THE ORIGINS OF RULER-CULT*

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There is ample evidence in the centuries following the death of Alexander the Great for the worship of the living man in the great Hellenistic kingdoms and in Greece itself. By worship I mean cult, i.e. an act of worship, not necessarily involving belief that the recipient is divine but not, I think, necessarily excluding it. The kings receive offerings like the Olympian gods; they have their temples, altars, cult-statues, and their own priests; regular festivals are held in their honour, as they are in honour of the gods, with contests (agônes) and processions. It has often been shown that the predominant motive of the cities in according such worship to the Hellenistic monarchs was political, that the worship was a reward for services rendered to the city and perhaps, not seldom, also an incentive to the king to grant future benefits. Indeed, it has been argued that the emotional element is entirely absent, that they have no religious basis whatever.1 This may be true of the post-Alexander period, although I incline to doubt it, but it does not seem to me to apply to the century before his death. In this paper I propose to consider what precedents there were in the Greek world for the worship of a living man before Alexander, whether Alexander shortly before his death issued a request to the Greek cities to be recognised as a god, and what his motives were, if he did issue such a request.

When one thinks of the Greek gods, one thinks almost automatically, I suppose, of the gods of Homer, the Olympian gods dwelling on the summit of Mount Olympus. They are thought of as dwelling apart from men, in the pure sunny regions of the aether, above the fog and the mist. There is a barrier of cloud pierced by the peak of the mountain; the gods live above and men below. If, in Homer, gods and men form one society, an aristocratic society, they are sharply divided in rank and prestige. There is ‘an unbridgeable gulf’ between them, and this they cannot cross. Gods are immortal, men are mortal. There is no suggestion that men may become gods for merit or for any other reason, and Achilles views with horror the life after death in which there are only unsubstantial shades. We may recall his words to Odysseus when that warrior visits the world of the dead in the eleventh book of the Odyssey (lines 489–91): ‘Put me on earth again, and I would rather be a serf in the house of some landless man, with little enough for himself to

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live upon, than king of all these dead men that have done with life.' Again, if Menelaus is to be transported to the Islands of the Blest, that is because he is the husband of Helen, the son-in-law of Zeus. His translation to the Islands does not constitute a precedent for less favoured mortals. The same attitude may be seen in Herodotus (7.10ε), when Artabanus tells King Xerxes that the gods are jealous and strike down the tallest trees, by which he means men who forget their mortality. It is also the teaching of the Delphic oracle — μηδέν ἀγάν, nothing too much — bow down before the gods, keep to one's station in life, and of the poet Pindar (Ol. 5.24; Isth. 5.16) — seek not to become a god, mortal things become mortal men. This view, that gods and men are poles apart, is widespread, and clearly does not provide any avenue by which men might be deified. We must seek some other line of development.

This is the other main strand which Professor W. K. C. Guthrie has shown to run through Greek religion. In The Greeks and their Gods he writes (p.206), 'There are two religious ideas — immortality implying apotheosis and mere submission to a higher power', and again (p.213), 'There are gods before whom men can only abase themselves, and gods of whose divinity and immortality they themselves might hope to partake'. These are the Olympian and the Chthônian gods, the gods of heaven and the gods of earth. For the Chthônian gods live in the dark recesses of the chthon, mother earth. They have to do with the maintenance of the fertility of the land and with the realm of the souls of the dead. The difference between the two kinds of gods can be seen most clearly in their cult. The Olympians receive on a high altar the sacrifice of a white ox slaughtered with its throat upward in the bright morning light, and they have the regular Greek temple. To the Chthônians is sacrificed at a low hearth or into a trench a black pig or a ram with its throat facing downward, and the time of sacrifice is evening or night. The sacrifice described by Odysseus at the beginning of Book 11 of the Odyssey (vv.19ff.) illustrates the latter very well: 'Dreadful night has spread her mantle . . . I drew my sharp sword from my side and dug a trench about a cubit long and a cubit wide. Around this trench I poured libations to all the dead . . . promising them that directly I got back to Ithaca I should sacrifice a barren heifer in my palace . . . and make Teiresias a separate offering of the finest jet-black sheep to be found in my flocks. When I had finished my prayers . . . I took the sheep and cut their throats over the trench so that the dark blood poured in.' (trans. Rieu)

