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Man, Myth and Medicine: The Exchange of Healing Deities in the Bronze Age Mediterranean

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Man, Myth and Medicine:
The Exchange of Healing Deities in the Bronze Age Mediterranean

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Classical Studies from
William & Mary

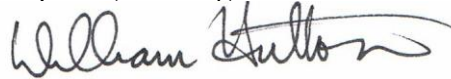
by

Ryan L. Vincent

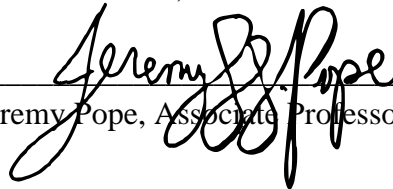
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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my Uncle Christopher Davenport who fostered a love of history in me at a young age and encouraged me in every step of my studies. I never would have achieved this without your support. You are the greatest historian and teacher I have ever known, and I hope I can live up to your legacy. Thank you for sharing your stories with me.

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Introduction:

The gods exist out of necessity. Across every polytheistic mythology, the gods exist for humankind to make sense of the unexplainable natural forces in the world and to attempt to exert control over these forces. This is why many civilizations follow a similar patterns of divine development. The first gods ruled over the natural forces most impactful on hunter-gatherer societies. It is at this early point that we see the emergence of sky gods, storm gods, agriculture gods and sea gods.

Sky gods and storm gods control the weather and celestial bodies, communication with them could protect humans from inclement weather. Agriculture gods influence the growth of essential materials that humans needed for food and to construct shelter. Sea gods would provide people with safe drinking water, travel by sea and food by means of fish. Each of these gods was an essential part of primitive societies. The most important thing to understand about each of these primitive gods is that they are inspired by the real world. Humans couldn't control the sun, storms or the earth. But they all existed, and the gods served as the rationalization of these concepts.

Although they are typically the last ones to be added to the pantheons, healing gods follow this pattern of originating in the real world. However, they are not derived from the natural world, because healing itself isn't a natural force. Physical ailments might resolve themselves in time, but even the earliest humans understood that they needed help to deal with these maladies. This is best exemplified in the words of anthropologist Margaret Mead.

A student once asked her what she believed to be the earliest sign of a civilized society. One would suspect some form of architecture? Or perhaps communication, some form of writing? Nope. Mead responded with a 15,000 year old fractured femur. And she said:

“The first sign of civilization in an ancient culture was a femur that had been healed. In the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die...A broken femur that has healed is evidence that someone has taken the time to stay with the one who fell, has bound up the wound, has carried the person to safety and has tended the person through recovery. Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilization starts.”¹

Healing is a concept invented by humans. Perhaps that’s why so many physician gods across dozens of civilizations begin their stories as humans. But if the gods are based on real phenomena, the healing gods should be no different. Healing was a human activity so the gods of healing would have to be based on humans. It is a circular rationale, but it makes sense when examining healing gods.

There are many famous physician gods throughout the various mythologies of the ancient world: Imhotep in ancient Egypt, Asklepios in Greece and Rome, Eir in Scandinavia and far more. All of these gods began their stories as human, or at least born to a human, giving credence to the idea that healing has an inherently human nature. But one famous Greek physician god does not seem to have been born human; at the very least, information about his birth is unavailable. This is Paieon, the first Greek god of healing, and he has gone tragically understudied.

To many scholars of the ancient world, Paieon is no more than an Epithet of Asklepios. The word Paieon seems to be connected to the Greek word for healing and Asklepios is the healing god. But Paieon accomplished so much more according to mythology. In fact, Paeon is arguably one of the most important gods of the early Greek Pantheon from the few sources we have on him, and his earliest appearance in worship goes back to before a number of major Olympians joined the pantheon. He saved the gods from death repeatedly and was capable of

¹ Meade, Margaret. *A Healed Leg Bone - The Sign of a Civilized Society*. p.1

reversing death itself. So why is there so little information about him? It seems that there is more information than one might suspect. But it is buried under different names.

Paieon is connected to Egypt. The first attestation of his name appears during the 14th century BCE, the height of Egyptian power. He was also the precursor to Asklepios with Paieon's accomplishments being added to the story of Asklepios. Paieon was the perfect middle point between the physician gods Imhotep and Asklepios. In his name, he carried an epithet for both gods. Chronologically, he came after Imhotep and before Asklepios. Paieon was a prominent god in the Greek pantheon although he came from Egypt.

With all this information, I am looking to answer one central question in my research: Did Imhotep influence Asklepios through Paieon? It seems, through a thorough examination of healing deities, Bronze Age trade patterns, literary evidence and linguistic transitions, that the answer is yes. Imhotep's legacy inspired the understanding of Paieon in the Greek world which was later adopted by the physician Asklepios.

Chapter 1: The Man, The Myth, The Mummy

Introduction:

“Everyone in the whole country [of Egypt] is a skilled physician, for they are of the race of Paieon.”² From this one line, Homer’s audience learned the most important fact about Egypt: that Egypt was the place where medicine flourished thanks to the work of some incredible Egyptian physicians.

In the broader context of this line from Homer’s *Odyssey*, Telemachus was in Sparta seeking information on his father’s whereabouts from Menelaus and Helen. After a night of festivities, Helen provided a drug from Egypt to help everyone sleep. Homer used this small detail concerning the drug as an opportunity to expound upon the importance of Egypt to the field of medicine. It remains an unusual tangent, even by the standards of Homer. The story presented in the *Odyssey* would not change if this line was omitted, leaving his audience with the question: why was the inclusion of this line necessary? This could have been a reference to the story of Helen having secretly waited out the Trojan war in Egypt. But the herb is said to have been given to Helen by a woman from Egypt, not in Egypt. “The drugs that Zeus’s daughter plied, potent gifts from Polydamna the wife of Thon, a woman of Egypt.”³ And even so, there was no reason to reference a deity who played no role in Helen’s story. Egypt was not relevant to the aforementioned conversation, and it would be quickly forgotten in the context of the story. The only reason for Homer to include this detail would have been to share his knowledge of the ancient Egyptian world with his audience; a world defined by medical prowess.

² Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.231-232, Trans. Fagles

³ Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.228-229, Trans. Fagles

The line from the *Odyssey* was meant to invoke an image of Egypt as the land where the field of medicine was held in the highest regard, a reputation that had expanded throughout the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean. It was a place so well known for its physicians that Homer considered them on the same level as Paieon, a deity capable of such incredible medical feats that he could reverse death itself. And Homer was just one of many to recognize the medical prowess of Egyptian civilization. The great physician, Galen, studied for years in Egypt in the hope of bringing their medical knowledge to the larger Mediterranean world.⁴ He studied a medical corpus first established by an Egyptian physician living in the 27th century BC and built upon by later Egyptian medical scholars.

Although Homer recognizes this skilled physician as the Greek god Paieon, the Egyptians recognized this great physician by a different name that is well recorded in Egyptian history. Homer, famous for recording mythology rather than history, refused to acknowledge the achievement of Egyptian physicians. Instead he credited the Egyptians' medical skill to being the sacred people of the god Paieon. Simply put, a god capable of medical miracles gave his medical knowledge to the Egyptian people so they might be known as the civilization of skilled physicians. But this is severely discounting the actual achievements of the Egyptian people that radically changed how medicine was practiced throughout the ancient world.

