in the Hellenistic Period. Particular emphasis will be placed on the political and urban institutions, namely the idea of kingship and the Greek *polis* becoming the standard way of organizing cities in the Hellenistic kingdoms. Alexandria and its renowned learning institutions demonstrate many features of Hellenism; therefore, in order to lay the groundwork for their understanding, it is important to explore aspects of both the life of Alexander and Hellenism.

Chapter 3 is “Cultural Competition, the Role of *Euergetes*, Gigantism, and Scholastic Patronage in the Hellenistic World.” Hellenistic monarchs from different kingdoms competed with one another to prove they were the culturally dominant power. Kings vied for cultural dominance through building on a tremendous scale in their capital cities as well as in other cities abroad. They invoked the title of “*euergetes*,” meaning “benefactor.” Competitive benefaction lent itself to monumental gigantism which had an effect on how the urban landscape of the Hellenistic Period took shape. This competitive gigantism was not limited to the realm of monuments; it can also be seen through

scholastic patronage. These monarchs directly competed in order to have the best learning institutions. The cultivation of scholarly work through royal patronage became a key way of expressing cultural power in the Hellenistic world. The dynasties ruling of the cities of Alexandria and Pergamon were most avid rivals in the pursuit of intellectual dominance; therefore their rivalry will be specifically elucidated. Detailing this development will broaden our understanding of how serious scholastic patronage became.

The goal of Chapter 4, “The City of Alexandria and the Great Library,” is to establish that Alexandria was the foremost city in the Hellenistic world and how its Mouseion and Great Library played a key role in this development. A description of the layout of Alexandria and the important buildings is given in order to place into context the city’s size and greatness. In my description of the city, primary emphasis will be placed upon on the learning institutions of the Mouseion and Great Library. In this analysis of the Mouseion and Great Library, I also touch on the important topic of the areas of study that were pursued in the Library and some of the more famous scholars who resided in its precincts. This serves to clarify the profound influence that the Great Library had over the Hellenistic and later Roman worlds.

The subject of Chapter 5, “Alexandria’s Legacy: Imperial Rome,” concerns the development of the city of Imperial Rome as the cultural capital of the Mediterranean at the expense of the formerly preeminent Alexandria. As the Roman state swallowed up territories in the eastern Mediterranean, it was influenced by the grandiosity of fabulous cities, especially Alexandria; Rome was the heir to their legacy. During the transitional time between the late Republican and early Imperial Periods, the city of Rome achieved

cultural dominance through the building of lavish urban amenities influenced by Hellenistic models. Another aspect of this cultural dominance can be seen in the emergence of many libraries within the city of Rome during this period. These libraries were also influenced by Hellenistic models and Greek culture. These developments were facilitated under, and could not have been possible without the patronage of important men, such as Sulla, Pompey, Julius Caesar, and most specifically, Augustus. Augustus became the sole ruler of the Roman world and transformed the capital city into a cultural powerhouse, much in the same way Hellenistic monarchs had done in their own capital cities. Augustus used Alexandria as his model during his rebuilding of the city of Rome to accommodate his new form of monarchical government.

One key thread that runs through this whole work is the passing of cultural dominance from one city to another. Hellenistic Alexandria surpassed Classical Athens in the realm of cultural supremacy in the Greek world. In much the same way, Rome assumed this role as it grew in political dominance at the end of the Hellenistic Age. Athens and Alexandria both remained important cities into the Roman period, but their superiority was compromised as another city began to outshine them. Thus the torch of cultural supremacy was passed from Athens, to Alexandria, then to Rome. Both primary and secondary sources were used to buttress these claims. There is a wide variety of primary sources coming from different periods in history, including Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods. In order to understand how I gathered the information used in this work, it is important to discuss these sources and how I evaluated them. I have divided my discussion of sources into separate periods in chronological order for the sake of clarity.

Primary Sources

A number of sources used in this work come from the Classical Period. Plato and Aristotle (early fourth century) are used in the discussion of the Hellenistic *polis*. Plato and Aristotle are instrumental to our understanding of the *polis* because, rather than just living in it, they analyzed what life was truly like in the Classical *polis* and how its institutions operated. These two influential thinkers are relevant because the Classical *polis* had a profound impact on the development of urban models in the Hellenistic world. Therefore, they are our best guides to understanding the *polis* as it was in the Classical Period and what it became in the Hellenistic Age. Aristotle's discussion of the Greek conceptions of kingship is used as well. This gives us an idea of how the Greeks felt about monarchies, which became the standard political system of the Hellenistic Age. Aristotle is especially germane because he was a contemporary of Alexander at the beginning of the Hellenistic period in the fourth century.

Demosthenes is used in reference to Greek attitudes toward Macedonians. Demosthenes' speeches are specifically relevant because they were delivered immediately prior to the conquests of Alexander in the middle fourth century. It is important to note that the speeches he delivered in opposition to Philip's take-over of Greece were no doubt propaganda. They also stress the hypocrisy of Athenian imperialism; it had only been a few generations since dismantling of the imperial, Athenian-led Delian League when Demosthenes gave his Philippics.³ In spite of this, Demosthenes is very useful for my discussion because he gives us a sense of the Greeks'

³ Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon 356-323 B.C.: A Historical Biography* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 21. Demosthenes was also accused of pocketing Persian gold. The Persians were not above bribing Greek statesmen in order that they foment war with Philip (*Ibid.*, 64). We are not positive whether this accusation was true, but this certainly damages Demosthenes' credibility as an orator for the Greek cause.

attitude towards the Macedonians, but also the Greeks' fervent objection to foreign forces that threatened their self-determination as guaranteed by the institution of the *polis*.

Two earlier authors from the fifth and early fourth centuries are Herodotus and Xenophon. Throughout history, the credibility of Herodotus' *Histories* has been called into question, even in antiquity. He has often been called the "father of lies," as a pun on his celebrated title of "father of history." The Roman orator, Cicero, called him a "story-teller" and the Athenian historian, Thucydides, accused him of "publicity seeking."⁴ However, the accuracy of Herodotus as a historian is not important for my work; Herodotus is used as a means of understanding Classical Greek attitudes towards civilizations more ancient than their own; for example, I discuss his amazement of the size and greatness of the walls of Babylon. This puts into context Classical Greek attitudes towards Near Eastern urbanism. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* concerns the management of an estate in Classical Athens. This source is used in order to talk about the responsibilities of a *euergetes* in that city. This is vital because *euergetes* became an important concept in the Hellenistic world, but it had its origins in earlier stages of Greek history. It also serves to allow the reader to fully grasp the heavy financial responsibility associated with the role of *euergetes*.

Many sources from the Hellenistic Age were written in Greek by people who were native to the lands conquered by Greeks and Macedonians. Manetho and Berossos are two authors who participated in the creation of this new form of literature. They wrote histories of Egypt and Babylon, respectively, in Greek. It is best to leave this analysis for the second chapter, where literary developments in the Hellenistic Age are discussed.

⁴ Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey De Selincourt, (New York, NY: Penguin, 1972), from the Introduction by A. R. Burn, 29.

Jewish authors writing in Greek also offer us some fascinating sources. *The Letter of Aristeas* recounts Ptolemy II Philadelphos' appointment of 72 Jewish scribes from Jerusalem to come to Alexandria and translate the Torah into Greek. It is written in the format of a letter, but reads like a narrative. The authorship is attributed to a man by the Greek name of Aristeas. Most likely it was written by a Jewish author with a Greek pseudonym.⁵ Most scholars believe that it was written a hundred or so years after it is said to have been written, and that the account is really a legend.⁶ *The Letter of Aristeas* is a little shaky on chronology as well. It claims that these acts were carried out by Ptolemy II Philadelphos. Although, we know that this could not be true because Philadelphos dismissed Demetrius of Phalerum (who play a large role in the narrative of the *Letter*) upon his ascension to the throne.⁷ If the scholars are correct and it was written a hundred years after it is said to have been written, then possibly the author conflated the first two Ptolemies. Despite these limitations, *The Letter of Aristeas* is still useful because it gives us clues to what Ptolemy I Soter and Demetrius had in mind when they first set out in creating the Library.⁸ It is also the oldest surviving document that specifically mentions the Great Library.

⁵ Ellen Birnbaum, "Portrayals of the Wise and Virtuous in Alexandrian Jewish Works: Jews Perceptions of Themselves and Others," in *Ancient Alexandria Between Egypt and Greece*, eds. W.V. Harris and Giovanni Ruffini (Boston, MA: Brill, 2004), 131-132.

⁶ *Ibid*, 131.

⁷ In 285, two years before his death, Soter elevated Philadelphos to the co-rulership. This was in spite of Demetrius' discouragement, being that Philadelphos was the son of Soter's mistress. When Soter died and Philadelphos became sole ruler, he made Demetrius a prisoner based on his disapproval of Philadelphos' ascendancy. Demetrius later took his own life by the bite of an asp. (Diogenes Laertius, *Demetrius*, in *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers: In Two Volumes, Volume I*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 531.)

⁸ Robert Barnes, "Cloistered Bookworms in the Chicken-coop of the Muses: The Ancient Library of Alexandria," in *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World*, ed. Roy McLeod (New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 64.

Maccabees is another source from Jewish authors. I Maccabees was translated into Greek from the Hebrew.⁹ This is essentially a history of the Jews under Seleucid rule. Maccabees is significant because it can give us a glimpse into the nuances of Seleucid rule as interpreted by non-Greeks. It was written in an effort to connect the Hebrew and Greek world-views in some ways.¹⁰ This reflects some level of cooperation between native communities and their Greco-Macedonian overlords. In this context, it is especially relevant for my discussion because it discusses the amiable relationship between Jonathan, the high priest of Jerusalem, and the Seleucid monarch. Jonathan reaped the rewards of being a “Friend of the King.”

Another source comes from the Jewish scholar, Philo of Alexandria, writing in the first century AD. His book, which was written in Greek, called *In Flaccum* details the cruel career of the anti-Semitic prefect of Alexandria, Flaccus. There is a passage in which Philo briefly describes his native city. I use *In Flaccum* in my work to discuss the layout of the city of Alexandria. This description is important because it gives us a sense of the make-up the city by someone living in it. Unfortunately, it is from the early Roman Period, so it is not directly contemporary with the period discussed in my work. However, the city’s layout would have changed little since the Hellenistic Period. Based on Strabo’s description of the city, many of the same buildings and institutions are present in the city. From his work, we can see that Jews in Alexandria took part in the politics of Ptolemaic and Roman Alexandria and freely called themselves “Alexandrians.”¹¹ This reflects lively cultural exchange in Alexandria. This text also

⁹ Graham Shipley, *The Greek World After Alexander* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 266.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 266.

¹¹ Erich S. Gruen, “Jews and Greeks,” in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 275.

reflects Hellenism, being that it was written by a Jewish scholar in Greek, although he was from the early Roman Period. It shows how many Jews in Alexandria were Hellenized in this period, even after the Romans took over.

Papyri are important and useful sources for looking at Ptolemaic Alexandria. In the discussion of the economic capacity of the Ptolemaic kingdom, a papyrus detailing the monopoly on oil is used. Papyri are unique to the region of Egypt and ubiquitous there. These records detail law codes, edicts, public announcements, and tax records. These important documents allow historians to reconstruct social and economic history of Egypt with a large degree of accuracy.¹²

Unfortunately there are no surviving texts concerning the life of Alexander contemporary with his lifetime. However, we do know of a few of these early accounts. Callisthenes was the official historian who accompanied Alexander on his campaigns. He was executed by the king, but some of his work survived and influenced others.¹³ Ptolemy, Aristobulus, and Nearchus all served under Alexander and wrote accounts of his campaigns.¹⁴ There is also a history of Alexander written in the late fourth century by Clitarchus. It was most likely written from first hand accounts and it became the origin of the “vulgate” tradition of Alexander biographical works.¹⁵ There are many texts that recount Alexander’s life that were written in the Hellenistic, Roman, and even medieval periods, however, many of these are apocryphal¹⁶ and will not be used for this thesis. I

¹² Shipley, 197.

¹³ *Ibid*, 6.

¹⁴ Francois Chamoux, *Hellenistic Civilization*, trans. Michel Roussel (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 11.

¹⁵ Shipley, 6.

¹⁶ Chamoux, 12.

will rely upon sources based on these earlier biographical traditions because they draw on evidence that can be traced closer to the life of Alexander.

There are four biographers of Alexander whose works are used in this thesis. Three of these subscribe to the vulgate tradition: Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius Rufus.¹⁷ Diodorus Siculus' account is the oldest, written in the second half of the first century. I think that Diodorus' work is credible because it is the oldest surviving source detailing the life of Alexander, even if it is based on another source. It is part of a larger volume detailing all of history; therefore it is also used as a means to outline wider topics in Hellenism and the later history of the Hellenistic Period.

Plutarch is another source used to talk about the life of Alexander, as well as the lives of later Romans who are discussed in the last chapter. His works are primarily biographies, oftentimes comparisons of the characters of two men, such as Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great. He is a good source when looking at the lives of notable individuals, but he does have certain limitations. Graham Shipley, author of *The Greek World after Alexander*, expresses his trepidation with using Plutarch. He states that Plutarch is good for historical data in default of other evidence, but not as the main source. He was writing to compare the characters of men and teach moral lessons. As a result, Plutarch sometimes would highlight or even exaggerate certain episodes in a historical figure's life to emphasize conclusions about their characters, sometimes even mixing up events. On this account he might not be as truthful a source as other ancient historians whose primary goal was to tell the history of events, not morals.¹⁸ Also, because he is concerned with biographies, he sometimes fails to acknowledge, or takes

¹⁷ Shipley, 6-7.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 14.

for granted, larger trends in history, such as the rise and fall of great powers.¹⁹ This does not mean that Plutarch is a useless source, but these considerations must be kept in mind when relying upon Plutarch's interpretations.

Quintus Curtius Rufus' text is the only Alexander biography used in this thesis that was written in Latin. There is heavy debate among scholars as to when this work was written, but, today most scholars agree that it was written either during the reign of Claudius or Vespasian.²⁰ Although much is unknown about Quintus Curtius Rufus' work, scholars do know that it uses Clitarchus' vulgate as its main source.²¹ It is unfortunate that we have no contemporary sources from the life of Alexander and that we have to rely so heavily upon three sources all derived from the same vulgate tradition. However, the original vulgate was written in the late fourth century, just decades after Alexander's death.

Arrian is the only Alexander biographer used in this work which is not based on the vulgate of Clitarchus. Arrian is possibly the most reliable source for the life of Alexander; most modern histories of Alexander are based off of Arrian. He was a Greek who gained distinction among Romans. Under the Emperor Hadrian, he was the governor of Cappadocia.²² In the opening sentences of Book One he names his sources, Ptolemy and Aristobulus.²³ Both of these men were present for many of the events and knew Alexander personally. Arrian claims that these are the most reliable sources and that he

¹⁹ Plutarch, *The Fall of the Roman Republic: Six Lives By Plutarch*, trans. Rex Warner (New York, NY: Penguin, 1972), from "Translator's Introduction," 7-10.

²⁰ Quintus Curtius Rufus, from the Introduction by Waldemar Heckel, 1.

²¹ Shipley, 7.

²² Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, trans. Aubrey De Selincourt (New York, NY: Penguin, 1971), from the Introduction by J. R. Hamilton, 15.

²³ *Ibid*, 41.

uses them critically.²⁴ I was particularly apt to use Arrian in my analysis of Alexander's life because he discussed his sources and engaged in source criticism.

The geographer, Strabo, gives us a description of Alexandria in the 17th book of his *Geographica*. Strabo came to the city with the Roman Prefect Aelius Gallus in 24 BC. They traveled throughout Egypt, but Strabo stayed in Alexandria until 20 BC.²⁵ Using Strabo allows me to emphasize Alexandria as the preeminent city in the Hellenistic world. This account was written in the late first century, early in the Imperial Roman occupation, during the reign of Augustus. In spite of this, Strabo is considered culturally and chronologically a Hellenistic writer.²⁶ The city had fallen as the preeminent city of the Mediterranean world; however, Strabo's account offers us a glimpse of a city that was still vital to Roman administration and economics. This reflects that although cultural supremacy in the Mediterranean was shifting to Rome, Alexandria was still one of the preeminent centers of culture and that it had influence upon Rome and its ascent to greatness. I use Strabo's description of the city with a large degree of confidence because it is based on personal observation and it is presented in a very detailed and systematic way.

Galen was a Pergamene medical doctor living in the second century AD. It is understandable that Galen would have been interested in the Great Library, since one of its main fields of research was medicine. The Ptolemies' bibliomania is recounted in his work. Although his extensive writings mostly cover the topics of his trade, he is still an excellent source in the discussion of the Great Library and the competitive nature of Hellenistic scholarship. His stories give us an idea of the extent to which the Ptolemies

²⁴ Shipley, 7.

²⁵ P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 1972), 7.

²⁶ Shipley, 14.

and Attalids went in order to claim scholarly dominance. However, it is important to remember that Galen was from Pergamon, the one-time rival of Alexandria. Therefore, his salacious stories might have been tinged with negative biases against the Ptolemies.²⁷ Another source is Suetonius. He was a biographer who wrote about the lives of the first twelve Roman emperors in the early part of the second century AD. This source is used in the discussion of certain anecdotes in the life of Augustus. Suetonius is known for being very objective when looking at Roman emperors. It seems that many other biographers eulogize, while Suetonius looks at emperors with a critical eye.²⁸ I think that Suetonius is a trustworthy source because he was not afraid to openly discuss the faults of Roman emperors.

Historiography

The Great Library of Alexandria is one of the more famous scholastic institutions in human history. It is commonly referred to as the place where all of the knowledge of the ancient world was stored. In some ways this is true. The Ptolemies ruthlessly acquired as many texts that they could possibly get their hands on, but of course this statement could not possibly be accurate. The Great Library has been mythologized and many people no longer truly grasp why it was, and remains, such an important institution. Oftentimes, when people think of the Library, they think of its burning and the tragic loss that this represented to humanity. Focusing on this aspect of the Library is not constructive because it does not aid in our understanding of the motives of those who created it or the purpose that it served while it was standing. Also, on a more concrete

²⁷ Andrew Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Museum and Library of Alexandria," *Greece and Rome* 42, no. 1 (1995): 47, footnote 8.

²⁸ Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves (New York, NY: Penguin, 1989), from the Introduction by Michael Grant, 8-9.

level, focusing on this is somewhat pointless because there was no specific time when the Library actually burned down. The Library went through various stages of decay and destruction, and it is impossible to pinpoint the specific date when it happened.²⁹ It is not even possible to locate exactly where it was in the city; we have no existing archaeological evidence indicating its position or size. The image of the Great Library burning is all part of the mythology surrounding it. Modern perceptions of the Library and its destruction play a very minor role in this thesis.

Lionel Casson's *Libraries in the Ancient World* is great resource in understanding the way the Great Library and other libraries in the ancient world functioned, but it does not fully explain why these libraries matter, it just explains them on a surface level. There is no in-depth analysis of libraries, only their purpose and function. Luciano Canfora's *The Vanished Library* is another wonderful source for learning about the Library; however it is too anecdotal and repetitive of primary sources. As far as sources that are specific to the Library, these are the two major contributors to this thesis. These works are both excellent for what they are, but they do not really put the Library into context. They are too focused on the institutions themselves.

Two sources come very close to the same topic that this thesis explores and they both were very influential in my research. They are Andrew Erskine's article entitled "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Museum and Library of Alexandria," and the chapter in P. M. Fraser's *Ptolemaic Alexandria* entitled "Ptolemaic Patronage: the Museum and the Library." They both focus on how royal patronage made these institutions possible and on the competitive aspects of Hellenistic scholarship, which are

²⁹ In my chronological survey of the Library in Chapter 4, I will discuss these different stages of the Library's destruction, but this only serves to place the Library in a chronological framework.

main themes in my analysis. However, given their brevity, they do not capture the full implications of the Library's impact on wider themes. Hellenistic urbanism was a key issue in the construction of these libraries. The Great Library and other tremendous learning institutions shaped the urban landscape of the Hellenistic world, but these ideas are not given significant attention. The role of *euergetes* and the idea of urban gigantism are key factors in the development of how these learning institutions grew to such unprecedented sizes. The role of *euergetes* is hinted at in the discussion of patronage by Erskine and Fraser, but it is never explicitly mentioned, nor is it tied to the origins of this idea in the Classical world.

Peter Green briefly touches on gigantism throughout his work *Alexander to Actium*; however, he never devotes an entire section to the analysis of Hellenistic gigantism and its impact on the urban landscape. An entire section devoted to gigantism in this thesis is justified because the Library stresses this idea perfectly in two ways. It shows gigantism in the scholastic realm; during the Library's time, it was the most ambitious collection of knowledge in history. It also expresses gigantism in monument building; it was a part of the Mouseion, which was the greatest and most significant temple to the Muses ever constructed. In the context of the Great Library and other Hellenistic libraries, little has been said about them as expressions of Hellenism. These libraries had representative texts from many different cultures, many of which were translated into Greek.

The last chapter, concerning Rome is particularly unique. One article entitled "Alexandria in Rome," by Sarolta A. Takacs discusses the urban influence that Alexandria had on Rome. This is very pertinent to my topic, but libraries are only

mentioned briefly, when in fact, they played a key role in Rome's bid for cultural supremacy. Diane Favro's *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* does the same thing. She discusses Rome's ascendancy to cultural capital of the Mediterranean world at the expense of Alexandria but talks very little about the learning institution that played a large role in this development.

Essentially this work takes the Great Library and puts it in a wider context. This thesis connects the Great Library to a wide variety of issues; from Hellenistic urbanism, to the influence that the Library, and the city of Alexandria in general, had on the city of Imperial Rome. Much ink has been spilled talking about the Library's chief librarians, the layout of the Library, and stories of the kings who patronized it. I feel that these are important points, because it puts the Library into a context that is easy for people to understand. Of course I will be addressing these issues in this work, but spending too much time on these topics, evades the issues that really matter. I will be focusing on the broader significance of the Library. This is how my work differs from so many others. How did Hellenistic learning institutions, most specifically those of Alexandria, represent aspects of Hellenism? *Why* did the Ptolemies want to acquire all of the knowledge of the known world? These are the questions that I seek to answer.

Chapter 2: Alexander, Hellenism, and Hellenistic Urbanism

Hellenism led to profound changes in many aspects of culture in the Eastern Mediterranean in the last three centuries of the first millennium. Hellenism was the systematic spread and imposition of Greek culture in the successor kingdoms of Alexander's empire and the result was a mixing of native Near Eastern and Greek cultures. A new Greco-Macedonian ruling class established its rule over lands in the Near East. Thus, Hellenism was chiefly an elite process. For the most part, only the upper classes of society felt its reverberations. The only echelon of society that interacted with the new ruling class was the existing, native elites; therefore the cultural cross-pollination was only felt at that level. The lower classes of society were affected very little by Hellenism; they simply would have gone on with their lives. This point will be stressed through the examination of many different aspects of society.

Hellenism had begun under Alexander himself. He carried out these changes because he saw himself as the legitimate successor to the Persian throne. The Hellenistic kings after him in their respective kingdoms did the same in order to keep the status quo as established by Alexander and the earlier Persian kings. By allowing many of the same governmental and societal procedures of the Achaemenid dynasty, the successor Macedonian dynasties facilitated a smoother transition from the Persians' rule. This strategy also helped to legitimize their claims of rulership. In Alexander's day, this had created much conflict and mistrust among his men, but later, in the height of the Hellenistic Age, these practices became the norm. The Hellenistic kings struck a balance between their Greek customs and the Near Eastern cultures that had been prominent in the areas that they conquered. Hellenism was a give-and-take process that blended the

Greek and Near Eastern traditions. Greek culture was emphasized, but Hellenism was not a monolithic development. The result was a system in which the different cultures amalgamated as a result of Greek culture being imposed on the elite in areas formerly under Persian rule.

Alexander the Great and Hellenism

The conquests of Alexander III of Macedon had a tremendous impact upon the ancient world. At his death, his empire stretched from Libya and Greece in the west, to what is now Afghanistan and India in the east. The aftermath of his military exploits truly changed the world. It is necessary to begin any discussion of Hellenism by looking at the life of Alexander himself. In this way, we can see the effects that his life and those of his successor generals had on the world around them. An attempt must be made to understand Alexander's motives. By building cities all across his vast empire, he was trying to spread Greek culture to far off lands. His efforts to Hellenize were somewhat successful, but in turn the Greeks were influenced by the Near Eastern cultures as well.

Alexander III was born in 356 in the Macedonian capital of Pella. His father was Philip II and his mother was Olympias of Epirus. He was raised in the Macedonian court and was educated in the ways of the Classical Greek scholars. His personal tutor was the famous philosopher Aristotle.³⁰ According to Plutarch, Alexander was intelligent and eager to learn in his youth. He says that Alexander and his tutor had a close relationship, "Alexander greatly admired Aristotle and became more attached to him than to his father, for the one, he used to say, had given him the gift of life, but the other had taught him

³⁰ There was also a family connection; Aristotle's father, Nicomachus, had been the court physician of Alexander's grandfather, Amyntas III. (*Alexander the Great: Historical Sources in Translation*, eds. Waldemar Heckel and J. C. Yardley (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 35, footnote 6.)

how to live well.”³¹ It seems that later their relations soured somewhat and Alexander and Aristotle had a falling out.³²

In the year 338, when Alexander was the age of 18, he was given command of the cavalry in the battle of Chaeronea. Philip was poised to gain control of the entire Greek mainland and Chaeronea was the pivotal point in the consolidation of all of the Greek city-states under his rule. This was a departure from the experience of previous history. The Greek city-states, from their inception, were fiercely independent and fought incessantly to remain so. The essence of the Classical Greek city-state was this self-determination. To the Greeks, who regarded the Macedonians as barbarians, Philip was stripping away what it was to be a *polis* in the Classical sense. The Macedonians achieved victory in this battle, with Alexander gaining distinction and showing his military prowess early in his career. Philip’s next plan was to engage in a war of revenge against the Persian Empire. The Persians had interfered in the affairs of the *poleis* for almost two centuries. They held control of the western coast of Anatolia, which was predominantly composed of Greek city-states. However, during the early stages of the planning of this project, Philip was assassinated and the kingdom of Macedon fell into the hands of his only capable son, the 20 year old Alexander.³³ There were suspicions of foul play by Alexander or his mother based on the fact that Philip had recently taken a

³¹ Plutarch, *Alexander*, in *The Age of Alexander: Nine Greek Lives By Plutarch*, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1973), 260.

³² Aristotle’s nephew, Callisthenes, was Alexander’s personal historian during his conquest of Asia. Callisthenes had few qualms about speaking his mind to Alexander, even in front of powerful people. At one point Alexander had had enough of his impudence and had Callisthenes executed for treason. Perhaps this is why the Peripatetic school (Aristotle’s successors) had always portrayed Alexander in a negative light. (Chamoux, 36.) The attitude of the Peripatetic scholars could also possibly be the result of the confrontation between Alexander and Aristotle.

³³ Alexander had an older half brother, Arrhidaeus, who was purportedly mentally deficient and unable to rule. Therefore, the job fell to Alexander. (Plutarch, *Alexander*, 334.)

new, young wife, Cleopatra, and had already produced a legitimate son.³⁴ These suspicions were compounded by the fact that it was well known that there had been friction between Alexander and his father. Regardless, Alexander ascended the throne.

Alexander's glorious campaigns would not have been possible without the prior arrangements of his father. Alexander reaped the benefits of his inheritance. The position of *hegemon* of Greece had been held by Philip. This position was essentially the military commander of all of the Greek city-states on the mainland. Alexander was able to inherit this title, however, he faced some opposition from prominent *poleis*, such as Athens, Sparta and Thebes, who tried to take advantage of the temporarily precarious Macedonian dynastic situation. It required shrewd political maneuvering as well as the utter destruction of the city-state of Thebes to pacify these *poleis* and reunite them under the title of *hegemon*.³⁵ This allowed Alexander to carry out his Persian Crusade with little worry of rebellion at home. Philip was also credited with the reorganization of the Greek phalanx. Alexander used the reinvigorated phalanx as his main tool in the destruction of the Persian Empire. Alexander was also given the military training, experience, and confidence of a commander as a result of working under his father in the battle of Chaeronea. Philip also had devised the plan to invade the Persian Empire in a war of revenge for the atrocities committed in the Persian Wars with Greece in the previous century. Alexander quickly carried out the plans of his father after his death and invaded northwest Anatolia in 334.

