Abstracts

Josef W. Schön, «Not a God, but a Person Apart». The Achaemenid King, the Divine and Persian Cult Practices

It is quite difficult to describe the position of the Achaemenid Great King from an ideological and religious-ritualistic point of view. The traditional distinction between human and divine does actually not fit this particular situation, while a comparative analysis of the Persian iconographic tradition, of the Greek literature describing the great ceremonies at the Achaemenid court, of the Elamite, Mesopotamian, and Avestan traditions allows us to frame the peculiar status of the Achaemenid king (or maybe of the Achaemenid kingship). Scholars have recently proposed the hypothesis that the Achaemenid rulers might have been the object of cult after their deaths. But the question remains open about their status while still alive.

Federico Maria Muccioli, The Cult of Timoleon in 4th Century BC Political and Religious Context: Tradition and Innovation

Diodorus and Plutarch report that Timoleon was attributed heroic honours by the citizens of Syracuse after his death. This paper aims at investigating the religious, social as such as political framework of those timai on the background of the cultic practices in the 4th century BC. Heroic cult in Sicily was usually due to founders or leaders such as tyrants who had acted energetically towards the citizens of their poleis, e.g. the oikistai attested for the archaic ages or the heroic tributes to Gelo, Hieron, Heron and Dion in his lifetime. Timoleon does not represent an exception, as he is considered as a founder in the sources. He compares to Gelo, according to Tineus, who considers both Timoleon and Gelo as the true saviours of
Sicily. Timaeus was very conservative as far as cults were concerned and he might be responsible for the emphatic description of Timoleon’s death and honours. The games celebrated in his memory deserve special attention. In particular, the music contests that are seemingly not attested before and should actually be compared to those held in Athens and Macedonia on the occasion of funerary celebrations.

Luisa Prandi, * Fortune, Virtue and Divinity. The Case of Alexander*  
This paper looks at the partial apotheosis of Alexander the Great, providing a survey of his posthumous reception in Macedonia and Greece. Another key piece of evidence is Alexander’s funeral organised in Egypt by Ptolemy son on Lagus. The main focus of the paper, however, is on what we know of Alexander’s own behaviour, and what we can conclude from it about the *persona* he sought to cultivate and convey. The author also aims to offer answers to some basic questions: firstly whether, towards the end of his life, Alexander deliberately acted in ways which suggested godhood, with careful consideration of his behaviour at Haphaiiston’s funeral; and, secondly, whether he took steps to establish an official apotheosis, with an analysis of the ancient very scanty tradition.

Franca Landucci Gattinoni, *The Divinisation in the Literary Tradition at the Beginning of Hellenism*  
The cult of the ruler in Early Hellenism is amply attested by epigraphic documentation: many *poleis* would express loyalty and gratitude to their sovereigns through worship, always portraying them as munificent benefactors. Literary documentation of the practice of divinising rulers is much scarcer, being almost solely confined to the well known case of Demetrius Poliorcetes, revered as a god by the Athenians in at least three circumstances between 307 and 290 BC; in fact, for the most part, the literary tradition proves hostile to this Athenian form of worship, considered unworthy of free men. In literature originating in the Greek tradition, the cult of the ruler needs to be distinguished from the notion of ideal monarchy, described in these ancient texts as an ‘honorable service’ on the part of monarchs, who are celebrated for their disinterest in their own glory and orientation towards common good. There is, nonetheless, proof of a dynastic cult having its largest centre in Ptolemaic Egypt, especially since the reign of Ptolemy II who, in 280/79, organized a large procession in honour of his father, by then formally deified; the event was described in detail by a contemporary observer, Callixenus of Rhodes, and preserved via Athenaeus. Into this contradictory cultural climate fits the figure of Euhemerus of Messene, a ‘rationalist’ and ‘atheist’, who regarded the ancient divinities as deified benefactor-kings. Euhemerus was criticized by Callimachus, a poet of the court of Ptolemy II, perhaps because he revealed the *arcana imperii* of the time, namely the
'political' ties between benefits (received by the subjects) and divine honours (bestowed on the sovereign), a practice of which Ptolemy II was a master.

