

# The Ancient History Bulletin

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## **Edited by:**

Edward Anson ✦ David Hollander ✦ Timothy Howe  
Joseph Roisman ✦ John Vanderspoel ✦ Pat Wheatley ✦  
Sabine Müller



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## Contents of volume twenty-eight

### Numbers 3-4

- 82     Lara O'Sullivan, *Fighting with the Gods: Divine Narratives and the Siege of Rhodes*
- 99     Michael Champion, *The Siege of Rhodes and the Ethics of War*
- 112    Alexander K. Nefedkin, *Once More on the Origin of Scythed Chariot*
- 119    David Lunt, *The Thrill of Victory and the Avoidance of Defeat:  
                 Alexander as a Sponsor of Athletic Contests*

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## Fighting with the Gods: Divine Narratives and the Siege of Rhodes

Lara O'Sullivan

From their earliest imaginings, the Greeks inhabited a world in which the gods took an interest in mortal warfare. Their interest is made most tangible, of course, in the Homeric epics, and while an Athena might not bestride the battlefield of a Herodotus, a Thucydides or a Xenophon,<sup>1</sup> a very real feeling that the gods could exert influence in battle is evident through the raft of religious gestures that surrounded the conduct of war, from the seeking of omens and the offerings of *sphagia* before the fighting to the dedication of thank offerings to the gods in the event of victory. When Greeks went to war, their gods went with them.

The purpose of this article is to explore the ways in which narratives of warfare in the Hellenistic period employed 'the divine realm.' Some continuities with classical praxis are to be expected; so too are changes, for the Hellenistic world witnessed shifts in both warfare and in the scope of 'the divine' realm itself — a realm expanded in this period to include not only the traditional gods of Olympus but also those mortals who, because of their power to inflict harm or confer benefaction, were rendered godlike through cultic honours bestowed on them. These isotheic honours themselves reflect in some measure the increased vulnerability of the Hellenistic city to military threat, and in particular to siege. Few classical poleis were taken through the breaching of their city walls; treachery from within more often played a part (an apprehension well reflected in Aeneas Tacticus' mid-fourth century treatise on siege warfare<sup>2</sup>) or else besiegers relied on their ability to isolate, and thus starve out, an impregnable polis. That situation eventually changed, with the siege technologies developed under Philip of Macedon and Alexander and further improved by their Hellenistic successors rendering tenuous not only a city's fighting force on the open battlefield but also the very survival of the city and its population.<sup>3</sup> Viewed in the context of this new vulnerability, the divine model was an apt one for the articulation of the dynamic between potentate and polis, and it is unsurprising that many cultic honours were prompted by interventions in times of military crisis or by the liberation of a

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the manifestation of Pan to Philippiades before Marathon (Hdt. 6.105; Paus. 1.28.4; cf. also the epigram *Anth. Plan.* 16.232, purportedly for the Pan statue dedicated by Miltiades), historical traditions put heroes rather than gods themselves on the classical battlefield: see at Marathon (Paus. 1.32.5; Plut. *Thes.* 35.5) and at Salamis (Paus. 1.36.1), with Mikalson (2003) 31, 36, 80 on the presence of heroes rather than gods. This is not to suggest that the gods were denied any agency in battle, for deities were indeed made tangible on victory dedications and in visual commemorations of battles: note for example the representations at Delphi of Athena and Apollo on the Athenians' Marathon monument (Paus. 10.10.1) or the representations of Olympians alongside the Dioscouroi and Lysander in the Spartans' Aegisopotamoi dedication (Paus. 10.9.7-10), or again the inclusion of deities in the painting of Marathon on display in Athens' Stoa Poikile (Paus. 1.15.3).

<sup>2</sup> See esp. Aen. Tac. 10.20-11.15; 14.1; 17.1-18.21; 22.4-5.

<sup>3</sup> The introduction by the Macedonians of the torsion catapult is key here, and almost certainly lies behind the comment on improvements in missile accuracy and siege engines in Arist. *Pol.* 7.1331a1-2 (ca. 330s BCE). See Garlan (1974) 201-69 for siege technology from 340s onwards; also de Souza (2007) 447-8, 451-4; Serrati (2013) 193-4.

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city from an occupying force. This nexus of warfare and cult is reflected in the militaristic aspect of some of the cultic titles (notably Soter, but compare too Nikator, Kallinikos) adopted by Hellenistic kings.<sup>4</sup>

The emergence of a new breed of godlike mortals, and the creation of narratives to legitimise and celebrate their status, afforded new complexities in the ways in which poleis used the divine realm as a means of articulating and responding to the experience of war. It made possible, for example, an interplay between the old Olympian gods and the new godlike mortals, and allowed a Hellenistic city a vital means of self-assertion despite the shadow cast by the dominant war-lords and their kingdoms. Poliorcetes' siege of Rhodes (305-304 BCE) here functions as a case study, for in the Rhodian experience are encapsulated some of the elements characteristic of the Hellenistic age itself, both in terms of the altered landscape of Hellenistic violence and in terms of religious innovation. Demetrius Poliorcetes brought against Rhodes the most impressive siege engines of his day (notably the famed *helepolis*: Diod. 20.91; Plut. *Demetr.* 21.1).<sup>5</sup> While the island ultimately withstood the onslaught, Diodorus Siculus' Rhodian-derived account of the siege action — with its vignettes of vulnerable women and children (Diod. 20.83.2, 98.8) — conveys a sense of the city's peril in a fashion not far removed from Phylarchus' emotionally charged description of the fall of Mantinea, replete with the 'tears and lamentations of men and women, led off into captivity with their children and aged parents' (*FGH* 81 F53).<sup>6</sup> Further, the religious realm claimed a presence in Rhodes' response to its deliverance from the siege. Some of this divine interest was expressed in conventional ways: the Rhodians' dedication of a thank-offering to the island's patron deity, Helios, in the aftermath of victory is a prime example of continuity from classical precedents, despite the arguably Hellenistic penchant for display underlying this Colossus' remarkable size.<sup>7</sup> Rhodes also, however, adopted newer fashions, bestowing divine honours on Ptolemy for his assistance rendered to the Rhodian cause.<sup>8</sup> His cult included a sacred precinct within the city (Diod. 20.100.3-4); the existence of his worship into the second century is attested both by the appearance of a

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<sup>4</sup> Chaniotis (2005) 72-3.