I have called the Chthônians 'gods'. But this is not strictly correct, for they included both gods and heroes. By 'heroes' I mean not the Homeric heroes, the great warriors such as Achilles or Ajax, but ancestors and other dead men who are in receipt of prayer and cult. They are not unnaturally
included among the Chthōnians since they are buried in the ground, and are grouped together with these gods in opposition to the Olympians. It used to be believed that the ‘hero’ had once been a god, that he was, so to speak, a ‘faded god’ but L. R. Farnell² has shown clearly that the trend was the other way, from man to hero. For the earliest known example of a ‘hero’, the Spartan Lycurgus, was certainly not a god before he became a hero. The name Lycurgus is that of a man and, whether he was historical or not, men certainly believed that he had been a man. The connection between ‘heroes’ and the Chthōnian gods was always very close, as Farnell points out. ‘There was always’, he writes (p.239), ‘a great resemblance between the ritual at a buried hero’s tomb and that at the underground shrine of the earth-deity or daimon; therefore in certain cases it might be hard to determine whether the personage belonged to one or the other class; and in the shifting popular tradition the one could easily be transformed into the other’. Clearly, as Guthrie has pointed out, this is far from the teaching of Homer (or, for that matter, of Herodotus), and this is the path that leads to immortality.

I want now to consider the various types of people who were granted heroic honours after their death. I have mentioned Lycurgus, the reputed founder of the Spartan way of life (agogē). He typifies one class, that of the lawgiver, to whom such honours were given. Turning to more certainly historical examples, we can see from Herodotus that before the fifth century the founders of cities were normally worshipped after their death. In one of his valuable digressions, Herodotus (6.38) tells us of the career of the elder Miltiades who colonised the Thracian Chersonnese and to whom at his death the people of the region sacrificed as to a founder, as was customary (ώς νόμος). In these cases cult seems to have been granted not so much on grounds of merit as for official reasons, by virtue of the position held. In the fifth century, however, cult was granted to particular groups of men as a reward for their patriotism. For example, the Greeks who fell at Plataea in 479, fighting against the Persian invaders, were worshipped as heroes, and their cult was still observed in the time of Plutarch, nearly six hundred years later.³ The same attitude towards benefactors can be seen in the cult of the Athenians who fell at Marathon and of the tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who attempted to free Athens from the tyranny of Hippias in 514. An interesting case is that of Brasidas, the great Spartan leader who, among other feats of arms, liberated Amphipolis from the Athenians during the Peloponnesian war and was regarded by the inhabitants, so Thucydides (5.11) tells us, as their second founder. After his death he was buried in the market-place and received annual sacrifices and contests in his honour. Once again heroisation is a recognition of outstanding services on

the part of the recipient. The same honours were accorded to the Corinthian Timoleon, who some 80 years later in 343 B.C. expelled the tyrant Dionysius II from Syracuse and led the people to victory over their Carthaginian enemies. The list could be extended indefinitely, and it was not only for military or political services that heroic honours were granted. The arts were not neglected. Soon after his death the poet Pindar was so honoured at Delphi, while both Aeschylus and Sophocles received annual sacrifices at Athens. These, as Farnell has shown (pp.362f.), probably began in the fifth century, and in the fourth the worship of Plato was instituted not long after his death in 347. Less commendably, some outstanding athletes such as Cleomedes and Theagenes were 'hero-worshipped' from the early fifth century.