Stefano G. Caneva, Ruler Cults in Practice: Sacrifices and Libations for Arsinoe Philadelphos, from Alexandria and Beyond

In this paper I discuss the dossier of cults for Arsinoe II Philadelphos to investigate how the worship of a sovereign could concretely become a constitutive part of the religious life of the communities composing a kingdom. I argue that in order to let the worship of a sovereign survive the political context in which it was first conceived, a certain degree of freedom and of individual initiative must have been encouraged among potential worshippers, so that the cults could become part of a durable shared religious and political identity connecting the individual with the collective sphere.

Lucia Criscuolo, The Queen, the Goddess and Her Horse

In the Ptolemaic royal titulature, the eponymous priests had an important role as an expression of the dynastic ideology and cult. In second century BC, the lists of such priesthoods became increasingly long, with the addition of both new kings and queens, their cult epithets, and new priesthoods for special royal cults. After the succession of Ptolemy VIII one of these priesthoods, the sacred hoal of Isis, seems to have acquired a new ideological importance. Its first traditional attestation (131 BC) can now be challenged and its meaning in the dynastic propaganda can be better defined.

Panagiotis P. Iossif, The Apotheosis of the Seleucid King and the Question of the High-priest/priestess: a Reconsideration of the Evidence

'Royal cult' is generally considered based on the inscriptions, both royal and civic, dealing with the timai received by the kings. Ancient historians being in most cases silent on the cult of the kings, especially of the Seleucids, modern history has reconstructed a category of cult based on the few scarce inscriptions relating the timai offered to the kings (and their families). Most of these inscriptions are manifestations of the effort of civic authorities to deal with the supra-civic power of a king. Much ink has been spilled on analyzing these timai, generally (and correctly) described as a form of benefaction in the do ut des process.

With the exception of the prostigmata of 209 for the nomination of Nikanor and 193 for the grand-priestesses of the cult of Laodike, most of the documents reflect the point of view of the city and her own anxieties in dealing with an unknown power. The same inscriptions do not deal with the question of the status of the Se-
leucid king: divine? hero? human? Furthermore, they provide no evidence on how
kings (and their courts) considered themselves. An analysis of the evidence is pro-
posed following Henk Versnel’s approach of the notion of theos. Concluding, it is
necessary, for our better understanding of the Seleucid cult, to take under consider-
ation coinage and other media for dissemination of the royal image. An innovative
approach of coins is proposed focusing on the way the kings associated themselves
with the divine.

Edward Dąbrowa, The Arsacids: Gods or Godlike Creatures?
The aim of this paper is to propose some new observations concerning the Arsacid
ruler-cult. In several studies written over the last few years the author proposed
some interpretations of various aspects of this cult. Nevertheless, there are still
some questions which must be discussed. One of them especially important, is if
in the Arsacid empire ruler-cult was indeed a replica of religious rites known in the
Hellenistic monarchies. Available evidence does not support a view that on soil of
Arsacid empire there existed any priest or regular religious practices related to the
ruler-cult. Even while different types of evidence permit us to conclude that the
Arsacid kings willfully propagated some forms of the ruler-cult, we should assume
that its theological content was certainly different from that known from other
Hellenistic states.

Margherita Facella, Apotheosis and Catasterism in Commagene: the So-called ‘Lion-
Horoscope’
Discovered in 1882 during the first survey of the architectural complex of Nem-
rud Daği, the ‘lion-horoscope’ is one of the most spectacular Commagenian monu-
ments. It is a quite large sandstone stele carrying the relief of a lion speckled with
stars and with a moon crescent on his chest. Amongst the reasons that make this
find so well-known is that the ‘lion-horoscope’ is, to date, the earliest Greek sculpt-
tural evidence of an astrological conjunction. For this reason the relief has attracted
significant attention within scholars, who have tried to locate in time this celestial
event. The reinvestigations by Maurice Crijns and by Stephen Heilen demonstrate
how the dating which the “horoscope” would represent and its interpretation re-
main under debate. In this paper the author gives a rapid overview of the dating hy-
pothesis and of the main interpretations proposed to date. The author then focuses
on recent (and less recent) epigraphic finds which, in her opinion, permit a connec-
tion of this conjunction with an important event in the king’s life, and therefore
allow us to exclude that the relief celebrates Antiochus’ apotheosis.
Luis Ballesteros Pastor, *Mithridates, God-King? Iranian Kingship in a Greek Context*