<sup>5</sup> The Rhodian siege has justifiably come to be regarded as emblematic of the highly technological form of Hellenistic siege warfare. For detailed analysis of the action and of the new modes of response demanded of the besieged polis, see now Pimouguet-Pédarros (2011). On Demetrius' siege engines, see also Marsden (1971) 84-5; Schürmann (1991) 82-5; Whitehead and Blyth (2004) 134-8.

<sup>6</sup> Diodorus' extensive treatment of the siege, replete with information about internal Rhodian affairs, has encouraged the identification of a Rhodian source, and the citation of one Zeno of Rhodes in a much earlier context (Diod. 5.56.7) has made Zeno a plausible candidate for the source of some of Diodorus' Rhodian material: Hornblower (1981) 56-9; Wiemer (2001) 222-50, cf. (2013) 298. Any such use of Zeno may have come in addition to Diodorus' use of his standard source for this period, Hieronymus, who may have been an eye witness to the Rhodian siege (cf. Wheatley (2014) 96 for suggestions of other military episodes possibly reported by Hieronymus at first hand); the possibility that Zeno himself drew on Hieronymus cannot be ruled out. See Hornblower (1981) 59; cf. Wiemer (2001) 248-50.

<sup>7</sup> Helios had assumed the status of Rhodes' poliadic deity after the synoecism of Rhodes in 408 BCE (although his mythical connection with the island existed earlier: see Pind. *Olymp.* 7.54-63), and Zeno could thus describe Helios as honoured above all other gods by the Rhodians (Diod. 5.56.4); his priest was the Rhodian eponymous official. On the priests of Helios, see further Dignas (2003) 36-8. On the size of the Colossus dedicated to Helios: Pliny *N.H.* 34.18; Philo Byz. *Mir.* 4.6; for other large statues of this period, compare Strabo 6.3.1. On the Colossus in general, see Hoepfner (2000).

<sup>8</sup> Ptolemaic assistance at Rhodes: Diod. 20.88.9, 96.1, 98.1-2.

priest of Ptolemy on a Rhodian priestly catalogue and by the performance on Rhodes of a paeon in Ptolemy's honour.<sup>9</sup>

Significantly, Ptolemy also became Soter, the title under which he is known to posterity, as a result of the siege (or so Pausanias 1.8.6. strongly implies).<sup>10</sup> Beyond the obvious honorific function of Ptolemy's title, such divine identities could function as implicit commentaries on contrasting modes of interaction between potentates and poleis. At the time of the siege Rhodes' aggressor, Demetrius, was himself the recipient of cultic honours in a number of places.<sup>11</sup> While his assault on Rhodes (unsurprisingly) did not see Rhodian honours added to his cult portfolio,<sup>12</sup> it did contribute to his famed *epiklesis*, 'Poliorcetes'. That name was not a cult epithet; indeed some have argued for it being in origin a term of mockery, an uncomfortable reminder from Demetrius' rivals of his actual *failure* in city taking at Rhodes.<sup>13</sup> The name is nonetheless evocative of cultic titles, and this similarity provided a means for the censure of Demetrius' aggression. Plutarch, in his *Demetrius* 42.10-11, explicitly juxtaposes Poliorcetes with Zeus' epithets Polieus and Poliouchos — epithets that celebrated that Olympian god's exercise of protective power over cities. As *poliorcetes* rather than *polieus*, Demetrius inverted the ideal relationship that existed between the Greek polis and its gods, and by analogy between the Greek polis and a powerful king. Thus Ptolemy's cultic title of Soter drew attention to what the Rhodians would have regarded as the proper use by Egyptian king of his manifest powers in his

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<sup>9</sup> For the priest, Segré (1941) 29-31; for the paeon, Gorgon *FGrH* 519 F19.

<sup>10</sup> See Habicht (1970) 109-110. Pausanias' ascription of the *epiklesis* Soter to the Rhodians is dismissed by Hazzard (1992); cf. Hazzard (2000) 6 n.16, who traces its origin instead to Ptolemy II. A compelling counter-case for a Rhodian basis has, however, been mounted by Kolde (2003) 392-7; see also Hauben (2010) esp. 103-8.

<sup>11</sup> Note for example the cult awarded by Athens in 307/6, where he and his father were celebrated as Soteres: Diod. 20.46.2; Plut. *Demetr.* 10; cf. Habicht (1970) 44-8. The title will have been evocative of Zeus, who bore this mantle at Athens; see Parker (1996) 238-41. Throughout his career Poliorcetes cultivated a particular association also with Dionysus, which found expression in cultic honours at Athens: see *SEG* 45.101.41-3 (of 293/2 BCE). Something of this 'divine identity' intrudes into the Rhodian siege narrative at Diod. 20.92.3-4, where remarks on Demetrius' physical beauty culminate in an explicit comparison of Demetrius and Dionysus. The literary possibilities afforded by a divine Demetrius on the battlefield are not overtly pressed in Diodorus' version, although the qualities of Demetrius' assembled forces — their scale, their gleam, their noise — and the terror that they inspire in the Rhodian onlookers (see in particular Diod. 20.83.1-2, 86.4) are reminiscent of the qualities and impact of deities, notably when they manifest themselves in battle (e.g. Athena at Hom. *Il.* 18. 218-20). The literary effect of such elements in Diodorus' account is largely to elevate the Rhodian episode to a Homeric or tragic scale.

<sup>12</sup> Rhodes did try to stave off Demetrius' assault by conferring 'great honours' on him (Diod. 20.82.2), and voted not to rescind existing honours during the course of the siege (20.93.6-7). The Rhodians' propensity for the skilful use of honours to elicit royal benefaction was marked: compare Diod. 31.36. In general see Ma (1999) 201-6 on the use of honours by poleis as tools to constrain and to guide the unpredictable behaviour of powerful kings.