Medicine in ancient Egypt goes nearly as far back as records of Egyptian history go. But their proficiency in healing is often overlooked due to the state of modern medicine. The goal of healing is and always has been to make anyone affected by physical ailments well again. But in the present we have far different methods for reaching that end goal. Modern medicine is defined by an emphasis on scientific reasoning behind treatment based on an accurate understanding of

⁴ Nunn, John. (1996). *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*. University of Oklahoma Press. p.207-208

human biology. In contrast, there was a heavy emphasis on the use of magic to relieve ailing individuals during the early years of ancient Egypt history. In the modern world, it is easy to separate magic from science. But in the ancient world, they were one and the same. We have accounts of a number of fantastical remedies provided by gods proving successful. Is this medical treatment? At what point does asking a god for help and finding oneself healed become fantasy? Healing in the ancient world can best be described as treatment of a physical or emotional ailment by means of science or magic. For the Egyptians, magic and medicine went hand in hand.

To the Egyptians, medicine/healing was the way of preventing death or illness.⁵ Medicine was how a person was healed, magic is why the medicine worked. Using magic and spells to save a person was just one of many treatments a physician could make use of. And if the spell worked, why not use it again?⁶ Magic was perhaps the oldest example of medical practice in Ancient Egypt. The earliest examples of healing in ancient Egypt relied solely on magic and the gods, as would be expected. But following the emergence of writing in Ancient Egypt, it only took a few centuries to begin incorporating a more scientific understanding into treatment methods. But this did not definitively remove magic from the Egyptian practice of medicine. From the development of more scientific medicine onwards, medicine and magic were two sides of the same coin.

⁵ The Egyptians were not alone in associating medicine with magic during the early years of their civilization. However, they were unique in how quickly they moved away from that model from after the beginnings of their civilization. Other groups, like the Greeks, made use of magic in medicine, but those practices persisted through the usurpation of Greece by the Romans.

⁶ In this circumstance, the spell working means that the person had recovered following the administration of the spell, and credit had been given to the spell for their recovery as opposed to whatever real technique was used.

Based on all the evidence available, Ancient Egyptians were making use of a more practical system of treatment as far back as the 3rd Dynasty (27th Century BCE).⁷ This roughly corresponds with the lifetime of one of the earliest and most well known physicians of Egypt. The reason we know so much about Egyptian medicine is the legacy of some of their greatest physicians. Many volumes have been compiled detailing the lives of Egyptian physicians. However, for the purpose of understanding the Egyptian influence on the god Paieon, I have chosen to focus on one physician who seems to be the perfect parallel of Paieon in Egypt; Imhotep. Imhotep serves as the most likely candidate due his mortal origin and his role as the physician god of the Egyptian pantheon, attributes he shares with the Greek physician god. Imhotep was quite unique in these attributes because it was nearly impossible to be both human born and a god.

In Egyptian society, the Pharaohs were seen as the representatives of the gods on Earth, literally incarnations of the falcon god Horus. Thus they were the only humans that could become gods up until the 3rd century BCE. And they weren't becoming gods in the Greco-Roman way where an individual is deified and added to the Pantheon. The pharaohs were already the god Horus reincarnated over and over again on Earth. As a god, Horus lived forever and he was the pharaohs. In the expansive history of Egyptian civilization, only two non pharaohs were able to ascend to divinity prior to the Hellenization of Egypt.⁸ When Imhotep became a god, in sharp contrast to the Pharaohs, it was as himself rather than as the incarnation

⁷ This is in contrast to healing techniques based entirely in magic. There are "medical" texts that have been dated to before the third century, but they do not employ any techniques that would actually assist a person in recovery,

⁸ For those who would later become gods, the ancient Egyptians first proclaimed them to be demigods before adding them to the pantheon centuries later. Since hero worship in Egypt resembles the worship of their gods (unlike in the Greek world), they were for all intents and purposes, gods. In his conquest of Egypt, Alexander the Great brought the Greek tradition of most mortem apotheosis to the Egyptians. This explains why there was a sharp increase in the number of deifications of humans during the Hellenistic period with most of the Ptolemies claiming themselves to be gods.

of a well established god. In order to understand how Imhotep influenced Paieon, it is important to understand how he first became a god. The answer lies in the accomplishments of his lifetime and is corroborated by the lifetime of another deified non-pharaoh, Amenhotep, son of Hapu.

Imhotep

Although he lived nearly 5000 years ago, Imhotep's name is remembered more than most pharaohs thanks to the popularity of The Mummy franchise. His name and role as a priest were given to the titular villain in the 1932 and 1999 films, both entitled The Mummy. But the real man who inspired the horror movie villain was far from a supernatural monster. Imhotep (𓂏𓂛𓏏𓏏) literally translated as “[the one] who comes being at peace”, was a Renaissance Man 4000 years before the Renaissance. Imhotep served in the coveted role of High Priest of Ra at Iwnw (𓂏𓂛𓏏), more commonly known as Heliopolis. As Pharaoh Djoser's vizier, Imhotep was Djoser's closest confidant and guided him in running his kingdom. After Djoser's death, Imhotep used his architectural skill to design and construct Djoser's tomb, the first pyramid of Egypt. But most importantly, he was a physician.⁹ The concept of medicine that Imhotep established dramatically changed the Egyptian practice of medicine from one reliant on magic to one rooted in an understanding of human biology.¹⁰ He invented concepts that doctors use to this day, and this was over 2000 years before Hippocrates, the “father of medicine”, was born. With his role and residence in Egypt, it is clear why Homer considers Egypt the land where healing is held in highest regard. And much like Homer, Imhotep's exact lifetime is somewhat difficult to understand as his legacy has overshadowed his actual lifetime.

⁹ Hurry, Jamieson B., Imhotep: The Egyptian Father of Medicine Proven by Historical Archives, Clifton, New Jersey: African Tree Press, 2012.

¹⁰ Breasted, James Henry. *The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus*. University of Chicago Press, 1930.

There is some conjecture over exactly when Imhotep lived. His grave/tomb remains undiscovered, meaning there is no body for radiocarbon dating. The oldest evidence of Imhotep's existence belongs to a statue base in King Djoser's tomb where Imhotep is listed as an advisor to the king.

"Chancellor of the King of Lower Egypt, the first one under the King, the Administrator of the Great Mansion, the hereditary noble, the High Priest of Heliopolis, the chief sculptor and the chief carpenter."¹¹

It is presumed that he outlived the pharaoh by a few years due to his possible involvement in the construction of the Pyramid of Sekhemkhet. This pyramid, sometimes called the Buried Pyramid, began construction around five years after Djoser's death. It is built in a similar architectural style to Djoser's pyramid making it likely that the same architect oversaw both projects.¹² With this design and an inscription of Imhotep's name on one of the walls within the structure, it seems likely that Imhotep was involved in the construction.¹³ The incomplete nature of the Buried Pyramid might have been due to the death of either the architect (presumably Imhotep) or the death of Pharaoh Sekhemkhet who died six years into his reign. Although later sources allege a different origin, the dating of the aforementioned works and his close relationship with Djoser establish his lifetime to have been definitively in the 27th century. From here we can understand the actions of his lifetime that would warrant a divine status after his death.

Imhotep was a rarity in the Egyptian world because although he lacked any form of familial ties to the royal lines of Egypt, his history was recorded to the same extent as many

¹¹ Statue Base of Pharaoh Djoser, Egyptian Museum of Cairo. This is my own translation corroborated by various sources including Petty's Hieroglyphic Dictionary.

