



The Roman Imperial Cult in Alexandria during the Julio-Claudian Period.

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**M.A. thesis submitted to
the Department of Classics,
University of Adelaide.
*August 1995.***

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ABSTRACT.

The purpose of this study is to examine the imperial cult in Alexandria under the Julio-Claudian Emperors of Rome. It will consider the origins of the imperial cult in Alexandria. It will look at the nature of the cult, through an analysis of the contemporary art, architecture and literature. It will study the political behaviour of the Ptolemies and the nature of the dynastic and personal cults they created to determine what factors influenced the imperial cult in Egypt. It will also consider briefly the effect, if any, of the native Egyptian religions upon the cult. Finally, it will review the nature of the imperial cult under each of the Julio-Claudian emperors.

DECLARATION.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis may be lent or photocopied.

Signed,

NICHOLAS EID

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

I would like to thank all those people who contributed to the writing of this thesis. To my supervisors Dr. Anne Geddes, Dr. Margaret O'Hea, and Dr. Albert Devine for offering advice on how to approach the subject and for the editing of the countless drafts submitted to them. My thanks to Gillian Bartlett for the use of her time and computer skills in the preparation of the final product. Finally, my thanks to my wife Donna for her patience and understanding over the years of study.

INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS.

- A.E. *L'Annee Epigraphique.*
- A.J.A.H. *The American Journal of Ancient History.*
- A.N.R.W. *Aufstieg Und Niedergang Der Romischen Welt.*
- B.G.U. *Griechische Urkunden aus den Kgl. Museen zu Berlin
Griechische Urkunden, Vols.1-9, 1895-1937.*
- B.M.P. *British Museum Papyrus.*
- C.I.G. *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.*
- C.I.L. *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.*
- Dessau ILS. *H. Dessau, Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae 1892-1916.*
- E.J. *Ehrenberg, V. & Jones, A.H.M., Documents illustrating the
reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, Oxford, 1955.*
- J.E.A. *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology.*
- J.H.S. *Journal of Hellenic Studies.*
- J.R.S. *Journal of Roman Studies.*
- R.S.A. *Rivista Storica dell Antichita.*
- Z.P.E. *Zeitschrift fur Papyrologie und Epigraphik.*



CHAPTER 1.

1.1 INTRODUCTION.

The nature of the Roman imperial cult in Alexandria was determined by a number of factors. The major contributing factors, from the period before the Roman annexation of Egypt, which subsequently affected the nature of the cult in Alexandria, were religious, social and political. Dynastic Egypt had the pharaoh as its central religious and political focus. The survival of the people and the country was directly linked to his ability to intervene with the gods. This idea was encouraged and developed under the Ptolemies and is particularly evident in Alexandria. These factors in the Roman period found expression in several areas of life in Alexandria. The evidence for these factors is found in the art, architecture and the literature of the period. The arrival of Augustus in Egypt further modified the existing traditions of kingship. During the Roman period in Egypt we are able to trace a pattern of influence in the imperial cult that demonstrates an influence from Greek, Egyptian and Roman sources. As a consequence the cult in Alexandria was unique in the empire.

The aims of this thesis are to determine the nature of the imperial cult during the Julio-Claudian period in Alexandria and to analyse the nature under each of the emperors to determine if it varied. It is important to consider the political context of Egypt within the Roman empire, since it appears that the development of the imperial cult was influenced by the status of Egypt and Alexandria. It will also examine the nature and origins of the Ptolemaic dynasty in political and religious terms to determine if the Roman cult in Alexandria was influenced by any Greek or native Egyptian factors. The fundamental question that this thesis aims to address is the issue of the nature of the imperial cult, that is, whether it was a political or a religious phenomenon.

In order to consider these points the thesis will be structured in the following way. Firstly a brief review of the literature on the imperial cult in Egypt and Alexandria in the last one hundred years will give an overview of the existing knowledge and theories relating to the imperial cult. In some cases it may be useful to consider material from outside Alexandria.

The second part of the thesis will consider Alexander the Great and his impact upon the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies and the imperial cult. It will also consider the influences that the Ptolemaic cults had upon the imperial cult, as well as the Hellenistic nature of the imperial cult. Finally it will consider the political and social context that the Ptolemies left in Egypt for the Romans, and the adoption and modification of this environment by the Romans. The third part of the thesis will consider the nature of the imperial cult in Alexandria. It will do this through the sources reviewed earlier. It will draw the evidence together and try to formulate an overall picture of the cult. The fourth and final part will consider chronologically each of the Julio-Claudian emperors and the nature of the cult under each of them.

Ruler worship in the classical world is defined as "the practice of offering sacrifice and other forms of cult homage to a mortal ruler, living or deceased."¹ From this definition the Roman imperial cult can be considered in the context of ruler cult. The purpose of the imperial cult has been variously described throughout the empire. However Roman ruler worship is best presented in the eastern provinces as, "a medium for expressing their loyalty by the states of Greece and Asia Minor when these came progressively under Roman control."² The imperial cult in the Roman empire was a political tool. Augustus initiated ruler cult as part of the romanisation of a newly pacified territory. As a consequence the provinces had an outlet for loyalty and a means to express their newly developed romanisation.³ He achieved this by focussing the imperial cult upon himself and the city of Rome. The *daimon* or spirit of the city of Rome was embodied in the image of the goddess Roma. The incorporation of some of the religious traditions of the conquered provinces into the imperial cult served to add a religious dimension to what was otherwise a very political institution. Within the imperial cult it is clear that the emperor was able to use the cult as a means of political communication. It enabled him to clarify his position within the empire and to influence the

¹ J.R. Fears, "Ruler Worship." R. Kitzinger & M. Grant (eds.), *Civilization of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome*, vol. 2, 1988, p.1009.

² D. Fishwick, "The development of provincial ruler worship in the western Roman empire", *ANRW*, 16.2, 1978, p.1207.

³ D. Fishwick, *ibid.*, p.1209.

manner in which he was viewed by his subjects. Therefore it was useful as a form of propaganda. The clear distinction in the background and the development of the imperial cult between the Eastern empire and the Western empire must be emphasised. Comparisons cannot generally be made given the differences between the two.

Price states that the earlier Hellenistic ruler cults were an "attempt to come to terms with a new type of power... The cult of the gods was the one model that was available to them (the Greeks) for the representation of a power on whom the city was dependent which was external and yet still Greek. By borrowing and adapting this pre-existing model of classification it proved to be possible to accommodate the new kings."⁴ It is possible to use this Greek model to explain the evolution of the imperial cult in Alexandria. At the time of the Roman conquest of Alexandria it already contained a large proportion of Greeks and maintained many religious customs from Greece. Furthermore he states that the imperial cult relied on local competition of residents to create honours for the imperial cult and hence gain public advancement, and that offers of cult were made in association with requests concerning privileges.⁵ This firmly places the role of the imperial cult into the political arena. Other writers such as Nilsson also favour the theory that the imperial cult was political in nature. "Emperor-worship is a masterpiece of the politician's art of employing religion towards the upbuilding of the State, and it contributed to keeping the Empire together; but, like all religious constructions of politicians, it had a weakness, for it lacked all genuine religious content."⁶ Thus the question of the status and the method of administration of the city of Alexandria is an important issue in the analysis of the imperial cult in Alexandria.

I shall consider the various types of cult that are discussed by modern writers. Some of the forms that the imperial cult could take under the Roman empire included dynastic, personal, civic, provincial, public and private cult.

⁴ S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power; The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, 1984, p.30.

⁵ S.R.F. Price, *ibid.*, p.70.

⁶ M.P. Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, H.J. Rose (trans.), 1969, p.178.

The development of the Roman imperial cult had its origin in the Greek world. It was an extension of the cult paid to semi-mythical and mythical heroes. Later such honours were extended to historically recognised people. Such cults were characterised by the award of divine honours by civic populations to distinguished men both living and deceased. This became known as ruler cult. The key factor that separated ruler cult from the previous hero cults was the recognition that the rulers were nonetheless still considered to be mortal. However some of the rulers achieved, by the very nature of their honours, a form of divinity. As Fears suggests, "Such worship frequently drew upon popular piety and patriotism, and cults of heroes were often unique to a single city, resting upon a popular perception of a miraculous intercession of divine power by the heroes through an act defined in time and place. Furthermore and most important, such cult worship could be bestowed upon historical persons."⁷

The key characteristic of a dynastic cult was the award of divine honours to the deceased kings, like those which occurred in the Ptolemaic cults in Egypt. The award of these religious honours was usually made by the living ruler to the deceased ruler, or was initiated by the priesthood. The honours were perpetuated through successive generations. The dynastic cult of the Ptolemies had some themes in common with the Roman tradition of ancestor worship. Later in the Ptolemaic cults divine honours were offered to the living ruler and also to members of the royal family, both living and deceased. In some respects the characteristics of the early Julio-Claudian imperial cult in Egypt appears to have been influenced indirectly by the Ptolemaic cults.

In their later phases both the Roman imperial cult and the Ptolemaic dynastic cult underwent a fundamental change to a personal cult. Personal cult offered to a living ruler appears to have evolved from the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies and first occurred during the Ptolemaic period. The major difference between personal cult and dynastic cult was the award of religious honours to the living ruler normally reserved for the gods. Such awards in Egypt

⁷ J.R. Fears, *Ruler Worship*, p.1010.

under the Ptolemies seem to have been instigated by either the native priesthood or the ruling family, as those in the dynastic cult were. One of the changes in the nature of the dynastic cult of the Romans to a personal cult in Egypt appears to date from the reign of either Nero or Gaius. However I will demonstrate that the change was superficial and was not the result of a clear policy change by the emperors. The evidence of personal cult in both the Ptolemaic and imperial cult should be treated with caution. In my opinion the dividing line between personal and dynastic cult is unclear. As a consequence I believe that although there is evidence of the award of some divine honours to living rulers in both the Ptolemaic and Roman periods this may fall short of those honours awarded to true religious deities. There is evidence in Egypt of elements of personal cult dating from Augustus' reign; this evidence occurs mainly in the form of private cult.

Honours in the civic and provincial cults, particularly in Egypt during the Roman period, could only be initiated from three possible sources. The first source was the Roman administration of the province. The administration was headed by the prefect of the province who maintained direct personal contact with the emperor. The prefect was a member of the emperor's staff and was not an appointment of the Roman senate. The second source was the civic bodies in Alexandria. The inadequacies of the civic structure reflect the broader issue of the political status of the city within the Roman empire. The third source was the provincial *koinon*. This was not an option in Roman Egypt which did not possess a *koinon*. In the west there were the provincial *Concilia* which were created to assume this function. Civic and provincial cults can be considered forms of public cult, with clear political motives. Evidence of the civic cult is often found in the public cult which was displayed on festive and ceremonial occasions.

Private cult was the cult of the individual citizens within their own homes. It is uncertain what constituted private cult as practiced in the family home. This is due in part to a lack of evidence from the Julio-Claudian period. This form of the cult arguably represents the truest expression of religious feeling within the context of the imperial cult. The absence of material

reflecting private cult under the Julio-Claudians in Alexandria suggests that either the cult had no true religious expression or that there is insufficient evidence available. An explanation for the uncertainty surrounding the existence of private cult in Egypt is likely to be found in the political status of Egypt and in particular Alexandria within the context of the empire.

The question of official cult as opposed to unofficial cult needs to be considered. It is a difficult issue to define as often the boundaries between the two merge. Within the context of Roman Egypt unofficial cult can be considered to include all aspects of the imperial cult not formally sanctioned by the emperor or his representative. "The study of any aspect of official imperial ideology must be based on a sharp distinction between official statements of the emperor and his agencies or of the senate and the Roman people and non-official, literary and artistic expressions of ruler ideology, which include municipal honours."⁸

1.2 FACTORS AFFECTING THE NATURE OF THE IMPERIAL CULT.

The result of my examination of the nature of the imperial cult in Alexandria will show that, while the purpose of the cult remained the same as in the rest of the empire, the mechanics varied in some respects. This variety can be attributed to three factors; firstly the attitude of the population of Alexandria to the Roman emperors, secondly the social and political structure of the city in relation to the emperor and the character of the emperor himself, and finally the political and religious history of Egypt.

The religious and political significance of the imperial cult, both to the emperor and the population of Alexandria, needs to be addressed. The cult in Alexandria appears to have lacked cohesion and direction. What the evidence tends to suggest is that the imperial cult in Alexandria was performed by separate civic groups, of both Roman and Greek composition. The Jewish population can be excluded from these groups as it seems that they were in direct

⁸ J.R. Fears, *Princeps a Diis Electus: The Divine Election of the Emperor as a Political Concept at Rome*, 1977, p.190.

opposition to the cult on religious grounds and under Augustus were given a special dispensation from the practice of the cult. This issue is an important factor within the cult and will be considered later. While Gaius later challenged this exemption, under Claudius it was reinstated and upheld. Such an exemption lends credence to the belief that the imperial cult at least under Augustus and the more moderate emperors could not have been religious in its purpose. If this was the case then the emperors would have opposed all requests for dispensations. It is the contention of this thesis that the imperial cult in Alexandria was influenced in its structure and nature by the political conditions that existed in the city under the Julio-Claudians.

The evidence suggests that the cult in other parts of the empire was influenced by the deliberate policy of romanisation first introduced and practiced by the emperor Augustus. The purpose of such a policy was to adapt pre-existing elements of the conquered culture to the Roman cultural model. In the case of weaker political, religious and cultural infrastructures such as those evident in the western parts of the empire the introduction of the cult assumed a pragmatic and therefore political purpose to unite the loyalty of the population to the emperor. It seems that initially the cult succeeded in taking hold in the Western empire and parts of the East primarily because of the relatively underdeveloped state of these societies in comparison to Rome and the political state they were in at the time of conquest. Many of them were recovering or embroiled in inter-tribal warfare, which was highly disruptive to the stability and development of these societies. The advent of Rome offered an end to these problems. However in Alexandria it appears that the highly developed Graeco-Egyptian society did not need the intervention of the emperor to ensure its stability. It was actively opposed to it under the leadership of M. Antonius and Cleopatra.

The status of the province of Egypt and the city of Alexandria within the context of the Roman empire needs to be considered as a barrier to the development of the imperial cult. The evidence suggests that the treatment by the emperor Augustus of the city of Alexandria as a personal possession rather than as a part of a province of the *Res Publica* may have had

an influence on the development of the cult. Egypt's political status under the Julio-Claudians was in many respects caused by the relationship that Augustus and C. Julius Caesar had with the last of the Ptolemies Cleopatra VII and her consort M. Antonius. Once this status was established it remained in place throughout the Julio-Claudian period and can be directly linked to the development of the imperial cult.

The personal characteristics of the later Julio-Claudian emperors such as Gaius and Nero in Alexandria had little effect on the imperial cult. The evidence supports the conclusion that these more historically sensational emperors did little fundamentally to change the nature of the imperial cult in Alexandria. Thus in Egypt emperors such as Gaius were treated, according to the blended Hellenistic and ancient Egyptian traditions, as gods. The perceptions of the emperor by the Alexandrians did not change with these rulers. It appears that both the Roman and the emperor's perception of himself changed because of exposure to the Ptolemaic traditions. The more moderate rulers such as Claudius recognised these attempts at flattery from Alexandria and sought to prevent it. Thus, we can conclude that Augustus' reign was important as it set in place the official precedents for the imperial cult that influenced the whole period. Once these standards were initiated there was little capacity to vary the nature of the official cult even in the provinces. Had these standards been in conflict with the traditional Republican styles then they would have been terminated by Augustus or at the insistence of the Roman senate. Such variations as were encountered in the nature of the imperial cult in Alexandria can be attributed to the religious and political context of the province and the city and, as such, they are representative of an unofficial form of the cult.

The political and religious precursor of the imperial cult in Egypt was the cult of the Ptolemies. The original cult of the deceased Ptolemies began as an extension of the hero cult of Alexander the Great in the late fourth century B.C.. The cult of the *Genius Loci* or spirit of the city of Alexandria, remained separate from the cult of Alexander as hero which was absorbed into the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies. Augustus' attitude towards Alexander the Great is an important point to consider in the context of the imperial cult. There can be no

doubt that Augustus was influenced by what he found in Egypt of the cult of Alexander and of his achievements. While there is no direct literary evidence the coinage and the art of the imperial cult provide the best indicators of such influence. There is a strong Hellenistic tradition of divinity in the Roman coinage and art of Alexandria which can be traced directly to many of the concepts of divinity first coherently organised under Alexander in his own search for a form of recognition for his achievements. It appears that his influence led the later Julio-Claudians in some cases to adapt elements of his cult of the *Genius Loci* to their own advantage within Egypt.

The concept of kingship expressed by the native Egyptians under their own dynasties of kings in some ways complemented the later artistic expression of the Roman emperor in Egypt and Alexandria. This relationship is demonstrated in the coinage of the emperors in Alexandria. However it does not extend to the Roman acceptance of the living ruler as a god. The title of pharaoh and the role he played in Roman Egypt was limited to the native Egyptian religions. None of the Julio-Claudian emperors was ever crowned as pharaoh although all of them were recognised as such by the native priesthood.

I will argue that the imperial cult in Alexandria was different from that of other cities of the empire on several grounds. The population mix was unusual in that it included one of the largest proportions of Jews outside of Jerusalem. The relationship that they enjoyed with the Julio-Claudian emperors and the Greek members of the city of Alexandria influenced the nature of the cult. The political makeup of the city of Alexandria also influenced the development of the cult. Finally the status of Alexandria in the empire also influenced the development of the cult.

1.3 EVIDENCE FOR THE IMPERIAL CULT IN ALEXANDRIA.

The primary sources for this thesis are the texts of Roman and Greek writers, both from the provinces and also from Rome itself. Philo, Strabo, Suetonius, Tacitus, Cassius Dio, Pliny, Josephus, Arrian and Ammianus Marcellinus provide important insights into the cult. The texts of these writers in conjunction with the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* and the

Oxyrhynchus papyri provide much of the literary evidence. They also provide the bulk of the evidence for the nature and origins of the imperial cult.

Philo, a Jewish Alexandrian, wrote of a golden age before his time. He tends to look back to the age of Augustus as a benchmark for the religious prosperity of the Jewish people. For the Jewish population of Alexandria the post Augustan period was filled with rioting and persecutions in comparison with the trouble free period under Augustus. These issues are reflected in his writing. Strabo has more credibility as a historian given that he was writing during the Augustan period and also witnessed first hand many of the sites he described.

Suetonius relied upon official state patronage in order to write political works. As a consequence one finds that his personal politics, like everyone else's, tend to exhibit a strong slant towards the reigning emperor. We find for example that some writers denigrate Suetonius for stating that emperors such as Nero and Gaius sought to introduce oriental emperor worship to Rome. "It is a charge fabricated out of the scandalmongering accounts of authors like Suetonius and Dio Cassius, who readily availed themselves of the stock portrait of the tyrant usurping divine honours."⁹ This seems to be true but it does not reduce the value of the texts. In a similar fashion Tacitus displays open hostility towards some of the emperors such as Tiberius and Nero. However he is grudgingly in favour of Augustus as a necessary evil.

The Rosetta stone reflects several features of the Ptolemaic cults that occur later in the imperial cult in Alexandria. The tablet from Ephesus which was located and first translated by J. Keil offers direct evidence of the nature of the imperial cult in Alexandria in the Roman period. Two other inscriptions are available from the Ptolemaic period and have a bearing on the current discussion. The first inscription relates to the deification of the royal family whilst they were still alive. The second inscription is concerned with public ritual in Alexandria which clearly emphasises the Hellenistic tradition and thus has implications for the Roman

⁹ J.R. Fears, *Ruler Worship*, p.1017.

period. Apart from these major texts what remains of the literature of the imperial cult is a few inscriptions which assist in the analysis of the development of the cult, under the Julio-Claudians and some chancellery documents from the Julio-Claudian emperors and their representatives.

The material remains dating from Roman Egypt are extensive but few are relevant to the imperial cult. The coinage of Egypt plays a major role in the analysis of the cult. There are three major studies, two of which were by Milne, the third by Christiansen. These studies provide an analysis of the existing coinage from Alexandria. The art of the Roman period has also been examined by a series of modern scholars. The descriptions of the statues in the literature provide some of the best ideas of the nature and perception of divinity and the appearance of some of the cult statues. What remains of surviving cult statues is a series of Roman copies that can be used as an aid to define the nature of the imperial cult.

The public architecture of the imperial cult in Alexandria is known almost entirely from literary descriptions. While many modern archaeologists have been at work in the city of Alexandria relatively little is known of the cult architecture. For example the physical evidence of the primary temple of the imperial cult, known as the Caesareum, is reduced to an outline of the temple. The above ground evidence of the cult in Alexandria is almost nonexistent. "In spite of this comparatively undisturbed condition of the area of the ancient city until recent times, excavation has yielded little material for its reconstruction at any period."¹⁰

The evidence shows that the cult developed continuously under each of the Julio-Claudian emperors. The evidence is divided over the treatment of the emperor in the city, whether he was viewed as a god or a mortal with divine honours. I believe that this problem can be resolved by considering the difference in cultural perspectives between Alexandria and Rome. The evidence also suggests that the cult changed superficially to keep pace with the

¹⁰ P.M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, vol.1, 1972, p.8.

wishes and beliefs of the individual emperors. In other cities of the empire the cult remained constant in its approach from the start by its amalgamation with the goddess Roma. Such an argument supports the view of the cult as a political tool rather than a religious one in Alexandria.

