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Chaire Antinoos! Researching the success of the cult of Antinous during the Roman Empire.

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Χαῖρε', Ἀντίνοος!

Researching the success of the cult of Antinous during the Roman Empire

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MA Thesis

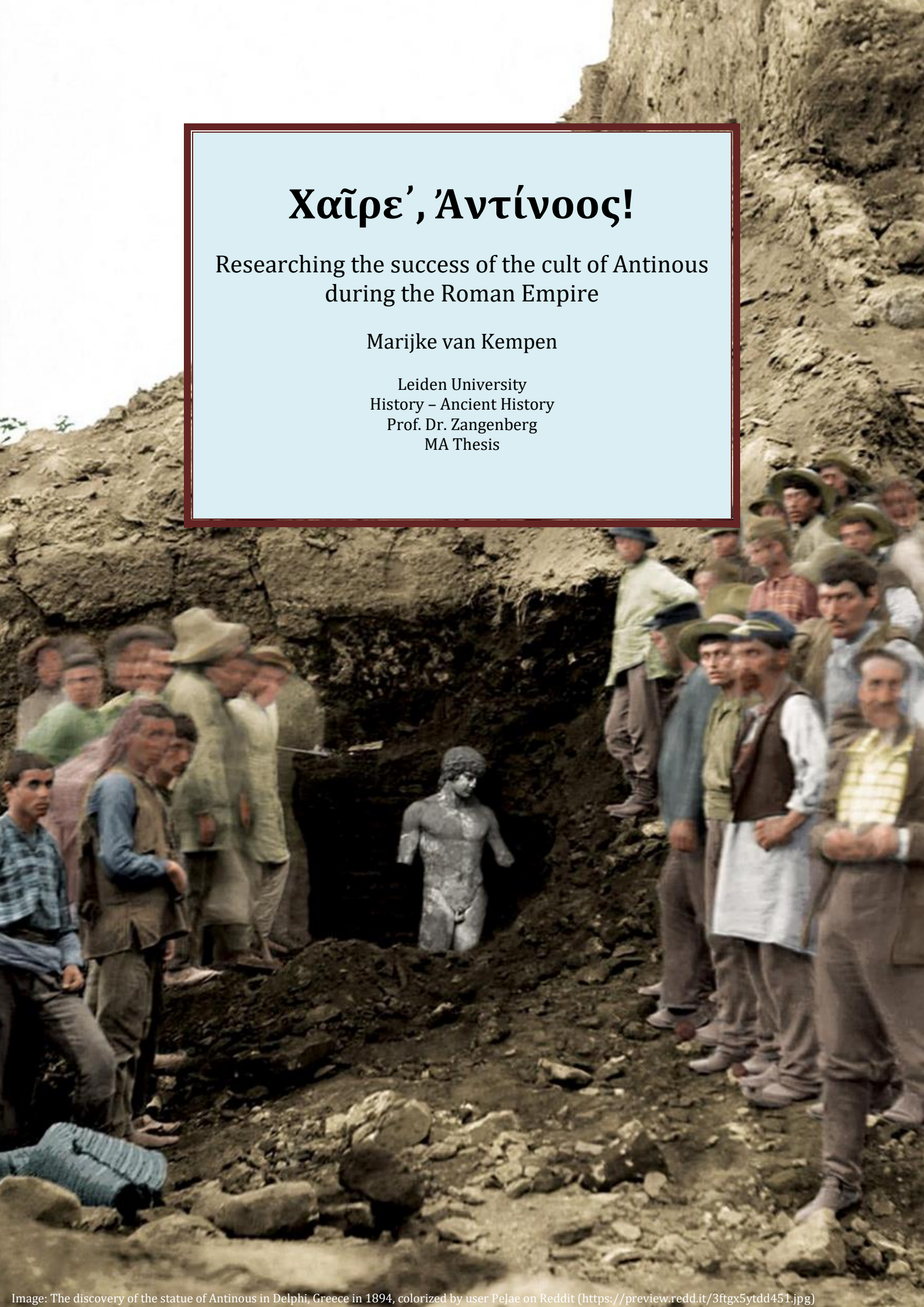


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List of Abbreviations

AJA = American Journal of Archaeology

ANRW = Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt

CENIM = Cahiers de l'Égypte Nilotique et Méditerranéenne

CIL = Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum

EDR = Epigraphic Database Roma

HD = Epigraphic Database Heidelberg

JRA = Journal of Roman Archaeology

JRS = Journal of Roman Studies

P. Oxy. = The Oxyrhynchus Papyri, in the text followed by volume in Roman numerals and inventory number.

P. Lond. = Greek Papyri in the British Museum

P. Berol = Papyrus Berol, Papyri in the Staatliche Museen Berlin

p. = plate

RGRW = Religions in the Graeco-Roman World

SNG = Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum

TM = Trismagistos; database for papyri and inscriptions

ZPE = Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Antinous and his cult

The Graeco-Roman pantheon was huge. Every facet of Greek and Roman society had one or more deities attached to it: the Lares protected Roman families, Mars aided the Romans in warfare, Venus was the goddess of love and Bacchus aided viticulture. These different categories of life that belonged to different gods were not strict, of course, but overlapped.¹

Something interesting happened with this pantheon during the reign of emperor Hadrian: he deified his lover Antinous. Little is known about 'Hadrian's favorite', as Antinous is often described, except for the fact that he died in Egypt under mysterious circumstances somewhere before his twenties. He was worshipped in both the eastern and the western Roman empire, as both god and hero, was commemorated with the installation of games in honor of him and Emperor Hadrian founded the city of Antinoöpolis close to the place where his lover died. Until Emperor Theodosius prohibited worshipping pagan deities in 391 AD, Antinous was venerated much intensively, especially in the Aegean region covering modern Turkey, the Greek Peloponnesus and the Greek islands. Witnesses for continued attention are not only a small number of fragmentary textual references, but above all objects of visual art. In many museums one encounters statues of Antinous, it seems that the presence of this boy is truly everywhere. It thus comes to no surprise that academics have also taken interest in Hadrian's lover, especially since the presence is overwhelming, although little factual information is known about him.

A few things are worth examining. First of all, it seems like Antinous was just a boy, yet he acquired the status of a god. Moreover, the followers of the cult of Antinous were active in various areas of the Roman Empire: what was the appeal of venerating Antinous at all? Did people identify themselves with the boy, or were they obliged to become followers in order to appease Emperor Hadrian? Another factor that needs consideration is also whether the

¹ For an in-depth analysis on the Graeco-Roman pantheon, see Versnel (2011).

activity of the cult of Antinous differed from region to region, and whether the cult was criticized in Roman society.

1.2. Historiography

Much research has already been done on Antinous and his cult. However, the way in which scholars research Antinous and the cult has changed. Lorentz Dietrichson took in 1884 an art historical approach, where he studied Antinous' life, death and apotheosis and researched the material culture that featured Antinous, such as busts and coins.² However, the impact of this material culture, was not discussed. Also, no attention was given to the fact that emperor Hadrian and Antinous were lovers.

Academics did not exactly turn away from this way of thinking in the previous century, as for example the scholars Alfred Grimm, Dieter Kessler and Hugo Meyer wrote a commentary on Antinous' obelisk.³ In this publication, the obelisk of Antinous is described in detail: the imagery is discussed, the obelisk is interpreted in a wider context and the hieroglyphics are translated. However, academics also started to focus on Antinous himself next to researching the visual arts that depicted him. Royson Lambert, for instance, wrote in 1984 a book about the possibilities of Antinous dying as a result of voluntary castration, a voluntary human sacrifice or as a result of poisoning.⁴ He also explores the deification after the boy's death, such as analyzing the appeal the hero-god had, the cult's spread and decline.⁵ Lambert writes that Hadrian intended to disseminate the cult throughout the whole Roman Empire, starting at the Greek islands and Egypt. Although it seems that many worshipped Antinous because Hadrian wanted them to, it is clear that Antinous was also venerated in more private settings. This might show that people chose to venerate Antinous as well, next to the obligation of venerating him in public spaces.⁶

According to Royson Lambert, the cult declined as a result of the struggle between Christians and pagans in the 4th century AD. The cult had already been criticized by both Christian and pagan authors such Celsus and Lucian, however during this century, many

² Dietrichson (1884).

³ Grimm *et al.* (1994).

⁴ Lambert (1984), 129-134.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 186-193.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 190-192.

sculptures representing Antinous were destroyed. Depictions of Antinous were officially banned from public places during the reign of Emperor Theodosius in 391 AD.⁷

The points Lambert puts forward are still of use today, as he describes the theories about the boy and the cult in detail, explains how the cult gained attraction, and explores how it declined in the fourth century. The arguments that he puts forward help in the understanding why Antinous was venerated, and how it was possible that the cult kept existing for many years.

Research into Antinous and the cult kept being carried out. In 2005, Caroline Vout for instance, discusses the imagery of Antinous and the implications of the imagery of the deified lover. She writes that much can be gained from studying how the statues of Antinous were integrated in Roman culture. She writes that the acceptance of the original images of Antinous in antiquity depended upon their ability to plug into the existing image of the pretty boy that was frequently portrayed by statues and busts of Alexander, Apollo, and Bacchus. Their success depended upon the tendency of the elite to erect their own images of Antinous, establish games in his honor, and borrow from his iconography.⁸

Vout, in a way, critiques the art historical approaches of Dietrichson and Meyer, stating that why Antinous was depicted has many reasons. In this way, the method she uses in order to understand the appeal of Antinous can be of use to answer the question how Antinous was presented in public spheres. By doing this, one might be able to uncover what appealed people to venerate Antinous, instead of focusing on Antinous himself. What lacks in her evidence however, is that she does not use many kinds of sources in her article.

Christopher Jones, similarly, writes in 2010 a book on heroes in antiquity. In this publication, he also devotes a chapter to Antinous, instead of thematically grouping him together with other types of heroes such as poetic heroes or athletes. He also argues, in contrast to Lambert, that the 'blankness' of Antinous made him suitable to be venerated and that it could be argued that Antinous was in fact, an older man.⁹ Jones means by this 'blankness' that Antinous did not have specific attributes or was the god of a specific concept, like the

⁷ Lambert (1984), 193-196.

⁸ Vout (2005).

⁹ Jones (2010), 82.

traditional Graeco-Roman gods. Because of this, Jones suggests that the heroization process was easier to set up and the cult was more accessible. This notion of Antinous being a 'blank slate' gives rise to the question why individuals worshipped him, and why Antinous was suitable for veneration as he was not traditional god such as Jupiter or Apollo. Jones' idea can also aid the understanding of Antinous' importance to his followers. However, he does not explain in what parts of the Roman Empire the cult of Antinous was mainly active, only what the appeal might have been to deify him.

The question of why venerating Antinous was important and why the cult of Antinous was able to exist for a long time, is discussed in more detail by Niayesh Jamshidi. In 2018, with the help of ancient authors such as Cassius Dio, Pausanias, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, she wrote in her MA thesis that Antinous' worship persisted because the cult appealed to the Greek speaking people in the Eastern Roman empire. In worshipping him, these people showed themselves to be supportive of Rome, while maintaining their Greek roots. Because the cult was established by emperor Hadrian, it reflected the desires of the Roman elite, which resulted in worshippers connecting themselves to Roman law and province tax.¹⁰ Christians also showed both the durability of the cult and its geographical location, as they kept writing about Hadrian and the cult of Antinous well after the death of both individuals, saying that the cult was incorporated in the cults of other gods. Moreover, they also write about the continuation of the games that were held in Antinous' honor.¹¹

Jamshidi also writes that the worship of Antinous was possible because the Roman world contained many different ethnicities. So, Antinous and his cult provided inclusion for a people who were often seen as inferior and mocked by Roman authors.¹² Although Ancient Greek culture influenced Roman culture and religion, they still saw the Ancient Greeks as barbarians. Xenophobic tendencies towards the Greeks are already present in Cicero's *de oratore*, where he disapproves that Greek rhetoric makes it possible to discuss a certain topic anywhere. Seneca and Martial also express their distastes in the Greeks, calling them arrogant and vain, and writing that they talk too much.¹³

¹⁰ Jamshidi (2018), 36.

¹¹ Jamshidi (2018), 26.

¹² Jamshidi (2018),

¹³ Henrichs (1995); Isaac (2004).

By making this conclusion, Jamshidi contradicts the scholar Lambert, who argued that the veneration of Antinous spread because emperor Hadrian installed fear. Yet, as Jamshidi herself points out, this would not explain why the cult continued to exist well after Hadrian's death. According to her, the 'Greekness' that Antinous represented was important for the Greek speaking east to keep their identity in a period where Greekness was vilified by Roman society. Although the cult also had followers in Roman Egypt and Italy, she does not focus much on these regions of the Roman Empire. Moreover, she does not explain why Antinous was not as important for identity building in these regions.

1.3. Problem and research question

What is clear from these studies is although not much is known about Antinous, it is clear that he had a legacy in the religious sphere. Yet many factors are open for discussion: on the one hand did Hadrian link Antinous to Roman pantheon, on the other hand the success of the cult could be explained by the blankness of Antinous when he was deified. The question that remains largely unanswered is thus why Antinous, a boy that might have drowned – or might even have been murdered according to Lambert – was suitable for veneration. In order to answer this, it might be useful to study the cult itself: how did this cult function and what was its origin? Why did the cult become successful and why did it persist for a long time? Did the spread of material culture featuring Antinous have anything to do with it? Because of these points, it is fruitful to research the identity of the cult of Antinous again.

These problems give rise to the following research question: Why did the cult of Antinous become such a success in the Roman Empire after Antinous' death and stayed active after Hadrian's death?

1.4. Methodology

In order to answer the research question and sub-questions, primary and secondary sources will be used. Works of the Greek author Pausanias, for example, are of use as he describes the Greek landscape and cult places. Ancient authors who criticize the cult of Antinous include Lucian, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome, and Emperor Julian. These sources prove useful to understand why the cult was popular in the Roman empire and why it was criticized at

the same time. Pausanias, Cassius Dio and Philostratus talk more about Antinous and the locations where the cult mainly operated, and might prove useful in understanding why Antinous was venerated and where cult activity took place. Next, archaeology will be used to answer questions on how Antinous was incorporated in the Roman pantheon by conducting epigraphical, papyrological, numismatic and iconographical research. The books and articles written by the mentioned academics, are of use in gaining more knowledge about the theories that surround the cult, such as the appeal and the reason Antinous was being venerated.

1.5. Thesis layout

So, this chapter has focused on what we do and do not know about Antinous. The second chapter deals with the question of who Antinous was. This helps to understand why Emperor Hadrian deified Antinous. In this chapter, the birthday, ancestry and name of Antinous will be discussed. How and when Antinous came in contact with Hadrian will be explored as well. Furthermore, the details surrounding his death will be examined.

The third chapter discusses the birth of his cult. Here, it will be discussed what the cult looked like and whether this cult saw Antinous as a god or hero. In this chapter, how the cult was perceived by ancient authors will also be discussed. Moreover, the reasons for installing a cult and why it became especially important for cult followers in the Greek speaking East of the Roman Empire, will be considered.

The fourth chapter focusses on the worship of Antinous in Egypt, the Greek mainland and on the Italian peninsula. Here, a closer look will be taken to how these cults operated and how active they were in the worship of Antinous.

The fifth chapter focusses on material culture surrounding the cult and Antinous. This is useful to understand how this kind of evidence might have aided the success of the cult of Antinous. The chapter takes a closer look at the seemingly standardized sculptures of Antinous, as well as the architectural contexts in which they were placed. Coinage depicting Antinous will also be researched by using the catalogued compiled by Blum and Von

Aulock. In this way, it might be uncovered whether art styles might have contributed to a standardized type of imagery for Antinous.

The final chapter returns to the research question and tries to answer this question on the basis of the findings.

Chapter 2: Antinous – from boy to god

This chapter focusses on Antinous' life. Firstly, what is known about him will be discussed. Secondly, the relationship between Antinous and Emperor Hadrian will be explored, after which the chapter focusses on the death of the Bithynian boy. The chapter will end with a short conclusion.

2.1. Life

Reconstructing Antinous' life is very difficult. Caroline Vout, for example, notes that creating a biography is hard because much literature that speaks of Antinous dates from after Emperor Hadrian's reign.¹⁴ Royson Lambert agrees: not much is known about Antinous' life, and what is known could have been overshadowed by personal views of authors that write about him.¹⁵ The fact that ancient sources speak of the details of Antinous' life does not mean that an accurate reconstruction of Antinous life can be achieved: it will in any case remain very hypothetical.¹⁶ When talking about Antinous life, it is important to take into account that much has been written on this with uncertainty and that all information about him comes from the period in which he was already deceased and deified. What we thus have is interpretation that *might* contain historically reliable information, yet this must be approached with care. The only source from antiquity that is more or less contemporaneous with Antinous is Pausanias, yet he claims to have never crossed paths with this boy:

“... Antinoüs too was deified by them; his temple is the newest in Mantinea. He was a great favorite of the Emperor Hadrian. I never saw him in the flesh, but I have seen images and pictures of him.”¹⁷

Pausanias was a Greek author and geographer who was contemporaneous to Emperor Hadrian, Antonius Pius and Marcus Aurelius, and lived between 110 and 180 AD. The *Hellados Periegesis*, the *Description of Greece*, is his only extant work that has come down to modern authors. In ten books, Pausanias offers a firsthand description of ancient Greece. As

¹⁴ Vout (2005).