So far all the instances of heroisation I have given have been posthumous, instances of men worshipped after their death. It is not until almost the very end of the fifth century that we hear of a man being worshipped in his lifetime. I shall deal with this first example shortly, but meantime I should like to turn to the case of Dion, towards the middle of the fourth century. Dion was the uncle of the tyrant Dionysius II, from whose rule he delivered the people of Syracuse in 356/5 B.C. According to the express testimony of the Sicilian historian, Diodorus (16.20), he was granted heroic honours during his lifetime, on the ground that he was a benefactor and saviour. It is true that Diodorus wrote some 300 years after the event, but in the Sicilian part of his history he used reliable third-century sources and I see no reason to disbelieve his statement. The circumstances in which Dion was granted these honours are significant. He had aided the Syracusans to expel Dionysius from Syracuse, but when faction broke out in the city he was himself compelled to retire with his mercenaries to the neighbouring city of Leontini. Dionysius was subsequently able to effect an entrance into Syracuse and was clearly gaining the upper hand in the fighting. The only hope for the people, as Diodorus stresses, was to appeal for help to the man they had driven out. Despite the treatment that he had received, Dion came to their assistance and succeeded in expelling the tyrant's troops. These were the circumstances in which Dion was granted heroic honours. It seems certain that the people felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude to one who at the last moment, and probably contrary to their expectations, had come to their assistance when disaster (and a very nasty kind of disaster) was almost upon them. It was an act which kindled the popular imagination.

5. For their stories see Pausanias, Description of Greece, 6.6.5, 6.11.2–9 (Theagenes); 6.9.6–8 (Cleomedes). Theagenes actually received divine cult later.
At the end of a most interesting and important article,7 A. D. Nock, the great historian of Greek religion, raises the question why the cult of the living man did not arise until 404 B.C. His answer, which seems to me to be the right one, is that in the fifth century in Greece no man had had the power or prestige necessary to impose sufficiently upon the popular imagination. The Spartans were unwilling that any man should become too prominent, while Athens was a democracy and in a democracy the levelling tendency is very obvious. Nock asks also why the practice had not arisen in the age of the tyrants, when there were outstanding men. The chief obstacle he finds in the paramount influence of the Delphic oracle with its doctrine of moderation. As he puts it (p.61), 'The tyrant lived in a world in which conformity with the normal ideal was the best policy.' He suggests, too, rather half-heartedly, that the age was not marked by any great warlike achievements 'capable of kindling the imagination'. Despite Nock's diffidence, my own feeling is that it is the impact which an act makes upon the imagination of the people that determines whether or not a particular act is rewarded by the grant of such honours.

To return to the question of the heroisation of the living man. If we wish to derive this from the cult of 'heroes', there is a difficulty, a very considerable difficulty, which it would be wrong to minimise. Hero-worship properly depends upon the belief that the dead have power in the grave; if they had no power they would receive no cult. The dead are thought of as dwelling in the tomb — a belief which explains the rich offerings of gold and silver cups, of swords and daggers, in the Mycenaean tombs — and their cult must therefore be observed at the tomb. But the living man naturally has no tomb. How then can he receive cult as a hero? Martin Nilsson suggested that the very frequency with which these honours were conferred has blunted the feeling that hero-cult is essentially a cult of the dead. There is no doubt much truth in this, but perhaps it is also the similarity of the qualities of the living man to those of the dead hero and the function he has that has caused the development. After all, the hero was worshipped because of his power to aid, and living men received cult because of the help they had rendered people at a time of great stress or crisis. For the belief in the power of the dead to help the living, Guthrie (p.233) refers to the famous passage in Aeschylus's Choephori where Orestes and Electra invoke the help of their dead father Agamemnon as Electra pours her libations over his tomb. A little later (p.235) the same writer comments that 'a city might found a hero-cult either in expectation of benefits to come or to avert the effects of the dead man's wrath'. The same

8. Guthrie well remarks (p.234) that 'it would be difficult to find a better example... of the state of belief which lay behind hero-cults and made them possible'.

attitude of mind seems to me clearly present in those who grant honours to the living.

The divorce of the worship of the hero from his tomb can be seen in the case of Heracles, the hero *par excellence*. It is quite certain that he passed from being a man to being a god — his name is a man's name, like Lycurgus. Heracles is, of course, an exception, an exception to the rule that the hero is tied to his grave and an exception in that he is the only hero to reach Olympus, to become a god; but his one case illustrates the possibility of such a change. For the importance of Heracles in this connection I again quote Farnell. 'As for the Greek world', he writes (p.154), 'he was the earliest and most salient example of the mortal achieving divinity through suffering and toil, his career could serve as a theme for the ethical teacher and could quicken in the average man the hope of a blessed immortality.'