¹² Goneim, M. Zakaria. *The Lost Pyramid*. Harlow, United Kingdom. Longmans, Green and Co. 1956. p.167

¹³ Goneim, *The Lost Pyramid*, 1956 p.167

pharaohs.¹⁴ Since pharaonic lines are typically inherited, there was a heavy emphasis on the parents of the pharaoh when recording their history. As Imhotep is not a royal himself, the available information on his parentage is limited. The best evidence we have indicates that Imhotep may have been the son or grandson of a man named Kanofer (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏), an architect, and the son of a woman named Khereduankh (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏).¹⁵ Although his parentage, or rather his ancestry, may contribute to his education and interest/skill in the architectural field, it doesn't provide any information on Imhotep's deification, as he was given a divine father after his death. It is possible that evidence of his human parents was intentionally forgotten following his deification to lend credence to his immortality through his assigned immortal father, Ptah.

Long before Imhotep was ever seen as a demigod, he was already connected closely with the gods as the High Priest of Ra at Heliopolis. In Egyptian, this title literally translates to the Greatest of Seers (𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏)¹⁶ as this was the individual responsible for communicating with the gods in times of crisis. It was also quite an honorable undertaking as later individuals to hold this position were commonly pharaohs or the direct family of pharaohs. This is a position that many people held throughout Egypt's expansive history. And since Imhotep is the only one to be deified, it seems his legacy must have been built on other, far more unique accomplishments. The Famine Stele tells of one of these events.

The Famine Stele tells of one of Imhotep's accomplishments as high priest.¹⁷ During his time, Egypt was struck by a terrible drought and famine that lasted for seven years. The public

¹⁴ The definition of history here encompasses all the achievements credited to Imhotep during his actual lifetime. While most of the evidence is derived from periods after Imhotep's death, they have been identified as widely circulating stories going back to his lifetime.

¹⁵ Hurry, *Imhotep*, 2012. p.4

¹⁶ Statue Base of Pharaoh Djoser, Egyptian Museum of Cairo

¹⁷ There has been conjecture over whether or not Imhotep is the priest performing the feats in the Famine Stele. Some scholars, such as Lichtheim and Barguet, have suggested it is a priest working on behalf of Imhotep rather than Imhotep himself. This is due to the structure of the sentence with a noun-noun construction (Imhotep - Priest).

had grown angry because of the drought and had begun breaking laws. Djoser sent Imhotep, named son of Ptah,¹⁸ to find the home of Hapy, the god of the flooding Nile. Imhotep goes to the library of the “House of the Nests” in Hermopolis, Thoth’s sacred city.¹⁹ Imhotep learns where Hapy resides and informs the king. Imhotep then goes to Hapy’s birth place and finds that the god Khnum has taken up residence there. In his sleep, Imhotep meets Khnum who offers him good things and tells him he will make the Nile flow again. Imhotep returns with this information to King Djoser. Djoser then issued a decree for the restoration of Khnum’s temples in Egypt. Shortly thereafter, the famine ended.²⁰

The Famine Stele, as Egyptologists recognize it today, was inscribed during the Ptolemaic period.²¹ Yet the text appears to have originated long before that inscription. Imhotep is not identified as a god, but rather as the demigod son of Ptah.²² By the time of Ptolemies, Imhotep had been widely revered as a god for nearly three centuries. The dating of the text would have to be sometime after his worship as a demigod began around the 25th century BCE

This could mean either the Priest of Imhotep or the Priest, Imhotep. Although this text is inscribed in the Ptolemaic period, it is telling a story from when Imhotep was only a demigod and he wouldn’t yet have a cult of worship and no priests, meaning it must be Imhotep. It should also be noted that during the period the story is referencing, Imhotep was the High Priest of Ra. The role of the High Priest of Ra is to communicate with the gods to prevent natural disasters, so communicating with Khnum to end a drought is something Imhotep would have done.

¹⁸ Since Imhotep is identified as the son of Ptah and not as a god, this story was most likely composed during the period following his death and before his full deification.

¹⁹ Before Ptah was identified as Imhotep’s father, Imhotep was closely associated with Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom and intellect. Thoth was viewed as Imhotep patron god. Once Imhotep starts earning epithets, they closely resemble some of Thoth’s.

²⁰ Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 3 University of California Press, Berkeley. 2006 p. 94-100

²¹ The dating of this text goes back to the Ptolemaic period. Scholars such as Barguet have argued that this story was created in the Ptolemaic period to exert control over the Temple of Khnum at Elephantine. However, as mythology shows, it is more common for a story to be co-opted to provide reasoning rather than inventing a story.

²² I have chosen to refer to the story contained within the famine stele as a text due to its likely origin in the written text the Westcar Papyrus, another written text, and further to establish that I am working with a physical record. But it seems likely that the story told in the famine stele was passed down for most of its lifetime in an oral tradition, like the epics of Homer. This explains the lack of records of this story and the anachronistic nature of the text which seems to suggest an earlier origin.

and before he was recognized as the god of medicine in 525 BCE.²³ Another detail that identifies the origin of this story is the use of both names of the Pharaoh, the cartouche name Djoser and the serekh name Netjerikhet. This is one of only three sources connecting these two names that hadn't appeared frequently together since the reign of Djoser himself. Taken with the portrayal of Imhotep as a demigod, this would suggest that this story had been passed down for at least several centuries.

If we accept that the text is older than the Ptolemaic period, as seems quite likely, the story told in the Famine Stele would fill in the holes in a piece of Egyptian literature quite well. The Westcar Papyrus, written sometime between the 17th and 16th century BCE, is the story of Pharaoh Cheops' sons telling the stories of five ancient Egyptian priests/viziers using magic to circumvent calamity.²⁴ The second through fifth have been preserved in their entirety, providing insight into the connections between the stories and the reason for their inclusion. Each of these stories features a priest or vizier performing incredible feats of magic in a story where water plays a prominent role. The second story features King Nebka's chief lector Ubaoner who creates an alligator statue that comes to life upon touching water. The third story features Djadjaemankh, advisor to Pharaoh Seneferu, suggesting that the pharaoh be sailed around the palace lake as a solution to his boredom. In the fourth story, a magic man named Dedi reveals a prophecy indicating that the future kings in Queen Rededjet's womb will be able to guide Khufu through the shrine of Thoth.²⁵ Finally, in the fifth story, the maid servant of the queen, Rededjet, is killed

²³ This date of deification is derived from the first depictions of one of Imhotep's priests. This statue identifies the man as a priest of Imhotep. Only gods had priests, indicating that this statue had to be constructed after Imhotep was deified. Since this statue dates to 525 BCE, this is likely the time when Imhotep was deified. Hurry, *Imhotep*, 2012

²⁴ Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol.1, University of California Press. 1973. p.94

²⁵ It may not seem immediately obvious what this story has to do with water, aside from a general "Water Bird" in the text. The story makes heavy reference to the sky goddess Nut's womb. In Egyptian art, this was depicted as a great container of water indicating some connection between wombs and water to the ancient Egyptians.

by a crocodile next to a body of water for threatening to tell the king of her transgressions. The only remnants of the first story reference Pharaoh Djoser, an unnamed priest/advisor of Djoser and some great magical deed the advisor performed. If this text were to follow the pattern of the remaining stories, the missing text most likely involved a story featuring water in a prominent role. It is well recorded that Imhotep was the only vizier to Pharaoh Djoser, indicating that the missing text of the Westcar Papyrus features Imhotep. Thus, the perfect story to fill this hole is the story depicted in the Famine Stele. And interestingly, there is further evidence in the adaptation of this story by other religious groups.

