

AGESILAUS OF SPARTA AND THE ORIGINS OF THE RULER CULT¹

Plutarch, in his *Apophthegmata Laconica* (Ages. 25 = *mor.* 210d), records that the Thasians made an offer of divine honours to king Agesilaus, and that Agesilaus ostentatiously refused them.² In the past, most scholars who have had occasion to comment on this anecdote have not doubted the veracity either of the report or of the language in which it is expressed.³ The situation, however, has now reversed itself. The current *communis opinio* is the contention of Chr. Habicht that the story is an invention of the Hellenistic or early imperial period and was intended to be a criticism of contemporary practices.⁴ The purpose of this note is threefold: to demonstrate that the anecdote derives from Theopompus' *Hellenica*, that it has a basis in historical fact, and that the incident thus narrated had far-reaching social and political consequences.

It is a peculiar fact that there is no unequivocal evidence for the deification of a living man between the alleged deification of Lysander and the well-documented deifications of the Successors of Alexander the Great.⁵ Although it is still a matter of dispute, perhaps it is more likely than not that divine honours were conferred upon Alexander either at Athens or elsewhere during the last year of his life.⁶ And yet after Alexander's death, the deification of living men soon became a widespread phenomenon throughout the Greek world; Antigonus I, Demetrius I, Lysimachus, Seleucus I, Ptolemy I, and Cassander were all worshipped in various Greek cities during their lifetimes. How can one explain this strange lacuna of 70 or more years?

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² Both the authorship and the ultimate source of these Laconian Apophthegms are much debated. For a convenient discussion, see E. N. Tigerstedt, *The Legend of Sparta in Classical Antiquity* ii (Stockholm, 1974), pp. 24ff., 82, 233 and 512 n. 813. For the purposes of this paper it makes little difference whether they were actually collected by Plutarch himself from primary sources, or whether he only excerpted them from an earlier and larger collection of Laconica. I here assume, for the sake of convenience, that Plutarch himself put together the collection from his first-hand knowledge of such authors as Xenophon, Ephorus, and Theopompus. If, however, someone earlier than Plutarch formed the collection, then the following arguments pertain to that 'someone' exactly as they would to Plutarch.

³ In particular, note the following: E. Kornemann, *Klio* 1 (1902), 55; E. Bevan, 'Deification,' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* iv, ed. by J. Hastings (New York, 1912), p. 525; F. Pfister, *RE* 'Kultus' (1921), col. 2127; J. Kaerst, *Geschichte des Hellenismus* i (Leipzig, 1927), p. 480 n. 2; L. R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford, 1921), p. 368; Hiller v. Gärtringen, *RE* 'Thasos' (1934), col. 1318; M. P. Charlesworth, *Harv. Theol. Rev.* 28 (1935), 12; G. de Sanctis, *RivFC* 68 (1940), 9; M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion* ii² (Munich, 1961), p. 141; and J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Historia* 1 (1950), 383.

⁴ *Gottmenschen und griechische Städte*² (Munich, 1970), pp. 179–84. The authenticity of the anecdote was first doubted by F. Taeger, 'Isocrates und die Anfänge des hellenistischen Herrscherkultes', *Hermes* 72 (1937), 358 n. 4.

⁵ This has been demonstrated convincingly by E. Badian, 'The deification of Alexander the Great', in *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honor of Charles F. Edson*, ed. by H. J. Dell, *Inst. for Balkan Stud.* clviii (Thessaloniki, 1981), pp. 27–71.

⁶ For bibliography, see Badian, art. cit. J. P. V. D. Balsdon, 'The "Divinity" of Alexander', *Historia* 1 (1950), 363–88, provides a basic discussion of deification in general besides that of Alexander.

To be sure, there are several possible explanations.⁷ It is my contention, however, that the lacuna can best be explained in terms of the negative precedent established by Agesilaus, who was the most influential man of his time.

One of the most persistent problems facing the historian of classical antiquity is how to determine the veracity of anecdotal evidence. It is certainly the case that many of the anecdotes preserved by our sources inspire little confidence. But when the provenance of an anecdote can be shown to have been a reliable contemporary source, then the possibility of its veracity is greatly increased.⁸ In all of ancient literature only three passages mention any connection between Agesilaus and the Thasians. Two of those passages relate different versions of the same event. This pair consists of a purportedly verbatim quotation of Theopompus by Athenaeus and a paraphrase of that fragment by Plutarch (*FGrHist* 115 F 22 and *Apophth. Lac.*, Ages. 24 respectively).⁹ In this story Agesilaus rejects a gift of delicacies from the Thasians and orders that they be given to his helots. The incident took place in 394 B.C. when Agesilaus was passing through Thrace on his march back to Greece from Asia Minor.¹⁰ It is instructive to quote both versions as it provides an important control for judging the degree to which Plutarch either retains or deviates from both the exact wording and the general meaning of his source. First, F 22:

καὶ οἱ Θάσιοι ἐπεμψαν Ἀγησιλάῳ προσιόντι πρόβατα παντοδαπὰ καὶ βοὺς εὖ τετραμμένους, πρὸς τούτοις δὲ καὶ πέμματα καὶ τραγήματων εἶδος παντοδαπὸν. ὁ δ' Ἀγησίλαος τὰ μὲν πρόβατα καὶ τὰς βοὺς ἔλαβεν, τὰ δὲ πέμματα καὶ τὰ τραγήματα πρῶτον μὲν οὐδ' ἔγνω (κατεκεκαλυπτο γάρ), ὥς δὲ κατείδεν, ἀποφέρειν αὐτοὺς ἐκέλευσεν, εἰπὼν οὐ νόμιμον εἶναι Λακεδαιμονίους χρῆσθαι τοιούτοις τοῖς ἐδέσμασι. λιπαρούντων δὲ τῶν Θασίων, "δότε", φησὶν "φέροντες ἐκείνους", δείξας [αὐτοῖς] τοὺς εἰλωτας, εἰπὼν ὅτι τούτους δέοι διαφθεῖρεσθαι τρώγοντας αὐτὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς παρόντας Λακεδαιμονίων.