Alexander's armies stormed through Anatolia and Syria, destroying any opposition that stood in their way. They engaged Persian forces in two decisive battles,

³⁴ Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 BC*, 107-110.

³⁵ Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 BC*, 120-121, 149.

Granicus River (in northwest Anatolia) and Issus (in northwest Syria). The Macedonian army was victorious in both confrontations, and in the latter the Persian Emperor himself, Darius III, led his troops. Darius was forced to flee and left his family behind: his mother, his wife, two daughters, and his young son. Alexander took pity on them and took them under his protection. They received the same treatment as they had enjoyed before Darius' defeat. Alexander held Sisigambis, the queen mother, in the same regard as his own mother.³⁶ His treatment of the royal family and his relationship to the queen mother is significant. It shows that Alexander was trying to gain legitimacy as the rightful claimant to the Persian throne, not only through conquest, but through the installation of himself into the royal family, thus taking the place of Darius himself.

Alexander continued on his journey and arrived in Egypt. A key event in Alexander's life occurred there. He traveled deep into the eastern desert to visit the holy site of the Siwah Oasis, which was sacred to Ammon. The Egyptian god Ammon was identified with Greek king of the gods, Zeus. Alexander was convinced that he was the descendant of Zeus himself and he made this dangerous journey to confirm his assertion. To the joy of Alexander, the priests of Ammon confirmed his claims of divine descent.³⁷ This was a seminal moment because he now had the confidence of an immortal, and he commanded the respect of a god. It fed his insatiable ego to the extent that allowed him to believe he was capable of anything. There had also been rumors circulating that his mother, Olympias, had slept with Zeus. This knowledge, as well as his flawless military successes led him to repudiate his father, Philip II, and claim that Zeus-Ammon was his father. These actions troubled his close friends and advisors and they began to become

³⁶ Quintus Curtius Rufus, 247.

³⁷ Arrian, 153.

wary of him. Later in history, this precedent would allow the Hellenistic kings and Roman Emperors to claim divinity.³⁸ With this new-found confidence, Alexander continued his conquest of Asia.

He faced the Persian king again in the decisive battle of Gaugamela. He once again defeated his rival and Darius fled never to be seen in his capital city again. Alexander entered the city of Babylon triumphant in the year 331. He was now recognized as the official Persian Emperor. A few months later, he entered the city of Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire. He burned the royal palace to the ground, against the advice of Parmenio, who had been Philip's right-hand man and was now one of Alexander's commanders. Parmenio advised that it was hardly wise to destroy something that was now his property. Also, the Persians would be less willing to support him. Alexander claimed that he was avenging the Persians' invasion of Greece in the previous century.³⁹ After some time, he decided to pursue the exiled Darius into the regions to the northeast, Bactria and Sogdiana. This pursuit was a perilous journey into unknown lands. Alexander eventually caught up to Darius when he was killed by his own guards in the mountain passes of Central Asia. Alexander eventually tracked down the regicides and sentenced them to death.

Alexander's army then encountered much resistance in the upper satrapies of Central Asia. Alexander decided that it would be advantageous for him to marry Roxane, the daughter of Oxyartes, a prominent political figure in that land. Apparently, it was a love match and that "Alexander fell in love with her at first sight; but, captive though she

³⁸ Heckel and Yardley, 217. However, some of the Hellenistic kings claimed divinity in an effort to lend legitimacy to their rule. An example is the Ptolemies of Egypt; former Egyptian dynasties had also claimed divine descent.

³⁹ Arrian, 179.

was, he refused, for all his passion, to force her to his will, and condescended to marry her”⁴⁰ This, as well as a long and grueling military campaign in the mountain passes, aided in the pacification the region. The upper satrapies no longer revolted against Alexander’s rule because he had married one of their own. Alexander set a precedent by marrying a foreign princess. A similar event occurred later, in 324, in the city of Susa in which ninety of his close companions married Persian brides, while he himself married the daughters of Darius and Artaxerxes III. Alexander “persuaded numbers of his friends to marry the daughters of the prominent Iranians”⁴¹ Many of the Macedonian soldiers were forced to spurn their wives at home and take on Persian wives. They were not fond of the idea of marrying foreigners and some even repudiated their marriages after the king’s death.⁴² This action reflected Alexander’s growing penchant for the introduction of eastern practices.

Intermarriage with foreigners was not the only practice that Alexander incorporated that offended his countrymen. He took on the dress and court ritual of the Persian emperors. The Macedonians felt that they were being betrayed by their own king. The most notable breach of trust that occurred was Alexander’s introduction of the practice of *proskynesis*. This was the long established practice of prostrating oneself before the Persian emperor as a sign of respect. To the Persians this was a totally secular concept, but to the Macedonians, it was dangerously close to the worship of a god. Callisthenes, Alexander’s historian, spoke out against *proskynesis*. He did not understand why Alexander would subject his fellow Macedonians to such a degrading practice. From

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 234-235.

⁴¹ Diodorus Siculus, *Book 17 “Table of Contents,”* in *Diodorus of Sicily: In Twelve Volumes, Volume VIII*, trans. C. Bradford Welles (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 111.

⁴² Heckel and Yardley, 182.

then on, Alexander no longer trusted Callisthenes, and this led to his eventual execution.⁴³ This shows Alexander's willingness to conform to Persian ways and his countrymen's reluctance to adhere to these practices.

Alexander founded many cities as we went along his route of conquest in Asia. There are detailed lists that come down to us from antiquity that describe these cities.⁴⁴ He named most of them after himself, but he gave others names such as Nicea, for Victory, and Bucephalia, after his prized horse. In some cases it is difficult to distinguish between *poleis* and *kataikiai* (military outposts). Many of the cities attributed to Alexander were not even built by him, but rather in later periods.⁴⁵ Plutarch states that "Alexander established more than seventy cities among the savage tribes, and sowed all Asia with Grecian magistracies, and thus overcame its uncivilized and brutish manner of living."⁴⁶ The impact that his cities had on the native populations was profound. These cities were built in an effort to exert Hellenic influence over the native populations. The Greeks regarded their style of city, the *polis*, as civilized, because the *polis* was at the core of their civic culture. The Macedonian conquerors wanted to impose this new urban model on the conquered people.

Thus Alexander's new subjects would not have been civilized, had they not been vanquished; Egypt would not have its Alexandria, nor Mesopotamia its Seleuceia, nor Sogdiana its Prophthasia, nor India its Bucephalia, nor the Caucasus a Greek city hard by; for by the founding of cities in these places savagery was extinguished and the worse element, gaining familiarity with the better, changed under its influence.⁴⁷

⁴³ Plutarch, *Alexander*, 311-313.

⁴⁴ P.M. Fraser, *The Cities of Alexander the Great* (New York, NY: Clarendon Press, 1996), see chapter entitled, "The Alexandrian Lists," 1-46.

⁴⁵ Heckel and Yardley, 303.

⁴⁶ Plutarch, *On the Fortune and Virtues of Alexander*, in *Plutarch's Moralia: In Fifteen Volumes, Volume IV*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 328.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 328-330.

Plutarch recognized that the cities founded by Alexander were important in the spread of Greek culture. Plutarch acknowledges that the Greek cities were used as a tool of power, even as early as Alexander's reign. By extending these "Grecian magistracies" over non-Greeks, it brought them out of "savagery" and into the fold of "civilization." This civilization was, in fact, Greek culture. The conquerors knew that imposing Greek culture through urban models and institutions was a means of exerting Greek control over these newly conquered areas. On a more general level, city founding was an expression of power. For centuries, Mesopotamian kings had been founding cities to demonstrate their power.⁴⁸

Later Hellenistic kings emulated Alexander in his extensive building of cities. These monarchs carried on this custom in order to exert the influence of their Greek culture. These cities were built along the lines of the Classical Greek *polis*. Building such cities in the Eastern Mediterranean was another key aspect of Hellenism. However, not only did they use their cities as tools of cultural power, but they also used them to aggrandize themselves. "The new rulers of the Hellenistic world found the city to be a suitable and enduring medium of propaganda as well as control of Hellenization."⁴⁹ These concepts are vital and will be referenced throughout this work.

After Alexander's consolidation of power over the upper satrapies, he went south into the region of India. He defeated King Porus in the battle of the Hydaspes River. Alexander almost fell victim to mutiny in India and was forced by his men to finally turn around. He was not happy with this idea, but he appeased his men and they finally, after more than a decade of fighting, returned home. Half went by sea and half went by land.

⁴⁸ Mesopotamian kings' city founding as an expression of power and its influence on the Hellenistic world will be discussed later in this chapter. See footnote 119.

⁴⁹ E. J. Owens, *The City in the Greek and Roman World* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991), 75.

The following year (323), while back in Babylon, possibly planning further conquests, Alexander died of a mysterious illness. At the time of his death, his empire encompassed almost the entire world then known to the Greeks, and he was cut down in what seemed to be his prime. He had rarely been defeated on the battle field, but he could not withstand the illness that killed him. He was unable to speak in his last days and he did not announce who would take over for him as king. No sooner had the last breaths escaped the lungs of Alexander than his key generals began to squabble over who was the rightful heir to his vast empire.⁵⁰

This is how the wars of the successors started. Through a series of conflicts amongst themselves, the generals of Alexander divided his empire. The *Diadochoi* were frustrated in their efforts to re-conquer all of the lands that Alexander's empire had swallowed up. The leading *Diadochoi* decided to take firm control of the land that they did have under their control and name themselves kings. With the exception of Egypt, the Hellenistic kingdoms were not fixed at the beginning of the third century, but in a generation or so, we see the political situation stabilize and three major, distinct dynasties emerged. These were the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt and Libya ruled by Ptolemy II, son of Ptolemy I, the Seleucid Dynasty in Persia, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia ruled by Antiochos I, son of Seleucos, and the Kingdom of Macedon which also held sway in parts of northern Greece, which was ruled by Antigonos Gonatos, grandson of Antigonos Monophthalmos. Later, a fourth kingdom emerged: the small Attalid kingdom centered

⁵⁰ Alexander's wife, Roxane, bore him his only legitimate son, Alexander IV, a few months after Alexander's death. They went back to Macedon. They were executed about ten years later by Cassander as a precautionary measure so that Alexander's line would end and no one would rival him for the throne.

around the city of Pergamon in west-central Anatolia.⁵¹ In each one of the successor kingdoms a new Macedonian elite was imposed on the natives and the systematic process of Hellenization was implemented. These major polities would define the political boundaries of the Hellenistic Period.

These events from Alexander's life highlight the beginnings of Hellenism. The process of Hellenism unfolded during the life of Alexander himself and some of his actions were the catalyst for its development. Our historical sources suggest that Alexander firmly believed in the blending of cultures. At first it seemed that he was waging a war of revenge upon the kingdom of Persia. Persia had held Macedon under its suzerainty, ravaged the Greek mainland during the Persian Wars, and interfered in the affairs of the Greek city-states for decades. However, over time we see a shift in his thinking that denotes a true belief in cooperation between Near Eastern and Greek cultures. One great example of this is how he married a foreign princess, thus setting a precedent for the practice among his men. Although most Hellenistic kings seemed not to continue this practice and many of them even renounced their foreign wives after his death, the point had been made. It seems that his motivation behind this and other actions, such as, claiming the Persian throne, treating the royal family as his own, participating in *proskynesis*, and claiming himself to be a god, was to assimilate Greek and certain aspects of Near Eastern cultures. These are all actions that were copied by Hellenistic kings; these are ways that they held onto legitimacy, both by harkening to Alexander and the kings of those regions before him. They established themselves as the rightful heirs of

⁵¹ This is not without precedent; a few other small, less-notable Hellenized kingdoms in Anatolia were springing up at this time, such as Pontus and Bithynia. (R. Malcolm Errington, *A History of the Hellenistic World: 323-30 BC* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 123-4.) However, the Attalid kingdom was the only Anatolian kingdom with a Macedonian royal family.

the kingdoms which they inherited through conquest, in the same way that Alexander had done.

Greek vs. Macedonian

The discussion of the concept of Hellenism presents a nagging question: If Alexander and his armies were Macedonian, then why did they spread *Greek* culture throughout their empire? The Greeks and Macedonians were certainly separate peoples, with a different language, culture, and political establishments. The historical record makes clear linguistic distinctions between these two peoples.⁵² So how did these cultures become so closely associated in the Hellenistic period? The Greeks had generally regarded all non-Greek speaking peoples as barbarians. This was true even for their immediate neighbors to the north, the Macedonians. The Greeks saw themselves as superior to the Macedonians. Their perception of them was as backward, hard-drinking, and pugnacious. The Greeks also considered the Macedonians' political establishment as unsophisticated. On the eve of the Hellenistic Age, Demosthenes, the Athenian statesman, delivered his famous speeches, the Philippics. These were chiefly intended to discredit Philip, Alexander's father, and the Macedonians as they extended their power over the Greek *poleis*. These are significant because they give us a sense of the Greek attitude towards their neighbors. Demosthenes refers to the Macedonians as barbarians repeatedly and criticizes their despotic governmental system. To Demosthenes, Philip is

⁵² In Plutarch, *Alexander*, 309, Alexander "shouted out in the Macedonian tongue for his bodyguard to turn out, a signal that this was an emergency." This indicates that Macedonian was not the language commonly spoken among Alexander and his friends, only for emergencies. Also in Quintus Curtius Rufus' *History of Alexander*, 138, he states that Alexander chides Philotas for requesting his trial to not be conducted in Macedonian, for the sake of clarity. Alexander says, "only remember that he is as contemptuous of our ways of life as he is of our language."

the “inveterate enemy of constitutional government and democracy.”⁵³ He is a threat to their very way of life. The idea of living under a monarchy, especially that of the barbaric Macedonians, was repugnant to the Athenians, and the wider Greek world. Demosthenes appealed to his audience by exploiting their hatred and ignorance of the Macedonians. Therefore, these speeches indicate that many Greeks were certainly not willing to accept the Macedonians into the Greek world.

In contrast to the Greek attitude of exclusion, the Macedonian elite had, for some time, admired Greek culture. In the early fifth century, the royal Argead house went to great lengths to establish a Greek identity, both culturally and ethnically. They had profound respect for Greek culture and tried to emulate it in every way. They even began to foster Attic Greek culture.⁵⁴ When Philip united all of Greece at the battle of Chaeronea, he fostered a sense of panhellenism, which was an ideological launching pad for Alexander’s career of conquest.⁵⁵ Alexander’s army was partially composed of Greeks and some 7000 Greeks participated in the original invasion of Anatolia.⁵⁶

Alexander himself was familiar with Greek culture and attitudes. His tutor had been Aristotle himself. The generals and friends of Alexander were part of the Macedonian elite, and no doubt expressed fondness for Greek culture; when they established their own kingdoms, they built them along Greek lines. Alexander began, and the Hellenistic kings continued, to use the Attic dialect of Greek for administrative purposes in order to be understood by a wider audience.⁵⁷ Thus the *koine*, “the common

⁵³ Demosthenes, *Fourth Philippic*, in *Demosthenes: Olynthiacs, Philippics, Minor Public Speeches, Speech Against the Leptines*, trans. J. H. Vince (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s and Sons, 1930), 279.

⁵⁴ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 5.

⁵⁵ Peter Green, *The Hellenistic Age: A History* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 2007), 12.

⁵⁶ Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 BC*, 158.

⁵⁷ Chamoux, 238.

tongue,” became characteristic of all of the land conquered by Alexander.⁵⁸ Overtime, the cultural distinction between the Macedonian and Greek administrators in Hellenistic kingdoms withered away, especially as many of the Macedonians were decimated in constant wars or returned home.⁵⁹ The conquering Macedonian elite had fully embraced Greek culture and used it as a way to extend their power over their new subjects; as a result, Hellenization of the former Persian Empire ensued.

Language, Literature and Libraries

Hellenism had a profound effect on the linguistic and literary establishments of the Near East. The Greek language became more widespread in this region during the Hellenistic Age. The spread of Greek in the Hellenistic world was primarily an elite phenomenon, and those who spoke it were certainly a minority in these kingdoms. For these people, the Attic dialect became the *koine* of the Hellenistic world. It was rare for the royal families of Hellenistic dynasties to even be familiar with the native tongue of their kingdom. One of the more famous stories illustrating this fact is that the only ruler in the Ptolemaic dynasty who actually bothered to learn the Egyptian language was Cleopatra VII, who happened to be the last ruler of that dynasty, ruling some three hundred years after the dynasty’s founding.⁶⁰ The Seleucids also maintained Greek as their court language. This was done in an effort to stress the hierarchy and elevate the new ruling class above their native counterparts. For this same reason, the previous Achaemenid Persian Dynasty had kept their native language.⁶¹ Although the Seleucids

⁵⁸ F. W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World: Revised Edition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 62.

⁵⁹ Chamoux, 239.

⁶⁰ Chamoux, 157.

⁶¹ Susan Sherman-White, “Seleucid Babylonia: A Case Study for the Installation and Development of Greek Rule,” in *Hellenism in the East: Interaction of Greek and non- Greek Civilizations from Syria to*

retained Greek as the language spoken amongst themselves, they did not use Greek exclusively in their administration. There is evidence for the use of both Akkadian and Aramaic in public inscriptions, and also in administrative and legal documents.⁶² This shows a willingness to adapt to Near Eastern cultures. The Seleucids maintained the status quo by holding onto the official administrative languages of the previous dynasty. This was much more efficient than a total Greek scribal overhaul. This allowed the transition from Achaemenid to Seleucid dynasties to be less cumbersome and more peaceful. However, this trend varied from kingdom to kingdom. In the Ptolemaic kingdom, servants in the court were strongly encouraged to be able to speak and, ideally, write Greek.⁶³ This also reflects the Ptolemies' above stated disinterest in learning the language of the land that they had inherited.

Hellenism had its effect on literature as well. We see a new kind of text emerging in the Hellenistic Period: histories and king lists by scribes and priests about their native lands written in Greek. Two texts of this kind that have come down to us are Manetho's *Aegyptiaca* and Berossos' *Babyloniaca*.⁶⁴ *Aegyptiaca* is an account of all the kings of Egypt, separated into different dynasties, as well as brief description of the religion of the Egyptians. To modern scholars, this work is thought to be authoritative; the kings of ancient Egypt are still categorized in the same dynasties by Egyptologists today. *Babyloniaca* is a similar text; it recounts all of the stories in Babylonian mythology and history, such as the Creation, the Great Flood, and all of the kings up until the founding

Central Asia After Alexander, eds. Amelie Kuhrt and Susan Sherman-White (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 7.

⁶² *Ibid*, 24-5.

⁶³ We have a letter from the reign of Ptolemy II written by a native servant. He is dissatisfied by his treatment by his Greek superiors. He requests a guarantee of higher pay in the future, "so I don't starve because I can't speak Greek." A letter from an Egyptian priest also complains that he is despised because he is Egyptian. (Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 313.)

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 325-326.

of the Seleucid Dynasty. This form of text had been a common convention for centuries in the Near East, as way to document the dynastic succession of kings, their accomplishments, and the events that transpired during their rule. However, they were now written in Greek. Both texts were written relatively early in the Hellenistic period, within the reigns of the first few monarchs of these dynasties. Why would native inhabitants have written histories of their homelands in the tongue of their new overlords? On the surface it might appear that these histories were written in an effort to bridge the cultural gap between them and their new rulers, making Egyptian and Babylonian history accessible to all Greek-speaking people.⁶⁵ However, there may have been other motives as well in the compiling of these texts.

Certainly, these texts were tailored towards the elite in these societies. It was only the elites who were literate and had access to scribal works. The intended audience for these works was the new Greek elite. There is some connection between the fact that the priestly and scribal classes were part of the elite circle and that they were written very soon after the new dynasties were established. These texts may they have been commissioned under royal patronage in order to lend legitimacy to the new dynasties.⁶⁶ Evidence for this is Berossos' dedication of his work to Antiochos when he became the sole ruler in 281.⁶⁷ The *Aegyptiaca* was explicitly commissioned by Ptolemy II.⁶⁸ These two works could also have been an expression of the rivalry between the two kings Ptolemy II and Antiochos I, who were both seeking to claim the greater antiquity of their

⁶⁵ Manetho, *Aegyptiaca*, trans. W. G. Waddell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), from the Introduction, viii.

⁶⁶ Amelie Kuhrt, "Berossos' *Babyloniaka* and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia," in *Hellenism in the East: Interaction of Greek and non- Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia After Alexander*, eds. Amelie Kuhrt and Susan Sherman-White (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 55.

⁶⁷ Manetho, from the Introduction, x.

⁶⁸ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 325.

lands.⁶⁹ Amelie Kuhrt suggests that the works were written independently of the Hellenistic monarchs in an effort to combat biases held by Greeks. Many Greek works had been composed that discussed the perceived strangeness and exotic nature of eastern societies. The work of Herodotus immediately comes to mind. It is possible that Manetho and Berossos were trying to deflect cultural criticism from Greeks, who were unfamiliar with their cultures.⁷⁰

These documents perfectly illustrate the concept of Hellenism. Hellenism cannot be seen in the literal content of these documents, but in the analysis of their meaning and in how and why they were produced. First, they were written for the elite, the only segment of society that was literate. In the same way Hellenism itself was primarily an elite phenomenon; the peasants were not directly aware of the Hellenization process, nor were they concerned with the composition of the *Aegyptiaca* and *Babyloniaca*. Secondly, they are accounts of the lands of Egypt and Babylonia, with a glossy Greek veneer painted over them.⁷¹ These documents are the same sacred stories revered by the native peoples of these lands, but composed for a new elite Greek class of people. This concept is consistent with Hellenistic society in general. From the outside, this new culture looks very Greek (especially linguistically), with some adherence to old Near Eastern practices. However, at the core of society, there is much cultural continuity. The everyday business of local administration and peasant affairs changed very little.

Libraries in the Hellenistic World were another aspect of culture that demonstrate the idea of Hellenism. There had been long traditions of libraries both in Greek and Near

⁶⁹ Manetho, from the Introduction, x.

⁷⁰ Kuhrt, 53.

⁷¹ Berossos, *Babyloniaca*, trans. Stanley Mayer Burstein (Malibu, CA: Undema Publications, 1978), from the Introduction, 9.

Eastern societies. A few examples come from Egypt, Assyria, and Athens. Older libraries from Egypt and the Near East contained administrative texts as well as sacred and literary texts.⁷² Hecataeus of Abdera, a Greek traveler in Egypt during the reign of Ptolemy I, writes an account of his visit to the cities of Thebes in Upper Egypt. His *History of Egypt* has not survived, but we do have an account of it from the historian, Diodorus Siculus, who copied Hecataeus' account two and half centuries later.⁷³ Hecataeus visited the Ramesseum, the tomb of the pharaoh Ramesses II of the Eighteenth Dynasty. Ramesses had reigned about one thousand years prior to Hecataeus' visit. One of the chambers of the Ramesseum contained a library. The Sacred Library had words, "Healing-Place of the Soul," written above its entrance.⁷⁴ The pharaoh had placed tremendous importance upon the library, considering it was located in his final resting place. The phrase written at the entrance to the library denotes a deep reverence and appreciation of the pursuits of knowledge and learning.

Ashurbanipal, an Assyrian emperor reigning in seventh century, was the patron of literary pursuits in his capital city of Nineveh. Ashurbanipal was literate himself and took great pride in his ability to read and write. He considered himself a scholar and had profound respect for scholastic pursuits. He placed great stress on constructing and maintaining a library of prodigious proportions that would dwarf any library that the world had seen.⁷⁵ In the North Palace area of Nineveh, a large number of literary texts were found. This area has been called Ashurbanipal's Library. Many of these texts have

⁷² Shipley, 242-3.

⁷³ Luciano Canfora, *The Vanished Library*, trans. Martin Ryle (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 10-11.

⁷⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *Book I*, in *Diodorus of Sicily: In Ten Volumes, Volume I*, trans. C. H. Oldfather (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 173.

⁷⁵ Lionel Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 9-15.

colophons that acknowledge Ashurbanipal personally.⁷⁶ The personal acknowledgement of Ashurbanipal reflects his level of patronage and involvement; he specifically wanted to be named as the patron of this great library. Another significant aspect of this library is that it contains literary texts, not just the administrative texts that would be characteristic of an archive. Ashurbanipal assembled a library that was above and beyond the level of necessity. Rather than just having texts that were necessary for the administration of his city and empire, he augmented his library with texts that concerned omens, incantations, medicine, lexical lists, and even Mesopotamian literature.⁷⁷ Ashurbanipal's stress on the library is significant because acquiring and preserving written documents was a difficult and expensive undertaking in the ancient world, whether they were clay tablets, scrolls of parchment, or papyrus. These materials were valuable and acquiring a staff to compose and properly handle them was costly. All of these texts had to be written by hand and very few people were literate. Merely having a library shows tremendous capacity, power, and wealth. In the ancient world, libraries were not easy to come by and Ashurbanipal, like the later Hellenistic kings, used his library as a way to show power and cultural dominance. He wanted the credit for creating this library, so he had his name written down in the colophons in many of the texts. Thus, Ashurbanipal was not merely creating a great library to satisfy his own scholastic interests; his massive library was created deliberately to stress his dedication to literary pursuits, as well as his incredible power and wealth.

⁷⁶ Olof Pedersen, *Archives and Libraries in the Ancient Near East: 1500-300 B.C.* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 1998), 163-164.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 164.

Athens had been the center of a growing trade in books in the Classical Era.⁷⁸ Many wealthy citizens supported their own private collections of books. Aristotle was one such individual. Aristotle was responsible for the construction of the Lyceum in Athens, which boasted an extensive library.⁷⁹ He had collected many books, which were from as many fields of knowledge as his own written works.⁸⁰ His library was a place for scholars to meet and discuss scholarly issues. This institution lasted for many years after his death in 322, and would have a tremendous influence on the foundations of many Hellenistic libraries, both in the layout of the library itself, and also in the knowledge that was stored there.

In the Hellenistic Age, there was a synthesis of these library traditions. The libraries of the Hellenistic World were built in the pursuit of literary and cultural supremacy, and they drew on the best aspects of both Greek and Near Eastern traditions to accomplish this task. They were on the scale of Near Eastern libraries, like Ashurbanipal's huge library, and they had the wide range of scholastic topics that characterized Aristotle's Lyceum. Another way that libraries in the Hellenistic world were indicative of aspects of Hellenism is the content of the libraries. New Hellenistic libraries were open to different languages and literary traditions. The Great Library of Alexandria was the place where the Ptolemaic kings attempted to acquire all of the knowledge of the known world. Although it was primarily a Greek institution, there was the desire to obtain ancient knowledge of sciences from other cultures in the wider Hellenistic world. It contained texts from the native Egyptians, as well as astronomical texts from the Near East. There were also Hebrew texts present. The Torah was even

⁷⁸ Casson, 18.

⁷⁹ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 85.

⁸⁰ Casson, 28-29.

translated into Greek during the reign of Ptolemy II.⁸¹ Hellenistic libraries were yet another paradigm of Hellenism; they represented the fusion of Near Eastern and Greek cultures.