<sup>13</sup> Heckel (1984); so, similarly, Berthold (1984) 79; Campbell (2006) 81-2; Murray (2012) 118. A less derogatory basis for the name is advanced by Lo Presti (2010); Pimouguet-Pédarros (2011) 307-10. In favour of the latter stance, it ought be noted that some of Demetrius' assaults on cities were effectual (for example at Sisypium: Diod. 20.103.2), and the very threat of them prompted pre-emptive capitulations in other places (see for example the surrender of the acropoleis at Sicyon: Diod. 20.102.2; Corinth: Diod. 20.103.2). Even the siege of Rhodes was not an outright defeat, for Demetrius was made to abandon the attempt at his father's behest (Diod. 20.99.1).

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dealings with them;<sup>14</sup> contrast Demetrius, whose deployment of towering siege engines made manifest the potential vulnerability of established Greek poleis and whose attack on Rhodes could be construed (at least by Rhodian historical traditions) as entirely unwarranted.<sup>15</sup>

This religious discourse around ideal interactions between cities and potentates was enhanced by the emergence of a pronounced tendency for divine epiphanies in the Hellenistic period. From the third century can be traced a spate of alleged interventions by deities to protect cities or sanctuaries from violent assault. The gods saw to the preservation of Delphi from Gallic attack in 279 BCE,<sup>16</sup> Demeter did likewise for Argos in 272 BCE (so Paus. 1.13.8<sup>17</sup>), and examples proliferate through the Hellenistic age.<sup>18</sup> This particular emphasis on soteric epiphanies seems indeed to be a feature of the period,<sup>19</sup> and its effect was to reinforce a paradigm of behaviour through which judgement might be delivered on the divinely-honoured Hellenistic potentates whose own visitations were sometimes couched in the language of epiphany.<sup>20</sup>

Ptolemy and Demetrius were not, of course, the only participants in the siege for whom a divine narrative was possible. In the centuries following the siege, the Rhodians elaborated upon their success by embroidering the memory of their victory with divine

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<sup>14</sup> Johnson (2000) argues that Soter was not, in the Rhodian context, a *cultic* title; *contra*, Hauben (2010) 106-7. For other poleis, of course, the impact of Ptolemy's power may not have been so benign: at the time of the Rhodian siege, Ptolemaic garrisons held Corinth and Sicyon (Diod. 20.37.2).

<sup>15</sup> For detailed analysis of Rhodes' diplomatic position in 305 BCE and the presentation of that position in Diod. 20.81, see Hauben (1977) 318-37; Berthold (1984) 59-67; Wiemer (2002) 71-96.

<sup>16</sup> *SIG* 3.398, revealing not only the epiphany but attesting to the awareness and acceptance of it in other parts of the Greek world; Diod. 22.9.5; Justin 24.8.5-12; *Suda* s.v. ἐμοὶ μελήσει; Cic. *de Div.* 1.81.

<sup>17</sup> A similar story, but without the identification of the female protagonist as Demeter, is found in Strabo 8.6.18 and Plut. *Pyrrhus* 34; these accounts are derived perhaps from Hieronymus (so Lévêque (1957) 622-30 for Plutarch). Pausanias cites a poem by the local Argive Lyceas for the divine identification.

<sup>18</sup> Platt (2011) 14. For epiphanies associated with historical wars, see Pritchett (1979) 19-39; Speyer (1980).

<sup>19</sup> With some justification, the divine intervention that supposedly saved Delphi from Gallic sack in 279 BCE has been regarded as the impetus for a proliferation of traditions concerning wartime manifestations of gods in the century following (Chaniotis (2005) 160), although there are instances that predate the Gallic episode: Apollo's claimed intervention to save Argos ca. 303 BCE is notable in this regard, as it is attested on an inscription of the late fourth century (*ISE* 1.39). A lengthy inscription from the Rhodian city of Lindos (*Lindos* II 2, on which see below, pp.92-3) reports two wartime epiphanies by Athena Lindia in historical contexts which predate 279, but the traditions claiming these epiphanies may well be later: this is demonstrably so for the first epiphany (during the Persian Wars, the documentary sources for which are cited at *Lindos* II 2 D 47ff, cf. Higbie (2003) 232-5), but it cannot be fully ascertained in the case of the second wartime epiphany during Demetrius' siege, since the part of the inscription on which the evidence for the epiphany would have been cited is lost.

<sup>20</sup> When Demetrius returned to Athens from Leukas and Cephallenia in the late 290s (most probably in 291/90 BCE), he was met by a processional chorus in whose song he was celebrated as god present within the city. For a partial text of the hymn, see Duris *FGrH* 76 F 13; for the context, see Demochares *FGrH* 75 F2. Both hymn and context have received extensive scholarly discussion: see in particular Marcovich (1988) 8-19 (with earlier literature cited at his n.1); Mikalson (1998) 94-9; Green (2003); Kolde (2003) 378-92; Chaniotis (2011). Similarly, the Indian tribes of Ghandara are claimed to have regarded Alexander the Great's advent among them as a divine epiphany: Curt. 8.10.1; Metz *Epitome* 34. On Hellenistic kings and the language of epiphany, Platt (2011) 142-3.



elements. Notable in this context is an epigram that purports to be the dedicatory inscription from the Rhodian colossus:

Αὐτῷ σοὶ πρὸς Ὀλυμπον ἐμακύναντο κολοσσὸν  
τόνδε ῥόδου ναέται Δωρίδος, Ἀέλιε,  
χάλκεον, ἀνίκα κῦμα κατευνάσαντες Ἐνυοῦς  
ἔστεψαν πάτρην δυσμενέων ἐνάροις.  
οὐ γὰρ ὑπὲρ πελάγους μόνον ἄνθεσαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν γᾶ  
ἄβρὸν ἀδουλώτου φέγγος ἐλευθερίας  
τοῖς γὰρ ἄφ' Ἡρακλῆος ἀεζηθεῖσι γενέθλας  
πάτριος ἐν πόντῳ κῆν χθονὶ κοιρανία.

To thy very self, O Sun, did the people of Dorian Rhodes raise high to heaven this Colossus, then, when having laid to rest the brazen wave of war, they crowned their country with the spoils of their foes. Not only over sea but on the land, too, did they establish the lovely light of unfettered freedom. For to those who spring from the race of Heracles dominion is a heritage both on land and sea. (*Anth. Pal.* 6.171; trans. Paton).