The material evidence for the cult in Alexandria reflects the influence of Alexander the Great upon the Roman emperors. It supports the intrusion of some of the concepts of the pharaonic tradition into the imperial cult. It also supports the conclusion that the architecture of the cult differed little from that of other parts of the empire. The evidence does not offer any clear answers to the question of the date of establishment of the high priest of the imperial cult in Egypt nor to the question of the rites and rituals of the cult.

1.4 MODERN SCHOLARSHIP ON THE IMPERIAL CULT.

The subject of the imperial cult in Egypt is a neglected one. There is very little information published on the province but more particularly, on Alexandria itself. This thesis is written in an attempt to redress this imbalance.

The first major article to discuss the nature of the imperial cult in Egypt dates from 1913. It argued in favour of an unofficial imperial cult not sanctioned by the emperor. It argued that the imperial cult in Egypt was a reaction by the Alexandrians to a new power. It further argued that the imperial cult in Alexandria was different from the cult in other parts of the empire on the grounds that Roma was never worshipped in conjunction with the emperor there. Considering all these factors it clearly adopted the attitude that the cult had a distinctly political purpose.¹¹ Later writers of the twentieth century adopt a similar approach to the subject of the cult in Egypt. They argue in favour of a Greek reaction to the change in power with the arrival of the Romans. The Romans then adopted a structure for the imperial cult

¹¹ F. Blumenthal, "Der Agyptisch Kaiserkulte", *Archiv fur Papyrusforschung und Verwandte Gebiete*, 22, 1913.

based on the Hellenistic cults.¹² This is a popular argument and is plausible given that initially the cults of the Greeks were also political reactions to a new power. In general it was not until 1987 that it was acknowledged that there is work to be done in the field of the Alexandrian imperial cult.¹³ Modern scholarship has produced a series of monographs on aspects of the imperial cult and cult temples. Prominent amongst such scholars is Fishwick who has written, for example, extensively on the early development of the Caesareum.¹⁴

The material remains of the imperial cult in Egypt and in particular Alexandria are not assessed wholly in terms of the imperial cult. Most writers are more concerned with the collection of the remaining evidence. One of the most comprehensive catalogues of portraiture and sculpture outside the Alexandrian museum itself comes from Graindor in 1936.¹⁵ The recent work that Kiss undertook in 1984 is important for his efforts in re-attributing identities of well known portraits in the Alexandrian museum.¹⁶

¹² H.I. Bell & A.D. Nock, "The Augustan Empire", *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol.10, 1971, p.481.

¹³ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 1987.

¹⁴ D. Fishwick, "The temple of Caesar at Alexandria", *AJAH*, 9, No.2, 1984, pp.131-134.

¹⁵ P. Graindor, *Bustes et Statue Portraits D'Egypte Romaine*, 1936.

¹⁶ Z. Kiss, *Etudes sur le portrait Imperial Romain en Egypte*, 1984.

CHAPTER 2.

Religious precursors of the Imperial Cult in Alexandria.

2.1 THE PHARAONIC RELIGIONS.

The native Egyptian religions contributed to the imperial cult in two ways. On the one hand there was the depiction in the art and on the coinage of the Roman emperor in a traditional iconography developed for portraying the pharaoh. On the other hand there was the traditional perception of the pharaoh as a divine being. Under the native pharaonic dynasties, before the peaceful occupation of Egypt by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C., the religious life of the nation had remained constant with the pharaoh as its centre. The basis of the pharaonic tradition was an absolute monarchy, a tradition that characterises the country of Egypt through much of its history. In Egypt the, "emergence of civilisation was marked by the unification of the Nile valley as a single rural domain of an absolute monarch whose own divinity secured the prosperity of the two lands."¹⁷ In effect this concept linked the survival of the pharaoh and thus the ruling house to the survival of the country as a whole. This was a theme that Augustus was to exploit and it is evident in much of his coinage. This exploitation was continued through much of the Julio-Claudian period. In the same context another important facet of the pharaonic tradition that also emerged in the imperial cult was that the pharaoh or emperor was recognised as a son of the gods. In the case of the pharaoh he was the incarnation of Horus on earth, and the son of Ra invested with his Ka, or spirit. The Roman emperors on the conquest of Egypt were accorded the title of pharaoh by the native priesthood and thus became, in the eyes of the native Egyptians at least, the incarnation of Horus on earth. Certainly the position of the emperors at Rome as Republican magistrates would have made the assumption of a royal title such as the pharaoh difficult without contradiction. To what extent the imperial cult was influenced by Egyptian religious ideas remains to be considered.

¹⁷ J.R. Fears, *Princeps A Diis Electus*, p.19.

The gulf between the imperial cult and the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies and the pharaonic tradition of kingship was wide and was caused, officially, by ideological differences which are reflected in the practice of cult. The main religious distinction was that on the death of the pharaoh he left the living world and his existence ceased to be acknowledged by the native priesthood and the people. In fact he became part of the God Ra. The pharaoh was recognised as the incarnation of the Egyptian god Ammon Ra and on his death he became an Osiris. As an individual he no longer played any part in ritual. The Greeks on the other hand kept alive in memory the kings after death in religious ritual, through sacrifice, festivals and cult centres. They became individuals in the divine world in their own right. This practice continued under the Romans. The imperial cult apotheosised an emperor on his death subject to the approval of the Roman senate. The grounds for deification were firmly in the realm of politics in the Roman period. On the other hand the Egyptian pharaoh was considered to be a living god by virtue of his selection as pharaoh by the gods prior to his birth and his appearance on earth was seen as the reincarnation of Horus. His death therefore was seen as a return to the heavens and the Egyptian gods.

In practical political terms, within the kingdom of Egypt, the pharaoh was all-powerful. "What is the king of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and the mother of all men, alone by himself without equal."¹⁸ There is implicit in this statement a clearly paternalistic approach to the social regulation of Egypt and it is reflected in the management of Egypt by the pharaohs. Augustus chose to exploit this approach. Rather than continuing the practice of appearing as a beneficent monarch he chose instead to drain those resources from the country normally returned to the workers and which ensured their support. The result was that the system of the imperial cult, not the pharaonic tradition, dominated the religious attitudes of the emperor in Egypt.

¹⁸ "The autobiography of Rekhmire", H. Gardiner (trans.), *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache*, 60, 1925, p.69, H. Frankfort, *Ancient Egyptian Religion*, 1948, p.43. See also H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Chicago, 1948.

It is known that Augustus did not acknowledge the native Egyptian religions on the grounds that the amorphous nature of the gods meant that they were unsuitable to be considered as a part of the Roman pantheon. "For this reason he would not enter the presence of Apis either, declaring that he was accustomed to worship gods, not cattle."¹⁹ The pharaonic tradition of ruler cult, which was closely allied with the native Egyptian religion was also rejected contemptuously on similar grounds. Thus any intrusion of the native religions into the imperial cult must have occurred at the instigation of the Alexandrians and not through the emperor himself. The later portrayal of emperors on the Alexandrian coinage in ways that the native Egyptians and Greeks were able to comprehend is not a contradiction of this idea but merely reflects political pragmatism. The emperors, like the pharaohs, were never portrayed in Alexandria or Egypt in the form of the traditional Egyptian animal deities, and certainly never in the context of the imperial cult.

One fundamental similarity between the native Egyptian ruler and the Roman emperors, in the Julio-Claudian period, in the religious cults is that neither were ever portrayed or recorded in the texts as being directly worshipped whilst alive. In most cases outside Alexandria the emperor and the pharaoh, in the native temples, are recorded worshipping the gods on behalf of the people. Thus they acted as an intermediary between the two in the country. In Alexandria it appears that the same was true.

The native Egyptian concept of divinity in pharaonic religion and the concept of divinity in the Roman emperor in the imperial cult were fundamentally similar in some aspects. What changed in the Roman period was the political purpose for which the emperor used his power. The imperial cult eroded what was a religious tradition and replaced it with a clearly political organisation with foreign aims and objectives. However there can be no doubt that elements of the Egyptian culture intruded into the imperial cult. It is generally recognised that by the reign of Augustus the pharaonic tradition of kingship was all but gone from the practical politics of the Romans in governing Alexandria. However elements of it survived through

¹⁹ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 51,16, E. Carey (trans.), 1917, vol.6, p.47.

Ptolemaic cults. It was in keeping with the policy of romanisation that such elements survived. They provided a reference point for the native Egyptians and, because these elements had, to a certain extent, become part of the Ptolemaic cults they also appealed to the Greek elements of the population in Egypt.

2.2 THE CULT OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

The subject of Alexander the Great in Egypt and his impact upon the cults of the Greeks and the Romans is an extensive one and difficult to consider in a few short paragraphs. It should also be noted that it is the subject of ongoing debate.

Alexander the Great's burial in Alexandria had important ramifications for the cults of the Ptolemies. It also had implications for the imperial cult in Alexandria under the Romans, in spiritual, religious and iconographic terms. In 323/2 B.C. the body of Alexander was seized by Ptolemy I and placed in the Sema in Alexandria and a state cult worship of him was instituted prior to 289 B.C.. "He decided for the present not to send it to Ammon, but to entomb it in the city that had been founded by Alexander himself, which lacked little of being the most renowned of the cities of the inhabited earth. There he prepared a precinct worthy of the glory of Alexandria in size and construction. Entombing him in this and honouring him with sacrifices such as are paid to demigods and with magnificent games, he won fair requital not only from men but from the gods."²⁰ This was the origin of the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies. It provided the focal point for the later dynastic cult of the Ptolemies. There is an argument as to the exact physical location of the Sema. However it is likely that it was located not far from the palace of the Ptolemies. Strabo observes of the palace complex "a part belonging to the palaces (which) consists of that called Sema, an enclosure, which contained the tombs of the kings and that of Alexander (the Great)."²¹ Clearly this tomb was the dynastic cult centre as it also contained the bodies of the deceased Ptolemies.

²⁰ Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 18,28, R.M. Greer (trans.), 1962, vol.9, p.95.

²¹ Strabo, *Geography*, 17,8, H.C. Hamilton (trans.), 1889, vol.3, p.229.

Taylor states that there were in fact two cults to Alexander in Alexandria. The first cult was to his spirit or *Agathos Daimon* which was worshipped at a temple as the *Genius Loci* of Alexandria in the form of the serpent. The second cult was to him personally as a hero and was offered at the Sema itself.²² It was at this second site that the focal point for the development of the Ptolemaic cult was established. Furthermore she states that the temple of the *Agathos Daimon* represented the centre of the worship of Alexander as a true divine being and may have been associated with a priesthood.²³ Later authors support the idea that Alexander was considered a god in death although not in the context of the *Agathos Daimon*. "In 323 the god died, but his cult continued tenaciously. The fiction soon developed that like Heracles he had been translated into heaven."²⁴

The concept of the *Genius Loci* of Alexander the Great is important to the later consideration of the imagery of the imperial cult. There are similarities between the calculated attempt that Augustus made to introduce the cult of his *Numen* and *Genius* to the western Roman empire and the introduction of the *Genius Loci* at Alexandria by Alexander the Great. The evidence for these similarities is in the coinage. Augustus and it seems later emperors, not only attempted to link themselves with the *Agathos Daimon* of Alexander, but also drew upon similar depictions of the *Genius Loci* to illustrate their own *Genius*. For example the attempt by Nero to link his *Genius* with the *Agathos Daimon* of Alexander is reflected in the coinage.²⁵ The need that the emperors felt to link themselves with both Alexander and his *Agathos Daimon* in Alexandria seems to reflect the charismatic nature of his leadership and the fact that he represented a benchmark in the Mediterranean world at that time. On Augustus' visit to the tomb of Alexander and the Ptolemies, he comments, "I wished to see a king, not corpses."²⁶ Thus it seems that by assimilation with Alexander the Roman emperors sought to establish their credibility as leaders themselves.

²² L.R. Taylor, "The cult of Alexander at Alexandria", *Classical Philology*, vol.22, 1927, p.167.

²³ L.R. Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor*, 1975, p.25.

²⁴ A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire; The Reign of Alexander the Great*, 1988, p.290.

²⁵ L.R. Taylor, *The Cult of Alexander*, p.169.

²⁶ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 51,16., E. Carey (trans.), p.47.

A second relevant issue concerns the recognition of Alexander as Ammon-Ra by the oracle at Siwa. Fishwick states, "In pharaonic theory every king of Egypt was by definition the son of Amun Re; so in recognising Alexander as such, now that he was ruler of Egypt, the priest was simply following the rules. Nevertheless since Amun (= Amon) was identified with Zeus, the process of Egyptian religion implied recognition of Alexander as the son of Zeus - with far reaching implications for the Greek world."²⁷ It also had implications for the later arrival of Augustus in Egypt. He too was recognised as *Zeus Epibaterios*. This title will be considered later.

Media reports as recently as February 1995 that suggest that the tomb of Alexander the Great has been located in Siwah in Egypt cannot be taken seriously given the vast quantity of literary evidence from eye-witnesses who viewed the tomb in Alexandria. It is not possible that all the writers were misled by the tomb and its contents. It is however possible that the tomb recently located there is an ancient fake designed to promote the status of the Oracle of Ammon who was supposed to have first warned Alexander of his divinity. However until further information comes to light from the excavations this question must remain open.

2.3 THE PTOLEMAIC CULTS.

Under the Ptolemies in Egypt there were two aspects of the official state cult. On the one hand there was the dynastic cult, originating from the death of Alexander the Great and the deification of the deceased Ptolemies. The link between the dynastic cult and the personal cult of the living pharaoh occurred some time between 273-0 B.C. when Ptolemy II and his wife Arsinoe shared a temple with Alexander as the brother-sister gods.²⁸ This represented him as a semi-divine being with hero status and later led to his deification as a demigod. Some explanation of these terms is needed. The hero was usually offered divine honours after

²⁷ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.9.

²⁸ W.S. Ferguson, "The Hellenistic monarchies and the rise of Rome", *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol.7, 1954, p.17.

his death. Therefore he was considered a demigod and not a full god. The reason for this was that in Greek religion the gods were superhuman beings exempt from death.²⁹

Before this deceased Ptolemaic rulers had been deified. The first recorded deification occurred in the reign of Ptolemy II. He deified his father Ptolemy I and his wife Berenice in *ca.* 280 B.C..³⁰ This worship was, "established officially in Egypt as an act of the king's. Shrines in which Ptolemy I and Berenice were worshipped with incense and the sacrifice of bulls were erected by royal order, probably in connection with the place where their bodies rested, near that of Alexander, in the Sema."³¹

The second phase was the introduction of the personal cults of the living Ptolemaic rulers and other associated members of the royal household. These began around the beginning of the second century B.C.. The main distinction between the personal and dynastic cults in this period was the point at which divine honours were awarded. It has been argued that without the appearance of cult statues of the Ptolemies in the temples of the native Egyptians they cannot be considered equal with the true gods.³² Therefore the question of personal cult becomes not whether the Ptolemies were considered living deities in the Greek or Roman sense but rather at which point divine honours were awarded. Aspects of both these cults can be linked to the imperial cult in Alexandria under the Romans, even though during the Roman period the Ptolemaic cults failed and all but disappeared.

In 323 B.C. on the death of Alexander the Great, Ptolemy I became the ruler of Egypt. It was not until 305 B.C. that he assumed the double crown of Egypt and became king. He was recognised as *Basileus* and as *Theos Euergetes* in the Canopus decree in 238 B.C.. Fears states that this indicates that the cult of the Ptolemies was reliant upon the Greek tradition of divine election.³³ The city of Alexandria became the new capital of the country, and was filled

²⁹ W.S. Ferguson, *The Hellenistic monarchies*, p.16.

³⁰ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.14.

³¹ E.R. Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy*, 1985, p.127.

³² M. Reinhold, "Roman attitudes towards Egyptians", *The Ancient World*, 3, 1980, p.339.

³³ J.R. Fears, *Princeps a Diis Electus*, p.76.

with the Greek and Macedonian troops necessary to perpetuate the new regime and subjugate the country. Many Greek religious customs were introduced to the city of Alexandria by this migration after its founding in 331 B.C. by Alexander the Great. For instance the establishment of a priesthood to the *Genius Loci* of Alexander as the guardian of the city of Alexandria, and festivals and rituals in honour of him in the traditional Greek style were held. It is agreed that the seizure by Ptolemy I of Alexander's body was done in order to establish a relationship with Alexander and to enhance the importance of Alexandria, as the new capital of his empire and as a cult capital for the worship of Alexander.³⁴ One can make a direct comparison between Nero and Ptolemy I in respect of their need to affiliate themselves with the city of Alexandria. Both the emperor and Ptolemy I sought to use the religious strength of Alexander's *Genius Loci* to promote their own political power structure in the city.

After the seizure of Alexander's body in 322 B.C. the main priority for Ptolemy I was to establish a claim to the power base that he now held in Egypt. He attempted this by satisfying the religious and political protocols of the Macedonian state. Even though Ptolemy created his own empire it was nevertheless important for him to remain within the bounds of Greek religious tradition in order to preserve his claim to be the successor to Alexander the Great and be acknowledged by the Greek world as such. At the same time Ptolemy provided a justification to the native population and priesthood for his rule as pharaoh. The first part of the claim of right manifested itself in the dynastic cult. The seizure of the body of Alexander and its interment in the Sema provided for Ptolemy I a legitimacy for his own divine claims and the religious benefits of the power of the spirit of Alexander. The second part of the process was achieved by the amalgamation of Greek and Egyptian gods to form the composite god Serapis.³⁵ In this composite Greek and Egyptian god the Ptolemies sought to unite the Greek and Egyptian religions and peoples. The extent of the success of this action is clear from the status that Serapis attained in the Ptolemaic period and beyond. However

³⁴ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.13.

³⁵ The origins of the god Serapis are discussed by a number of writers all of whom agree that it is an amalgam of the Egyptian gods Osiris and Apis. For further information see M.M. Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest*, 1981. and A.B. Bosworth, *From Arrian to Alexander*, 1988. For the legend of the origins of the cult see Tacitus, *The Histories*, 4,83-84.

Serapis had no influence upon the imperial cult during the Julio-Claudian period. This can be linked to Augustus' earlier disparaging comments about the Egyptian gods. It is under Hadrian and the Flavians that it assumed importance in the imperial cult and gained a following throughout the empire.

The Rosetta stone provides an example of the combination of the Greek and Egyptian traditions into the cult of the Ptolemies. It also illustrates some of the traditions that were later assimilated into the imperial cult. I have used the translation from the Greek.³⁶

"In the reign of the young king, who inherited the kingdom from his father, the glorious lord of the diadems, who made Egypt strong, who was pious in matters of religion, victorious over his adversaries, who restored the life of mankind, lord of the Thirty Year Festivals, great like Hephaestus, King like the Sun, living image of Zeus, son of the sun, Ptolemy the ever-living, beloved by Phtha, in the ninth year, when Aetus, Aetus' son, was Priest of Alexander and of the Saviour Gods and of the Brother Gods and of the God Manifest and Gracious..."

"...with Good Fortune. The priests of all the holy places of the land have resolved to increase greatly all the existing honours paid to King Ptolemy the Everlasting, God Manifest and Gracious, and likewise to his parents the Parent-loving Gods, and to his ancestors the Benefactor Gods and the Brother Gods and the Saviour Gods, and to set up a statue for King Ptolemy the Everlasting, God Manifest and Gracious in the most visible place of every temple, to be called the statue of Ptolemy the Defender of Egypt, and alongside it shall stand the principal god of the temple, handing him an emblem of victory. All this to be portrayed in the Egyptian manner. The priests shall worship at the images three times a day and provide them with holy robes, and perform all the other ritual traditional to the other gods in the national festivals. And there shall be set up to King Ptolemy, God Manifest, and Gracious, born of King Ptolemy and Queen Arsinoe, Parent-loving Gods, a golden statue and shrine in each of the temples, and it shall be placed in the sanctuary with the other shrines, and in the

³⁶ J. Ferguson, *Greek and Roman Religion: A Source Book*, 1980, pp.67-69.

great festivals in which the shrines are brought out and carried in procession, the shrine of the God Manifest and Gracious shall accompany them in procession...."

The decree comes after the native Egyptian rebellions centred on Memphis and Thebes in 207 B.C.. These rebellions were mainly initiated by the native priesthood against the Ptolemaic rulers. Therefore the introduction of the statues of the Ptolemies into the native shrines of Egypt indicates a political motive. The implication is that by worship the Ptolemies would ensure the loyalty of the native priesthood. Obviously a refusal to worship the statues would indicate a source of discontent and could be dealt with. The decree has been taken to suggest that the placement of the statues of the rulers in the shrine with the native gods implies an equality with them. However Fishwick argues persuasively that there was nothing to show that they were represented as gods rather than humans being accorded divine honours.³⁷

In comparison with the religious issues raised by this decree there are two fragmentary texts that indicate the nature of the cult in Alexandria. The first decree is from 272 B.C. and is to the living queen Arsinoe wife of Ptolemy II. "And let those wishing to sacrifice to Arsinoe Philadelphus sacrifice in front of their own houses, or on the [roofs] or in the street along which the canephoros passes. Let everyone sacrifice a... or a bird, or whatever he wishes, save a he-goat and a nanny-goat. And let everyone make the altars of sand. And if any persons have ready built altars of brick, let them throw sand on top of them, and let them place on the sand faggots on which they will burn the pulse..."³⁸ This appears to indicate that the living ruler was worshipped as a divine being. However Fishwick believes that this is not the case. He states that Arsinoe was in fact often assimilated with Aphrodite Euploia. This meant that she was not a goddess but had, by virtue of exceeding the ordinary achievements of a mortal, been rewarded with divine honours.³⁹ The inclusion of Ptolemy II and Arsinoe in a temple with Alexander as the brother-sister gods, considered earlier, indicates that both the dynastic and personal Ptolemaic cults were clearly linked with Alexander the Great.