Religion

Religion is another element of culture in which we see a merging of Near Eastern and Greek ideas. Most of the civilizations that were prominent in the Hellenistic world were polytheistic. Polytheism allowed the introduction of new gods into existing pantheons. There was always room for new gods, because there was not the claim that one person, city, or culture worshipped the one true God, as in monotheism. Oftentimes, foreigners visiting an unfamiliar land would identify foreign gods with one god or another from their own homeland. This is a process known as syncretism, which is the amalgamation of different beliefs into one. There are many examples of syncretism in antiquity. For example, the Romans had been tremendously influenced by Greek culture throughout their history. One of the best reflections of this influence is the core of the Roman pantheon of gods being strikingly similar to the twelve Olympian Greek gods. All of the Olympian gods can be identified with a Roman god with a different name, such as Zeus with Jupiter, or Aphrodite with Venus. Another example of this comes from the conquests of Alexander. Greeks identified the Egyptian god, Ammon, with their king of the gods, Zeus. Alexander claimed Zeus-Ammon to be his father. Therefore, with the new-found integration of cultures in the Hellenistic Age, the practice of taking on new gods, or identifying foreign gods as one's own, was elevated to a new level. This explosion of syncretism was in large part based on the Greek gods, and foreign gods associated with them (such as Zeus-Ammon), being spread out over a wider geographical

⁸¹ This text is known as the Septuagint. (Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 317.)

area because of the expansionist mentality of the age. The best example of this was the god Serapis. His worship was primarily centered in Egypt, but his appeal was not limited to that area and he outlived the Hellenistic Period itself. During the Roman period, worship of Serapis spread to all corners of the Empire.

Serapis became the most important god in Ptolemaic Egypt and there is a colorful story about the foundation his cult. Ptolemy I had a dream which told him to remove a statue of a god from the Black Sea port city of Sinope. The statue was of “Chthonian” Zeus. The statue was also associated with Hades, the god of the Underworld and consort of Persephone. Ptolemy consulted the Delphic oracle and somehow convinced the Sinopians to part with their statue. It was brought to Alexandria, where a shrine was built for the new god, with the Egyptian goddess, Isis. This shrine received royal patronage.⁸² These ancient stories are, in fact, false. Serapis had a cult in Saqqara, Egypt even during the life of Alexander. This story merely reflects how the people came to gratefully associate the god with their Ptolemaic overlords on account of their generous patronage.⁸³ Serapis became identified with both Osiris, Egyptian god of the underworld, as well as Apis, the Egyptian bull god. The combination of these two gods created the name “Serapis” (osir-apis).⁸⁴ He was depicted in two ways, as a bull, and also as similar to Zeus, a fatherly figure with a tremendous flowing beard. This reflects the Egyptian and Greek (respectively) perception of this god. He actually took the place of Osiris in the Egyptian pantheon, assuming the role of consort of Isis. A smaller “daughter” library⁸⁵ of

⁸² Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 406-7.

⁸³ Shipley, 165-166.

⁸⁴ Chamoux, 339.

⁸⁵ As with the original Mouseion, the Serapeum Library grew out of a religious site. It has been described as the daughter library because it was secondary in importance to the Great Library. (Edward J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006),

the Great Library of Alexandria was even constructed as an outgrowth of the shrine, and was named the Serapeum for the god.⁸⁶

Serapis is the embodiment of the idea of Hellenism; he symbolized the fusion of two cultures. He possessed the traits of different gods from distant lands and perfectly merged the two into a single divine entity. He was simultaneously Greek and Egyptian, while at the same time a story had been circulated that his original statue came from northern Anatolia. The Ptolemies attempted to create unity in Ptolemaic Egypt through Serapis; he was a common focus of devotion for both the Egyptians and the Greeks.⁸⁷ However, as in other aspects of Hellenism, the worship of Serapis remained, primarily, an elite process. The Egyptian natives were impervious to the attraction of a god with a great flowing beard, and his worshippers were mostly Greek, or at least part of the bureaucratic and administrative classes.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, his emergence as a major god in the Hellenistic world is a testament to the level of internationalism and the attempt at cultural synthesis by the royal dynasties in this period.

Military and Political Factors of Hellenism

Martial matters were also subject to Hellenism. The militaries of these early Hellenistic kingdoms were mostly comprised of Macedonians and Greeks who were outfitted with the same equipment that they had used in their conquest of the Persian Empire, the standard hoplite kit. Over time, as the Hellenistic monarchs gained firm control of their kingdoms, they introduced native units of soldiers into their armies. This arrangement went on even during the rule of Alexander himself. Arrian discusses the

146.) The Serapeum contained mostly copies from the Great Library and can be thought of as a separate branch to its palatial counterpart. (Watts, 150.)

⁸⁶ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 268.

⁸⁷ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 84.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 589-590.

introduction of Persian units under Macedonian commanders and the ensuing antipathy that was caused:

They resented, too, the growing orientalism of Peucestas, Governor of Persia... just as they resented the inclusion of foreign mounted troops in the regiments of the Companions. Bactrians, Sogdians, Arachotians; Zarangians, Arians, Parthians, and the so-called Euacae from Persia were all introduced into the crack Macedonian cavalry regiments.⁸⁹

Elephants were also introduced into the Hellenistic armies. The Ptolemies traded with kingdoms south of the territory under their control in order to gain African elephants for their army. They needed to offset the Indian elephants that the Seleucids took into battle.⁹⁰ The introduction of elephants into Hellenistic armies is another example of how Greek institutions were modified in light of foreign influence. The new rulers used their own Greek institutions, such as the Greek phalanx, but they were flexible enough to recognize new, possibly superior innovations, like elephants. Thus, the armies of the Hellenistic world express notions of Hellenism as well; they show a fusion of Greek and Near Eastern practices, both with the use of foreign military units and elephants.

There were similar political factors that characterized the profound changes in the Hellenistic Age; they involved the introduction of foreign administrators. When Alexander conquered new provinces, he sometimes reorganized the administrative and elite classes, other times he left them intact. These classes were the Persian satraps and the bureaucracies attached to them. Alexander did not necessarily favor Macedonians over Persians in the administration of his empire. Depending on the situation, Persians were replaced with Macedonians and Greeks, while at other times, the Persian satraps remained in power. There are a few examples of these practices in Arrian:

⁸⁹ Arrian, 356.

⁹⁰ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 175.

The governorship of the neighboring country of Libya was given to Apollonius, son of Charinus, and of Arabia by Heroopolis to Cleomenes of Naucratis; the latter was instructed to permit the existing nomarchs, or district governors, to carry on as before except with the collection of tribute, which they, in their turn, were ordered to pay.⁹¹

In this situation, the top-level governors were replaced, while the lower-level governors were allowed to stay in power. There is also the example of King Porus in the Indus River region. Alexander had a battle with him, but was so impressed with his military prowess and nobility of character that he kept him in power by allotting him his own kingdom as well as another sizeable chunk of land, actually extending Porus' power in the region.⁹²

The Macedonians chose to adhere to the age-old practices of the Near Eastern kings to ensure administrative efficiency, as well as to prevent a possibly restive populace to grow unhappy with the new, foreign rulers.⁹³ In order to deflect this hostility, the Hellenistic kings continued the long held practices of their geographical predecessors. They employed the traditional rituals associated with kingship. The Greco-Macedonian elites had to adapt to these ancient political environments in order to be accepted by the people and the existing native elites. The Ptolemies established the practice of sibling marriage among royalty and divine kingship. These new rulers understood this to be an ancient custom in the pharaonic tradition.⁹⁴ Ptolemy II took Arsinoe, his full sister, to be his wife. His official title had been "Philadelphos," meaning "sister lover." His taking of this title reflects the Greeks' unfamiliarity and possible repugnance with this practice, as

⁹¹ Arrian, 154-155.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 281-282.

⁹³ There are records of native uprisings in the Hellenistic period, especially in the city of Alexandria itself. (Shipley, 204-5.)

⁹⁴ The pharaohs of Egypt certainly practiced incestuous royal marriage on occasion, but it was not the norm. Based on the historical record, it seems that the Greeks were convinced that the practice was widespread, therefore the Ptolemies practiced it. (Sheila L. Ager, "Familiarity Breeds: Incest and the Ptolemaic Dynasty," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 125 (2005): 17.)

well as Ptolemy II's embracing of it. We can get a sense for how sibling marriage was received by the Greek public. The poet, Theocritus, likened the couple to Zeus and Hera, who were also full brother and sister, while Sotades criticized it. No doubt this expressed the more popular opinion; however, Sotades was sealed in a lead jar and dropped into the sea.⁹⁵ Like sibling marriage, the concept of divine kingship would also have been a foreign concept to the Greeks, but it became a standard practice of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The pharaohs of Egypt had traditionally been seen as the living representation of the god, Horus, and the Ptolemies went to great lengths to foster this notion, although they were not native rulers. Alexander himself, the immediate predecessor of Ptolemy I, had deified himself as the pharaoh of Egypt. Another one of the ways in which Ptolemy I legitimized his rule was to sponsor the cult of Alexander and this practice continued under the later Ptolemaic Dynasty.⁹⁶ Philadelphos also gave divine honors to his father and mother, Ptolemy I and Berenice, and then to himself and his own wife.⁹⁷ As a foreigner, he was trying to claim the legitimacy of his position by adapting the customs of the land he was ruling. The Macedonians were comfortable with the idea of monarchy, but elevating oneself to divinity was certainly not in their own or the Greek tradition.

The Seleucids, who ruled over the lands further to the east, also had to legitimize their rule by taking on the role of the kings of former dynasties. They upheld edicts that allowed the Chaldeans to maintain residence around the temple of Bel in the city of Babylon (in the context of the settling of the new city of Seleucia Tigris). Antiochos III allowed the Judaeans *ethnos* (nation) to live under the laws of their own lands and

⁹⁵Sheila Ager, "An Uneasy Balance: From the Death of Seleucus to the Battle of Raphia," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 39.

⁹⁶ Angelos Chaniotis, "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 435.

⁹⁷ Chamoux, 72.

maintain their community in the city of Jerusalem.⁹⁸ Antiochos I restored the temples of Esagila at Babylon and Ezida at Borsippa.⁹⁹ The Seleucids, when they could, also personally participated in ritual of symbolic brick making and the laying of the foundations of new temples in the region of Babylonia.¹⁰⁰ These were all acts carried out by the traditional monarchs of the region. This softer transition would no doubt have eased the tension felt by the local elite. A radical overhaul of court practice and ritual could have alienated these people and precipitated revolutionary activity. The ways in which these dynasties handled the delicate transitions between Achaemenid and Hellenistic dynasties certainly would have been felt only in the elite circles, the common people would have been so unaffected by these transitions that their reaction was minimal. They simply went on with their lives. This reflects again how Hellenism was an elite phenomenon. The adherence to long-held Near Eastern practices by Macedonians was also certainly not an innovation; they were the same rituals, however, they were practiced by different people. It simply shows that the conquerors adapted to their new political and cultural surroundings, just as in other aspects of Hellenism. Greek culture had to be adapted to fit into Near Eastern culture and a synthesis was created.

The *Polis* and Classical Greek Attitudes Towards Kingship

In order to lay the groundwork for the discussion of Hellenistic Urbanism, it is important to explore how the *polis* is defined and how it operated in the Archaic and Classical worlds. This is significant for my discussion because this *polis* model was taken by Hellenistic monarchs and grafted into their kingdoms. In Greek the word *polis* means

⁹⁸Sherman-White, 26.

⁹⁹*Ibid*, 28.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid*, 28.

a city-state that possessed freedom and autonomy.¹⁰¹ Thus the *polis* was a small, politically independent entity that was centered around a city. *Poleis* had urban centers and rural areas surrounding them, which supported their populations with food and resources used in the production items for export. These hinterlands could vary in size, based on the population of that city-state and its agricultural needs.¹⁰² The *polis* had its heyday in the two centuries between the end of the Persian Wars in 479 and the final consolidation of power by the *Diadochoi* around 275. Greek *poleis* were mostly centered around the Aegean Sea region. These were the city-states that primarily came under the rule of the Hellenistic kingdoms, but there were other *poleis* further afield.¹⁰³

The idea of the *polis* was ingrained in the Greek conception of political reality. The Greeks believed that the natural environment of man was within the *polis* and it was thought that the city-state naturally occurred. In the opening pages of Book One in *Politics*, Aristotle discusses this idea. “A city-state is among the things that exist by nature, that a human being is by nature a political animal, and that anyone who is without a city-state, not by luck but by nature, is either a poor specimen or else subhuman.”¹⁰⁴

Arsitotle’s outlook reflects the Greek attitude towards people living outside of *poleis*. He

¹⁰¹ R. J. van der Spek, “The Babylonian City,” in *Hellenism in the East: Interaction of Greek and non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia After Alexander*, eds. Amelie Kuhrt and Susan Sherman-White (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 57.

¹⁰² Charles Gates, *Ancient Cities: The Archaeology of Urban Life in the Ancient Near East and Egypt, Greece, and Rome* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 196-197.

¹⁰³ Throughout the Archaic and Classical Periods, Greek city-states had sent out colonists who had established *poleis* along the Black Sea coast, mainland Italy and Sicily, North Africa, as well as far away as Marseilles in modern-day France.

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), 4. The passage “Man is a political animal” has often been misinterpreted. People sometimes think that Aristotle meant that man, by nature, has a desire to be involved in politics, when in fact it can be gleaned from the context of that passage that Aristotle meant that man, by nature, belongs in a *polis*. This makes sense based on the fact that in English, the only adjective that we have that might mean “pertaining to the city-state” is “political.” Perhaps it would be beneficial to my discussion as well as to the translation of that passage to develop an adjective that has this meaning. My suggestion would be the word “polistic,” whose definition would simply be, “pertaining to the *polis*” or “*polis*-like.”

describes them as “subhuman.” This is certainly consistent with Greek hostility towards outsiders, whom they called barbarians, Macedonians included, who would later adapt their polis-like institutions. The hostility derived not only from the difference in culture and language, but also from the way that outsiders arranged themselves politically. The Greeks felt that people, by nature, should govern their own cities without interference from foreigners (both *barbaroi*, non-Greeks, and *xenoi*, Greeks not of one’s own city).

There were also certain urban institutions within the *polis*, which characterized the *polis* itself. There was the *acropolis*, meaning “high city.” The *acropolis* got its name for the elevated position that it held in the city. It oftentimes housed important buildings, such as the treasury and sacred temples, because it was usually heavily fortified and difficult to ascend by invading belligerents. The *agora* was essentially a marketplace, but it had wider implications. It was a meeting place for the citizens of the city that invited political debate and social exchange. The theater was a place to watch stage productions and engage in the social environment of the city. The theater was an important part of civic life in the *polis* because it was a large place for the community to gather, thus created a sense of unity.¹⁰⁵ There were also the *gymnasia* and the *ephebeia*. The *gymnasium* was a place to exercise, as in the modern sense, but in ancient Greece, it had wider cultural importance. It was a place to assemble, listen to lectures on various intellectual topics, discuss ideas, and debate. The educational systems were centered around these institutions, and oftentimes, there were libraries attached to *gymnasia* as well. It was a place to exercise both the physical body as well as the mind. *Ephebeia* were similar institutions, but they were for *ephebes*, adolescent males. Present in *poleis* were

¹⁰⁵ Chamoux, 293.

also council chambers (*boule*) or town halls (*prytaneion*).¹⁰⁶ These were vital for the political life of a *polis*; the political assemblies (*ekklesia*) gathered in them. The *polis* comprises all of these institutions and they contribute to how one defines it.

As the conquering Macedonians spread the idea of the *polis* to far off lands they used these institutions to impose Greek culture. The *polis* was transformed in the Hellenistic period and it no longer catered to Classical Greek forms of government, it evolved to accommodate the Macedonian and Near Eastern form of government: monarchy. The Greeks viewed monarchy as outdated and tyrannical. Aristotle discusses his ideas of kingship in *Politics*. In his investigation, he primarily sought to answer these questions: what is more beneficial for a *polis* or territorial state – a monarchical system or a system with rule of law and a constitution? And why do these systems work for some and not others? He categorized the different kinds of monarchical systems in order to analyze their proficiency at carrying out political affairs. Aristotle believed that looking at different governmental systems and cultures that employed them would expound their effectiveness and merits. Aristotle's *Politics* gives us a very good idea of how Greeks felt about monarchy at the beginning of the Hellenistic Period.

First, Aristotle discusses the Spartan kingship in which two men rule. Essentially it is a permanent generalship. Aristotle is unopposed to this idea because it is based on a constitution and upheld by laws, which he feels are just. The next type of king that he discusses is the non-Greek type of monarchy which is tolerated by the non-Greeks “because non-Greeks are by nature more slavish in their character than Greeks.”¹⁰⁷ This system is stable because it based on heredity and laws, but it is contrasted with the

¹⁰⁶ Richard Billows, “Cities,” in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 197.

¹⁰⁷ Aristotle, 92.

Spartan system because “the former have bodyguards drawn from the citizen, whereas the latter have their bodyguards to protect them from the citizens.”¹⁰⁸ The third type of king is the dictator who takes power for emergency purposes. This can be retained for life or just on a temporary basis. There is also the kingship of the Heroic period, recounted by the poet Homer.

After analyzing these four types of monarchy, Aristotle asks: is it better to be ruled by a man or by laws? Aristotle does not specifically denounce monarchy, but the overall tone indicates that kingship was outdated because the populations of city-states in his time have grown to the point where the mass of people are better able to make decisions for themselves. He states:

Besides a large quantity is more incorruptible, so the multitude, like the larger quantity of water, are more incorruptible than a few. The judgment of an individual is inevitably corrupted when he is overcome by anger... whereas in the same situation it is a task to get all the citizens to become angry and make mistakes at the same time.¹⁰⁹

This leads into his discussion of how governmental systems evolved. Aristotle describes a progression of systems of government, beginning with monarchy. More people acquired wealth, were corrupted, and they made wealth honorable. This led to tyrannies being established until “by concentrating power in fewer hands, because of the shameful desire of profit, they made the multitude stronger, with the result that it revolted and democracies arose.”¹¹⁰ To Aristotle, this is a desirable form of government, since more power is centered in a greater mass of people. Therefore, corruption is less likely to occur, because it is regulated by a greater number of people and a few powerful people are not able to achieve their own corrupt aims. Aristotle’s discussion is limited because it only

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 95.

describes of the progression of governments within the Greek city-state model. However, this is consistent with his attitude towards people living outside of these establishments; they are subhuman, therefore not worth mentioning.

Overall, one gets a sense that Aristotle was not at all comfortable with the idea of monarchy. Monarchies were no longer predominant in Greece. To Aristotle, this system was for people of a more “slavish” nature. He even described the reasons why the practice had been driven out. Kingship became corrupt and fell out of favor in most Greek *poleis*. This seems to reflect the wider trends in Greek thinking. Overtime, most of the people living in the Greek *poleis* abhorred the idea of having a king. This is reflected in the small number of *poleis* with monarchies in the Classical Period. As people began to disassociate themselves from monarchies, *poleis* reflected this change in mindset and were established in ways that would accommodate the oligarchic and democratic forms of government.

Unlike the Greeks, the Macedonians were no strangers to the idea of monarchy. The monarchical Macedonians were great admirers of Greek ideas, hence they took the Greek *polis* and used it as their model for the new cities built in their Hellenistic kingdoms. However, the *polis* model was not equipped to accommodate monarchies. With urban institutions, such as the *agora* and the theater, the *polis* was more conducive to public speeches and freedom of interaction. The Hellenistic period ushered in many fundamental changes to the Greek way of life. The ability to self-govern was the essence of the Classical Greek *polis*, therefore, the *polis* had to undergo changes in the Hellenistic period as a result of the larger territorial kingdoms that characterized it. These changes were not only in the political sense (now that these cities were under the rule of

kingdoms), but also based on the fact that the *polis* model was expanded to all areas of the Hellenistic world as a result of the conquests of Alexander. The Greeks had to adapt to different ways of life and this affected their *polis* structures. These ideas have been presented by different scholars studying Hellenistic urbanism.¹¹¹ These challenges include: larger territorial states created by the *Diadochoi*, the effects of kingship on the city-state urban experience, confrontations with non-Greeks, and cities as multicultural urban centers. The widespread nature of these larger territorial states took the Greeks out of what Aristotle would call their natural environment. They had to modify these kingdoms to accommodate the *polis*, as well as adapt the *polis* to larger territorial states. This created a new urban milieu: Hellenistic Urbanism.

Hellenistic Urbanism

Hellenistic Urbanism was a unique phenomenon. One question continually emerges: If the *polis* became part of larger territorial states in the Hellenistic Age, can it still be considered a *polis*? The urban institution of the *polis* was in decline in the Greek world after the spread of Greek culture throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond as a result of Alexander's military career. The Greek city-states had been fighting amongst themselves for centuries. They were exhausted to the breaking point while Philip II of Macedon, Alexander's father, was consolidating his power in the middle of the fourth century. With the founding of the separate Hellenistic kingdoms, the Greek city-states lost their independence as separate political entities. As has been previously outlined, the *polis*' ability to rule itself was the essence of the Greek city-state. Some would argue that these cities were no longer *poleis* in the sense that they had been,

¹¹¹ See Mason Hammond, *The City in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 197, and Gates, 276.

because they lost their political power. This continued on into the Roman Period, with the destruction of city walls and the introduction of palaces for provincial governors, which were certainly not a classic *polis* structure.¹¹² The argument against this is that internal political life in the cities was alive and well in the Hellenistic Period with the presence of such federated leagues as the Aetolian and Achaean, who successfully fought against Macedonian rule.¹¹³ The citizens of these cities and leagues would no doubt have identified themselves in the same way, but their governments did not have the same political power. These were federated systems that were created in an effort to stand up to the monarchy of the Macedonians and uphold the cause of the liberty of the *poleis*.¹¹⁴ Various rebellions occurred throughout the Hellenistic Age and even some during the campaigns of Alexander himself. Thus, the idea of the *polis* never was completely wiped out in the ancient world. Therefore, I think that in this new period of Greek history, the Greek *polis* continued to exist, but was reborn in a new form. They were no longer Classical Greek *poleis*. Not only did the Hellenistic *polis* have to tailor itself to a new political arrangement, but they were a mixture of Greek and Near Eastern models. The Hellenistic *polis*, in this way, is another representation of the concept Hellenism, a mixture of cultures.

As a result of Alexander's conquests, new cities were founded throughout the empire. The cities were constructed in an effort to incorporate Near Eastern lands into the Greek sphere of influence, both militarily and culturally. They also would be instruments of Macedonian power and control. The chief way of accomplishing this task in

¹¹² Mogens Herman Hansen, *Polis: An Introduction to the Ancient Greek City-State* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 133.

¹¹³ A. H. M. Jones, "The Hellenistic Age," *Past and Present*, no. 27 (1964): 3.

¹¹⁴ Chamoux, 211.

Alexander's lifetime was to build small military outposts throughout the area that had formerly been under Persian rule. Alexander founded many of these settlements as military garrisons as his armies marched through the regions that they conquered. These military outposts developed into larger settlements inhabited by Greek colonists. Some ancient cities were also reorganized along the lines of a Greek *polis* during the Hellenistic Period as well. It has even been argued that the city of Babylon can be identified as a *polis*.¹¹⁵ Ancient authors made distinctions between cities that were founded by Greeks and older cities that had long been inhabited. The cities themselves were actually different in many ways, as will be outlined in the following pages. New Greek cities, as well as reorganized non-Greek cities, were called *poleis hellenides*, older, already well-established cities were *poleis persike*, and mixed cities were called *poleis mixobarbaroi*.¹¹⁶ These distinctions were significant to the ancient people who lived in them, because they reflect that the older cities, such as Babylon, were now under direct Greco-Macedonian political domination and were subservient to the newer cities built by Alexander himself and the *Diadochoi*.¹¹⁷

These new cities became nodes of Hellenism far away from the Greek homeland. Alexander and the later Hellenistic kings used these new and reorganized cities, as well as the institutions associated with the classical Greek *polis*, as tools of power. These new Greek colonies were vital to the spread of Greek culture. The Hellenistic rulers used the institutions within the *polis* and the institution of the *polis* itself to Hellenize the Near Eastern world. Many of these new settlements Alexander named after himself, as a means

¹¹⁵ Sherman-White, 20-21. This notion has been since refuted by scholars, due to the lack of evidence of deep Greek acculturation. Greek occupation of the city of Babylon was mostly limited to the Greek garrison that was stationed there.

¹¹⁶ Van der Spek, 59.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 59.

of stressing his political influence. Alexandria in Egypt, which became the most prominent city in the Hellenistic world, is a prime example of this. Like Alexander, later Hellenistic kings did the same. A few examples are the Seleucid cities of Seleucia Tigris, founded by Seleucos, and Antioch, founded by his son Antiochos I. The work involved in building a new city was enormous; it stressed a ruler's tremendous capacity for mobilizing thousands of workers, as well as great wealth.¹¹⁸ The Macedonians wanted to present this image of themselves.

In the Hellenistic Period the *polis* also changed in scale. The Hellenistic world began to become identified with larger urban settlements. These cities grew to sizes that would have never been imaged by Greeks in the Classical era. In *Laws*, Plato said the ideal city-state should not be too large: "Let us assume that there are - as a suitable number - 5040 men, to be land-holders and to defend their plots"¹¹⁹ The number that Plato referred to was, of course, just the land-holding, citizen caste of society, not including the women, slaves, and non-citizen metics. This would have increased the population figure considerably, but certainly would not have boosted it to the level of the Hellenistic metropolises, which numbered in the hundreds of thousands.¹²⁰ The Classical Age in Greece did see cities that had many thousands of people; Plato's own city of Athens was one of the largest. Plato is merely stating that a *polis* of that size would be ideal for the equality and balance of the resources for the citizen body as well as for its

¹¹⁸ Hellenistic kings, like ancient Mesopotamian kings before them, founded cities in order to emphasize their greatness and massive wealth. Sargon of Akkade founded a new dynastic seat in the nineteenth century. Assurnasirpal II founded the city of Nimrud and it was the capital of the Assyrian Empire for 150 years. (Marc Van De Mieroop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999), 53-4.)

¹¹⁹ Plato, *Laws*, Book 5, in *Laws: In Two Volumes, Volume I*, trans. R. G. Bury (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), 357.

¹²⁰ Diodorus Siculus (*Book 17*, 269.) states that at his time, the city of Alexandria had three hundred thousand free residents. As with Plato's figure, this number would have been considerably higher, taking into account slaves and other dependents.

defense. Plato was a very influential thinker and this passage can give us some indication of Classical Greek attitudes toward the desirable size of *poleis*.

There are a few reasons why the *polis* grew in size in the Hellenistic Period. The *polis*' hinterland was not just the small rural area needed to support it; it was now the capital of a huge, multi-ethnic state that stretched for hundreds of miles. The *polis* had to grow in order to accommodate the larger political entities that they represented. A small *polis* could simply not support some of the commercial and governmental institutions required to operate on this level. The other reason why the urban centers grew in the Hellenistic world is the influence that the earlier, Near Eastern cities had upon them. The new Hellenistic cities seem to hearken back more to the ancient cities of the Near East, such as Babylon, Nineveh, and Uruk.

Behind the Seleucid foundation of Antioch we can glimpse earlier flourishing cities: Ugarit... Pergamon, in Asia Minor, looks back to Lydian cities, even to Hittite rule: Eumenes and Attalus used their wealth in ways very similar to the characteristic blend of self-aggrandizement, patronage, bribery, and entrepreneurship Croesus displayed.¹²¹

The connection with the ancient Near East cultures can be seen in the scale of the monuments and the sheer size of the cities themselves. Mesopotamian cities would have dwarfed Greek *poleis* and the monuments within would have been unbelievable to Greeks. Herodotus was amazed at the scale of the city walls of the city of Babylon,

There is a wall fifty cubits wide and two hundred high... On top of the wall they constructed, along each edge, a row of one-roomed buildings facing inwards with enough room for a four-horse chariot to pass. There are a hundred gates in the circuit of the walls, all of bronze with bronze uprights and lintels.¹²²

¹²¹ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 155.

¹²² Herodotus, 113.

The size of these walls was unprecedented for a Greek observer; they would have dwarfed any fortifications in the Greeks world. Mesopotamian cities and monuments were built on such a tremendous scale in order to impress outsiders of their king's power. Seeing the tremendous wealth and monuments of the Near East whetted the appetites of the Macedonian conquerors. They wanted to achieve such feats and as a result they continued the same magnificent building programs of the earlier Mesopotamian and Persian rulers. It was for this same reason that Hellenistic cities grew in size. The Hellenistic kings had to demonstrate their power over their rivals in distant lands, but they also wanted to outshine their geographical predecessors. This is the concept of gigantism, which will be outlined in the next chapter.