¹⁵ Lambert (1984).

¹⁶ Opper (1996), 170.

¹⁷ Paus 8.9.7-8. Translated by Jones (1933), *LCL* 272.

the only contemporary author of Hadrian and Antinous, he can assert that Antinous was indeed a favorite and that many busts representing him were found throughout the Roman Empire. He writes that Antinous was Hadrian's 'favorite'. Yet what is known about him before he met the emperor?

What can be assessed with certainty is that Antinous was born in Claudiopolis, modern Bolu, a city located in Bithynia.¹⁸ This Roman province is now part of north-west Turkey. As he was assimilated with deities of nature after his deification, it could be that he came from the hinterland of Claudiopolis, rather than the city itself.¹⁹ The location of Claudiopolis is shown in Figure 1 in Appendix 1.

2.2. Date and year of birth

Antinous was probably born between November 110 and November 112 AD. The precise year of birth is not known.²⁰ This estimation is, however, backed by some evidence, namely an inscription of Antinous' burial club in Lanuvium, a Roman town located near the Via Appia in Latium. The date of 27 November states that on this day, a feast was held in honor of for Antinous. The birthday of Antinous was celebrated by the cult of Antinous and Diana. A marble inscription, known as CIL XIV 2112, which once stood inside of tetrastylum of the temple presumably dedicated to Antinous mentions the date of birth of Antinous, as well as the rules and regulations that the worshippers should have adhered to. The start of first column reads:

"In the consulship of Lucius [Ceionius] Commodus and Sextus Vettulenus Civica Pompeianus, on June 9, [at Lanuvium] in the temple of Antinous, in which Lucius Caesennius Rufus, [patron] of the municipium, had ordered that a convention be held through Lucius Pompeius [...]us, quinquennalis of the worshipers of Diana and Antinous, he {Caesennius Rufus} promised that he would [give] to them in consequence of his liberality the interest on 15,000 sesterces: on the {5} [birth]day of Diana on August 13 400 sesterces and on the birthday of Antinous on [November] 27 400 sesterces. And he

¹⁸ Lambert (1984), 15.

¹⁹ Jones (2010), 75.

²⁰ Lambert (1984), 17-18.

enjoined the lex established by them to be written out in full at the bottom of the tetrastylum of Antinous on the inner side so as to produce the words written below.”²¹

The text thus opens with a description of a cult gathering on the 9th of June 136 AD. L. Ceionius Commodus offers the sanctuary a sum of 400 sesterces on the birthday of Antinous on November 27. Not only was the money used to help the honors of Diana and Antinous, but also to help finance the funerals of the members of the cult.²² All in all, it is clear that according to this inscription, Antinous was born on the 27th of November.

Moreover, papyrus P. Oxy. XXXI 2553, dated to the period between 176 and 225 AD, records this date as well, and lists festivals attributed to Antinous in a chronological way.²³ The papyrus translates to:

“... On the ... of Zeus (Jupiter?) and consecration of Antinous ... to the house of Britannicus ... [...eum] and to the shrine of Fortune and to the Serapeum ... On the birthday of Antinous he sacrifices horse-rites ... three days, whenever they are posted ... on behalf of the victories of the deified Aurelius Antoninus ... [...geum] and sits in the Lageum ... and booths of spectacles whenever ... contests celebrated as a result of a bequest ... he offers incense in the Sarapeum and sits in the Lageum ... On the day on which the deified Hadrian ... the city ... gymnasiarch(s) enters the Sebasteum and sacrifices and the ... and goes in procession and sacrifices and sits in the Lageum horse-rites. ... on the birthday of the deified Verus enters the Sebasteum and sacrifices and ... on the steps of the processional way and into the Serapeum and ...”²⁴

The list starts with the day of deification, no later than October 30, and ends with the birthday of Lucius Verus on December 15. The fourth entry in this sequence is thought to be that of Antinous’ date of birth, which is Choiak 4, which then should have been somewhere in the eleventh month of the year and around the 30th day of the month according to the Gregorian calendar in use today.²⁵ That Antinous’ birthday was indeed the 27th of November as the inscription CIL 14 2112 suggests, however, cannot be assessed with certainty, as this

²¹ CIL XIV 2112 = EDR078891 = TM251182 = HD000715. Translation Bendlin (2011), 213.

²² Bendlin (2011), 216-217.

²³ Lambert (1984), 18.

²⁴ Translation in Barns *et al.* (1966), Oxyrhynchus Papyri XXXI, 74-76.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

fragmentary papyrus is unclear about the actual date.²⁶ The fragmentary state of this papyrus also causes the birthdate of Choiak 4 to be dubious. From the very circumstantial evidence we can however carefully conclude that Antinous was probably born between November 110 and November 112 AD, around the last few days of the month.

2.3. Name and ancestry

Antinous' ancestry is also dubious, although it is likely that he was not from the Greek Peloponnese or the islands. This can for instance be discussed by taking a closer look at the name 'Antinous'. The historian Lambert offers various hypotheses to why Antinous was given this name. First, he argues that Antinous was named after one of Penelope's suitors in Homer's epic *Odyssey*.²⁷ In this epic, Homer describes two prominent suitors out of many. Antinous of Ithaca is described as a violent and over-confident character who attempts to kill Odysseus' son Telemachus. In the end, he is the first to die by Odysseus' arrows.²⁸ Another hypothesis is that Antinous was named after the warrior-hero Epaminondas of which the founders of Mantinea, a city in Arcadia on the Peloponnese, claim to be connected to, as he died on the battlefield close to the city. Epaminondas was a Theban politician and general, fought against the Peloponnesian League and was the founder of the short-lived Theban hegemony in 420 – 362 BC.²⁹ However, this hypothesis could have been influenced by the fact that Mantinea became a center of worship after Antinous' divinization.

Another possibility is that Antinous is the male equivalent of Antinoë, who was according to legend the female founder of Mantinea. Mantinea was a city has very close ties with Bithynia, so it could be the case that children born in this area were given this name or its male equivalent. The inhabitants of Bithynion namely claimed that their city had been founded settlers from Arcadia, specifically Mantinea.³⁰ As the name seems to have been used locally in Bithynia and is different from Greek names, it could be argued that Antinous did not come from a Greek family. Moreover, in all sources, Antinous is only mentioned by this single name. It is likely that he is from a provincial family which did not have Roman

²⁶ Lambert (1984), 18.

²⁷ Ibid., 19.

²⁸ Graf & Eck (2006).

²⁹ Buckler (1980).

³⁰ Lambert (1984), 19.

citizenship, as a three-part-name surname was characteristic to freeborn Romans with citizenship. Mantinea is, as already mentioned, also described by Pausanias. Therefore, the ties Antinous has to this city, seem to be very strong. In regards to the evidence, it seems most likely that Antinous refers to the close ties between Mantinea and Bithynion. The evidence that he was named after a character in Homer's epic, is namely very scarce.

The implications of Antinous' ancestry has also led to bizarre interpretations of Antinous physique by modern authors, who sometimes call him "a dark Arabian beauty"³¹, give him oriental qualities³² or attribute Jewish characteristics to him.³³ However, the only representations of Antinous are the many sculptures that all look somewhat identical: an angular, broad nose a square face, thick eyebrows, curly hair and a voluptuous mouth are characteristics that appear on many busts and statues that represent Antinous.³⁴ Although similar features are presented on coinage on which he is represented, it should be noted that the nose was often a modern reconstruction, as this is the part of a sculpture that is very fragile. Furthermore, they all belong to a phase where Antinous was already deified. It is thus very unlikely that these images reflect how Antinous actually looked like. One of those sculptures is shown in Figure 2 in Appendix 1. A closer look at the busts representing Antinous will be taken in chapter five.

2.4. Status

Antinous' status is also a matter of debate: was he a free man or possibly a slave? It is known that freeborn Roman men were allowed to establish sexual relationships outside their marriage with men and women from lower classes, such as prostitutes and slaves.³⁵ Was Antinous also from these lower strata of society?

Evidence points to the fact that it is unlikely Antinous had been a slave. For one, it would have been scandalous if a slave had achieved apotheosis. Slaves, though having human

³¹ Clark (1960), 44.

³² Such as Clark (1953), 165 and West (1941), 129.

³³ Laban (1891), 46.

³⁴ Lambert (1984), 20.

³⁵ Ormand (2018); Williams (2010); Hunt (2018), 99; Fantham (2011), 118, 128; Seneca *Epistula* 47; Artemidorus 88.5–12 in MacAlister (1992), 149.

appearance, were namely seen as objects in Roman law and society.³⁶ Moreover, people were scared of the structure of society when a slave escaped, which can be attested by studying the high bounties of runaway slaves and the many ways in which masters could demand a slave's loyalty, but also the way in which slave revolts were put down and the measures that were taken in order to not let a slave revolt happen again after the one led by Spartacus.³⁷ Worshipping a deified slave would likely not have been accepted, although they could be freed, and many slaves – male as well as female - were used as prostitutes. Hadrian would also not have paraded Antinous if he had been a slave. Besides, there is no evidence from antiquity of a slave or freedman reaching apotheosis.

Secondly, there is only one source calling Antinous a slave. The Christian historian Eusebius who echoes the Christian orator Hegesippos, from the second century AD, who wrote an anti-pagan polemic had an aversion to pagan religions, namely writes:

“... To them they made cenotaphs and shrines until now, and among them is Antinous, a slave of the Emperor Hadrian, in whose honor the Antinoan games are held, though he was our contemporary.”³⁸

Although this is the only source calling Antinous a slave, historians from the Renaissance onwards have had the tendency to adhere to this hypothesis. Because there was a denigration of him and Emperor Hadrian, writers portrayed the two people in negative ways.³⁹ Moreover, “Slave” could also mean that he had been a slave and was freed, or it could have been linked to Hegesippos' polemic.

Ancient sources are as speculative on this matter as the hypotheses that modern historians have put forward, or do not talk of Antinous family background at all. The Christian philosopher and apologetic Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), although a rough contemporary of Antinous, is the only one that refers to Antinous' origins and writes in his *First Apology*:

“And again [we fear to expose children], lest some of them be not picked up, but die, and we become murderers. But whether we marry, it is only that we may bring up children; or

³⁶ Hunt (2018), 67.

³⁷ Ibid., 137-148, 161-165.

³⁸ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* IV. viii. Translated by Lake (1926), LCL 153.

³⁹ Lambert (1984), 21.

whether we decline marriage, we live continently. And that you may understand that promiscuous inter- course is not one of our mysteries, one of our number a short time ago presented to Felix the governor in Alexandria a petition, craving that permission might be given to a surgeon to make him a eunuch. For the surgeons there said that they were forbidden to do this without the permission of the governor. And when Felix absolutely refused to sign such a permission, the youth remained single, and was satisfied with his own approving conscience, and the approval of those who thought as he did. And it is not out of place, we think, to mention here Antinous, who was alive but lately, and whom all were prompt, through fear, to worship as a god, though they knew both who he was and what was his origin."⁴⁰

The questionable origins of Antinous are not mentioned here – at least they would speak against worshipping him. Instead, Justin Martyr says that everybody knows about Antinous' origin and that people worshipped him as god out of fear, rather than pure veneration. This text is quite biased: The *First Apology* defended Christian life, polemicized against polytheistic religion and was written to convince the Roman emperor Antoninus to stop the prosecution of Christians.⁴¹ Justin Martyr had negative feelings towards pagan religions and that he refers to Antinous as a way to further his argument how wrong it is to persecute Christian who - unlike polytheists - worship the only true God. In fact, it is likely that Justin used the worship of Antinous to show the servility of the people towards Emperor Hadrian, and criticizing it.⁴² He also states that pagan gods are human-made and will only be worshipped by sensible people if they are forced to do so, never out of true belief.

This is one possibility. There are, however, two textual variants, one meaning "out of fear", which implies being forced to do so which would excuse the worshippers. In other words, they could not help worshipping Antinous. The other variant, "worshipping with fear" implies sincere belief. This might even make the accusation bigger: worshippers venerated Antinous with fear although they knew where he came from.⁴³ In the rest of the chapter, Justin Martyr namely positively focusses on the continence of Christians. The sneering

⁴⁰ Justin *First Apology* XXIX,4. Translated by Dods & Reith (1885), 172.

⁴¹ Rokéah (2002), 2.

⁴² Dods & Reith (1885), footnote 6.

⁴³ Ulrich (2019), 301.

remark that people worshipped Antinous while apparently knowing his background, shows that Justin was not in favour of Emperor Hadrian's decision to worship him, although elsewhere, Justin does refer to Hadrian positively.

So, Antinous was neither a slave and neither a boy with family ties to the elite, which sparked controversy when he was venerated. What can only be assumed is that Antinous was likely a boy from the lower or middle classes of society. What then, attracted the boy to emperor Hadrian and vice versa?

2.5. First meeting with the emperor and the form of the relationship

It is likely that emperor Hadrian met Antinous during one of his many tours through the Roman Empire, although it is not clear how the two actually got in contact with each other.⁴⁴ During Hadrian's reign, the empire was stable and largely at peace, which allowed the emperor to travel often. In June of 123 AD, the emperor arrived at Claudiopolis.⁴⁵ This means that Hadrian was 47 years old when he met Antinous, as Hadrian was born in 76 AD.⁴⁶ Antinous could, according to our observations above, not have been older than thirteen when he met the emperor, although the exact age is not sure as the precise date of birth is unknown.

So, where could a thirteen-year-old boy have met emperor Hadrian and rise to being his favorite? There is much speculation about where exactly the two first met as there is no direct evidence for this. Dietrichson, one of the first modern historians that focused on Antinous, suggests that a group of slaves was sent to Hadrian's camp⁴⁷, yet the date is far too late: he puts the date as late as 129/130 AD. As it is suspected that Antinous and Hadrian participated in the Eleusinian mysteries in September 128 AD while travelling the Roman provinces with him, it is unlikely that Dietrichson's date is correct.⁴⁸

The historian Viktor Rydberg wrote that Antinous had been a student of philosophy, and that he caught the attention of the emperor when they were both at a pool in the palace of

⁴⁴ Lambert (1984), 59-60; Jones (2010), 75; Birley (1997), 112.

⁴⁵ Lambert (1984), 30.

⁴⁶ Birley (1997), Lambert (1984), 30.

⁴⁷ Dietrichson (1884), 36-37.

⁴⁸ Lambert (1984), 101-106.

Nikomedia in 123 AD⁴⁹, the same year Hadrian visited Claudiopolis. However, this is also just a hypothesis that has not been proven by any kind of evidence. The scholar Francesco Carandini argues that Hadrian had met Antinous on one of his journeys and then met him again by appointment in 128 AD, after which Antinous became a male consort.⁵⁰ Many historians agree that Hadrian and Antinous were already close when they both participated in the Eleusinian Mysteries in September of 128 AD which had been part of the travel tour through the Roman Empire.⁵¹ The first meeting must therefore have occurred before this date, but where and precisely when is unknown. After this first meeting however, it is known that Hadrian's entourage visited many places in the Roman Empire: after participating in the Eleusinian Mysteries in Athens, the travelling court visited places such as Antioch in 129 AD, from which it travelled onwards to Lydia in 130 AD.⁵² Here, it is thought Hadrian and Antinous went on a famous lion hunt, which will be furtherly addressed in the next chapter. In September 130 AD, Hadrian's entourage arrived at Heliopolis⁵³, preparing to move upstream the Nile. This is where Antinous met his demise. The timeline of events is illustrated in Appendix 2.

But first, let's address the relationship Antinous and Hadrian had. Emperor Hadrian was not the only emperor who had a male consort next to being married to a woman, in his case empress Sabina. Nero had a male concubine as well, called Sporus, who was a *puer delicatus*, a term that can be translated to 'dainty boy'.⁵⁴ These boys were often child slaves that were castrated in order to preserve their youthful look. They differed from the Greek *eromenoi* as they were physically and morally vulnerable.⁵⁵ The subordinate role that these slaves often had during fornication was namely seen as immoral and not masculine. Freeborn Roman men were allowed to have sexual relationships with other men, as long as they were not from the same class. This included slaves and prostitutes. So, the relationship between the older Hadrian and the youthful Antinous was not unusual per se, yet the fact that Antinous became a god, is what mainly Christian authors are critical about.