Compare this with *Apophth. Lac.*, Ages. 24.

Θάσιοι δὲ τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν διαπορευομένῳ μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος (sc. Ἀγησιλάῳ) ἄλφита καὶ χήνας καὶ τραγήματα καὶ μελίπηκτα καὶ ἄλλα παντοδαπὰ βρώματά τε καὶ πόματα πολυτελῆ ἐπεμψαν. μόνᾳ δὲ τὰ ἄλφита δεξάμενος, τὰ λοιπὰ ἀπάγειν ἐκέλευσεν ὀπίσω τοὺς κομίζοντας, ὥς οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς ὄντα χρήσιμα. λιπαρούντων δὲ καὶ δεομένων πάντως λαβεῖν, ἐκέλευσεν αὐτὰ τοῖς εἰλωσι διαδοῦναι. πυθομένων δὲ τὴν αἰτίαν, ἔφη "τοὺς ἀνδραγαθίαν ἀσκούσας τὰς τοιαύτας λιχναεῖας οὐχ ἄρμόζει προσίεσθαι· τὰ γὰρ δελεάζοντα τοὺς ἀνδραποδῶδεις τῶν ἐλευθέρων ἀλλότρια."

Plutarch obviously has made a rather free paraphrase, although the essential details have been preserved accurately enough: that is, Agesilaus was offered a gift of rich foods by the Thasians; he ordered that they be given to his helots because he believed that eating such foods has an enervating and dissipating effect upon free men. It is

⁷ Badian, art. cit., recently has argued that Lysander was not actually deified during his own lifetime. His view is discussed below.

⁸ Strictly speaking, Theopompus was not a contemporary of Agesilaus. Ancient sources give two dates for Theopompus' birth: the Suda 408–404 and Photius 378/7 (*FGrHist* 115, T 1 and 2 respectively). Although modern opinion favours 378/7, it is not as secure as is generally assumed (see R. Lane Fox, 'Theopompus of Chios and the Greek World: 411–322 B.C.', in *Chios: a Conference at the Homereion in Chios, 1984*, ed. by J. Boardman and C. E. Vaphopoulou-Richardson [Oxford, 1986], pp. 105–20, esp. 107–8). The last scholar to accept the Suda's date was R. H. E. Wickers, *Theopompi Chii Fragmenta* (Leiden, 1829), p. 7. On Theopompus' reliability see below.

⁹ All references to historical fragments are to F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin and Leiden, 1923–58), abbreviated as *FGrHist*.

¹⁰ E. Meyer, *Theopomps Hellenika* (Halle, 1909), pp. 193–7, correctly points out that this incident did not take place on Thasos itself, but while Agesilaus was marching through Thasian-held territory on the Thracian coast. See also Jacoby, *FGrHist* II b Komm. p. 357. The date and context are fixed by the position of F 22 in Book 11 of Theopompus' *Hellenika*, which recounted events of the years 395–4.

important to note that although Plutarch has rewritten the passage in his own words, he has not altered the point of the original story.

The third passage connecting Agesilaus and the Thasians is the one recording the offer of divine honours (*Apophth. Lac.*, Ages. 25). It immediately follows the anecdote quoted above (Ages. 24), and reads as follows:

πάλιν δὲ τῶν Θασίων διὰ τὸ δοκεῖν μεγάλως ὑπ' αὐτοῦ εὐεργετῆσθαι ναοὶς αὐτὸν καὶ ἀποθεώσσει τιμησάντων καὶ πρεσβείαν περὶ τούτου ἀποστέλλαντων, ἀναγνούς τὰς τιμὰς, ὥς αὐτῷ προσήνεγκαν οἱ πρέσβεις, ἠρώτησεν εἰ ἡ πατρίς αὐτῶν ἀποθεοῦν ἀνθρώπους ἔχει δύναμιν· φαμένων δέ, “ἄγετ’” ἔφη “ποιήσατε πρῶτους ἑαυτοὺς <θεοὺς>· καὶ τοῦτ' ἂν πράξετε, τότε πιστεύσω ὑμῖν ὅτι καμὲ δυνήσεσθε θεὸν ποιῆσαι.”

The wording of the text implies that the Thasian envoys were presenting Agesilaus with a *fait accompli*. They were not so much offering him divine honours as announcing that such honours had already been decreed. For the verb ἀναγνούς suggests that Agesilaus read a decree in which the honours were described. It is unclear from his response whether he was demanding that the honours be rescinded or was merely expressing his opinion that such honours were absurd and meaningless. In either case, the effect of his pronouncement would have been the same.

Let me again stress the fact, however, that these passages are the only extant record of any connection between Agesilaus and the Thasians. If we count *FGrHist* 114 F 22 and *Apophth. Lac.*, Ages. 24 as recounting the same episode, then the record is reduced to only two anecdotes. Plutarch's version of the first anecdote (*Apophth. Lac.*, Ages. 24), the one recording the gift of delicacies, indisputably is derived from Theopompus' *Hellenica*. This suggests that the second anecdote, the deification story, is also from Theopompus. Moreover, the two anecdotes are closely linked by the opening words of Ages. 25, πάλιν δὲ τῶν Θασίων. This strong verbal connection reinforces the hypothesis that Plutarch found them in the same source. Indeed, if Theopompus did tell both anecdotes, they probably would have been in close proximity in his narrative. Both incidents would have been recorded in connection with Agesilaus' return to Greece in 394 B.C., when he was accosted by ambassadors from Thasos. But I must also register the possibility (discussed below) that the offer of deification was connected with Spartan intervention on Thasos in c. 385 B.C. In that case Theopompus is less likely to be the source, although he might have mentioned the incident in Book 12 of his *Philippica*.