There was some continuity within the Classical *polis* model. The urban landscape was essentially the same as it had been in the Classical period. Greek colonists in Hellenistic *poleis* would feel at home in an eastern setting because the Greek city was implanted in the east. This was accomplished in two ways. First, the grid pattern was utilized in urban planning, as it had been used before in Classical Greek city-states.¹²³ This idea had originated earlier, in the Archaic Period, in order to make efficient use of terrain, reduce number of oddly shaped plots of land, assist in drainage, and beautify the city.¹²⁴ This was also the quickest and most convenient way of establishing a city in a potentially hostile territory.¹²⁵ The grid pattern was employed in many Hellenistic cities. Some new cities were laid out in the grid pattern, such as Alexandria, and other older cities were merely reorganized along the grid pattern, such as Damascus.¹²⁶

¹²³ Peter Green, *The Hellenistic Age*, 48.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹²⁵ Owens, 74.

¹²⁶ See *Ibid.*, chapter entitled "Town Planning in the Hellenistic World," 74-93, for maps and diagrams.

Secondly, the institutions of the *polis* remained intact. Many of the cities founded during Alexander's conquest as military garrisons had the institutional trappings of the Greek polis, such as the *agora*, *acropolis*, and gymnasium, to name a few.¹²⁷ The political successors of Alexander followed his example. Under the *Diadochoi*, the *agora* became a vital part of what comprised a Hellenistic city in the Near East. The *gymnasium* also played a large role. In Pergamon, under Attalid royal patronage, the largest gymnasium in the Classical or Hellenistic world was founded and flourished under their rule.¹²⁸ The *ephebeia* became a central institution in the Hellenistic Period. It was treated as a weapons training institution for young citizens, while at the same time teaching *ephebes* social and intellectual subjects as well. *Ephebeia* became increasingly more important in the Hellenistic world, as they trained young men to fight in the army. They also contributed much to the Hellenization of the Near East, though the imposition of Greek culture upon young natives.¹²⁹

In the Classical period, theaters were an important outlet of Greek culture. Performances in these theaters were in the Greek language and told stories of Greek legends. In the Hellenistic Age, theaters built in the Near East imposed Greek culture in this way; the natives certainly absorbed Greek culture while attending these performances of Greek drama. Many Greek-style theaters have survived until the modern day, as far away as Babylon¹³⁰ and Ai Khanum in Afghanistan.¹³¹ The presence of these theaters in distant Near Eastern cities is one way in which Greek influence has been measured. For

¹²⁷ Mogens Herman Hansen, 134.

¹²⁸ Esther V. Hansen, *The Attalids of Pergamon: Second Edition, Revised and Expanded* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 390.

¹²⁹ Mogens Herman Hansen, 132-133.

¹³⁰ Michel Austin, "The Seleukids and Asia," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 131.

¹³¹ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 333.

example, the existence of a Greek-style theater in Babylon led some people to be convinced that it was fully Hellenized.¹³² Some of the minor political institutions were in place as well, such as the *demes*, chief magistrates and *strategoi*.¹³³ In Ptolemaic Alexandria, both a *boule* and *prytaneion* were present in the city, however, the *ekklesia* of the city met in the theater. This shows that even though the city was ruled by a dynastic monarchy, these institutions still played a key role in the politics of Hellenistic Alexandria, however, only on a municipal level.¹³⁴ This is significant because it shows that the Greek people living in these cities were reluctant to give up some of their governmental institutions so that they could uphold the idea that they still held political autonomy.

The institution of the palace was introduced to the *polis*. The new idea of the palace in the *polis* was indicative of the change of the political setting of this time. Although some of the municipal institutions, such as the *ekkleisa* and the *boule* remained intact in Hellenistic cities, the system of monarchy was made tangible through the presence of the palace. This was one way in which the *polis* had to adapt. Accommodation to monarchy was necessary for the survival of the *polis*; the introduction of the palace was one such concession. The palace in the *polis* also reflects Hellenism. The palace's presence in the *polis* hearkens back to older, Near Eastern urban models, but places it within the Greek institution of the *polis*, therefore, the palace represents a blending of Greek and Near Eastern cultures. The palace was also an outlet for the Hellenistic rulers to show off their wealth. This is a very important phenomenon in the Hellenistic world. This idea was one of the driving forces behind what made Hellenistic

¹³² Sherman-White, 21.

¹³³ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 155

¹³⁴ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 30.

Urbanism so unique. These shows of wealth manifested themselves in the ideas of cultural competition among Hellenistic kings, *euergetes*, and urban gigantism.

Chapter 3: Cultural Competition, the Role of *Euergetes*, Gigantism, and Scholastic Patronage in the Hellenistic World

One of the distinguishing attributes of the Hellenistic Age in the eastern Mediterranean was cultural competition between the different successor kingdoms of Alexander's Empire. The kings of the various Hellenistic dynasties strove to be the politically and militarily dominant forces in the region, but they also wanted to be the most cultured as well. One of the main ways in which this competition was carried out by Hellenistic monarchs was through the patronage of artistic and scholastic pursuits, as well as the building of magnificent cities and incredible monuments in their own honor. They wanted to glorify themselves and culturally outshine their fellow Hellenistic kings in far-off kingdoms. The kings also wanted to be looked upon with favor by their subjects, so they invoked the title of *euergetes* or "benefactor" in their building of new urban amenities and in their academic patronage. This shameless self-promotion and competition through the building of massive structures and other conspicuous displays of wealth is an idea known as "gigantism."

The building of these tremendous monuments had a profound impact on the urban landscape itself. This gigantism became one of the hallmarks of Hellenistic Urbanism. The new Hellenistic *polis* was the canvas upon which the Hellenistic kings painted fabulous images in order to express their magnificent wealth and garner awe from their subjects and rivals. The ideas of competition among kings, their patronage of learning within their own kingdoms, *euergetes*, and gigantism in the Hellenistic Age will be discussed in this chapter. These ideas all exemplify significant trends in Hellenistic Urbanism. Alexandria represents the pinnacle of Hellenistic Urbanism in all of these aspects. Alexandria and the Ptolemies exceeded all other Hellenistic cities and royal

families in their support of academic development and magnificent monument building.

Cultural Competition Among Hellenistic Rulers

The cultural competition among Hellenistic kings began when the *Diadochoi* realized that their individual efforts to reunite the shards of the shattered empire of Alexander the Great were no longer realistic. Alexander had conquered all of the Persian Empire through charisma, intimidation, and outright military dominance. The *Diadochoi* could not possibly replicate the illustrious career of Alexander and soon learned it was not worth the time, money, and effort to try to expand their borders far beyond the areas within their immediate control.¹³⁵ Some destructive battles still occurred between the successor states of Alexander's empire throughout the Hellenistic Period,¹³⁶ but ambitions to unite the former empire had faded away.

In the 301, the Battle of Ipsus took place. This battle, also known as the "Battle of the Kings," took place in the heart of Anatolia. It pitted the octogenarian Antigonos and his son, Demetrios, against a coalition of Cassander, Lysimachus, and Seleucos, with Ptolemy running diversionary tactics in Syria. Antigonos had controlled most of the eastern portions of Alexander's empire, but he perished in the battle and his lands were partitioned by the successful generals.¹³⁷ This battle was the final nail in the coffin for political unity in the Hellenistic world.¹³⁸ As the military tensions cooled, the political

¹³⁵ Shipley, 41-2.

¹³⁶ The most destructive of which was the Battle of Raphia, some generations after the break-up of Alexander's Empire in 217. The Seleucid Antiochos III attempted to invade Egypt, however his efforts were reversed when his army was met by that of Ptolemy IV at Raphia in Palestine. Ptolemy was victorious in the battle and very soon after, peace was agreed upon. The battle was a disastrous blunder for Antiochos, he was forced to leave behind all of Coele-Syria, which he had conquered from the Ptolemies. The Ptolemaic kingdom was then able to keep its Syrian bulwark. (Chamoux, 102.)

¹³⁷ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 34.

¹³⁸ Chamoux, 54.

situation stabilized, and the different kingdoms came into existence. These different kingdoms were drawn into a stalemate and around the beginning of the third century the borders of these states were, for the most part, determined. Their attention turned inward, and they focused on how to improve their social standing among other Hellenistic kings. These monarchs sought to gain prominence in the cultural realm as opposed to the military or political realm. In this context, a sense of cultural competition arose and gained momentum as kings strived to be the definite cultural power in the eastern Mediterranean. Gaining the upper-hand in cultural competition offered a number of benefits. The dominant cultural power of the eastern Mediterranean would, no doubt, attract people to the capital city. This would boost the economic power of that kingdom and provide the rulers with large amounts of revenue, both from taxation and trade. As can be seen with Alexandria, it became the dominant port city in the Mediterranean world, but this will be discussed in the next chapter.

These Hellenistic dynasts were upstart rulers from the land of Macedon. Macedon had long been a kingdom of feuding clans and agrarian landholders who had previously held no power outside of their own domains. After Alexander's death and the imperial partitions by the *Diadochoi*, Macedonians assumed control of expansive areas of land in the Near East, as well as the seemingly unlimited riches of these prosperous regions within the mighty Persian Empire. Once the wealth of the Persian Empire was at their disposal, they wanted to spend it on luxurious items that would make their kinsmen who were ruling in foreign lands jealous.

These rulers were also greatly influenced by the cultures of the lands they conquered, such as Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, and Persia. This influence and cultural

cross-pollination is one of the main aspects of the growth of Hellenism. The kings in these more ancient cultures had long supported building projects on a tremendous scale to glorify themselves and their kingdoms. Ancient Near Eastern kings, going back to the Bronze Age, had the economic capacity and manpower to build monuments such as pyramids and ziggurats. The Macedonian kings were influenced by these aspects of the ancient Near Eastern kings' rule and they felt the need to compare themselves to the old pharaohs and kings. Hellenistic kings inherited the means to build on this level and wished to exploit their potential at the expense of their rivals ruling in other successor kingdoms of Alexander's empire. Alexander himself was influential as well. He was a larger-than-life example of what a Macedonian king could achieve, and in turn the *Diadochoi* sought to emulate him. Therefore, the Hellenistic kings were not just competing amongst themselves; they also sought to rival the ancient, long-dead kings from previous dynasties, and even Alexander, their purportedly semi-divine predecessor. They also wanted to show their new subjects that they were on the same level as their own native rulers. So, in many ways, their conspicuous displays of wealth were a way to legitimize their rule over foreign kingdoms.

These obvious displays of wealth were made manifest in the ensuing cultural competition of the Hellenistic Age. The ability to build stupendous monuments translated into wealth and power. The capacity to build monuments became the measuring stick upon which cultural sophistication was judged, thus demonstrating a ruler's power. The rulers of the Ptolemaic, Seleucid, and Attalid dynasties all wanted to surpass each other in the pursuits of lavish living, monument construction, patronage of learning, and urban development. These were all very costly pursuits and required enormous manpower to

accomplish. A king capable of founding multiple new cities and building monuments on a scale never before seen was regarded as financially prosperous and politically powerful. These efforts were all for self-aggrandizement.

The construction projects of Hellenistic kings and the cities built in their honor reached gigantic proportions. The size of their monuments reflected the size of their inflated opinions of themselves, and in some cases, such as in the Ptolemaic dynasty, their claims of divinity. Ptolemy II Philadelphos set the precedent for divinity by naming his father a god and starting a festival in his honor.¹³⁹ A cult of the Ptolemaic dynasty was established and temples were built in their honor all over their kingdom. A sanctuary in Zephyrion on the Egyptian coast, east of Alexandria, was created to honor Queen Arsinoe, wife of Ptolemy II. She had been identified with the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, in her own lifetime.¹⁴⁰ These building projects were some of the distinguishing attributes of these dynasties' rules and they were not shy about promoting their lavish generosity in temple and monument building. As a result, they invoked the title of *euergetes*.

Euergetes

Euergetes is another important idea in the study of Hellenistic kingship and city building. *Euergetes* means "benefactor" in Greek. Hellenistic kings played the role of *euergetes* for their cities. *Euergetes* was so significant a phenomenon, that some Hellenistic kings even took this title as a surname,¹⁴¹ such as Ptolemy III and Ptolemy VIII. Ptolemy III assumed this title after he restored to Egypt some statues of gods that

¹³⁹ Andrew Eskine, "Life After Death: Alexandria and the Body of Alexander," *Greece & Rome* 49, no. 2 (2002): 175.

¹⁴⁰ Chamoux, 325.

¹⁴¹ Shipley, 96.

had been taken away by the Persian ruler, Cambyses.¹⁴² The role of *euergetes* took the form of building projects and urban beautification, as well as gift giving and appointment to offices in the royal administration. In some cases, the role of benefactor was central to the administration in Hellenistic kingdoms.¹⁴³ Sherman-White and Kuhrt discuss the Seleucids' active role as *euergetes*. They provided items, such as building materials, food, military equipment, land, tax immunities to certain communities and individuals for various reasons. There was a very pragmatic reason for them providing for certain subjects in this sort of way. In theory, it rendered their subordinates dependent upon them and this gave the Seleucids the upper hand in royal court. The title of "Friend of the King" was bestowed upon certain individuals; this allowed them to gain much power and prestige in the royal court. Along with this would come earthly riches as well, such as gold plates and cups as well as luxurious raiment.¹⁴⁴ An example of such an appointment comes to us from Maccabees in the Old Testament: "The young king Antiochus wrote to Jonathan and confirmed him as High Priest and as ruler over the four regions and gave him the title of 'Friend of the King.' He sent him gold tableware and authorized him to drink from gold cups, to wear the royal robe."¹⁴⁵ This kind of direct patronage gave the Seleucids greater control over their immediate circle and they could call in favors whenever they required them. In the earlier periods of Near Eastern history, especially in Mesopotamia, the king had played a similar role. He was sort of the patriarch of the large number of households. He took care of his people, providing them with defense, irrigation to keep them fed, and justice. As a result, he had many dependents attached to

¹⁴² Chamoux 228.

¹⁴³ Susan Sherman-White and Amelie Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A New Approach to the Seleucid Empire* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 132.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, see section entitled, "Power and Patronage," 132-136.

¹⁴⁵ 1 Maccabees 11: 57-58.

the palace administration.¹⁴⁶ The Seleucids no doubt hearkened back to this model in the administration of their kingdom. Using such a familiar model could have also bound their subjects to this new dynasty.

In the Classical Greek world, wealthy private citizens could be regarded as *euergetai*. For the most part, Classical Greece was not comprised of monarchies, so they did not rely upon royal patronage for building projects. It was difficult for the governments of these small, independent city-states to generate the money required to glorify, or even renovate, their cities. Thus, propriety and custom required wealthy private citizens of the aristocratic classes to supply their *polis* with capital to carry out building projects and entertainment events. Xenophon, writing sometime in early fourth century Athens, talks about the responsibilities of an affluent Athenian citizen:

I notice that you are bound to offer many large sacrifices; else, I fancy, you would get into trouble with gods and men alike. Secondly, it is your duty to entertain many strangers, on a generous scale too. Thirdly, you have to give dinners and play the benefactor to the citizens... you must needs keep horses, pay for choruses and gymnastic competitions, and accept presidencies; and if war breaks out, I know they will require you to maintain a ship and pay taxes that will nearly crush you. Whenever you seem to fall short of what is expected of you, the Athenians will certainly punish you as if they caught you robbing them.¹⁴⁷

This shows the prominence of this practice as well as the urgency with which it was carried out. Greek cities needed the capital of private citizens to maintain themselves and wealthy citizens were not allowed to avoid their financial contributions to the greatness of their cities.

This practice has precedents in the Classical world, but it reached a new level in the Hellenistic Age. These efforts were made possible by the fact that Hellenistic

¹⁴⁶ Van De Mieroop, 119-120.

¹⁴⁷ Xenophon, *Oeconomicus: Book 2*, in *Memorabilia and Oeconomicus*, trans. E. C. Marchant (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1923), 375-7.

Dynasties had gained access to resources that dwarfed the revenues of the city-states in Classical Greece and the Kingdom of Macedon. For the most part, the Hellenistic kingdoms did not require a private *euergetes* to stay afloat. They drew funds from the coffers of large, widespread kingdoms with massive amounts of wealth and manpower. The Ptolemaic monarchy was known to have held monopolies on certain products in order to control the market on those particular items. Oil was one such commodity. There was strict control over every stage of its production, from the sowing of the crop to the finished product. Even the market price was determined by the state. The factories themselves were even owned by the government.¹⁴⁸ There are records of how these monopolies functioned. An excerpt from one such record from the reign of Ptolemy II in the year 259 reads as follows:

The cultivator shall not be allowed to sell either sesame or croton to any other person... and they shall give to the comarch a sealed receipt for what they received from each cultivator. If they fail to give the sealed receipt, the comarch shall not allow the produce to leave the village; otherwise he shall forfeit 1000 drachmae to the Crown.¹⁴⁹

The large exploitation of certain products by the Ptolemies is one way in which they were able to generate the massive wealth that they controlled.

The larger Hellenistic kingdoms did not need private citizen or foreign *euergetes*, but some of the smaller, independent city-states and islands did need outside help to carry out certain lavish building projects. In order to balance their finances, many Hellenistic cities often appealed for generosity from both citizens and foreigners.¹⁵⁰ Based on Greek conception of kingship, honor required kings to assume this role. Therefore, when the

¹⁴⁸ *Select Papyri: In Five Volumes, Volume II: Non-Literary Papyri and Public Documents*, trans. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 10, footnote *a*.

¹⁴⁹ Papyrus entitled, "The Oil Monopoly of Ptolemy Philadelphos," in *Ibid*, 13.

¹⁵⁰ Chamoux, 191.

kings adopted this pose of *euergetes*, the cities called their bluff and manipulated them into providing them with all sorts of amenities.¹⁵¹ Thus, Hellenistic kings regularly took on the role of *euergetai* in cities outside of their political control. The Seleucids are known to have helped the Island of Rhodes with economic aid after an earthquake devastated their island.¹⁵² The Ptolemies and the Seleucids built tremendous theaters in foreign lands for the production of Greek plays.¹⁵³

Athens was considered the dominant cultural capital in the earlier Classical Age, and it still remained an important city in the minds of many Greeks.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, it is no surprise that it was showered with benefaction and experienced much beautification in the Hellenistic Age. It was the place where many important scholars and statesmen carried out their illustrious careers, such as, Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Sophocles, Pericles, and Demosthenes. Aristotle's Lyceum Library remained active and much scholarship continued to take place in the city. In the Hellenistic Age it remained the most important city for the study of rhetoric and philosophy.¹⁵⁵ However, the city was not what it once was. It had been somewhat degraded into a backwater as Mainland Greece was outshone by the Hellenistic kingdoms. Although Athens did remain one of the preeminent cities in Mainland Greece, it suffered through a period of decline along with its fellow Greek cities. Therefore, many Hellenistic rulers felt the need to project an image of generosity and wealth by beautifying Athens. There are many examples of Hellenistic rulers adding to the already cluttered monumental atmosphere of this

¹⁵¹ Billows, 213.

¹⁵² Sherman-White and Kuhrt, 132.

¹⁵³ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 95-6.

¹⁵⁴ Chamoux, 192-193.

¹⁵⁵ Samuel N. C. Lieu, "Scholars and Students in the Roman East," in *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World*, ed. Roy MacLeod (New York, NY: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), 127-128.

illustrious city. Two Pergamene Attalid rulers, Eumenes II and Attalus II built huge stoas in the *agora* of Athens.¹⁵⁶ In 174, Antiochos IV Epiphanes continued work on a large temple to Olympian Zeus. The work had begun under Pisistratus in the sixth century and remained incomplete for more than three hundred years. It still was not finished until the reign of Emperor Hadrian in the second century AD.¹⁵⁷ Building monuments in the same city, such as Athens, was a way for Hellenistic rulers to compete directly in close proximity. They also did this to endear themselves to foreign populaces. This would extend their reputation for generosity and wealth beyond their borders.

There is much evidence that Hellenistic kings had high opinions of themselves. The naming of dozens of cities after themselves and members of their family, such as, Antioch, Ptolemais, and Seleucia, is one clear example. Claims of divinity and massive displays of military prowess are also examples of royal self-importance, but the most obvious and significant of these is the building of incredibly elaborate monuments to stress their greatness. Though monument building, kings were able to accomplish a number of tasks. They were benefiting the citizens of their city by creating urban amenities, but they were also promoting themselves and carrying out competitions with other kings. There were, however, other reasons to play the role of *euergetes*. Oftentimes there were handsome rewards for *euergetai*. There were honors, privileges, and tremendous respect shown to *euergetai* and their family members. In some cases, the role of *euergetes* was inherited from one generation to another and the honors and privileges would be extended to heirs. It was common that a family would have a long tradition

¹⁵⁶ The Stoa of Attalus was rebuilt in the modern era and still stands as a museum in the *agora* today. (Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 526.)

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 526.

benefaction in a particular city.¹⁵⁸ There were even more extreme cases. In some cities cults were set up in order to honor *euergetai*. This idea was not totally without precedence, it emerged in the overall climate of the apotheosis of royal personages.¹⁵⁹

Gigantism

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how the construction projects had reached gigantic proportions and how these construction projects reflect the size of these kings' opinions of themselves. Now we turn to discuss this idea of gigantism specifically. What is this notion of gigantism and how does it apply to Hellenistic kings? Monuments in the Hellenistic Age were built on a scale that was unimaginable to the earlier Classical Greeks. In the Hellenistic World, everything that the kings did was inflated, in all aspects of society, but most specifically in the proportions of buildings. Gigantism had a competitive undertone; it was waged like a war. The kings used shock and awe tactics in order to surpass their opponents. Peter Green discusses the idea of gigantism throughout his work, *Alexander to Actium*, most specifically in the chapter entitled "The New Urban Culture: Alexandria, Antioch, Pergamon."¹⁶⁰ This is significant because he places his discussion of gigantism directly in the context of Hellenistic Urbanism. Gigantism played a tremendous role in the reshaping of the Hellenistic urban landscape. The traditional Greek *polis* had experienced some level of grandiose building projects, but the Hellenistic Age saw a tremendous explosion in these undertakings.

Green also discusses gigantism in Hellenistic tomb building. He states that tombs became increasingly ornate and gargantuan. These projects almost superseded the private

¹⁵⁸ Chamoux, 192.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹⁶⁰ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, see chapter entitled, "The New Urban Culture: Alexandria, Antioch, and Pergamon," 155-170.

realm and encroached into the public sector. Tombs were no longer private tributes to a dead person, their extravagant nature was dangerously close to proclamations of divinity; they almost replaced temples in the function of worship.¹⁶¹ As can be seen from the pyramids of Old Kingdom Egypt, this practice goes back thousands of years, but the Hellenistic Age saw a more pronounced growth of the practice. A great example of this is the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, which was regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Alexandria itself also had a building of similar grandiosity. This building: the Sema. In the context of how important this building was for the Ptolemies' claim on Egyptian kingship, I will discuss this building in the next chapter.

Some of the most recognizable monuments built in antiquity can be counted among the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. This is significant in the context of the Hellenistic Age, because this list was compiled in this period and many of the monuments themselves were built then. Green states that the Seven Wonders, “are essentially a Hellenistic tribute to gigantism.”¹⁶² The authorship of the list of the Seven Wonders of the World is credited to Philo of Byzantium. Philo was better known as a military engineer, who specialized in engines of war and siege weapons.¹⁶³ Some of the older monuments appearing on the list, such as the Great Pyramid at Giza and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, were built hundreds of years before the Hellenistic Age. The Statue of Zeus at Olympia had been built by the famous Greek sculptor Phidias, one hundred years or so earlier during the Classical Age. The fact that they were included in the list of monuments built mostly in the Hellenistic world indicates that the compiler

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 95.

¹⁶² *Ibid*, 156.

¹⁶³ Chamoux, 302. Philo lived in the third century BC. There is some doubt whether he actually wrote the treatise, as there are many similar lists created in this time period. (L. Sprague De Camp, *The Ancient Engineers* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Books, 1963), 135.)

was looking at contemporary buildings and hearkening back to long acknowledged and admired monuments. There was an effort to place some of the more recent developments on the same level as older, more famous feats of engineering.¹⁶⁴ This is much in the same way that Hellenistic kings wanted to elevate themselves on the same level as the native rulers of kingdoms, such as the Ptolemies as pharaohs and the Seleucids as the kings of Babylon.

The other four Seven Wonders of the World were the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (discussed above as a prime example of gigantism in tomb building), the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Colossus of Rhodes, and the Pharos Lighthouse in Alexandria. I will discuss the final two in detail because they both illustrate the idea of gigantism in the Hellenistic Age perfectly. They also reflect the ingenuity and innovative spirit of this period. The Colossus of Rhodes was literally a colossal bronze statue. This monument was built in honor of the god Helios by the people of Rhodes. They believed that through Helios' aid they successfully endured a siege of the main city of Rhodes by the general Demetrios Poliorketes in 305-4. His father, Antigonos Monophthalmos, one of the original generals of Alexander, had sent him there to punish the independent, republican Rhodians for not supporting them in their war against Ptolemy I. Demetrios' title, "Poliorketes," meaning "besieger of cities" was mockingly added, because he was not able to capture the city and had to concede to them that they would not have to help him with the war effort.¹⁶⁵ The people of Rhodes took the siege equipment left behind by the failed belligerents and with it built a tremendous statute of the god Helios cast in bronze. The engineer of the project was Chares and the statue stood at 70 cubits, which is

¹⁶⁴ *Seven Wonders of the Ancient World* (New York, NY: A&E Home Video, 1997).

¹⁶⁵ Errington, 49.

between 90-120 feet, depending on which conversion is accepted.¹⁶⁶ This size is comparable to the modern day Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. It is said to have cost 300 talents,¹⁶⁷ a considerable sum of money. It also took twelve years to complete.¹⁶⁸

Why would people go to the effort and incredible expense to build such a, practically speaking, useless monument? It was built with the express purpose of glorifying the city and the god that they honored. They wanted to celebrate the fact that they had repelled a dangerous invasion from a man who was trying to exert his hegemony over a city that they felt was not his for the taking. Unfortunately, in spite of its massive bulk, it succumbed to the forces of nature only seventy or so years later. In 227, the Colossus was toppled by an earthquake. Even its derelict state, it remained a tourist attraction for hundreds of years.¹⁶⁹

One of the symbols of the city of Alexandria was the Pharos Lighthouse. It was commissioned by Ptolemy I and carried out by the architect, Sostratos of Knidos.¹⁷⁰ It was completed during the reign of Ptolemy II. The Lighthouse would have been the first sight a traveler would have witnessed when they reached the harbor. Strabo described the entrance into the harbor and the initial sight of Pharos Island: “The extremity of the isle is a rock, which is washed all round by the sea and has upon it a tower that is admirably constructed of white marble with many stories and bears the same name of the island.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ De Camp, 135.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 135.

¹⁶⁸ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 33.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 33.

¹⁷⁰ De Camp, 125.

¹⁷¹ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, in *The Geography of Strabo: In Eight Volumes, Volume VIII*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1932), 25.

Reliable sources say that it was over 100 meters high, which was made even more impressive by the fact that it was built on a low harbor.¹⁷²

There are legends pertaining to the Lighthouse declaring that stood 306 fathoms high, that it could be seen from 300 miles away, and that the light that it cast could make ships burst into flames.¹⁷³ The reliability of these tales is obviously dubious. The exact height of the Pharos Lighthouse or how far it could have been seen from the sea is not significant. The true significance lies in the awe that the legend of the Lighthouse inspired. This is how the greatness of the Ptolemaic Dynasty was propagated. The Ptolemies wanted people to believe the stories that were being told about the Pharos Lighthouse. They wanted people to be astonished at their power and capacity for incredible building projects, it was one of the ways that that they established Alexandria as the preeminent city in the Hellenistic world.