Scholars speculate that some passages and stories from the Torah may have originated in Egyptian Hieroglyphic writings and there has been a special emphasis on the Westcar papyrus providing the stories of Genesis 42-44.²⁶ This section of Genesis tells the story of Joseph in Egypt when he is serving as the advisor to the Pharaoh.²⁷ During a massive famine, his brothers come to Egypt to request grain from the Pharaoh's reserves. Joseph uses this situation to frame his brother Benjamin for theft as retribution against his brothers.²⁸ The actions of Joseph are strikingly similar to those done by the various viziers throughout the Westcar Papyrus.²⁹ The stories of Joseph and Potifer's wife, Joseph's silver cup and Joseph's communications with G-d are all reflected in this text.³⁰ The only thing that is missing from the Westcar Papyrus that is present in the story from Genesis is the famine preceding the events, suggesting that the first story in the Westcar Papyrus has something to do with a famine. From the surrounding texts we

²⁶ Fuller, David J. "The Westcar Papyrus and Genesis 42-44: An Overlooked Reference?" *The Jewish Bible quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2022): 192–199.

²⁷ Some religious leaders of the Abrahamic faith have suggested that Joseph and Imhotep are the same. This may be due to their Pharaohs being similar (And Joseph's is never really named). This claim is completely unsubstantiated but it needed to be mentioned.

²⁸ Genesis, 42-44

²⁹ Fuller. "The Westcar Papyrus and Genesis 42-44: An Overlooked Reference?" (2022)

³⁰ There is another similarity between Joseph and the magicians of the Westcar Papyrus. Like Dedi, Joseph died at 110 years old. This may lend further credence to the idea that the story of Joseph was inspired by this text.

also know that the story has to do with a priest/vizier living during the reign of Djoser, presumably Imhotep, performing a miracle and there should be a heavy emphasis on water. The only story that fits in this 17th-16th Century BCE text is the story portrayed in the Famine Stele and it fits the pattern perfectly. Djoser's vizier, Imhotep, convinces the god Khnum to let the Nile flow again and end the Egyptian famine.

The best piece of evidence to confirm this story would be architectural remains of the Temple of Khnum at Elephantine that Imhotep and Djoser agreed to build for the god. While there is no evidence of a temple built during the reign of Djoser, there was a Temple of Khnum built at Elephantine sometime before the 14th century BCE. It is then possible that the construction of this temple was done to fulfill the story, which means the story would have been in existence for some time already. The construction of a temple by Imhotep in the story of the Famine Stele. is an interesting detail because temple construction in ancient Egypt often carried a divine association.

Imhotep was well known as an architect, perhaps giving him more reason to be associated with the gods during his lifetime. Although dwarfed in comparison by the Great Pyramids that followed, Djoser's Pyramid (also identified as the Step Pyramid) was an architectural marvel at its time. It is widely considered to be the world's oldest substantial monumental structure to be built of dressed stone, and it existed as a prototype for the Great Pyramids that would be constructed during later dynasties.³¹ Only the most brilliant mind of the time could have pioneered this structure, and that mind belonged to Imhotep. There is ample information that would support the claim that Imhotep's deification was the result of his role as an architect. But this evidence is contested by his role in the Egyptian pantheon.

³¹ Lehner, Mark. *The Complete Pyramids*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997. p.84

When Imhotep was first worshiped by the Egyptian people, it was as the demigod son of Ptah, the craftsman god. The god of crafting is an appropriate father for a man famous for designing and constructing a pyramid, providing credence to the idea that Imhotep's rise to a divine status was due to his role as an architect. But when Imhotep himself becomes a god, he is worshiped as the god of medicine, a far cry from his role as an architect. It is still possible that Imhotep's architectural work earned him his deification. In this circumstance his role in the pantheon would have been derived from the makeup of the Egyptian pantheon at the time. There is little evidence of an Egyptian god of medicine during Imhotep's lifetime. It is possible that due to the lack of a physician in the Egyptian pantheon, the role of the physician god was forced upon him. In truth, there was no reason to force the role of a physician onto Imhotep as he was a physician during his lifetime. Perhaps this better serves as the basis for his deification.

Surprisingly, the aspect of Imhotep's life we have the least information about is his role as a Physician. He is definitely a god of medicine when he becomes a god. Even as a demigod, he was being prayed to for help with physical maladies.³² The reason people perceive Imhotep this way goes back to the perception of medicine by the Egyptians. Imhotep was a proud practitioner of curative magic in his position as high priest. His position is further proven by the existence of the Edwin Smith Papyrus.

This papyrus, purchased by Edwin Smith in 1862, is the oldest medical treatise on Earth. It has been given the title "The Secret Book of the Physician" due to a possible reference by that name in another text.³³ The text was written in the Second Intermediate Period of Egypt's history (somewhere around the 16th or 17th dynasty). This was roughly 1000 years after Imhotep's lifetime. But the grammar used in this text seems to more closely resemble the grammar used by

³² Hurry, *Imhotep*, 2012. P. 29

³³ Breasted. *The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus*. 1930. p.10

Egyptians in the Old Kingdom (when Imhotep was alive) rather than the grammar of the period it was produced in. It was quite common for old texts to be copied for the purposes of preservation. But why was it connected to Imhotep?

The most ardent supporter of Imhotep being the author of the text is James Henry Breasted, the first man to create a translation of the Edwin Smith Papyrus. He asserted in the translation's introduction that Imhotep, being the only well known and well regarded physician of the time, had to be responsible for the full text this was copied from. Although Egyptologists do not have anything definitively written by Imhotep to cross examine the Edwin Smith Papyrus with, it is well known that Imhotep was a prolific scribe. Most statues of Imhotep depict him sitting down writing. He is also invoked in the poem/song, the Harper's Lay, in the same line as a known writer. This song inscribed in the tomb of King Intef states "I have heard the words of Imhotep and Hardjedef. Whose sayings are recited whole."³⁴ Hardjedef composed the Instruction of Hardjedef, a piece of didactic literature from the Old Kingdom. To invoke the sayings of Hardjedef and Imhotep would suggest Imhotep was a well revered writer. With his intellect, knowledge and skill, it is likely that Imhotep wrote the entire text out. Details from the text seem to corroborate Imhotep's authorship.

From what we know about Imhotep, he was a priest, architect and physician. Someone working entirely in the realm of religion, like a priest, would typically be inclined to put full reliance for medical assistance in the gods and magic. Someone working in the physical world, like an architect or physician, would be inclined to work within the real scientific world. So someone like Imhotep who is all three would most likely split the difference, including both real world science and divine magic in a medical treatise, which is exactly what the Edwin Smith

³⁴ Lichtheim, Miriam. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol.1, University of California Press. 1973. p.194-195

Papyrus is. The first section of the text consists of scientific diagnoses and treatments of physical ailments and the next section consists of spells for removing a “pest of the year”, some form of sickness. If there is one person who would compose a text like this, it would be Imhotep.

There is another piece of evidence that seems to imply that Imhotep is the creator of this text, and it is easy to see why it would be missed. A large section of this text is devoted to removing a plague. Throughout this section, the text makes repeated references to Heliopolis, where Imhotep served as the High Priest. It would not be out of the ordinary to reference this city when invoking its patron deities, but one deity invoked in the text is not connected to Heliopolis. In the Third Incantation, *Another Protection Against the Pest of the Year*, the person doing the spell says “O Meskhenet, that came forth out of Heliopolis.”³⁵ According to Egyptian myth, this fertility goddess has no patron city nor was she associated with any particular region. So why is she coming forth from Heliopolis, a city already closely associated with the great gods Horus, Atum and Ra? The only reasonable answer seems to be that she is being invoked by someone with ties to Heliopolis, perhaps its High Priest, Imhotep. This text was not discovered in Heliopolis so an allusion to Heliopolis adds credence to the idea that this text is a copy of something much older.