Even if it is granted, however, that both anecdotes are indeed derived from Theopompus' *Hellenica*, there are several difficulties of interpretation. First of all, Plutarch has clearly rewritten both passages in his own language, and this presents a serious barrier to reconstructing what actually transpired. Secondly, many scholars have shown a reluctance to accept Theopompus' authority on otherwise unattested events, and especially when they concern *exempla* of virtue and vice.¹¹

The second of these difficulties is the least serious. Since the anecdote concerning the offer of deification would have derived from the *Hellenica*, which was published in the 340's, and not from the *Philippica*, there is no danger of contamination from later events.¹² Specifically, Theopompus would have recorded Agesilaus' opposition to the deification of a living man long before the controversy arose surrounding the deification of Alexander the Great or the bestowal of divine honours upon Harpalus'

¹¹ Note, for instance, the judgements of G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, 'The Alleged Secret Pact between Athens and Philip II concerning Amphipolis and Pydna', *CQ* 13 (1963), 114, and of W. R. Connor, *Theopompus and Fifth-Century Athens* (Washington D.C., 1968), p. 152 n. 30.

¹² At least part of the *Hellenica* had been published by 343/2 B.C. See A. Momigliano, 'La storia di Eforo e le Elleniche di Teopompo', *RivFC* 13 (1935), 188.

deceased mistress, Pythionice. The unprecedented and tasteless honours which Harpalus paid to his mistress were in fact ridiculed by Theopompus in a letter to Alexander of c. 324 B.C.¹³ But Theopompus could have had no knowledge of those future controversies when he wrote of the meeting of Agesilaus and the Thasians, and thus no motive for fabricating the incident. In any case, it is unproved that Theopompus was in the habit of embroidering his narrative with incidents which he himself made up, even if he was often inclined to accept rather uncritically the gossip of others.¹⁴

Habicht, however, doubts the historicity of the incident because of the silence of Xenophon and other sources. Xenophon does not mention any offer of divine honours to his friend either in his own *Hellenica* or, more appropriately, in his *Agesilaus*. Indeed, Xenophon records neither of the encounters with the Thasians, and it might be argued that he never would have omitted anecdotes which so poignantly portrayed the character of his friend, especially considering that Xenophon actually accompanied Agesilaus on the trip back from Asia in 394 B.C. Referring to the offer of divine honours, Habicht comments, 'Welchen besseren Beweis hätte er für die von ihm so hervorgehobene Eusebeia seines Helden geben können, als dessen Antwort an die Thasier?'

This objection is not as cogent as it might seem. First of all, the encounters with the Thasians were not appropriate subject matter for inclusion in Xenophon's *Hellenica*. Xenophon apparently felt a reluctance to include anecdotes which depicted virtue or illuminated character in an historical work. After describing the popularity of Teleutias among his troops, he adds this remark as a justification for including such material (*Hell.* 5.1.4.): 'Now I know that this matter pertains to no expenditure of money or danger or contrivance that is worthy of mention. But, by Zeus, I think that it is worthwhile for a man to understand what it was that Teleutias did to dispose his men towards him in this way. For this is the achievement of one who is a man indeed, and is more worthy of mention than the spending of much money or the facing of many dangers.' Theopompus and Ephorus broadened the scope of history so as to include not only the notable deeds of men in war, but also an account of actions which, although not memorable for their military or political consequences, depicted the virtue or vice of prominent individuals.¹⁵

It is more problematic why Xenophon did not mention the Thasians in his *Agesilaus*, for encomium was the proper genre for recording actions which depict virtue. On the one hand, it is not significant that Xenophon does not relate the specific incidents which Theopompus does. The *Agesilaus* is a relatively short work, in which only 14 out of 31 pages in the Oxford text are devoted to a catalogue of his character traits and personal habits. It is not surprising, therefore, that with so much to tell about a king who reigned for the forty most turbulent years in Spartan history, Theopompus and Xenophon did not relate the very same anecdotes.

There was in all likelihood, however, an excellent reason why Xenophon chose not

¹³ *FGrHist* 115 Frr. 251-4.

¹⁴ The most recent discussion of Theopompus is by Lane Fox, art. cit., who rightly criticises his penchant for exaggeration and slander. But concerning his accuracy in the reporting of facts, I accept the judgement of N. G. L. Hammond and G. T. Griffith, *A History of Macedonia* ii (Oxford, 1979), p. 239 n. 4: 'De Ste. Croix writes that "any unsupported statement of this very unreliable historian should be examined with special vigilance". If a statement of T. contains any judgement, I would concur, for clearly he was a writer of vast prejudices, and in this sense is unreliable. But to think of him as a habitual liar when narrating seems certainly wrong.'

¹⁵ For this trend in fourth-century historiography, see C. W. Fornara, *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 97-8 and 107ff.

to recount the offer of divine honours. Xenophon portrays Agesilaus as being a paragon of traditional piety, and there is a strong indication in many of Xenophon's writings that he was such a man himself.¹⁶ As such he would have regarded the Thasian offer as unworthy of mention. Xenophon not infrequently refused to record those things of which he personally disapproved or which he found unpleasant to remember, such as the role of Epaminondas and Pelopidas in events before 367 B.C., or the foundations of Megalopolis and Messene, or the establishment of the Second Athenian Confederacy. More to the point, he makes no mention of the rumour that Lysander had plotted to change the Spartan constitution and have himself elected king. Nor does he record the valiant death of his own son in the cavalry battle that took place before the walls of Mantinea in 362 B.C. A long list of such omissions could be compiled. Are we to suppose that he was ignorant of those events because he did not mention them? As G. L. Cawkwell has observed, 'Xenophon was a man of uncommon reserve. It would be a grave error to suppose that what he did not mention he did not know about.'¹⁷ It was impious and disgraceful for the Thasians to grant to a mortal man honours which were reserved for the gods. Others might comment; Xenophon damned with silence.