³⁷ D. Fishwick, "Statues taxes in Roman Egypt", *Historia*, 38, 1989, p.343.

³⁸ P.Oxy. 2465., P.M. Fraser, *op.cit.*, p.229.

³⁹ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.39f.

What are some of the issues brought out by the Rosetta decree? It describes elements of both the personal and dynastic cults of the Ptolemies. The cult of the living ruler was amalgamated with the deceased rulers to form the personal cult of the Ptolemies. The Rosetta decree establishes beyond doubt that by the reign of Ptolemy V, during which the document was written in 196 B.C., there existed a priesthood dedicated to Alexander the Great. There is an implication in the text that can be read in two ways. Either the cult of Alexander was separate from the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies or it was linked intrinsically to it. Earlier evidence indicates that the cult of Alexander was linked to the dynastic cult and to the cult of the living king. The priest of Alexander was also recognised as the priest of the 'Saviour Gods', the 'Brother Gods', and the 'God Manifest and Gracious'. The latter term is a direct reference to the current ruling Ptolemy. It indicates that all three cults were inter-related. The decree emphasises that the political success of the Ptolemaic empire in Alexandria had to be linked to Alexander the Great in order to establish its legitimacy. In the rest of Egypt the Ptolemies ruled as absolute monarchs by virtue of their confirmation as pharaoh. In the same manner Roman emperors of the Julio-Claudian period such as Nero who were less sure of their status as rulers in Alexandria sought to strengthen links with Alexandria by comparison with Alexander the Great and his *Genius Loci*. In the rest of Egypt the emperor did not feel the need to ensure his political stability by any other means than force of arms and as an absolute monarch.

In the Rosetta decree there are two key phrases common to eastern descriptions of kingship. The first is the idea of being "victorious over enemies". The second phrase relates to the position of the portraits of the pharaoh and "alongside it (the statue of the pharaoh) shall stand the principal god of the temple, handing him (the pharaoh) an emblem of victory"⁴⁰. This Egyptian perception of victory was an important idea that influenced the development of the Roman imperial cult outside Alexandria. A second origin of the concept of victory lies in the Hellenic world of Alexander the Great and his successors. "Of equal significance with the

⁴⁰ See above p.27.

ruler cult is the mystique of victory as a divine gift, a numinous quality that attached to the successful general or ruler."⁴¹

Outside Egypt in the imperial period, particularly in the West, there is a strong iconographic representation of the emperor in military dress and as a conqueror. Why there is less evidence of this from Alexandria is not clear. However it is quite possible that the evidence existed but has been destroyed. On the other hand given the conquest of Egypt and the position it occupied in the empire it may not have been necessary to emphasise the way in which Egypt was forced to join the empire. Certainly outside Alexandria in the temples of the native Egyptians it is not uncommon to see the Roman emperor represented as victorious over his enemies in relief sculpture. Most of this sculpture is in the native Egyptian style and shows the emperor as pharaoh. This reflects the traditional Egyptian role of the pharaoh as defender of the people. It does not occur in Alexandria nor does it show him defeating the Alexandrians and Egyptians. The Roman coinage however does reflect elements of victory. Thus an explanation for the failure of symbols of victory to appear in Alexandria during the Julio-Claudian period may be found in the political situation at Rome. After Actium Augustus was forced into compromises with the Senate at Rome. Victory appeared in the Senate house and the worship of it was carried out by the Senate.⁴² The association of Augustus with Victory could not be tolerated by the Senate because of this. Later after the development of the cult of *Victoria Augusta* in the early first century there was no need to stress the element of victory in Egypt as it was already an integral part of the role of pharaoh.

Some of the more obviously Greek practices that are evident within the decree included the priesthood for the deceased Ptolemies and the placement of the statues of the living rulers in the temples of the other gods. The carriage of the image of the ruler in equal status with the image of the gods in procession during holy days was a traditionally Egyptian practice. Such ceremonies as these would also have been relevant to the cult of Alexander prior to the

⁴¹ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.113.

⁴² D. Fishwick, *ibid.*, p.117.

establishment of the cult of the Ptolemies. Modern writers argue against the equality of status of the living Ptolemies with the true gods of Egypt and Greece on the grounds that, "We know too of statues for the living monarch that were erected in temples (in Alexandria during the Ptolemaic and Roman period) and could be the focus of ceremonial, and the Rosetta stone attests the placing of a gold image of the monarch housed in a special *aedicula* that lay in the *adyton*; this too was the recipient of rites. It is conceivable that such images in temples could fall within the definition of *synnaos* but nothing goes to show that the current rulers were given an *agalma* in the temples of other gods; in which case they can hardly have been *synnaoi theoi*."⁴³ The *agalma* was essentially a cult statue. If such a statue of a living Ptolemy appeared in the *adyton* of the temples of the native gods, it would mean that the Ptolemy was being treated as divine and 'equal to the true gods', or *synnaos theos*. The *adyton* was the main chamber where the cult statues of the gods were held in the temple. However there was often found next to the *adyton* an *aedicula* or small room which could hold a statue of the king. This separation of the kings from the gods marked the difference in status.

The images of the Ptolemaic pharaohs placed in the native temples may have been important for other reasons. For example in comparison with the Roman emperor in Egypt we note that the pharaoh was responsible for the success of the crops and the flooding of the Nile. Clearly this was a function inherited from the native Egyptian dynasties and reflected the importance of the position of the pharaoh and his relationship with the gods. In this instance the emperor appears not as a god himself but as an intercessor on behalf of the people. Therefore honours to the pharaoh or emperor from the people could ensure that he made every attempt to help them and ensure their survival. In the native Egyptian temples the pharaoh, both Ptolemaic and native, was often depicted offering sacrifice to the gods on behalf of the Egyptians. This also demonstrates that there was a difference in status between the true gods and the concept of ruler worship in pre-Roman Egypt. The other main purpose of such rituals in Alexandria when the statues of the ruler were carried in procession would be to reinforce loyalty to the

⁴³ D. Fishwick, "Statues taxes in Roman Egypt", p.339.

pharaoh. The appearance of the cult statues when the pharaoh was not present provided a focus for loyalty.

2.4 CONCLUSIONS.

The native Egyptian culture influenced the later development of the Roman imperial cult in Alexandria indirectly in two areas. It linked the idea of military success to that of kingship. Also the survival of the land and the success of the crops was made dependent upon the pharaoh, a tradition that Augustus sought to maintain given the importance of Egypt as the granary of the empire. The early imperial cult was influenced by the attitude of the Alexandrians to the new pharaohs or Roman emperors, but this was an unofficial form of the cult.

The Ptolemaic cult with its Hellenistic influences contributed to the imperial cult in a different fashion. It introduced the emperors to the *Agathos Daimon* of Alexander the Great and to Alexandria which was a focal point of that worship. It was one of the reasons that led the emperors to elevate Alexandria to a special level above the rest of the country. Some of the Julio-Claudian emperors sought to link their own *Genius* to that of Alexander to strengthen the relationship that they had with the city of Alexandria and also to promote their own image in the empire by a link with Alexander. This attempt is evident in the coinage. Finally the Ptolemaic living cult provided the impetus for emperors such as Gaius to consider the deification of his sister Drusilla in Rome.

CHAPTER 3.

Political influences upon the structure of the Imperial Cult.

3.1 PTOLEMAIC POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE.

This chapter will be concerned with the political and social background of the imperial cult in Alexandria and more generally in Egypt. The object is to demonstrate how these factors influenced the structure of the imperial cult and thereby its nature.

The economic and political events in Egypt that preceded Augustus' acquisition of Egypt in 30 B.C. upon the death of Cleopatra VII and M. Antonius after the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. provided the environment for an absolutist structure which, it has been suggested, was first instituted by the native Egyptian dynasties but strengthened by the Ptolemies. They achieved this through the centralisation of all functions both business and government. "Thus Ptolemy when he became Satrap of Egypt in 323 B.C., found the administrative machine in working order. He and his son Ptolemy II so developed and improved it that it became one of the most rigidly centralised bureaucracies that the world has ever seen. Every official, down to the village scribe, held his appointment, directly or indirectly, from the central government, and every detail of the administration was controlled from the centre. The government moreover, controlled almost every human activity. The land in theory all belonged to the king."⁴⁴ In effect this structure laid the ground for the Roman occupation of Egypt so that it could be instituted with minimal administrative changes. When this absolutist environment of the Ptolemies was coupled with the fertile land and the productive and rich economy of Egypt, it paved the way for the complete exploitation of both the population and land by Augustus for the benefit of himself and the Roman state.

The political and economic structure of Egypt under the Ptolemies placed its rulers in a unique position. If the land ownership was held entirely by the king, then there was the capacity for a more absolute form of rule to occur in Egypt than anywhere else, as indeed it

⁴⁴ A.H.M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 1937, p.298.

did under the Ptolemies. This situation enabled three important circumstances to occur in Egypt: the exploitation of the land through the work of the rural population, the right of the king to use the population for organised labour (brought about by the immemorial tradition of the right of conquest), and the regulation of the retail trade implicit in state run monopolies.⁴⁵

The relationship between religion and politics in Egypt crystallised under the Ptolemies into terms that the Romans could understand. The country under the Ptolemies was divided into *Nomes* or districts that were based on arrangements for worship and the land districts had as their centre an urban settlement. For example in the Chemmitic district the population centre was Chemmis. The name Chemmis was derived from an Egyptian god who was equivalent to the Greek god Pan. Therefore under the Ptolemies the town was known as Panopolis. In the same way Alexandria had as its central protecting deity the *Agathos Daimon* of Alexander the Great under the Ptolemaic dynasty. These traditions continued under the Romans.

3.2 THE CIVIC STRUCTURE OF ALEXANDRIA UNDER THE PTOLEMIES.

The relevance of the civic structure of Alexandria is important to the nature of the imperial cult in the city in so far as, without one, the city would be unable to make independent representation to the emperor. It has already been said that the role of the imperial cult was to offer honours to the emperor as a means of securing privileges for the city. The dispatch of delegations to the emperor was the responsibility of the citizens of the city. This was organised by the ruling body of the city. In Alexandria this was the board of *Prytaneis*, six magistrates, one of whom was the *Archiereus* and who retained the function of the *Asiarches* which was primarily the management of cults and festivals dedicated to the reigning ruler.⁴⁶

Under the Ptolemies it would appear that there was not an official civic council. The civic council essentially represented a democratic process that contradicted the nature of Ptolemaic power in Egypt. The civic council was "an essential element of the political, social, and

⁴⁵ M. Rostovtzeff, "Roman exploitation of Egypt in the first century", *The Journal of Economic And Business History*, 1, 1929, p.340.

⁴⁶ A.H.M. Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 1937, p.300.

religious life of every Greek city. Without the *koinon* it is unlikely that there would be anyone to apply for the right to build temples in honour of the emperor."⁴⁷ This position is not wholly tenable given that both the Ptolemies and the Romans managed in Egypt to create traditions of ruler cult. The other forms of government traditionally associated with Greek cities were still used, such as the board of *Prytaneis*. The class structure and method of selection of these magistrates was retained and it appears that the city still retained a healthy rivalry amongst the upper classes for political office. This system continued under the Roman empire. It was this system that enabled the cult to develop in the city of Alexandria.

The absence of a civic council does not seem to have affected the development of the imperial cult in Alexandria in any abnormal way. However the absence of the provincial *koinon* does have implications for the development of the imperial cult at provincial level. If however one were to assume that the city of Alexandria was treated in an equivalent manner to the rest of the province of Egypt then the whole perception of the imperial cult in the city changes. However the question of the status of Alexandria in relation to the province of Egypt will be considered later.

3.3 THE INFLUENCE OF M. ANTONIUS AND CLEOPATRA.

The political relationship between Rome and Egypt before its annexation by Augustus in 30 B.C. contributed to the future status of the province in the empire. The behaviour of the then rulers of Egypt M. Antonius and the last of the Ptolemies Cleopatra VII had an impact on the nature of the imperial cult in Egypt. M. Antonius' efforts to defeat Augustus provided the necessary catalyst for the chain of events that reduced Egypt to the status of a personal possession of the emperor. M. Antonius had established an association with the god Dionysus and also claimed descent from Hercules. By linking himself with Dionysus M. Antonius appealed to both the native Egyptians and the Greeks in Alexandria. The native Egyptian equivalent of Dionysus was Osiris, well recognised as the consort of Isis. Cleopatra herself

⁴⁷ K. Dowden, *Religion and the Romans*, 1992, p.59.

was recognised as the goddess Isis incarnate. Augustus used this against M. Antonius in the propaganda war.

M. Antonius was Augustus' major opponent. The fact that he had established himself as a foreign king in Egypt was used by Augustus to his own advantage in justifying his war with M. Antonius. His marriage to Cleopatra VII was looked upon as a betrayal of the ideals of the Roman state particularly when he then sought to link himself to the native Egyptian and Greek gods. The question whether he was in fact considered a god in Egypt is open to interpretation. Through propaganda put about by Augustus Cleopatra was considered a foreign queen who had influenced C. Julius Caesar and was now seeking the ruin of the Roman ideal of Republic through war against Augustus. All of these issues were represented to the Roman people by Augustus as propaganda as the coinage of the period in Rome attests. Augustus' rejection of the Ptolemaic tradition is in keeping with his propaganda. However his acceptance of certain facets of the pharaonic tradition could indicate his desire for personal deification.

It is agreed that M. Antonius manufactured a lineage that claimed Dionysus as the progenitor of his family. Dionysus was recognised by the Greeks as the son of Zeus and a member of the Greek pantheon of gods. His association with Alexander the Great and the Ptolemaic dynasty was already well established in myth. Furthermore under the Ptolemies Dionysus was associated by the Greeks with Osiris, the Egyptian god. This association was made by Ptolemy I so as to link the traditional Egyptian religions with the new Greek concepts of religion. He did this in an attempt to unify the populace of Alexandria and Egypt under a common national religion.⁴⁸ Later this new religion became the cult of Serapis. With this background in mind the purpose of the link between M. Antonius and Dionysus becomes quite clear. It was meant to establish a political sanction through religious means for the benefit of the populace of Egypt, and in particular of the Greeks of Alexandria, to justify his right to take Cleopatra as his wife and therefore make himself king of Egypt. If he was

⁴⁸ J. Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire*, 1976, p.92.

descended in theory from Dionysus-Osiris then he had a claim to be the legitimate consort of the Queen who was recognised as Isis incarnate. Thus the two gods could be linked in life as they were in the heavens. M. Antonius was able to strengthen further his political links to Egypt when his children were recognised by the population of Egypt as the future heirs to the throne of Egypt. The denigration of M. Antonius and his heirs by Augustus to the Roman people was another factor that disallowed his open acceptance of the pharaonic tradition of rule in Egypt.

As a result of the troubles in Egypt and M. Antonius' attempts to establish an eastern empire from there, Augustus developed a mistrust of the Egyptians. He illustrated to the Romans through propaganda the ills of the eastern ideals of kingship. Thus after the conquest of Egypt Augustus was in no position to pursue actively the crown of Egypt and with it the role of pharaoh. It is acknowledged that he was recognised as pharaoh in Egypt by the native Egyptians outside Alexandria, but he did not officially sanction this recognition. As a consequence the imperial cult in Alexandria reflects the Roman and Greek aspects of religion rather than native Egyptian concepts.

3.4 THE POLITICAL STATE OF EGYPT AND ALEXANDRIA UNDER AUGUSTUS.

Egypt under Augustus' rule underwent few political and social changes that would have substantially altered the status of the native and lower classes in the rural areas of the province. Alexandria however was treated differently from the rest of the province after annexation. Citizens of Alexandria held special rights in the Roman empire separate from the rest of the population of the province. No person was able to become a citizen of Alexandria without both parents being from Alexandria despite the fact that there were a large population of native Egyptians within the city. Because of this right of citizenship, which was based on the fact that both parents had a Greek heritage, Alexandrians in the early Julio-Claudian period could aspire to Roman citizenship. The native Egyptians in Alexandria had their status further reduced by being disallowed this right even if they were resident in Alexandria. The Greek citizens were exempt from the poll tax and any land outside Alexandria that they held

was also tax exempt. It would appear that Alexandria was allowed these exemptions mainly because of its perceived cultural background within the empire. "This study will present the hypothesis that the overwhelming bias towards the Greek provinces (and to a lesser extent, the civilised Latin provinces of the Mediterranean) in the evidence relating to contacts between subject and emperor is not just the reflection of chance, of the survival of literary and documentary records; but that on the contrary it was precisely considerations of cultural and historical status which gave cities, and individuals from them, the confidence to approach the Emperor."⁴⁹ The Prefect Tiberius Julius Alexander in his edict of 68 A.D. implies this distinct status, "I am taking the utmost care in order that this city (Alexandria) might remain in an appropriate status enjoying the benefactions which she has received from the Augustan emperors, and in order that Egypt, living in good condition, might serve willingly to the *annona* and to the greatest propriety of our times, without being burdened with new and unjust exactions."⁵⁰ In other words while the rest of Egypt continued to pay tribute to the emperors to the best of its ability, Alexandria would continue to receive special treatment.

When Egypt was added to the Empire the term to describe it was the *kratesis* of the emperor Augustus. This translates as 'dominion'.⁵¹ Even in the title *Alexandria ad Aegyptum*, which can be translated as "Alexandria adjoining Egypt", there is clear evidence of the division between Egypt and Alexandria.⁵² Further evidence for the division of the province into Egypt and Alexandria is found in the title of the prefect in Egypt who was known as the prefect of Alexandria and Egypt.⁵³ Another result of Egypt's status was that the currency was closed to the rest of the Empire and vice versa. Therefore the only coinage allowed in Egypt was minted in Egypt. There is no evidence to suggest why this was done. However a brief consideration of the economic factors in light of its position as a personal possession of the emperors indicates that it was necessary to preserve the political and economic integrity of

⁴⁹ F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World*, 1977, p.8.

⁵⁰ M. Rostovtzeff, *op.cit.*, p.344.

⁵¹ A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs*, 1989, p.37.

⁵² H.I. Bell, *Roman Egypt*, p.349.

⁵³ A.K. Bowman & D. Rathbone, "Cities and administration in Roman Egypt", *JRS*, 82, 1992, p.115.

the country. A possible explanation for this distinction between Egypt and Alexandria could lie in the fact that under the Ptolemies Alexandria was recognised as one of the foremost centres of learning in the Mediterranean. Not only this but also the port of Alexandria was essential to the emperor as a means of supplying the grain tribute so important for his popularity at Rome. The rest of Egypt was only there to provide the labour to extract the tribute. Finally Alexandria was recognised as a Greek city and it has been considered that the Roman emperors sought to promote Greek culture above the Egyptian.

Although the Ptolemies had been crowned as pharaohs in the traditional way Augustus failed to continue this tradition. Thus he ignored one of the major methods by which foreign rulers were accepted as kings of Egypt amongst the native Egyptians. How did Augustus circumvent this method, given that he was recognised in the native Egyptian temples of Upper Egypt and clearly identified in reliefs in the guise of a pharaoh? I would suggest that the native priesthood in the first century B.C. having grown used to the absolute rule of the Ptolemies was, in Alexandria at least if not further afield, compliant with the whims of the rulers. Even though the native priesthood's influence was severely restricted under the later Ptolemies the recognition of a person as pharaoh would be sufficient for his acceptance by the native population. The fact that Augustus was never formally crowned as pharaoh suggests that it was politically not necessary to carry out this act. The rejection of the pharaonic tradition was essentially a rejection of a political viewpoint, namely that of the native Egyptians. There were other reasons that prevented Augustus from being crowned pharaoh amongst which the primary one was the potential reaction in Rome had he been made king of Egypt. It would have been an unpopular move at a time when there was an emphasis upon the return within Rome to Republican ideals, and he himself was seen as the champion of these ideals. As Augustus himself stated, "... *nullum magistratum contra morem maiorum delatum recepi.*"⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, P.A. Brunt & J.M. Moore (eds.), 1967, p.20.

Was the nature of Roman rule in Alexandria and Egypt governed primarily by the criterion that it was a spoil of war won by Augustus and a personal possession of his? Augustus appears to have justified the excessive placement of troops in Alexandria on three strategic factors for military control and protection; first that the approach to Alexandria could only be made by sea not overland, second that there still existed the potential for revolt and thirdly that the faction fighting in Alexandria presented long term problems of political stability.⁵⁵ The first factor is the only obvious strategic point relevant to the defence of the country. The other two relate directly to the security of the city in political terms. We know that Augustus sent over twenty thousand men to Egypt to secure the country. This amounted to three legions. A comparison with Asia shows that only forty thousand men, or six legions were required for the whole of the provinces of Asia Minor. This information certainly suggests the possibility that Egypt was in some danger of revolt, but more likely it was under threat of seizure by a Roman rival or foreign enemy. However in reality it would be more appropriate to define the necessity of the forces as, firstly, to maintain the oversight of the civic and rural development and continual flow of tribute from Egypt; and secondly, to ensure that there was no external threat to the emperor's power, either from outside the empire or from within Egypt.