⁴⁹ Rydberg (1879), 91.

⁵⁰ Carandini (1969), 77.

⁵¹ Graindor (1934), 14, 59; Lambert (1984), 59; Carandini (1969), 35; Guarducci (1949), 152.

⁵² Lambert (1984), 110 - 114; Birley (1997), 151-152.

⁵³ Lambert (1984), 121; Birley (1997), 242-243.

⁵⁴ Manwell (2007), 118.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

2.6. Antinous' death

Not much is known about the legendary passing of Antinous. Nevertheless, it is known that emperor Hadrian and his entourage visited Heliopolis, a city in the Nile Delta in Egypt in 130 AD. From here, they sailed upstream to visit various sites, such as the shrine to Thoth. It is likely that around the festival to Osiris, Antinous fell into the water and drowned.⁵⁶ Yet, whether this is true remains a mystery, since there are various hypotheses that have been put forward, ranging from murder to voluntary castration and human sacrifice.⁵⁷ According to Cassius Dio, emperor Hadrian did not tell the public that Antinous' death was accidental.⁵⁸ This might be linked to the idea that Antinous sacrificed himself. Cassius Dio writes:

“... Antinous was from Bithynium, a city of Bithynia, which we also call Claudiopolis; he had been a favourite of the emperor and had died in Egypt, either by falling into the Nile, as Hadrian writes, or, as the truth is, by being offered in sacrifice. ... Accordingly, he honored Antinous either because of his love for him or because the youth had voluntarily undertaken to die (it being necessary that a life should be surrendered freely for the accomplishment of the ends Hadrian had in view) ...”⁵⁹

Cassius Dio was a Roman freeborn man and researched Greek and Roman history. He lived between 155 and 235 AD and is most notable for his eighty volumes on the history of Rome. Books 61 to 80 are the least well-preserved, as only fragments remain. Although earlier modern scholars have claimed Cassius Dio is an unreliable source, the historian has recently been re-evaluated as an author whose historical interpretations were complex and sophisticated.⁶⁰ Thus, there could be some truth to Antinous' drowning.

Furthermore, according to the *Historia Augusta*, a 4th century publication of an anonymous writer or writers⁶¹ about the lives of 72 emperors, Emperor Hadrian 'wept like a woman' after Antinous' death:

⁵⁶ Nicklas & Spittler (2013), 147.

⁵⁷ Lambert (1984), 126-142; Vout (2007), 57.

⁵⁸ Lambert (1984), 134.

⁵⁹ Cass. Dio, *Roman History* LXIX.xi.3-4. Translated by Cary (1923), LCL 176.

⁶⁰ Millar (1964); Lintott (1997); Lange (2016); Fromentin *et al.* (2017); Burden-Strevens & Lindholmer (2018).

⁶¹ Stover (2016).

“... During a journey on the Nile he lost Antinous, his favourite, and for this youth he wept like a woman. Concerning this incident there are varying rumours; for some claim that he had devoted himself to death for Hadrian, and others—what both his beauty and Hadrian’s sensuality suggest. But how ever this may be, the Greeks deified him at Hadrian’s request, and declared that oracles were given through his agency, but these, it is commonly asserted, were composed by Hadrian himself.”⁶²

Similarly, Sextus Aurelius Victor writes:

“Others see his motives as pious and religious: for when Hadrian was desiring to prolong his life by any means, the magicians proposed that someone should die voluntarily on his behalf; everyone refused, Antinous alone offered himself: from that all the homage rendered to his memory.”⁶³

Aurelius Victor was a historian and politician who lived between 320 and 390 AD. His *Historia Romana* is contemporary to the *Historia Augusta*, yet he also uses sources unknown to modern scholars.⁶⁴ It is likely that the *Historia Augusta* used the *Historia Romana* as a source.⁶⁵ However, the credibility of the statement featured in that publication that Hadrian was extremely grief-stricken can be questioned.

Not only did the *Historia Augusta* rely on the accounts of Cassius Dio and Herodianus instead of using first-hand accounts, but the text also is likely not written bias-free, resulting in creating a biased view on Hadrian and his reaction to the death of his lover. Although first-hand accounts are by no means totally reliable either, using first-hand observations might help with the credibility of the author and the research he conducted. Pausanias, as mentioned in the previous chapter, excused himself for not referencing to another author.⁶⁶ The *Historia Augusta* does not comment on references at all, which could, at first glance, make the text less trustworthy. In the introduction of Jona Lendering in Nagelkerken’s translation of the *Historia Augusta*, Lendering states that the text is similar to a mockumentary and that it was likely written in the fourth or fifth centuries AD, at the same

⁶² *Historia Augusta* I.xiv.5-10. Translated by Magie (1921), LCL 139.

⁶³ Adapted from Sextus Aur. Victor XIV, translated by Lambert (1984), 131.

⁶⁴ Lambert (1984).

⁶⁵ Bird (1994).

⁶⁶ Habicht (1984), 40.

time as Jerome's letters. Moreover, he writes that it is likely that much of the information in the *Historia Augusta* is unreliable, and that many sources that the author uses did not exist at all.⁶⁷

However, it seems that the reliability of the *Historia Augusta* is up for debate when considering the first volume only, which describes the life of emperor Hadrian. The scholar Herbert Benario argues that it is likely that the author used a number of biographies, which have been used in other biographies of emperors as well. These encompass a biography by Marius Maximus, another biography by an anonymous author and Hadrian's own autobiography. Benario argues that due to the use of different biographies, the author of the *Historia Augusta* is bound to repeat and contradict certain entries. This also means that both sources in favor of Hadrian, such as the autobiography, and sources that unfavorable to Hadrian can shine different lights on similar situations that are described.⁶⁸

The entry in which the *Historia Augusta* describes Hadrian's immense grief towards the death of Antinous is, as the unknown author clearly states, based upon a previous biography of Marius Maximus. The problem with using this source, is that Marius Maximus' biography did not show emperor Hadrian in a good light. This author wanted to make Hadrian the enemy of the Senate, presenting him as a man that had many inner torments and personal failings. It is thus very important to understand that it was Maximus that wrote that Hadrian 'wept like a woman'; it is not a comment of the author of the *Historia Augusta*.

The fact that Maximus' reiterated comment stresses that Hadrian wept like a woman, might signify the huge amount of criticism Hadrian had received for his love for Greek culture. By stating that emperor Hadrian was effeminate due to his public and uncontrollable reaction, the Maximus shows that Hadrian is less of a man, or even a man with less *virtus* than what was expected a Roman emperor to have.⁶⁹ After all, by uncontrollably weeping, Hadrian behaves just like a woman.

The term *virtus* is important to understand this better. *Virtus* is a term used to describe ideal Roman masculinity: A Roman man was supposed to adhere to certain codes of conduct that

⁶⁷ Nagelkerken (2012); Grey (2016).

⁶⁸ Benario (1980), 4-5, 8-9.

⁶⁹ Lambert (1984), 143.

would make him a Roman man. These codes of conduct have much to do with having control over others and oneself, and favored the dominion of freeborn Roman men. *Virtus* is also often associated with the active and penetrating role a man should have during copulation, but having a strict character also was seen as having much *virtus*.⁷⁰ Showing much emotion would not have been seen as proper behavior that men were supposed to show. The critique the emperor received about his Hellenophile lifestyle and rule, falls in the category of him being not 'manly' enough, too. Given Maximus' position towards Emperor Hadrian, it is likely that presenting him as an individual without emotional control was used as a sneer rather than an actual biographical fact.

Benario also writes that the *Vita Hadriani* within the *Historia Augusta* is not a well-rounded biography per se, however the historical integrity is quite high when keeping in mind that the author uses different sources. Although there are also many gaps in the text that need to be filled with the use of other sources, the anonymous author of the *Historia Augusta* is not deliberately misleading, the mistakes that he makes regarding the text's accuracy are remissible: the author had not been very careful and alert in the process of creating the *Historia Augusta*. Moreover, much information found in the *Vita Hadriani* can be confirmed with the use of coinage, inscriptions, archaeology and papyri.⁷¹ As such, the information presented in the *Vita Hadriani* can be read with much, though not total confidence.

Although Cassius Dio, the *Historia Augusta* and Aurelius Victor all speak of sacrifice as a viable reason for Hadrian not mentioning that Antinous death was accidental, they are all different as well. Moreover, they all rely on an earlier, unknown source and date to a period well after the deaths of both Hadrian and Antinous.⁷² Moreover, the sources differ from each other, as the magician only appears in one source, and the fact that Antinous sacrificed in order for the emperor to become healthy again is only attested in one as well. Lambert writes that the self-sacrifice might not have been mentioned in order to avoid looking physically or politically weak, yet whether Antinous was truly sacrificed himself, remains a mystery.⁷³ Yet, when studying the mentioned sources, it seems a distinction should be made between the

⁷⁰ Williams (2010), 139, 145;

⁷¹ Benario (1980), 13-14.

⁷² Jamshidi (2018), 5.

⁷³ Lambert (1984), 140.

claim that Antinous died in the Nile, which may be reliable as it is mentioned multiple times although it also had mythological undertones, and various interpretations on why and under which circumstances Antinous died. The fact that there are claims that Antinous was offered or had offered himself to save Hadrian, might imply that the authors already put Antinous on the road to deification. As all sources date to the period in which Antinous had already died and after his apotheosis had been completed, it might reflect the religious circumstances in which Antinous died.

So, returning to the passage describing Hadrian's reaction after Antinous' death, it is clear that Hadrian likely did not weep publicly upon Antinous' passing. Be that as it may, the way in which Hadrian commemorated Antinous was exceptional. Usually, the commemoration of a loved one was a private, personal affair, with often times an inscription being the only reference to such a person that was placed in a public space.⁷⁴ Instead, Hadrian commemorated Antinous through deification, ordered the creation of imagery representing the boy, including coinage, statues and portraits where the boy was represented as a god or a hero. He even founded Antinoöpolis in the area where Antinous had passed away.⁷⁵

But what does that mean? What do the concepts of god and hero imply in the Roman World? The next chapter focusses on the divinization process of Antinous. Closer attention will be paid to the ways in which Antinous was venerated and to which gods he was associated with.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the life and death of Antinous. It is clear that not much is known about Antinous' life: there are no contemporaneous sources that speak of him, and when he was exactly born and from which background is unclear. What the boy looked like, is not exactly known. Nevertheless, there are some things that can be derived from studying ancient sources: it is assumed that Antinous was of a free class of provincials without Roman citizenship, yet he was educated. There is also strong evidence that Antinous had been Emperor Hadrian's lover when he was around the age of 13, when he also became part of the

⁷⁴ Lambert (1984).

⁷⁵ Ibid., 199.

entourage that travelled together with Emperor Hadrian, as he was born on one of the last days of November 110, 111 or 112. After travelling the Roman Empire with Hadrian, he passed away under mysterious circumstances in October 130 AD. In the next chapter, his heroization process will be addressed.

Chapter 3: The Immortal Antinous and his Cult

In the previous chapter, the life of Antinous has been explored: He was a boy from Claudiopolis with unknown ancestry. It is likely that Antinous met emperor Hadrian when he was around fifteen years old, although where he met the emperor precisely is vague. He became a consort in Hadrian's entourage, travelling with him throughout the Roman Empire until he met his demise at the Nile in 130 AD. In this chapter, a closer look will be taken at the cult of Antinous. Firstly, the veneration of mortals in the Roman world will be addressed. Secondly, the distinction between heroes and gods will be explored. This chapter also focusses on how Antinous was venerated, as there is evidence for both him being venerated as a god and as a hero. Furthermore, the heroization process of Antinous through myths will be analyzed. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

3.1. The veneration of mortal beings in the Roman World

In the imperial period, the divinization of human beings after their death was not uncommon, yet mostly reserved to the emperors and their families. In the Greek world, more individuals could experience an apotheosis: many people such as doctors, priests, founders of a city and benefactors achieved a divine status next to those that had a link to a ruling elite. However, the Greeks did not believe that these heroes sat together with the gods on Mount Olympus. Instead, the powers of these heroes were based locally. In this way, the Greek hero cults also differed from the Roman emperor cult, in which an emperor truly became as divine as the gods of the Roman pantheon.⁷⁶

Unlike hero cults, the Roman emperor cult became already a phenomenon when emperor Augustus deified his adoptive father, Julius Caesar. Although authors like Cassius Dio in his speech of Maecenas and Tacitus in his *Annales* wrote that an emperor becomes a god in the minds of people, and that a good rule will cause this glorification⁷⁷, the cult had an important function, namely that it was used for negotiation to construct and stabilize the Roman Empire. Coinage was important to achieve this. Coins portrayed the deceased emperor with

⁷⁶ Whitley (1994), 220-230.

⁷⁷ Cass. Dio. *Roman History* LII.xxxv; Tacitus *Annales* IV.xxxviii.2; Fishwick (2012); Bowersock (1973) 194-203; Hammond (1932).

divine attributes, and coined this individual as *divus*, which resulted in spreading different kinds of associations the emperor had with the divine. This is clear from inscriptions and sanctuaries that are associated with cults. So, the cult was intertwined with the worship of the Roman pantheon.⁷⁸

However, the emperor cult was not completely controlled by the government as worship was certainly not imposed upon civilians. Moreover, no central dogma needed to be followed.⁷⁹ Instead, this type of cult following has been identified as a grassroots initiative, initiatives that were allowed to be executed by permission of emperor and which showed a sign of mutual respect and cooperation between the emperor and local communities.

In regards to the installation of the cult of Antinous, there are a few similarities when comparing this cult to the emperor cults. Aside from four provincial cults for the deified Augustus, with two in the western and two in the eastern part Roman Empire and, later, the cult of Tiberius at Smyrna, no official big cult places dedicated to worshipping Antinous have been discovered, just as there were no big cult places where people worshipped emperors.⁸⁰ But first, we need to uncover the concept of hero and god in the Graeco-Roman world.

3.2. Hero and god in Graeco-Roman religion

In Greek mythology, a hero is a figure that provides a link between humans and gods because the character has both a mortal and an immortal parent. Heroes received cultic veneration and were seen as approachable, as well as being able to help and heal. However, the word 'hero' is also attributed to dead men, who were venerated at their own tombs or at shrines, often because of their exceptional deeds in life or the way in which their death protected others, such as kings, generals and poets.⁸¹

Moreover, the veneration of heroes is based on the development of ancestor cults, not only but ancestors could be heroized. As the Greek *poleis* developed, the affair became less and

⁷⁸ Price (1984), 146-156.

⁷⁹ Galinsky (2011), 3.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Jones (2010).

less familial and more civic.⁸² Because of this expansion, the historian Jon Whitley describes that there is not one type of hero cult, but five. These are *oikist* cults of founding figures, cults to named heroes, cults to local heroes, cult activity at tombs and oracle cults.⁸³ These distinctions are absent in the way gods from the pantheon were venerated. Although these gods could also be local to one place, such as Pallas Athena, they were still more or less the same god.⁸⁴ However, a god was often more powerful than a hero although the distinction between a god and a hero could be small, such as in the case of the cult of Asclepius and Amphiaraus.⁸⁵ Both had exceptional gifts in fortune-telling and healing, both had been favored by Zeus and both were transformed into healing gods that were worshipped through traditions.⁸⁶

However, there are differences between heroes, too. Yes, they are very diverse, often local, and very flexible qua profile and presentation. Characteristics can mix and move from one hero to the another. Amphiaraus, for example, is the 'poster boy' hero: he is a chosen warrior and diviner, who can access another reality. Asclepius, the god of medicine, had been human as well, yet became the most important healing god in the Greco-Roman world. Yet, in the representation of the healing power of Amphiaraus, it seems that attributes related to Asclepius had been used as well, but without fully assimilating them. In this way, there is no clear distinction between heroes and gods.⁸⁷

Just like with Antinous, different realities and representations could emerge which show the complexity of the apotheosis of an individual. So, was Antinous venerated as a god or a hero? In order to answer this question, we need to look at similar cases where mortal beings were venerated, as well as study the epigraphical evidence from Asia Minor in which Antinous is called upon.

3.2.1. *Hero or god? Similarities with other cults*

⁸² Whitley (1994); Antonaccio (1994).

⁸³ Whitley (1994), 220-230.

⁸⁴ Versnel (2011), 268-300.

⁸⁵ Parker (2001); Versnel (2011), 396-421.

⁸⁶ Piguet (2017), 58-68.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 68-80.