The first difficulty is far more serious. As Habicht has pointed out, much of the language of the anecdote is inappropriate to a fourth-century setting. The words ἀποθέωσις and ἀποθεόω are not attested before the third century B.C. More generally, all phrases which mean to make or vote a man a god, such as ποιήσατε ἑαυτοὺς θεοὺς and κάμὲ θεὸν ποιῆσαι, appear to be late. On the other hand, phrases which recognize the fact of an individual's divinity are early.¹⁸ It seems likely, therefore, that if Plutarch's version derives from a fourth-century original, he has completely reworded it using the technical terminology of his own day. Nevertheless, for reasons to be given below, one might argue that the linguistic evidence collected by Habicht does not apply to this particular incident. To be more precise, the ironic response of Agesilaus may stand outside the normal terminology, if one can even speak of normal terminology at the very inception of a complex phenomenon such as ruler worship.

This kind of problem, of course, extends far beyond the interpretation of this anecdote alone. It applies to every instance in which the historian attempts to use Plutarch as an historical source for otherwise unattested events. One can be fairly confident, however, that as in *Apophth. Lac.*, Ages. 24 (which can be compared to the original version, *FGrHist* 115 F 22), the point of the anecdote has remained unchanged. At the very least we are entitled, I believe, to infer the following: Agesilaus was offered honours which he believed were reserved for the gods, and he ostentatiously rejected them. These honours must have consisted of something more unusual than the erection of a statue in his likeness, which is the subject of the next anecdote in the series (*Apophth. Lac.*, Ages. 26) and is mentioned by Xenophon.¹⁹ For the erection of a statue does not in any way presuppose the divine or heroic status of the person represented.

¹⁶ For Agesilaus' piety, see especially Xen. *Ages.* 1.27, 3.2ff. and 11.1ff. Note also 1.34, where Xenophon echoes Agesilaus' disapproval of the Persian practice of *proskynesis*. For a recent discussion, see P. Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (London, 1987), pp. 97–8, 417–18.

¹⁷ For a discussion of Xenophon's omissions, see Cawkwell's introduction to the Penguin edition of Xenophon, *A History of my Times* (Harmondsworth, 1979), pp. 33–8. Quotation is from p. 33.

¹⁸ Habicht, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–9.

¹⁹ Xenophon, at *Agesilaus* 2.11, reports that Agesilaus ordered that no statues of himself be erected, though many wished to make him a present of one.

But the point of Agesilaus' response, even if we do not have his exact words, suggests that the Thasians offered him something which he considered to be impossible: 'Make yourselves gods first, and if you can do it, then I will be convinced that you can make me a god too.' Whatever was offered most probably entailed the recognition of his divinity. Moreover, it is possible that Agesilaus did indeed use the phrase 'to make a god', despite the linguistic evidence that phrases to that effect were not employed in the fourth century. For from Agesilaus' point of view, that is exactly what the Thasians were attempting to do. Despite theological niceties, they were not recognizing his divinity. They were in fact 'making him a god'. So perhaps the linguistic argument made by Habicht does not apply to this particular instance. Alternatively, at least one substitution for θεὸν ποιεῖν suits the context of the anecdote very well. Habicht cites the phrase θεὸν ἀναγορεύειν as being an early expression. If one were to replace the relevant forms of ποιεῖν with those of ἀναγορεύειν, both the sense and syntax of Agesilaus' response would be preserved.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the utterance is the most essential part of an apophthegm, and is the element least likely to be forgotten. Even when the speaker and the occasion are forgotten or transposed, the utterance is usually remembered.²⁰ Therefore, if Agesilaus was the speaker, it is very likely that Plutarch at the very least has preserved the sense of what he said.

Such arguments, of course, are based on a calculation of probabilities, and can never attain the status of proof. The sceptic might contend that Plutarch's source mentioned heroic, not divine, honours and that Plutarch has confused the two. Although that is a definite possibility, the tone of Agesilaus' response and the fact that Lysander recently had received divine honours, suggests that Plutarch has got it right. Plutarch cites Duris of Samos for the fact that Samos had honoured Lysander with altars, sacrifices, paeans, and most significantly, a festival called the Lysandreia.²¹ If these honours were granted to Lysander during his lifetime, as is generally supposed (this view is defended below), the Thasians could hardly have offered less to Agesilaus. To have offered heroic honours to the king when his lieutenant had just received the divine variety, would have been a tremendous insult. Or at least the Thasians would have thought so. Perhaps the Thasians offered to hold a festival in Agesilaus' honour, as the Samians did for Lysander. Or, if we can make an inference from Plutarch's mention of ναοί, which sounds like an exaggeration, as a minimum they planned to erect an altar in his honour, as was also done for Lysander. In any case, we may be sure that any gesture which brought with it a recognition of divinity would have aroused both the indignation of Agesilaus and the silence of Xenophon.

This extraordinary action of the Thasians, it must be noted, fits into a pattern of behaviour which was untypical for Greeks concerning the glorification of the individual. Theagenes, the Thasian Olympic boxing victor of 480 B.C., was one of the first Greeks of the historical period to receive heroic honours after death.²² From c. 350 B.C. come two remarkable architrave dedications. The architrave of the gate of Zeus at Thasos was inscribed Πύθιππος Πα[ιευστράτου].²³ A building known as the

²⁰ See Tigerstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

²¹ Plut. *Lys.* 18.4-6 (= *FGrHist* 76 F 71; also note F 26).