Millar suggests that the presence of the army was the dominating factor in the romanisation of a province; the non-citizens were recruited into the auxiliary units and came out citizens. Towns grew up around the legionary camps and the settlement of veterans led to the eventual romanisation of the province.⁵⁶ The only town established as a Roman settlement was known as Nikeopolis in 29 B.C. and provided a secure location to station the legions. "To Neptune and Mars; Imperator Caesar, son of the divine Julius, having achieved victory by sea in the war which he waged for the state in this area, dedicated the camp from which he went out to attack the enemy, decorated with spoils. Consul for the fifth time, Imperator seven times,

⁵⁵ J.G. Milne, *A History of Egypt under Roman Rule*, 1898, p.2.

⁵⁶ F. Millar, *The Roman Empire and its Neighbours*, 1967, p.3.

peace having been obtained by land and sea."⁵⁷ While other garrison towns were established, the countryside remained mostly rural. What evidence there is seems to support the idea that Egypt was controlled by the emperor as if it was a large estate. There appears to have been little intention to achieve full scale colonisation. Such an act would have required ratification by the senate at Rome. This would imply the reduction of the emperor's authority in Egypt. Certainly Strabo seems to confirm this military power in Egypt. "There are three legions of soldiers one of which is stationed in the city (of Alexandria) and the others in the country; apart from these there are nine Roman cohorts, three in the city, three on the borders of Ethiopia in Syene, as a guard for that region, and three in the rest of the country. And there are also three cavalry units, which are likewise assigned to the various critical points."⁵⁸

The strategic information supplied by Strabo, if correct, when it is considered in conjunction with Millar's argument, implies that the only area to develop any degree of romanisation would be Alexandria itself and around those Roman garrison towns. In the early years of Augustus' reign even this would have been lacking in Alexandria, considering that the legion was based at the new Roman suburb of Nikeopolis and kept separate from the rest of the city. It is said of the cult that it "was more readily introduced into the newer and more backward provinces than into those which were more firmly established within the Roman political system. In the former it was needed as a means of associating the image of Roman power with a religious aura; in the latter it was less necessary as a key to romanisation."⁵⁹ However we know that the cult did develop in Alexandria from early in Augustus' reign. It is likely that the reduced status of Egypt and Alexandria in comparison to the rest of the empire meant that the competition to retain and expand privileges was strong amongst the population of Alexandria. Possibly the difference in status between Egypt and Alexandria led the Alexandrians to try harder to separate themselves from the rest of Egypt and establish themselves as a unique identity and favourite of the emperors.

⁵⁷ EJ 12 with J.M. Carter, *ZPE* 24, 1977, pp. 227-30, D.C. Braund (ed.), *Augustus to Nero; A Sourcebook on Roman History 31 B.C. - A.D.86.*, 1985, p.22.

⁵⁸ Strabo, *Geography*, 17,1,12., H.L. Jones (trans.), 1932, vol.8, p.49.

⁵⁹ J. Ferguson, *op.cit.*, p.95.

3.5 THE ROMAN ADMINISTRATION OF ALEXANDRIA.

The Roman administration of Alexandria under the Julio-Claudians was relatively simple. It had as the central authority, in the absence of the emperor, the prefect. The prefect was a servant of the emperor and not of the Roman senate. This is an important distinction in the consideration of the status of Alexandria under the Romans. The prefect performed the roles of military commander, chief justice and financial controller. The prefect when he was not touring the country was usually based in Alexandria, recognised as the capital city of Egypt during the Roman period.⁶⁰ The role of a governor of a senatorial province was considered by several ancient authors. "The governors who are sent to the cities and the provinces are each and all rulers of them in their own right, but in regard to themselves and in their relation to each other they are likewise all subjects, and indeed it is in this respect that one would distinguish them from their subjects, that they offer the leading example of how a subject should behave."⁶¹ This standardised view of the Roman governor is in contrast to the role of the prefect. Within the context of the Roman state he held no official power. He drew all his power directly from the emperor. Thus his relationship with the emperor was as a servant in a private contract. He could be compared to the overseer of an estate. "*On sait par Tacite que le prefet d'Egypte etait considere comme le successeur des rois et que ses <<decrets>> avaient l'authorite des decisions proconsulaires.*"⁶² Reporting directly to the prefect were two other officials known as the *Juridicus* and the *Idiologos*. The latter was the procurator of the special account. The former held special judicial powers assigned and held at the discretion of the prefect. Both served as provincial officers drawn from the ranks of the *equites* and were not limited in their jurisdiction to the city of Alexandria.⁶³ The specific official municipal administrative roles of the city of Alexandria under the Romans were made into officially recognised magistracies. The positions were filled by prominent Greek citizens who were drawn from the ranks of the Gymnasium class. This was a class of Greek persons determined

⁶⁰ H.I. Bell *Roman Egypt*, p.349.

⁶¹ Aelius Aristidies, *Oration 26, Panegyric on Rome, 30-3*, B.C.. Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook*, 1985, pp.116-7.

⁶² J.M. Andre, "Les Romains et l'Egypte", *Etudes Philosophiques*, 42, 1987, p.193f.

⁶³ H.I. Bell, *Roman Egypt*, p.349.

by citizenship in the city of Alexandria and a minimum standard of wealth. These officers served as a basic council for the city of Alexandria.

3.6 ALEXANDRIAN CIVIC STRUCTURE UNDER THE ROMANS.

There is no doubt that an official civic council similar to those of other eastern provinces did not exist in Alexandria under Augustus. "Augustus commanded the Alexandrians to conduct their government without Senators; with such capacity for revolution, I suppose, did he credit them. And of the system then imposed upon them most details are rigorously preserved at the present time, but they have their Senators in Alexandria, beginning first under the emperor Severus..."⁶⁴ Later in the letter to Claudius we find the same point being made. "Concerning the city council, what your custom may have been under the ancient kings I have no means of saying, but that you had no council under the former emperors you are well aware."⁶⁵ The lack of a civic council in Alexandria in the Julio-Claudian period appears not to have affected the ability of the imperial cult to function in the city in the Augustan period. It has already been established that the political framework of Egypt was conducive to the development of an even more strict totalitarian state under the Romans than had previously existed under the Ptolemies. For the same reasons that existed during the Ptolemaic period it is unlikely that the Roman state and more particularly, the emperor, would want to allow government functions other than liturgies and magistracies in the city to be dealt with by any part of the population of Alexandria.

The civic council served a useful purpose in the promotion of the imperial cult in the cities of the east. One of their major functions in the Roman period was to provide the necessary impetus and cohesion for the citizen body to acknowledge the achievements of the emperors.⁶⁶ The civic council was headed by the city elders who were members of the *gerousia*. They filled positions relevant to the administration of the city under the Ptolemies

⁶⁴ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 51,17., E. Carey (trans.), p.47.

⁶⁵ Claudius' Letter to the Alexandrians, *BMP* 1912., N. Lewis & M. Reinhold (eds.), *Roman Civilization, The Empire*, vol.2, 1955, p.367.

⁶⁶ E.G. Hardy, *Studies in Roman History*, 1906, p.241.

as in Greek cities. One of their primary purposes under the Greeks was as a supervisory religious body of cults and festivals. "To the ideas of the time every such *Koinon* implied some common religious cult, just as conversely every common cult implied a *Koinon* for its administration and organisation."⁶⁷ Thus it seems that the civic council should have provided the major source of initiative for imperial honours to the emperor and the development of the civic imperial cult. This did not occur.

What Alexandria did have was "colleges of elected magistrates (*gymnasiarchs*, *kosmetai*, *exegetai*) who were responsible for the limited degree of civic autonomy which the monarchs allowed - supervision of... festivals, games, public facilities and so on."⁶⁸ These six magistrates in total also included an *Archiereus* whose primary role was the management of the cults of the city. These roles had existed with their functions since the Ptolemies had first come to Egypt. In all probability it was to the *Archiereus* that the role of supervisor of the imperial cult festivals and processions fell in conjunction with the priests of the imperial cult temples, the *Neokoroi*. This title became more widespread by the reign of the emperor Hadrian.⁶⁹ However it would appear that all such decisions concerning the practice of the imperial cult had to be ratified by the prefect.⁷⁰

The civic cult did continue to develop under Claudius. By 55 A.D. there was an established provincial high priest of the imperial cult in Alexandria.⁷¹ I believe that implicit in this title is a civic high priest of Alexandria which indicates that the cult in the city may have reached official status by this time.

We also know that Tiberius Claudius Balbillus held the post of high priest of Alexandria prior to 55 A.D.. This is denoted in the Keil inscription by the term *Archiereus*.⁷² The *Archiereus*

⁶⁷ E.G Hardy, *ibid.*, p.243.

⁶⁸ A.K. Bowman, *op.cit.*, p.211.

⁶⁹ S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power*, p.65f.

⁷⁰ S.R.F. Price, *ibid.*, pp.69-70.

⁷¹ K.J. Rigsby, "On the High Priest of Egypt", *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, 22, 1985, p.283.

⁷² K.J. Rigsby, *ibid.*, p.279.

was originally a Greek office and one of the elected magistrates of the *gerousia*. The position was made compulsory and drawn into the Roman administration under Augustus, and it was usually filled by a Greek, in the city of Alexandria. At this point the position probably only had responsibility for the Greek cults and possibly for the imperial cult in the city of Alexandria. The existence of the *Archiereus* offers one explanation for the format of the imperial cult. The position may have been incorporated into the official imperial cult to form the basis of the office of high priest of Alexandria and Egypt in 14 A.D., when the emperor Tiberius is known to have created the cult of Divus Augustus.⁷³

I would argue in favour of a high priest for the provincial imperial cult in Alexandria from 14 A.D.. Prior to that, under Augustus, there was no capacity for the imperial cult to function in Alexandria as an official cult. The *Archiereus* in Alexandria maintained the religious observances for the imperial cult as he was required to do with all other religious cults in the city. The embassies sent to the emperor in this period simply reflect the need that the Alexandrians felt to ingratiate themselves with the Roman emperor. They resorted to the traditional Ptolemaic cult methods of honours to influence him. Thus prior to 14 A.D. the imperial cult was unofficial within the city of Alexandria. That is, it was practiced with the tacit consent of the emperor but was not formally recognised as an official cult in the empire.

Finally a papyrus record of an address made to the emperor that occurred in Rome between the emperor Augustus and an embassy from Alexandria shows the attitude of the Alexandrian people towards the emperor. "Such a... as you have granted... nothing... Lord Augustus, such a grant we ask you to make today to your Alexandrians. For we are here under the title of suppliants, but in truth our city is worshipping your most sacred Fortune with full enthusiasm."⁷⁴ A record such as this is likely to have been taken down on papyrus by a member of the imperial court such as a scribe or it may represent a record kept by one of the members of the embassy at the time.

⁷³ K.J. Rigsby, *op.cit.*, p.285.

⁷⁴ P.Oxy. 2435 Verso., D.C. Braund (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.190.

This transcript puts forward a similar view of the imperial cult common to other parts of the empire when it names Augustus' Fortune as the object of worship rather than himself.⁷⁵ This would indicate that under Augustus there was the potential in Alexandria for the existence of the private cult of Augustus' *Genius*. The usual form of offering was a glass of wine or a toast at all banquets offered in the home. This offering of libations was voted to Augustus in 30 B.C. by the Roman senate.⁷⁶ The existence of the delegation during Augustus' reign also suggests that the Alexandrians had a body separate from the Roman administration that was capable of representing the Greeks of the city to the emperor; in this instance this would most likely have been the council known as the *Prytaneis*. The use of the word 'Lord' is a poor translation of the word *Sebastos*. A literal translation of the Greek word would be Augustus. Thus the use of such a title reflects the Greek nature of the embassy to the emperor.

Alexandria during the Roman period was recognised as a politically unstable city. It could be said that the Greek Alexandrians' only possible means of political action was to riot under the Romans, when an embassy had failed to achieve the desired goal. To the Roman emperors it made Alexandria politically unstable and underlined the need to station one full legion there. The approach that was adopted in the rule of the province of Egypt, but more particularly in Alexandria, was not one of equality with the other provinces but domination. Hence in many of the other Eastern cities where the cult flourished because of the existence of the provincial *koinon* it could be said that such public expressions of the imperial cult were spontaneous and a genuine response to granted benefactions from the emperor. Under the early Julio-Claudian emperors there are several embassies to the emperors in Rome that indicate the desire of the Alexandrians to gain the favour of the emperor and to establish cult offerings to him. The evidence for these embassies will be considered later. The accepted thinking is that the Roman emperors took a great deal from Egypt but gave little back. Such a policy would have given little hope for any genuine political or social benefits in return for the success of such embassies but were essential as the only way of representation to the emperor.

⁷⁵ For a full discussion on whether the toast was offered to Augustus or to his Fortune see D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.375f.

⁷⁶ N.G.L. Hammond & H.H. Scullard (eds.), *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1970, p.149.

3.7 CONCLUSIONS.

The question of the imperial cult cannot be addressed without reference to the political state of Egypt under the Roman empire since the development of the cult is intrinsically linked to it. It is quite clear from the literature that Egypt was viewed by the emperors as some kind of personal spoil of war for them to handle as they saw fit. "The country was in a sense, the personal spoil; while the older provinces of the Roman Empire had been won from foreign kings for the Republic by its generals and with its armies, Egypt was the fruit of his (Augustus') victory over a Roman rival, albeit a recreant to Roman ideas; and, as the personal property of that rival's wife, was confiscated for the private benefit of the victor."⁷⁷ The Roman emperors put Egypt to work to provide as much wealth for them as was possible. It is argued that due to the status of the province "there was a cult in Alexandria and in various local temples, and certain honours were paid to the emperor throughout the land but there was no provincial cult for the reason that Egypt was not allowed to have any self consciousness as a unit and there was moreover no enthusiasm to regulate. Asia had been delivered from bondage but Egypt had merely passed into the hands of absentee landlords who kept strict bailiffs."⁷⁸

I believe that Egypt prior to and immediately upon its annexation to the Roman empire for a variety of political and military reasons found itself with very little status in the context of the other provinces. This is partially reflected in Augustus' failure to romanise fully the province. It is further reflected in his failure to reinstate or to institute an Alexandrian civic senate. It has been demonstrated that the political system in Egypt instituted by the early Ptolemies was on the whole left in place by the Roman emperors with few modifications. The dynastic cult of the Ptolemies continued under the Roman empire, albeit in a simpler form. There is evidence of the continuation of Ptolemaic cult practices into the Julio-Claudian period. This fact emphasises that many of the links with the Ptolemaic dynasty were not severed

⁷⁷ J.G. Milne, *op.cit.*, p.1.

⁷⁸ H.I. Bell, & A.D. Nock, *op.cit.*, p.486.

deliberately, but rather that they occurred naturally under Augustus as a result of his neglect of the social and political environment in Egypt as a province of the empire.

One might expect that a provincial cult failed to develop in the manner of the other provinces of the East under Augustus for two main reasons. The first was associated with the lack of a specific religious bureaucracy for the imperial cult in the early years of Augustus' reign. Secondly the cult failed to develop because the status of the city of Alexandria was reduced in comparison to other Greek cities of the empire throughout the whole of the Julio-Claudian period.

Thus the cult continued, as in other provinces, to perform a basically political function. It developed on an unofficial level in the city of Alexandria from early in Augustus' reign. It would appear that Augustus was worshipped as a living god by elements of the city and that the religious emotion in these acts varied in intensity from flattery to genuine piety. However it was not until Tiberius' reign that a formal city bureaucracy was established for the imperial cult. Before this the cult was conducted in a haphazard way as a reaction to the new power structure within the country.

CHAPTER 4.

Art and architecture.

4.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter will analyse Greek, Egyptian and Roman art and architecture in Alexandria for what it tells us of the imperial cult. A cursory consideration of sculpture in the round of the emperors of the Julio-Claudian period shows that official Roman imperial art followed predetermined rules to ensure that the emperor and his family were portrayed in a uniform and politically correct manner throughout the Empire. These rules were primarily based on the standards initiated by Augustus, and later modified according to the individual needs of the emperors. Augustus drew these standards from "...traditions honours and magistracies... which exemplified his wish to return to old Republican ways."⁷⁹ In the same manner as imperial art, architecture also followed fundamental design rules common throughout the empire. As a consequence of this blend of Greek and Roman architecture the same sort of temple could be found in Greece itself and anywhere else in the Greek east.

As for the art of the imperial cult no cult statue survives from Alexandria. What we do have from various parts of Egypt are statues and reliefs that indicate a common perception of the emperor. In many cases the art of the imperial cult and the art of the emperor in general can be compared. Imperial art seems to have conformed to a standard set by the emperor himself and was a reflection of the way in which he sought to appear to the empire, even if these traits contradicted his physical appearance. The formal representations of the emperor, that is, those works sanctioned by the imperial administration for official functions, tend to exhibit a strongly Greek influence in the choice of pose, manner and religious imagery. In the province the emperor is represented in a form that is easily recognised as a power symbol to the particular culture. There are of course symbols common to more than one culture that were also used. Such symbols often stemmed from the pre-existing religious concepts of the conquered cultures. Often the symbols that the emperor chose were commonly acknowledged

⁷⁹ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *The Image of Augustus*, 1981, p.23.

as the most powerful symbols of power and authority. These types of symbols were common to all cultures and in them the emperors found a means to demonstrate their function and position in the province.

4.2 HELLENISTIC PORTRAITURE.

A brief resume of the essential elements of Hellenistic art that went into the construction of royal portraits under Alexander the Great and the later Ptolemies will illustrate the nature and influence that Hellenistic art had upon Roman imperial art in Egypt. The period of portraiture under Alexander the Great reflects some of the most clearly defined elements of deification in Hellenistic royal portraiture, and indeed many of the elements of civic and dynastic cult portraiture later evident under the Ptolemies. Plutarch refers to the existence of the portrait of Alexander by Lysippus.⁸⁰ While the original no longer exists we have, thanks to the survival of the literature, the ability to reconstruct its appearance and observe both Greek and Roman copies. This particular portrait is important to the imperial cult as it was said to embody the essential characteristics of Greek divinity. These characteristics were later picked up by the Roman emperors and adapted for their own use. The importance of this portrait can be seen in the number of Roman copies that survive. As for painting, under Alexander the Great, Apelles was made the official royal painter and he also was given the sole right to paint Alexander. Similarly Pyrgoteles was given the right to portray Alexander in stone, "*Idem hic imperator edixit ne quis ipsum alius quam Apelles pingeret, quam Pyrgoteles scalperet, quam Lysippus ex aere duceret, quae artes pluribus inclaruere exemplis.*"⁸¹ It is Pyrgoteles' representation of Alexander seated that provides the basis for many Graeco-Roman copies. Thus the way in which Alexander was portrayed was strictly controlled by himself. This resulted in stereotypical images of him with characteristics that he could dictate. Later the Roman emperors followed this example.

⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Lives*, The Life of Alexander, 4.1., J. Langhorne & W. Langhorne (trans.), 1805, p.713.

⁸¹ Pliny, *Natural History*, 7,37,125.

Most representations of Alexander in sculpture conform to a few basic visual ideals regardless of the location of their find. They can be divided into two categories, the divine and the heroic. The heroic statues tend to be distinguished by their bulging forehead and dilated eyes and a raised gaze, symbolic of piety. The divine type on the other hand is similar but marked by a serene image with no upward look.⁸² One of the other aspects of the portraiture of Alexander common to both types is the distinctive hair. It is described as "the *anastole*, in which the uplifted front locks fell gracefully to either side of a central parting."⁸³ The *anastole* drew its power from its similarity to the lion's mane and the corresponding connection with the strength of the animal. The locks were specifically characteristic of Serapis under the Ptolemies and in later Roman portraiture were symbolic of divinity. The rest of the hair is represented as short in his own lifetime, but later it appears as long locks. Three other facial features that commonly occurs are the unshaven cheeks, the partially opened mouth and full lips. The unshaven cheeks were not a full beard.

The head of Alexander the Great ⁸⁴ in the museum of Alexandria represents the epitome of the classical Alexander as a hero. The eyes are staring straight ahead, there is the close mouth and narrow lips, the slightly turned head, to the side and not upwards, and the distinctive *anastole* hairstyle. "*C'est qu'elle ressortit surement a l'art alexandrin.*"⁸⁵ It can be dated to the second century B.C..⁸⁶ This particular statue has all the hallmarks of heroic style but its foremost distinguishing feature is its serene eyes, which, it is said, give it the hint of divinity.⁸⁷

Other elements of the art of Alexander include the diadem and the ram's horns of Zeus-Ammon and the elephant-scalp all strongly representative of divinity and frequently found in the coinage of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Two coin types of Alexander from the early Ptolemaic dynasty are described as "Alexander wearing the ram's horns of Zeus Ammon;..." and

⁸² J.J. Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 1984, p.25.

⁸³ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *op.cit.*, p.5.

⁸⁴ H. Riad & Y. Chehata, *Guide Aux Monuments Alexandrins*, Cat. No.3402, p.136.

⁸⁵ P. Graindor, *op.cit.*, p.73.

⁸⁶ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *op.cit.*, Fig.2, p.5.

⁸⁷ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *op.cit.*, Fig.3a, p.5.

"Alexander wearing the elephant scalp of Dionysus; minted by Ptolemy I."⁸⁸ Both posthumous portraits emphasise different aspects of divinity and more importantly have political overtones invoking specific imagery. In the former coin Zeus and Ammon are joined into one identifiable deity. The latter coin illustrates one of the eastern traits of kingship, that is, the success that Alexander enjoyed in battle in the East. In both coins this imagery is achieved through the use of the divine, and one is able to see how closely the question of political strength and the power of the gods to influence the events of the world were linked.