We have seen how the cult of the hero has become divorced from the tomb and has been accorded to a living man in the person of Dion. But even before this the consciousness of the difference between gods and men was growing dim. Some heroes were being worshipped as gods, i.e. they were receiving the cult properly given to gods. The truth is, as Nilsson remarks (p.130), that the difference was never as clearly marked in practice as it was in theoretical discussion. For a Christian the barrier between God and men is very clear; to a Greek, or at any rate to some Greeks, the barrier between gods and heroes, and I would add between heroes and men, was indeterminate. It is, doubtless, wrong to think that in Greece any more than in Britain or New Zealand there was uniformity of belief. We may perhaps illustrate this overlapping by the story told by the third-century Greek historian Timaeus⁹ that the flatterers of Dionysius I danced around the tyrant referring to the Nymphs as lifeless gods, implying presumably that Dionysius was a live one. This, of course, hardly indicates belief, but that the remark could be made is in itself significant.

This development may perhaps dispose us to accept what the biographer Plutarch tells us about the Spartan general, Lysander.¹⁰ Lysander, he writes, was the first man to whom Greek cities set up altars as to a god, to whom they made offerings and sang paean, and for whom they held *agōnes*. There is no doubt that the worship is that normally accorded to a god, since the paean at this time is sung in honour of a god; it is the mark of divine worship, not of the worship granted to a hero. But Plutarch was writing some 500 years after the event, and the questions must be asked, 'What is the value of his information? Where did he get it?' His source, he tells us, is Duris, an early third-century writer and, it must be admitted, one whose veracity is suspect on other occasions. Many have thought, therefore,

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⁹. According to Athenaeus 6.250A.
that Duris includes details from the customs of his own day; even Nilsson, who is readier than most to envisage the possibility of a man receiving worship during his lifetime, is doubtful of Duris' account. On the other hand, Duris was ruler of Samos, where Lysander received these honours, and might reasonably be supposed to know what they were. It is understandable that the oligarchic faction in Samos — for Habicht's suggestion (p.167) that it was the oligarchs who honoured him is surely right — should honour their saviour and benefactor in the same way as they would have honoured him had he perished in the moment of triumph. Martin Charlesworth, moreover, points out very justly that Lysander had freed a hundred cities and held greater power than any man before him. The element of pure power, surely, is not unimportant.

There are only a few other instances, apart from Dion, of men claiming or being granted divine honours until we come to Philip, the father of Alexander. About the middle of the fourth century we have the case of Clearchus, the tyrant of Heracleia in Pontus. He claimed to be the son of Zeus, wore a purple robe and a golden crown, and called his son Keraunos (Thunderbolt). Then Athenaeus (7.289c) tells the story of Menecrates, a Sicilian doctor, who thought he was Zeus, and surrounded himself with subordinate gods, patients he had cured of epilepsy! I imagine that most people would agree with Tarn's verdict of 'crazy', although there may be something to be said for Nilsson's comment that it is significant that Menecrates' psychological sickness found expression in that way.

I come now to Philip of Macedon, whose importance in this connection is sometimes played down. We may have doubts about the statement of Clement of Alexandria that the Athenians had decided to worship Philip at Cynosarges, where there was a famous statue of Heracles, but the other evidence cannot be summarily dismissed. According to Diodorus (16.95.2; 95.1), on the very morning of his murder at Aegae in Macedonia, in the procession held as part of the wedding festivities for his daughter Cleopatra, the date and purpose of the Philippeum at Olympia seem too controversial to permit of worthwhile conclusions.
Philip had his own statue carried together with those of the twelve Olympians. As Diodorus puts it, 'The king exhibited himself enthroned (σύνθρονον) among the twelve gods'. Clearly he was in some manner claiming to be their equal and entitled to worship like them. Moreover, there existed at Eresos in Lesbos, as we know from an inscription, altars to Zeus Philippios, and Nilsson (p.134) admits that this comes as near to deification as it could.