²² For Theagenes, see Pausanias 6.11.2-9; J. Pouilloux, *Recherches sur l'histoire et les cultes de Thasos* i (Paris, 1954), pp. 62ff.; and the useful corrective on the latter by P. Fraser, *AJA* 61 (1957), 99. Note also Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* i (Oxford, 1972), p. 213.

²³ C. Picard, *Les Murailles (I): Les Portes sculptées à images divins, Études Thasiennes*, viii (Paris, 1962), pp. 171ff.; Pouilloux, *op. cit.*, p. 224 n. 21; C. Picard, 'Sur les dédicaces monumentales apposées en Grèce aux entablements de façades d'édifices sacrés ou civils', in *Χαριστήριον εἰς Ἀναστάσιον Κ. Ὀρλανδον, Τόμος Α'* (Athens, 1965), p. 100.

Hypostyle perhaps was dedicated to the god Dionysus, and conjecturally bore the inscription *Θερσίλοχος Ὀρβομένου Διονύσω ἀνέθηκεν*.²⁴

It was highly unusual among the Greeks for a sacred structure to carry a private dedication.²⁵ Precedents were few. At Delphi the Corinthian treasury bore the name of Kypselus and the Acanthian treasury carried the inscription 'Brasidas and the Acanthians from the Athenians'.²⁶ The latter, however, was probably dedicated in Brasidas' honour after his death.²⁷ Essentially, the Thasians were breaking new ground in allowing private dedicants to inscribe their names on a sacred structure. It ought not to surprise us, therefore, that an early instance of ruler worship should come from Thasos. As S. Hornblower has observed in connection with the architraval inscriptions, 'Such a place might well allow special forms of recognition to special generosity.'²⁸

One important question, however, still remains to be answered. What had Agesilaus done that had so excited the Thasians that they offered him divine honours? Three possibilities come to mind, and two of them are not mutually exclusive. First, let us continue to assume that the offer was made in 394. As mentioned before, Agesilaus was approached by the Thasian envoys as he marched through Thasian-held territory on the coast of Thrace.²⁹ That must be the meaning of Plutarch's phrase *τὴν χώραν αὐτῶν διαπορευομένῳ μετὰ τοῦ στρατεύματος*; for in view of the emergency in Greece, Agesilaus would have had no time to make a special voyage to Thasos. Plutarch also says that the Thasians had been greatly benefited by him: *μεγάλως ὑπ' αὐτοῦ εὐεργετῆσθαι*. One possibility is that Agesilaus then acknowledged the Thasians' claim to their possessions on the coast of Thrace, possessions which historically had been a source of great wealth. Alternatively, he may have settled a constitutional crisis in Thasos herself.

Sometime between the autumn of 405 and the autumn of 404 Lysander had made a voyage to the region of Thrace.³⁰ He apparently visited Thasos and arranged for the slaughter of the island's pro-Athenian democratic party.³¹ Although our sources do not say so, the slaughter was undoubtedly followed by the establishment of a decarchy composed of Lysander's partisans.³² When the decarchies were abolished by a decree of the ephors,³³ the internal affairs of Thasos, like those of other cities, may have been thrown into a state of confusion.³⁴ It is possible, therefore, that either on his march home in 394 or while in Ephesus in 396, Agesilaus had made a new arrangement for the government of the island.

²⁴ Pouilloux, op. cit., p. 224 n. 22; Picard, 'Dédicaces', p. 98.

²⁵ See S. Hornblower, *Mausolus* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 274–93.

²⁶ For Kypselos, see Plut. *mor.* 400e; for Brasidas, Plut. *Lys.* 1.1 and *mor.* 401d.

²⁷ Picard, 'Dédicaces', p. 95 and Cartledge, op. cit., p. 85.

²⁸ Op. cit., p. 284. Hornblower also points out that a certain Akeratos of Thasos had a tomb so large that it was used as a lighthouse (*IG* xii.8,68₃).

²⁹ Strictly speaking, the *presbeia* appears only in Ages. 25. Ages. 24 only mentions 'Thasians' and so could refer to private individuals as opposed to the Thasian state. But *FGH Hist* 115 F 22 (the original of Ages. 24) specifies 'the Thasians', and thus implies an official delegation.

³⁰ See A. Andrewes, 'Two Notes on Lysander', *Phoenix* 25 (1971), 206–26, and especially 217–18.

³¹ The story is related by Polyaeus 1.45.4 and Nepos, *Lys.* 2.2. In Plut. *Lys.* 19.3, Miletus is most probably a mistake for Thasos (Andrewes, art. cit., 217 n. 20).

³² Contra Cartledge, op. cit., p. 90, Nepos, *Lys.* 3.1 does not specifically state that there had been a decarchy on Thasos, although the passage may be taken to imply its existence.

³³ The decarchies were abolished at some point between the end of 403 and Lysander's plan to restore them in 396 (mentioned by Xen. at *Hell.* 3.4.2). The most convincing study is still that of A. Andrewes, art. cit., who argues that they were abolished either during the latter part of 403 or early in 402.

³⁴ Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.7–10.

Either of the above possibilities, or a combination of both, is sufficient to explain a gift of divine honours, given the climate of the time. For the Samians had deified Lysander for bestowing benefits of a political nature. Perhaps it is most likely that these services had been rendered while Agesilaus was still at Ephesus. Then, as an act of gratitude to their new benefactor, the Thasians dispatched embassies to meet him on his march home for the purpose of presenting him with supplies, gifts and honours.