4.3 EGYPTIAN ART.

Egyptian art with particular reference to imperial portraiture was in decline by the Ptolemaic period. This decline can be directly linked to the revolution in religious ideas that Egypt underwent first with the Ptolemies and later with the Roman emperors. In the earlier kingdoms, "the almost omnipotent rulers of Egypt were satisfied, in contrast with the tyrants of all ages, to let their individuality merge with the impersonal portrait of the ideal ruler."⁸⁹ However under the Roman emperors the merging of features was not acceptable to the emperors. Whilst they sought to idealise their features and cover individual blemishes they were ultimately identifiable as individuals from their portraits. This reflected a change in the focus of the imperial cult when compared to the pharaonic religions.

This change is clearly shown by the forms of sculpture that were created in the Ptolemaic period originating from Alexandria. The portraits of the Ptolemaic rulers were influenced by the Hellenistic style. Ptolemaic portraiture was also influenced by portraiture of Alexander the Great which results in similarities in expression and pose. However by the Roman period this similarity between rulers had disappeared and the new order was for stereotyped portraits of individual rulers that were nonetheless distinguishable from each other. There was however an occasional tendency to merge a few Egyptian characteristics with the Greek style during the Ptolemaic period. It is this merger that forms the basis of the Alexandrian style of

⁸⁸ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *op.cit.*, Fig.3b, p.5.

⁸⁹ H. Frankfort, *op.cit.*, p.48.

art. But this style of art does not seem to have intruded itself into the Roman period to the point where it is possible to indicate elements of native Egyptian art in the surviving official Roman portraiture in the round in Alexandria.

Differences in culture and religion between the Greeks and Egyptians make the identification of Ptolemaic portraiture easy. In effect we have an idealistic representation of a Ptolemaic ruler based on the Alexandrian, and thus Greek elements of divinity. For example there is a head of Ptolemy III in the Alexandrian museum ⁹⁰ which is an attempt to recreate the elements of the divine inspired by the stereotyped portrait of Alexander the Great. There is the bulging forehead, the eyes serene and gazing heavenward and the close mouth and full lips. The statue is carved from marble but by comparison with works from Greece it is possible to see the inferior workmanship. However it is an important piece as it represents the continuation of the tradition of Alexandrian divinity in Alexandria.

4.4 ROMAN IMPERIAL ART IN ALEXANDRIA.

It is important to begin this discussion with a definition of a cult statue as opposed to an honorific statue. The difference is difficult to define in physical terms. It is rather determined by the location of the statue. Fishwick explains that statues of gold and silver in varying forms were representative of cult statues but by no means exclusively confined to cult statues.⁹¹ Price states that the difference between the two is explained in the literature about the statue. Specifically he says that an *andrias* and an *eikon* were honorific images placed in the square or in other public places, whereas an *agalma* was essentially an image that belonged to a sacred context.⁹² One of the major difficulties in analysing statues of the emperors in the context of the imperial cult is the lack of both cult statues and dedicatory statue and altar inscriptions in Alexandria. This problem extends to Rome itself where we have no single replica of a cult statue. One is reduced to assumptions on the nature of the cult statues and is reliant upon reliefs from altars as a means of indicating the role of the emperor

⁹⁰ H. Riad & Y. Chehata, *op.cit.*, Cat. No.19122, p.139.

⁹¹ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, pp.543-546

⁹² S.R.F. Price, *The Roman Imperial Cult*, pp.176-177.

in Alexandria. Therefore it is necessary to consider other statues of the emperors that hold a less direct religious role in order to attempt to define those characteristics that may have contributed to a cult statue.

In order to do this it is also necessary to define the types of art to be considered. "The Egyptian-style reliefs of Trajan at Philae, Dendera and Esneh are valid expressions of Trajanic art, but they have no place in an appraisal of the Greek imperial heritage. Like the statues of Caracalla in the guise of an Egyptian Pharaoh, they are more curiosities of the survival of Egyptian art than documents of Roman state commemoration in the East. They do fall in line with the imperial policy of assimilation with the gods and religions of subject peoples, but it is doubtful that it was politically necessary for Trajan or any other emperor to appear under the guise of Ramases II in an age that was nearly a century and a half after the death of Julius Caesar and the battle of Actium."⁹³.

Outside Alexandria such a statement reflects a clear distinction between the imperial cult and its formal representations of the emperor and the native Egyptian portraiture of the emperor that were implemented under the Romans. Within Alexandria a distinction also existed between the Roman art and the Graeco-Egyptian art. The statement also illustrates something of the purpose of the imperial cult in Alexandria, which was primarily to achieve state control through the implementation of uniform religious values. Meanwhile the native Egyptian reliefs and sculpture simply became a means by which the native Egyptian priesthood in the countryside could represent the emperor in a context that they understood. The minor influence of native Egyptian culture in Alexandria under the Romans is a reflection of the small role that the native Egyptians played in Alexandria. The vast majority of the population of Alexandria was composed of Greeks, Jews and other Aramaic races and it was at them that the imperial cult was directed. Thus there are two kinds of imperial art which may help to explain imperial cult art. Firstly there are those representations of the emperor which are distinctly Roman and incorporate aspects of Hellenic religious portraiture. Secondly there are

⁹³ C.C. Vermeule, *Roman Imperial Art in Greece and Asia Minor*, 1968, p.244.

those aspects of portraiture which are a combination of influences from all three major ethnic groups in Alexandria, Greek, Roman and Egyptian, and which may indicate religious aspects of the Egyptian culture and the Graeco-Egyptian culture in the imperial cult.

Arguably the most important iconographic representation of the emperor Augustus in the early empire and in many of the provinces was the image of the soldier. There can be no doubt that military prowess featured strongly within the early empire but to what degree it formed part of the imperial cult is open to discussion. It is possible that one would have seen statues of the emperor in military dress located in cult shrines or altars near military encampments such as Nikeopolis. An important issue in the selection and continued survival of a royal house in the East was the question of success in battle. "Throughout the history of the ancient Near East and Egypt, victory in battle was viewed as a sign of royal legitimacy. The charisma of victory was fundamental to the Near Eastern concept of Kingship."⁹⁴ Thus in the imagery of the emperor in the East one would expect to see full length statues of Roman emperors in cuirasses. This is not the case in Egypt. Why this should be so is obscure. It may be an indication that much of the portraiture has been lost or destroyed. On the other hand it may be indicative of the lack of need felt by Augustus and the other Julio-Claudians, due to the overwhelming military conquest of Egypt, to represent themselves as military commanders. It is possible that the appearance of statues of Augustus and other emperors in Alexandria in military dress would detract from their divine status.⁹⁵

The portraiture that we do have of Augustus from Egypt from the beginning of the period of annexation shows him in a number of recognisably Hellenistic forms with particular emphasis on similarities between himself and Alexander the Great. There is the bronze head of Augustus from Meroe.⁹⁶ Most writers have given it a date of 25-21 B.C..⁹⁷ It clearly reflects

⁹⁴ J.R. Fears, *Princeps a Diis Electus*, p.15.

⁹⁵ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.520f. He argues that the appearance of the emperor semi-nude and seated is more readily identifiable with divinity than statues of him in military dress.

⁹⁶ P. Graindor, *op.cit.*, p.41, Pl. I.

⁹⁷ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *op.cit.*, p.22.

many of the features so common in the portraits of Alexander the Great. Yet all of them are in the heroic tradition rather than the divine. The major difference in this instance is the down turned gaze which in the divine portraits of Alexander is lacking. Roman portraits such as Augustus in the guise of *Pontifex Maximus*, while they serve to remind us of his priestly role, are more heroic and illustrate that he was a servant of the gods and not one of them.⁹⁸

The features in the Meroe head centre around the *anastole* at the front, the full lips and the down turned gaze and soulful eyes, which lend it an air of piety. This piece is very much in the heroic tradition. The Meroe bronze is not only important because of its similarities to Alexander, but also because it represents a type of bust prominent in the Roman imperial period. The features of the Meroe head are recreated in a head of Tiberius also from Egypt.⁹⁹ The Meroe head is a benchmark, for the features show it to be semi-divine or heroic, not purely divine. Given the lack of divine features such portraits serve to strengthen the evidence in favour of the imperial cult in Egypt as an official dynastic cult, rather than an unofficial cult of the living emperor. Another head of a colossal statue of Augustus also from the same tradition is described thus. "*Elle representait surement Auguste, un Auguste aux traits idealises comme celui de Meroe, avec une inclinaison de la tete évoquant les portraits d'Alexandre.*"¹⁰⁰ However these examples of imperial statues are not representative of cult statues given the lack of a strong emphasis upon those characteristics that are divine and comparable with elements of Hellenic portraiture under Alexander the Great. The fact that other more important marks of divinity from the Roman period are not available in portraits from Alexandria, such as bare feet and the semi-nude figures of Julio-Claudian emperors, makes the position of the emperor in Alexandria difficult to assess from what evidence remains.

It is evident not just in Egypt but in the rest of the Roman Empire that Alexander's features and associated dress came to be regarded as the type representative of divinity. The art

⁹⁸ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *op.cit.*, Fig. 23, p.24.

⁹⁹ S. Walker & A. Burnett, *op.cit.*, Fig.22b, p.22.

¹⁰⁰ P. Graindor, *op.cit.*, p.44, Pl. III.

commissioned by Augustus has been shown to have copied many of the features of Alexander. Later Roman emperors, particularly the Julio-Claudian line, sought to copy Augustus. It is important to note this link with Alexander the Great. "Of the ages of imperial art in the East none was as important for portrait sculpture as the Augustan and Julio-Claudian. In the century from 30 B.C. to A.D. 70 the habit and rules of official commemoration in the arts were formed, the public works that produced the statues, reliefs and monumental epigraphy initiated."¹⁰¹ While divine characteristics cannot be found in Alexandrian portraits of Augustus, what did appear there during the Roman period is representative of official art in much of the empire. Furthermore the precedents set by the deification of Alexander and Augustus' interpretation of it were then codified and transmitted to later Roman emperors.

One can only speculate as to the nature of the art of the official Roman imperial cult in Alexandria. One would expect it to be derived in part from the images of Alexander the Great and the divine tradition. Egyptian art would not be expected to play any obvious role in the Alexandrian imperial cult but may fulfil a role in the cult in the countryside as a means of representing the emperor in terms understandable to the native Egyptians. The Graeco-Egyptian style of art prominent in Alexandria under the Ptolemies would probably have played a role in the methods and style of construction. What we are left with are honorific statues of the emperor available for common consumption. There are no clear literary references that indicate the style and pose in any detail of a cult statue. One is therefore forced to the conclusion that given that all representations of the emperor were for the purpose of propaganda in the Roman empire, then the extant material can be considered as a general guide only to those works of art which contributed to the imperial cult and appeared in the temples of the cult in Alexandria.

4.5 ROMAN CULT ARCHITECTURE IN ALEXANDRIA.

The architectural evidence about the cult in Alexandria is limited. It is confined to two known temples of the cult and two obelisks thought to have been located at the entrance to the

¹⁰¹ C.C. Vermeule, *op.cit.*, p.228.

Caesareum. There is no evidence that I have located that indicates the design of altars or shrines in houses in Alexandria.

The literature supplies most of the evidence for the architecture and also to a lesser extent the art. It has been said that "... it would seem more useful to collect together the various kinds of buildings that indicate that Egypt differed little from other Roman provinces in the architectural forms found."¹⁰² This statement is a broad generalisation but it seems that the architecture of the imperial cult in Alexandria may support it. It does not support it in other parts of Egypt where the influence of the Roman culture was less felt and the native Egyptian architecture was more prominent. However it is by no means proved in Alexandria given the lack of archaeological evidence. The native Egyptians, generally expelled or reduced in status within the city of Alexandria, appear during the Roman period, to have offered little cultural input into the architecture of the cult. The typical Greek temple, "consisted of an oblong sanctum with a porch at one or both ends and a surrounding colonnade. The basis of the building was a low stone platform with continuous steps..." The typical Roman temple which, "manifestly derived from the same tradition, was of a very different kind. It was raised upon a lofty podium 9 or 10 feet high, and above this it presented a deep and dominating colonnaded porch, often with no more than a vestigial continuation in the form of attached columns along the sides and back of the shrine."¹⁰³ The architecture of the imperial cult in Alexandria would have exhibited the standard forms common to Greek and Roman architecture. The question of style lies in the degree of native Egyptian input into temples in the city.

The architectural remains in Alexandria that relate to the Roman imperial cult are few and usually reduced to foundations. The plans of the temples illustrate some of the form of the temples. Hence they enable us to form some conclusions about the nature of the cult in Alexandria, when considered in conjunction with the literature of the period.

¹⁰² D.M. Bailey, "Classical architecture in Roman Egypt", *Architecture and Architectural Sculpture in the Roman Empire*, M. Henig (ed.), 1990, p.121.

¹⁰³ M. Wheeler, *Roman Art and Architecture*, 1964, p.89.

In order to establish the nature of the cult architecture one must consider the different factors relating to the location and construction of a temple of the imperial cult. Such a temple should have had certain qualities. One would expect to see a temple close to or in the centre of the city. They were usually placed there for political reasons. That is where all business was conducted and the population would have a constant reminder of the significance of the emperor.¹⁰⁴ It would have been more inclined to the Greek population of the city in its appearance. Most native Egyptians in Alexandria were confined to their own quarter and generally encouraged, by the Roman attitude to them, to leave the city. Cult architecture should, if it follows the model of other imperial cult sites, be found to house another deity besides the emperor. Under Augustus the most usual partner elsewhere was the goddess Roma. "The basic idea that provincials, but not Roman citizens, could worship the person of the living ruler is shown by Augustus' actions in Asia and Bithynia. He permitted the Roman citizens in these provinces to build temples at Ephesus and Nicaea for the worship of Roma and Divus Julius. Those who were not Roman citizens requested and received permission to build temples at Pergamum and Nicomedia (Izmit) for the worship of Roma and Augustus."¹⁰⁵

The association of Augustus with Roma is a common one and was often a favoured form with Augustus in the temples of the imperial cult. It therefore had official sanction. There does not appear to be any valid reason why this association should not appear in Egypt. However it does not. We know that the dedication of the Caesareum was to Caesar alone and there is no mention of Roma. The absence of the goddess Roma from the official imperial cult implies two possibilities, firstly that during Augustus' reign the cult in Egypt was an unofficial one, or secondly that it was official but that it was not a necessity for Roma to form a part of the imperial cult in order for it to be officially recognised in the East. Did the cult of Roma and Augustus exist in Alexandria, or did Augustus establish a cult to himself alone? It has been argued that no cult of Roma existed in Egypt.¹⁰⁶ It is to this view that I am inclined. After all

¹⁰⁴ P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 1988, p.298.

¹⁰⁵ J.R. Fears, *Ruler Worship*, p.1016.

¹⁰⁶ H.I. Bell, *Cults and Creeds in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 1957, p.25.

the main purpose of such an association was "not the worship of Augustus as an individual; it was rather the veneration of the Imperial authority vested in his person, and of the sovereign city in which that authority was concentrated."¹⁰⁷ Such authority was already established by Augustus in Alexandria through his right of conquest. Blumenthal also argues against the cult of Roma and Augustus in Egypt on the grounds that the provincial cult of Augustus became that of Roma and Augustus in the western provinces and Asia Minor with official sanction. On the other hand there was no official sanction of the cult in Egypt and thus it continued as a civic cult to Augustus only, with no other god associated.¹⁰⁸ This is a strong possibility and marks one of the key differences between the imperial cult in the rest of the empire and in Egypt. However Fishwick states that the cult of Roma did not begin until 27 B.C. and that temples dedicated prior to that were to *Imperator Caesar divi filius*.¹⁰⁹ The cult of Roma did occur in Alexandria after that date, as the Caesareum was dedicated in 31 B.C. after Actium.

The site of the Caesareum is in the centre of the city close to the theatre and alongside the forum on the western side. This is known only from the two obelisks originally from Heliopolis which were shipped to London and New York in the nineteenth century. Such a site was a popular choice for the location of new temples of the cult under Augustus in the Western empire. There are relatively few archaeological remains from Alexandria but the literature of the day is quite explicit as to the nature and purpose of the Caesareum. Certainly its location fits the expectation. Pliny says there were "two other obelisks at Alexandria in the precinct of the temple of Caesar near the harbour. These were cut by King Mesphres and measure 42 cubits."¹¹⁰ A passage from Philo also provides a description of the temple. "For there is no precinct like that which is called the Sebasteum, a temple to Caesar on shipboard, situated on an eminence facing the harbours famed for their excellent moorage, huge and conspicuous, fitted on a scale not found elsewhere with dedicated offerings, around it a girdle of pictures and statues in silver and gold, forming a precinct of vast breadth, embellished with

¹⁰⁷ E.G. Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.244.

¹⁰⁸ F. Blumenthal, *op.cit.*, pp.326-327.

¹⁰⁹ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.127f.

¹¹⁰ Pliny, *Natural History*, 36,14,69., H. Rackham (trans.), p.55.

porticoes, libraries, chambers, groves, gateways and wide open courts and everything which lavish expenditure could produce to beautify it..."¹¹¹ We know little else of the Caesareum beyond this literary evidence.

The early use of the Caesareum prior to its dedication to Augustus on his departure from Egypt is subject to debate. Fishwick argues that the initial purpose of the temple was a shrine to the deceased C. Julius Caesar and that shortly after the conquest of Egypt by Augustus it was dedicated to himself.¹¹² His argument is fundamentally based on an interpretation of the texts relating to the Caesareum. The text of Suetonius clearly suggests that the temple was either completed or sufficiently completed to house the cult statue of C. Julius Caesar on the conquest of Egypt. "*Antonium iuvenem, maiorem de duobus Fulvia genitis, simulacro Divi Iuli, ad quod post multas irritas preces confugerat, abreptum interemit.*"¹¹³ Fishwick concludes that the statue of C. Julius Caesar that Antyllus grasped was a cult statue of C. Julius Caesar as it was described as a *simulacrum*, normally a word applied to a cult statue, and not a *statua*.¹¹⁴

A second text also confirms the nature and origins of the early temple. "Such were these two (M. Antonius and Cleopatra VII) and such was their end. Antyllus was slain immediately, though he was betrothed to the daughter of Caesar and had taken refuge in his father's shrine (*Sebasteum*), which Cleopatra had built."¹¹⁵ Fishwick again argues that the use of the word 'father' in the Greek should apply to C. Julius Caesar.¹¹⁶ Antyllus was following the ancient custom of asylum in temples by grasping a statue of the god. This act should have guaranteed his safety. In this instance the statue was a cult statue of C. Julius Caesar.

¹¹¹ Philo, 22,151., *Embassy to Gaius*, F.H. Colson (trans.), 1962, vol.8, p.77.

¹¹² D. Fishwick, "The Caesareum at Alexandria again", (forthcoming), p.12.

¹¹³ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Augustus. 2,17..

¹¹⁴ D. Fishwick, "The Caesareum at Alexandria again", (forthcoming), pp.3-4.

¹¹⁵ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 51,15., E. Carey (trans.), p.43.

¹¹⁶ D. Fishwick, "The Caesareum at Alexandria again", (forthcoming), p.3.

The second part of his argument is based on two further inscriptions from the base of an obelisk brought to Rome by the emperor Gaius. They provide an interesting addition to the question of the early purpose of the Caesareum in Alexandria. The first reads:

*"IVSSV IMP. CAESARIS DIVI F.
C. CORNELIVS CN. F. GALLVS
PRAEF. FABR. CAESARIS DIVI
FORVM IVLIVM FECIT."*

This is translated as follows: "By order of the Imperator, son of the deified Caesar, C Cornelius son of Gnaeus Gallus, praefectus fabrum of the son of the deified Caesar, built forum Julium."¹¹⁷

The second inscription was superimposed over the original and reads:

*"DIVO CAESARI DIVI IVLII F. AVGVSTO
TI. CAESARI DIVI AVGVSTI F. AVGVSTO."*

This is translated as follows: "To the deified Caesar Augustus, son of the deified Julius (and) to Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the deified Augustus, sacred."¹¹⁸

The inscription is usually associated with a Forum Julium constructed in one of two possible locations in the city of Alexandria. Fishwick argues in favour of the location next to the Caesareum. He argues that the earlier inscription on the obelisk can be dated to the year 30 B.C. and indicates a *terminus ante quem* for C. Cornelius Gallus' appointment as prefect of Egypt.¹¹⁹ Perhaps the Forum Julium was begun as an extension of an existing temple complex possibly the Caesareum.

To justify this argument he argues that the forum was begun by C. Julius Caesar in 48 B.C. and this is reflected in the naming of it.¹²⁰ The person responsible for the construction of the obelisk itself and the earlier inscription on it was C. Cornelius Gallus. He was in Egypt from

¹¹⁷ AE 1964, No.255., M.C.J. Miller (trans.), "Forum Julium ad Aegyptum" *The Ancient World*, 13, 1 & 2, 1986, p.55.

¹¹⁸ CIL VI, 882, Dessau ILS 115., M.C.J. Miller (trans.), *ibid.*, p.55.

¹¹⁹ D. Fishwick, "The Caesareum at Alexandria again", (forthcoming), p.7.

¹²⁰ D. Fishwick, *ibid.*, p.10.