Gigantism was not just a phenomenon of building. It can be seen in other aspects of culture as well. Green discusses the excesses that occurred in the everyday life of the Hellenistic rulers. Their every whim was carried out. Green describes a Dionysiac procession in detail from an account by Callixeinos of Rhodes during Ptolemy II's reign. In the procession there were gold statues, a Delphic tripod eighteen feet high, a gold mixing bowl that held 150 gallons, gold-crowned Dionysian revelers, camels, ostriches, peacocks, a giraffe, and even a rhinoceros, among other things.¹⁷⁴ Athanaeus discusses the coronation of that same king in the year 285. It is said to have cost 2239 talents and

¹⁷² Chamoux, 280.

¹⁷³ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, from footnote 1, 24.

¹⁷⁴ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 160.

50 minae, a sum roughly equivalent to 35 million dollars!¹⁷⁵ Hellenistic kings were eager to go to great lengths to enjoy extravagant luxuries. Philadelphos' private zoo was said to have contained a polar bear.¹⁷⁶ No doubt this would have amazed any visitors and Philadelphos would have gone to great expense to acquire such strange animals for his processions and zoos. Philadelphos was an avid patron of scholarship as well; the extreme nature of this patronage will be discussed below. Philadelphos certainly had a reputation for being extreme in all his actions. Philo, the Jewish Alexandrian scholar writing in the first century BC (not the Greek engineer), talks of his as well as his dynasty's grandiosity and legacy of gigantism:

In all the qualities which make a good ruler, he excelled not only his contemporaries, but all who have arisen in the past; and even till to-day, after so many generations, his praises are sung for the many evidences and monuments of his greatness of mind which he left behind him in different cities and countries, so that, even now, acts of more than ordinary munificence or buildings on a specially grand scale are proverbially called Philadelphian after him. To put it shortly, as the house of the Ptolemies was highly distinguished, compared to the other dynasties, so was Philadelphos among the Ptolemies.¹⁷⁷

This passage also indicates the level of appreciation and reverence that people had for their kings who provided their cities with such architectural and cultural wonders.

Another aspect of culture that the idea of gigantism can be extended to is in the military realm. A great example is the use of elephants in the army. The introduction of these prodigious and exotic animals was one way for Hellenistic kings to illustrate their military might as well as their control over nature. Hellenistic kings had the wealth,

¹⁷⁵ Athaneaus, "The Great Spectacle and Procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, 285 BCE," trans. Williams Streams Davis. Ancient History Sourcebook, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/285ptolemyII.htm> (accessed September 30, 2009).

¹⁷⁶ De Camp, 128-9.

¹⁷⁷ Philo of Alexandria, *De Vita Mosis, Volume II*, in *Philo: In Ten Volumes, Volume VI*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 463.

power, and resources to subdue the largest land animals in the known world and used them to terrify their opponents. It also reflects the competition among them. Not to have the new innovation of elephants in the army would simply be unacceptable. For one without elephants, it would have been shameful to face an opponent with such superior military might. The precedent for having elephants in the army was set during Alexander's campaigns. His battle with Porus on the Hydaspes River stressed the importance of elephants and prestige required elephants to be a feature in any up-to-date army.¹⁷⁸

Some of the other technological military innovations were staggering. There were engines designed to launch missiles incredible distances. These siege machines were built by engineers such as Philo and the renowned Archimedes. The kings supported them in their efforts. These engineers enjoyed the patronage of the Hellenistic royalty in their pursuit of creating weapons of massive destruction. Ptolemy IV commissioned a warship that had forty banks of oars and was 420 feet long. He possibly did not even intend to use this leviathan for combat;¹⁷⁹ it was to showcase his ability to build on a tremendous level. This reflects the desire for these kings to exhibit their incredible capacity to generate manpower and resources. These Hellenistic kings wanted to express the notion that they had the capacity to do anything that they could imagine.

Gigantism served another purpose as well. Oftentimes, these representations of wealth would reflect trends in Greek culture, such as lavish stage performances of Greek plays, or elaborate rituals venerating Greek deities, such as the Dionysian procession described above. These actions were carried out in an effort to impress upon the native

¹⁷⁸ Walbank, 200.

¹⁷⁹ See Shipley, 334-341.

peoples the notion of Greek superiority in culture. They wanted to show mastery over the immigrant Greeks in their kingdoms as well, but also to possibly make these Greeks feel at home. This is another way that gigantism fit into the framework of Hellenism.

Although the Hellenistic kings were influenced by the cultures of the lands that they conquered, great emphasis was placed upon the primacy of Greek culture.¹⁸⁰

The concept of the *euergetes* sometimes went hand-in-hand with the idea of gigantism. Many of these massive monuments built in the Hellenistic Age had practical uses¹⁸¹ and certainly benefited the entire populace of the cities, and not just in the capacity of prestige. Gigantism was mostly carried out by Hellenistic kings to extol oneself and kingdom, but the growing size of cities in the Hellenistic world made it necessary to build on a larger scale. Some of these mammoth structures, such as large amphitheaters, might seem overly ambitious and are obvious symbols of wealth and power, but they also were created in order to accommodate large populations.

Alexandria's staggering Lighthouse is a great example of the synthesis of the ideas of gigantism and *euergetes*. The Pharos Lighthouse served a dual purpose. The Lighthouse was enormous in its proportions, so it showed the Ptolemies' wealth, but it was also useful to the mariners coming into the harbor and the structure stood for 1500 years. For these two reasons, Alexandria became a very important center of commerce and one of the main port cities in the Hellenistic world. However, Alexandria was able to assume this role in another ways as well, through scholarship.

Although some of the more obvious displays of wealth and power of the Hellenistic kings were the impressive monuments and temples that they built, there is

¹⁸⁰ Moses Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), 2-3.

¹⁸¹ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 158.

another enduring legacy that they left behind. These rulers were avid patrons of various forms of art and scholarship. This patronage manifested itself both in the lavish support of learned men, as well as the building of tremendous scholastic institutions that housed and displayed these men's accomplishments. Royal patronage of scholarship in the Hellenistic period must be seen through the context of gigantism as well. Never before had competition for scholars taken on such a serious or even violent tinge as it did in the Hellenistic Age.

Hellenistic Scholastic Patronage

One of the chief ways in which this cultural competition played out was through the patronage of scholars in the capital cities. This patronage of scholars was just one aspect of the Hellenistic competition, but it certainly played a very important role in the development of these cities as beacons of learning and thus, contributing to their aura of cultural supremacy. They wanted to find other ways to outshine their opponents and bring prestige to their cities. The Hellenistic kings also needed the intellectual infrastructure to perform such staggering feats in engineering that came to characterize their cities. This intellectual infrastructure was comprised of both the learned men who had the expertise to plan and implement massive building projects, as well as the learning institutions in which these men lived and worked. For these reasons, Hellenistic dynasts generously patronized the arts.

Based on the reputations of such institutions of the Great Library of Alexandria and the Pergamon Library, it is quite clear that significant amounts of wealth and effort were contributed to academic pursuits in this period. These dynasties wanted to lure famous poets, scientists, mathematicians, historians, and other men of letters to their

cities. They did this through funding their research and discoveries. Not only did the Hellenistic dynasties provide for the scholars monetarily, but they also provided the books for them to study.¹⁸² Acquiring and maintaining scrolls in antiquity was an expensive enterprise.¹⁸³ It is in this context, that libraries and museums were founded and supported by the sovereigns of these kingdoms. It would have required enormous supplies of wealth to accommodate the kinds of libraries that were being assembled in the Hellenistic Age. This reflected their level of dedication to learning, but it was also another way to display the wealth of a dynasty. These learning institutions were the most direct manifestations of the patronage of academic aspirations. These institutions were not just to prove their cultural supremacy to their Hellenized rival kingdoms, but they also were used as a means of stressing the primacy of Greek culture within their own kingdoms.¹⁸⁴ Thus, these libraries and museums were paradigms of Hellenism.

The dynasty that is most identified with these developments was the Ptolemaic dynasty in Alexandria. They were the most generous and jealous of patrons. The Ptolemies sometimes even indulged in some of these intellectual pursuits themselves. Ptolemy I Soter wrote a history of the campaigns of Alexander. This was one of the standard histories used by subsequent historians for years to come, since it was a first hand account of the events.¹⁸⁵ Ptolemy I was responsible for the building of the Pharos Lighthouse, the Great Library, and Mouseion. Ptolemy II Philadelphos was born to

¹⁸² Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt," 40.

¹⁸³ The literacy rate in ancient times was low, so able scribes were not in abundance. Therefore, the cost of producing books was relatively high. A cheap book purchased in Athens during the Classical Period was about one drachma. A drachma was about one day's wage for an Athenian working man. (Casson, 27.) Hellenistic libraries were sometimes composed of thousands of books, so the cost of acquiring that number would have been staggering, not to mention the cost of maintaining and organizing these extensive collections.

¹⁸⁴ Canfora, 25.

¹⁸⁵ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 49-6.

Soter's mistress, Berenice, in 308 on the island of Cos, which was a Ptolemaic possession at the time. Philadelphos ruled the Ptolemaic Dynasty at a time when it was at its height of glory, until the year 246. He was took very seriously the arts and literature of Greek culture. He continued to sponsor the Library and Mouseion, as his father had done and it flowered into the greatest institution of Hellenistic scholarship during his reign.

Philadelphos is the king most credited for its development. On a personal level, Philadelphos was interested in biology and even had zoological gardens to study animals and plant life.¹⁸⁶

Ptolemy III invoked the royal title of "Euergetes" as a result of his continued patronage of the Library as well as other massive building projects. Ptolemy IV Philopater was also a powerful and generous ruler, but his death in 205 marked beginning of decline of the Golden Age of the Ptolemaic Dynasty. The loss of most of their overseas empire is the greatest indication of this development, although they did keep Cyprus and Cyrene.¹⁸⁷ The subsequent Ptolemies continued to support the learning institutions of Alexandria with almost imperialistic fervor. The dynasty's power and wealth ebbed over time and it became increasingly difficult for them to support the Library and Mouseion. Certainly the reigns of the first four Ptolemies were the most illustrious, but their successors continued their efforts to patronize the arts. However, there is one notable exception. Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II expelled all the scholars from the Mouseion when he was in a conflict with the inhabitants of Alexandria.¹⁸⁸ Another disaster that faced the Library in the later stages of Ptolemaic power was around the year 50. Julius Caesar was besieged in the palace of the city, under the protection of Cleopatra

¹⁸⁶ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 158.

¹⁸⁷ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Egypt*, 60-61.

¹⁸⁸ Shipley, 366.

VII. She was quarrelling with her brother, Ptolemy XII, over the throne. A fire broke out and much of the city was burned. Many of the buildings close to the harbor were destroyed, and these buildings contained roughly 40,000 scrolls.¹⁸⁹ There is no evidence that the Library itself was damaged; it was warehouses containing scrolls that burned.¹⁹⁰ However, the loss of so many books, many of which were most likely destined to be contained in the Library, would no doubt have been a blow to the city's intellectual capital. This was not the end of the Library, its history would last for many more centuries, however the Roman take-over of Egypt a few years later in 31 BC spelled the end of Ptolemaic patronage and this caused the Library to slip into decline. Hence, the Ptolemies worked hard to foster an image of intellectual supremacy for their city of Alexandria. This is how Alexandria was established as the chief center of learning in the Hellenistic world; through their support, the legendary Great Library and Mouseion were built.

The idea of patronage of famous scholars and important literary figures was not an unfamiliar concept in the Greek world. For centuries, different kings supported playwrights and poets in order for them to be at home in their cities. They did this primarily for their own and their guests' entertainment. In the Dark Age of Greek history, traveling bards made a living by traveling from *polis* to *polis* telling the stories that would one day be recorded in the works of Homer. In Book 8 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus was welcomed into the court of King Alcinous. At his welcoming banquet, as part of the entertainment Demodocus, the blind poet, was present. He was well cared for by the king: "He also set a fair table with a basket of victuals by his side, and a cup of wine for

¹⁸⁹ Canfora, 69.

¹⁹⁰ Theodore Vrettos, *Alexandria: City of the Western Mind* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2001), 94.

which he might drink whenever he was disposed.”¹⁹¹ This work was written early in recorded Greek history and it recalls events hundreds of years prior to that period. This gives us an indication of the ancient tradition of supporting literary figures. Tyrants in the Archaic Period are known to have been patrons of Greek poets and this practice survived wherever tyranny and monarchy lasted up until the Roman period. Pisistratus, the tyrant of Athens, was said to have been the first to make scrolls available to the public in the Archaic Period.¹⁹² Polycrates of Samos, another tyrant from this period, was known to have supported literary pursuits as well a library.¹⁹³ The city of Classical Athens, although a democracy, was renowned for its philosophers and tragedian playwrights in the Classical and on into the Hellenistic Age.¹⁹⁴ In the fifth and fourth centuries, Macedon was a popular destination for scholars seeking employment. Aristotle himself was hired by Philip II to be Alexander’s personal tutor.¹⁹⁵ As with other aspects of society, the Hellenistic kings took this idea to a new level. Hellenistic monarchies had a greater capacity for spending, they had more funds at their disposal than Classical *poleis* had had and they used these funds liberally to maintain their cultural supremacy.¹⁹⁶ The amount of money that royal families could set aside for academic research and development dwarfed the resources of the Classical *polis*, even the city of Athens in its heyday. Money is what chiefly separated establishments like the Lyceum in Athens from the Great Library in Alexandria.¹⁹⁷ This money was made possible by royal patronage. In

¹⁹¹ Homer, *The Odyssey: Book VIII*, in *The Iliad and the Odyssey*, trans. Samuel Butler (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1999), 498.

¹⁹² Canfora, 123.

¹⁹³ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 305.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 480.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 305.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 306.

¹⁹⁷ Shipley, 329.

the Classical era few, if any, private citizens would have been capable of bankrolling an institution on the level of the Great Library of Alexandria.

With the breakdown of the stability of the city-state structure in mainland Greece, many scholars sought far off destinations to secure a comfortable position in order to carry out their intellectual pursuits.¹⁹⁸ These scholars were not permanently bound to one city or another and there was fierce competition between the cities to lure and hold on to well known scholars in their royal courts. Scholars who were lured to the lavish capitals of Hellenistic kingdoms were not just funded in their literary pursuits, they were given a very favorable position in society. The rulers had to keep them well paid and content. When Ptolemy Soter was first establishing his Mouseion, he wanted to make sure that the scholars would be enticed to reside in his new city.

The resident community of scientists and thinkers in Alexandria led enviable lives. They were showered with free meals, high salaries, pleasant surroundings, good lodgings and servants.¹⁹⁹ These scholars were also exempt from paying any taxes.²⁰⁰ The noted physician in Alexandria, Herophilus, was famous for his vivisections of prisoners in order to study anatomy. He would not have been able to carry out this study without the compliance of the Ptolemaic dynasty; he needed someone to legally provide him with subjects for his experiments.²⁰¹ These scholars also held high status in the courts of the royal families. One story comes down to us from the scraps remaining of a biography of Queen Arsinoe III written by the noted scholar Eratosthenes. During a royal banquet, which Eratosthenes attended, the queen off-handedly asked him a question about the

¹⁹⁸ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 85.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁰⁰ Canfora, 37.

²⁰¹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 348.

entertainment. This might seem like a mundane detail taken out of context from an obscure document, but it reflects the level of freedom and high status that these scholars had in royal courts.²⁰² The scholars often were criticized for such decadent perks. The contemporary writer, Timon of Phlius, attacked the Alexandrian intellectuals: “In the populous land of Egypt there is a crowd of bookish scribblers who get fed as they argue away interminably in the chicken coop of the muses.”²⁰³ One can only wonder if there is a tone of jealousy in Timon’s writing.

This idea of royal patronage and the resulting work that came of it has drawn criticism, not just from Timon of Phlius, but from modern scholarship as well. Shipley’s *The Greek World After Alexander* has noted that these scholars were not free members of a political class, as they would have been in a Classical *polis* such as Athens.²⁰⁴ The rise of interest in natural philosophy in the Classical and Archaic Ages in Greece was a result of the argumentative and debate-prone culture of the *polis*. Although the *polis* remained a large part of the individual Greek identity, it had lost its political power with the rise of dynastic monarchies. In places such as Alexandria, whose political assembly had, in practice, little power compared to that of the king, therefore, free exchange of ideas could have been discouraged. This hurts the scholars’ credibility based on the fact that they were subject to the whim of monarchs. They were possibly not able to express themselves as freely as they would have been in a democratic society; thus, this could have tainted their research and observations. Nonetheless, Alexandrian and wider Hellenistic scholarship achieved incredible accomplishments.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 310.

²⁰³ Erskine, “Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 38.

²⁰⁴ Shipley, 366.

Alexandria was certainly the center of attention and the success of the Alexandrian Library incensed other royal families. They went to great expense to bolster their intelligentsia and learning institutions; this one-upmanship is how scholastic competition precipitated. There was an intellectual arms race that manifested itself in the wooing of scholars to royal courts. The Attalid dynasty of Pergamon was the chief rival of the Ptolemies. This dynasty was not one of the first kingdoms to emerge in the Hellenistic Period. Lysimachus was one of the *Diadochoi* and at one point he held the Hellespont and parts of western Anatolia. There was a large treasure stored in the city of Pergamon, some 9000 talents, so the city was an important stronghold and it became his base of operations. He entrusted the city to a Paphlagonian by the name of Philetaerus. Philetaerus joined the side of Seleucos in 281 and was allowed to act independently shortly thereafter, because Seleucos was murdered. He then built fortification walls around the city.²⁰⁵ Philetaerus had enough troops and wealth to sustain himself and his small kingdom, but he did not claim the royal title. In spite of this, the Attalid Dynasty is recognized as starting with him, because there was an unbroken line of succession until the first official king. His nephew, Eumenes, took over for him when he died in 263. Eumenes was even powerful enough to defeat Antiochos I of the Seleucid Dynasty in combat near Sardis.²⁰⁶ Eumenes was also succeeded by his nephew in 241, Attalus I, who was the first to take the royal title and establish his kingdom with Pergamon as the capital.

The Attalids were, like the Ptolemies, avid patrons of the arts and great beautifiers of their city, Pergamon. Pergamon was famous for its *gymnasium*, which was regarded as

²⁰⁵ W. Radt "The Urban Development of Pergamon," in *Urbanism in Western Asia Minor*, ed. David Parrish (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2001), 44-45.

²⁰⁶ Chamoux, 77.

the largest and most complete in the entire Greek world.²⁰⁷ Given the wider uses of *gymnasia* in the ancient world, building a tremendous *gymnasium* certainly was a profound gesture proving one's commitment to the scholastic arts; its sheer size and importance is a testament to this.²⁰⁸ They also built a library on the model of the Alexandrian Library in order to compete with the Ptolemies.²⁰⁹ Their library is said to have contained 200,000 scrolls, second to only Alexandria's roughly half a million.²¹⁰ Eumenes II, the son of Attalus I, was the most avid patron of the Library in the second century. "When Eumenes, the son Attalus, came to the throne, he embarked on a veritable hunt for books, using methods like those the Ptolemies had employed for the last hundred years."²¹¹ The building programs of Eumenes II expanded the city to 4.5 times its original size. He employed a strict grid pattern in the city and created urban institutions that were prominent in other Hellenistic cities, such as a new *agora*, as well as the above stated *gymnasium* and library.²¹² Another great indication of the Attalids patronage of literary pursuits is the presence of statues of famous authors that have been found in the Library precincts.²¹³ The Attalids were great patrons of sculptors. One of the great works of art of the Hellenistic Age, the Gigantomachy on the Altar of Zeus was completed under the rule of Eumenes II in the middle second century.²¹⁴ Based on the number of the volumes of books, the celebrity of its scholars, and renowned reputation, the Alexandrian Library was the dominant learning institution in the Hellenistic world, but the Pergamene Library did experience some moments of greatness at the expense of the Alexandrian Library.

²⁰⁷ Ester V. Hansen, 390.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 390.

²⁰⁹ Shipley, 239.

²¹⁰ Ester V. Hansen, 274, and Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 88.

²¹¹ Canfora, 45.

²¹² Radt, 48.

²¹³ Ester V. Hansen, 377.

²¹⁴ Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 351.

When Ptolemy VIII persecuted the scholars in 146, they had to flee from the city. Many of them went to Pergamon to seek refuge and continue their scholastic work under Attalid patronage.²¹⁵ This would have certainly given the Pergamene Library a boost in prestige. In the year 133, the last Attalid monarch, Attalus III, surrendered to the outside pressure of the growing power of the Roman Republic and bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans.²¹⁶ Eventually, under Roman rule, the Pergamene Library's greatness was superseded by the Great Library of Alexandria, when Mark Antony reportedly donated 200,000 scrolls from Pergamon to the Alexandrian Library, possibly as compensation for the books that had been lost in the fire during Julius Caesar's Alexandrian War. The city of Pergamon itself flourished during the Roman Period and was an important city, but was never again a capital city. Although the Ptolemaic and Attalid dynasties are the most well known patrons, other dynasties were patrons of the arts as well. The Macedonian court at Pella supported literary scholars, one of whom was the above mentioned Timon of Phlius.²¹⁷ Court libraries were known to have been constructed in the Macedonian kingdom, as well as in the city of Antioch, the capital of the Seleucid Dynasty.²¹⁸

One of the most important reasons why the Hellenistic kings carried out these efforts was to gain prestige for their cities, but certainly there were other benefits associated with the fostering of scientific and literary development. The discoveries made by scholars improved other aspects of society within these kingdoms. Philetaerus, of the early Attalid Dynasty, took an interest in stockbreeding, possibly to improve the revenue

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 422.

²¹⁶ Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Greece* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997.) 51.

²¹⁷ Shipley, 239-40.

²¹⁸ Chamoux, 362.

of his small and nascent polity.²¹⁹ The Seleucids and the Ptolemies both attempted to acclimatize spice and perfume bearing plants to the environments of their kingdoms.²²⁰ These efforts would have aided in commercial interests. The literary contributions of the Great Library of Alexandria, spanning all the way into the Christian era, can not possibly be discounted.²²¹

Patronage in the Hellenistic Age was not a clandestine operation. The kings wanted their subjects to know of their generosity, good will, and cultured attitude towards the arts. These developments were openly advertised. In a way it was in an effort to lure more intellectuals to their cities, but these sovereigns wanted all of the credit that they felt that they deserved. On some level, they believed that they were responsible for all of the research and discoveries that were taking place under their aid. This was another way in which they invoked the title of *euergetes*.

In this light the Great Library and Mouseion of Alexandria became especially important expressions of gigantism. These institutions were the greatest of their kind in the entire world. The Ptolemies built the Great Library and Mouseion for the same ostentatious reasons that they built the Pharos Lighthouse. The Ptolemaic dynasty intended to have learning institutions that would dwarf those of other Hellenistic kings in foreign lands, and they went to extreme measures to establish themselves as the greatest supporters of intellectual pursuits. Although the other kings certainly could not compete with the Great Library, they continued to try and this merely fueled the proverbial fire and further proved the Alexandrian institutions' primacy.

²¹⁹ Shipley, 345-346.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 346.

²²¹ See Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, chapter entitled "Aspects of Alexandrian Literature," 495-719.

Alexandria and Pergamon: The Rivalry Reaches Gigantic Proportions

The Hellenistic Age was a time of great development and opulence in the Eastern Mediterranean. This development was fueled by the royal families of the Hellenistic kingdoms supporting various literary pursuits as well as grand city building projects. These efforts were indeed competitive, but the competition between the different Hellenistic states can be seen directly in the realm of scholarship. This intense competition can be viewed as an aspect of gigantism. Some of their actions were downright vindictive, petty, and violent. In spite of the malicious nature of certain aspects of this competition, these rulers were trying to boost the reputation of their cities and kingdoms, thus assuming the role of *euergetes*. Alexandria and the Ptolemies were the most adamant in their fervor for hegemony in the scholastic realm and their efforts were rewarded with everlasting fame. However, they had fiercely competitive rivals that forced them to remain vigilant in their bibliomaniacal and scholar poaching pursuits. There are many stories that come down to us from antiquity concerning the lengths to which Hellenistic kings went in order to secure their kingdom as the culturally dominant force in the eastern Mediterranean. The most obvious and well-known manifestation of this trend is the rivalry between the cities of Alexandria and Pergamon. The city of Alexandria secured its place as the preeminent city in the Hellenistic world, in part, through gaining the upper-hand in this book hunting competition.

Athens and Rhodes were known as places where many volumes of books could be purchased, however, oftentimes the Ptolemies and Attalids employed more extreme methods.²²² In some cases the acquisition strategies of these two libraries can be described as imperialistic. Strabo talks about the Attalids' lust for books in Book 13 of

²²² Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt," 39.

his writings. Neleus was a man who had inherited the books of Aristotle from Theophrastus. His heirs had to bury the book collection underground “when they heard how zealously the Attalic kings, to whom the city was subject were searching for books to build up the library in Pergamon.”²²³ Galen discusses the imperialistic nature of the Ptolemies acquisition of books for their library. During the reign of Ptolemy III Euergetes, all ships that entered the harbor of Alexandria were boarded and all written material was seized, copied, and the copies of the documents were returned to the ships while the originals went to the Library.²²⁴ Galen also talks about how the Athenians lent one of the Ptolemies the official copies of the plays of Euripides, Aeschylus, and Sophocles for a 15 talent deposit. This was a fortune. The Ptolemies were happy to forgo the deposit and keep the originals. They did, however, send back copies of the plays to the Athenians with the assurance that they were written on the best papyrus available.²²⁵

The Hellenistic dynasties were also victims to fraudulent book dealers as well. The bidding wars between the different royal houses of the Hellenistic world created a market for inflated prices as well as forgeries. For this reason, in Alexandria the books were not immediately accessioned to the Library, but were first placed in warehouses to be cross-checked later.²²⁶ The most overtly vicious act in the history of the rivalry between Alexandria and Pergamon occurred at the expense of Aristophanes of Byzantium, who was the Chief Librarian in Alexandria at the time. Ptolemy V Epiphanes suspected him of deserting to the court of Eumenes II. Epiphanes locked up Aristophanes

²²³ Strabo, *Geography: Book 13*, in *The Geography of Strabo: In Eight Volumes, Volume VI*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1929), 111.

²²⁴ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 39.

²²⁵ Erskine, “Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 39 .

²²⁶ Barnes, 65.

in prison and he eventually died of a slow and painful illness.²²⁷ The competition between these two cities also fostered some innovation as well. It is said that parchment was invented in Pergamon under Eumenes II, the most avid Attalid scholastic patron. The word “parchment” comes from the name of Pergamon.²²⁸ The idea to use animal skins as writing material arose when the jealous Ptolemies, who had a geographical monopoly on papyrus, banned the export of it.²²⁹ These kings employed spiteful and brutal tactics to acquire the finest learning institutions in the world. They went this extent because these learning institutions were directly tied to the fate of the cultural reputation of their kingdoms. These stories indicate the tremendous lengths Hellenistic kings resorted to in order to protect their cultural interests and their standing among the great kings of the Hellenistic Near East. These stories also illustrate the considerable power that the kings had and their willingness to use in order to exalt themselves and their kingdoms. The city of Alexandria and its learning institutions were paradigms of all of the ideas discussed in this chapter. It is now time to turn and examine this city specifically and how its learning institutions played a role in its position as the paramount city in the Mediterranean world.

²²⁷ Fraser, 461.

²²⁸ Chamoux, 362.

²²⁹ Erskine, “Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 46.

Chapter 4: The City of Alexandria and the Great Library

Alexandria was the most prominent, populous, and significant city in the Hellenistic world. It was founded by Alexander himself and was developed and ruled by the Ptolemaic dynasty in order to preside over their new kingdom of Egypt. This city represents the peak of Hellenistic civilization and was regarded as the cultural capital of the Hellenistic world, even its own time of greatness. Alexandria reflects the pinnacle of many trends of Hellenism, such as Hellenistic urbanism, gigantism, and the role of *euergetes*. There are many specific factors that led to Alexandria's success as a city: its placement in Mediterranean trade, its effective royal family and their ability to maintain control, and its learning institutions. I will discuss all of these factors, but I think that the key factor that led to Alexandria's rise as the quintessential Hellenistic city were its learning institutions, patronized directly by the Ptolemaic dynasty. These were the envy of the entire Hellenistic world. This chapter addresses how Alexandria assumed the role of cultural capital of the Hellenistic world, as well as the agency that its learning institutions had in this development.