The Persian and Macedonian roots of the Pontic kingship were reflected in both the concept of royalty and in the relationship with the subjects. Thus, while Mithridates VI received from the Greeks divine honours similar to those granted for other Hellenistic monarchs, the Iranian perspective was followed at court: rulers were not deified although they could receive special treatment. Mithridates was hailed in Roman Asia with terms that may be related to Greek epithets: *pater-ktistes, conservatorsoter*. Eupator was also exalted as a New Dionysus, that could be a sort of *interpretatio Graeca* of the king’s ability to drink plenty of wine – which was a feature associated with the Persian concept of kingship. The Pontic ruler was also hailed as New Dionysus in Athens, in an episode reminiscent of Demetrius Poliorcetes’ arrival in the city. The Delian chapel dedicated to Eupator and the Dioscuri highlighted the relationship of these heroes with the sign of Gemini, which was linked by Persian astrology to Cappadocia. Mithridates shared this *heroon* with Castor and Pollux as a *synnaos theos*. This king was interested in being especially associated with two characters in Greek mythology: on the one side Pelops, regarded by certain traditions as king of Paphlagonia, famous as a charioteer, who had a chariot of winged horses given by Poseidon. On the other side, the Pontic ruler claimed to be linked with Telphus, mythic king of Mysia, the region formerly ruled by the satraps of Dascylium, ancestors of the Mithridatids. In addition to this Eupator was most likely associated with Heracles, a Greek hero who had travelled to the Black Sea on several occasions.

The only direct evidence about ruler cult in the Mithridatid realm is an inscription dedicated to Pharnaces I by the *phrourarch* Metrodorus: it reflects that the king was not deified, although he probably was granted honours similar to those received by the Persian rulers. However, there would have been a dynastic cult in Pontus, analogous to the one established by Antiochus III in the Seleucid Empire. From at least Pharnaces I we know about the office of *archiereus*, royal foundations with dynastic names, and the use of royal epithets by some Pontic monarchs.

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Tommaso Gnoli, *Augustus’ Apotheosis*

This paper analyses Augustus’ funerary ceremony of 14 AD and specifically focuses on the procedure of the Apotheosis and the significance of the great dynastic tomb in Campo Marzio. The analysis of the ceremony’s religious meaning reveals a typical case of ‘invention of tradition,’ pretending that it respected the oldest beliefs of the Roman religion rather than new revolutionary needs. The ideological contents of the message connected with the death of the *princeps* had been accurately selected by Augustus himself in his lifetime as he had planned the entire ceremony in great detail, imbuing it with high symbolic content. The message transmitted through this was a conscious alternative to Hellenistic ideologies.
Anna Lina Morelli, Erica Filippini, *The Deification of Women in the Early Empire: The Numismatic Evidence*

The deification of the princeps after his death is the result of a series of ideological implications. In the Early Empire the consecratio had a strong political meaning and worked as a medium to achieve personal legitimation by means of the creation of a divine filiation and the consequent celebration of it. Female members of the imperial family also deserved a consecratio starting from the apotheosis of Drusilla, the sister of Caligula, and of Livia, the grandmother of Claudius. All this acquires special relevance in connection with the increasing importance of the women of the imperial family in the process of legitimation of the imperial power. This is testified for by issues of posthumous coins during the first century AD celebrating both personal and dynastic legitimation by means of the deification of the members of the imperial family, also women.

In this regard, the study of the numismatic evidence regarding diva Domitilla, identified here as Flavia Domitilla Minor (sister of Domitian and grandmother of his adoptive sons), shows a clear dynastic programme, related to the role played by the imperial women as guarantors for the succession to the throne.