Kenneth Jones has convincingly argued that this text is not the authentic inscription from the Colossus, but arises rather from the political and military context of the early second century BCE and functions as a direct response to an epigram composed for the Macedonian king, Philip V, of whom Alcaeus of Messene writes:<sup>21</sup>

Μακύνου τείχη, Ζεῦ Ὀλύμπιε πάντα Φιλίππῳ  
ἀμβατά· χαλκείας κλεῖε πύλας μακάρων.  
χθῶν μὲν δὴ καὶ πόντος ὑπὸ σκῆπτροισι Φιλίππου  
δέδμηται, λοιπὰ δ' ἄ πρὸς Ὀλυμπον ὁδός.

Heighten thy walls, Olympian Zeus, for all is accessible to Philip; shut the brazen gates of the gods. Earth and sea lie vanquished under Philip's sceptre; there remains the road to Olympus. (*Anth. Pal.* 9.518, trans. Paton)

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<sup>21</sup> Jones (2014). Thanks to the verbal echoes between the Rhodian poem and Alcaeus' text (notably the presence in both of the rare μακυνᾶσθαι and the striking placement in each of πρὸς Ὀλυμπον), a relationship between them has long been accepted; see Walbank (1942) 135-6; Edson (1948) 117. Jones' contribution has been to detail a case for the temporal priority of Alcaeus' text, and thus the separation of the Rhodian text from the actual dedication of the Colossus. For other supposed dedicatory texts from the Colossus, see Strabo 14.2.5; *Anth. Plan.* 16.82.



Jones' relocation of the Rhodian text puts it a period that had seen Rhodes locked in conflict with the Macedonian king Philip V. In the late third century Philip had been pursuing an expansionist policy, encroaching into territory such as the Rhodian Peraea; such successes are presumed to form the backdrop for the lines by Acaeus cited above. In the course of the so-called Second Macedonian War of 200-197 BCE, however, Philip saw many of his territorial gains reversed, and Rhodes had been a key player in those reversals. Its navies had liberated from Macedonian control a number of Aegean poleis and, on the strength of these initiatives, Rhodes had attained leadership of a revived Nesiotic league;<sup>22</sup> it had secured renewed control over its mainland Peraea, and had also extended its influence over a number of sites (Caurus, Myndus, Halicarnassus and Samos) that had been, at least nominally, possessions of the Ptolemaic throne.<sup>23</sup> On Jones' dating, the proud boast of dominion in the text for the Colossus reflects this resurgence of Rhodian influence.

Of interest in the Rhodian epigram is the proclamation of descent from Heracles. Rhodes' claim to Heracleian credentials was in fact of long standing, but the link had not traditionally been much emphasised or exploited; Heracles himself had little presence in Rhodian cult.<sup>24</sup> Its appearance in the Colossus epigram has its basis in, and serves to contest, Philip V's own self-representation: he had cultivated a connection with that son of Zeus, minting coins with the club of Heracles and attracting verses such as that preserved as *Anth. Pal.* 6.115.<sup>25</sup> The likelihood that he was the first of the Antigonids to foster a particular Heraclid association gives added impetus to the Rhodian response; this was a particular policy of Philip V and not some entrenched Antigonid line that elicited both Alcaeus' lines and the corresponding Rhodian epigram. As such, the Rhodian claim to Heraclid descent might be dismissed as reactionary, a claim conditioned by Philip V's rhetoric. It could also be regarded as simply in keeping with a widespread tendency in Hellenistic diplomacy. Heraclid descent — or at least its somewhat diluted form, Argive ancestry — had proved a popular commodity in the Hellenistic age as new (or newly Greek) cities sought to establish credentials for themselves and gain diplomatic leverage within the cultural landscape of the Greek world.<sup>26</sup> The potential inherent in such mythically-derived kinship is epigraphically attested at Xanthos at a date very close to that of the composition of the Rhodian epigram: an appeal for aid by the city of Cytenium was supported in the first instance by the urging of Xanthos to heed the Dorian identity that

<sup>22</sup> Polyb. fr 172 (= *Suda* s.v. κατεξαναστάντες); Livy 31.15.8. On the Nesiotic League, Berthold (1984) 142-4.

<sup>23</sup> Peraea: Livy 33.18. (Reclamation of the Peraea had been among Rhodes' prime motivations for war with Philip: Polyb. 18.2.3; Livy 32.33.6.) Ptolemaic cities: Livy 33.18.22, 20.11-12.

<sup>24</sup> The tradition is attested as early as Homer (*Il.* 2.661-70). Heracles had not, however, been particularly prominent in Rhodian cult, although he did have some presence at Lindus: see Croon (1953).

<sup>25</sup> See also *Anth. Pal.* 6.114 and 6.116.

<sup>26</sup> Scheer (2003) 226-31 on Cilician cities. For the diplomatic potential inherent in kinship see Jones (1999) 50 ff for the Hellenistic period. Rhodes' Argive connections were occasionally invoked for diplomatic advantage: see the Argive decree honouring the Rhodians SEG 19.317 (*ISE* 1.40) of probably the late fourth century (so Stroud (1984) 215-16), where common ancestry (Ῥόδιοι συγγενέες Ἀργείων) is invoked as a bond between Argos and Rhodes.

linked Xanthos and Cytenium, and then by an assurance that such joint Dorian action would find favour with Ptolemy IV Philopater because of his own Heraclid lineage.<sup>27</sup>

The epigram's evocation of Rhodes' Heraclid descent advances a more wide-reaching agenda, however, and the victory at the siege of 304 BCE is key. Victory and ancestry here operate in tandem; the success against Poliorcetes acts as a vital 'peg' on which to secure Rhodes' claim to Heraclid ancestry, an ancestry the reality of which in turn is itself proved by Rhodes' ensuing military strength.<sup>28</sup> The epigram thereby stakes a place in a tradition that goes back to Alexander, in which conquest and military prowess function as proof of divine descent.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, it deploys strategies used, on an individual and familial level, by Hellenistic monarchs, for whom victory and territorial dominion operate hand-in-hand with heroic or divine descent. A pertinent example is afforded by Theocritus' treatment of Ptolemy Philadelphus in his *Encomium of Ptolemy*, a hymn that celebrates (*inter alia*) the Heraclid descent of that house:

ἄμφω γὰρ πρόγονός σφιν ὁ καρτερὸς Ἡρακλείδας,

ἀμφοτέρω δ' ἀριθμεῦνται ἐς ἔσχατον Ἡρακλῆα.