30 B.C. until 28 B.C. when he was recalled to Rome by Augustus where he committed suicide in 26 B.C..¹²¹

On the other hand Miller offers a location in Nikeopolis for the Forum Iulium. The city of Nikeopolis, a recently built town under Augustus, which may have contained a Forum Julium, was designed for the settlement of the legion sent there to guard Egypt. The town itself was due east of Alexandria but to all intents and purposes it represented an outlying suburb of Alexandria.¹²² This location is not possible when it is considered that the town of Nikeopolis was established while Augustus was in Egypt. There would not have been enough time to clear a site let alone begin construction.

A temple to the emperor Claudius in Alexandria has also been assumed on the basis of the evidence from Suetonius. "To conclude, he even wrote books in Greek: twenty volumes of Etruscan history, and eight of Carthaginian. The city of Alexandria acknowledged these works by adding a new wing to the museum called "The Claudian" in his honour; and having the Etruscan history publicly recited from end to end once a year by relays of readers in the old wing; and the Carthaginian likewise in the new."¹²³ Blumenthal makes the assumption that such a wing was in fact a temple to Claudius himself. I think that this is not difficult to substantiate on the basis of further evidence from Strabo. He describes the museum of Alexandria under Augustus. "The museum is a part of the palaces. It has a public walk and a place furnished with seats and a large hall in which the men of learning, who belong to the museum, take their common meal. This community possesses also property in common; and a priest formerly appointed by the kings, but at present by Caesar, presides over the museum."¹²⁴ The two texts indicate that a Claudium named in honour of the emperor may have had a shrine attached to it also in his honour. The description of the museum and the statement that a priest was in charge of the museum indicates that the priest may have

¹²¹ J.G. Milne, *A History of Egypt*, p.19.

¹²² M.C.J. Miller, *op.cit.*, p.55.

¹²³ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Claudius, 42,2., J.C. Rolfe (trans.), vol.2, p.121.

¹²⁴ Strabo, *Geography*, 17,8., H.C. Hamilton (trans.), vol.3, p.229.

conducted religious rites. Therefore the dedication of a wing of the museum to Claudius would indicate that the museum may have housed a temple also dedicated to him. Any shrine to Claudius would form part of the imperial cult. These passages do not provide absolute proof of the existence of a second cult temple to Claudius. However under Augustus we know from Strabo that the museum had a priest. If this was a priest of the imperial cult then it would provide evidence of a second cult temple apart from the Caesareum under Augustus.

We could suppose that when the new wing was built by Claudius the museum may have contained a statue of Claudius. Such a statue would have occupied a position similar to the *simulacrum* in the temple rather than the *statua* or the *agalma* alongside the deified deceased emperors. Therefore while Claudius lived, rites may have been offered for his health, but to the deified emperors and other gods rather than directly to him.

It has been established that Augustus founded the city of Nikeopolis to the east of the main city and tried to establish it as his own capital. It is here that we would expect to find Roman style temples dedicated to the cult and more particularly to the *daimon* of the city of Nikeopolis, Nike. The coin record from the city of Alexandria reveals a strong association of Augustus with Nike in Egypt. This leads me to suspect that if the imperial cult in Alexandria were to follow the convention of the Western cults then there should be archaeological evidence of temples of Augustus and Nike, certainly in the city of Nikeopolis and possibly, given the frequency of Nike's appearance on the coinage of Alexandria, in Alexandria itself.

I can only assume that other temples in Alexandria that related to the imperial cult must have been designed and built from the late first century B.C. onwards. The influence of native Egyptian style on these temples is unassessable given the lack of evidence. It is unlikely that the Caesareum was not distinctly Greek in its construction. The Claudium on the other hand may be more in keeping with the Roman tradition of temples.

4.6 THE ALEXANDRIAN COINAGE IN THE JULIO-CLAUDIAN PERIOD.

It remains to examine one other medium from which it may be possible to consider whether the art and architecture of the cult in Alexandria had any unique elements that distinguished it from the rest of the empire. It appears that the coinage of Alexandria held a unique status in the empire. There was no gold coinage issued from Egypt during the early empire. However there were the issues of gold coinage of the emperor within Egypt under later emperors. Under Augustus all the gold and silver coinage and bullion that existed under the Ptolemies was withdrawn, with the intention of presenting a new unit of currency in Egypt. However bronze issues already in existence under the Ptolemies remained. The separation of the Alexandrian coinage and economy from the rest of the empire may have led to a greater degree of freedom in the choice of currency designs. There is also the possibility that the design, given the lack of access to external currency, developed a strongly Graeco-Egyptian character. Even though the presentation of the emperor would have been predetermined by the Roman administration, there is still evidence of artistic freedom. A brief survey of the coinage showing imperial architecture does not contribute much information about the cult centres. What it does offer is far more concrete evidence of the way in which the emperor was represented to the population of Egypt. The result of the analysis indicates that the Roman coinage was influenced strongly by Greek coinage types which indicated the elements of divinity that were later assumed by the Romans. The purpose of an examination of the coinage is to see how the emperors were portrayed in Alexandria and whether they appeared in the traditional forms indicative of the imperial cult coinage or in the Hellenistic or native traditions.

It has already been made clear that under the Ptolemies there was no coinage produced other than through the official mint, and that under Augustus the gold and silver coinage was removed from Egypt leaving only a billon, or bronze, coinage. This appears to strengthen the arguments that suggest that Augustus desired to retain Egypt as an entity distinct from the rest of the Empire. This issue is one that needs to be looked at in more detail later as it has a bearing upon the nature of the imperial cult in Egypt. One final consideration in relation to

the coinage of the Alexandrian mint is the public at whom it was aimed. Unlike the art and architecture which can be examined and confined in many respects to the city of Alexandria, the coinage was destined to be used throughout the province. Can we expect therefore that the messages on the coinage may be more obvious and less complicated than some of the messages that the art and architecture in Alexandria provided, and will show an appeal to the native Egyptians given that they constituted the bulk of the rural population?

There appears to have been a much simpler system of coinage in production in Egypt than in Rome. It consisted of two issues, that of the tetradrachm and the drachm. The tetradrachm was of silver and roughly equivalent to the Roman denarius and the drachm was a bronze coin with issues of the half, quarter and eighth. Reece suggests four main reverse categories on the tetradrachm and drachm, "(a) Heads of joint rulers or of other members of the imperial family, and full-length figures showing the emperor with Victory, or a soldier, or some other full-length figure, personification, or deity. (b) Gods and goddesses of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythology... (c) Buildings such as temples... (d) Animals and birds."¹²⁵ The obverse of the coinage tends to be difficult to read and makes comment difficult. Many of the reverse patterns reflect the standard ideas of the Roman emperors, formulated by Augustus, in adopting the conquered countries' images of power, royalty and spirituality. The coinage also combines the deliberate elements of imperial propaganda familiar to all forms of coinage in the empire. "In short the representation upon coins of the Roman 'virtues' enabled moneyers to bridge the gap between the historical or mythological types, with their implied analogy between past and present, and types of explicit topical import."¹²⁶ In this instance the virtues referred to include *Victoria* and *Felicitas* and are meant to illustrate the nature of the emperor in Roman terms that were also common to the provinces. In this instance the importance of *Victoria* has already been shown in the imperial tradition and the equivalent eastern theories of kingship. Thus type (a) has clear links with the eastern values of kingship.

¹²⁵ R. Reece, *Roman Coins*, 1970, p.132.

¹²⁶ C.H.V. Sutherland, *Coinage In Roman Imperial Policy*, 1951, p.6.

What does the coinage tell us of the imperial cult and the Graeco-Egyptian heritage? The portrait style of the emperors on coinage is characterised by those elements of art that are found in sculpture and painting that illustrate to the population specific elements of Greek divinity, but even more specifically that represent an association with Alexander the Great. Portraits often feature the diadem, or the radiate crown, around the head, the long curly hair, and occasionally the skhent (one of the few obvious references to the native Egyptian culture on the coinage). The radiate crown in the coinage is indicative of honours offered to the deceased emperors. The horns of Zeus-Ammon also feature as a favourite of the emperor Nero who seems to have had an affection for and a need to appeal to the Alexandrians, probably due in part to a desire to appear as Alexander, as well as a desire on the part of the Alexandrians to employ flattery as a means to gain exemptions and privileges. All are indicative of divinity in their cultures. The most common association of gods and goddesses that occur on the coinage varies according to the emperor in power and the regnal year but it can be noted that Nilus, Serapis, Roma and Zeus feature heavily in all eras.¹²⁷

What can this then tell us about the nature of the cult in Alexandria? The comparison with Zeus, the chief Greek god, would be seen by the Greek speakers of Egypt as an attempt by the emperor to connect himself to them but more importantly to Alexander the Great. After his death in 14 A.D. we find that Augustus is linked with Zeus as *Zeus Epibaterios* in the oaths taken under Tiberius.¹²⁸ The use of Nilus and Serapis would be designed to link the emperor to the native Egyptian gods, with a special emphasis on Serapis, the chief of the Egyptian gods, and with Nilus. Both gods represent the concept of abundance in nature. They were therefore important to the native Egyptian cycle of life and indeed all food supply. This is another reason why Augustus could not have ignored completely Serapis, given his reliance upon the corn supply of Egypt.

¹²⁷ E. Christiansen, *The Roman Coins of Alexandria*, 1988, p.98.

¹²⁸ F. Blumenthal, *op.cit.*, p.330.

The question of Serapis in the Julio-Claudian period is an interesting one. The coin record suggests that Augustus did have an association with him. Augustus himself knew of the cult of Serapis as he offers it as one of the reasons he did not sack the city of Alexandria on conquest; "...nevertheless he offered as a pretext for his kindness their god Serapis, their founder Alexander..."¹²⁹ While Serapis was not connected directly with the imperial cult his powers to influence the crop cycle would have made him attractive to Augustus in order to appeal to the native Egyptians and the Greeks.

"For the very essence of mentioning a 'virtue' is that its presence or its absence may be equally in point. To represent *Concordia*, *Libertas* or *Pax* might stress not so much their activity as the need for their activity, as successive *principes* well understood."¹³⁰ In essence then we are led to the conclusion, certainly by the coinage, that the imagery of virtues was used to establish political credibility and promote a need for action, and that so far as the cult was concerned it was not meant to promote the cult but rather to draw subtle political comparisons in the mind of the viewer as to the nature of the emperor and his policies.

Thus Sutherland states that any occurrence of an emperor with a major deity on the coinage may be taken as illustrative of the need for that emperor to consolidate his power base and is not necessarily indicative of his divinity. The Julio-Claudians relied upon human and dynastic sources to justify their political actions.¹³¹ This argument is used to divide the Julio-Claudian period from the emperors after the years 68-69 A.D. The post Julio-Claudian men who became emperors were forced to use major deities as a means to legitimise their rule. Their appearance on the coinage was not so much a comparison with as an association with the gods and thereby a means to derive divine powers and assistance from them.

If the coinage from the Alexandrian mint is considered we find that there is a strong input in the early years of Augustus of types representative of the human basis for his power, as well

¹²⁹ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 51,16., E. Carey (trans.), p.45.

¹³⁰ C.H.V. Sutherland, *op.cit.*, p.7.

¹³¹ J.R. Fears, *Princeps a Diis Electus*, p.201.

as emphasis on the religious legitimacy of his position. Milne suggests six groups of coin types issued in Augustus' reign.¹³² Group one offer such types as an eagle standing left on a thunderbolt, in front of it being a cornucopia. This is highly symbolic of the nature of and the reason for Augustus' conquest of Egypt. The dual function of the cornucopia represents crop abundance and the god Serapis, as well as the strength of the *imperium* of Rome and the benefits it offered to the conquered countries. However it is worth noting that the eagle and thunderbolt motif is a direct copy from the Ptolemaic coin types. Group two contains similar elements in common with group one but now there are added such elements as the 'temple of Mars Ultor', 'triumphal arches' and 'pontifical instruments'. The obvious symbolism of these elements need no discussion, except to note that with the exception of the temple of Mars Ultor they appeared before the title of Augustus was conferred on the young Octavian, thus emphasising the source of his power. The third group show the introduction of the laurel crown on the head of Augustus and is indicative of his political position and his achievements in the empire. The emphasis is on the laurel crown awarded for triumph in battle and this represents to the Alexandrians the charisma of victory. The fourth group again reflects the images of the earlier groups and add the title of *Pater Patriae* under the laureate head of Augustus. Yet again this title emphasises the honours that had accrued to him by virtue of the wishes of the people of Rome. The commonest types of the fifth group issued around 1 A.D. include Nilus on the reverse and on the obverse the laureate head of Augustus. Characteristic elements of the fifth type seem specifically aimed at the population of Egypt as a whole. They appear to force the people of Egypt to make the connection between the success of the crops and Augustus' role in the cycle of nature. The sixth and final type, concentrating on Augustus himself, shows him with Euthenia, Nike and wreathed. Euthenia has a common association with Nilus and represents, once again, the abundance of the crops.

It is not possible to deduce the nature of the cult architecture in Alexandria from the coinage alone. The coin record allows us to see that the temple known as the Caesareum did exist. The lack of architectural detail on the coinage makes it impossible to speculate on the

¹³² J.G. Milne, "The Alexandrian coinage of Augustus", *JEA*, 13, 1927, pp.135-140.

existence or the exact form of other buildings that may have formed part of the imperial cult. As for the representations of the emperors and various deities on the coinage they only really allow us to draw conclusions about the cult in context with other, more concrete, evidence presented by the literature. There is no consistency in the types of coinage amongst the early Julio-Claudians and one is forced to wonder where the administrative direction for the coin types comes from. Milne suggests that "the dies for the Alexandrian coins seem to have been designed and executed by local artists: the style is definitely Greek rather than Roman, and even when types are borrowed from Roman sources they are treated on Greek lines."¹³³ This suggests that Augustus' policy of romanisation continued slowly with the initial thrust of coin types left largely in the style of his predecessors in Egypt, the Ptolemies, or taken from Egyptian mythology. Only by the regnal year forty do we find the introduction of obviously Roman types. This seems to indicate that such a policy was not considered important by Augustus, provided the tribute demands were met.

¹³³ J.G. Milne, "The Alexandrian coinage of Augustus", p.136.

CHAPTER 5.

The written evidence of the Imperial Cult.

5.1 INTRODUCTION.

This chapter examines some of the written evidence of the imperial cult in Alexandria and Egypt. From an analysis of the literature of the cult it might be possible to identify the general nature and extent of the imperial cult in Egypt under each of the Julio-Claudian emperors and identify some of the distinguishing features that marked their individual cults. The literature offers the most extensive source of information upon the subject. The types of literature that are available are threefold, firstly the panegyric literature, secondly the historical and thirdly inscriptions. The first part of this chapter will concentrate on the literature at the beginning of the Julio-Claudian period and try to establish facts about the imperial cult and its development in Alexandria and the form that it adopted. The second part of the chapter will study those texts that indicate the progression of the cult under the later Julio-Claudians. The particular emphasis here is on the Roman view of the cult in the province of Egypt.

5.2 THE INSCRIPTION OF TIBERIUS CLAUDIUS BALBILLUS.

Valuable information is provided by an inscription listing the offices held by Ti. Claudius Balbillus. In Rigsby's emended version he is the high priest of Egypt at some time before 55 A.D.. Our knowledge of the early evolution of the imperial cult in Alexandria derives in part from the text. The reconstruction is taken from the work of J. Keil.¹³⁴

*[Ti Claud] io Ti[berio] Claudi
[- - -] i f(ilio) Quir(ina)
[Ba] lbillo
[proc(uratori) Asiae et] aedium divi Aug(usti) et
[magni Sarapidis? e] t lucorum sacro
[rumque omnium qu] ae sunt Alexan-
[dreae et in tota Aegypt] o et supra mu-*

¹³⁴ K.J. Rigsby, *op.cit.*, p.279.

*[s] eum et a[b Alexandri] na bybliothece
et archi[erei et ad Herm] en Alexan-
dreon per [annos....] et ad legati-
ones et resp[onsa Graeca? Ca] esaris Aug(usti)
divi Claudi e[st trib(uno) milit(um) le] g(ionis) XX et
prae[f(ecto)]
fabr(um) divi Cla[udi et d(onis) d(onato) in tri]
umph[o] a [divo]
Claudio [corona - - - et hasta]
pura [et vexillo - -]*

On the basis of his reconstruction of the text Rigsby believes that there were three possible paths of development. Firstly, Augustus established the cult of the living emperor, but Claudius in an act of humility converted it to the cult of Divus Augustus. Secondly the priesthood was originally of Divus Augustus and therefore established after 14 A.D. and converted to the cult of the living emperor sometime before 39/40 A.D. Finally, the emperor Tiberius created the priesthood of Divus Augustus and Caligula converted it to self-worship and Claudius' references deprecating worship of himself as a god in 41 A.D. in his letter to the Alexandrians demonstrated his return to the dynastic cult.

The evidence in favour of the later option is strong. Rigsby offers an issue of silver coinage under Tiberius which shows Augustus with the sunburst crown, an emblem of divinity, and the motif *Theos Sebastos* which dates to 20 A.D.. This he argues indicates a policy decision by Tiberius about the cult of Augustus that reached Egypt in or around the year 20 A.D.. He suggests the tour of Germanicus in 19 A.D. to Alexandria, where he was forced to deprecate the award of divine honours to himself, as a possibility. He argues that it was a threat to Tiberius' carefully constructed piety towards Augustus and therefore necessitated action.¹³⁵ The text of Germanicus' speech will be considered later. Certainly Tiberius appeared to have been annoyed by Germanicus' visit to Alexandria. "He (Tiberius) actually sent the Senate a

¹³⁵ K.J. Rigsby, *op.cit.*, pp.287-8.

letter of complaint when Germanicus hurried to Alexandria and there relieved a sudden disastrous famine, saying that he had not been consulted about this invasion of his own private domain."¹³⁶

The suggestion that Gaius converted the imperial cult to a personal cult around the years 39-40 A.D. is not supported due to a lack of evidence.

The date of establishment of the provincial imperial cult seems most likely to have occurred during the reign of Tiberius considering Suetonius' evidence for the establishment of an official cult. There is a hint of the establishment of this provincial cult to Augustus within the empire when Suetonius states of Tiberius, "his pretext for the progress through Campania was that he must dedicate a temple to Capitoline Jupiter at Capua, and a temple to Augustus at Nola."¹³⁷

In Alexandria the lack of a second cult temple does not raise a problem for the existence of a provincial imperial cult of Egypt. There may have been other temples but it is not until the reign of Claudius that a second possible temple is mentioned in the texts. The existence of a civic imperial cult was essential for a city to be recognised formally as the centre of an imperial provincial cult. The city had to have the title of *Neokoros* which translates as temple warden. Such a title was usually associated with more than one cult temple.¹³⁸ This problem of a second cult temple can easily be attributed to the lack of extant remains in the city of Alexandria rather than a lack of a second cult temple, given the fervour with which the Alexandrians offered honours to the emperor.

The role of the high priest of Alexandria and all Egypt is important to this study. The evidence indicates that the position was usually occupied by a Roman civil official, with responsibilities for the annual returns of the temples and the property and priest associated

¹³⁶ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Tiberius, 3,52., J.C. Rolfe (trans.), p.367.

¹³⁷ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Tiberius, 3,40., J.C. Rolfe (trans.), p.351.

¹³⁸ J. Ferguson, *op.cit.*, p.93.

with them; secondly with responsibility for sacrifices and other details of cult.¹³⁹ Thus his role in the Julio-Claudian period seems to have been as an administrator.

The correct title that applied to a high priest of the imperial cult at provincial level in the Western cults was "*Sacerdos Romae et Augusti ad aram quae est ad confluentem*".¹⁴⁰ The lack of a similar priestly title and other offices and practices common to the imperial cult under Augustus in other parts of the empire may suggest that the imperial cult in Egypt did not arise from within the Roman administration but was a spontaneous creation of the Alexandrians. The position of the *Archiereus* of Alexandria has been considered as a quasi-official civic high priest of the imperial cult prior to the creation of the Roman high priest of the province some time between 14 A.D. and 55 A.D.. This seems to indicate that the imperial cult at provincial level before the recognition of the high priest of Alexandria and Egypt was conducted on a relatively minor scale in the province and was overseen by the procurator of the *idios logos* and the prefect. When the high priest was appointed there must have been a corresponding increase in the role of the imperial cult in Egypt which required a full time position to oversee it.

Fishwick states that the institution of the imperial cult was carried out as a means of romanisation and as an outlet for loyalty within the provinces.¹⁴¹ The absence of the formal provincial imperial cult under Augustus certainly indicates that the city of Alexandria and Egypt in general was not regarded as a prospect for romanisation. When this factor is considered together with the extreme measures the Alexandrians took to attract the emperor and his family's attention, the reaction of Tiberius in formalising the cult was more an act of political astuteness than an act of recognition of the province as equal to the other senatorial provinces of the empire.

¹³⁹ H.I. Bell, *Cults and Creeds*, p.54.

¹⁴⁰ D. Fishwick, *Provincial Ruler Worship*, p.1207.

¹⁴¹ D. Fishwick, *ibid.*, p.1209.

From these arguments it is possible to conclude that the provincial imperial cult in Alexandria was not established under Augustus but probably under Tiberius. If it was created by Tiberius then it was a reaction, by him, to a perceived threat to his power rather than an acceptance of the province of Egypt into the empire. The title of high priest of Egypt, on the basis of Rigsby's interpretation of the papyrus, indicates that some time prior to 55 A.D. the powers and responsibilities of the imperial cult were centralised in this position. It is not possible without further evidence to propose a precise date for the creation of the specific role of high priest of Alexandria and Egypt though it was between 20 A.D. and 55 A.D..