The Importance of Alexandria and the City's Layout

The city of Alexandria was, without a doubt, the most important city in the Hellenistic world. It exceeded other urban centers in almost all aspects of culture. There is much evidence to support this. An early document regarding the Library, the *Letter of Aristeas*, described Alexandria as a city "which excels all cities in size and prosperity."²³⁰ On the whole, Alexandria's institutions and monuments were more imposing than any other city's. The first thing that one would see when they came into the harbor of

²³⁰ *Letter of Aristeas 109*, trans. R.H. Charles (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1913) <http://www.ccel.org/c/charles/otpseudepig/aristeas.htm> (accessed September 30, 2009).

Alexandria was the enormous lighthouse; it certainly would have inspired awe. The royal palaces in the city were so gigantic that they occupied a quarter and maybe even as much as a third of the great city.²³¹ Its Mouseion was the greatest center of learning in the Hellenistic world. The famous geographer, Eratosthenes of Cyrene, placed the city at the prime meridian in his measurement of the world. This stresses its cultural importance; Eratosthenes positioned Alexandria at literally the center of the world.²³²

The success of the city of Alexandria can be traced back to its early history and construction. After Alexander the Great's successful siege of Tyre, he arrived in Egypt and was crowned pharaoh. He is today regarded as a great founder of cities, and Egypt is where he founded the city that was destined to become the greatest in the Hellenistic Age. Arrian tells the story of its founding:

When he proceeded round Lake Mareotis and finally came ashore at the spot where Alexandria, the city which bears his name, now stands. He was at once struck by the excellence of the site, and convinced that if a city were built upon it, it would prosper. Such was his enthusiasm that he could not wait to begin the work; he himself designed the general layout of the new town, indicating the position of the market square, the number of temples to be built, and what gods they should serve – the gods of Greece and the Egyptian Isis – and the precise limits of its outer defenses.²³³

He assigned the architect Deinocrates to trace the outlines of the city.²³⁴ Deinocrates was a noted city planner who had impressed Alexander with “his good looks and dignified carriage.”²³⁵ Deinocrates, with the help of Alexander himself, carried out the traditions of

²³¹ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, 33.

²³² In modern times, the city of London holds a similar position; the prime meridian is set at the Royal Greenwich Observatory, in the Greater London area.

²³³ Arrian, 149.

²³⁴ Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 55.

²³⁵ Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1960), 36. Vitruvius discusses the meeting of these two men. Deinocrates was a Macedonian architect, so Alexander was predisposed to patronizing him. However, Deinocrates dressed as Hercules, presented

the Classical Greek city planners.²³⁶ This tradition was the grid pattern, an efficient and popular style in the Archaic and Classical Periods.²³⁷ Thus, Alexandria represents a connection between Classical Greek *polis* building and the magnificence of the Hellenistic urbanism. The builders used tried-and-true building strategies, while setting a high standard for later cities in the Hellenistic world. Alexandria was not a virgin site. According to Strabo, it had been used by the pharaohs as a military outpost to monitor shipments coming in from foreign harbors.²³⁸ Also on the site of Alexandria there was the small fishing village of Rhakotis on the shores of Lake Mareotis. After Alexander founded Alexandria and continued on his conquests, he left the administration of the city of Alexandria to Cleomenes of Naucratis, who was one of his advisors.²³⁹ With the death of Alexander in 323, Ptolemy, son of Lagus, a general of Alexander, was awarded the prosperous and enviable satrapy of Egypt and ruled there continuously until his death in 285.²⁴⁰ Ptolemy I was a very able ruler of and he set Alexandria upon the path to greatness.

Militarily, Alexandria was a very important city for the Ptolemies as well. It stood at a strategic point that had been exploited by the rulers of Egypt for centuries and the Ptolemies certainly understood this. The military success afforded to the Ptolemaic

himself to Alexander, and offered to him the idea of carving an image of a man into the side of Mt. Athos, holding a city. Alexander liked the idea, but it was impractical because of lack of water. Nonetheless, he accompanied the army on their campaign and was set to the task of building Alexandria.

²³⁶ Owens, 68.

²³⁷ See pg. 56.

²³⁸ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 5.

²³⁹ Peter Green, "Alexander's Alexandria," in *Alexandria and Alexandrianism*, (Malibu, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996), 11. Unfortunately, we have very little evidence of the period of Cleomenes' rule, (Fraser, *Ptolemaic Egypt*, 6.) but we do know that he was promptly executed by Ptolemy when he assumed his post as satrap of Egypt. This is because Ptolemy worried that he might conspire against him, as he was recently demoted when Ptolemy took the satrapy of Egypt. There also was a rumor that he was in secret communication with Perdikkas, who was destined to become Ptolemy's rival for control of Egypt. (Peter Green, *Alexandria and Alexandrianism*, 16).

²⁴⁰ Diodorus Siculus, *Book 18*, in *Diodorus of Sicily: In Twelve Volumes, Volume IX*, trans. Russel M. Geer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 15-16.

Dynasty was the result of the geography of Egypt.²⁴¹ It was difficult to invade by sea because of the presence of forts along the Nile Delta maintained by the pharaohs. To the west of Egypt is the Libyan Desert, to the south, there are the Nile cataracts, making naval maneuvers nearly impossible, and the east only provides a narrow strip of land, the Sinai Peninsula. Earlier in the history of Egypt, belligerent armies were met with disaster in their attempts to invade Egypt. Good examples are the two failed invasions of the mysterious Sea People of the late Bronze Age. The Hellenistic Period is no exception; Perdiccas tried to invade Egypt from the east. Diodorus Siculus describes the events that transpired in Perdiccas' perilous crossing of the Nile River near Memphis in 321. He discusses how the river was deeper than it seemed and many men drowned and some were even devoured by the dangerous animals inhabiting the marshes. More than 2000 of his men died in total; it was an utter disaster. He was assassinated by his own disgruntled men and they went over to Ptolemy's side. Ptolemy treated the dead with honor and had their bodies shipped to their relatives for proper burial.²⁴²

As a result of these geographic factors, the Ptolemaic Dynasty was the last Hellenistic dynasty to hold out against Roman rule. This ability to fend off invasion demonstrates the importance of the city of Alexandria and the dynasty that ruled it. The Romans did not capture Alexandria and the Ptolemaic Kingdom through outright military domination. It happened as a result of decades of interference in internal affairs, much aggressive diplomacy, and even potential dynastic ties between the last Ptolemaic ruler and prominent Romans.²⁴³ The other reason why the Ptolemies were able to maintain control in Egypt throughout the Hellenistic period was its seemingly inexhaustible

²⁴¹ Peter Green, *The Hellenistic Age*, 60.

²⁴² Diodorus Siculus, *Book 18*, 111-115.

²⁴³ Julius Caesar and Mark Antony both had children with Cleopatra VII.

wealth. Egypt had been wealthy in gold for its entire history and the annual flood of the Nile provided ample grain supplies, both for its own people and for export. Grain from Egypt fed much of the Roman Empire throughout its history, even before Egypt fell under their control, when they still had to purchase it. Even in the face of profligate spending and dynastic squabbles of the later Ptolemies, the dynasty still enjoyed much wealth. This is evidenced in the massive building projects and the patronage of the Library and Mouseion.²⁴⁴

Once Ptolemy had firmly established himself as the ruler of Egypt, he took the royal title, just as the other kings were doing in other parts of the Hellenistic world.²⁴⁵ In the year 304, he took the title of “Soter,” which means “savior” in Greek.²⁴⁶ This task was made easier for Ptolemy to accomplish because he had captured the body of Alexander while it was on its way to Macedon for burial.²⁴⁷ Ptolemy interred Alexander’s body in a gold coffin, and brought it back to Egypt. The possession of Alexander’s body was a very significant gesture; it lent much legitimacy to the Ptolemaic Dynasty. Alexander’s tomb became the complex known as the Sema, which became the ancestral tomb of the Ptolemaic kings; each successive monarch was placed along with the others. The Sema was a building that not only demonstrates gigantism, but also represented important ways in which Alexandria was able to become such a cultural juggernaut. The presence of Alexander’s body in this ancestral tomb implies that the Ptolemies’ power is derived from that of Alexander. Diodorus Siculus discusses how Ptolemy felt that it was appropriate for Alexander to be buried in a city that he himself had founded: “He

²⁴⁴ Peter Green, *The Hellenistic Age*, 60.

²⁴⁵ Errington, 145-6.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 152.

²⁴⁷ Shipley, 201.

[Ptolemy] decided for the present not to send it to Ammon, but to entomb it in the city that had been founded by Alexander himself, which lacked little of being the most renowned of the cities in the inhabited earth.”²⁴⁸ As a result, the city contained a relic of incredible political significance. It was a jewel in the crown of the city. This is a very similar position to that held by the Library, as will be discussed in a later section. Also, Diodorus recognizes that Alexandria, even within a few decades of its founding, was one of the preeminent cities in the world, based on some of the urban amenities that it already possessed. Strabo also discusses the monument:

The Sema also, as it is called, is part of the royal palaces. This is the enclosure which contained the burial-places of the kings and that of Alexander ...the body of Alexander was carried off by Ptolemy and given sepulture in Alexandria.²⁴⁹

Alexander was regarded as a god and interring his body along side those of one’s own ancestors not only lent legitimacy to the dynasty in the political realm, but it also implied divinity. This was a deliberate effort on their behalf.²⁵⁰ The Ptolemies wanted to be seen as gods, on the same level as Alexander the Great. This tomb was visited by various historical figures, including Julius Caesar and Augustus. After Augustus’ victory over Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony in the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C, he visited the tomb of Alexander. Suetonius recounts the event: “[Augustus] showed his veneration by crowning the head with a golden diadem and strewing flowers on the trunk. When asked ‘Would you now like to visit the Mausoleum of the Ptolemies?’ he replied: ‘I came to see a king, not a row of corpses.’”²⁵¹ This story reflects Augustus’ scale of ambition. He respected Alexander because, like him, Augustus imagined a state that encompassed

²⁴⁸ Diodorus Siculus, *Book 18*, 95.

²⁴⁹ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, 35.

²⁵⁰ Erskine, “Life After Death,” 164.

²⁵¹ Suetonius, 63.

entire kingdoms. Augustus remark reflects that he felt that the Ptolemies were petty kings with a limited vision. More importantly, this shows the deep significance of the body of Alexander. The Ptolemies, having been defeated and conquered by the Romans, no longer controlled of the city of Alexandria and the body of Alexander, and in turn no longer held the legitimacy of the throne of Egypt. To Augustus they were just a row of corpses. Ptolemy I knew how symbolic the body of Alexander was, and went to great trouble to procure and inter it in its ostentatious tomb. Building this great tomb and stocking it with a relic of incredible political significance, such as the body of Alexander the Great himself, reflects a funerary trend in gigantism. This shows that efforts towards gigantism paid off; it placed the Ptolemaic dynasty on firm footing ideologically, as well as religiously.

The Ptolemaic dynasty saw themselves as the successors of Alexander. Ptolemy justified these claims in a number of ways. First, he possessed the body of Alexander. Next, he moved the capital of Egypt from the traditional site of Memphis to the newly founded city of Alexandria, which had been founded by Alexander during his conquests. It was another way for him to hearken back to the greatness of Alexander, while diverting attention from the old capital and creating a new locus of kingship in the ancient kingdom of Egypt. The Ptolemies used these powerful images of kingship, as well as the wealth and resources of the prosperous kingdom of Egypt at their disposal, to make their realm the culturally dominant power within the Hellenistic world. The Ptolemies used the city of Alexandria as the clearest example of their wealth and power and their efforts certainly paid off. In both the Hellenistic and Roman eras, the city was called “*Alexandria by Egypt*”, not “*Alexandria in Egypt.*” This gives us a clue to the function of the city as it

was used by the Ptolemies and the later Romans. Alexandria was seen as separate political entity which exerted control over Egypt. It expressed the notion that Egypt was a battle-won prize, a “spear-won territory,” that was fit for economic exploitation.²⁵²

It is now time to discuss the physical layout of this magnificent city. This will allow us to better understand how it gained such renown. Alexandria has been continuously inhabited since antiquity. This is in contrast to Pergamon, which now lies in ruins. This reflects the favorability of Alexandria’s site; it stood the test of time.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to glean any archaeological evidence of the city from the Hellenistic Age because of this continuous occupation.²⁵³ Therefore, for a description of the layout of the city as it was in the Ptolemaic Dynasty, we must rely on ancient written sources. There are snippets that come down to us from different sources in antiquity. The most ancient account comes from before the city even existed. In Book 4 of the *Odyssey*, Menelaus describes his visit to the island of Pharos, later a part of Alexandria, “Now off Egypt, about as far as a ship can sail in a day with a good stiff breeze behind her, there is an island called Pharos. It has a good harbor from which vessels can get out into the open when they have taken in water.”²⁵⁴ Of course this is inaccurate; Pharos Island is certainly not a day’s sail from the coastline. Strabo was a great defender of Homeric geography and he stated that the Nile River had silted up the harbor in those centuries between Homer and his day.²⁵⁵ This passage also demonstrates Alexandria’s potential as a favorable harbor, even in Homer’s day.

²⁵² Peter Green, “Alexander’s Alexandria,” 3.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵⁴ Homer, *The Odyssey: Book IV*, 454.

²⁵⁵ Mostafa El-Abbadi, “The Island of Pharos in Myth and History,” in *Ancient Alexandria Between Egypt and Greece*, eds. W.V. Harris and Giovanni Ruffini, (Boston, MA: Brill, 2004), 259-260.

Philo of Alexandria's *In Flaccum* has a section that briefly described how the city was divided: "The city has five quarters named after the first letters of the alphabet, two of them are called Jewish because most of the Jews inhabit them, though in the rest also there are not a few Jews scattered about."²⁵⁶ The Beta section was to the north and contained the palace, Mouseion, and Sema, while the Delta section was one of the Jewish quarters of the city.²⁵⁷ This indicates that the city was very diverse and had neighborhoods of ethnic enclaves. This is an important detail that helps us understand the diverse and multi-layered nature of the Hellenistic city. In the novel *Leucippe and Cleitophon* by Achilles Tatius, the narrator describes the dazzling sights of the city. Wherever he turned there were endless rows of columns, and the city itself was illuminated at nightfall on account of it being the feast day of Serapis. "It was as though another sun had arisen, that spread its rays in every direction. There I saw a city whose beauty rivaled that of the heavens."²⁵⁸ This account was written in the third century AD, so it was not directly from the Hellenistic Period, but the city seems to have retained its magnificence throughout the centuries even though Rome was then the undisputed cultural capital of the Mediterranean world at the time when this novel was written.

Strabo discusses the layout of the harbor. He describes the imposing Pharos Lighthouse on the island that it is named for. The harbor was divided into two portions, "being separated from it by an embankment called the Heptastadium. The embankment forms a bridge extending from the mainland to the western portion of the island, and

²⁵⁶ Philo of Alexandria, *In Flaccum*, in *Philo: In Ten Volumes, Volume IX*, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 333.

²⁵⁷ Wendy Brazil, "Alexandria: The Umbilicus of the Ancient World," in *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World*, edited by Roy McLeod (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), 40.

²⁵⁸ Auguste Couat, *Alexandrian Poetry Under the First Three Ptolemies: 324-222*. trans. James Loeb (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), 2.

leaves only two passages into the harbor of Eunostus, which are bridged over.”²⁵⁹ The Heptastadium was a man-made structure that was silted over and still today connects the island of Pharos to the mainland. He also talks about the advantage of the city’s location:

The advantages to the city’s site are various; for, first, the place is washed by two seas, on north by the Aegyptian Sea, as it is called, and on the south by Lake Mareia, also called Mareotis. This is filled by many canals from the Nile, both from above and on the sides, and through these canals the imports are much larger than those from the sea, so that the harbor on the lake was in fact richer than that on the sea; and here the exports from Alexandria also are larger than the imports.²⁶⁰

Later in Book 17, Strabo states that, “both to commerce by sea, on account of the good harbors, and to commerce by land, because the river easily conveys and brings together everything into the place so situated- the greatest emporium in the inhabited world.”²⁶¹

Hecataeus of Abdera, a contemporary of Alexander and Ptolemy, claimed that Egypt was “practically harborless” prior to Alexandria.²⁶² With the addition of this important harbor, the Ptolemies capitalized on their position in the world economy.

Strabo’s description of the harbor and the advantages of the position of the city is significant because the harbor was a major part of what led to the success of Alexandria and the Ptolemaic kingdom in general. This is one of the reasons why he finds it necessary to discuss it.²⁶³ It was well protected and in an ideal location for much exchange, monetary as well as intellectual. The amount of commerce carried out there made it one of the centers of world trade in the Hellenistic periods and it continued as such into the Roman Period. Strabo specifically acknowledges Alexandria as the greatest center of commerce in the world. The harbor was a conduit to the rest of Egypt and it

²⁵⁹ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, 27.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 29-31.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁶² El-Abbadi, 266.

²⁶³ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 132.

allowed direct trade with centers of the east and south, such as India, Ethiopia, and Arabia. Alexandria was the port that connected these far off lands to the Mediterranean world.²⁶⁴ Alexandria drove the economy of the Ptolemaic kingdom in this way. The wealth that this port procured would have certainly attracted many people from different parts of the Hellenistic world to this city, adding to the overall diverse atmosphere, in a racial, religious and even intellectual sense. One piece of evidence for this is that not all of the scholars who resided at the illustrious Mouseion were from the city of Alexandria. The Mouseion was a collection of scholars from many different parts of the Hellenistic world and practiced many different schools of thought. Alexandria's role as a center of trade, commerce, and exchange no doubt contributed to its image as an international, cosmopolitan metropolis. This sophisticated aura certainly would have been attractive to these men.

Strabo goes on to discuss the shape of the city. He portrays the city as being in the shape of a chlamys, a Macedonian cavalry cloak,²⁶⁵ with straight and gridded streets. He then describes the royal palaces. In his account we can see evidence for gigantism and competition among different generations of Ptolemies in the pursuit of luxury:

just as each one of the kings, for love of splendour, was wont to add some adornment to the public monuments, so also he would invest at his own expense with a residence, in addition to those already built, so that now, to quote the words of the poet, "there is building upon building."²⁶⁶

The whole palatial complex, as well as the Sema, was connected by covered walkways. Strabo states that the celebrated Mouseion complex was also present on the palace grounds, which contained the Great Library.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, see section entitled, "Trade with the South and East," 173-184.

²⁶⁵ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, 33.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 33-35.

The Great Library and Mouseion

The idea of a library was not a new concept in the Greek world. Patronage of scholastic pursuits by men of power was common in the Classical Period. In Classical Athens many wealthy, educated men collected books and the book trade was a thriving and lucrative business in this environment.²⁶⁷ The Lyceum, Aristotle's famous library, is a great example of this development in the city of Athens. Many books were produced in Athens and sold to other parts of the Greek world. The Attic dialect, the language of Aristotle and the Academy, became the literary tongue that dominated the Hellenistic world.²⁶⁸ Being the major locus of the book trade and the spread of its dialect are both large parts of how Athens became the cultural dominant city in the Classical Greek world. It was the center of literary culture. An indication of Athens' literary superiority is the number of Classical authors that are identified with Athens. Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, as well as the three tragedians were all inhabitants of Athens. This tradition continued and there were many private book collections in the Hellenistic period, but what the Alexandrian Library became was essentially a state library and it dwarfed any private collection.²⁶⁹ It was a state library in the sense that it built under governmental authority, by the Ptolemaic kings; however, it was not a private collection and many scholars had access to it.

The Great Library and Mouseion were also ways for the Ptolemies to impose their Greek culture on the Egyptians. These would have mostly been the upper-class, literate Egyptians. The peasants would not have been concerned with such scholarly pursuits. All of the Hellenistic kings used their learning institutions in this fashion, but the imposition

²⁶⁷ Casson, 26-27.

²⁶⁸ Chamoux, 239.

²⁶⁹ Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt," 40.

of Greek culture is especially important for the Ptolemies because Egyptian culture had been so strong for thousands of years. The lower class Greek people would not really have known or cared what went on beyond the walls of the Library; however it was an important symbol of Greek supremacy in Alexandria.²⁷⁰ It could have possibly given them a sense of pride. Lower class people in general, many of whom were not Greek, would not have had access to the library, because a great majority of them were not literate. The Library certainly benefited the elite more than it did anyone else; however it was a powerful symbol for the lower classes and non-Greeks to see the power of their kings.

The early origins of the Great Library and Mouseion are shrouded in mystery. We do know that it was originally envisioned by Ptolemy Soter. Under his patronage, the famous philosopher and former tyrant of Athens, Demetrius of Phalerum, came from Athens to serve under and advise the king.²⁷¹ Demetrius had been the ruler of Athens for a period of time, but was exiled by the people and went to live in the court of the Ptolemies. He was the man who first encouraged Ptolemy to build the Library and Mouseion. Ptolemy heeded his advice and assigned him to implement the Library. This is how Alexandria's fame as the intellectual capital of the Hellenistic world began.²⁷²

The Mouseion was originally designed as a shrine to the muses.²⁷³ The muses were the divine inspiration behind all sorts of literary and scholarly pursuits. The royal patrons wanted to show their devotion to these goddesses and their craft by building them a great temple. Therefore, it was in the first place a religious center. Although it was

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 42.

²⁷¹ Diogenes Laertius, 531.

²⁷² Chamoux, 69.

²⁷³ Barnes, 62.

primarily a cult center, scholars who were engaged in many fields of knowledge, including mathematics, astronomy, and literature assembled there to worship the muses. Literary competitions were also an activity that took place at the Mouseion. At some point, early in its development, the Library grew out of the Mouseion. The best source we have for this development is the *Letter of Aristeas*. This document is a great account of the Library in its earliest days:

Demetrius of Phalerum, the president of the king's library, received vast sums of money, for the purpose of collecting together, as far as he possibly could, all the books in the world... On one occasion when I was present he was asked, How many thousand books are there in the library? And he replied 'More than two hundred thousand, O king, and I shall make endeavor in the immediate future to gather the remainder also, so that the total of five hundred thousand may be reached.'²⁷⁴

Demetrius' enthusiastic acquisition of a tremendous number of books indicates gigantism, both in the quantity of books as well in the seemingly unlimited amount of money provided by the king to acquire them. The number of books that he was trying to obtain was on a scale that had never been imagined, and this goal was eventually achieved. This passage also shows that it is likely that the early organizers of the Library wanted to collect the entire corpus of Greek literature.²⁷⁵

Strabo includes a short account of the Mouseion which reads as follows:

The Museum is also a part of the royal palaces; it has a public walk, an Exedra with seats, and a large house, in which is the common mess-hall of the men of learning who share the Museum. This group of men not only hold property in common, but also have a priest in charge of the Museum.²⁷⁶

Although this short passage can tell us much about the Mouseion, it omits one frustrating detail. It does not specifically mention the Library. I think this demonstrates that the

²⁷⁴ *Letter of Aristeas* 9-10.

²⁷⁵ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 329.

²⁷⁶ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, 35.

Library was intrinsically tied to the Mouseion; these two institutions were one and the same. The Library must have been part of the greater Mouseion complex. On the other hand, this passage does elucidate some details about the Mouseion. Its importance is stressed; the Ptolemies decided to place it within their own palace grounds. Strabo's mention of the head of the Mouseion being a priest is important as well. This reflects the original religious function and its connection to the worship of the muses.

Demetrius was a member of Aristotle's Peripatetic School²⁷⁷ and this certainly influenced the Great Library. Soter had originally wanted Theophrastus to play Demetrius' role. Theophrastus was Aristotle's immediate successor in the Peripatetic tradition, but he turned down Ptolemy's invitation. Demetrius was a close associate and pupil of Theophrastus, so he was the next best option.²⁷⁸ Aristotle's library, the Lyceum in Athens, was the model for the Great Library. The Lyceum was a shrine to the muses and its philosophy stressed the idea of a community of scholars.²⁷⁹ This is a very similar arrangement to that of the Mouseion as described by Strabo. This might justify Strabo's claim that Aristotle, "taught the kings in Egypt how to arrange a library."²⁸⁰ We know that chronologically this was impossible, because the construction of the Library was not under way until a few decades after the death of Aristotle, but Strabo is discussing Theophrastus' succession of Aristotle as head of the Peripatetic school in this excerpt and his implication that this school of thought had a tremendous influence on the Great Library and Mouseion is clear.

²⁷⁷ Barnes, 62.

²⁷⁸ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 114.

²⁷⁹ Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt," 40.

²⁸⁰ Strabo, *Geography: Book 13*, 111.

The fact that the Library and Mouseion were built upon an Aristotelian model is significant for two other reasons. First, it expresses the primacy of Athens as the center of culture and learning in the Greek world. The goal of Alexandrian kings was to reach and surpass the intellectual level of Athens. The Ptolemies wanted Alexandria to assume the title of successor to Athens in the cultural and intellectual realm. The second reason is that Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander. This is another way in which the Ptolemies invoked the name of Alexander in order to legitimize their role as the successor to him, both in Egypt itself, but also in the wider Hellenistic world.²⁸¹

One of the aims of the Ptolemaic patrons was to acquire knowledge from all different languages, cultures, and literary traditions of the world. This indicates Ptolemaic tendency towards scholastic gigantism. Not only did they want to control all of the knowledge of the Greek world, but they wanted to incorporate knowledge of the entire, wider Hellenistic world. It also reflects the cosmopolitan, diverse environment fostered by the Ptolemies. Text came in from all corners of the Hellenistic world and they were all translated into Greek. The teachings of Zoraster and the Hebrew scriptures could be found in the Great Library.²⁸² No doubt Egyptian texts translated into Greek would have been present as well, based on the fact that the Library was in Egypt.²⁸³ This diversity of knowledge was not just expressed in different cultures, it also can be seen in the wide acceptance in religious beliefs that the Ptolemies fostered. Theodorus the Atheist publicly denied the existence of gods and he was spurned by his colleagues. He was made

²⁸¹ Erskine, "Culture and Power in Ptolemaic Egypt," 41-2.

²⁸² Vrettos, 37-38. Manetho is a great example. He was a native Egyptian priest and he wrote his history of Egypt in Greek.

²⁸³ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 330.

welcome by the liberal minded Ptolemy during the time of Demetrius of Phalerum's tenure at the Mouseion.²⁸⁴

Perhaps the most famous story of the translation of non-Greek texts for the use of the Library is the story of the Septuagint. The Septuagint was the name given to all the Hebrew Scriptures that were translated into Greek, as per the king's request. This was in order for the Library to have a copy, but also to benefit not only the Jews living in Egypt, but all of the Jews of the world.²⁸⁵ The Septuagint got its name on account of the fact that it was compiled by 72 Jewish scholars. Again, the *Letter of Aristeas* is a key source for this discussion. Its chief concern was the compilation of the Septuagint. The letter discusses how the king wrote a letter to the high priest in Jerusalem, Eleazar, to send his scholars fluent and literate in both Hebrew and Greek in order to obtain a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures; he requested six from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Ptolemy is portrayed as an exceedingly generous and respectful patron of these visiting scholars, "the king spared no expense and superintended the workmen individually."²⁸⁶ One interesting portion of the letter recounts a banquet that Ptolemy held in their honor. He discussed philosophy with the scholars and asked them endless questions. This is interesting, because it reflects the king's learned nature; he was very curious and eager to debate with them the finer nuances of moral philosophy. After they were entertained for some time, they were taken to Pharos Island by Demetrius himself and secluded there, in order not to be distracted, for 72 days until they were finished and all agreed on the translation. They were then sent home with honors and luxurious gifts.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁴ Chamoux, 369.

²⁸⁵ Gruen, 277.

²⁸⁶ *Letter of Aristeas*, 51.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 301-322.