The third possibility is that the offer of divine honours belongs not to the 390s, but to the 380s. This seems to me to be less likely, but the possibility needs to be discussed. At some point between 391/0 and 389/8 Thrasyboulos brought Thasos back under Athenian control.³⁵ The Thasians agreed to pay a five percent tax on their seaborne trade and they apparently received an Athenian archon.³⁶ Significantly, Thasos is the only Athenian ally known to have received an archon during the period 394–386.³⁷

Thasos remained democratic and an ally of Athens until after the King's Peace of 386. Within a few years Sparta once again intervened at Thasos and reestablished oligarchic government. The likely date is 385, the year in which king Agesipolis put down the democracy at Mantinea. *IG* ii².33 records a grant of *ateleia* to Thasian exiles at Athens, in accordance with a similar grant to the exiles from Mantinea.³⁸ Agesilaus is not likely to have ventured to Thasos himself in the period 385–380, but the Thasians would have known whom to thank for the policy of Spartan intervention. Thasos then remained a Spartan ally until she joined the Second Athenian Confederacy in 375. If the Thasians did indeed make their offer to Agesilaus at this time, then Theopompus becomes more tenuous as the source of the anecdote recorded by Plutarch. It is to be noted, however, that Book 12 of the *Philippica* contained a digression which discussed the establishment of the King's Peace and Spartan transgressions thereof.³⁹

If one is inclined to accept the historicity of the anecdote, it actually makes little difference as far as the history of Greek religion is concerned whether the offer was made in c. 396–4 or in c. 385. The only reason to prefer the former is the possibility (which I accept but cannot prove) that Plutarch found both anecdotes about Agesilaus and the Thasians narrated in the same source and in close proximity.

One other piece of evidence also indicates that there were close ties between Thasian oligarchs and Spartan aristocrats. A certain Liches, son of Arkesileos, was an archon at Thasos in 398/7 B.C. It is unlikely that he was identical with the Spartan Lichas, son of Arkesilaos, who is mentioned by Thucydides.⁴⁰ Most probably the

³⁵ For the date of Thrasyboulos' expedition to Thrace and the Hellespont, see G. L. Cawkwell, *CQ* 26 (1976), 270–7; R. Seager, *JHS* 87 (1967), 110; and R. Merkelbach, *ZPE* 5 (1970), 32, who argue for 391/90, 390/89, and 389/8 respectively. The inscription should be dated soon after the expedition; see M. J. Osborne, *Naturalization in Athens* (Brussels, 1982), v.ii., pp. 50–7.

³⁶ See *IG* ii².24, and discussions by G. T. Griffith, 'Athens in the Fourth Century', in *Imperialism in the Ancient World*, ed. by P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 129 and 132; Hornblower, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–6; and Cartledge, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

³⁷ Griffith, *op. cit.*, p. 132, who calls the archon 'juridically indefensible'. It is possible, however, that Sthorys was appointed both archon and seer at the request of the Thasians themselves. But this depends on a restoration of *IG* ii².24 (b) lines 14f. proposed by A. Wilhelm, *Attische Urkunden v* (*Sber. Wien*. ccxx, 1942, v), 107, which is by no means certain.

³⁸ Discussed by Osborne, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–3, who convincingly argues for 385. Note also Cartledge, *op. cit.*, pp. 296 and 371.

³⁹ *FGrHist* 115 F 103 (7): καὶ ὡς Ἀθηναίων ἡ πόλις ταῖς πρὸς βασιλείᾳ συνθήκαις ἐπειράτο ἐμμένειν, Λακεδαιμόνιοι δὲ ὑπερογκὰ φρονοῦντες παρέβαινον τὰς συνθήκας.

⁴⁰ Argued by J. Pouilloux and F. Salviat, *CRAI* (April–June, 1983), 376–403.

Thasian Liches, son of Arkesileos, was a *xenos* of the family that included the Spartan Lichas, son of Arkesilaos.⁴¹ If so, this is a remarkable case of homonymy, extending as it does over three generations, and it testifies to the close relations between the aristocracy in both cities. This is significant; for as Cartledge has suggested, the long tradition of close personal connections between Spartan and Samian aristocrats helped to induce the latter to deify Lysander.⁴² The same may have been true at Thasos as well. Thus we have close ties between Spartan and Thasian elites and a tradition at Thasos (discussed above) of honouring important individuals in extraordinary ways. All things considered, the case for accepting the deification anecdote is a strong one.

Habicht concluded that the story was invented by a later critic of ruler worship, and something must be said in response to his argument. Although one cannot disprove it, it is possible to demonstrate that his explanation is unnecessary. It was not necessary, at least in imperial times, to attribute such sentiments to virtuous figures from the past, when similar criticism could be expressed *in propria persona*. Note, for instance, Pausanias' disdainful comment on contemporary practice (8.2.4–5):

And I believe this story (about Lykaon), which has been told by the Arkadians from ancient times and has likelihood on its side. For the people of that time, because of their justice and their piety, entertained gods and sat at table with them, and the favour of the gods manifestly was bestowed upon the good and likewise their wrath fell upon the wicked. Indeed in those days certain human beings were turned into gods and even today are still honoured, like Aristaios and Britomartis of Crete, Herakles son of Alkmene and Amphiaraos son of Oikles, and Polydeukes and Kastor as well. So one may well believe that Lykaon was turned into a wild beast and Tantalos' daughter Niobe was turned to stone. But in my time, when wickedness has increased to the last degree and has spread over the entire earth and all its cities, no human being ever becomes a god, except in name only and to flatter authority, and the wrath of the gods is a long time falling on the wicked and is stored away for those who have departed from the world.

As mentioned above, if one accepts that Agesilaus was offered and rejected some form of divine honours, it has a serious implication for our understanding of the development of ruler worship in ancient Greece. E. Badian has recently demonstrated that there is no secure evidence for any instance of deification of a living man in the seventy years or more that elapsed between the reported deification of Lysander and the earliest date at which the deification of the living Alexander can be posited.⁴³ Considering that in the case of Alexander the precedent was followed without delay, Badian rightly finds it unusual that no instances followed upon the example of Lysander. His solution to this perplexing situation is that Lysander was not actually deified within his lifetime as Plutarch alleges, and that Plutarch misunderstood what Duris of Samos had written on the matter.