This text is in many ways the culmination of Imhotep’s lifetime. A man with one foot in real world science and another in the realm of the gods created a medical treatise that relies on both scientific medicine and magical invocations. It also has an emphasis on Heliopolis where Imhotep served in one of his most coveted positions. But most importantly, this text would insure the legacy of its author as a physician, a legacy we know Imhotep had. This is quite

³⁵ Breasted. *The Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus*. 1930. p.479

revealing concerning the reason for Imhotep's deification. But to truly understand why he was deified after his death, it is important to understand his death.

Throughout the history and mythology of the ancient world, an apotheosis tends to follow a remarkable death. Caesar's deification followed a vicious assassination plot by those he trusted. Asklepios' deification followed his death at the hands of Zeus to prevent a war. Imhotep's apotheosis is not preceded by that same type of circumstance, which makes understanding the reason behind his deification slightly more difficult. There is certainly more information to be uncovered surrounding his death but that will require the discovery of his burial. Many individuals have tried in vain to find the tomb of Imhotep. It is believed that he was buried somewhere in Saqqara in the proximity of the tomb of King Djoser. As unremarkable as his death remains, it is what happens to him afterwards that is truly remarkable.

Imhotep was undisputedly born human. Even though we have yet to find his remains, there is no evidence to suggest he was fictitious, and the contemporary references to him corroborate that claim. His first step towards deification came in the adoption of divine parentage. Throughout the early study of Egyptology it was believed that Imhotep became the son of Ptah in the New Kingdom of Egypt (roughly 1580 BCE).³⁶ But in 1916 CE, a new papyrus was discovered which seemed to refute the previous assertion giving Imhotep his divine parentage in the 4th dynasty.³⁷ It stated that King Menkaure, the son of Kheops, established a

³⁶ All legends vary with every telling but it should be mentioned that, at least once, Imhotep was named as the son of Wahibre. Wahibre was a Pharaoh in Egypt's 26th Dynasty, long after the lifetimes of both Imhotep and Amenhotep. At the moment, I am unable to determine exactly why someone living at this point would choose to ascribe a Pharaoh as the father of Imhotep when he was already seen as the son of Ptah. Wahibre ruled close to the time of Imhotep's Apotheosis in 525 BCE. Although Imhotep is identified by the statue as the son of Wahibre, there is no indication that this is the Pharaoh Wahibre, as the name Wahibre is missing a cartouche. The name Wahibre was quite common in the Old Kingdom so it is possible this was Imhotep's father's name. However, this statue was constructed in the Ptolemaic period, millennia after Imhotep began to be worshiped as the son of Ptah. I am not certain what this inscription is suggesting.

³⁷ The Oxyrhynchus Papyri: 11.1381-1. A 2nd century AD copy of a text discovered in the Temple of Imhotep in the 3rd century BCE.

temple for Imhotep, son of Ptah. In reality, Menkaure was the great grandson of Kheops, thus putting the veracity of this document into question. However, since the writer of the text was living several centuries after the dynasty and was able to identify multiple members of that family, it seems that this text still holds merit. Imhotep was perceived as partly divine shortly after his own lifetime. Then he existed as a demigod for nearly 1500 years before becoming a true god and part of the pantheon. Ultimately his rise to an immortal status seems to have been a result of all the actions of his life, with his role as an architect and physician standing out the most.

It seems that people in the present may recognize the reason behind Imhotep's ascension quite well. There's a saying in the present day: "My body is a temple." It would seem the Egyptians had a similar, or at least inverse, conception concerning the body and temples. In *Mummies, Magic and Medicine* it is postulated that the Egyptians saw the temples of gods as their physical manifestations on earth, a type of body for the gods.³⁸ Imhotep was an architect and a physician. He constructed the bodies of gods on earth and repaired the bodies of mankind. Add to this his work as a high priest and the pharaoh's vizier and it is easily understandable why Imhotep was deified as the god of medicine, a role that someone needed to fill in the Egyptian Pantheon.

During Imhotep's lifetime, there was no definitive god of medicine or healing. There were magic deities like Isis (Aset) who filled the role when magic and medicine were indistinguishable. There were also gods of intelligence who held sway over the sciences like Thoth (Techuti). But neither of these gods were medicine gods. This theoretically means there

³⁸ Price, Campbell. *Mummies, Magic and Medicine in Ancient Egypt Multidisciplinary Essays for Rosalie David*. Edited by Paul T. Nicholson, Andrew Chamberlain, Roger Forshaw, and Campbell Price. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016. p.169-178

was a place open in the Egyptian Pantheon for Imhotep, which he claimed in 525 BCE.³⁹ The ascension to immortality was deserved for a man who accomplished so much during his lifetime.

If it was the combined role of architect and healer, and his position in the Pharaoh's court that assured Imhotep his place in the Egyptian Pantheon, then anyone who accomplished similar feats should also have been deified. This is exactly the case with another man who accomplished similar things, and that man was the only other non-pharaoh to be deified before the Greek conquest of Alexander. This was Imhotep's "brother" Amenhotep, son of Hapu.

Amenhotep, Son of Hapu

Quite fittingly, Amenhotep son of Hapu lived during the reign of another Amenhotep, Pharaoh Amenhotep III (18th Dynasty).⁴⁰ Amenhotep's mother was a woman named Iti and his father, a scribe, was obviously named Hapu. Literary excellence would play a substantial role in Amenhotep's life and death as most statues of Amenhotep depict him writing. He was not as well known or regarded as Imhotep so his lifetime is not as well recorded. What is known about Amenhotep are the achievements of his life that earned him immortality.

Amenhotep is most famous for being the Scribe of Recruits under Pharaoh Amenhotep III. This position put Amenhotep in charge of organizing manpower for all of the pharaoh's projects; both civilian (staffing construction projects) and military (filling up the armies).⁴¹ A position of such high regard as this would definitely raise the perception of an individual to something more than human, much like the position of vizier for Imhotep. For this position

³⁹ Hurry, *Imhotep*, 2012. P.38

⁴⁰ Given the large presence of the name Amenhotep throughout this period of Egyptian history, I will be referring to the physician Amenhotep son of Hapu as "Amenhotep" in this chapter. All others will be identified as pharaoh followed by their ordinal number.

⁴¹ Wildung, Dietrich. *Egyptian Saints: Deification in Pharaonic Egypt*. New York, New York; New York University Press. 1977. p.84

Amenhotep was even given an epithet “True of Voice” which was inscribed many times on his tomb.

Although the responsibility of the Scribe of Recruits is only managing people, Amenhotep accomplished so much more during his service. In addition to recruiting the manpower for constructing public monuments, he is recorded as having designed the monuments. Amenhotep famously designed the Mortuary Temple of Amenhotep III. He also created the plans used for both the Temple of Karnak and the Luxor Temple.⁴² If being an architect is truly a way to connect with the gods as Imhotep’s lifetime seems to suggest, Amenhotep’s reason for rising to divine status is clear. But interestingly, his lifetime includes no references to him being a doctor.

Amenhotep was a fantastic scribe by all accounts but he lacks the history as a physician, even in the magical sense that came to be associated with Imhotep. It is possible that he wrote some important medical treatise as it is suspected Imhotep did, but there is no confirmation of this. But he still somehow became a god of medicine. This was confirmed by a 26th dynasty statue base reading “O, Prince Amenhotep, son of Hapu, justified. Come O good doctor.”⁴³ It is unlikely that the Egyptians were just deifying any skilled mortal. But perhaps the feats accomplished by Amenhotep brought to mind those accomplished by Imhotep, leading to both being deified together as medicine/healing gods in 525 BCE.

As with any pantheon, multiple deities are capable of filling a very similar role within one pantheon. There were multiple gods of warfare in the Greek pantheon with Ares and Athena serving as the main two. Having spent their lifetimes serving kings and constructing long lasting monuments, there was no reason to limit the sphere of control to either Imhotep or Amenhotep.