Both have as ancestor the mighty son of Heracles, and both trace their family back in the end to Heracles (Theoc. 17.26-27; trans. Hunter).<sup>30</sup>

After an extensive catalogue of Ptolemy's dominions, the same hymn credits him with rule over land and sea:

θάλασσα δὲ πᾶσα καὶ αἶα

καὶ ποταμοὶ κελάδοντες ἀνάσσονται Πτολεμαίῳ

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<sup>27</sup> For Xanthos and Cytenium: SEG 38.1476 (esp. 40-42) dating to 206/5 BCE. On the Heraclid lineage of the Ptolemies, see below p.88 with n.30.

<sup>28</sup> Compare Edson (1934) 221 cf. (1948) 117; he however assumes that the epigram belongs to the original dedication of the Colossus in ca. 283 BCE and reads it as a rebuttal of a claim to Heraclid ancestry by Demetrius Poliorcetes. There is no evidence, however, that Poliorcetes ever claimed such descent. His (and his father's) minting of coinage with the head of Heracles on the obverse (for which see Newell (1978) 14-15 with Plate I 4-6, 11-12, 15-17 for examples struck at Salamis; cf. Mørkholm (1991) 77) is best understood as an adoption of Alexander's coinage rather than an Antigonid claim for Heraclid connections.

<sup>29</sup> Callisthenes FGrH 124 F36; Arr. 4.8-9; Diod. 17.51.3.

<sup>30</sup> Theocritus' 'both' here refers to Philadelphus' father, Ptolemy Soter, and to Alexander the Great. Their joint Heraclid descent serves to mark out the Ptolemaic dynasty as the legitimate heirs of Alexander: so Hunter (2003) 120. Theocritus' encomium is among the earliest evidence for the Ptolemaic claims to Heraclid ancestry, and encourages the association of that propaganda with Ptolemy II Philadelphus. For other testimonia on the Ptolemies and Heracles, see further Satyrus FGrH 631 F1; OGIS 54.1-6 (from Adulis, 240 BCE). Notably, the early tradition in Satyrus traces the Heraclid link through Ptolemy Soter's maternal line; some later traditions imply that the link was a paternal one by positing Philip II of Macedon as Ptolemy Soter's real father: so Curt. 9.8.22; Paus. 1.6.2. The pronounced possibility that Soter was not a legitimate son of Lagos (on which see also Suda s.v. Λάγος = Aelian F285 Hercher) will have fuelled the latter speculation. For extensive treatment of the ancient traditions around Ptolemy Soter's descent, see Collins (1997).

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All the sea and the land and the crashing rivers are subject to Ptolemy...

(Theoc. 17.91-2, trans. Hunter).<sup>31</sup>

For monarchs, such universal rule became particularly potent if coupled with benefaction, and in this too can Rhodes compete through the association of its victory with the spread of Greek freedom. This topos of freedom situates Rhodes within a continuum of rhetoric from Alexander's successors, for whom the liberty of Greek cities was a frequent rallying cry;<sup>32</sup> it had a particularly contemporary resonance given Flamininus' proclamation of Greek freedom at the Isthmian Games following his victory over Philip V at Cynocephalae in 197 BCE.<sup>33</sup> By arrogating such royal rhetoric for the island, the composer of the epigram projects Rhodes onto the Mediterranean stage as a claimant of prestige alongside the Hellenistic potentates, and validates that prestige through the same means as employed by them. With its underpinnings of divine ancestry and victory, Rhodes bids for a status akin to that of the Hellenistic potentates as the rightful heir to the dominions of Alexander.<sup>34</sup>

Close parallels exist, therefore, between the strategies deployed in the Rhodian poem and those deployed around Hellenistic kings, but there is also an important point of difference. For Hellenistic kings, the combination of divine descent, universal rule and benefaction might legitimise, or even invite, their receipt of *timai isotheoi*. Such a nexus is implicit in Callimachus' lengthy excursus on Ptolemy Philadelphus in the *Hymn to Delos*.<sup>35</sup> Transcendence of the mortal sphere is a dominant and rather unsubtle element too, of course, in Alcaeus' poem for Philip V, in which Olympus itself is warned to bar its gates against the Macedonian monarch.<sup>36</sup> Alcaeus' text further invites its reader to recall a

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<sup>31</sup> Hunter (2003) 168 describes such claims to universal rule as 'commonplace in Pharaonic and Ptolemaic texts ... and more generally in Hellenistic panegyric', and as 'perfectly at home within an oriental rhetoric of kingship.' For the formula 'on land and sea' see also Momigliano (1942).

<sup>32</sup> For early instances see Diod. 18.55.2 (Polyperchon); Diod. 19.61.4, 20.45.1, Plut. *Demetr.* 8.1 (Antigonos Monophthalmus and Demetrius Poliorcetes); Diod. 20.37.2 (Ptolemy I). For detailed examination of Rhodes' espousal of Greek freedom, see Dmitriev (2011) 283-8. Such rhetoric has its origins, of course, even earlier; see Dmitriev (2011) 15-111 for its use prior to the Diadochan era.

<sup>33</sup> Proclamation of liberty: Polyb. 18.46.5 cf. Livy 33.32.5, 33.7; Plut. *Flam.* 10.4; App. *Mac.* 9.4; Val. Max. 4.8.5. In the wake of this declaration, Flamininus' power was implicitly compared to that of Alexander the Great through the fashioning (at Corinth, or perhaps at Chalcis where Flamininus was granted cult) of commemorative gold staters with reverses modelled on Alexander's gold Nike staters. See Mørkholm (1991) 136-7 with plate XXIX 445.