According to Plutarch, Duris had said of Lysander: 'He was the first Greek to whom the cities raised altars and sacrificed as to a god, the first to whom they sang paeans.'⁴⁴ Badian argues that this statement of Duris does not explicitly assign the cult to Lysander's lifetime, even though Plutarch believed that it was done while Lysander was still alive. Plutarch goes on to tell an anecdote about how the young Plato consoled the poet Antimachus when the latter was defeated in the Lysandreia.

⁴¹ Suggested by P. Cartledge, *LCM* 9.7 (July, 1984), 98–102; and accepted by G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 20–1.

⁴² 'Sparta and Samos: a Special Relationship?', *CQ* 32 (1982), 243–65, and esp. 264–5.

⁴³ Badian, art. cit., pp. 33–44.

⁴⁴ Plut. *Lys.* 18.4–6 (= *FGrHist* 76 F 71; also note F 26): *πρώτῳ μὲν γάρ, ὡς ἰστορεῖ Δούρις, Ἑλλήνων ἐκείνῳ βωμοὺς αἱ πόλεις ἀνέστησαν ὡς θεῷ καὶ θυσίας ἔθυσαν, εἰς πρῶτον δὲ παιάνες ᾄσθησαν, ὧν ἐνὸς ἀρχὴν ἀπομνημονεύει τοιάνδε... Σάμιοι δὲ τὰ παρ' αὐτοῖς Ἑραῖα Λυσάνδρεια καλεῖν ἐψηφίσαντο.*

The significant detail is that Lysander himself was presiding over the poetic *agōn*. According to Badian, if we dismiss the testimony of this anecdote, then there is no suggestion that the honours mentioned by Duris were accorded to Lysander during his lifetime.

This interpretation of Duris, however, faces a serious difficulty.⁴⁵ For Lysander manifestly was not the first Greek who received divine honours after his death. From the Greek point of view, the first man to be posthumously deified was Herakles, and he was followed by Kastor and Polydeukes. The passage of Pausanias quoted above makes this clear. Or, for a more contemporary statement, note the opinion of Isocrates (*To Demonicus* 50): 'For Zeus, who, as the myths relate and all men believe, was the father of Herakles and Tantalus, made the one immortal because of his virtue, and inflicted on the other the severest punishments because of his wickedness.' Moreover, it can be stated as a certainty that Duris considered Herakles to have been a fully historical figure (*FGrHist* 76 Frr. 93 and 94). This being the case, Duris cannot possibly have intended to say that Lysander was the first Greek to receive divine honours after death. He, like most Greeks, would have accorded that honour to Herakles. Duris' meaning, therefore, would have been self-evident to his readers; i.e. Lysander was the first Greek to whom the Greek cities paid divine honours during his own lifetime. It is, of course, possible that Plutarch is not quoting him exactly and that his own statement was more explicit.

It may seem unusual that Duris was the only literary source, or at least the only one whom Plutarch knew of, to mention the divine honours given to Lysander. Perhaps Duris, as a pro-Macedonian tyrant of Samos of the early 3rd century B.C., had a personal interest in finding a precedent for the deification of living men. Since Lysander's cult was undoubtedly limited to Samos, Duris was in a position to rediscover a fact which may have been forgotten by most other Greeks.

In connection with Lysander, one other point deserves reconsideration. In 1964 an inscription was found on Samos which records that an individual was four times victor in the Pancration during the Lysandreia.⁴⁶ This proves beyond doubt that the festival survived Lysander's fall from power in 403, since games in honour of Lysander obviously would not have been instituted before the capture of Samos in 404. Unfortunately, the inscription does not tell us at what point after 404 the Samians changed the name of the festival from Heraea to Lysandreia. Theoretically, it could have been at any time between the surrender of Samos to Lysander in 404 and the establishment of an Athenian cleruchy on the island in 365.⁴⁷

Habicht maintains that the most suitable occasion for the Samians to have renamed their festival in honour of Hera the Lysandreia was between 404 and 394. He argues

⁴⁵ Badian's theory of a posthumous deification has been rejected by P. Cartledge, *Agésilas*, p. 83, but he does not offer a refutation of his arguments. Cartledge does point out, however, that Badian fails to mention the Navarchs' Monument and other lifetime dedications (made either by Lysander or his friends) which commemorated his victory over Athens. The Navarchs' Monument, which Lysander set up at Delphi, featured a statue group in which Poseidon crowned the victorious Lysander. This dedication might be interpreted as an act of self-heroization on the part of Lysander, and thus was a precursor to his deification by the Samians. For a discussion of these various dedications and their significance see Cartledge, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–6; J.-F. Bommelaer, *Lysander de Sparte: Histoire et traditions* (Paris, 1981), pp. 7–23; and G. Zinserling, 'Persönlichkeit und Politik Lysanders im Lichte der Kunst', *WZJena* 14 (1965), 35–43.

⁴⁶ Published by E. Homann-Wedeking, *Arch. Anz.* 80 (1965), 440.