⁴² Wildung. *Egyptian Saints*. 1977. p.84

⁴³ Karnak Statue Base by Psamtek’s daughter in Nunn. *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*. 1996. p. 122

So in the minds of the Ancient Egyptians, they were brothers, both ruling over the dominion of medicine and healing.

Although in name, Amenhotep is not quite as well known as Imhotep, Amenhotep played a larger role in the mind of the famous Greco-Roman physicians. Imhotep's temple had been long forgotten by the rise of Greek civilization, but some of the most famous physicians from the ancient world, like Galen, spent years studying in the Temple of Amenhotep in Egypt.⁴⁴ Amenhotep's legacy was ensured by accomplishing so much, just like Imhotep.

Imhotep's lifetime was incredible and well deserving of an apotheosis. This is not just my opinion though. The ancient Egyptians agreed that the feats Imhotep accomplished should make anyone who accomplished them worthy of deification. This is why Amenhotep, son of Hapu was deified alongside Imhotep, even though Imhotep's first steps toward a divine status occurred centuries before Amenhotep was born. All of Egypt would remember Imhotep for his accomplishments. But Egypt did not exist in isolation. It was part of a growing network of Mediterranean civilizations. So how was Imhotep remembered by people outside of Egypt?

Aside from Hollywood horror, the best direct reception of Imhotep was by the late Classical Greeks, to whom he remained a god of medicine. When the Egyptian pantheon definitively permeated Greek religion, following the conquest of Alexander the Great, Imhotep was seen as the Egyptian parallel of Asklepios. But it is possible and likely that Imhotep had reached Greece centuries before Alexander's conquest.

⁴⁴ Nunn, John. (1996). *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*. University of Oklahoma Press. p. 207-208

Chapter 2: Amenhotep's World Tour

The History and Precedent of Greco-Egyptian Gods

When two pagan cultures intersect, there are a variety of possible outcomes pertaining to the perception and understanding of gods. Sometimes one pantheon completely usurps the other. For example, when the Romans came into contact with the pagan Druids, all Druidic practices were forbidden, allowing the Roman pantheon to be the sole religion.⁴⁵ Another common outcome is that the pantheons are blended together in a syncretic fashion. We can see this in the exchange of Roman and Celtic gods as the Roman Empire expanded.⁴⁶ The Britons received a number of hybrid gods, like Apollo Cunomaglus, which combined the Celtic and Roman Pantheons.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Romans brought back some Celtic deities, like Epona, and incorporated them into their own Pantheon.⁴⁸ Many scholars are of the mindset that when the Egyptian gods were brought into the Classical world, they were initially blended, joining the pantheon in their Egyptian identities. And eventually, shortly before the decline in pagan worship throughout the empire, the gods of Egypt and the Greco-Roman pantheon were considered one in the same.

The Egyptian gods are frequently subsumed into the religions of other prominent Mediterranean civilizations. This continuous process appears to start centuries earlier than scholars have concluded. Indeed Alexander the Great famously co-opted Egyptian iconography in Greek Art as part of his conquest of Egypt.⁴⁹ This evidence serves as the basis for the claim

⁴⁵ Watts, *Religion in Late Roman Britain*, 1998. p.1

⁴⁶ I use the term Celtic here in this circumstance as it is the choice word of the authors of the various texts I have pulled this information from. But Celtic is a somewhat meaningless term as it broadly describes the peoples from Gaul up through Ireland and Caledonia. And each of these cultures is quite unique.

⁴⁷ Watts, *Religion in Late Roman Britain*, 1998. p.9

⁴⁸ Watts, *Religion in Late Roman Britain*, 1998. p.82

⁴⁹ Worthington, Ian. *Alexander the Great: Man and God*. 1st ed. London ;: Routledge, 2014. p.83-90

that Alexander brought the Greek gods to Egypt. However, an examination of Bronze Age migration and trade reveals evidence that Alexander was only continuing a tradition of cultural and religious appropriation that had existed for centuries. After the Egyptian gods are brought into the Greek pantheon during the Bronze Age, they lose pieces of their Egyptian identities becoming exclusively Greek and then exclusively Roman. It ultimately culminates in the Egyptian gods being nothing more than the disguises that the Roman gods wear when they visit Egypt in the literature of the early Roman Empire.

If we are to understand how the pantheons of Egypt and Greece were combined, we have to begin by looking at the point at which they were undisputedly the same and work our way backwards through ancient history. We can find the latest point in the timeline chronologically well after Greece had been conquered by the Roman Empire, in the retellings of Classical Myth by the Roman poet, Publius Ovidius Naso. Ovid's work, *The Metamorphoses* was composed in the 1st century BCE. This collection of stories told of a number of mythological transformations from one form into another.⁵⁰ In Book V, Ovid told of the transformation of the Roman gods into the Egyptian gods. The Olympians were fighting the monstrous Typhon. All of the gods fled to Egypt except for Zeus, who stood up to Typhon only to have his sinews removed. Pan follows the Olympians to Egypt to beg them to rejoin the fight. Upon arriving in Egypt, Pan sees the Olympians in the aforementioned forms of the Egyptian gods. Ovid says:

“[h]ow the Gods fled to Egypt's slimy soil, and hid their heads beneath the banks of Nile. How Typhon, from the conquer'd skies, pursued their routed godheads to the seven-mouthed flood. Forced every God, his fury to escape, Some beastly form to take, or earthly shape. Jove (so she sung) was changed into a ram, From whence the horns of Libyan Ammon came. Bacchus a goat, Apollo was a crow, Phoebe a cat; the wife of Jove a cow, whose hue was whiter than the falling snow. Mercury to a nasty Ibis turned.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ These stories were pulled from widely accepted versions of mythology. The focus of these stories is the element of transformation as opposed to the ancillary characters.

⁵¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 5.327-331. Trans. Kline

This is not a transformation of one pantheon into another. Rather, this is the story of the gods using alternative identities to be recognized by the Egyptians. In the context of this story, the Egyptian gods don't exist. They are just different names and depictions of the Roman gods. These animal headed gods are immediately recognizable as the Egyptian gods, at least according to Egyptian art. Apollo takes the crow-like form of Horus.⁵² Phoebe becomes the cat goddess Bastet. Hera becomes the cow goddess Hathor and Hermes becomes the Ibis god Thoth. They have changed into these forms quite deliberately according to the story. The Romans recognized the Egyptian gods as anthropomorphized animals because that is how they were depicted in Egyptian art. So the understanding of the Romans was that the Roman gods appeared to the Egyptians with the heads of animals, establishing that the pantheons were the same, but with different depictions. Egyptians would recognize the Roman gods, but only if they maintained an animal headed appearance. When the gods had to flee from Mount Olympus to Egypt, in order to be recognized as the gods they were, they needed to wear the animal heads familiar to the Egyptians. Therefore Zeus is the ram headed Ammon, while Hermes is the ibis headed Thoth, and Asclepius is the demigod physician Imhotep.⁵³ Although the last pairing follows the conventions of Roman and Egyptian gods at the time, evidence suggests that the Romans had just returned the original identity of Asclepius rather than assigning him that of another god.⁵⁴

The understanding of the Egyptian gods in Rome was a direct result of the Greek conquest of Egypt during the reign of Alexander the Great. As Alexander continued his conquest

⁵² Those familiar with Egyptian mythology will immediately recognize that Horus is depicted as a falcon or hawk, not a crow. It has been well established outside of this text that Horus is the Egyptian counterpart of Horus. There is proof of this in the Egyptian city Idfu being renamed Apollopolis as it was the sacred city of Horus and thus Apollo.