These are, I believe, all the recorded instances of divine or heroic honours granted to living men before Alexander. Let me turn now, briefly, to the writers of the fourth century, to Isocrates and Aristotle, who, it must be admitted, are not as helpful as one could wish. Isocrates is credited with writing a letter (Epistle 3) to Philip in 338 B.C., after the battle of Chaeroneia, in which he says that, if Philip conquered Persia, there would be nothing left for him but to become a god. It has been argued that this may have encouraged Alexander to claim divinity in his lifetime, but I find myself in this instance on the side of the sceptics. Even if the letter is not, as no less an authority than Wilamowitz thought, a forgery — counter-propaganda to the statement put about by the democrats that Isocrates had lost his faith in Philip — a comparison with the end of the Philippus, an ‘open letter’ addressed to Philip eight years earlier, makes it probable that Isocrates was thinking of Philip receiving divine honours after his death.

We come to Aristotle, and the passage in the third book of the Politics (1284a3) dealing with the god among men. It runs as follows: ‘If there be a single man, or more than one man, who shall so surpass the rest of the citizens in excellence and political capacity that no comparison would be possible, such a man cannot be merely part of the state, for it would be unjust to them to put them on an equality with those they so surpass, for such a man would truly be a god among men.’ I incline to agree with Balsdon in his contention that ‘He was simply describing the quasi-metaphysical grading of a humanly inconceivable paragon’, what Victor Ehrenberg calls, more pithily, a ‘superman’. As far as I am competent to judge, Aristotle does not seem to have believed (except perhaps in a purely abstract and logical way) in the possibility of a man becoming a god. When, towards the end of his Nicomachean Ethics (1177b), he writes, ‘Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have a man’s thoughts or a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought so far as possible to achieve immortality’, he seems to mean that the best part of man is identical with the nature of god, and it is, in fact, only the philosopher who can for short

periods attain to this state. If, earlier in the same work (1159a), he asks, in talking about friendship, whether we can wish our friends to become gods, he seems to me to be talking purely hypothetically. Certainly, we are not justified in asserting that Alexander must have gained the idea of the god among men from Aristotle during his period of instruction in Macedonia when he was aged between 13 and 16.

Nevertheless, I regard it as not improbable that the teaching of Plato and Aristotle on the immortality of the soul was misunderstood in much the same way that the teaching of Socrates was confused with that of the Sophists. It is surely a short step in the popular mind from saying that man has within him a divine element to saying that he is himself divine.

This is the background against which Alexander is said to have issued a request to be recognised as a god. The evidence for such a request is meagre, consisting as it does of statements (almost identical) by Plutarch and Aelian, writers of the first and second centuries A.D. respectively.18 None of the chief sources for the history of Alexander mentions such a request, although in Arrian and Curtius there are gaps in the narrative at the point where it might have occurred.

It is beyond question that discussions on a proposal to grant Alexander divine honours took place in Athens late in 324 B.C. The contemporary orator, Hypereides, for example, states that Demosthenes agreed (συγχωρών) that Alexander might be the son of Zeus and Poseidon too, if he wished, while another orator, Demades, is said (admittedly by a late author) to have proposed that he be recognised as a thirteenth god.19 Despite valiant efforts by Balsdon and others to throw cold water on the evidence, it is certain that the Greek cities did recognise Alexander as a god. The evidence is a passage in Arrian’s Anabasis, which reads as follows: ‘Embassies also in the meantime (Spring 323 B.C.) came from Greece, and their envoys, themselves crowned, came forward and crowned Alexander with golden crowns, as if they had come on a sacred embassy to honour some god. And yet he was not far from his end.’ On this passage Balsdon remarks, ‘there is nothing in the offer of a golden crown to indicate recognition of divinity’. This is undoubtedly true, as a glance at the index to Tod’s Greek Historical Inscriptions (to which Balsdon refers) will show.20 But the important point in Arrian’s statement, as others before Balsdon had seen, is that the envoys themselves wore golden crowns, as they did when engaged