Gabriele Marasco, *A Reversed Apotheosis: How to Send an Emperor to Hell*

The apotheosis and the emperor’s cult were essential and generally accepted features during the Roman Empire. However, the decision was not always taken without difficulty: sometimes, indeed, it caused fierce debates and controversies, which have left their mark in the history and literature of Antiquity. The most famous case is the apotheosis of Claudius, which was ordered by Nero and Agrippina for political reasons, but caused considerable dissent and derision, witnessed mainly by Seneca’s *Apokolokyntos*. The analysis of this work and of similar evidences of the strong disagreements about the apotheosis of Hadrian and of some generally neglected sources concerning Commodus and Aurelian reveal that these disagreements were primarily the result of widespread hostilities in the Senate. The frequent references in Cassius Dio and in the *Historia Augusta* also show traces of a very strong debate that opposed, also in the juridical field, imperial authority over the Senate, jealous of its prerogatives, and aimed to provide its members with impunity even in cases of serious crimes.

Orietta Dora Cordovana, *For the Living or for the Dead? Policy and consecratio in Julio-Claudian and Antonine Age*

This paper focuses on some hitherto neglected aspects of imperial apotheosis. Scholars agree that Septimius Severus manipulated this ritual for political purposes, in order to consolidate the legitimacy of his imperial succession against one of the
few political prerogatives still under senate control. This contribution aims to demonstrate that this was not a unique case. By contrast, the need to claim legitimate succession was a constant Leitmotiv of the principate and a pivotal practice well rooted in a specific political habitus and a philosophic ideology of *maiestas*. Against the background of the ambiguous political opposition between the senate and the *princeps primus inter pares*, *consecratio* was not just a redundant religious ritual linked to the imperial cult. Focusing specifically on the first and second century AD, this paper analyses the fundamental role of the late emperor’s successor in the apotheosis-protocol and its crucial legal consequences in the context of this specific procedural aspect of imperial succession.

Kai Ruffing, *Living Gods–State in Roman Egypt. Social and Economic Conditions of Imperial Cult and of Emperor Worship in the Capitol of Ptolemais Euergetis*

Due to its richness of documentary papyrus sources Roman Egypt provides a good example for the economic and social conditions of worshipping the Roman emperor. Thus the present paper tries to sketch briefly how the Roman emperor was worshipped during lifetimes by different strata of the population of the Nile province. After short remarks on the composition of the provincial society something is to be said about the worshipping the emperor in Egyptian temples and the role of the *Kaisareia* in the metropoleis of the province. Finally a closer look will be taken on how the imperial cult and the worship of the emperor was financed in the Capitolium of the nome metropolis Ptolemais Euergetis. It will be argued that there was an economic and social win-win-situation for the elite sustaining the cult in the Capitolium.

Ted Kaizer, *Euhemerism and religious life in the Roman Near East*

Scholars generally claim that the presentation of the divine world of the Roman Near East in both the *Phoenician History* by Philo of Byblos and the *Syriac Oration* of Meliton the Philosopher, with their tendencies to explain the gods as mortals who had become deified in recognition of their contributions to civilization, had nothing to do with the actual cultic realities on the ground. This paper provocatively questions the legitimacy of downplaying their Euhemeristic interpretations as a literary phenomenon only, and suggests to take into account the possibility that these theories could in fact have played an active role in some of the cultic life within the Levant.

Matthias Haake, *Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door*

The *apotheosis* of a king or emperor, during his lifetime or after his death, constituted an essential element in the political communication between rulers and subjects
both in the Hellenistic period and during the Roman Imperial era. Perhaps contrary to expectations, this aspect of political communication was of no importance in one specific type of text, the *peri basileias*-literature. This genre, having first occurred during the reign of Alexander the Great, experienced its *floruit* in the early Hellenistic period and is attested, albeit as a rather unsuccessful phenomenon of reception in the Roman Imperial era and late antiquity. Socially, it is part of the communicative context of the continually precarious web of relationships between ruler and city. However, it is not the real-political aspects that characterise the content of the philosophers’ texts – which are addressed to sole-rulers, entitled *basileus* and directed at the panhellenic public of poleis as their implicit readers – rather, it concerns the construction of the ideal good ruler, opposed to the tyrant omnipresent in ancient political thought. It is in this context that the absence of the apotheosis-theme in the *peri-basileias*-texts needs to be explained.