The rapid growth and spread of the cult of Antinous resembles the rise of a different cult in the province of Paphlagonia, installed for Alexander of Abonuteichos.⁸⁸ The only author that has described the life of Alexander was Lucian of Samosata. Although the motives are as vague, it is known that Alexander wanted to publicize his new god Glycon, that was a snake with a human head.⁸⁹ The god demonstrated the intricate relationship between Alexander and Asklepios, the god of medicine and health. According to Lucian, his 'religion' was founded in the temple foundations of the god Asclepius where Alexander, acting as a priest, would give oracles that were not asked for while a snake would round his body.⁹⁰ In his work *Life of Alexander of Abouoteichos*, Lucian does not portray Alexander as a good man:

"In understanding, quick-wittedness, and penetration he was far beyond everyone else; and activity of mind, readiness to learn, retentiveness, natural aptitude for studies—all these qualities were his, in every case to the full. But he made the worst possible use of them, and with these noble instruments at his service soon became the most perfect rascal of all those who have been notorious far and wide for villainy, surpassing the Cercopes, surpassing Eurybatus, or Phrynonidas, or Aristodemus, or Sostratus."⁹¹

So, according to Lucian, Alexander had good qualities that he used in a bad way, namely to promote his new god. Lucian has good reason for criticizing Alexander. The author was namely a supporter of the Epicurian philosophies. Epicurus had been an atomic materialist who did not believe in superstitions and was not in favor of divine intervention.⁹² Lucian is therefore biased. The *Life of Alexander of Abouoteichos* is not the only work in which this bias is clear. In the *Life of Pergeginus* Lucian namely makes fun of human credulity towards religious charlatans and mocks religious practice as well.

Charlatan or not, the cult of Glycon eventually became so popular that Glycon was even featured on imperial coinage of Antonius Pius and Marcus Aurelius, which was minted in Abonuteichos. As statues and inscriptions from this area also refer back to ⁹³, it is apparent that the god and its creator had big impact on the community of Paphlagonia. It could be

⁸⁸ Galinsky (2011), 3.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*. Translated by Harmon (1925), LCL 162.

⁹¹ Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* iv.

⁹² Wilson (2015).

⁹³ Gordon (1996), 114.

argued that this was a semi-grassroots initiative as there was spontaneous veneration by the local community. Followers of this religion were also found in other parts however. For example, there is a famous statue of Glycon⁹⁴. Just like Glycon was minted on coinage and statues of the god were made, the cult of Antinous was propagated in the same way, as will become clear in the fifth chapter.

Alexander was a student of another figure that linked both divine and mortals. He was namely taught by Apollonius of Tyana, who was a Greek philosopher and mentor who lived between 2 and 98 AD. He is known from Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*. Philostratus lived between 170 and 250 AD and was a Greek sophist.⁹⁵ In the *Vita Apollonii* the author describes the many travels of Apollonius to the east. In the last chapters, Philostratus describes Apollonius' ascension from the temple of Dictynna on the Crete.⁹⁶ While visiting this temple, guardians saw him as a wizard and robber and jailed him. Philostratus describes how Apollonius escaped: he threw off the chains, after which the door of the temple opened before him. Within the temple, a choir urged Apollonius to go to heaven. In a later chapter, Apollonius appears posthumously to a man, therefore confirming the idea that souls are immortal.⁹⁷

The link with the gods is also used to explain Apollonius' extra-sensory perception, as described in the eighth book. Here, Apollonius seemingly envisioned the murder of emperor Domitian on the day the event happened.⁹⁸ This ability, as well as the ability to appear before people after death, has caused many scholars to link Apollonius with Jesus Christ.⁹⁹ In the third century, the popularity of Apollonius was even used against the spread of Christianity.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, talismans appeared in numerous cities in the Eastern Roman Empire in the form of figures and columns that were meant to protect the cities from

⁹⁴ Jones (2010), 83.

⁹⁵ Bowie (2009), 19-21.

⁹⁶ Flinterman (2008), 225.

⁹⁷ Flinterman (2008), 226; Elsner (1997), 28; Schirren (2005), 308.

⁹⁸ Bowie (2009), 19-21.

⁹⁹ Young (1998), 80; Ehrman (2013), 208; Chrisholm (1911), 188; Remsburg (1909), 13-23; Bennett (2001), 206; Price (2011), 20.

¹⁰⁰ Dzielska (1986).

illnesses.¹⁰¹ Just like with Glycon and Antinous, this divine mortal also has links with medicine, and the high level of local activity is also very apparent.

This sudden disappearance of Apollonius after he entered the temple, mentioned above, seems to be directly linked to apotheosis.¹⁰² Other mortals that namely achieved a divine status, such as the hero Heracles and Empodocles, also seem to have vanished into thin air, with no tomb or cenotaph constructed in their name that was left behind.¹⁰³ It could be argued that this has similarities with how Antinous became venerated: although there are many inscriptions bearing his name, as will be addressed shortly, no monumental tomb has been found with cenotaphs that show that Antinous was buried at a specific location, although there is speculation that Antinous' body was laid to rest in Hadrian's villa.

Interestingly, another similarity with the cult of Antinous is that the Apollonius ascends to heaven at a cult place that is fairly local. The goddess Dictynna was only worshipped on Crete, but also identified with other local deities, namely Laphria on Cephallenia and Aphaia on Aegina, as well as with the Panhellenic goddess of hunt, Artemis.¹⁰⁴ It is likely that Philostratus uses this local cult in the biography of Apollonius to link him with the Greek pantheon: according to myth, Dictynna is a daughter of Zeus.¹⁰⁵ This is not the first time Philostratus does this: at the beginning of the book, he already writes that Apollonius is a child of the local Zeus Asbamaios, a god that was central to the identity of Apollonius' native city.¹⁰⁶

The fourth similarity is that both Apollonius and Antinous have links to the Egyptian pantheon. When Apollonius' mother was pregnant with him, she had a vision of an Egyptian god, Proteus, who told her that he was the one that she would give birth to.¹⁰⁷ By doing this, Philostratus explains why Apollonius escapes dire situations during his lifetime, such as his imprisonment at the temple of Dictynna.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Dzielska (1986), 99-127.

¹⁰² Lohfink (1971), 38-41.

¹⁰³ Flinterman (2008), 229; Kingsley (1995), 233-316.

¹⁰⁴ Flinterman (2009), 241.

¹⁰⁵ Flinterman (2009).

¹⁰⁶ Berges & Nollé (2000), 317-319.

¹⁰⁷ Flinterman (2009), 232.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; Schirren (2005), 47-50.

Antinous also had both connections with the Graeco-Roman pantheon and with Egyptian gods. At his villa in Tivoli for example, Hadrian also set up a statue of Antinous in the form of Osiris-Dionysus, which now resides in the Vatican, as shown in figure 3. The obelisk of Antinous also refers to the Egyptian pantheon. In hieroglyphs, the text on the obelisk states that Antinous was now a god called Osiris-Antinous, and that he is buried in the gardens of Hadrian's villa.¹⁰⁹ Although there is little evidence for the latter, it is true that Roman gods were sometime linked with the Egyptian pantheon. Take for example Zeus-Serapis, but also the more popular Osiris-Dionysus. This can be explained by Antinous' death in the Nile. By linking him with Osiris, a god that was resurrected as well, it appears that the divinization of Antinous started very early.

Studying these similar instances is not the only way in which the blurred link between hero and god can be explained however, so let us now focus on the epigraphy in which Antinous is mentioned.

3.2.2. Hero or god? The epigraphical evidence

Inscriptions can help in understanding whether people venerated Antinous as a god or a hero, or even both. An inscription from Mantinea featuring a man named Isochrysos, speaks of Antinous raising him up to sit with the gods through love: ¹¹⁰

"Isochrysos, son of Doxa, whom the god Antinous himself
Loving him, raised up to be seated among the deathless ones:
Epitynchanos his father, having made a likeness of this child in bronze,
Set it up in this place with the approval of his fatherland."¹¹¹

This inscription thus attests the link between Mantinea and Antinous. Isochrysos seems to be considered as a hero by the mourner, who was likely his father. Although not stated directly, it could mean be that Isochrysos' father was part of the mysteries of Antinous and

¹⁰⁹ Grimm *et al.* (1994); Birley (1997).

¹¹⁰ Jones (2010), 79.

¹¹¹ Translated in Renberg, G. (2010), note 42.

got to know that his son had become a hero through a dream.¹¹² Because of this, he donated a statue representing his son.

There is also evidence of worship in the city of Bithynion in the form of an inscription dating from 69 BC to 269 AD. Here, a citizen carries out the role of a priest during the mysteries of Antinous and a man of a lower social class dedicates an altar to this new god. The inscription was part of a large statue base, that might have been placed in front of a building or theater. The inscription mentions officials and their personal names, as well as the various communities of Bithynion-Claudiopolis and the system of city tribes, inhabitants of “neighborhoods” who are represented in the city council.¹¹³ The inscription can be seen in Figure 4 of Appendix 1.

Interestingly, names of tribes, or *phyle* to be exact, link back to gods of the Graeco-Roman pantheon or people linked to emperors. In total, 12 *phylai* are named on the stone. The fact that all names link back to persons or gods, adheres to the trend that was apparent in Asia Minor in the imperial period. A joint decree of honor by the organization of *phylai* like this one, is also attested in Prusias, Ankyra, Akmonia, Laodikeia and Lystra. It is the earlier and simpler form where in many cities the organization system developed into a system where the same person was honored by several people or all *phylai* in a city.¹¹⁴

The list also shows that there was a *phyle* in Bithynion named ‘Hadriane’ and a ‘Antinois’.¹¹⁵ The appearance of this shows that Antinous was indeed from this area and that the connection with the Bithynian city is apparent. Moreover, the inscription also confirms that at the city of Bithynian games were held in Antinous’ name. When considering that a *phyle* had connections with a specific individual, it is clear that Antinous received honors too. As *phylai* had important functions in public organization, it is clear that this group was able to have much influence on the city. The fact that a specific *phyle* is named after Antinous makes this interesting, as the boy was not of a high status, as was discussed in chapter 2. It is therefore quite unique that someone without ties to the ruling elite could not only be honored by a group of individuals, but that the people that honored him and were part of

¹¹² Robert (1980), 135; Renberg (2010), 170.

¹¹³ Marek (2002), 31.

¹¹⁴ Jones (1987), 347.

¹¹⁵ Marek (2002), 43-44.

the organization of a city could have much influence. The fact that these individuals were important for public organization, might also show the grassroots initiatives that took place when Antinous became a deity.

It is very likely that in the eastern Roman empire, grassroots initiatives present in order to heroize Antinous. It is unlikely that these cities claimed to have descended from Antinous, as Bithynion and Mantinea were already well-established cities before Hadrian's *Panhellenion*, in which the emperor wanted to form a league of suitable city-states.¹¹⁶ The fact that Mantinea had an active cult venerating Antinous, is also described by Pausanias. In the *Description of Greece*, the author writes:

“Antinoüs too was deified by them; his temple is the newest in Mantinea. He was a great favorite of the Emperor Hadrian. I never saw him in the flesh, but I have seen images and pictures of him. He has honors in other places also, and on the Nile is an Egyptian city named after Antinoüs. He has won worship in Mantinea for the following reason. Antinous was by birth from Bithynium beyond the river Sangarius, and the Bithynians are by descent Arcadians of Mantinea. For this reason, the emperor established his worship in Mantinea also; mystic rites are celebrated in his honor each year, and games every four years. There is a building in the gymnasium of Mantinea containing statues of Antinoüs, and remarkable for the stones with which it is adorned, and especially so for its pictures. Most of them are portraits of Antinoüs, who is made to look just like Dionysus.”¹¹⁷

Pausanias' work had been important during the period in which Greece was part of the Roman Empire. Although mostly topographical, the volumes in which he describes the different areas of Greece are also cultural geographical: in describing landmarks he not only states the location, but also explains myths surrounding a specific landmark and even describes the history of a certain place.¹¹⁸

By focusing on ancient Greek history and culture, Pausanias established Greek identity in a world where Roman values are most valued. His thorough description of the statues of Antinous may reflect his preference to describing temple structures and statues of the gods,

¹¹⁶ Marek (2002), 47.

¹¹⁷ Pausanias *Description of Greece* 8.9.7-8. Translated by Jones (1933). *LCL* 272.

¹¹⁸ Habicht (1984) Hutton (2005); Pretzler (2007).

rather than public buildings and imagery of politicians.¹¹⁹ Although he is not always careful in referencing his own work, he is honest enough to address this. This does not mean that his observations are false: archaeological research has proven that structures are found at the places Pausanias mentions.¹²⁰ The *Description of Greece* therefore proves to be crucial in linking classical literature and archaeology. The idea of a grassroots initiative in the east, can therefore be a good explanation of how Antinous was venerated in the Greek east, whether this was as a hero with divine qualities, or a proper god.

However, in order to creating a proper following to Antinous, qualities that were not a hundred percent accurate needed to be attributed to him. In what way did Antinous become a hero?

3.3. Heroization process of Antinous: a great hunter and a wise boy

The previous chapter mentioned how Antinous and Hadrian went on a lion hunt in Lydia. Pancrates made a poem on this event. Here, Antinous was already seen as a remarkable hunter despite his age, and the idea that a flower had sprung up from the blood of the lion he had killed, signifies that heroization paved the way to connect Antinous with mythical motives, thereby increasing the heroization process.

Although the length of the poem is debated, it has been described in the *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus, as well as in fragments on papyri (P. Oxy. 8 1085; P. Lond. 3 p. LVII 1109 b; P. Berol. 17044), which have been found in Hermopolis and Oxyrhynchus.¹²¹ Hadrian liked the poem so much, that he rewarded Pancrates a stipend at the Museum of Alexandria.¹²² In the *Deipnosophistae*, Athenaeus writes:

“Speaking of Alexandria, I know that in that fair city there is a wreath called Antinoeios made from the lotus bearing that name there. This grows in marshes in the summer season; there are two colors, one resembling the rose; it is from this that the wreath properly called Antinoeios is twined; the other is called lotus, and its color is blue.

¹¹⁹ Alcock, Cherry & Elsner (2001).

¹²⁰ Habicht (1984), 40.

¹²¹ Whitmarsh (2018).

¹²² Bowie (1990), 81-83; Hunt (1911), 73.

Panocrates, a poet of those regions whom we knew, showed the Emperor Hadrian when he visited Alexandria the rosy lotus as a great wonder, alleging that it was the one which should be called Antinoeios, since it sprang, so he said, from the earth when it received the blood of the Mauritanian lion which Hadrian had killed when hunting in the part of Libya near Alexandria; it was a huge creature that for a long time had ravaged the whole of Libya, of which this lion had made many places uninhabitable. Hadrian, therefore, pleased at the originality and novelty of his thought, granted him [Panocrates] the favor of maintenance in the temple of the Muses. The comic poet Cratinus, also, calls the lotus a wreath plant in *Odysséis*, since all leafy plants are spoken of as wreath plants by the Athenians. So Panocrates in his poem says, not without elegance: "The thyme with its woolly tufts, the white lily, the purple hyacinth, the flowers of blue celandine, yes, and the rose which unfolds to the zephyrs of spring; but not before, surely, has the earth brought to bloom the flower named for Antinous."¹²³

So, Athenaeus, echoing Panocrates, describes how Hadrian and Antinous aided the inhabitants of Lydia by killing the lion that roamed there. From the blood of this lion, a flower sprouted that was named after Antinous, thereby signifying Antinous' rebirth.¹²⁴ This is a clear example how the heroization process of Antinous started very early. Antinous is immediately linked to the flower that sprang up from the blood of the lion. The fact that Hadrian allegedly honored Panocrates to be responsible for the maintenance of the temple of the Muses, might signify how pleased he was with the outcome of the poem and how it aided the heroization process of Antinous. It made the speed of this process also likely easier as Panocrates likely knew Hadrian personally. In a similar vein regarding the lion hunt the *Oxyrhynchus papyri* states:

"... and swifter than the horse of Adrastus which once saved the king as he fled ... in the battle-throng. Such was the steed whereon Antinoüs sat in wait for the deadly lion, holding in his left hand the bridle-rein and in his right a spear shod with adamant. First Hadrian hurling his brass-fitted spear wounded the beast but slew him not, for of purpose he missed the mark, wishing to test to the full the sureness of aim of beauteous Antinoüs,

¹²³ Athenaeus *Deipnosophistae* XII.xv.677. Translation Gulick (1941).

¹²⁴ Höschele (2019), 225-229.

son of the Argus-slayer. Stricken, the beast was yet more aroused, and tore up in his wrath the rough ground with his paws, and the dust rising in a cloud dimmed the light of the sun; he raged even as the wave of the surging sea when Zephyrus is stirred forth after the wind of Strymon. [Straight] he rushed upon them both, scourging with his tail his haunches and sides . . . while his eyes, beneath his brows, flashed dreadful fire; and from his ravening jaws the foam showered to the earth as his teeth gnashed within. On his mighty head and shaggy neck, the hair stood bristling; on his other limbs it was bushy as trees, and on his back ... it was like whetted spear-points. In such wise he came against the glorious god and upon Antinous, like Typhoëus of old against Zeus, slayer of giants."¹²⁵

Similarly, this papyrus described the lion hunt. Yet, it does not only explore the way in which a flower had sprung up, but describes how Antinous and Hadrian killed the lion that harassed the inhabitants of Lydia. The strength of the lion is even encouraged by calling upon gods such as Zephyrus and Strymon.¹²⁶ The mythologization process of Antinous is also strengthened by linking the boy to the slayer of giants. By vividly describing how Antinous killed the beast, Antinous is presented as a heroic individual. Myths like this might have helped in people's belief that Antinous was really a hero with divine qualities, of which hunting was one. Lastly, by mythologizing the hunt, Antinous could be assimilated with gods that already were associated with hunting, such as Artemis and Silvanus. In turn, this could have had a positive impact in making the cult of Antinous an active one.