on sacred embassies. Nor is Balsdon’s second objection any better based. ‘ὡς θεωροὶ δὴθεν’, he writes (p.385), ‘is not the same as a statement that they came actually ὡς θεωροὶ rather than πρέσβεις (secular envoys)’. He goes on disarmingly, ‘Moreover, the passage is one which in general should not be pressed too hard, for it is that very rare thing in Arrian, a piece of fine writing. The envoys were “as if they had come on a sacred embassy to honour a god”, he says; he continues “τῷ δὲ οὐ πόρρω αρα ή τελευτή ἦν”’. What Balsdon is contending is that Arrian does not believe that the envoys had come on a sacred embassy, otherwise he would not have used the particle δὴθεν. But, while it is true that this particle sometimes indicates disbelief, there are a good many instances where it indicates not disbelief, but sarcasm;21 this is the case here. What Arrian is saying is that the envoys came to acknowledge the divinity of Alexander, which is absurd. How could Alexander be a god? Everyone knows that the essence of divinity is immortality, ‘and yet Alexander was not far from his end’. Arrian is doubting not the recognition of Alexander’s divinity (the crowned envoys attest this), but the divinity itself. Arrian, like other writers of his time (2nd century A.D.), is sceptical of the cult of rulers, as he had observed it in the Roman Empire.

I agree with Balsdon that this passage cannot be used as evidence that the initiative came from Alexander himself, but when he suggests that it came from Alexander’s supporters in the Greek cities we part company again. They wished, he thinks, to compromise their political opponents on this question of divine honours. But is it likely that they would have ventured on such a step without knowing what Alexander thought about the matter, particularly if, as Balsdon has argued earlier in his article, there was little or no precedent for the granting of divine honours? I very much doubt it. Admittedly, Alexander had been calling himself ‘son of Zeus’ for some years, but that is not at all the same thing as being a god. Moreover, Balsdon’s view assumes, I think, that the supporters of Alexander in the various cities concerted their efforts — surely not a very likely supposition — or, alternatively, that they all had the same idea at the same time. At least we know of action at Athens and Sparta, and Arrian clearly implies that sacred envoys from a number of Greek cities came to Babylon in 323. I do not think we are justified in rejecting the explicit statement of (the source of) Plutarch and Aelian that Alexander requested recognition of his divinity.

21. On the use of δὴθεν see J. D. Denniston, *Greek Particles* ed.2 (Oxford, 1954), 264ff., esp. (5) ‘Expressing not incredulity, but contempt or indignation’, and (6) ‘Seldom devoid of all trace of scepticism, irony, or indignation.’ There are two similar examples in Arrian’s seventh book: 7.8.2, ὡς χαριούμενος δῆθεν τοῖς Μακεδονίασ (of Alexander’s promises to the Macedonians before the mutiny) and 7.14.5, τιμωρούμενον δῆθεν τὸν Ἐλλησποντον (of Xerxes punishing the Hellespont).
There is, indeed, a little other evidence that points in the same direction. First, Plutarch in Chapter 28 of his *Life of Alexander* quotes a portion of a letter from Alexander to the Athenians in which the king refers to Philip as his ‘so-called’ father. This may mean no more than that he thought of himself as ‘son of Zeus’, but as Plutarch immediately before, quoting from the letter, states that Alexander assumed his own divinity only rarely, he evidently took Alexander to be referring to deification. Then Arrian tells us (without naming his source) that one of the motives for Alexander’s projected invasion of Arabia was a desire on the part of the king to be worshipped as a third god beside Ouranos (Sky) and Dionysus, the chief gods of the Arabians. We might be inclined to shrug off this story if we did not know from Strabo (16.1.11) that Arrian’s source was Aristobulus, a Greek who accompanied Alexander and was one of Arrian’s main sources. The sceptics must admit, even if they reject the attribution of motive, that it is significant that Aristobulus, who knew the king well, could think of Alexander in this way.