Attilio Mastrocinque, *Heliogabalus, Saturnus and Hercules*

The ancient tradition unanimously condemned the emperor Heliogabalus, but did not explain what the alleged reason and the meaning of his behaviour were. Recent research has been aimed at understanding more than describing or condemning the political and religious choices of this odd emperor. In this article a ritual performed by him is explained where he combines a lion, a monkey, a snake, and human genitals. The iconography of some magical gems shows the same elements and is referred to a castrated Egyptian Kronos, whose features were known also in Syria, at Hierapolis-Bambyke. This Kronos was a symbol of Eternity and possibly of the eternity of a deified emperor. A second peculiarity of Heliogabalus was his depiction on coins as a cross-dressed Hercules, wearing a priestly Syrian dress, similar to female attire. Romans knew only of a cross-dressed god, namely Hercules at the court of Omphale. This was a means by which Heliogabalus presented himself as a new Hercules and made the Romans understand his attitude.

Antonio Panaino, *The Sasanian Emperor Between Human and Divine*

Sasanian royal ideology should be framed in its particular context. The king was a *persona sacra*, who, by means of his initiation to royalty (in the rituals of enthronement and coronation) changed his status and at the same time entered an altogether new ontological dimension. While this royal elevation gave him a šibr (descent/brightness/image) deriving from the gods, it did not permit him to name himself as yazad. Furthermore, the šāhān šāh remained a dastgird of the gods, and this explains why he continued to offer sacrifices for the benefit of his own soul. All these facts, analyzed more in detail, serve to demonstrate that the Persian king was a human being, not a god, but set apart, as a sacred person. As such, he was responsible for an
eschatological role in the struggle against (historical and spiritual) evil, and in close relation with Ohrmazd and the other Yazadān. This special position needs to be carefully considered, which is why the concept of divinization which is applied to it seems to be completely unfitting, or, at least, misleading.

Ramón Teja, *Non tamen deus dicitur cuius effigies salutatur: the Discussion Over the Imperial Cult in the Christian Empire*

In the so called *Christian Empire* that began with Constantine, a new religion was shaped from Greek and Roman paganism, with the addition of new themes to benefit the Roman cult of the emperor which had been promoted partly through the iconic fashioning of an image to establish the emperor type. Christian liturgy transmitted what had been the late-antiquity imperial court ceremonial, based on the sacral nature of the imperial figure. Contemporary Christian thinkers attempt to justify the persistence of those rituals which establish different meanings to terms such as *adoratio* and *salutatio*, *numen supernum* and *numen imperatoris*, or, as in the case of Gregory Nazianzenus, between the *proskynesis* to images of divinities and to image of emperor, censuring the practice that he called mixed *adoratio*; distinctions which seem, above all, rhetorical devices. There is the paradox that in the Christian empire the so called *adoratio purpurae* that had been before Constantine a cause of so much spilling of blood of martyrs, was to become a permanent ceremony in the imperial palace. This ambiguity concerning the respect demonstrated by Christianity for imperial images, caused a variety of interpretations that reappear with particular harshness in the iconoclastic controversy.

Giorgio Bonamente, *Theodosius I, an Emperor Without Apotheosis*

The *Apotheosis* is a complex institution with a strong and spectacular ritual. Its *ratio* is evident in the connection between power and the imperial virtues, and in the projection of the emperor — after death — to a time and to an absolute dimension. The primary role of the Senate in managing the *probatio*, which preceded and gave foundation to the *relatio in numerum divorum*, and the *consecratio* of the deified emperor conferred prestige and credibility to imperial *apotheosis*. Therefore, by its nature, the *apotheosis* is commensurable with both the Old and New Testament's eschatological sanction of the works of a man, which explains the passage from the *apotheosis* to the 'sanctification' of the Christian emperors.