It is clear that more than one instance describes this instance with the lion, and the great skills Antinous had in hunting. The fact that a flower had sprung up from the blood of the lion makes Antinous maybe even mythical. So, the heroization of Antinous opened the way to connect Antinous with mythical motives: even a lotus wreath was called after Antinous to commemorate where he had hunted.

The fact that Antinous was also associated with the god Silvanus, is more evidence that Antinous was thought to have been a great hunter, according to the scholar Royson Lambert.¹²⁷ He also suggests that the Arch of Constantine refers back to Pancrates' poem on

¹²⁵ Translation in Hunt (1911), 75-76.

¹²⁶ Höschele (2019), 218-220.

¹²⁷ Lambert (1984), 60.

the western main frieze, where a dead lion is shown. Although there has been controversy over the arch, as there is doubt over the origin and the fact that the arch was reworked to fit Constantine better, there is no hard proof that the Arch of Constantine itself indeed dates back to the reign of Emperor Hadrian.¹²⁸ However, circumstantial evidence shows that the builders in the age of Constantine used reliefs from an older arch of Hadrian that they dismantled. A possible image of Antinous is however still clearly visible: the top left figure on the first roundel, with the characteristic curls and broad facial features, as seen on Figure 5 and 6 in Appendix 1.

A hunt is commemorated on these roundels. As the marble arch stood in a public place, it was seen by many people. In this way, Hadrian could not only promote the cult of Antinous through literary devices, but also through visual ones. This may have had an impact, as only a small amount of people, often from the middle and upper classes of society, were literate. By making the idea of Antinous as a skilled hunter more accessible, the cult of Antinous had the ability to become more widespread, too, as the mythologization was more visible.

Antinous was not only remembered as a great hunter, but also a wise boy. An epitaph on the obelisk of Antinous, now situated in Rome, states that Antinous was wise and as intelligent as any grown man¹²⁹, which might suggest that Antinous indeed received some form of education before he travelled Europe together with emperor Hadrian. The inscription, found on the west-side relief on the *Obelisco Pinciano*, states:

“Osirantinoos, the justified – he became a youth with a beautiful face that delighted the eyes...strength with **clever heart** like one with strong arms he received an order of the Gods at the time of his passing.”¹³⁰

However, it has to be kept in mind that an obelisk’s function was to honor the dead, and probably functioned as a grave marker at the *Antinoeion* in Hadrian’s Villa, the place where Antinous is thought to have been buried.¹³¹ Good qualities were often mentioned on these monuments; however, they could as well have been exaggerated. This exaggeration is also

¹²⁸ Stephenson (2010), 151; Pensabene and Panella (1999); Ferris (2013), 7.

¹²⁹ Lambert (1984), 64.

¹³⁰ Erman (1934), translation by Boatwright (1987), Birley (1997), Grenier (2007).

¹³¹ Mari & Sgalambro (2007); Ekonomou (2007).

clear in the poem of Pancrates, where gods are associated with Antinous as well as the beast he killed. All in all, they were quite useful in creating a mythological or legendary being of Antinous, which in turn was useful in promoting the young cult of Antinous.

3.4. Conclusion

So, what can we take from this? One thing is for sure: the line between hero and god is very blurry. Considering the evidence, it is clear that the local aspect in the veneration of Antinous is a crucial one. Moreover, grassroots initiatives that occurred after Antinous' mysterious death in Asia Minor might have pushed the idea of venerating Antinous even more. Lastly, it is clear that with the help of visual and literary descriptions or portraits of the lion hunt, Antinous could be easily mythologized. In the next chapter, the various locations of cult activity will be furtherly addressed.

Chapter 4: Spatial evidence of cult worship

The previous chapter showed that Antinous was both venerated as a hero and as a god and that he had mythical qualities attributed to him. Yet where was Antinous venerated? This chapter gives an answer to this question.

4.1. Venerating Antinous in Asia Minor

Until the reign of Hadrian, Greek cities had stopped the veneration of nobility through a hero cult, that had been apparent in the Hellenistic period.¹³² However, these claims of descent reappeared during the reign of Hadrian when he travelled through the Greek peninsula. For example, when the tomb of Ajax was discovered, the emperor allegedly kissed the bones and installed a new tomb. Moreover, when Hadrian visited Melissa, the place where the politician Alcibiades had died, he had a statue placed and ordered that a bull should be sacrificed in his name.¹³³ During the establishment of the *Panhellenion*, where Hadrian offered Greek city-states to be organized together in a league, the cities that wanted admission proved that they were unique by claiming descent from a local hero. In conclusion, in Asia Minor, the main difference between the veneration of gods from the pantheon and heroes is that the latter is more bound to (local) politics.

However, the line distinguishing heroes and gods is blurry, as heroes could achieve a divine status. This is also the case in the divinization process of Antinous. Antinous was often linked with gods that were associated with the outdoors, such as Artemis, Silvanus and Dionysus. Moreover, Antinous was also thought to cure diseases and answer prayers.¹³⁴ Games with a musical or athletic nature were held in his name in various places as well of which the most prominent ones were in Mantinea, as Pausanias has illustrated. The epigraphical evidence that was explored in the previous chapter also shows that Antinous was venerated as a god in Asia Minor. Coinage might also have had an impact in the popularity of the cult, but this will be addressed in the next chapter.

¹³² Robert (1980), 258-270.

¹³³ Ibid., 258-291.

¹³⁴ Jones (2010).

4.2. Antinoöpolis

Antinoöpolis was founded by Hadrian in 130 AD on the ruins of the Ptolemaic town of Hir-Wer, after Antinous' death. The city did not only refer back to his dead lover, but also functioned as a centre of Hellenistic culture in Middle Egypt.¹³⁵ Its location can be viewed in Figure 7 in Appendix 1. The "New Greeks", the Greeks from a civic elite who settled in Antinoöpolis, were used to foster Hellenistic culture in the area.¹³⁶ Later, Roman veterans who had been given land, as was custom when someone had finished their military service, also inhabited Antinoöpolis.

Antinoöpolis was different from other cities in Egypt and Greece, as Hadrian bestowed privileges on its inhabitants: intermarriage between Greeks and Egyptians was legal and offspring could qualify for citizenship, liturgies were exempted and parents who registered their child soon after birth could profit from special funding.¹³⁷ It is unclear whether the city thrived economically, yet it was culturally and religiously significant for the region. Even in the high Middle Ages, Arabic scholars mention Antinoöpolis as a place where sorcerers were at play and miracles happened.¹³⁸ Origen too, agrees that miracles happened in the city, attributing them to a *daimon* that was aided by magic spells.¹³⁹ The historian Eric Dodds argues that this is because of the big presence of the cult in Antinoöpolis in Egypt, where Origen stayed a significant amount of time.¹⁴⁰

Both Bes and Osiris-Antinous were the main deities in Antinoöpolis. The Egyptian god of household was already venerated locally, so with the introduction of Osiris-Antinous, more intermingling between Hellenistic and Egyptian culture took place. Osiris-Antinous was nevertheless the main god of Antinoöpolis, as papyri from this region have shown: together with the name of the emperor, people swore oaths on Osiris-Antinous, and the god was often mentioned on legal documents.¹⁴¹ The influence of Hadrian on this city is also attested by studying the *phylai* of the city, who represented different groups of inhabitants, as was also visible on the inscription from Mantinea, which was discussed in the previous chapter. The fact that there were *phylai* with the names Paulinios (after Hadrian's sister Paulina) and Bithynieus (after the homeland of Antinous), shows the strong link between the officials of

¹³⁵ Lambert (1984), 198.

¹³⁶ Zahrnt (1988).

the city and the emperor, and to the city and the Athenian model of civic representation, which was also based on the presence of *phylai*.¹⁴²

Moreover, Hadrian declared that games would be held in Antinoöpolis in the spring of 131 and that these games would be held every year. The Antinoeia became one of the most important festivals in Egypt and included rowing, chariot and horse races, athletic events and artistic and musical festivals. Prizes included citizenship, sums of money, and free lifetime maintenance. Traditionally, honours were also paid in the Antinoeion to Antinous.¹⁴³

Although Christianity became the official religion of the city in 392 AD, grave steles that represented youths with characteristics similar to Antinous were sculpted up until the fourth century. Coptic and Egyptian culture became more and more apparent in the city and by the fifth century, the term Antinoite did not exist anymore. In the tenth century the city was abandoned.¹⁴⁴

Not much is left from the city of Antinous: the temple of Ramses that stood in the city as a remnant of its predecessor Hir-Wer was destroyed in the nineteenth century to feed cement works, stone was used to build homes and mosques and the chalk and limestone that was once abundant in the city was reduced to dust in order to construct a dam and a sugar factory.¹⁴⁵ How much the presence of Antinous had been felt in the city that was named after him, is therefore unknown and relies on the circumstantial evidence that is presented in literature. Yet, when considering the evidence that many public festivals were held and that the names of *phylai* reflected both the family of Hadrian as well as Antinous, it is clear that cult activity was at large in this city well after Hadrian's death.

¹³⁷ Lambert (1984), 203-204; Bowman & Rathbone (1992); Schubert (2012).

¹³⁸ Lambert (1984), 205.

¹³⁹ Ibid., Dodds (1965), 125.

¹⁴⁰ Dodds (1965), 125-126.

¹⁴¹ Lambert (1984), 205.

¹⁴² Schubert (2012).

¹⁴³ Lambert (1984), 149, 205.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 206.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 206-207.

4.3. Cult activity in the Italian peninsula

Also, in Italy there is evidence for cult activity, although the evidence is not as prominent as the evidence gathered from Antinoöpolis. It is likely that after Hadrian came back to Rome, he tried to propagate the cult, just as he had done in Asia Minor and in Antinoöpolis. It is likely that the cult did not gain much attention and leverage due to the fact that Rome was far away from the homeland and place of death of Antinous. However, smaller groups did venerate Antinous in Rome, of note the union of Dionysian artists. They set up a large statue of Antinous and appointed a priest to carry out sacred rites.¹⁴⁶

“We, the Hadriatic assembly who stand in awe of the beautiful Antinoos, establish you (as) the new god Hermes with Nikios, whom you – blessed one – appointed as your priest for life, dedicating it”¹⁴⁷

In the inscription, Antinous is seen as a new Hermes: both gods offered protection to young people and seem to both also be the gods of entertainment. This is similar to coins in Bythinia where Antinous and Hermes are both represented on. A priest called Nisias promises to fulfil the role until his death, yet what kind of rites is unknown.¹⁴⁸ The uniqueness of this inscription makes it difficult to see how active this cult group was. However, it does show that followers were present in Rome.

Then, let's return to Lanuvium. In the second chapter, the inscription CIL XIV 2112 from this site was also mentioned. Next to featuring Antinous' birthday, the inscription makes clear that the cult composed of men that were both freeborn and slaves, and that Diana was also venerated alongside Antinous.¹⁴⁹ This had undoubtedly to do with Antinous' association with nature. The association was founded only two years after Antinous' death, on 1 January 133 AD. The *collegium* has not been attested anywhere else.

The inscription also includes the formalities of the association. The lengthy inscription speaks of a chairman who functioned for five years, aided by two administrators and a messenger. Four annually appointed *magistri* handled the finances and organized a banquet

¹⁴⁶ Moretti (1968), 124-125.

¹⁴⁷ IG XIV 978a, translation in Thompson (2013), Note 37.

¹⁴⁸ Moretti (1968), 124-125.

¹⁴⁹ Thompson (2013), 155.

that was held six times a year.¹⁵⁰ The inscription also shows the link with the emperor, as the members of the association hope that their *collegium* will thrive, but that they also bid good fortune to the emperor and his family.¹⁵¹ A senatorial decree is also included, that might show the imperial push to instigate cult places to Antinous in and surrounding Rome. As already noted, Hadrian wanted to establish a cult in Rome. The fact that Lanuvium is near Rome, and that the inscription includes a *salutare* to emperor Hadrian, might show how the emperor pushed the idea of a cult to Antinous forward, however no direct evidence can attest this claim.

Lastly, in Ostia too, there is evidence that Antinous was venerated.¹⁵² Two statues have been counted that represent Antinous, his birthday is visible on the inscription of a temple complex and a Greek dedication to the Bithynian youth has also been found¹⁵³:

“To Antinous, who sits by the side of the gods of Egypt . . .”¹⁵⁴

Although this dedication has been dated to 130-138 AD, there is no foundation that this date is accurate: the cult did namely thrive after Hadrian’s death as well.¹⁵⁵ Although it is unclear whether the temple complex on which the inscription was found as a temple dedicated to Antinous, is unclear, as the arguments have not been convincing.¹⁵⁶ However, the fact that some evidence has been found in favour of cult presence, shows that there were cult followers in the Italian peninsula.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that next to Asia Minor, cult activity was present in Antinoöpolis and in the Italian peninsula. The evidence from Antinoöpolis clearly shows that Hadrian wanted to strengthen Hellenistic culture in the region where Antinous died, while the evidence from Rome, Lanuvium and Ostia is much more superficial. There is evidence that some rituals took place, such as a banquet, yet what else happened is unclear. Moreover,

¹⁵⁰ Bendlin (2011), 217.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 221.

¹⁵² Lambert (1984), 179, 188.

¹⁵³ Calza (1964), 80-82.

¹⁵⁴ IG XIV 960, translation in Bruun (2016), 366.

¹⁵⁵ Bruun (2016), 367.

¹⁵⁶ Meiggs (1973), 336; Marinucci (1992), 199; Van der Meer (2012), 38; Zevi (2001), 180.

there is no evidence of cult activity outside of Rome and its surroundings. This could be because there were no ties to Antinous in the sense that his birthplace and place of death were far away from the Roman capital. As Hadrian promoted his cult only in Rome, this contrasts the idea that the whole of the Italian peninsula venerated Antinous. In the next chapter, the material culture surrounding the cult of Antinous will be addressed.

Chapter 5: Material evidence

The previous chapter has given considerable attention to the places where Antinous is thought to be venerated at. In this chapter, a closer look will be taken to the object evidence that spread throughout the Roman Empire. Firstly, closer attention will be given to the coinage: how is Antinous presented and where were the coins made? Secondly, closer attention will be given to the busts featuring the likeness of Antinous. In this section the way these statues may have caused the cult to persist after Hadrian's reign will also be explored. As usual, the chapter will end with a conclusion.

5.1. Coinage

Antinous has been presented on much material culture. In the third chapter, inscriptions showed that Antinous was seen as a god, yet coinage tells a different story. Here, Antinous is frequently represented as a hero.¹⁵⁷

The imperial coins that feature Antinous are largely found in the eastern part of the Roman Empire, and were locally minted in bronze. About thirty cities in the Greek speaking east include depict Antinous on their coinage. The coins hail from Arcadia, Mantinea, Argos, and Corinth in the central or north-eastern Peloponnese, as well as in Delphi in Phocis, and Nicopolis in Epirus. In Asia Minor there is a concentration in Bithynia, Aeolis, Mysia, and Lydia. Coins have also been found in Amisos in Pontus and in northeastern Phrygia and Tarsos in Cilicia. Coins featuring Antinous have also been found in Ephesos and Smyrna.¹⁵⁸ This can be gathered from the evidence presented in catalogues. The spatial distribution of coins can be shown in Appendix 3.

Although published in 1914, the 'Numismatique d'Antinoos' by Gustave Blum is one of the principal publications on coinage featuring Antinous, next to the catalogues of the collection of Hans von Aulock that were published between 1957 and 1968. When considering these catalogues, a striking facet is that all coins refer to Antinous as a hero, even at Mantinea and Egypt where Antinous was regarded as a god. However, as already mentioned in the second

¹⁵⁷ Jones (2010), 80.