⁴⁷ There is no warrant, however, for thinking that all of the Samians were expelled in 365. See *FGrHist* 328, Philochorus F 154, with Jacoby's commentary, and *IG* ii² 1437, 20. Most recently, see G. Shipley, *A History of Samos, 800–188 BC* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 138–43.

that the festival cannot have survived the revolt of Samos against Sparta and its alliance with Athens in 394.⁴⁸ It is certainly true, as Badian suggests, that the Samians would have had the opportunity to rename the festival between 390 and 365, when they were once again within the Spartan sphere of influence. Nevertheless, the political efficacy of such a move would have been strongest in the years 404–397. For the influence of Lysander in the eastern Mediterranean was permanently undermined by Agesilaus during the Asian expedition of 396–5.⁴⁹

Xenophon reports that many Greek cities sent representatives to Agesilaus at Ephesus because their constitutions were in a state of disarray after the abolition of the decarchies.⁵⁰ Since these men were familiar with Lysander, they appealed to him to represent their interests to Agesilaus. The latter, however, was jealous of the attention which Lysander was receiving, and sent away empty-handed all those who had used Lysander as an intermediary. Does it not seem extremely likely that representatives of the Samians were among those who had approached Lysander, and who consequently were rebuffed by Agesilaus? It is known for a fact that Samos had received a decarchy in 404.⁵¹ When the decarchies were abolished, the Samians would have suffered the same internal turmoil as other states. And since the leading men of Samos had a particularly intimate relationship with Lysander, it would have been only natural for them to approach Agesilaus. But to their great surprise, they would have discovered that friendship with Lysander was no longer a profitable commodity.

It is true, of course, that Lysander's reputation at Sparta was somewhat restored by the circumstances of his death at Haliartus in 395. Nonetheless, it would have been common knowledge among Sparta's allies in Asia Minor and in the islands of the eastern Aegean that Lysander's influence had been greatly diminished as a result of his falling out with Agesilaus in 396. Furthermore, Lysander's reputation continued to suffer after his death. The story was spread that he had conspired to subvert the Spartan constitution,⁵² and it is significant that of the fourth-century historians only Theopompus of Chios took a favourable view of him.⁵³ Like Sulla, he was little loved after his death. There would have been little point, therefore, for the Samians to attempt to win the favour or forgiveness of Sparta by honouring the memory of Lysander at any time after his death in 395.

If Lysander had received divine honours during his lifetime, one may be confident that Agesilaus, a man noted for conventional piety, would have thought little of it. When the Thasians, who perhaps were following the example of the Samians, offered Agesilaus divine honours, he took the opportunity ostentatiously to demonstrate his disapproval of such honours. The Thasians probably made the offer either as a token of gratitude for his confirmation of their territorial claims on the Thracian mainland, or for settling their internal affairs, or perhaps for both. Similarly, we may assume that the Samian oligarchy desired to honour Lysander as their benefactor and lavished extraordinary honours upon him. How could the government of Thasos give anything less to Agesilaus? Even heroic honours would have paled beside the altars, sacrifices, paeans, and festival granted to Lysander. What we have is yet another example of how institutions spread among the Greeks through imitation. If Agesilaus had not arrested the process, it seems likely that the practice of conferring divine honours upon powerful individuals would have spread at that time from city to city as it later did in the age of the Successors of Alexander.

⁴⁸ Habicht, *op. cit.*, pp. 243–4.

⁴⁹ See Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.7–10; Plut. *Lys.* 23 and *Ages.* 7–8.

⁵⁰ Xen. *loc. cit.*

⁵² Diod. 14.13.4–5; and Plut. *Lys.* 24–6 and 30.

⁵¹ Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.6–7.

⁵³ *FGrHist* 115 Frr. 20 and 333.

The timing of the incident is also significant. If the offer was made in 394, it followed roughly two years after Agesilaus' break with Lysander in 396. That break had been occasioned by Agesilaus' jealousy of Lysander's popularity, prestige and influence among Sparta's allies in Asia Minor and the eastern Aegean. Although Lysander now had been dead for nearly a year, perhaps his negative response was also intended to forestall the spread of Lysander's cult to other cities, or even to suggest that present honours be cancelled. Agesilaus, as Theopompus realized,⁵⁴ was the most prominent individual of his time, and the negative precedent which he set had the effect of curtailing the development of the ruler cult for the next two or more generations. If indeed Alexander the Great requested and received divine honours within his own lifetime, it took an individual of even stronger character and more impressive achievements than those of Agesilaus to break the precedent set by the pious Spartan king.

One last point deserves consideration. Historians both ancient and modern have a tendency to underestimate the importance of events which almost happened but did not: offers of alliance that are rejected, peace negotiations which fail, and honours which are declined.⁵⁵ At times such non-occurrences set a negative precedent which is as important as any positive one. The rejection of divine honours by Agesilaus set such a precedent, despite the fact that both ancient and modern authorities have paid it scant attention. Even those modern scholars who have accepted the authenticity of the report consider the incident to be unimportant and deserving of only a brief footnote in a discussion of weightier matters.⁵⁶ The preconception is that since Agesilaus turned down the honours, the incident had little effect on contemporary practices. But, as I have attempted to demonstrate, the historical importance of the incident was in no way diminished by the fact that the honours were not accepted.

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⁵⁴ *FGrHist* 115 F 321 (= Plutarch, *Ages.* 10.9–10): καὶ μέγιστος μὲν ἦν ὁμολογουμένως καὶ τῶν τότε ζώντων ἐπιφανέστατος, ὡς εἰρήκῃ που καὶ Θεόπομπος, ἑαυτῷ γε μὴν ἐδίδου δι' ἀρετὴν φρονεῖν μείζον ἢ διὰ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν.

⁵⁵ A particularly striking example is the otherwise unattested statement of Andocides (*De Pace* 30) that Syracuse made an offer of alliance with Athens on the eve of the Sicilian expedition of 416 B.C. These negotiations are ignored by Thucydides. Did he think the Syracusan initiative to be insignificant because nothing came of it? But if Andocides is telling the truth, surely his testimony improves our understanding of Athenian motives for sending the expedition. Nonetheless, I do not know of a single work of scholarship in which Andocides' report is taken seriously, if it is mentioned at all. Although Andocides makes a number of factual mistakes in the speech, I find it difficult to believe that he could be wrong about so recent and so important an incident.

⁵⁶ See note 3 above.