<sup>34</sup> Rhodes' prolific minting in the first decade of the second century of tetradrachms modelled on Alexander's silver Heracles issues has been viewed as a similar statement of Rhodes' new power and prestige: Sippel (1985). The propagandistic nature of this coinage should not, however, be pressed too far, given the ubiquity of similar issues in the region of western Asia Minor and the nearby islands: cf. Mørkholm (1991) 139-44. The Rhodian production may have been functional as much as propagandistic, and is described by Price (1991) 1.317 n.7 as an 'alliance coinage'. For the tetradrachms themselves see Kleiner (1971); Price (1991) nos. 2509-27; Mørkholm (1991) plate XXXII 471-2.

<sup>35</sup> Call. *Hymn to Delos* 4.166-90. Bosworth (1999) extensively canvasses the Hellenistic evidence for the association of apotheosis with conquest and benefaction.

<sup>36</sup> Far from being serious praise of Philip V, Alcaeus' lines may be read as scathing sarcasm, particularly as an assault on Olympus would cast him in the role of the mythical giants; the resonances between Alcaeus and Asclepiades' verses on the Lysippan Alexander (for the text of which, see p.90) further

similar insinuation of divine status for Alexander the Great (or, more precisely, for a Lysippan statue of Alexander the Great) in the following epigram ascribed to Asclepiades:

Τόλμαν Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ ὅλαν ἀπεμάξατο μορφάν

Λύσιππος· τίν' ὁδὶ χαλκὸς ἔχει δύναμιν.

αὐδάσονται δ' ἔοικεν ὁ χάλκεος ἐς Δία λεύσσων·

“Γᾶν ὑπ' ἐμοὶ τίθεμαι, Ζεῦ, σὺ δ' Ὀλυμπον ἔχε.”

The boldness of Alexander and his entire form were imitated by

Lysippus. What power this bronze has!

The brazen man, as he looks at Zeus, resembles someone about to say,

‘I subject the earth to myself; Zeus, you keep Olympus!’

(*Anth. Plan.* 16.120, trans. Sens (= his no. 43))

As Sens observes, the words spoken by this bronze Alexander, far from being ‘a simple, morally neutral acknowledgement of the distinction between the mortal and divine spheres’, operate rather to ‘reflect [Alexander’s] potentially more problematic arrogation of divine rights.’<sup>37</sup>

The Rhodian epigram, by contrast, lays claim for Rhodes to all the components of divine status but self-consciously steps back from the crowning insinuation of cult. Indeed, by limiting the horizons of Rhodian sway to the mortal realm of land and sea, the epigram effectively rejects the ‘bid on Olympus’ that looms the lines of Alcaeus and of Asclepiades. It instead constructs Rhodes’ special status within the framework of more traditional forms of civic piety: as the putative dedicatory inscription of the Rhodians’ own bronze Helios, the epigram is predicated upon recognition of the patronage of Rhodes’ chief deity, and it embeds the island’s strong ties with that god as the foundation of its military success.<sup>38</sup> This bond between Rhodes and Helios is insinuated into the very freedom that Rhodes bestows by the casting of that freedom in the language of light (ἀβρὸν... φέγγος ἐλευθερίας). Such language is not entirely novel: indeed the Antigonids, who were posing as liberators of Greece in the late fourth century, had hoped that a liberated Athens might act as a ‘watch

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encourage identification of a negative slant, and Sens (2011) 299 harbours no doubts: this text is ‘openly hostile’. Alcaeus is moreover openly antagonistic to Philip V elsewhere: thus *Anth. Pal.* 7.247; 9.519; 11.12; *Anth. Plan.* 16.5. The tenor of *Anth. Pal.* 9.518 has nonetheless proved controversial: compare Edson (1948); Momigliano (1942) 53-4; Walbank (1942) & (1943).

<sup>37</sup> Sens (2011) 293; he notes further (299) the statue’s usurpation of the role often ascribed to Zeus himself in being the one to assign the divided realms of earth and sky (for which see Hes. *Theog.* 881-5; Call. *Hymn* 1.61-4; Nic. *Th.* 343-5). A displacement of Zeus by Alexander is at the heart also of the dream anecdotally ascribed to Demetrius Poliorcetes in Plut. *Demetr.* 29.1-2, in which Alexander appears and chides Demetrius for his choice of ‘Zeus and victory’ rather than ‘Alexander and victory’ as watchwords prior to battle.

<sup>38</sup> The piety of the Rhodians and the favour which they receive from the gods are ideas embedded also in the discussion of the Colossus by Philo Byz. (*Mir.* 4). For Philo, however, the divine favour is manifest in the wealth given by Zeus to Rhodes, wealth that the Rhodians use to raise high the Colossus.

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tower' and might 'beacon forth' their deeds to the Greek world.<sup>39</sup> Within the Rhodian context, however, and within a text purporting to be the dedication on the monumental statue of Helios, the imagery of light recalls the patronage of Helios himself, a divine bond that augments Rhodes' bid to be recognised as the champions of Greek liberty.

The epigram functions, moreover, effectively to insinuate Rhodes' military success as an enduring phenomenon. To the extent that the poem assumes the pretence of being the dedicatory inscription of the Colossus, Rhodes' casting of the light of 'unfettered freedom' over sea and land is construed in the poem as the result of the events of 304 BCE. That is misleading: at the end of Poliorcetes' siege, Rhodes had managed to preserve its independence, but it had hardly extended its sway. As others have recognised, the domination described is much more readily reconciled with the standing enjoyed by Rhodes in the early second century (on which see above, pp.86-7).<sup>40</sup> The epigram collapses time, conflating the moment of survival against Demetrius Poliorcetes in 304 BCE with the reach of Rhodian influence current in the early second century.<sup>41</sup> It is aided in this temporal mirage by its invocation of time on a mythic scale, a scale on which the vicissitudes of Rhodes' historical fortunes are dissolved into a timeless tenure of power vouchsafed by their divine descent and by their special relationship with their patron, Helios.