¹⁵⁸ Blum (1914); SNG Von Aulock (1957).

chapter, the difference between these two concepts are not too great. Coins from Delphi call Antinous a 'hero before the gates', while at Hadrianoutherai he is called a 'good hero'. Some coins even call him a new Iacchos, a minor deity from Greek mythology, who had cults at Athens and Eleusis. As both Antinous and Iacchos were connected to the Eleusinian mysteries as well as Dionysos both gods were also linked to one another.¹⁵⁹

All in all, it seems that many provinces in Asia Minor wanted to mint Antinous on their coinage, each having their own reasons. Antinous was likely minted on coinage in Egypt as he passed away there, while Bithynion-Claudiopolis wanted to commemorate him because he was born in that area. The Greek province of Arcadia claimed its title of metropolis of Bithynion in order to link themselves to the emperor's favorite. The fact that festivals were held in honor of Antinous in this area, as described by Pausanias, might also have been a reason to mint coinage featuring Antinous.¹⁶⁰

Other cities like Hadrianothera and Tarsus, had other reasons for commissioning these coins. Cities in Asia Minor had namely received many rights under the reign of Hadrian. Minting Antinous' portrait on local coinage might in this way also have been a way to express their gratitude.¹⁶¹

However, there is strong evidence that imperial efforts were done as well that caused the portrait of Antinous to be minted on coinage. Some coins namely feature the name of the benefactors that issued the coins. That these people are mentioned on coins in Delphi, Corinth, Ancyra and Smyrna is not a coincidence. Aristotimos in Delphi had been the city's representative before Hadrian and had been a friend of Plutarch. He is the same individual who installed a statue of Hadrian in 125 AD. Hosterius Marcellus, mentioned on coins from Corinth, describes himself as priest of Antinous, while Julius Saturninus in Ancyra was likely the governor of the Roman province. At Smyrna, the benefactor is Antonius Polemo, who was chosen by Hadrian to deliver a speech for the Olympieion at Athens in the same year that Antinous passed away, where he might have praised Antinous.¹⁶² These are all very

¹⁵⁹ Jones (2010), 81; Lambert (1984), pl. 46-48.

¹⁶⁰ Blum (1914), 61, 63, SNG Von Aulock (1957).

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Blum (1914), 61-63; Jones (2010), 80; Puech (1992), 4837-4839; Eck (1970), 224.

influential people that were close to Hadrian who could push the following of the cult of Antinous forward.

But not all coins were minted in Asia Minor. The Egyptian coins featuring Antinous, were minted in 134-135 AD, five years after Antinous' death. Blum explains that the coins were minted at that time, because they were made to commemorate Antinous' penteteria, where his death was commemorated. It could be that the first penteteria happened in 135 AD, and that the subsequent penteteria were celebrated every other year until Hadrian's death. This religious aspect is also seen at Sardis and Tmolos in Asia Minor.

No coins that were made to commemorate Antinous were minted after 138 AD, the year in which Hadrian passed away.¹⁶³ Still, regional continuation did happen in other areas, for example in Bithynia and Nicomedia. Here, Antinous was minted on the reverse of coins commemorating Caracalla and Commodus. This region saw the importance of Antinous in linking the birthplace with the empire, and wanted to commemorate him as a local hero as well.¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, this is a few decades after Hadrian, which shows that there was indeed a continuation of veneration.

So, it is clear that there are different motives for minting coins featuring Antinous. However, what do the coins themselves tell us? The markings on the coins, as well as the quality of the mints, suggests that the coins featuring Antinous were both in use in the monetary circuit as well as used as medallions that served as models or as portraits. This obverse 'portrait type' is one of the types of coins featuring Antinous. On the reverse of the coins, imagery is found that associates to Antinous as well, of which is the most prominent one Hermes. The third and last type can be distinguished as Antinous being represented as a divine hero, identified with the title "ANTINOOC HPΩC".¹⁶⁵ These visual details that were present on the coins show that Antinous was very present in the religious sphere in the area.

Interestingly, there is a close match with portraits featured on coins when statues are analyzed. Both depict him with luscious locks of hair, a broad nose and face, full lips and

¹⁶³ Blum (1914), 60.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.; Meyer (1991), 139.

¹⁶⁵ Blum (1914), 63-64.

straight eyebrows. Therefore, it seems that there is a kind of standardization present. This will be discussed below.

5.2. Sculpture

The previous section has shown that Antinous' profile was already present on coinage. However, there are many sculptures that represent him as well, of which a distinction has been made between 'Egyptian', *Haupttypus* and 'Mondragone' types. This distinction was made on the basis of shape of the J-like locks, of which Meyer made a typology in 1991. Also busts and cameos were made to capture the boy's apparent likeness.¹⁶⁶

In multiple ancient sources, the high number of statues that bore a likeness of Antinous is mentioned. Cassius Dio and Pausanias already write about the abundance of statues called *adriantes* (portrait-statues) and *agalmata* (cult-statues). The *Historia Augusta* refers to these statues, too.¹⁶⁷ Archaeology supports these claims, as there is an abundance of statues and busts that are exhibited in archaeological museums.¹⁶⁸ This is interesting. Contrary to imagery of gods and emperors for example, is that although information about the Bithynian youth is very fragmentary, there is such a plethora of imagery representing him. What is more, is that within these types of sculpture, copies of statues of Antinous remain almost identical to each other. What does this tell us about the way Antinous was seen after his untimely death?

5.2.1. Concerns

But first, a few concerns. Do these statues of Antinous only represent him, are they generalizations or are both possibilities at play here? That the portraits of Antinous – the full lips, broad face and straight eyebrows – seem to be familiar, but may just be eighteenth century restoration practices that characterized Antinous that way. After all, the faces might have represented other kings, heroes or gods.

¹⁶⁶ Vout (2005), 82.

¹⁶⁷ Paus. 8.9.7–8; 8.10.1; Cass. Dio 69.11.2–4; *Historia Augusta* Hadr., 14.5–7; Vout (2005), 83.

¹⁶⁸ Take for example the collections of the Vatican Museums in Rome, the Louvre in Paris and the Glyptotek in München and the recent (september 2018 to february 2019) Antinous exhibition at the Ashmolean museum in Oxford; Vout (2005); Smallwood (1966), 165; Oliver (1941).

The main problem lies in the fact that Antinous is largely identified on the basis of his curls. However, another person that is characterized with luscious locks, is namely Alexander the Great. Many images of this Greek general are contemporaneous with portraits that have been categorized as Antinous, resulting in the question whether the person that is thought to be characterized is really represented by the specific statue. The fact that numerous statues exist of *ephebes*, complicates this issue even more.¹⁶⁹

Another consideration is that the veneration of Antinous was complex. Antinous is not linked to one god: there are instances where he is linked to Dionysus, Osiris, Hylas, Hermes, Meleager and Narcissus, among others. The myths surrounding these gods and heroes sometimes overlap with regional variants, of which the link between Osiris, Dionysus and Antinous is most apparent. The fact that Antinous might be represented as a certain god, is therefore not nuanced enough.

There is a person that shows that the problems in the characterization of Antinous already existed in this antiquity, namely Polydeuces, one of the sons of Herodes Atticus, who lived between 101 and 177 AD. Like Antinous, they seem to have been venerated as a hero and games seem to have been held in his name.¹⁷⁰ Like the statue head representing Antinous, the heads of Polydeuces show him as a youth with luscious hair and full cheeks. He glances upwards, just like a few heads of Antinous do. And this is not the only instance where Herodes links himself to the life of Hadrian: Egyptianizing elements were constructed in his home and he erected statues of Hadrian and his wife Sabina at the burial tomb for him and his own wife. Herodes then, also wanted his dead son to be seen as Antinous. Because of this, it is likely that Herodes needed people to see the resemblance with the Bithynian youth, suggesting that statues representing Antinous were made long after Antinous and Hadrian were dead, just like the previous section on coinage has shown that Antinous' portrayed continued to be minted on coinage.¹⁷¹

Now that these problems have been explained, it is time to study the statues themselves.

5.2.2. *Typology of statues representing Antinous*

¹⁶⁹ Nielsen (1992); Nielsen (1993); Stewart (1994), 44.

¹⁷⁰ Vout (2005), 92.

¹⁷¹ Vout (2005), 93; Evers (1995), 449.

The statues that represent Antinous have been categorized in catalogues that help in dating. Archaeologists believe that the bulk of imagery representing Antinous was made between 130 AD and 138 AD, respectively the dates on which Antinous and Hadrian died.¹⁷² It is likely that Hadrian commissioned a basic model, now identified as the *Haupttypus*, that sculptors followed.¹⁷³ Of the 2000 statues and busts that are estimated to have been commissioned, at least 115 survive.¹⁷⁴

Yet, there is also reason to believe that these sculptures representing Antinous were made as late as the third and fourth centuries, not to mention the proliferation of creating copies of the boy that occurred in the 16th century.¹⁷⁵ Statues of Antinous were namely first included in Andrea Fulvio's *Imagines Illustrium*, a small catalogue with information about notable figures from antiquity, featured in Figure 8 in Appendix 1.¹⁷⁶ Next to each explored figure a portrait was presented which was based on ancient medals and coins. These images indeed matched Antinous' likeness that was presented on coins, of which the most notable feature was the long, thick and curly hair.¹⁷⁷ These characteristics are linked to this traditional *Haupttypus* type.

The Farnese Antinous, featured in Figure 9 in Appendix 1, is one of the many statues that belong to this basic model. There is a debate whether the affixed ancient head actually belonged to the rest of the body, or whether the statue is a mix of an ancient head and a different body that was presumably made in the Renaissance.¹⁷⁸ This sculpture was thought to represent Antinous, due to the close match with portraits featured on coins. The Farnese Antinous, named after the collection of antiquities by the Farnese family, namely shows Antinous as a youth with thick hair and wavy 'J'-shaped locks, straight eyebrows, full lips and a round face. The contrapposto pose might refer to the Doryphoros of Polykleitos, yet as the arms and the lower legs are modern restorations, this cannot be certain.

¹⁷² Vout (2005), 83.

¹⁷³ Lambert (1984), 165.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 189-190.

¹⁷⁵ Vout (2005), 83.

¹⁷⁶ Cunnally (1999), 52-69; Haskell (1993), 30.

¹⁷⁷ Vout (2005), 83.

¹⁷⁸ Vout (2005), 84-85.

Any sculpture that features the mentioned *Haupttypus* characteristics however, is bound to be seen as a representation of Antinous.¹⁷⁹ The problem is that many of those best preserved Antinous sculptures have these modern noses and mouths, in order to let them fall in the ‘Antinous model’, as explained in the paragraph on the concerns.¹⁸⁰ Other sculptures that are part of this *Haupttypus*, as Meyer calls them, are for example the Delphi Antinous, the Antinous Braschi, Antinous Albani and busts of Antinous exhibited at Palazzo Altemps in Rome. The statue of Antinous that is now housed in Port Sunlight (UK) has also been through a restoration process, where Antinous was represented as Ganymede instead of a hunter, which is thought to be the original representation.¹⁸¹ What attributes the statues really had in antiquity and whether the modern restorations are accurate, is not certain.

Not all sculptures of Antinous fit in this model however, such as the Capitoline Antinous, the Mondragone and the types featuring ‘Egyptian’ attributes. Antinous was also represented as a god, such as Osiris, Hermes, Apollo and Dionysus. On the relief at Lanuvium that was made by Antonianos Aphrodisias, Antinous is represented as Silvanus, too.¹⁸² If all the statues were indeed made in the eight-year period between Antinous’ and Hadrian’s death, why are there more statue types of Antinous?

Well, maybe there was a difference in public and private space to what kind of iconography types were used. Pausanias remarks in the *Description of Greece* that a statue of Antinous adorned the gymnasium of Mantinea, and that the statue of Antinous included attributes that were characteristic of Dionysus.¹⁸³ Perhaps it was this *Haupttypus* that was used for the adornment of public spaces. That these kinds of naked ephebic looking statues were placed in a gymnasium is not unusual. After all, the word gymnasium comes from the Greek *gymnos*, meaning naked. Athletes that would train on the *palaestra* of these gymnasia, would often be sexualized. This resulted in an interest to adorn gymnasia, but also bath complexes with statues of naked athletes: young boys with downcast eyes, thick locks of hair and sensuous limbs.¹⁸⁴ When considering that this is also the way statues of Antinous were likely

¹⁷⁹ Vout (2005), 85; Evers (1995), 450.

¹⁸⁰ Vout (2005), 85.

¹⁸¹ Calandra (2019), 253.

¹⁸² Vout (2005),

¹⁸³ Paus. 8.9.7–8. Translated by Jones (1933), *LCL* 272.

¹⁸⁴ Fisher (2013); Bartman (2002); Newby (2005), 88-140.

represented as, as well as the high cult activity in Mantinea, the location of a statue of him in the gymnasium is not a surprising one. Nevertheless, Pausanias is the only author that describes one placement of such a statue. How many 'Antonines' adorned the facades of other gymnasia in Asia Minor, is guesswork. Lastly, when taking into consideration that Antonine' statues are highly stylized, but that many were also fragmented before 18th century reconstructions, the question remains whether these statues which have been branded as 'athletes' or 'youths' and which were erected in public spaces, were once depictions of Antonine' as an ephebe.

5.2.3. *Egyptianizing types*

The Egyptian types are not found at locations where veneration of Antonine was public. Instead, these types of statues representing Antonine were unique to Hadrian's villa and were specifically located in the Antinoeion. This complex was discovered in 1998, but was already almost completely destroyed. During excavation, sculptural fragments in a so-called 'Egyptianized' way were found, as well as a base that is thought to once have supported the obelisk of Antonine.¹⁸⁵ Due to the sepulchral inscription that is found on this monument, it is likely that the Antinoeion might have been the final resting place of Antonine and that it might have been a model for similar Antinoeia that were erected elsewhere. Although Antonine' remains have never been found, the cenotaphic inscription "Antonine rests in this tomb situated inside the garden [Hadrian's Villa], property of the Emperor of Rome" is evidence for this.¹⁸⁶

In total, 15 statues were found in the area of the Antinoeion, which are made from dark greyish marble and have a height of 150 centimeters. Although the majority of the statues have been found during excavation in the 17th and 18th centuries, the more recently found fragments belong to the same corpus. Half of this group has been lost and is only known from drawings, yet the second half is now exhibited in the Vatican Museums.¹⁸⁷ Both divinities and priests are represented, and a group of statues also represented divinities in animal forms. Also, a group of white-colored marble fragments and portraits are thought to

¹⁸⁵ Mari and Sgalambro (2007), 83-84.

¹⁸⁶ Grimm *et al.* (1994); Mari and Sgalambro (2007), 86, 99.

¹⁸⁷ Mari and Sgalambro (2007), 91; Mari (2003-2004), 279-289.

have belonged to altars, basins, vases and bases. The basins and vases show that water must have flowed through the Antinoeion, symbolizing the Nile. This does not only allude to Antinous' death in the Nile, but is also related to the role of water in Egyptian funerary and cult rituals.¹⁸⁸

In contrast to sculptures from other cults of an Egyptian deity, such as Isis, there is much diversity in the statues: there are 'priest types', thought to have represented the deified Antinous in traditional Egyptian attire, 'deity types' and enormous statues of Antinous must have been erected, as a large fragment of the head and a large statue of Osiris-Antinous have been found (Figure 10 in Appendix 1). The statues, which are now found in museums all over Europe, could have been placed in the cellas of the Antinoeion complex, on the podiums, or at the entrance. Telamons are thought to have been placed in the porch, alluding to the place being not only a tomb, but also a place for private worship; see Figure 11 in Appendix 1).¹⁸⁹ Because of Antinous' link to the Nile, Hadrian might have chosen to commission monuments in this fashion for private veneration at his villa, in contrast to the *Haupttypus* statues that were present at locations where public veneration took place. The most apparent difference with the *Haupttypus* type is the inclusion of a nemes and a uraeus, a small crown featuring the head of a snake (see Figure 12 in Appendix 1).

5.2.4. *Mondragone type*

The third and last type is the Mondragone type. The Mondragone Antinous was found in a villa near Frascati in Rome and is now displayed in the Louvre. It was discovered in Tusculum, a Roman city in the Alban Hills in Latium. Its dimensions are huge: from the crown of the head until the base of the neck, the bust measures a total of 95 centimeters.¹⁹⁰

Just like the Egyptianized models, this type also differs from the so-called *Haupttypus*. The long locks that are characteristic of this type, do not look anything like the *Haupttypus* J-shaped curls. Instead, they are longer, and neatly parted in the middle, as presented on Figure 13 of Appendix 1. This type of hairstyle is mainly used to represent Dionysus or Apollo. As a result, Antinous is not identified within the Mondragone types as Antinous on

¹⁸⁸ Mari and Sgalambro (2007), 92.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 97-98.