⁵³ Asklepios does not appear in this section of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Chronologically Asklepios won't be born until sometime after the events that transpire with Typhon. The Romans did identify Asklepios as Imhotep in the same way the other gods were identified with their Egyptian counterparts. (Hurry)

⁵⁴ The representation of Asklepios as Imhotep is quite common in post Hellenistic artwork. With the names Imhotep and Asklepios being interchanged in inscriptions quite regularly. (Oxyrhynchus 11.1381)

into Egypt, he began to combine the pantheons.⁵⁵ The historical record regards Alexander as a liberator of the Egyptian people and proclaimed him the “Son of Ammon.”⁵⁶ In the Hellenic World, Alexander the Great had already fashioned himself as the son of Zeus, the king of the Greek pantheon. Ammon was the figurehead of the Egyptian pantheon at the time and Zeus was the head of the Greek pantheon. As Alexander the Great claimed to be the son of both of these deities, it makes sense why Alexander would merge the two, combining attributes and leaving the Hellenic world with Zeus Ammon.⁵⁷ From there the rest of the pantheons began to merge. Osiris and Hades, lords of the afterlife, were brought together into Serapis.⁵⁸ Thoth and Hermes were brought together into Hermes Trismegistus.⁵⁹ Soon after the rest of the pantheon followed suit. It is this historical moment that many have marked as the origins of the combined Greek and Egyptian pantheons. But the true origin extends back before the Hellenistic period and Alexander the Great, before the adoption of Isis in the Archaic period, and even before the downfall of civilization in the 12th century BCE.⁶⁰

The Hellenic people regularly took gods from the Egyptians outright and combined them with members of their own pantheon to create new gods. This sets up the idea of an Egyptian being brought into the Greek pantheon first as his own entity and later being combined with other important figures in Greek mythology. It seems the first example to fit this pattern was the well regarded physician god Imhotep.

⁵⁵ Worthington. *Alexander the Great*. 2014. p.90

⁵⁶ Worthington. *Alexander the Great*. 2014. p.85

⁵⁷ Worthington. *Alexander the Great*. 2014. p.85

⁵⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica

⁵⁹ Hart, George. *The Routledge Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses*. 2nd ed. London ;: Routledge, 2005.

⁶⁰ The adoption of Isis in the Greco-Roman world is quite different from the rest of the Egyptian pantheon. She is worshiped as a Greek entity from the start. Since her worship does not influence how we understand Imhotep’s adoption by the Greeks, I am foregoing further detail here.

Imhotep, Pajawon & Paieon

As we have seen, throughout the history of worship of the Greco-Roman pantheon, bringing the gods of two unique civilizations into one pantheon was useful for ancient rulers. The people and gods of ancient civilizations were intrinsically linked, and it was much easier to subdue a people if the worship of their preexisting gods was permitted to continue. But interestingly, the adoption of Egyptian gods by the Greeks seems to have existed before the Greeks were conquering the Egyptians. It begins in the Bronze Age when Egyptian civilization had reached a peak and the Hellenic world was plagued by destruction. Evidence suggests that the Greeks inherited the Egyptian gods back in the Bronze Age, specifically pointing to the adoption of Imhotep as Paieon centuries before Asklepios' first testimonies were written. It seems that the transformation of the Egyptian Imhotep into the Proto Greek deity Pajawon was initiated by Pharaoh Amenhotep III.⁶¹

Amenhotep III was the ninth pharaoh of the 18th dynasty ruling during the 15th Century. His reign marked one of the peaks in Egyptian prosperity which earned him the title Amenhotep the Great. His success extended beyond his own rule with a court filled with some of Egypt's greatest minds including Amenhotep, son of Hapu. As mentioned in Chapter One, he was one of the few non-royals to become a god. In the later part of his life, Amenhotep had gained significant weight and most likely suffered from constant pain. He died after a nearly 40 year reign, passing a kingdom at its peak to his son Amenhotep IV, known more commonly as Akhenaten.⁶² Although Amenhotep III accomplished a great deal in his lifetime, his most notable

⁶¹ For clarification's sake, Paieon and Pajawon are the same god. Pajawon is the transliteration of his name in Linear B and Paieon is the transliteration of his name in Classical Greek. I will be primarily using Paieon to identify the god regardless of time period. Pajawon will be reserved for making reference to his name as written in Linear B.

⁶² O'Connor, David B., and Eric H. Cline. Amenhotep III : Perspectives on His Reign. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998. p.22

achievement is his establishment of trade and communication systems throughout the Mediterranean world.⁶³ In addition to all of Amenhotep III's successes as a ruler, his reign saw a resurgence in the worship of the physician demigod Imhotep.⁶⁴ The name of Imhotep began appearing with more frequency in tombs and libation offerings, as in this invocation: "The wab-priests may stretch to you their arms with libations on the soil, as it is done for Imhotep with the remains of the water bowl."⁶⁵ It was during Amenhotep's reign that an historical parallel to Imhotep, the aforementioned Amenhotep, son of Hapu, emerged.⁶⁶

Given the growing popularity of Imhotep, and Amenhotep's attempts at foreign relations, it was likely that Amenhotep III intentionally brought some reference to Imhotep with him on his travels. As mentioned, towards the end of his life, Amenhotep dealt with extreme illness and physical injury due to his weight.⁶⁷ When a widely beloved pharaoh is experiencing severe physical distress, physicians would be at the front of the mind, specifically Egypt's only demigod of medicine, Imhotep. But there is little reference to Imhotep in connection to Amenhotep III or his health. This makes sense when one considers that although Imhotep was worshiped in association with medicine and healing, all available evidence suggests that Imhotep's evolution into Paieon has nothing to do with his role as a physician. Rather it comes from one of his greatest recorded feats, ending a famine. The most probable scenario is as follows:

Amenhotep III sent an emissary around the Mediterranean. Mycenae was dealing with the beginning of a catastrophic famine when the Egyptians arrived.⁶⁸ The Egyptians shared their

⁶³ O'Connor, David B., and Eric H. Cline. *Amenhotep III : Perspectives on His Reign*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998. p.236-238



⁶⁴ Naunton, Chris. *Searching for the Lost Tombs of Egypt*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2018. p.33

⁶⁵ Wildung. *Egyptian Saints*. 1977. p.34

⁶⁶ Amenhotep's deification was a direct result of historical parallels to Imhotep.

⁶⁷ It is most likely his weight gain that led to his early death in his 40s.

⁶⁸ Although the Minoans and Mycenaean existed as separate civilizations until what is understood as the Mycenaean takeover of Crete, for the purpose of this analysis, I am grouping them together as one larger Greek

own story of overcoming a famine; Imhotep's voyage to Hermopolis. The Mycenaeans, having learned about this Physician god who ended a famine, incorporated Imhotep into their pantheon as "The One of Hermopolis" aka P3.n.wnw, () transliterated in their own tongue as Pajawone (). And from that point onward, Paieon, the Great Physician god, grew in popularity as the need for medical assistance grew.