The king, moreover, paid the great painter Apelles twenty talents to paint a portrait of him for the temple of Artemis at Ephesus, and in this picture he was portrayed holding a thunderbolt. Despite the doubts of some scholars about the value of the elder Pliny’s evidence, it seems to be supported by a rare decadrachm, of which only three examples are known, struck at Babylon. It shows on the obverse, Alexander on horseback attacking the Indian rajah Porus on his elephant and on the reverse the king standing holding a thunderbolt. Here, as in Apelles’ painting, Alexander is clearly portrayed as a god. The important point is the date of issue. On this Charles Seltman, the Cambridge numismatist, writes: ‘It is improbable that the coin was struck after Alexander’s death, for there would hardly have been an occasion for this issue except just after the Indian expedition.’ He points out that the coin was clearly commemorative. At any rate, if these coins were struck during his lifetime, they show Alexander proclaiming himself a god, showing himself as a person to whom the idea of divinity was by no means unwelcome. To claim that this evidence constitutes proof that Alexander requested his deification would be to claim too much, but it tends, I believe, to confirm the positive statement that he did so.

But if Alexander did issue a request to the Greek cities, what was his motive for doing so? It has been widely held that his motive was political,

22. For a defence of the authenticity of this letter see my article ‘Alexander and His “So-called” Father’, in *Classical Quarterly* N.S. 3(1953), 151–157 (= Alexander, Main Problems, 235ff.).
25. Two are in the British Museum, one in an American collection.
that he wished to obtain the right to intervene in the affairs of the cities to enforce his order (proclaimed at the Olympic Games in 324) that they should receive back their political exiles. The great difficulty about this view is that it is extremely doubtful whether, in fact, being a god made any difference to his control of the Greek cities. A god hardly had a legal standing in a Greek city, while if it is suggested that the cities would perhaps be reluctant to disobey someone they had deified, we may fairly reply that after the death of Alexander they lost no time in revolting.

There remains the possibility that Alexander requested divine honours for their own sake, as a recognition of his superhuman achievements. Certainly, if great achievements could raise a man to the company of the Olympians, no one (it might be maintained) had a better right to join them than Alexander. He was a liberator on a grand scale, he had overthrown the mightiest empire in the western world, he had advanced beyond the bounds of that empire, further (it was said) than Heracles and Dionysus, further certainly than any Greek before him.

One might suggest other factors which may have influenced him to make his request: his recognition as Pharaoh in Egypt, his belief that he was the son of Zeus, the pomp and ceremonial of the Persian court and the outstanding position of the Persian king (although it seems certain that the Persians did not regard their rulers as divine), the honours paid to his father Philip and perhaps the worship of Alexander himself in the cities of Asia Minor, for which there appears to be some evidence.

The widespread refusal to believe in a request by Alexander stems, I believe, not so much from the scantiness of the evidence, as from the feeling that such a request would make Alexander appear foolish or even abnormal. There is perhaps more force in this than Charlesworth, for example, would seem to allow. For he writes (p.13) that ‘when Alexander issued a request to the Greeks that he be accorded divine honours, the average Greek mind was ready enough by instinct and tradition and by the experience of a hundred years to feel that the demand had justice in it.’ I wonder whether he is right. Or is there a difference between the spontaneous recognition of a man’s divinity, i.e. of his superhuman qualities and achievements, on the part of others, and a demand from the person himself that he be so recognised?

Certain actions towards the end of Alexander’s life might perhaps be held to support the view that at this time Alexander’s state of mind was abnormal. I have mentioned above his letter to the Athenians in which he disowns

27. See, especially, Tarn, Alexander the Great II.370ff. Tarn’s arguments were rejected by several reviewers and Balsdon, op.cit. (n.16), 386-7 demolished his case.  
28. See, e.g., Tarn, op.cit. II.359, and Balsdon, op.cit. 375 and n.66.  
his father Philip — a very strange thing to do in an official letter. Then we have his order for the erection of a magnificent monument to his alter ego, Hephaestion, at a cost of 10,000 (or, some say, 12,000) talents. Finally, and most surprising, there is his letter to the governor of Egypt, Cleomenes, who had been guilty of gross oppression of his subjects; this offered to pardon Cleomenes for his past misconduct and to give him carte blanche for the future if he erected suitable shrines for the dead Hephaestion in Alexandria and on the island of Pharos.