The Great Library and Mouseion were not the only scholastic institutions that the Ptolemies fostered in their city. The shrine to the god Serapis, called the Serapeum, also contained a “daughter” library to the Great Library.²⁸⁸ It was dedicated during the reign of Euergetes I, the son of Philadelphos.²⁸⁹ The building of the Serapeum as another learning institution in the city of Alexandria reflects the Ptolemies’ enthusiastic upkeep of the city’s scholastic reputation. In order to maintain their position as cultural superpower, they built yet another library to supplement that already dominant Great Library.

Ammianus Marcellinus describes the Serapeum:

There are besides in the city temples pompous with lofty roofs, conspicuous among them the Serapeum, which, though feeble words belittle it, yet is so adorned with extensive columned halls, with almost breathing statues, and a great number of other works of art, that next to the Capitolium, with which revered Rome elevates herself to eternity, the whole world beholds nothing more magnificent.²⁹⁰

This reflects the Ptolemies’ tendency towards gigantism in building, not just in the Serapeum, but the entire city in general. Creating a grand temple to the god Serapis also demonstrates the Ptolemies’ role as *euergetes* in the city. Under the patronage of the Romans in the later Imperial Period, the Serapeum seems to have surpassed the Great Library. All references to the Library indicate the Serapeum, and references to the Great Library in the Mouseion are just references to its past greatness.²⁹¹ It is also likely that these authors writing centuries after these libraries had flourished merely had them confused or conflated them into one entity when looking at the overall aura of Alexandria’s prodigious scholastic reputation. Ammianus Marcellinus is one such

²⁸⁸ Canfora, 81.

²⁸⁹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 28.

²⁹⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Surviving Books of the History: Book XXII*, in *Ammianus Marcellinus: In Three Volumes, Volume II*, trans. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 303.

²⁹¹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 335.

example: “In this [the Serapeum] were invaluable libraries, and the unanimous testimony of ancient records declares that 700,000 books, brought together by the unremitting energy of the Ptolemaic kings.”²⁹²

The Great Library was in its heyday in the Hellenistic Age. The Library remained an important institution for hundreds of years, but it endured a slow decline under the successive political powers that controlled it. The fate of the Library is representative of the fate of the city that it came to symbolize; their stories are intertwined with one another. The Ptolemaic Dynasty ruled Egypt for nearly 300 years. The last Ptolemaic pharaoh of Egypt, Cleopatra VII, finally succumbed to Roman rule after the battle of Actium, in 31 BC, in which Octavian’s armies defeated her and Mark Antony’s forces. Alexandria came under the administration of the Romans, as did the Great Library. In Strabo’s description of the Mouseion, written in the Roman period, he discusses how the transition from Ptolemaic to Roman administration affected the Library: “a priest in charge of the Museum, who formerly was appointed by the kings, but is now appointed by Caesar.”²⁹³ This passage reflects two aspects of the Library. First, it shows importance that the Library and the maintaining of knowledge held for the Ptolemies and later for the Romans. The chief priest was officially appointed by the highest sovereign in the land, not some low level bureaucrat or provincial governor. It also stresses the smooth transition of power that ensued when the Romans took over for the Ptolemies; there was no bloodshed or pillaging of the city. This allowed the Library to remain in existence for many more centuries. The Emperor Claudius (reigned 41-54 AD²⁹⁴), who himself

²⁹² Ammianus Marcellinus, 303.

²⁹³ Strabo, *Geography: Book 17*, 35.

²⁹⁴ Mary T. Boatwright, Daniel J. Gargola, and Richard J. A. Talbert, *The Romans: From Village to Empire* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), 328.

dabbled in literary and historical pursuits, is said to have had a new wing of the Mouseion dedicated to him when he completed works of history pertaining to the Etruscans and Carthaginians. The new wing was even named after him, “The Claudian.”²⁹⁵

Later in the Roman period, the Library somewhat faded into obscurity and the librarians were less prominent and well-known. After a while the Alexandrian Library became synonymous with literary criticism. Even the word “Alexandrian” became a metonym for “editing.”²⁹⁶ Without the direct Ptolemaic royal patronage, the innovative edge of the Library waned and gave way to pedantic literary pursuits. This reflects wider trends for the city of Alexandria. As royal Ptolemaic patronage of the city went away, Alexandria was no longer an important cultural capital. This role shifted to Rome. The Library’s is both indicative of and a key aspect of Alexandria’s cultural decline. It was a symbol of Ptolemaic power.

Towards the end of the Roman period there was the disastrous episode in the Library’s history, when the Serapeum was destroyed by Christian zealots. In 391 AD, a mob incited by Emperor Theodosius and his representative, the Patriarch Theophilus, burned all of the books contained in that library.²⁹⁷ This attack had been an effort to destroy all pagan temples. The Serapeum, although a library, was also a shrine to the god, Serapis.²⁹⁸ There was, however, a short revival of scholasticism in Alexandria. In the Christian era, prior to the Arab conquest, Alexandria was home to some considerable theological developments in the early Church. Some notable Christian scholars of

²⁹⁵ Suetonius, 211.

²⁹⁶ Roy McLeod, “Introduction: Alexandria in History and Myth,” in *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World*, edited by Roy McLeod (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), 9.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹⁸ Canfora, 87.

Alexandria include Clement, Athanasius, Origen, and Arius.²⁹⁹ In line with the free-thinking intellectual society of Alexandria, both Arius and Origen put forth many teachings that were controversial and he came into ardent conflict with Church leadership.³⁰⁰ Consequently, they were both condemned as heretics. Although the Library itself probably did not play a large role in this development, the revival of learning in the Christian era is a testament to the resiliency of the Alexandrian intellectualism that was first inspired by the Ptolemies.

The final blow to the Great Library and overall intellectual atmosphere of the city of Alexandria came during the Arab conquest in the seventh century AD. There is a legend of the conquering general, Amrou Ibn el-Assa, being ordered by the Caliph to burn all the books not in line with the teachings of Muhammad. As a result of the mass quantity of books, it took six months to dispose of them all. Only the works of Aristotle were spared.³⁰¹ The fact that the legend of the Library and the wealth of books that it contained is said to have lasted until the Muslim era, nearly a thousand years after its founding, shows how important that Library was in influencing an entire millennium of intellectual thought. These later episodes in the Library's history stress its importance. It does not just last until the end of the Hellenistic Period, the Library and the scholastic heritage that it engendered was one of the enduring symbols of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Famous Alexandrian Scholars

There were many prominent figures who contributed to the history of the Library. Discussing their individual roles reveals the overall atmosphere of learning that Alexandria fostered, as well as how effective Ptolemaic patronage was in the cultivation

²⁹⁹ Vrettos, See chapter entitled "The Soul of the City," 163-207.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 194-8

³⁰¹ Canfora, 98-99.

of this environment. Alexandria was a hotbed of innovation in the early Ptolemaic Period and this is reflected in the kinds of discoveries achieved by Alexandrian scholars. The Chief Librarians were very well documented on account of their illustrious careers. We have a list of all of them from the foundation of the Library to the takeover by the Romans. It was a great honor to hold this position, and many of these scholars were closely associated with the royal family and even were the private tutors of the royal offspring. Zenodotus of Ephesus was the first Librarian and he was credited with the editing of the *Iliad* and dividing it into 24 books. His work was carried out and finished by the later Librarian, Aristarchus.³⁰² Callimachus was a scholar who was long believed to be Head Librarian, but he never actually was.³⁰³ He was merely a scholar who resided there who was famous for his extensive writing and his reorganization of the Library. He set up the *pinakes*, or tables, which were basically a bibliography of all of the authors' works contained in the Great Library, arranged into separate subjects.³⁰⁴ His system was the Dewey Decimal System of his day. The idea to organize a library as such had previously not been conceived. This alone was a great innovation in how libraries were maintained and catalogued. Callimachus' chief rival was Apollonius of Rhodes. He was a tutor the royal children and he later became Chief Librarian.³⁰⁵ He also wrote the famous epic poem, *Argonautica*, recounting the tale of Jason and the Golden Fleece. Eratosthenes was another noted scholar who was a Head Librarian. He had a very close relationship with the royal family in the court of Ptolemy IV Philopator.³⁰⁶ Eratosthenes is famous for

³⁰² Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 450.

³⁰³ Alan Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 11.

³⁰⁴ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 452.

³⁰⁵ Cameron, 11.

³⁰⁶ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 309-310.

his incredibly accurate measurement of the circumference of the Earth.³⁰⁷ These examples are a testament not only to what was possible under Ptolemaic patronage, but also to the caliber of men that the Ptolemies employed to reside in their library.

There is not always evidence to show that prominent Alexandrian scholars were associated with the Mouseion or the Library, but no doubt they were part of the erudite milieu of Alexandria in the reign of the Ptolemies and some certainly enjoyed royal patronage. Medicine was a branch of learning that had always been prominent in Egypt. Herodotus claims that in Egypt, “the practice of medicine they split up into separate parts, each doctor being responsible for the treatment of only one disease. There are, in consequence, innumerable doctors.”³⁰⁸ This specialization of different fields of medicine reflects that medical research in Egypt had reached an advanced level. The Greeks certainly were well versed in medicine as well; Hippocrates of Cos from the fifth century is still acknowledged today as an incredibly influential doctor. Medicine thrived in the city of Alexandria as a result of the synthesis of Greek and Egyptian medicine. The era of medical research between Aristotle and Galen is actually called “Alexandrian.”³⁰⁹ The Library played an important role in the development of Alexandrian medicine; it provided the literature that made the practice of medicine possible.³¹⁰

Engineering was another field of learning that prospered under the patronage of the Ptolemies. The Ptolemies benefited militarily from the advances made under them by

³⁰⁷ He used geometry to measure the Earth, and his estimate was 252,000 stades, which is about 24,662 miles (depending on what measurement of the stade that one uses, however, this is the widely accepted measurement). The actual circumference is 24,862 miles; this means he was off by only 200 miles! (Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 414-415.)

³⁰⁸ Herodotus, 160.

³⁰⁹ John Vallance, “Doctors in the Library: The Strange Tale of Apollonius the Bookworm and Other Stories,” in *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World*, edited by Roy McLeod (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), 96.

³¹⁰ Guido Majno, *The Healing Hand: Man and Wound in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 315.

notable siege engineers who created incredible siege artillery and projectile weaponry.³¹¹ Most of these engineers in Alexandria were from all over the Hellenistic world, such as the famous Philo of Byzantium, Heron, and Abdaraxus. However, Ktesibios, one of the more influential engineers of ancient times, was an Alexandrian native.³¹² He was a son of a barber and he constructed a system that would raise and lower a mirror without the customer seeing the device's inner workings. From these humble beginnings, he became the Thomas Edison of Ptolemaic Alexandria.³¹³ Many of his machines were operated with the use of compressed air, such as his musical instruments, like an organ, and even a catapult.³¹⁴ Prominent figures in the field of mathematics spent time in Alexandria as well, such as Euclid and Archimedes.³¹⁵ Archimedes is said to have invented the Archimedes Screw while in Egypt. He used it for irrigation along the Nile River.³¹⁶ The greatest indication of Ptolemaic scholastic patronage is the results that the city's scholars produced. These incredible advances characterized and enhanced Alexandria's cultural standing among Hellenistic cities. These famous scientists and thinkers were the intellectual celebrities of their day and brought incredible prestige to the city. The tradition of scholastic patronage gradually faded away in the city of Alexandria at the end of the Hellenistic Period as the political locus of power gravitated towards another city: Rome. This city became the cultural capital of the Mediterranean world and continued the literary and scientific developments that had been initiated by Alexandria.

³¹¹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 426-34.

³¹² Majno, 323.

³¹³ DeCamp, 137.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

³¹⁵ Majno, 315.

³¹⁶ Shipley, 332.

Chapter 5: Alexandria's Legacy: Imperial Rome

In the age of Augustus, the urban landscape of the city of Rome was transformed. From the late Republican to early Imperial Periods, Rome changed from an architecturally unimpressive city on the banks of the Tiber River to the grandiose imperial capital of an expansive, culturally diverse empire. Augustus oversaw the culmination of this development, but this had been an on-going process under the competitive patronage of wealthy men for decades. Sulla, Pompey the Great, and Augustus' predecessor and adoptive father, Julius Caesar had paved the way for urban renewal. As Rome's political dominance grew under these men, this urban transformation was both a result and a cause of Rome becoming the cultural capital of the Mediterranean world. As the Roman State absorbed the lavishly ornate and awe-inspiring Hellenistic cities of the east, it had to present itself as a legitimate rival to the splendor of cities such as Antioch, Pergamon, and most especially, Alexandria. In turn, Rome was influenced by and emulated these cities' ostentatious style. These cities also influenced the Roman Republic politically, as it slowly developed into the Roman Empire. Under Augustus, the Roman Empire essentially became a dynastic monarchy.

Rome was able to surpass the greatest city in the Hellenistic world in cultural supremacy in the early Imperial era in much the same way that Hellenistic Alexandria had surpassed Classical Athens. One of the ways that Rome was able to surpass these cities in prominence was building monuments on a gigantic scale. This was carried out through Augustus' reforms. Another important aspect to Rome's cultural ascendancy was the introduction of public libraries to the imperial capital. A large part of Alexandria's cultural power was vested in its famous learning institutions, the Great Library and

Mouseion. In the late Republican and early Imperial Periods of Rome, a growing interest in these libraries and Greek literature became apparent. Early emperors took on the role of fostering libraries much in the same way that Hellenistic kings had in the Eastern Mediterranean for centuries. The transition between the Republican and Imperial Periods was a pivotal time in Rome's history. At this time Rome secured its position as cultural capital of the Mediterranean.

Rome in the Republican Era and the Rise of Urban Patronage

Like the cities of the Greek world prior to the conquest of Alexander, Rome had been a city-state. In 509, they overthrew their king and founded a Republic.³¹⁷ For most of its early history, Rome struggled to survive in Central Italy in the midst of other polities. In the 390's it was sacked by the Gauls and subsequently rebuilt. Livy discusses the disorganization of the newly rebuilt city:

The work of reconstruction was ill-planned...All work was hurried and nobody bothered to see that the streets were straight; individual property rights were ignored, and buildings went up wherever there was room. This explains why... the general lay-out of Rome is more like a squatters' settlement than a properly planned city.³¹⁸

Thus, Rome did not employ the grid pattern, which had given so many Greek cities efficiency and organization. Rome was not on the same level of the magnificent cities of the eastern Mediterranean; it was tightly packed and aesthetically unimpressive.³¹⁹

Although Rome was not a greatly planned or beautiful city in its early days it was able to strengthen its power on the Italian peninsula in such a way that it became "first among

³¹⁷Fernand Braudel, *Memory and the Mediterranean*, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 273.

³¹⁸Livy, *The Early History of Rome: Books I-V of The History of Rome from its Foundation*, trans. Audrey De Selincourt (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1981), 402.

³¹⁹Diana Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 42.

equals” in its alliance with other Italian city-states. While other cities and kingdoms in the Mediterranean, such as the Hellenistic kingdoms in the east and the North African city of Carthage, were fighting over Sicily and the eastern territories, Rome wove its web in Italy, making itself a match for these foreign powers.³²⁰ In the third century Rome fought and won two destructive wars with Carthage.³²¹ After these wars, Roman power was no longer limited to Italy. As the Roman Republic established itself as the dominant power in the western Mediterranean, it acquired territories in these regions. Soon after, the Republic began to look east towards the predominantly Greek speaking Hellenistic world.

During Rome’s early development, the Romans had long been in contact with Greek culture. This contact had led some Roman aristocrats to admire the sophistication of Greek culture. Southern Italy and Sicily had been colonized by Greeks in the eighth century.³²² The Romans began to absorb this culture early in their history. One of the first imitations of Greek culture by the Romans was in religion. From Southern Italy, they got the idea of anthropomorphic gods, which replaced their earlier *numina*, which were spirits or divine powers.³²³ This admiration of Greek culture later manifested itself in urban planning and beautification of the city, as well as the foundation of a number of libraries, however, the literary implications of Greek and Roman interactions in Southern Italy will be discussed later. In the late third century, soon after they had established direct diplomatic ties with *poleis* in Mainland Greece, Rome was allowed to participate

³²⁰ Braudel, 276.

³²¹ The first two of three so-called “Punic Wars,” the last of which would result in the utter annihilation of Carthage in 146 BC. Inconsequently, this was the same year Rome conquered Achaean League and raised the city of Corinth to the ground. (Boatwright, Gargola, and Talbert, 134.) This gives us an idea of how rapidly Roman power was spreading.

³²² Casson, 61.

³²³ Adkins and Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 251.

in the Isthmian Games. This was a major step for them; it allowed them to be seen as equals in the Greek world.³²⁴ Overtime, they began to participate directly in Greek diplomacy. Soon, the Roman started to interfere with affairs in the Hellenistic kingdoms. Eventually, Hellenistic history essentially became the history of the states' relations with Rome and the gradual extension of Roman domination.³²⁵ As they widened their power base, many Roman aristocrats, who were already heavily influenced by Greek culture, grew even more captivated by the incredible cities of the Hellenistic world.

However, not all Romans admired Greece. As Roman power spread further to the east in the late Hellenistic Age, we see some repulsion to the absorption of Greek culture by more traditional elites. Some aristocrats valued age-old Roman virtues, and saw Greek ways as foppish and decadent. The Romans derived their identity from a common moral system and material culture, while the Greeks identified themselves on a kinship, linguistic, and religious basis. To the Romans, Greek scientific and literary developments were not balanced by military might or austere morals. Therefore, they saw the Greeks as poised somewhere between decadence and civilization.³²⁶ Polybius talks about how Greek culture had a decadent influence on Rome around the time of the conquest of Macedon in the 160's. He states that some Romans were willing to pay a talent for a male prostitute, or 300 drachmae for a jar of Pontic pickled fish. At this, "Cato once declared in a public speech that anyone could see that the Republic was going downhill when a pretty boy could cost more than a plot of land and jars of fish more than

³²⁴ Chamoux, 97-98.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

³²⁶ Maud W. Gleason, "Greek Cities Under Roman Rule," in *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, ed. David S. Potter (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 228.

ploughmen.”³²⁷ This gives us a sense of how extravagant some Romans were becoming in the context of the conquest of the Hellenistic East and how some were highly skeptical of its repercussions. Nonetheless, Greek culture had made inroads in the religion, culture, and, as we shall see later, the literature of Rome. As Horace said: “Greece in its capture then captured its rough-mannered conqueror, thereby bringing the arts into countrified Latium.”³²⁸

The Greek east was well known for its successful cultivation of grandiose urban landscapes, while the Romans were more concerned with efficiency. Strabo states:

for if the Greeks had the repute of aiming most happily in the founding of cities, in that they aimed at beauty, strength of position, harbors, and productive soil, the Romans had the best foresight in those matters which the Greeks made but little account of, such as the construction of roads and aqueducts, and of sewers.³²⁹

The Hellenistic east had the long established practices of gigantism and royal patronage of monuments for centuries. One of the ways that Hellenistic kings competed was in the realm of the urban landscape. Given the lackluster appearance of Rome, many criticized it as it became a power player in the Mediterranean. Courtiers in Philip V of Macedon’s court mocked the appearance of Rome. “Some would poke fun at their manners and customs, others at their achievements, others at the appearance of the city itself, which was not yet made beautiful in either its public or its private sections.”³³⁰ Although Rome was defeating the Hellenistic kingdoms in the realm of political and military dominance,

³²⁷ Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1979), 530.

³²⁸ Horace, *Epistles: Book 2*, in *The Complete Works of Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)*, trans. Charles E. Passage (New York, NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1983), 344. This passage is especially relevant in the context of this chapter because it was written during the reign of Augustus.

³²⁹ Strabo, *Geography: Book 5*, in *The Geography of Strabo: In Eight Volumes, Volume II*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1923), 405.

³³⁰ Livy, *Book XL*, in *Livy: In Fourteen Volumes, Volume XII*, trans. Evan T. Sage and Alfred C. Schlesinger (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 15.

the Hellenistic kingdoms still claimed that they were culturally superior. People in Pergamon, Alexandria, and Athens felt that they were superior to the Romans in this way.³³¹ Rome could not compete with these cities in the field of monuments and urban beauty. It was disadvantaged in this contest for a number of reasons. First of all, it was a Republic, so it did not have an extravagantly wealthy royal patron to manage the urban landscape. Also, unlike the most Hellenistic cities, it was not built on a grid pattern. It was haphazardly placed together, as Livy stated. In the context of the negative attitudes that others had expressed towards Rome, its wealthy citizens sought to improve its appearance in the late Republican Period. It almost became a necessity for the Roman aristocrats to develop their urban image because they would never receive the respect that was afforded to them as overlord if they did not improve the outward appearance to their city.

Cicero claims “the Roman people despise private luxury, but favor public magnificence.”³³² To exemplify this, many private citizens had contributed to the city while possessing modest dwellings.³³³ Although only magistrates with *imperium*³³⁴ could build public temples,³³⁵ many Romans from the upper-class began patronizing buildings that added to the overall image of Rome. Roman culture was a patron-client based society. This code of conduct was established within social hierarchies in which wealthy citizens patronized clients. The clients would then be obligated to reciprocate in some

³³¹ Favro, 42.

³³² Cicero, *In Defense of Murena*, in *Nine Orations and The Dream of Scipio*, trans. Palmer Bovie (New York, NY: Mentor Books, 1967), 205.

³³³ Favro, 53.

³³⁴ *Imperium* was a position that could be given to magistrates. It had strong religious undertones and allowed a magistrate to hold supreme authority to lead armies and punish offenders. (Boatwright, Gargola, and Talbert, 61.)

³³⁵ Favro, 55.

fashion. This was central to the Roman cultural experience.³³⁶ This could take the form of wealthy citizens building public amenities for the people in exchange for votes in public offices. This was sort of a Republican version of the Greek practice of *euergetes*.

One example was the triumphal arches built with the spoils of foreign campaigns. Men who served as generals in foreign campaigns received much of the spoils of war. They would be required to pay their men, however, afterward they could do as they wished with the money. With all of the successful campaigns carried out in this period, there was much money to contribute to the urban landscape of the city. A trend that we see emerge is the idea of the manubial temples. As early as the fourth century we see temples in Rome dedicated privately by victorious military commanders *ex manubiis*, or from the spoils of war.³³⁷ In the first century BC, this practice picked up steam, and in the midst of the late Republican Period these building efforts often became politicized and competitive. Many ambitious men sought to put their personal stamp on the city.³³⁸ In some ways this competitive trend reflects the Hellenistic kings in their respective eastern kingdoms.

Many of these men had personally been to the east and had marveled at the glorious cities that they visited there. The first triumvirate, Crassus, Pompey, and Julius Caesar (the three men who most characterized the political climate of late Republican Rome), are all examples of Romans who traveled extensively in the eastern Mediterranean. A speech given by Cicero gives us an indication of the Roman

³³⁶ Elizabeth Deniaux, "Patronage," trans. Robert Morstein-Marx and Robert Martz, in *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, eds. Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 401.

³³⁷ Katherine E. Welch, "Art and Architecture in the Roman Republic," in *A Companion to the Roman Republic*, eds. Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 502.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

aristocracy's awareness of the riches of the eastern Mediterranean and their readiness to exploit it. Cicero states: "Asia is so rich and fertile as easily to surpass all other countries in the productiveness of their soil, the variety of her crops, the extent of her pastures and the volume of the exports."³³⁹ This speech was in favor of the Manilian Bill, which was to give more power to Pompey in the campaign in eastern Anatolia to destroy Mithridates, an enemy king of Rome.

The first century BC was period of instability in Rome; there were civil wars that contributed to the fall of the Roman Republic. In the growing political turmoil that characterized this period of Rome's history; urban amenities built by wealthy elites were used as a way to secure the people's favor and votes for political offices.³⁴⁰ There were a few men who would come to characterize this phenomenon, and in many ways embody it. Sulla was one of the first who really began to use building programs to his political advantage. He was made *dictator* in 82 BC after a bloody civil war. He posted his "proscriptions," which were lists of his enemies, who could be killed by anyone with the prospect of a reward. Then he had their property confiscated.³⁴¹ With this wealth, while he had supreme power, he began to augment Rome's public monuments. He rebuilt the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline Hill, two temples to Hercules, and he reconfigured the Forum Romanum, the political center of Rome.³⁴² He stepped down and retired in 79 BC. One of Sulla's generals was Pompey.

Pompey spent much time campaigning in the east and had developed a taste for eastern magnificence. Plutarch talks about how he resembled statues of Alexander in his

³³⁹ Cicero, *Pro Lege Manilia*, in *Cicero: The Speeches*, trans. H. Grose Hodge (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 27.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁴¹ Boatwright, Gargola, and Talbert, 193.

³⁴² Favro, 56-57.

younger years and many referred to him as “Alexander” mockingly; although he was not annoyed by this.³⁴³ In fact, he modeled himself after Alexander the Great and even took the surname *Magnus*.³⁴⁴ In Rome many political associations would be drawn to Alexander after the conquest of Alexandria, this merely set the precedent. Pompey’s most famous achievement upon the urban landscape of Rome was the first permanent stone theater. He built this with profits from eastern campaigns in the 60’s BC.³⁴⁵ This was built on the Campus Martius, which was essentially a parade ground in Republican times, but over time became littered with temples and monuments in the Imperial Period.³⁴⁶ This was a welcome and incredible achievement which the people loved. The stone theater built by Pompey was in line to a growing trend in Italy; other parts of Italy had built stone theaters. Campania was one such region in Southern Italy. It had close ties both to the Aegean world, as well as to Rome in the late Republican era. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Campania was a conduit for Greek influence on Rome in theater building.³⁴⁷

Horti, or Gardens, were another contribution to the city by Pompey. Although many Roman aristocrats had embraced Greek culture, to many conservative Romans, *horti* were offensive. In their minds, *horti* were obvious signs of eastern decadence, not in line with the stern values of Rome.³⁴⁸ In Hellenistic cities, gardens had played a large role in the beautification of cities. As in other aspects of Hellenistic urban culture, they

³⁴³ Plutarch, *Pompey in Fall of the Roman Republic: Six Lives by Plutarch*, 158-159.

³⁴⁴ Favro, 57.

³⁴⁵ Hammond, 276.

³⁴⁶ Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, trans. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 147.

³⁴⁷ J. R. Green, “The Theater of Paphos and the Theater of Alexandria: Some First Thoughts,” in *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World*, edited by Roy McLeod (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), 120.

³⁴⁸ Favro, 59.

reached a level of gigantism. Any properly outfitted Hellenistic palace was required to have extensive gardens, and the Ptolemies certainly had gardens in their royal palace.³⁴⁹ Gardens continued to be built in the city of Rome by other wealthy citizens and they played a key role in the city's transformation. Roman *horti* represent another aspect of the Hellenistic urban influence in the city of Rome.

Julius Caesar was the next major patron who came onto the scene. Caesar won the common peoples' undying love by building generously in order to benefit their needs. This was his main base of power and he even went into debt in order to carry out building projects to benefit the people's needs and wants. Plutarch discusses his extravagant expenses and the people's reaction to his generosity:

We are told, for instance, that before entering public office he was thirteen hundred talents in debt...all his other lavish expenditures on the theatrical performances, processions, and public banquets he threw into the shade all attempts at winning distinction in this way that had been made by previous holders of the office. The result was to make the people so favorably disposed towards him that every man among them was trying to find new offices and new honors to bestow upon him.³⁵⁰

Building was just one aspect of Caesar's patronage to the Roman people, but it certainly played a key role in putting his permanent imprint on the city. Caesar was the man who laid the groundwork for Rome becoming a city of truly imperial proportions. He did this in many ways; politically, by dismantling the Republic, militarily by bringing many new peoples under the Roman yoke, and through the reshaping of the Roman urban landscape more than any single person had done in the past.

Caesar and Pompey had at one time been political partners; they were both in the first triumvirate. Two factors led to strained relations between these two men. First,

³⁴⁹ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 15.

³⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Caesar in The Fall of the Roman Republic*, 248.