¹⁹⁰ de Kersauson (1996), #63.

the basis of his curls, but rather on the basis of its similarity to the head from the Antinous Frascati.¹⁹¹ The bust is thought to be an acrolith, meaning that it was once a statue that consisted of multiple pieces. There is nothing left of the eyes, which were likely to have been made of metal or other precious stones.¹⁹²

The issue with this head is that it challenges the viewer to think about how this sculpture is different from other busts representing Apollo and Dionysus, and how it differs from the *Haupttypus*. One needs to keep in mind that although a statue is dated to antiquity, a statue might have undergone restoration processes, as mentioned earlier in the chapter. The Mondragone head, for example is antique, while the bulky neck seems to be a 18th century restoration. The result is that the head and a neck are a little disproportioned to one another. However, this might only be one possibility. The head also might have been an outsider in the typologies and may rather be viewed as a sculpture with excellent preservation.¹⁹³ Whether the elements in all the categories, be it the basic model, the Egyptianized statues or the Mondragone types, are ancient can only be gathered to a certain degree.

5.3. Conclusion

So far, it is clear that there were different types of statues that represented Antinous. Many of them did undergo restoration and there is evidence that there were commissioned for a long time. How can the persistence of the cult then be explained?

The hypothesis that statues of Antinous kept being commissioned can be explained by evidence that the Antinoan games were being celebrated right into the fourth century, and that the first regional games were established as late as 200-202 AD. Here, we again turn to a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, namely P. Oxy IV 705, that is dated securely to this period. The first 64 lines of this papyrus are very fragmentary, yet important information can be distilled

¹⁹¹ Vout (2005), 89.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

from it: the papyrus namely contains two petitions written by the official Aurelius Horion who tried to lighten the tax burdens of the local population.¹⁹⁴

Although the lines 42 to 51 are not clear, Horion proposes to devote a loan of which the interest was to be invested in the annual contest of *epheboi* at Oxyrhynchus in order to be as splendid as the one in Antinoe, or referring back to Antinous (... τ[ο]ῖς κατ' ἔτος ἀγωνιουμένων ἐφ' οἷς κα[ὶ] οἱ Ἀντ[ι]ν[ο]ῖς? νῦν ἀγωνίζοντε).¹⁹⁵ Yet, the restoration of the lines to Antinous is very doubtful, although a name is expected.¹⁹⁶ The fact that the text mentions *ephebes* might be an indication that the festival might have honored Antinous however, since he was a beautiful youth, although *ephebes* were not only present at festivals celebrating Antinous.

Athanasius also has evidence that backs the idea that cult activity took place late in antiquity. Athanasius was the patriarch of Alexandria who lived between 296 and 373 AD. His first work *Contra Gentes – De Incarnatione*, written before 319 AD, vindicates Christian doctrine and vilifies pagan religious practice.¹⁹⁷ In chapter 9, a chapter focused on idolatry, Antinous is mentioned:

“While some of them, as if vying with them in depravation, have ventured to erect into gods their rulers or even their sons, either out of honor for their princes, or from fear of their tyranny, such as the Cretan Zeus, of such renown among them, and the Arcadian Hermes; and among the Indians Dionysus, among the Egyptians Isis and Osiris and Horus, **and in our own time Antinous**, favorite of Hadrian, Emperor of the Romans, whom, although men know he was a mere man, and not a respectable man, but on the contrary, full of licentiousness, yet they worship for fear of him that enjoined it.”¹⁹⁸

Although this excerpt heavily criticizes Hadrian for making Antinous a hero, just as other church fathers have one as the previous chapters have also shown, an important detail is that Athanasius comments that Antinous was still venerated in his time. When considering that this work was written before 319 AD, plus the fact that Athanasius lived in a different period

¹⁹⁴ Grenfell and Hunt (1904), Oxyrhynchus Papyri IV, 162.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 163-165.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 167.

¹⁹⁷ Bouter (2010).

¹⁹⁸ Athanasius, *Contra gentes – De Incarnatione* I.ix.39. Translation Roberston edited by Knight.

than Hadrian and Antinous, it seems that the cult had persisted long after the death of both individuals.

More literary evidence comes from a poem celebrating the ascension of Diocletian, an emperor that ruled between 286 AD and 305 AD.¹⁹⁹ Next to this celebratory poem, another poem begins, mentioning Antinous²⁰⁰:

“She rejoiced to find the ransom for the life of Antinous, memorial of his hunt, palm of his victory, ... I revere, Narcissus, your shadowy reflection; I shed a tear for Hyacinthus who ... the cruel discus; I pity your hunting of the wild beast, Yet the meadow of Antinous and his lovely ... not pool, not fatal discus, not ... The nymphs ... with the flower named after Antinous, which to this day preserves the mighty spear of the hunter. To the Nile he hurried for the purification of the blood of the lion, but the Moon upon more brilliant hopes bad him shine as a star bridegroom and garlanding the new light with a circle she ... A city was the gift of Hadrian, an island that of the Nile: the one lies rich in vines beside its sweet neighbor, the other the chosen flower of Achaea, has been crowned for its harbors as a champion of the plain.”²⁰¹

Although incomplete, the poem starts with describing the creation of a flower and the creation of a new constellation of Antinous by the goddess Selene, a personification of the moon. The flower is used as an instrument for salvation for Antinous from death, and it also represents the victory of Antinous over a lion, similar to the poem by Pancrates, which was explored in the previous chapter. However, new information is given as well: after the death of the lion, and the blooming of a flower from the lion’s blood, Antinous is said to have washed himself in the Nile.²⁰² Presumably, this is where the accident happened, of which the cause is unknown. Moreover, both Antinoöpolis and Hermopolis, situated at either Nile bank, are mentioned. The author is in favor of Antinoöpolis, which might reflect the politics of Diocletian. In the beginning of the fourth century, he made the city the capital of the Thebaid province, the most important district in middle Egypt in that time. The poet also mentions games. It is known that the city of Antinoöpolis had a cult following that

¹⁹⁹ P. Oxy. LXIII 4352.

²⁰⁰ Gigli Piccardi (2002).

²⁰¹ Translation Rhea (1996), *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* LXIII, 9-10.

²⁰² Gigli Piccardi (2002), 55, 56; Höschele (2019), 215-216.

worshipped Antinous, and that the games involved wrestling in the Nile as well as poetry contests, which both had connotations with the rebirth of Antinous as an immortal hero.²⁰³ The author might have used this link in the poem as he had been a witness to these festivals which must have occurred until late in antiquity.²⁰⁴ This hypothesis can be made on the basis that this papyrus dates to 285-299 AD, which is, like the comment on Antinous in Athanasius' *Contra Gentes*, decades after Hadrian's and Antinous' deaths.

The spread of material culture, both statuesque and numismatic, might thus have aided the interest in Antinous and its persistence through time. In Asia Minor and Egypt, coinage was an important material medium that made Antinous visible, well after Hadrian's death. As many provinces minted an image of Antinous on their coins because they wanted to link themselves to the Roman Empire, cult activity might have been encouraged. In the Latin speaking west of the Roman empire, many sculptures seem to have dotted the landscape, although provenance and dating is problematic. The fact that literature from the third and fourth centuries still comment on Antinous' presence and veneration, aids the understanding that many statues were commissioned well after the deaths of Hadrian and Antinous. That Antinous was visible to the public at various cult places, as well as traditional festivities to commemorate him, might have encouraged cult activity to take place as well. The final chapter will answer the question of Antinous' success as a deity more thoroughly.

²⁰³ Gigli Piccardi (2002), 58; Höschele (2019), 218.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The fact that Antinous became a suitable subject for veneration seems to contrast by what is known about him. Although papyrological and epigraphical evidence supports that fact that he was a boy born on the final days of November in either 110, 111 or 112 AD in Claudiopolis, less is known about his status and the way in which he met emperor Hadrian, with whom he had an intimate relationship. What is known, however, is that he travelled with the emperor's entourage and until his death in 130 AD. Soon after his death in the Nile, the allegedly devastated emperor deified his lover, installed a cult and founded the city of Antinoöpolis. Material evidence in the form of roundels, statues and coinage that portrayed Antinous' likeness spread throughout the Roman Empire. But then why did the cult of Antinous become such a success in the Roman Empire after Antinous' death and stayed active after Hadrian's death?

The answer lies in the measures that were taken after Antinous' death. As Antinous did not yet belong to the traditional Roman pantheon, Hadrian had the opportunity to immortalize Antinous through myth-making, of which the most important aspects were Antinous' skills as a hunter and as an intelligent boy. Because of this, the assimilation with established gods such as Artemis, Silvanus and Iachhus quickly followed. This divinization process also caused Antinous to become venerated as both a god and a hero. Epigraphical and papyrological evidence supports this.

Moreover, the birthplace of Antinous also had impact on the area and the way in which people venerated Antinous. Not only was this a result of a grassroots initiative in Asia Minor, this is also because of the history of the area. The city of Mantinea had close ties with Bithynia, the province where Antinous hailed from. Pausanias remarks that the presence of Antinous was felt in both the statue that adorned the gymnasium, as well as the festival that was held in his name. The officials that organized the cities in the Asia Minor also had influence as they were suitable to encourage the plans of the emperor. In turn, they were able to make stamps for the coins that were made locally, causing Antinous to be presented as a hero with divine attributes on coinage from for instance Smyrna, Delphi and Corinth.

Also, the foundation of Antinoöpolis and the rumors of this place have had an impact in the cult's presence. Both Greek and Egyptian settlers profited from numerous privileges that caused Antinoöpolis to become a big center for Hellenistic culture. The festivities surrounding the cult of Antinous, thought to have occurred every five years, as well as the myths surrounding the active cult that was present at this location, caused the city to be even mentioned in the works written by Arabian scholars in late antiquity. Due to the fact that Hadrian also introduced Rome and her surroundings to the cult of Antinous also caused the presence to be felt here, although this was on a far lesser scale than in Egypt and Asia Minor.

Lastly, the busts that featured Antinous also had an impact on the cult's presence and popularity: it is estimated that 2000 statues and busts were made that were used both in public spaces as well as in private spaces such as the Antinoeion at Hadrian's Villa. There is much reason to believe that the statues were commissioned not only as religious objects but also as works of art. Authors from late antiquity such as Horion and Athanasius mention how Antinous was venerated with idols and that people wanted to capture the likeness of Antinous. The fact that many sculptures went under restoration processes in the 16th through 18th century to look like the traditional Antinous *Haupttypus*, a man with a broad features and J-type curls, also results in statues and busts to be coined as Antinous, whether this was rightly or wrongly concluded by the antiquarians.

It is thus with the aid of being a new god, the ties that Antinous had with Egypt and Asia Minor and the iconography of him on materials that caused the cult to become successful after Antinous' own death, and caused persistence of the cult well after Hadrian's own death, too.

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Appendix 1: Figures

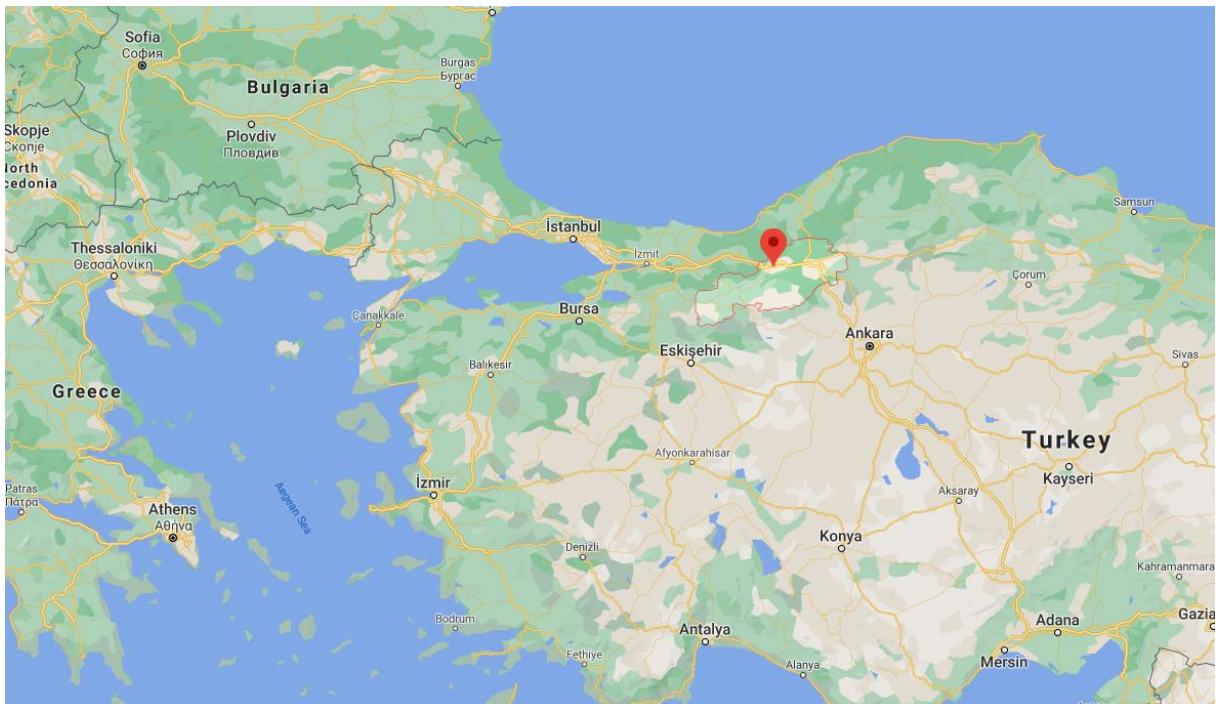


Figure 1: The location of Claudopolis on a modern map (Google Maps). As you can see, it is clear that Antinous hailed from an area that was more to the periphery of the Roman Empire.

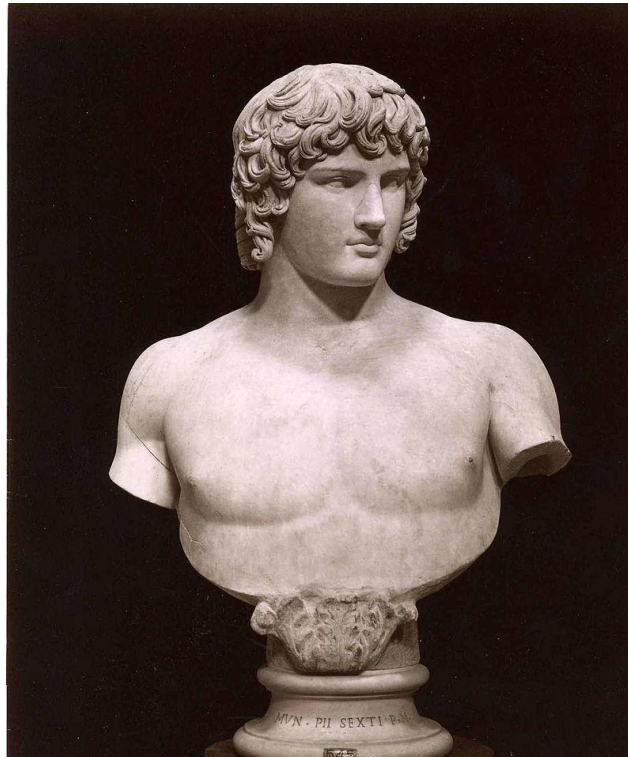


Figure 2: Bust of Antinous (Vatican Museums, Pio Clementino Museum inv.no. 241, Sala Rotonda). This is one of the many busts of Antinous. The strong facial features as well as the prominent curls are clearly visible. Yet, there is no way of determining whether Antinous really looked like this. The fifth chapter addresses this in more detail.