At the beginning, the institute of the *apotheosis* was commissioned by Augustus for his adoptive father, but throughout the imperial age became an important component of the figure and the role of the figurehead and role of emperor, because the Senate maintained an important role in deciding the *probatio*, and the successor to the dead emperor — who usually promoted the *probatio* and sanctioned the conse-
cratio himself – obtained a strong legitimacy from the title of divi filius. A profound transformation, both in the ceremony and in the conception of the institution origintated from Constantine the Great. The first Christian emperor received both the ceremonial of relatio in numerum divorum and the title of divus by the senate of Rome, and obtained the depositio ad Apostolos in the Basilica of the Apostles in Constantinople. It was evident that the Christian conception of the afterlife fate of the emperor came into direct competition with the traditional Roman conception. The balance experimented with by Constantine soon proved soon unstable and hence his sarcophagus was removed from the Basilica of the Apostles during the reign of Constantius II.

Nevertheless, only Ambrose was able to impose a Christian interpretatio on the projection of the imperial figure beyond the limits of earthly life, in occasion of the death of Theodosius in 395. His senatorial culture exposed his sensitivity to the political significance of probatio and he strived to give new foundations, a new process and new referents for reviewing the political work of an emperor, thus granting to it the chrim of absoluteness. The recent victory of Theodosius over Eugenius and the succession to the throne of his two children presented Ambrose with the ideal conditions under which to propose a new model in a solemn manner. During the funeral, the bishop of Milan showed how a Christian prince could be ‘accepted in light of the Father’. It can be said that De obitu Theodosii marked the time when the traditional apotheosis disappeared and the era of the sanctification of the Christian rulers officially began.

Antonio Carile, Imperial Funerals and Burials in Constantinople Between Reality and Legend

Though deprived of their original gold ornaments, Byzantine sarcophaguses made of rare marbles (porphyry, green marble of Thessaly, red marble, proconnesian marble, Assuan black granite, reddish marble, onyx or alabaster, Hereke marble, Sagari-on marble), stand as a testament to imperial grandeur. Damages inflicted by thieves and fragments reused in other buildings testify the bias to obliterate the function and memory of the imperial sarcophagus. The burial ceremony described by Constantine VII in the tenth century is demonstrated adherent to reality by an historical description recently edited by Featherstone.

Monica Centanni, ‘Alexander rex’ Between Byzantium and Venice: the Double Ideological Interpretation of the Alexander’s Flight (XII-XIII Centuries)

The episode of Alexander the Great’s flight is a common subject in late-antique and medieval Byzantine art. The scene features both as the subject of monumental depictions and as an ornament in small precious objects related to courtly ceremonial,
including golden rings, ivory caskets, and glazed dishes. Between the 10th and the
13th century the legend started to be portrayed also in the Western world. In me-
dieval churches the scene featured either in isolation, as a warning against human
pride, or next to Biblical episodes, as positive symbol. In the twelfth-century Nor-
man cultural milieu, the iconography of Alexander’s flight assumed negative con-
notations, with a precise ideological twist of the meaning attributed to the image
in Byzantine domains. By contrast, in early thirteenth-century Venice, the image
of *Alexander Rex* was once again converted into a positive symbol, in accordance
with the Byzantine tradition. Indeed, Alexander’s flight can be considered both an
example of regal *apotheosis* and an *exemplum superbiae*. Such positive and negative
meanings can be both traced back to textual and visual sources: the negative mean-
ing to an apocryphal chapter of the Scriptures, and the positive meaning in the sense
of a prefiguration of the divine charisma of the imperial power.

Alessandro Scafì, *The Survival of the Classical Apotheosis in the Medieval Geographi-
cal Tradition: The Pillars as Cartographic Pointer to Christian Divinisation*

The apotheosis of Hercules, recorded in classical sources, had a Christian afterlife
in medieval cartography. The idea of an east-west progression of human history
lies at the heart of the medieval mappae mundi, which were east-oriented pictorial
representations combining time and space. The Pillars of Hercúles, depicted at the
bottom of some of these maps to indicate the Straits of Gibraltar, marked both a ge-
ographical boundary – the extreme west – and a historical threshold – the impend-
ing consummation of history. A map sign associated with the classical hero who
became a god was adopted by Christian mapmakers to point to the ultimate apothe-
osis of humankind. According to Jean Seznec, the ancient gods survived through
the Christian Middle Ages as historical figures transformed into gods, as symbols
of cosmic forces, as allegories. This paper suggests the importance of geographical
tradition to ensure this very survival.