The literary medium of the epigram itself has a key part to play in this artifice of endurance. On the dating of the poem followed here, the Colossus itself was lying in ruins, toppled by the earthquake that struck the island in 226 BCE, and the Rhodians had determined not to resurrect it.<sup>42</sup> The epigram transcends the physical vulnerability of the statue by creating for the Colossus an existence in the imagination that was prey neither to the vagaries of the elements nor to the ravages of time. Poets explicitly vaunted this

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<sup>39</sup> Plut. *Demetr.* 8.3. From an earlier context, compare Pindar's dithyrambic celebration (F77 Snell) of the Athenians at Artemisium as laying the 'shining foundation of freedom' (φαειννάν κρηπίδ' ἐλευθερίας). The reminiscence of the Persian Wars in *Anth. Pal.* 6.171, if intentional, will have entirely apposite.

<sup>40</sup> Accame (1947); Jones (2014) 147-50.

<sup>41</sup> This collapsing of time is enhanced by the continuities in political rhetoric that link the nominal occasion of the epigram (the victory in 304 BCE) with its contemporary context in the early second century BCE. Aspects of Rhodes' high standing in the latter period (such as its espousal of Greek freedom and its attainment of the hegemony of the Nesiotic League) resonated with what had been, at the time of the Rhodian siege, Antigonid policies (for Antigonid freedom proclamations, see above n.32; for Antigonid establishment of the Nesiotic League, see *IG XI.4.1036* of 314 BCE). The epigram thus manages to imply that the Rhodians assumed the mantle of liberators from their 'defeated' foe and, unlike that foe, treated the implementation of liberty seriously. Such implication is, of course, disingenuous, to the extent that all such championing of Greek liberty served the interests of its proponents as much as the interests of the Greek poleis, and the Antigonids themselves continued after the siege of Rhodes to fight for the liberty of mainland Greece against Cassander in the Four Years' War.

<sup>42</sup> Financial considerations here may have played a part; there is, at any rate, a tradition that Ptolemy offered to pay for its restitution, an offer that the Rhodians declined: see *schol.* Pl. *Philebus* 15c. The Rhodian rejection of Ptolemy's benefaction may have stemmed in part from qualms about allowing a monarch to claim some of the prestige associated with the monument. If that were the case, the recourse to an oracle as the justification for the decision not to rebuild (so Strabo 14.2.5) may have served as a diplomatic and face-saving device for the Rhodians; similarly adroit diplomacy became part of the tradition concerning the Ephesians' rejection of Alexander's offer to fund the rebuilding of their temple of Artemis (Strabo 14.1.22). In the wake of the Colossus' fall, Rhodes seems to have been willing to accept from potentates donations that did not entail the reconstruction of the statue: see Polyb. 5.88.

advantage of their art over more tactile forms of commemoration. Horace's *exegi monumentum aere perennius* ('I have completed a monument more lasting than bronze': *Ode* 3.30.1) at the culmination of his third book of *Odes* is perhaps the classic statement of this, but the sentiment is attested much earlier, notably in Pindar.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, as Pindar well appreciated, poetry enjoyed the added advantage of its mobility; the opening lines of his *Nemean* 5 draw explicit contrast between the sedentary victory statue and the song that goes forth aboard every ship to spread the fame of the victor far and wide. The Rhodian text in turn exploits these commemorative powers inherent in its medium, but it does so in a way that does not seek to compete against the statue but acts rather to compensate for its loss. Such strategies seem to have been highly effective, for Polybius claims that the Rhodians so magnified the reputation of the statue after its collapse that they were better served by its destruction than by its presence.<sup>44</sup> That the destruction of the statue did indeed prove largely inconsequential is evidenced by its longevity as an imagined monument: well beyond its collapse, the Colossus is amply attested by its frequent presence within the canon of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, the earliest known of which postdate the statue's physical demise.<sup>45</sup>

Through the epigram, therefore, the Rhodians' special bond with Helios, and their rightful tenure of dominion that derived from that bond, continued to be advertised to the world through the figure of the lost Colossus. Helios was not, however, the only traditional deity of Rhodes to loom large within traditions constructed around the siege. In 99 BCE, the Rhodian city of Lindos caused to be published a fascinating and lengthy inscription cataloguing the rich variety of treasures purportedly dedicated at their celebrated temple of Athena;<sup>46</sup> this so-called *Chronicle of Lindos* (*Lindos* II 2) also documents three occasions on which the resident goddess appeared to her local devotees. One of these epiphanic episodes occurred during Poliorcetes' investiture of Rhodes in 305/4, when the goddess repeatedly manifested herself to a former priest, Callicles, to urge the petitioning of Ptolemy for succour (*Lindos* II 2 D 94-116).<sup>47</sup>

The overtures to Ptolemy that the *Chronicle* ascribes to Athena's urgings are a matter of historical record, as are his ensuing benefactions.<sup>48</sup> The *Chronicle* contextualises both these

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<sup>43</sup> See for example Pind. *Pyth.* 6.6ff; *Nem.* 5.1ff. Pindar's deployment of poetry and sculpture has attracted a great deal of scholarship; see O'Sullivan (2005) 98 n.13 for relevant bibliography, to which may now be added Pavlou (2010) on Pind. *Nem.* 5.

<sup>44</sup> Polyb. 5.88.

<sup>45</sup> The earliest catalogues of the Seven Wonders include the *Laterculi Alexandrini* (*P.Berol.* 13044 col. 8; second century BCE); *Anth. Pal.* 9.58 (Antipater of Sidon, also ca. second century BCE); Varro in Gell. 3.10.16. Of these, Antipater's verses feature the Colossus. For the traditions on the Seven Wonders, see Brodersen (1996).

<sup>46</sup> For text, translation and commentary see Higbie (2003). The island of Rhodes had a long-standing claim to a special relationship with Athena (Pind. *Ol.* 7.49-53), and her temple at Lindos was reputed to have been built originally by Danaus (Hdt. 2.182).

<sup>47</sup> On the identity of Callicles and of the Rhodian prytanis, Anaxipolis, to whom Callicles reported Athena's epiphanies, see Paschidis (2008) 355-6.