5.3 THE RES GESTAE DIVI AUGUSTI.

The religious policy of Augustus must be considered in the context of the imperial cult to see if it can offer clues to the nature of the cult in Egypt under Augustus himself. Here again there has been much debate. There is no direct evidence of the policy adopted by Augustus in the province of Egypt but there is plenty of ancillary evidence from the province of Asia Minor that can be considered, and indeed from Italy itself. An analysis of Augustus' religious policy may help to establish the nature of the development of the cult in Alexandria. The leading source of information is the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. There can be no doubt that he developed one religious policy to cover the whole empire. Augustus refers on more than one occasion to his redevelopment of the old cults and the temples long neglected.¹⁴² What did he hope to achieve by promoting the imperial cult? It seems that Augustus was a farsighted political leader and that by promoting the cult in the empire he sought to encourage political stability that had as its cornerstone the office of the emperor.

It is possible that Augustus had a hidden agenda for himself in the development of a religious policy. However the policy that was presented to the general populace of the empire seems to vary according to the province for which it was intended. In Italy itself his decisions were quite clearly influenced by the successes and failures of his adopted father C. Julius Caesar.

¹⁴² P.A. Brunt & J.M. Moore, (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.23. See chapter 11 for a list of all the temples that were rebuilt under Augustus.

In effect the desire that Augustus displays for ever higher honours is evident only in the literature of the post-Augustan period. The facade that is presented to the population of Rome by Augustus is one of humility and the obvious need to show that the positions he occupied were given him by the will of the people through the Senate. "*Dictaturam et absenti et praesenti mihi delatam et a populo et a senatu, M. Marcello et L. Arruntio consulibus non recepi.*"¹⁴³ Dio Cassius says, "For when they wished to call him by some distinctive title, and men were proposing one title and another and urging its selection, Caesar was exceedingly desirous of being called Romulus, but when he perceived that this caused him to be suspected of desiring the kingship, he desisted from his efforts to obtain it, and took the title of "Augustus", signifying that he was more than human; for all of the most precious and sacred objects are termed Augusta. Therefore they addressed him also in Greek as Sebastos, meaning an august personage, from the passive of the verb sebazō, "to revere"."¹⁴⁴

The implications of this passage are quite clear and some of them may be found in the text of the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*. On the one hand it is obvious that Augustus sought higher honours than those he was voted by the Senate, yet on the other there is the desire not to commit the mistakes of his predecessor. While this does not clearly illustrate the whole of his religious policy it does provide a useful indicator of his personal intentions. In another passage from Dio, Augustus rejects the plans of Agrippa to set his statue in the temples alongside the gods in Rome. "Agrippa for his part, wished to place a statue of Augustus there (in the Pantheon) also and to bestow upon him the honour of having the structure named after him; but when the emperor would not accept either honour, he placed in the temple itself a statue of the former Caesar and in the ante-room statues of Augustus and himself."¹⁴⁵ Fishwick argues firmly that the words of Dio have been wrongly interpreted in the past and that the correct interpretation implies that the purpose of the statue was honorific and it was never intended as a cult statue by Augustus.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ P.A. Brunt & J.M. Moore, (eds.) *op.cit.*, p.20.

¹⁴⁴ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 53,16., E. Carey (trans.), p.235.

¹⁴⁵ Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 53,27., E. Carey (trans.), p.265.

¹⁴⁶ D. Fishwick, "The statue of Julius Caesar in the Pantheon", *Latomus*, 51, 1992, pp.331-332.

Thus it seems clear that Augustus sought to publicly reject divine honours offered him in Rome by his supporters. There are two reasons that suggest themselves for this action. Firstly it was in the interests of his political survival to acknowledge that it was through the people of Rome that he held his authority. The second reason was most likely that he could not accept divine honours and place himself in the position of contradicting his acknowledged policy of 'first among equals'. Such an action in Rome, where the popular view of deification was markedly different from the Greek and Eastern perceptions of deification would ultimately put him at odds with his stated internal political policy. Augustus' religious policy, certainly in respect of the imperial cult, was one of caution and it was necessary to adopt this approach in order to be consistent with his approach to the other questions of religion and personal politics in Rome. The need to consider such questions also further illustrates the clear connection in the imperial cult that existed between politics and religion. The early emperors clearly considered religion to be a political phenomenon.

In the provinces it appears that Augustus had fewer qualms about accepting divine honours offered by cities, particularly in the East. It is quite clear that Augustus early on in his conquests recognised the value of Eastern kingship and saw that in order to represent himself as a higher power, (that is greater than the ones he had vanquished), it was necessary for him to accept honours greater than mere kingship. It is through this means that he would have been able to fulfil any hidden agenda for divinity in his own lifetime, yet at the same time represent it to the Roman people, upon whom his power base was firmly centred, as a necessity entailed by the nature of the Eastern conceptualisation of kingship. Furthermore his failure to link the goddess Roma to his cult in Alexandria is also in keeping with his religious policy in the provinces.

Because Egypt and Alexandria were cut off from the rest of the empire there were no repercussions in Rome concerning the nature of the imperial cult there. The native Egyptian and Ptolemaic concepts of kingship embodied religious ideals that represented the pharaoh as

a descendant of the gods. Therefore within Egypt it was important for the emperor to maintain this status and even to extend it. Augustus achieved this by right of victory. He was officially portrayed in a divine manner as the son of a god. That was acceptable within the context of the cult. The embassies that the Alexandrians initiated to the emperor offering honours reflect the nature of kingship in the pharaonic and Ptolemaic periods.

5.4 FURTHER EVIDENCE FROM THE AUGUSTAN PERIOD.

A further inscription from Alexandria relating to the emperor Augustus.

"IMP. CAESAR DIVI F. AVGVST. PONTIF.

maxim. flvmen sebaston a schidia induxit a milliario XXV

qvod per se toto oppido flveret praefect. aegypt.

c. ivlio aqvila anno XXXX caesaris."

The inscription is bilingual with a Greek translation. The translation of the inscription reads, "Imperator Caesar Augustus, son of a god, Pontifex Maximus, brought in the river Sebaste from Schedia from the 25th milestone to flow throughout the city due to himself, the Prefect of Egypt, being Gaius Julius Aquila, year 40 of Caesar."¹⁴⁷ The inscription can be dated to around 10-11 A.D.. There are several key issues that are raised here. Firstly the inscription names Augustus as the son of the divine Caesar, which is normal Roman practice, rather than nominating the living emperor as a deity. This is a key factor in the analysis of the cult. If we assume that the marker was set up in accordance with the directions of the imperial administration in Egypt then we can draw some assumptions from this. We can conclude that the official representation of the emperor in Egypt was as a son of a god and not a god himself, certainly while he was still alive. This would fit in with Rigsby who sets 14 A.D. the year of the death of Augustus for his deification under the new emperor Tiberius. We know that the cult became a provincial dynastic cult with a high priest some time between 20 A.D. and 55 A.D.. In any case the inscription does not identify Augustus in any form other than one would expect an emperor with Republican sympathies to be identified.

¹⁴⁷ CIL Vol.3 Suppl. No. 12046, D.C. Braund, *op.cit.*, 1985, p.310.

5.5 PRIVATE IMPERIAL CULT IN ALEXANDRIA.

The next stage in the examination of the imperial cult in Alexandria is to consider the private forms of the cult of the emperor there. What evidence is there that private imperial cult existed in Alexandria under the early Julio-Claudians? Once again the literary evidence is limited. We have available to us a document from Alexandria circa 6 B.C. which mentions "The Augustan Guild of the God Imperator Caesar."¹⁴⁸ What we know of this organisation is that it possessed its own priest and was a private group of imperial freedmen formed into a club known as the Augustales. The nature of these clubs certainly in Rome where most of the literary evidence comes from suggests that the clubs were of men practicing the same trade and that they came together under a patron deity. It has been suggested that, "very often the collegium was religious in little more than the adoption of a patron deity."¹⁴⁹ Their purpose seems to have been twofold. On the one hand they were burial clubs and on the other they provided meeting places and fostered friendship between the members. The important element to note is the term, "adoption of a patron deity." If this is the case we can infer that the deification of Augustus took place at a popular level before his death. Official political deification did not occur until after his death with the approval of the Senate. In Alexandria these clubs contradict the nature of the official cult in Rome. They suggest that in Alexandria the official cult of Augustus also contained elements of public cult that accepted him as a living deity, unless of course these clubs were affiliated with another god.

The religious nature of these clubs is reinforced by the description of their physical layout. What we know of the building from other examples located is that the club's rooms contained an *aedes* or room to house the image of the god and his treasure.¹⁵⁰ Considering that an *aedes* was present in any temple to a god as a dwelling place or sanctuary this gives rise to the impression that Augustus was worshipped as a god in a private and unofficial form of the imperial cult in Alexandria. Finally it appears that the club also had a priest which indicates

¹⁴⁸ F. Blumenthal, *op.cit.*, p.331.

¹⁴⁹ N.G.L. Hammond & H.H. Scullard, *op.cit.*, p.205.

¹⁵⁰ J.E. Stambaugh, "The functions of Roman temples", *ANRW* 16.1., 1986.

the extent of the worship of Augustus.¹⁵¹ The fact that the priest is to Augustus alone indicates that the guild practiced a cult that deified Augustus whilst he was still alive.

The implications of the existence of this organisation appear to be that the deification of an emperor was not necessarily a religious event which signified the necessity for worship at a popular level. Rather the organisation showed gratitude to the emperor for perceived benefactions to the city or other institutions that affected their lives. In other countries it was initiated by the residents of a city through the *koinon*, or it could occur through a private group of individuals. It would appear though that each of these clubs had to have had some kind of imperial sanction, given that under Augustus all political organisations were banned and only non-political groups could exist. Therefore there probably was a tacit acceptance of worship by Augustus while he was still alive in the provinces. The fact that this particular organisation was dedicated to him alone indicates that he was considered a living god by some elements of the population of Alexandria possibly reflecting the pharaonic tradition of kingship.

Other forms of private cult that are considered in the context of the imperial cult include the cult of the *imago*. This occurred in the private homes of the citizens. It was characterised by the placement of imperial images in private houses. To what extent this occurred in Alexandria is unknown given the lack of evidence. However the incorporation of the emperor's image into the private shrine indicates some element of genuine religious feeling; "...but an offering of incense and wine, perhaps with veneration of the image, would certainly have been appropriate ceremonies before the emperor's *imago* on major imperial occasions."¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ H.I. Bell, *Cults and Creeds*, p.56.

¹⁵² D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, p.535.

5.6 TIBERIUS AND THE IMPERIAL CULT.

The reign of Tiberius was particularly important for the imperial cult in Egypt. Most of the information that we have comes from the literary sources. It is evident that in Italy itself Tiberius encouraged the deification of Augustus after his death and generally deprecated honours to himself, thus adopting the traditional republican view of the cult in Rome at least. "*Ego me patres conscripti, mortalem esse et hominum officia fungi satisque habere, si locum principem impleam, et vos testor et meminisse posteros volo.*"¹⁵³ It appears from earlier evidence that he established the cult of the *Divus Augustus* after Augustus' death in Rome and it is a natural assumption that it then spread to other parts of the empire. This step represents, in the context of Roman political life, the continuation of the tradition begun towards the end of the first century B.C. of honours paid to successful leaders. These honours in turn followed the deification of C. Julius Caesar by the Senate in 42 B.C.. It is argued that C. Julius Caesar was in fact awarded divine honours prior to his death in 44 B.C. at the instigation of the young Octavius.¹⁵⁴ Thus he would have been a god prior to his death. If this was the case it would add weight to the idea that the imperial cult in the city of Alexandria was imposed by the introduction of the cult of the deified Augustus at provincial level. It is a reasonable supposition that the Caesareum became the centre of the cult of the deceased emperors upon the death of Augustus and his subsequent apotheosis. The failure to establish a second temple to Augustus in Alexandria seems to strengthen Augustus' claim to the Republican religious attitude of the worship of the *gens Julia* rather than the individual.

Tiberius was seen by the elite of Rome to reject divine honours in other provinces of the empire and at Rome itself. "He vetoed all bills for the dedication of temples and priests to his divinity, and reserved the right to sanction even the setting up of his statues and busts - which might not be placed among the images of the gods, but only to decorate private houses."¹⁵⁵ Yet the renaming of the month of November in Egypt as *Neos Sebastos* in honour of Tiberius without his permission and the fact that it persisted until the end of the second century

¹⁵³ Tacitus, *The Annals*, 4,38,1.

¹⁵⁴ D. Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult*, pp.61-63. Fishwick considers, in some detail, the extent of the evidence that C. Julius Caesar was deified before his death.

¹⁵⁵ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Tiberius. 26., J.C. Rolfe (trans.), p.333.

indicates a certain tacit acceptance of these honours by the emperor in the provinces. It also indicates a disregard for the emperor's wishes by the public in Alexandria.¹⁵⁶ This act alone however does not indicate that the emperors were unwilling to direct the cult. It indicates rather the process begun by Augustus of instituting honours in the provinces and then allowing them to be self perpetuating under later emperors.

The arrival of Germanicus Caesar in Egypt in AD 19 and the welcome that he received from the Alexandrians provides an interesting insight into the attitude of the imperial family to the issue of deification. He says, "I welcome the goodwill which you always display when you see me, but I totally reject your acclamations which are invidious and appropriate to the gods. They belong exclusively to the real Saviour and Benefactor of the Human Race, my father [the emperor Tiberius], and to his mother, my grandmother [Livia]..."¹⁵⁷ While we do not have direct access to his private thoughts there are distinct traces of Greek influence in his speech, by use of the terms 'Saviour' and 'Benefactor'. Such terms indicate the political stance adopted by the imperial family. It appears that the family thought of him as a mortal worthy of divine honours, at least when they spoke in public. "Livia's attitude in this matter is unknown, but, in view of her general policy in regard to divine honours, it seems unlikely that she accepted."¹⁵⁸

The nature of Livia's honours, while she was alive, in both the east and the west generally followed those of Augustus. In the east she is often associated with goddesses such as Hera, Hestia and Demeter and received the title of Augusta.¹⁵⁹ Therefore it is possible to speculate that within Alexandria she also occupied a position after her death equivalent to Augustus even though Tiberius refused to deify Livia on her death.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ K. Scott, "Honorific Months" *Yale Classical Studies*, 2, 1931, pp.243-244.

¹⁵⁷ EJ320 with J.H. Oliver, *RSA*, 1, 1971, pp.229-30; cf. K. Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*. 1978, p.205.

¹⁵⁸ G. Grether, "Livia and the Roman imperial cult", *American Journal of Philology*, 67, no. 267, 1946, p.243.

¹⁵⁹ G. Grether, "Livia and the Roman imperial cult", p.223.

¹⁶⁰ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Tiberius, 51, J.C. Rolfe (trans.), p.340.

5.7 THE EMPEROR GAIUS AND ALEXANDRIA.

The emperor Gaius had an unusual attitude to the imperial cult. His excesses are recorded by Suetonius who wrote at least eighty years after the death of Gaius. He does make some interesting points that clarify the comments made by the ancient author Philo. He states that, "He (Gaius) came near assuming a crown at once and changing the semblance of a principate into the form of monarchy. But on being reminded that he had risen above the elevation both of princes and kings, he began from that time on to lay claim to divine majesty; for after giving orders that such statues of the gods as were especially famous for their sanctity or their artistic merit, including that of Jupiter of Olympia, should be brought from Greece in order to remove their heads and put his own in their place, he built out a part of the palace as far as the forum, and making the temple of Castor and Pollux its vestibule, he often took his place between the divine brethren and exhibited himself there to be worshipped... He also set up a special temple to his own godhead, with priests and with victims of the choicest kind. In this temple was a life-sized statue of the emperor in gold..."¹⁶¹ This passage refers to the emperor's actions in the city of Rome. Since this behaviour had been accepted in Rome it may also have occurred in Egypt and Alexandria.

The following passage confirms the above possibility and illustrates another point about the nature of the cult in Alexandria. It demonstrates that the cult was confined under Augustus and Tiberius to the non-Jewish section of the city of Alexandria and although the Jews were forced to recognise the emperor as the head of state it appears that they did not have to set his image in their temples and formally recognise his deity. "This great benefactor (Augustus) they (the Alexandrians) ignored during the forty-three years in which he was sovereign of Egypt, and set up nothing in our meeting-houses (the Jewish synagogues) in his honour, neither image, nor bust, nor painting."¹⁶² The imperial cult in Alexandria under Gaius was used by the Alexandrians for political manipulation, in this instance to attempt to bring about the destruction of the Jewish community in Alexandria. This attempt is illustrated by Josephus where he recounts a proclamation of Claudius. "... And since I am aware that the

¹⁶¹ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Gaius, 22, J.C. Rolfe (trans.), pp.435-7.

¹⁶² Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 22,148., E. Carey (trans.), p.75.

Alexandrians were roused against the Jews of their city in the time of Gaius Caesar, who in his great stupidity and madness humiliated the Jews because the Jewish people would not transgress their ancestral worship and address him as a god, it is my wish that the Jewish people lose none of its rights on account of the madness of Gaius, rather that they keep their old privileges continuing in their particular customs."¹⁶³ One of the old customs that can only have provoked the fury of the Greek Alexandrians against the Jews was the fact that the Jews were also allowed to have a governing council officially recognised under Augustus.

The reference in Claudius' decree to previous rights refers to a decree of Augustus concerning statues in Jewish temples. It appears that during his reign the Jewish temples were exempt from having any statues. What this decree also implies is that in temples of other deities in Alexandria and Egypt Augustus' statue did appear. On what conditions did these other statues of Augustus inhabit the same temples as the gods? In keeping with what has been stated earlier it would appear that they were not *synnaoi theoi*.

Several issues are raised about the imperial cult in Alexandria both under Claudius and Gaius. Gaius may have sought to have himself recognised as a god by all the provinces including the Jews, and maybe the Greek Alexandrians sought to gain an advantage over the Jews by pointing out their refusal to the emperor. As a result of this there were the riots and violence that characterised Gaius' reign in Alexandria. The Jews were excused images of the emperors in their temples under Augustus and maybe this was a political tool the Greek Alexandrians used to their advantage.

Although the imperial cult in Alexandria may have undergone radical shifts under Gaius, given the Hellenistic nature of the civic cult under Augustus, the shift to the deification of the living ruler was not really very dramatic. The emperor was already considered, in the pharaonic tradition, to be divine. One can argue that Gaius was directly influenced by the Ptolemaic cults of Egypt in his attempts to be treated as a god. Scholars have argued that the

¹⁶³ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 19, 280-5., L.H. Feldman (trans.), 1965, pp. 349-351.

death of his sister Drusilla and her deification bear many of the hallmarks of the Ptolemaic dynastic cult.¹⁶⁴

5.8 CLAUDIUS' LETTER TO THE ALEXANDRIANS.

Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians in 41 A.D. soon after his accession provides several interesting insights into the imperial cult in Egypt. It is worth quoting some parts of the letter which is quite extensive in its range of topics.

"Wherefore I gladly accepted the honours given to me by you, though I am not partial to such things. And first I permit you to keep my birthday as an Augustan day in the manner you have yourselves proposed, and I agree to the erection by you in several places of the statues of myself and my family; for I see that you were zealous to establish on every side memorials of your reverence for my house. Of the two golden statues, the one made to represent the Claudian Augustan Peace, as my most honoured Barbillus suggested and persisted in when I wished to refuse for fear of being thought too offensive, shall be erected at Rome, and the other according to your request shall be carried in procession on my name days in your city; and it shall be accompanied in the procession by a throne, adorned with whatever trappings you wish. It would be foolish, while accepting such great honours, to refuse the institution of a Claudian tribe and the establishment of sacred groves after the manner of Egypt; wherefore I grant you these requests as well, and if you wish you may also erect the equestrian statues given by Vitrasius Pollio my procurator. As for the erection of the statues in four horse chariots which you wish to set up to me at the entrances to the country, I consent to let one be placed at the town call Taposiris, in Libya, another at Pharos in Alexandria, and a third at Pelusium in Egypt. But I deprecate the appointment of a high priest to me and the building of temples, for I do not wish to be offensive to my contemporaries, and my opinion is that temples and the like have by all ages been granted as special honours to the gods alone."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ A. Momigliano, *Claudius, The Emperor and his Achievement*, 1961, p.21.

¹⁶⁵ BMP 1912., N. Lewis & M. Reinhold (eds.), *op.cit.*, p.367.

Claudius' letter indicates his own attitudes to the cult. Superficially it appears that he is opposed to the concept of temples and priests to the living emperor. On the other hand his acceptance of the statues and the sacred grove is one of the hallmarks of deification. To the rational and intelligent emperors the imperial cult would have seemed to provide a useful role in the recognition of the status of the emperor and contributed to the romanisation of a state in order to bring it firmly under the empire. At the same time within Rome it provided a useful method of demonstrating the restraint of the emperor in a way other than those traditionally reserved for great leaders and statesmen. Thus the imperial cult provided a means by which the emperor was able to express himself in a political context in the provinces and indeed in Rome itself. In this instance the refusal of the honours represents common political sense. The honours relating to practices in the city of Alexandria represent foreign honours in a foreign context that were not likely to influence his power base in Rome. The statue was therefore more of an honorific one than a religious one. On the other hand the statue to be dedicated in Rome would have had an expressly religious and political purpose if it had remained in Alexandria and would clearly reflect elements of divine worship of a living emperor in Rome. Clearly this was an intolerable situation to the emperor. Claudius' acceptance of the statue but its removal to Rome solved the problem of divine worship and did not offend the Alexandrians. The offering of the honours was a way in which the population of Alexandria was able to express their loyalty and its rejection would be seen as a rejection of their loyalty.