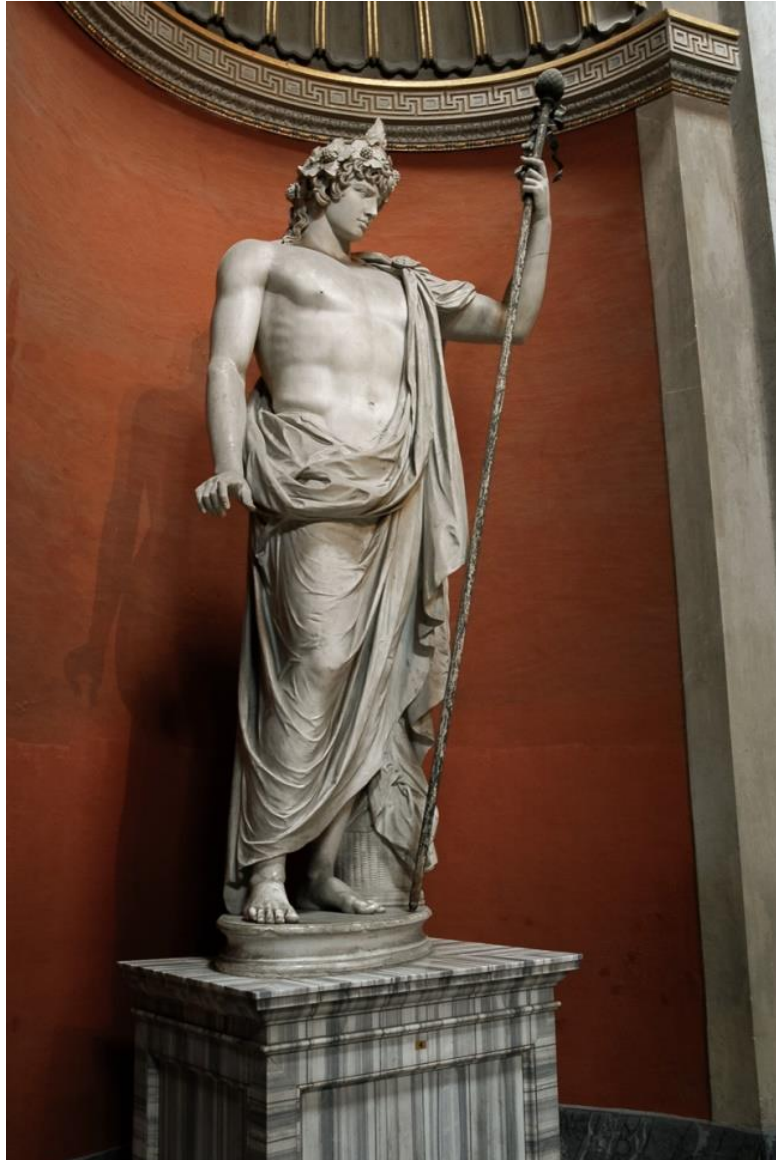


Figure 3: Antinous as Dionysus-Osiris wearing a wreath and scepter (Vatican Museums, Pio Clementino Museum inv.no. 256, Sala Rotonda; Photo by S. Sosnovskiy <http://ancientrome.ru/art/img/1/1201.jpg>). Here, Antinous' features, that are similar to the ones seen in the previous image, are assimilated with features of the god Dionysus, which are the wreath and scepter. As Antinous did not strictly belong to the traditional Roman pantheon, it became easier to associate him with gods from this pantheon.



Figure 4: Statue base with honorary inscription for Septimius Severus in Marek (2002), 32. This statue base contains the names of the different *phylai* in the city of Mantinea in which the cult of Antinous was very active. The names of a few of these *phylai* refer to Hadrian and his family, as well as Antinous.



Figure 5: Boar Hunt roundel from an older Hadrianic arch. Antinous is most likely the second figure on the left (Photo by J. Bondono; <https://www.jeffbondono.com/TouristInRome/ArchOfConstantine.html>).



Figure 6: Hadrianic roundel featuring a lion hunt (Photo by J. Bondono; <https://www.jeffbondono.com/TouristInRome/ArchOfConstantine.html>). The figure on the far right could be Antinous, yet the figure on the far left is also a possible candidate when taking Antinous' striking characteristics in mind.

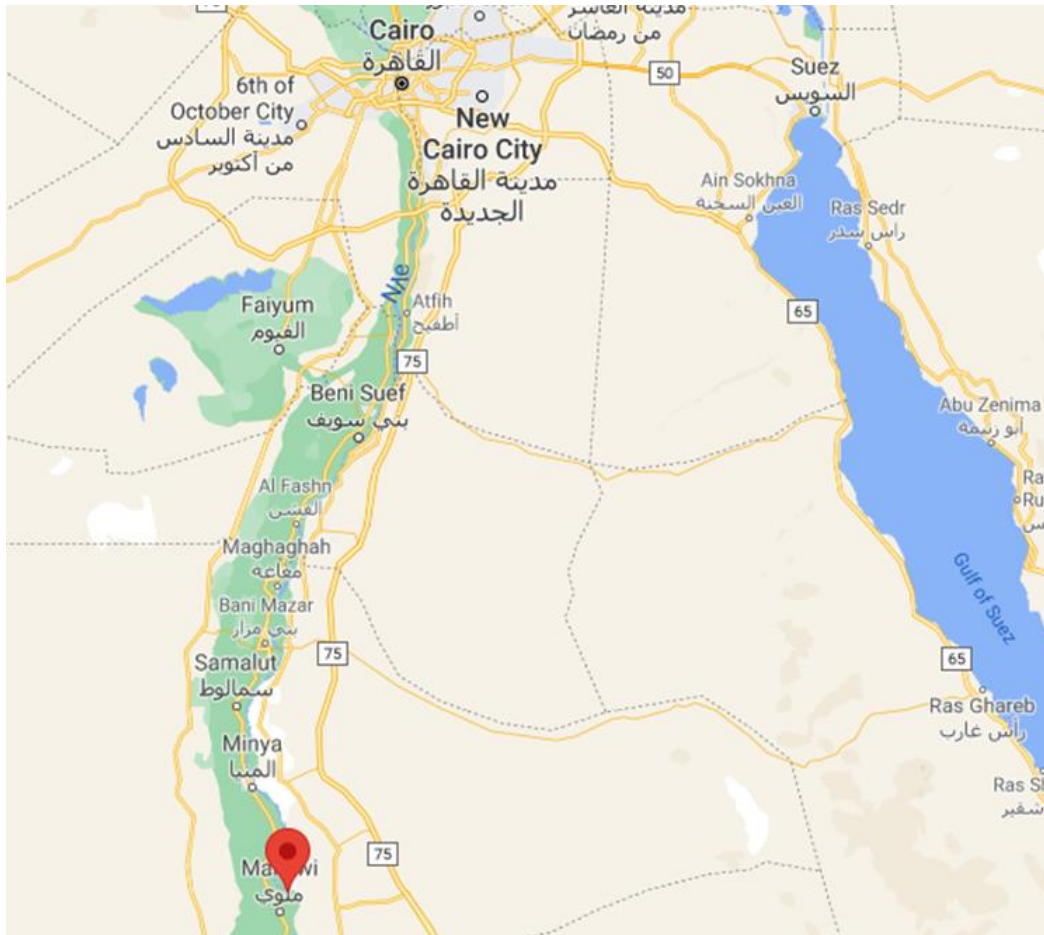


Figure 7: The location of Antinoöpolis in Egypt (Google Maps; checked on 18-06-2021). The city was founded next to the Nile at the spot where Antinous had died. The city became an important city of Hellenistic culture within Egypt.



Figure 8: Entry of Antinous in the *Imagines Illustrium* (Vout 2005). The characteristics that are often attributed to Antinous are clearly represented here: tight curls, short nose and square chin. These characteristics are also present on coinage featuring Antinous.



Figure 9: Farnese Antinous (Naples National Museum of Antiquities inv.no. 6030. Photo by A. Durand, <http://durand-digitalgallery.com/2011/photography/sculpture/eros-antinous-napoli/farnese-antinous-11/>). The relaxed, asymmetrical contrapposto position adds realism to the sculpture. The characteristics of the *Haupttypus* Antinous are clearly visible.



Figure 10: Osiris-Antinous (left; Vatican Museums, Gregorian Egyptian Museum inv.no. 22795) and recently found portrait of a priest (right; Mari and Sgalambro (2007), 99). The inclusion of a *nemes*, the striped cloth that was worn by Egyptian pharaohs shows the divine and regal status of Antinous.

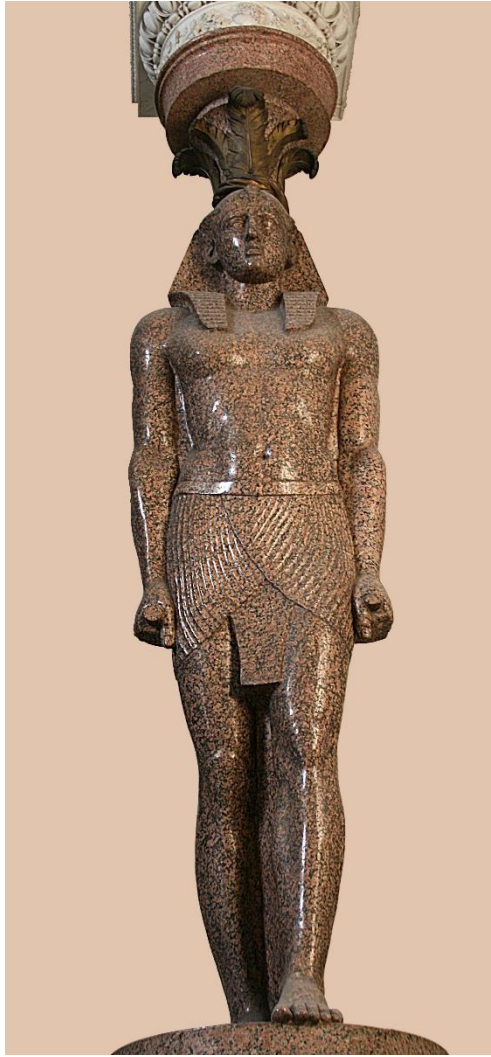


Figure 11: Telamon of Antinous (Vatican Museums, Pio Clementino Museum, inv.no. 197, Sala a Croce Greca. Photo by J.P. Grandmont.

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/0_T%C3%A9lamon_d%27Antino%C3%BCs_-Museo_Pio-Clementino_%28Vatican%29.JPG).

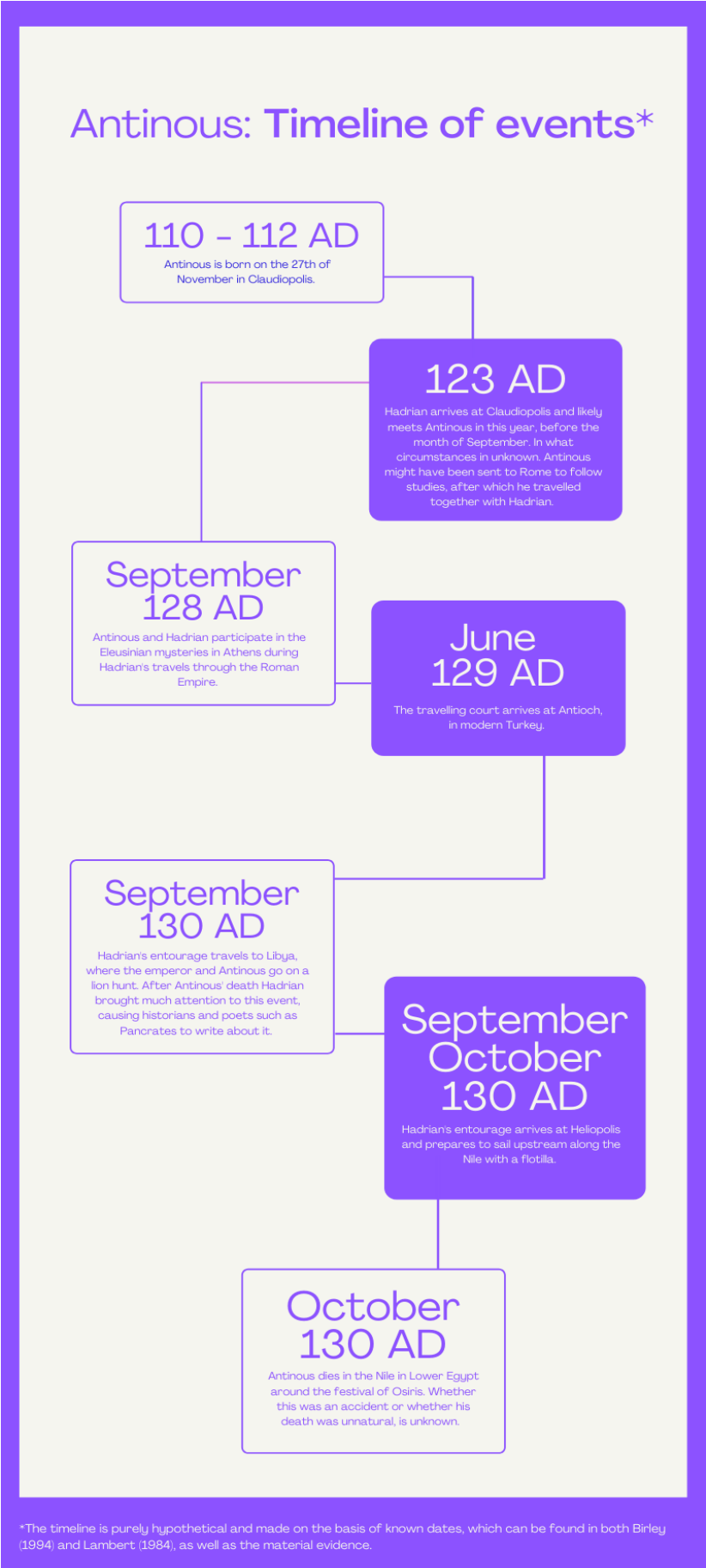


Figure 12: Bust of Antinous with nemes with uraeus (Louvre Museum, Salle 710, inv.no. MR 16, Ma 433, N1018. Photo by M. and P. Chuzeville <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010277935>). Found at Tivoli, this bust again shows the Hellenistic as well as Egyptian visual elements with which the statues at the Antinoeion were stylized.

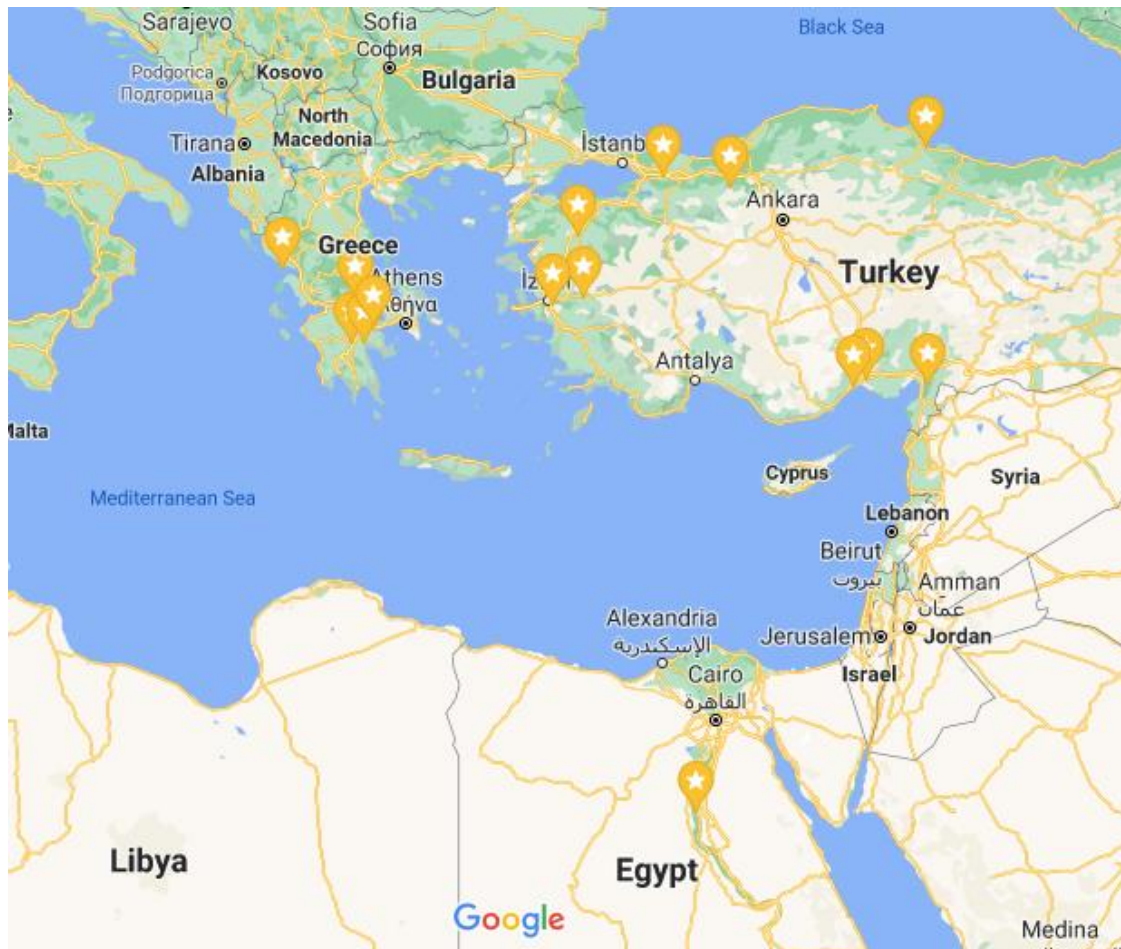


Figure 13: Mondragone Antinous (Louvre Museum, Salle 405, inv.no. MR 412, Ma 1205, N 1366. Photo by M. Nguyen, https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Antinous_Mondragone_Louvre_Ma1205_n5.jpg). Instead of the short, J-shaped curls, the curls are longer and stylized differently, making this bust differ from the *Haupttypus* Antinous.

Appendix 2: Timeline of Antinous' life



Appendix 3: Spatial distribution of coins



The locations where evidence of coin minting have been found (Google Maps; checked on 18-6-2021). As you can see, the distributions are clustered in Greece and at the coastal sites of Turkey. Was this spontaneous or were the cities ordered to mint coins featuring Antinous?