Pompey had married Julia, Caesar's daughter, and she died in childbirth; thus their familial ties had been broken. Secondly, the political tripod had collapsed when the other member of the triumvirate, Crassus, died on an eastern military campaign.³⁵¹ Caesar and Pompey competed militarily to be the preeminent man in Rome, but they also competed in the realm of monument building, a contest that Caesar was destined to win on both fronts. His building achievements include the extension and renovation of the Forum Romanum, enlargement of the Circus Maximus, and a new Forum, which he named after himself, the Forum Julium.³⁵² Suetonius states that "Caesar continually undertook great new works for the embellishment of the city... His first projects were to temple of Mars, the biggest in the world... and an enormous theater sloping down the Tarpeian Rock on the Capitoline Hill."³⁵³ This temple to Mars was never completed in his lifetime, but it was continued by his heir, Octavian. Caesar became a larger than life figure. Over time, through his successful military campaigns and generosity towards the people, he became the embodiment of the Roman state, the second founder of Rome. Under Caesar's patronage, the people began to think of the city of Rome in more universal terms. It was a common pun to intermix the words *urbs* with *orbis*, meaning "city" and "world" respectively.³⁵⁴ In their minds it became the center of the world and Caesar was the central figure in this new conception of the city. Caesar's embodiment of the Roman city and state was all tied to his effort to beautify Rome. Caesar became the *euergetes* of the city, in the exact same way that Hellenistic kings had taken this title, and they had been his inspiration in assuming this role. This perception helped to pave the way for the

³⁵¹ Favro, 61.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 61-63.

³⁵³ Suetonius, 33.

³⁵⁴ Favro, 65.

Roman people to accept the idea of an emperor, and precipitated the downfall of the Republic.

One of the acts of Caesar that he was not able to carry out before he was violently assassinated in 44 BC “was to provide the finest possible public libraries, by commissioning Marcus Varro to collect and classify Greek and Latin books.”³⁵⁵ Prior to this, there had only been private libraries on the estates of upper-class citizens, so this idea of a public library represents the benevolence and generosity of Julius Caesar. Libraries played a key role in the urban landscape in this transitional period between Republican and Imperial Rome.

Roman Libraries in the Late Republic and Early Empire

The Romans had always been influenced by Greek culture, partly attributed to the fact that some of their neighbors in Southern Italy were Greek colonists. Greek influence can especially be seen in the field of literature and scholarship. As booksellers rose in prominence in Greek centers such as Athens and Rhodes, many of them made a living in Southern Italy. The Greek tongue itself also came to be used widely in the Roman world among the upper classes. It was sort of the second language of cultured men and many of these aristocrats became well versed in Greek philosophy and literature.³⁵⁶

Latin literature was in its infancy in the third century. By the end of the Second Punic War (in 201), some Roman elites were writing histories in Greek, and later in Latin.³⁵⁷ Some of these early Latin authors were Livius Andronicus, Ennius, and Plautus. Evidence for the first Latin authors began as their works appeared in private libraries.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ Suetonius, 33.

³⁵⁶ Braudel, 304.

³⁵⁷ Boatwright, Gargola, and Talbert, 148.

³⁵⁸ Casson, 62-63.

This was coupled with the propensity for Greek learning. These factors coincided, and we see the foundation of libraries containing both Greek and Latin works from the third century onward. Wealthy Romans with literary interests collected books in the same way that wealthy men in Athens had. It was quite fashionable in the upper-class of Rome to possess a library.³⁵⁹ As Rome established itself as a scholastic outpost for Greek learning, certain types of Greek philosophy, such as Stoicism, even branched out and established schools in Rome itself, as it had in many Hellenistic cities.³⁶⁰ These developments augmented Roman cultural capital; Rome was beginning to be recognized as a legitimate cultural destination.

The wider distribution of libraries in Rome in the late Republic was fueled by the wealth that flooded into the city as it became a power in the Mediterranean. Thus, as in the Hellenistic world, libraries are a symbol of culture, power, and wealth. Roman patronage of Greek art and literature slowly began to rival that of Hellenistic patrons and they even took over from some of the Greek clientele.³⁶¹ Money, however, was not the only way the Roman citizens acquired books in the late Republic. Roman looting of books from Hellenistic kingdoms was a well documented phenomenon in this period. Lucius Aemilius Paullus carted many books from Pella back to Rome after his successful defeat of Perseus in the Third Macedonian War. He created an extensive private library, the first on record in Rome.³⁶² Lucullus did the same when he conquered the Pontic kingdoms.³⁶³ Plutarch talks about Lucullus' library: "But what he did in the establishment of a library deserves warm praise. He got together many books... and his

³⁵⁹ Adkins and Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome*, 211.

³⁶⁰ Chamoux, 371.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 374.

³⁶² Casson, 68.

³⁶³ Adkins and Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome*, 210.

use of them was more honorable to him than his acquisition of them. His libraries were thrown open to all... without the restriction to the Greeks.”³⁶⁴ Looting Hellenistic libraries was a quick and easy way to obtain books.³⁶⁵

The practice of lending books was widespread,³⁶⁶ but the concept of the public library did not arise until Caesar’s initial plan. He was never able to carry out the construction of this library. The task was finally carried out in 39 BC by Asinius Pollio after a successful military campaign. Pollio had been a supporter of Caesar. Public libraries did not come into existence until there was a patron who could afford to organize a library on such a grand scale; Augustus was this person. He was the most well-recognized man in the building of public libraries.³⁶⁷ He founded two large libraries. One was built on the Campus Martius, named the Octavian, for his sister.³⁶⁸ The other was built on the Palatine Hill and was significant because it was built as part of the Temple of Apollo, Augustus’ patron god.³⁶⁹ Horace makes a reference to this temple: “If books are to fill up Apollo’s new library-temple such as will honor the god and provide incentive to greater efforts by poets.”³⁷⁰ This shows that libraries had a connection with religious buildings, as they did in Alexandria; the Mouseion and Serapeum were both originally maintained as shrines. Libraries were also housed in many baths throughout the city.³⁷¹ Roman baths served the same functions that *gymnasia* had in the Greek world, they were a place to gather and relax. Lectures were given and much cultural exchange

³⁶⁴ Plutarch, *Lucullus*, in *Plutarch’s Lives: In Eleven Volumes, Volume II*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (New York, NY: The MacMillan Co., 1928), 605.

³⁶⁵ Casson, 68.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 73-74.

³⁶⁷ Sarolta A. Takacs, “Alexandria in Rome,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 97 (1995), 271.

³⁶⁸ Casson, 81.

³⁶⁹ Casson, 81.

³⁷⁰ Horace, 346.

³⁷¹ Casson, 89.

took place in these establishments, so it was an appropriate place to have a library.

Imperial patronage of libraries did not stop after Augustus; Roman emperors were avid patrons of both baths and libraries, which oftentimes occupied the same property. Later emperors, such as Trajan, Domitian, and Vespasian, deeply cared for the proliferation, care and maintenance of public libraries in Imperial Rome.³⁷² This is a close parallel to the Ptolemaic dynasty. In both cases there were long traditions of scholastic patronage; much funding and manpower was set aside to foster learning.

Rome became the center of Latin literary culture, much in the way that Alexandria had in the Greek world. In both cases this development was attributed to their libraries. These buildings were receptacles for the entire corpus of the literary traditions of their respective cultures. Rome's libraries did for Latin what Alexandria's libraries did for Greek.³⁷³ Libraries in Rome also represent other important aspects of culture. First, they were a conduit for Greek influence in literature and scholarship. Latin aristocrats absorbed Greek culture as they collected their books. Hellenistic influences had shaped the intellectual and cultural atmosphere of Rome and this led to self-discovery. They found ways to express their cultural identity through their literature, which had become linked to the Greek past.³⁷⁴ This aided in the proliferation of Latin literature, both in a logistical sense, because the alphabet derived indirectly from Greek, but also in the sense that the Romans wanted to emulate the Greeks and produce a literary tradition that could be recognized as legitimate and possibly even rival that of the Greek.

Libraries during this transition period also represent wider trends in the Roman urban landscape. The Romans built many great and new kinds of buildings that rivaled

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁷⁴ Takacs, 267.

those of cities in the Hellenistic world. These libraries in Rome are one aspect of these new building projects. Most of the time, these libraries were contained within larger structures, so the visual impact on the urban landscape was not significant,³⁷⁵ but no doubt the cultural importance could be felt. Also, anyone who was literate was welcome to enjoy the libraries. The fact that they were made public represents how men like Caesar and Augustus were shamelessly recruiting the common people to support them. In this way, libraries were used as a means to garner favor and to outshine their political rivals. Augustus' proficiency in building libraries demonstrates just how profound his patronage of the city of Rome was, because it was merely one aspect of his patronage.

Diminished Alexandria

Octavian (later Augustus) conquered the city of Alexandria and the Ptolemaic kingdom with one swift stroke at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. The Ptolemaic kingdom was the last Hellenistic kingdom to resist Roman rule in the Eastern Mediterranean and its destruction represented the complete consolidation of Roman power in the region. This spelled the end of the Hellenistic Age. This event also solidified Augustus' power, making him the only *triumvir* left to claim *imperium*.³⁷⁶ Octavian assumed the title of Augustus and nominally restored the Republic in 27 BC, but in reality, he was sole ruler of Rome. This seemingly benevolent gesture endeared him the populace and kept the guise that Rome was still a Republic, when in fact, this signified the beginning of the Imperial Period in Rome.

³⁷⁵ Favro, 165.

³⁷⁶ The two other triumvirs were Mark Antony, who committed suicide after Augustus had defeated him in the Battle of Actium (Boatwright, Gargola, and Talbert, 288.), and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, most commonly known as Lepidus. Lepidus had been a supporter of Julius Caesar's. In an earlier episode in 35 BC, after a defeat of Sextus Pompey, who was a mutual enemy of Lepidus and Octavian, Lepidus tried to have Sextus surrender his command to *him*, instead to Octavian. Octavian boldly went into the camp of Lepidus and had his and Sextus Pompey's troops recognize him as commander. Lepidus was so humiliated that he retired peacefully. (Boatwright, Gargola, and Talbert, 279.)

Thus the city of Alexandria was downgraded from the capital of the Hellenistic world to a Roman provincial capital. Augustus did not destroy the city for a number of reasons. The city had been founded by Alexander himself,³⁷⁷ and it was exceedingly beautiful.³⁷⁸ Alexandria's destruction would have also been ill-advised based on the economic role it played in the Eastern Mediterranean. His sparing of Alexandria reflects his admiration of Hellenistic style cities and why he emulated it in the transformation of Rome. The Romans were not always accustomed to destroying conquered cities, but this case is notable because Alexandria had been a particular nuisance to Augustus. Alexandria became the seat of the prefect of Egypt, but as in the Ptolemaic Period, it was considered apart from the rest of the country; *Alexandria ad Aegyptum*, "Alexandria by Egypt."³⁷⁹ Alexandria did, however, remain a very important city; it still housed the Great Library and contained a large population of people that were now Roman subjects. However, Alexandria's power as a center of learning had fallen significantly as Rome started to patronize Pergamon when it was bequeathed to Rome in 133.³⁸⁰ Rome was also undoubtedly the political capital of the Mediterranean world, and was soon to assume Alexandria's role as cultural capital as well. Many Alexandrian scholars immigrated to Rome and ended their careers there in the age of Julius Caesar and Augustus.³⁸¹ During the long years of Roman occupation, the Library of Alexandria's fate reflected that of the city itself. Over time, Rome was no longer as dependent on Egypt's grain shipments, so

³⁷⁷ Invoking symbolism of Alexander was very important to both the Ptolemies (as has been discussed in the construction of the Sema) and for the early Roman Emperors. This development will be discussed explicitly in the next section.

³⁷⁸ Favro, 217.

³⁷⁹ Hammond, 288.

³⁸⁰ Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 79.

³⁸¹ *Ibid*, 79-80.

the maintenance of the Library was less of a priority.³⁸² The city of Ephesus, whose library became famous, also received much patronage in the field of learning from emperors in the Imperial Period. Ephesus was the official capital of Roman Asia during this time.³⁸³ This would have further weakened Alexandria's position. Alexandria even faced some open hostility from the Romans. The unpopular emperor, Caracalla, was not fond of philosophers and carried out a massacre in the city in 215 AD. He also abolished financial support for the Mouseion.³⁸⁴ Thus, the absence of a resident royal patron of libraries was crucial for the downfall of Alexandria's libraries, as well as for the city's intellectual status as a whole. The development of Rome as a center of learning had been on-going for decades, during the late Republic, however, it did not come to full fruition until Augustus came on to the scene as *princeps*.³⁸⁵

Augustan Patronage in Imperial Rome

Augustus was "aware that the city was architecturally unworthy of her position as capital of the Roman Empire,"³⁸⁶ so he made it one of his chief tasks to improve Rome's urban image. He assumed the role of chief patron of the public monuments inside the city of Rome. He began to mold the urban image of Rome into a city whose greatness would match both the Empire of which it was a capital, as well as the greatness and power of its *princeps*, Augustus himself. He played a similar role to that of the *euergetes* of the Classical and Hellenistic ages for the city of Rome. Prior to his career as *princeps*, while he was still feuding with Mark Antony for political supremacy, Augustus used building

³⁸² McLeod, 9.

³⁸³ Lieu, 133.

³⁸⁴ Bowersock, G. W. "Late Antique Alexandria," in *Alexandria and Alexandrianism* 263-272, ed. Peter Green (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 264.

³⁸⁵ "First citizen," his official title.

³⁸⁶ Suetonius, 69.

projects to his own advantage. While Antony was absent from Rome, spending time with his lover, Cleopatra, in Alexandria and the eastern provinces, Augustus sought to improve the Forum Romanum. He also pointed out that Antony was unconcerned with his native city of Rome; he was off in an exotic land, under the spell of a foreign queen.³⁸⁷ This endeared Augustus to the people, while at the same time, hurting the already unpopular Antony's political career.

One of the most obvious differences that can be seen between Republican architecture and that of early Imperial/Augustan period is the materials used. Suetonius says of Rome: "Augustus so improved her appearance that he could justifiably boast: 'I found Rome built of bricks; I leave her clothed in marble.'"³⁸⁸ Not only were bricks used in the buildings, but also, terra-cotta statues were used to decorate them. The introduction of marble is very important because it created a much more luxurious image for the city. It also reflected Greek influence, because this was the primary building material used in the Hellenistic kingdoms. The use of marble in Rome was the integration of Greek materials with the traditional Italian features.³⁸⁹ Augustus sanctioned the building of a new forum, the Forum Augustum, in close proximity to the Forum Julium. This was done in order that his public works would come to be associated with those of his foster father. In this forum, he built the Temple of Mars Ultor, making due on Caesar's promise to build the largest temple to Mars in the world.³⁹⁰ The Forum Augustum was the frame for this new temple.³⁹¹ He also made large contributions to the Campus Martius. The Ara Pacis was built there as a shrine to peace. It commemorated Augustus for having brought

³⁸⁷ Favro, 99.

³⁸⁸ Suetonius, 69.

³⁸⁹ Gates, 336.

³⁹⁰ Favro, 96.

³⁹¹ Gates, 338.

peace to the Empire and honored him as the successor to Romulus.³⁹² Another monument in the Campus Martius was the Mausoleum of Augustus. It was a large funerary monument surrounded by gardens.³⁹³ The heirs that he had appointed during his lifetime died before Augustus did and he had them buried in this monument. This is a similar monument to the Sema in Alexandria. It was a tomb intended to be the resting place for the entire dynasty. Augustus could have been making political overtures in the building of this monument. After this monument had been built, gigantism in funerary monuments in Rome went into serious decline. Prior to this, it had been a trend among rich people to build massive tombs, upon the Hellenistic model. The Mausoleum of Augustus rendered this practice pointless, and to some extent a political liability. One did not want to draw attention to oneself.³⁹⁴ In the aristocracy, there was a trend in more modest tomb building during this period. This would usually consist of a simple family burial plot, where each family member received a humble altar, with a portrait and the corresponding ash urn.³⁹⁵ Through his cultivation of Rome's urban image for his own glory, Augustus rendered lavish tomb building pointless in the city of Rome.

Augustus used his building projects to place the city itself at the center of the Roman world. He used Rome as the fulcrum to leverage the Republic into the imperial state.³⁹⁶ He also used the city as a means to foster the idea of the deified Julius Caesar. During his own lifetime, Caesar had received some semi-divine honors in Rome when his statue was placed before the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill.³⁹⁷ However,

³⁹² *Ibid*, 339.

³⁹³ Favro, 117.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 166-167.

³⁹⁵ Zanker, 292.

³⁹⁶ Favro, 103

³⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 65.

Augustus really took this development to the next level when he fostered the cult to Divus Julius (Divine Julius) and named himself *Divi filius* (son of a god). He built a temple to this new divinity in 29 BC, shortly after he had taken supreme power.³⁹⁸ Augustus himself was deified after his death and his cult spread throughout the empire. Subsequent emperors were also deified. This idea of the ruler cult was heavily influenced by late Ptolemaic Egypt. It is likely that Caesar received divine honors in Alexandria during his liaisons with Cleopatra. Also, Mark Antony was oftentimes associated with Dionysus or Hercules.³⁹⁹ Therefore, this Hellenistic political idea was taken by the Romans and used in order to lend legitimacy to an institution that had formerly not been any part of the Republic. As the *Divi filius*, Augustus was able to elevate himself to the position of intermediary between gods and men. This is clearly a Ptolemaic convention. Each subsequent emperor invoked this idea and it lasted throughout the Imperial Period.⁴⁰⁰ During the transition between the Republican and Imperial Rome, Augustus created a system that was essentially a monarchy. This idea of the supreme ruler in the Roman world was certainly influenced by and based on the institution of Hellenistic kingship. Acceptance to this idea can be seen, especially in the east, as cities competed with one another in order to build shrines and temples to their emperor.⁴⁰¹

The emperors of Rome also legitimized their claims by connecting the *imperator* to Alexander the Great. One example is Octavian's usage of Alexander's effigy on the imperial stamp before he started using his own.⁴⁰² Augustus also used the sphinx on seal

³⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 95-98.

³⁹⁹ Chaniotis, 442-443.

⁴⁰⁰ Takacs, 267-268.

⁴⁰¹ Zanker, 305-306.

⁴⁰² Takacs, 265.

impressions and coins.⁴⁰³ This symbolized his conquest and rule over the city of Alexandria and the kingdom of Egypt. In the early 30's BC, while he was still contending with the other triumvirs for sole power in the Roman world, a story circulated that Atia, his mother, had slept with a god in the guise of a snake, thus conceiving him. This story is identical to the one told of Olympias' supposed conception of Alexander.⁴⁰⁴ The implication of this story could not be any clearer; Augustus derived his divinity in the same way Alexander had. A few generations later, Caligula is said to have worn Alexander's actual breastplate in a procession.⁴⁰⁵ These events all have to do with the Romans conquering the city of Alexandria and invoking the symbolism of the Hellenistic world and those of Alexander himself. Both Caesar and Augustus visited the tomb of Alexander while in Alexandria. The Romans controlled the city where Alexander had been laid to rest, therefore they considered themselves the successors of his heritage, just as the Ptolemies had.⁴⁰⁶ Another smaller aspect of the political influence of Alexandria on Rome is the adoption of Ptolemaic Alexandrian municipal administration. The control of this administration passed from senate and magistrates to the emperor himself, as is in a monarchy.⁴⁰⁷ Rome had grown so fast in the late Republic/early Empire that it had to look to other models to see how administration in large megalopolises was carried out. Alexandria, being the largest city in the Hellenistic world, was an obvious example to look to.

At times Hellenistic influence in Imperial Rome can be seen not only in building on a tremendous and excessively elegant scale, but also in a more direct way. After the

⁴⁰³ Zanker, see Fig. 36 b, 48, and Fig. 38, 50.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 50.

⁴⁰⁵ Erskine, "Life After Death," 178.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 177-178.

⁴⁰⁷ Hammond, 283.

conquest of Alexandria, in the early Imperial Period, obvious Egyptian influence can be seen in architectural styles. Egyptian motifs in the aristocratic houses of Italy became more prevalent. One example is the wall paintings of Augustus and Livia's villa on the Palatine Hill. These scenes depict Egyptian landscapes, obelisks, lotus flowers, and *uraei*.⁴⁰⁸ The *uraeus* was the cobra symbol that adorns the crown of the pharaoh and signifies Egyptian kingship, thus these depictions reflected the political influence that Egypt had upon the early emperors of Rome. Obelisks were constructed by subsequent emperors throughout the city of Rome and many can still be seen today. The Solarium Augusti was dedicated in 10 BC within the park of the Mausoleum of Augustus. This 30 meter obelisk was the largest sundial ever constructed. The inscription at its base references the "victory over Egypt" in 31 BC.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, it symbolizes Egyptian architectural influence as well as Roman urban gigantism. Obelisks spread throughout the Roman world and most specifically in the *spinae* of circuses. This demonstrates that Egypt's culture had influenced Rome's to such an extent, that it became part of Roman public life.⁴¹⁰ An example of Egyptian influence is the ostentatious tomb of Gaius Cestus. This was a large pyramid built within city limits. This monument is interesting because it seems that a funerary monument of such great size would create an obstacle for Augustus' domination of the landscape, however it actually succeeded in glorifying him by hearkening back to the memory of his Egyptian conquest.⁴¹¹ It seems that Augustus' influence was so profound that even a detriment to his urban image could be turned into

⁴⁰⁸ Takacs, 269.

⁴⁰⁹ Zanker, 144.

⁴¹⁰ Takacs, 270-271.

⁴¹¹ Favro, 212.

propaganda. Augustus' cultivation of the Hellenistic-style urban image of Rome assured his position as sole ruler, not just political but in the minds of the people as well.

Conclusion

This work has explored a wide variety of topics, from Hellenism and its form of urbanism, to Alexandria's influence on the city of Imperial Rome. In the Hellenistic Age the *polis* went through a number of changes, such as: a general widening of its spatial dimensions, the loss of political independence, and the introduction of kingship. However, the *polis* survived through its urban institutions. The *polis*, like other aspects of culture during the process of Hellenism, had to adapt to survive in new environments. The new Macedonian rulers had to legitimize their rule over their subjects through subtle changes in all aspects of society: linguistic, religious, political and urban culture. They had to find a middle ground in order to create a peaceful and lasting political arrangement. The outcome was Hellenism, the blending of Greek and Near Eastern cultures. Hellenism and the adaptations that resulted from it was a central theme in many of the topics I discussed. I wanted the reader to understand how profoundly the blending of cultures affected people; therefore, I discussed many different aspects of culture. However, I did not want the reader to forget that Hellenism was an elite process; this can be seen in all of the specific aspects of culture which I discussed. One reason why I felt the need to analyze Hellenism to such an extent is that the Library itself was also an important representation of this phenomenon. The purpose of the Library was the concentration of knowledge from all corners of the Hellenistic world, which demonstrates a blending of cultures. However, it was not only a receptacle of knowledge from many different cultures, but it was primarily for elites; this is very important in the context of Hellenism.

The ideas of cultural competition, gigantism, *euergetes*, and scholastic patronage were all very important phenomena in Hellenistic history. These ideas underlie much of the astounding building activity, which was one of the hallmarks of urbanism in this period. Analyzing the excesses of the decadent royal families at this time as well as the competitive nature of building activity which motivated them is vital to our understanding of how these institutions came to be so large and important and how deeply they affected the urban landscape. Discussing these ideas also helps us understand why the Hellenistic rulers fostered scholasticism and furnished these cities with such spectacular intellectual institutions, such as libraries and museums. The fervent competition between the Ptolemies of Alexandria and the Attalids of Pergamon is what led them to enlarge and zealously maintain these learning institutions. These enormous libraries were some of the most important buildings in these cities and they were a main reason why Alexandria and Pergamon were regarded as the most culturally advanced cities in the Hellenistic world. Alexandria was able to gain the upper hand in this competition and the Great Library played a leading role in the establishment of Alexandria as the cultural capital of the Hellenistic world.

The Great Library, although founded in the Hellenistic Period, remained an important symbol through the Roman, Byzantine Christian, and Muslim Periods. It still resonates today as an important symbol of scholastic accomplishment. However, the tradition of Alexandria, the Library, and Hellenistic urban gigantism had a more immediate effect. In the city of Imperial Rome many of these trends can be seen as the Hellenistic Period drew to a close and as the Romans began to swallow up large territories in the East. In many ways, the Romans picked up where the Ptolemies and

Attalids left off, as the proverbial torch of cultural supremacy was passed from Alexandria to Rome. Rome's cultural ascendancy was an expression of the new political reality.

Many of the ideas from the earlier chapters of this thesis have been reinforced by the example of Imperial Rome. Prior to the Hellenistic Age, it had been difficult for Greek *poleis* to build on such an opulent scale as can be seen in the cities of Hellenistic Alexandria and Pergamon, as well as the more ancient cities, such as Babylon or Nineveh. State libraries were also difficult to achieve. This was in large part due to the absence of larger territorial states headed by royal patrons with kingly revenues in the Classical Greek world. As in the Hellenistic world, once Rome acquired large overseas territories and an imperial system of government, the city's urban image developed rapidly and culture flourished under that emperor's patronage. In earlier chapters I also discussed how Athens had been the cultural predecessor of Alexandria. There is a parallel with Rome. When Egypt was conquered by the ambitious Augustus in 31 BC, cultural dominance in the Mediterranean world passed from Alexandria to Rome, just as it had from Athens to Alexandria at the dawn of the Hellenistic Age. The Romans benefited tremendously from Greek and Hellenistic culture. In many ways, they can be seen as the heirs of Hellenistic culture, through its ideas, customs, and even territories.⁴¹² Augustus used Hellenistic models to make his imperial capital the glorious center of the world. This was done through the invocation of political, religious, and literary ties with the old dynasties of the east, most specifically the Ptolemies. The Romans preserved Hellenistic culture in this way and used it to impose their rule on the entire Mediterranean world, both politically and culturally.

⁴¹² Takacs, 273.

The Great Library of Alexandria was a very powerful symbol on many levels. One of the most important themes in this work is the Library as a representation of the Ptolemies' wealth and power and their usage of it as way to gain cultural prestige. These developments fed off of one another; it was a circular process. The Ptolemies showed their power and wealth through the patronage of learning institutions. The presence of the Mouseion, Great Library, and Serapeum in a city lent itself to the establishment of cultural sophistication. This cultural sophistication put Alexandria on the map and it drew more people into their city, which gave the Ptolemies even more wealth and power. The Library was a symbol of Ptolemaic preeminence. The Great Library was also a potent symbol of Hellenism, as well as gigantism. It was built on a massive scale, with the express purpose of outshining any potential rivals in the other Hellenistic kingdoms.

Alexander and the Ptolemaic Dynasty set Alexandria on the path to greatness from its very inception. Alexandria lasted as a cultural center for many centuries after some of the other preeminent cities of the Hellenistic Age had faded into obscurity. The Great Library was still influential in western culture until the Muslim invasions of the 600's. The Pharos Lighthouse guided ships into the harbor until thirteenth century, when it was toppled by an earthquake.⁴¹³ These are powerful images of the longevity of Alexandria as a cultural center, engendered through the Ptolemies' patronage. Today, Alexandria is a sprawling metropolis and still one of the most important port cities in Egypt and the entire region. The city is still important on a global scale, while many other Hellenistic centers, such as Antioch and Pergamon, are merely in ruins. In contrast to these other cities, Alexandria had staying power. Alexandria's enduring importance over the course of thousands of years could not have been accomplished without the careful

⁴¹³ De Camp, 127.

planning and patronage of the Ptolemaic Kings who oversaw its cultural development in its formative years, or without the massive wealth that their city and kingdom generated.

There are many symbols in the modern city hearkening back to the Hellenistic Age; statues and busts of its illustrious founder adorn important intersections of the city and depictions of long-destroyed lighthouse are a prevalent image in the city. In 2000 the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was founded; “the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina is dedicated to recapture the spirit of openness and scholarship of the original Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It is much more than a library.”⁴¹⁴ These factors demonstrate how profoundly Alexander and the Ptolemies influenced this city. The enduring legacy of the Hellenistic Period can still be seen in the city named for the man who brought this age into being.

⁴¹⁴ Bibliotheca Alexandrina. “Bibliotheca Alexandrina Overview.”
<http://www.bibalex.org/English/Overview/overview.htm>.

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