It is also possible to argue that the place where the embassy met Claudius influenced his refusal of the other divine honours offered by the Alexandrians. Hopkins argues that the embassy was sent to Rome and thus the refusal of the honours quite clearly indicates the nature of the political situation in Rome.¹⁶⁶ This position is difficult to sustain given the evidence demonstrating that the Roman emperors, beginning with Augustus, frequently rejected divine honours. The most obvious and likely explanation for the rejection of divine honours is that he may have meant exactly what he said. He may have rejected all forms of

¹⁶⁶ K. Hopkins, *op.cit.*, p.204.

divine honour but recognised that it was not possible to monitor some methods of worship in the provinces. He may not even have been aware of the precise nature of the honours he received by proxy as a cult figure in temples in the eastern parts of the empire.

However Rostovtzeff argues that the political situation in Alexandria on Claudius' assumption of the throne was such that it required military force to suppress the dispute between the Greeks and the Jews in Alexandria. As this dispute was initiated by the Jews it was against them that the military action was carried out. The first statue, Claudius' letter states, was of the *Pax Augusta Claudiana*. The name of the second was not specified. The letter tells us that the second statue was to be used on or at religious occasions in Alexandria. It is unlikely that this statue would have been a source of dispute between the Alexandrians and the Jews given the earlier proclamation of Augustus that was reinforced by Claudius concerning statues in Jewish temples. However the second one may have been.

The second statue known as the *Pax Augusta Claudiana* was to be set up in the city of Rome in a public place and according to Rostovtzeff, was done so that the Alexandrians would be able to put the blame for the riot entirely on to the Jews and to celebrate their victory. The letter indicates that it was suggested through Barbillus that a statue of *Nemesis-Pax*, a copy of that in the *Julian Nemeseion*, should be dedicated to commemorate the re-establishment of peace and the crushing of the rebels.¹⁶⁷ The second statue that Claudius consented to does not seem to have an openly religious function which is probably why he agreed to it.

There were certainly living emperors who indulged in self-deification and an examination of the literature, considered in the section earlier relating to Gaius, and later on to Nero, shows that their behaviour was not fully accepted by the Roman people. It appears that the government in Rome although established as an hereditary system by the end of Augustus' reign was still reliant to a large degree upon the general goodwill of the Roman population without which the emperors would inevitably come to grief.

¹⁶⁷ M. Rostovtzeff, "Pax Augusta Claudiana", *JEA*, 12, 1926, p.28.

The question of who Tiberius Claudius Barbillus was, and his status in Egypt, also occurs in the letter of Claudius. Rostovtzeff argues once more that this is one and the same person mentioned in the inscription from Ephesus translated by Keil. The argument he proposes in favour of this possibility is not beyond doubt. However if we consider the Barbillus 'of Claudius' letter to be one and the same person with the Balbillus mentioned in the inscription from Ephesus it raises some interesting points about his position. If we also assume that he was the high priest of Egypt and Alexandria and also a Roman then it is possible to demonstrate that the imperial cult in Egypt under the Romans was a cult of the deceased emperor. In Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians it appears that while a native embassy approached Claudius in regards to the honours it was Balbillus/Barbillus that persuaded the emperor to accept a compromise statue that would still maintain the republican facade in the imperial cult for viewers of the cult in Rome. Thus was his position in Egypt in 41 A.D. *Archiereus* of the city of Alexandria prior to his appointment as high priest of all Egypt and Alexandria? I believe that this is likely.

Finally there is the issue in his letter of the right of the Alexandrians to elect by lot the priests of the cult of Divus Augustus.¹⁶⁸ These priests known as *Neokoroi*, discussed earlier as temple wardens, can therefore be dated to at least 41 A.D.. This effectively indicates that by the time of Claudius and possibly earlier the city of Alexandria had a formal civic cult and a high priest which was head of the provincial imperial cult. This proves the existence of the formal civic cult. However the date of establishment is still open to debate.

A proclamation of Lucius Aemilius Rectus in 41 A.D. prior to the reading of the letter of Claudius seems to contradict the overall impression of Claudius' reign in Egypt and suggest he was worshipped as divine. "Since at the reading of the most sacred and beneficent letter to the city, the whole city could not attend on account of its size, I considered it necessary to publish the letter in order that, reading it individually, you may wonder at the greatness of our

¹⁶⁸ A.K. Bowman & D. Rathbone, *op.cit.*, p.117.

god Caesar and be grateful for his good will towards the city."¹⁶⁹ However I believe that there is a simple explanation available. The emperor was viewed in traditional pharaonic terms in Egypt as a god. The use of the term *theos* or 'god' by the Roman prefect of Egypt is simply an adoption of the most acceptable description in the province and a letter outside the province may have described the emperor in different terms.

5.9 THE IMPERIAL CULT UNDER NERO.

The available evidence for the imperial cult under the emperor Nero is scant. The coinage has already been examined and the primary concern that arises from it are the parallels drawn between Nero and the *Agathos Daimon* of Alexandria. There appears around the regnal years eight and twelve of Nero the reverses of Alexandria and in the years three, thirteen and fourteen the reverses of the *Agathos Daimon*. The only real suggestion that can be drawn from this evidence is that the emperor Nero sought to strengthen ties with Alexandria and promote himself as some kind of living incarnation of the patron deity of the city, possibly strengthening links between himself and the cult of Alexander the Great.

Blumenthal suggests that a temple to Nero was established in Alexandria. However the evidence for this is confined to one document and is not specific about the name of the emperor concerned.¹⁷⁰ Blumenthal also argues that Nero held a special status in Alexandria due to his benefactions to the city early in his reign. Suetonius implied a tax reduction to the city population under Nero when he said, "The more oppressive sources of revenue he (Nero) either abolished or moderated."¹⁷¹ Later he also stated that "he (Nero) planned but two foreign tours, to Alexandria and Achaia;..."¹⁷² However the former quote seems to refer directly to Rome and makes no mention of Alexandria and so I believe that it can be

¹⁶⁹ P.Lond.1912., E.M. Smallwood, *Documents Illustrating the Principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero*, 1967, No.370, p.99.

¹⁷⁰ F. Blumenthal, *op.cit.*, p.323.

¹⁷¹ Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Nero, 10,1., J.C. Rolfe (trans.), p.101.

¹⁷² Suetonius, *The Lives of the Caesars*, Nero, 19,1., J.C. Rolfe (trans.), p.113.

discounted. The latter intention to visit was cancelled after bad omens for the trip appeared to the emperor.

A proclamation from 54 A.D. on the accession of Nero confirms the official attitude of the Alexandrians to Nero and to the person of the deceased emperor. "The Caesar owed to his ancestors, god manifest, has gone to them, while the imperator expected and hoped for by the world has been proclaimed. On account of this we should all wear garlands and sacrifice oxen to show thanks to the gods. Year 1 of Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, 21st of the month New Augustus."¹⁷³ We can identify this letter as stemming from the imperial administration, in fact from the Prefect. It demonstrates that the emperor was still viewed as a mortal ruler by the Roman administration, and thus on an official level within the cult. Therefore if the emperor was considered divine while living then his deification was most likely in the private cult of the citizens or it occurred at some later date for which we have no evidence in Alexandria. The proclamation further demonstrates that sacrifices were made to the gods for the health of the emperor. If he were recognised as a divine being then the sacrifices would be offered directly to him. The deceased Caesar, Claudius, is recognised as a "god manifest" and the term seems to indicate prior approval from the Senate of Rome. Thus the letter pertains to the official imperial cult.

A letter to the city of Ptolemais from Nero can also be considered. He writes, "... and of the two items remaining, I decline the temple you offer on the grounds that this honour is rightly paid by men to gods alone and I return, though with thanks, the gold crown..."¹⁷⁴ The format of this letter bears a strong resemblance to the letter of Claudius sent to the Alexandrians. It has all the hallmarks of a formal rejection letter from the chancellery of Rome sent to more than one city in the empire who offered direct living emperor worship. The rejection of the crown depicts an emperor who still retained a sense of Republic. If Nero was rejecting divine honours in Ptolemais then it is unlikely that he was actively accepting them in

¹⁷³ P.Oxy. 1021., E.M. Smallwood, *op.cit.*, No.47, p.32.

¹⁷⁴ O. Montevecchi, *Aegyptus*, 50, 1970, pp.5-33., D.C. Braund, *op.cit.*, p.219.

Alexandria. If he were, then this clearly contradicts the position taken by Rigsby who argues in favour of a deliberate return by Nero to the deification of the emperor while he was still living. If this were the case then such a complete reversal of policy must have occurred after the date of the proclamation. The evidence does not appear to substantiate Rigsby's theory of a change in policy, early in Nero's reign, in the form of the imperial cult in Alexandria. It does indicate that by the reign of Nero the cities of Egypt were still pushing to be allowed to practice deification of the living emperor in temples without adjoining gods. This attitude was still in keeping with the tradition of the pharaoh. What the evidence strongly supports is a moderate attitude by Nero towards the nature of the imperial cult and does not support a change in the position of the emperor in the cult in Alexandria prior to the date of the proclamation from Ptolemais.

CHAPTER 6.

Conclusion.

This thesis had two aims. Firstly it has attempted to consider the origins of the imperial cult in Alexandria. This can be broadly subdivided into two parts, firstly the influence of the Ptolemaic religion and political situation and secondly the influence of the traditional native Egyptian religions. Secondly it has attempted to examine the nature of the cult by examining the contemporary art, architecture and literature and to examine the cult under each of the Julio-Claudian emperors looking for variations in the cult.

Before discussing each of these factors I would like to mention a few of the more general issues brought to light by this thesis. The debate about the nature of the cult as either a political or a religious phenomenon has been given undue emphasis by others. The evidence clearly shows a political motivation for the cult in Alexandria, both from the emperors' points of view and from that of the population of Alexandria. In any case the mistake that seems to be most often made about the cult is the decision to categorise it in either of the two divisions. I think that this is the wrong approach to the cult and I do not believe that it can be done. From my own research I would adopt a more unified approach. I would argue that the cult had a political purpose but it was achieved by the manipulation of religious values. I would add however that the religious aspects of the cult were not always viewed by all parties to it with genuine religious emotion, although individuals might do so. It is also important to stress the fundamental differences between the cult of the Eastern empire and the Western empire. Although both were designed to achieve the same purpose they differed in the method by which they achieved that. In the West it was very much organised and directed by the emperor. In the East where there had been forms of emperor cult for some time it was initiated by the emperor and continued spontaneously by the people. In Alexandria and Egypt it was different again.

To turn to the first of these matters, the origins of the imperial cult in Alexandria. It appears that the origins of the cult in Alexandria are difficult to determine. There is evidence of a

civic and unofficial cult as early as 6 B.C. being practiced by the Alexandrians. The existence of the Caesareum and its consecration to Augustus after the annexation of Egypt in 30 B.C. cannot be taken without comment as the starting date for the cult in Alexandria. I would argue that without a priesthood dedicated to Augustus created at the time of his departure the exact purpose of the temple in his reign remains in question. However there is a possibility that the temple was dedicated to C. Julius Caesar for an indeterminate period. Therefore the establishment of an official provincial cult can only be dated certainly to the reign of Tiberius and the creation of the cult to Divus Augustus. The exact date of such an event is also open to dispute. The most appropriate time seems to be after 14 A.D. and before 20 A.D.. At this time it became a cult of the deceased emperor and therefore dynastic in style. The conclusion then is that the cult in Alexandria had its origins as a unofficial civic cult during Augustus' reign and that its express purpose, to the Alexandrians, was as a political device for the manipulation of the emperor. There is evidence that under Augustus there was an official magistrate known as the *Archiereus* who had responsibility for the maintenance of the cult and temples in Alexandria. This official was superseded by the high priest of Egypt when the cult became a provincial cult. To Augustus the cult appears to have been politically unnecessary in Egypt, given his attitude towards the province. Therefore the cult did not develop as it did in other eastern and western provinces, because of the inferior political status of Alexandria.

The art and architecture that survives in Alexandria is limited. Therefore any analysis of the nature of the cult from this source is limited. Firstly it was necessary to define what constituted art and architecture of the imperial cult in Alexandria. It was thought that any representation of the emperor could indicate the nature of the imperial cult. In order for the architecture to be considered as a part of the cult it had to be known from a direct source as an imperial cult temple. This latter requirement limited the architecture to one temple, the Caesareum, with a second possible building, the Claudium. There is nothing about the nature of the cult to be gained from the Caesareum other than its location. The temple was centrally located near the forum and therefore was an integral part of the day to day existence in the

Roman period. There is also the possibility that the Caesareum was dedicated to C. Julius Caesar early in Augustus' reign.

To the Claudium we have only one reference in the texts examined that offer any evidence and that is insufficient to conclude anything other than its existence and purpose. However we know that a library was often commonly attached to a temple. As the library was named after Claudius then it may be possible to surmise that the temple, if there was one, may have been dedicated to him as well.

Imperial art provides more substantial evidence about the nature of the cult in Alexandria. The primary source of information is the coinage. There are consistent themes that characterise each of the coinage issues under the Julio-Claudian emperors. From this we can conclude that it was both necessary and important to portray to the audience specific political and religious ideas. In the Alexandrian coinage the emperor adopted a role as intermediary between the gods and mortals. It is through him that the people were able to ensure the continued success of the harvests of the country, the coming of the flood season, and the abundance of food supplies. The coinage had strong political overtones when one considers that Egypt was regarded as the granary of the empire. The corn supply which was provided free to the Romans, ensured the emperors' political survival. The way in which the emperor could be portrayed on the coinage indicates this link. He could be, for example, holding a cornucopia. On the other hand the emperor also used the coinage to indicate a specific political message. The emperor Nero did this by his use of reverses that included references to the *Agathos Daimon* of Alexander such as showing him with the sunburst or radiate crown and with reverses that showed the *Agathos Daimon* as a serpent. Such references were not indications of divinity but rather represented the strengthening of links between the emperor and the tradition of Alexander.

The portraiture of the emperors that survives from the Roman period in Egypt tends to indicate that they were portrayed as political figures with elements of divinity rather than

divine figures. While much of the portraiture shows the emperors using symbols of divinity that were first employed by Alexander the Great, the emphasis is on piety rather than the arrogance of divinity. The divine symbols in the portraiture appeared more after death and in conjunction with those emperors who were officially deified by the Roman senate. Such representations tend to indicate that the official imperial cult in Alexandria may have followed the other provincial cults in their use of official portraiture. There are no surviving portraits or literary statements that indicate the nature of the imperial cult portraiture in Alexandria according to my definition of a cult statue.

The literature of the imperial cult in the Julio-Claudian era is not all free from political bias. The literature constitutes the largest source of information about the cult. It is possible to draw some conclusions from the literature. It indicates that Augustus may have dedicated the Caesareum while he was in Egypt. To whom he dedicated it is more difficult to determine, either to himself or to C. Julius Caesar. If it was to the latter then at some stage the Alexandrians may of their own initiative have introduced Augustus' image to the temple, or he himself ordered the change. The latter possibility is unlikely given the pious and traditional role that Augustus adopted in Rome. Thus the cult was intended by Augustus as a dynastic cult not as a personal one. The evidence clearly indicates that there never was an official provincial imperial cult established until after Augustus' death. However it is possible that the Alexandrians may have created an unofficial civic cult of the living emperor while Augustus lived and that it continued as such until after his death. The emperor Tiberius appears to have converted the cult to an official provincial cult more as a political reaction than out of any loyalty to the deceased Augustus. There appears to have been a constant flow of embassies from the city of Alexandria to the emperors attempting to offer honours consistent with a cult of the living emperor. When examined in the historical context of the city of Alexandria most can be linked to a political purpose. There is no evidence of embassies that were successful in their attempts. This does not necessarily mean that such honours were granted to living emperors but the lack of evidence prevents further discussion.

If on the other hand the Caesareum was dedicated to Augustus by himself then the evidence is clearly in favour of a cult of the living emperor, not officially sanctioned by the emperor but nonetheless enjoying provincial status, and having a cult at civic level. This cult would have enjoyed the private support of the emperor. The evidence is not strong. However the references to Augustus' attitude to the Jewish population of Alexandria in Philo indicate that he must have had some knowledge of the cult while alive since he exempted them from worshipping his statue in their temples. Therefore he may either have been worshipped as a god or, at least, had his statues in an annex of the temples of other deities.

Therefore the imperial cult was unofficially sanctioned by the emperor Augustus. When news of events that occurred in the Alexandrian cult spread to the rest of the empire and began to be perceived as a threat to the power of later emperors Tiberius officially sanctioned the cult. These events centred on the worship of the living emperors. It appears that this spread did not actually occur. It was more of a difference in perception of the pharaonic tradition between Egypt and Rome. Such acts as the extension of honours to the royal family helped to encourage this perception of a political threat. When the cult was granted provincial and thereby formal status under Tiberius it was required to meet the official standards of the cult as in other parts of the empire.

The question of the existence of a temple to Claudius which formed a part of the imperial cult is more difficult to assess. The evidence of Strabo indicates that a wing existed as a part of the Alexandrian museum and that the main museum had a priest appointed by the emperors. Fishwick's argument concerning the nature of statues based on their positions in Roman temples clearly indicates that any such statue to Claudius in the museum would be placed there as a *simulacrum* and not as an *imago* and would not have occupied the position in the temple reserved for the gods. Thus honours to Claudius in such a place would be compatible with honours awarded to the emperor in the imperial cult in the rest of the empire and would therefore be possible.

The literature illustrates the way the Roman administration encouraged in Alexandria the offering of divine honours. Several public decrees and inscriptions indicate that the emperor was recognised or presented by the prefects of Egypt as either the son of a god or as a living god. I believe that this was done in order to illustrate to the population of Egypt as a whole that the emperor occupied a position higher than the previous rulers, the pharaohs.

The literature offers no evidence that either Gaius or Nero ever officially accepted divine honours. Certainly Gaius seems to have been influenced by the Ptolemaic cults of the living ruler in the deification of his sister Drusilla after her death. This is only a natural extension of the dynastic cult already in place in the Roman world. The same is true for Nero in that he seems to have accepted the cult as a dynastic one and he rejected the honours from Egypt offering deification whilst still alive in the almost formulaic style of Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians.

It would appear that there was a provincial high priest of the imperial cult in Egypt certainly from Claudius' reign. And possibly from as early as the reign of Tiberius there was a priest of the imperial cult in Alexandria. He would have been the *Archiereus*. Assuming that the provincial cult dates from Tiberius' reign the first high priest of the provincial cult should also date to this time. However his existence is only confirmed without question for Claudius' reign. What the exact role of the priest was in the Julio-Claudian period is open to debate. Opinion is divided in favour of a purely administrative and political role rather than a religious role. This question cannot be satisfactorily answered by the evidence.

Evidence of the festivals and rites of the cult in Alexandria are not to be found in any detail. We know that there were religious processions and that sacred groves existed. But the nature of the processions or the manner in which they were carried out is not known. There is also the reading of the histories of the Etruscan and Carthaginians mentioned as one of the

ceremonies to be conducted in the dedication of the Claudian museum. If these continued after his death and subsequent deification then they are one of the rites of the imperial cult.

There is also the evidence of private imperial cult in Alexandria in which the emperor was recognised as a living god and worshipped as such. One cannot help but feel that this attitude was influenced by the native Egyptian religions. The imperial cult in private houses is also unknown. This is in part due to a lack of material remains but also due to a lack of literary references to the cult during the Julio-Claudian period.

The imperial cult was influenced by both the Ptolemies and the native Egyptian religions. The imperial cult art, architecture and religious observances seem to be composed of many traits found in the Greek religious cults. Many of these traits come directly from contact with the Greek mainland. I have considered the major influence of the Ptolemaic cults on the Roman cult. This seems to include the deification of relatives of the emperor. As this only occurs under Gaius and Nero it is difficult to comment in any great detail without considering evidence from other periods. However it does indicate signs of personal cult in the imperial cult in the empire. It does not appear to have had a detrimental effect on the cult during the post Julio-Claudian period. The evidence clearly shows the native Egyptian religions and culture in decline under the Romans.

The political issues that preceded the annexation of Egypt to the Roman empire may have contributed to the failure of the Ptolemaic cults in the Roman period. Links were broken between the Ptolemaic cults and the imperial cult because of the enmity between M. Antonius and Augustus. It is clear that as a result of this enmity the Ptolemaic cults in Egypt declined and the population was reduced to slavery. The absolutist nature of the political state of Egypt under the Ptolemies was further developed by the Roman emperors.

Alexandria had a different status to the rest of Egypt, and it appears that the city attempted to preserve this special status by paying homage to the emperor. Under each of the emperors of

the Julio-Claudian period the cult grew. The changes that it underwent were part of a natural progression. It was still viewed by each of the emperors as a dynastic cult to the deceased emperors but unofficially it was a cult of the living emperor. Attempts by the Alexandrians to convert it to the cult of the living emperor on a formal basis met with resistance from the emperors. Only during Gaius' and Nero's reigns is there evidence to suggest that it became a cult of the living emperor officially. The evidence for this is incomplete and open to interpretation. Thus while the emperors of the Julio-Claudian period adopted a uniform standard for cult practices in the city of Rome, in the eastern provinces the practices were uniform but different from those at Rome.

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