<sup>48</sup> For Ptolemy's provisioning of the besieged city, see above, n.8. The inscription gives only a limited picture of Rhodes' diplomacy, with Diodorus recording that envoys seeking aid were in fact sent not only to Ptolemy but also to Cassander and Lysimachus (Diod. 20.84.1). The help they provided was of lesser account, and they were recognised with statues and not cult (Diod. 20.100.2); hence, presumably, the lack of interest in them in the epiphany narrative.



benefactions and (implicitly) the cult which Ptolemy I subsequently enjoyed from the grateful Rhodian populace within a broader religious narrative.<sup>49</sup> As noted above, the possibility of direct Olympian intervention in time of military emergency — particularly in poleis under direct attack — seems to have been apprehended particularly keenly by Greeks of the Hellenistic age, if the proliferation of epiphany stories in that period is any indication.<sup>50</sup> Just such direct Olympian interest is charted on the *Chronicle*, and its effect is to affirm and to enshrine in public display the bonds that bound Athena Lindia to the Rhodians. That special bond is explicitly reinforced in the *Chronicle*'s treatment of an earlier epiphany by Athena when the city was besieged in the Persian Wars, an episode in which the Persian invader Datis was moved by the miraculous intervention of the goddess to declare that 'gods protect these people' (τοὺς ἀνθρώπους θεοὶ φυλάσσουνσι: *Lindos* II 2 D 46-7). In 305/4 it was again because of Athena's special care and concern that Ptolemy's aid was solicited; her pivotal role is underscored by the fact that, according to the chronicle, she appeared by dream to her former priest no fewer than six times before he took heed of the goddess and duly had Ptolemy approached for aid.<sup>51</sup>

This narrative does not detract from the high accolades that Ptolemy subsequently received, but neither does it overtly recognise them;<sup>52</sup> instead, it articulates a case for local prestige, by making Ptolemy's involvement contingent upon the direct relationship of Athena to her chosen people.<sup>53</sup> (The *Chronicle* further advertises Ptolemy's own recognition of Athena's prestige, for the king is himself listed as a dedicator of votives to the goddess elsewhere in the inscription (*Lindos* II 2 C 110-13).<sup>54</sup>) Once again, moreover, Rhodes' divine connections function to vouchsafe the Rhodians' own power: Athena promises to lead and to secure victory and dominance ([ἀ]γῆσειμένας αὐτᾶς καὶ νίκαν καὶ κράτος παρασκευαζέουσας: *Lindos* II 2 D 102-4), on condition that Ptolemy I be approached. As obedient devotees of their native goddess, the Rhodians are guaranteed their military success — a success that the goddess notably does not restrict to the immediate conflict against Poliorcetes that had prompted her manifestation.

The traditions that arose around the Rhodian siege indicate that the realm of the gods was a potentially fruitful place for a Hellenistic city to turn when faced with the

<sup>49</sup> On the Rhodian cult for Ptolemy, see above, pp.83-4.

<sup>50</sup> Above, p.85.

<sup>51</sup> This special relationship is established not simply through this individual instance of divine manifestation but rather through a long-standing pattern of Rhodian respect for the goddess and her reciprocal divine benefaction; the entire content of the *Chronicle* — the catalogue of dedications and of epiphanies — acts as witness to their connection.

<sup>52</sup> An interesting comparison in this context is afforded by the experience of Argos ca. 303 BCE (*ISE* 1.39, cf. above, n.19). Volgraff (1908) 240 suggests the 'Apollo' who intervened by night to save Argos is to be identified as Demetrius Poliorcetes. If so, the Argive text at once flatters Demetrius by assimilating him to the god, but does so in so oblique a fashion as to obscure his presence entirely; it is Argos' Apollo Pythaeus, resident of the local sanctuary, and not the king who is credited with the victory.

<sup>53</sup> Habicht (1970) 233-4 perceives a slightly different emphasis in the relationship of the Lindian *Chronicle* to Ptolemy's honours, and suggests that the function of the claimed epiphany of Athena was to displace the Siwah oracle (Diod. 20.100.3) as the key authority behind the new cult. On either interpretation, the primacy of the polis' own traditional deity is implicitly confirmed.

<sup>54</sup> The identification of this King Ptolemy as Ptolemy I Soter is probable but not provable (Higbie (2003) 137-8), but it is notable that one of the mortal participants in Athena's earlier epiphany, the Persian commander Datis, is also listed as the dedicator of votives to the goddess: see *Lindos* II 2 C 65-74.



unprecedented scale of the violence threatened by the era's new rulers. It afforded a means to articulate their relationship with such potentates, whether through the rewarding and encouragement of benefaction or through the condemnation of aggression. The Rhodians showed themselves to be highly competent players of the new Hellenistic diplomacy, by recognising Ptolemy's benefactions with their conferral of cult upon him. The divine realm also, vitally, provided a platform for a city's display of prestige against the competing claims of the diadochs. That prestige was expressed as a product of the reciprocal relationships that united the polis to its traditional patron gods, and it did so in a way that served as a civic counterpoint to the god-like status asserted by individual Hellenistic kings.<sup>55</sup> This counterpoint is neatly embodied in the Rhodian Colossus itself, which was (almost literally) a reconfiguration of the very siege engines that Poliorcetes had brought against the city: those machines, abandoned by Poliorcetes in the siege's aftermath, were sold off by the Rhodians and the proceeds used to fund a victory dedication whose height — like that of the *helepolis* — excited universal admiration.<sup>56</sup> Through such gestures, which were themselves amplified by the literary traditions of the following centuries, the Rhodians insinuated that their survival in their tussle with one of the Hellenistic world's new mortal divinities, Poliorcetes, owed much to the lineage of the island and to the favour of its old and traditional Olympian gods.

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<sup>55</sup> The Rhodians' adherence to piety is present even in their conferral of cult on Ptolemy, for which sanction was first sought from Zeus Ammon at Siwah (above, n.53). Siwah was the obvious place to seek such an imprimatur, given its proximity to Ptolemy's power-base and its credentials in approving similar requests such as Alexander's request for cult for Hephaestion: Arr. 7.14, 7.23; Plut. *Alex.* 72.3; Hyperides 3.21; Diod. 17.115.6; Justin 12.12.12.

<sup>56</sup> Height of Colossus: see above, n.7; *helepolis*: Diod. 20.91.2-4; Plut. *Demetr.* 21.1-2; Vit. 10.16.4; Ath. Mech. 27.4-5.

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