The reign of Amenhotep III is well regarded as the peak of Egyptian civilization. During his reign, Egyptian territory was prosperous and large. As history shows, once everything is going well at home, a monarch will begin engaging in foreign relations. At the end of his reign, Amenhotep III was quite ill and no longer traveling, but he still set out emissaries around the Mediterranean to create relations with foreign rulers and peoples. The exact destinations of the trip are listed in the Mortuary Temple of Amenhotep III (constructed by Amenhotep, son of Hapu)⁶⁹ on a statue base. Famously called "The Aegean List", this statue lists the voyages of Amehotep's political emissaries and details about the regions indicating some knowledge of the regions that had to come from experience. The locations the emissaries were sent to include Messenia, Western Anatolia, Crete and the Argolid, home of the Mycenaeans.⁷⁰

The voyage certainly transpired as written, at least to Mycenae. There have been a number of Faience Fragments discovered in Mycenae that were crafted in Egypt under the reign of Amenhotep III.⁷¹ These fragments are not like most faience fragments discovered in Egypt. In

Bronze Age civilization. This is primarily due to the evidence being written in the Mycenaean Linear B script even though it was discovered in Knossos, the central palace of Crete (and the Minoan Civilization).

⁶⁹ While there would be no reason to lie about these travels, I think it is important to emphasize who exactly was inscribing them. The Mortuary Complex of Amenhotep III was designed and constructed by Amenhotep, son of Hapu. This Amenhotep was given the epithet "True of Voice" throughout his lifetime. Even if the evidence didn't exist to support the veracity of this inscription (which it does), it was written by a trusted man in Egyptian society.

⁷⁰ The Aegean List, Statue Base in the Mortuary Temple of Amenhotep III

⁷¹ Of the eleven fragments discovered in Mycenae, 10 of them bear his name and the pharaonic epithet. And in Egypt, these pieces would bear the name of the ruler under whom it was built.

Egypt, Faience bricks were one sided for use in construction. In contrast, the fragments from Mycenae have writing on both the front and the back. No examples of double sided inscriptions have been found in Egypt during Amenhotep III's reign. It would take extra effort to make these which would be wasted if only one side was going to be visible. These bricks are only meant as gifts and thus would not have recreations embedded into Egyptian architecture.⁷² This has led scholars to conclude that these pieces were not stolen but rather intentionally crafted as gifts made to mirror Egyptian artistic styles without serving as functional; they could be presented as works of art but not built into any structures. They are exactly the type of goods that one ruler would exchange with another in an attempt to create diplomatic relations. It is clear that Egyptians sent on behalf of Pharaoh Amenhotep III traveled to Mycenae. And their goal was establishing a relationship between the two peoples through an exchange of gifts. But it seems the Egyptians brought more than just artistic pieces with them. They brought a demigod, worshiped in the same manner as a god, Imhotep.

While Egypt was at the peak of its civilization, the rest of the Mediterranean world was headed towards turbulent times with what has been dubbed by scholars as the "Bronze Age Collapse".⁷³ There have been a number of reasons cited for this collapse. These include disease, natural disaster and the attack of the Sea People. It is difficult to say what exactly led to all of the issues. Perhaps it was all of the aforementioned issues coming together. Regardless of what actually caused the collapse, it is possible to see what issues were present and most catastrophic

⁷² Cline, Eric H. *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea : International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean*. Oxford [England: Tempus Reparatum, 1994. p.31-32

⁷³ This name does not acknowledge the cultural continuity that occurred from the Bronze Age into the "Dark Age". The Bronze Age Collapse wasn't a definitive end, rather it incorporates a period of several centuries where natural disasters (Famines, Droughts, etc.) caused a slowing in cultural growth. Since humans continue on through this period of struggle, the intellectual milieu continues as well. Paieon's name appears both before and after the collapse. The stories of Homer invoke the Bronze Age World with Mycenae and Troy playing crucial roles in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. This all indicates that a mythological tradition, like that of Paieon, could easily have persisted through the so-called collapse.

for the inhabitants of Bronze Age Greece. One of the most pressing issues was famine. In Hittite texts, there are a number of references to famines and the intense need for grain in the Hittite Empire and throughout the Bronze Age Mediterranean.⁷⁴ This famine is also accounted for in the archaeological records of Greece where oxygen isotope studies have revealed a drought beginning in the Late Bronze Age and lasting between 150 and 300 years.⁷⁵ Droughts, such as this, would immediately result in crop failure and famine.

This famine would have been in full swing in Mycenae when the Egyptians arrived in the 15th century B.C.E.⁷⁶ It would be affecting the daily lives of the Mycenaeans. It is likely that the Mycenaeans would share the catastrophic issues they had been struggling through with their well off neighbors, perhaps with the hope that the Egyptians might have a solution. Fortunately for the Mycenaeans, the Egyptians had a particularly famous story regarding the ending of a famine. A story eventually inscribed in a stone in the 2nd century BCE and known today as the Famine Stele. Although this text was mentioned in the first chapter, it is relevant here too. This text describes a famine that had spread throughout Egypt and Imhotep's successful attempt at ending it.⁷⁷ This story followed Imhotep to the city, known to the Greeks as Hermopolis and to the Egyptians as *Wnw* (𓏏𓏏𓏏). This city was the sacred city of the Egyptian god Thoth. This is important to note because, as mentioned in the first chapter, there is a deep connection between Thoth and Imhotep.

⁷⁴ Cline, Eric H. *1177 B.C. the Year Civilization Collapsed*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. p.154-158

⁷⁵ The exact downfall of civilization is recorded as 1177 by Eric Cline (among many other scholars). However, as mentioned previously, the collapse did not suddenly happen. The Bronze Age Collapse was a series of disasters occurring in relative succession over the span of a few centuries. Cline says that the Mediterranean famines began around 1200 BCE but the difficulty of dating allows for 150 years as the margin of error. This means the famine could have started as early as the mid 14th century, putting it during Amenhotep III's lifetime and, more importantly, during the time of Greco-Egyptian contact.

⁷⁶ It must be acknowledged that creating a precise chronology is difficult given available historical records. I am proposing one possible explanation that seems to be the most likely conclusion based on the available evidence.

⁷⁷ Lichtheim. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. 3. 2006. p.94-100

Imhotep did not have a large number of epithets due to his relatively late addition to the Egyptian pantheon. But the epithets he does have, are quite commonly shared with Thoth, the god of writing and knowledge. In the early days of his worship, Imhotep was often seen as a parallel of Thoth, perhaps earning him similar epithets. One of Thoth's most notable epithets is derived from his role as the patron god of Hermopolis. For this, he is called "The one of Hermopolis", in Egyptian Pa.n.wnw.⁷⁸ (𓂏𓂛𓂏𓂛𓂏𓂛). There is no signifier here of a divine status, just a location he accomplished an important feat in. Any type of accomplishment done by an Egyptian god in the service of the residents of their sacred city is guaranteed to earn them an epithet to invoke that accomplishment. Thoth accomplished something great in Hermopolis (Wnw) and he earned the title "The one of Hermopolis". Imhotep ended a famine, a great feat for the benefit of mankind making him worthy of the same epithet.⁷⁹ Although evidence of Imhotep specifically using that epithet has yet to be recovered, it is likely he made use of the same epithet, especially when referring to what he accomplished according to the Famine Stele which, as noted in the first chapter, originated long before the travels under Amenhotep III.⁸⁰

Next we move to Mycenae where Amenhotep's embassy may have arrived. It is difficult to trace exactly when worship of Paieon began in the region. The only reference to Paieon as a Mycenaean god is found in Knossos. In the Room of the Chariot Tablets, a number of texts have been discovered, praising different gods including early forms of Athena, Ares and Poseidon.

⁷⁸ The existing epithet is commonly written as [Glyphs/Pa.n.hmnw] with hmnw referring to Hermopolis. But this is not the only spelling, the other being wnw. In my research I have more frequently discovered wnw being the spelling of Hermopolis, especially in connection to Imhotep. If the epithet "The one of Hermopolis" was going to be attached to Imhotep's name, it would most likely be the wnw spelling. Leitz, Christian, ed., *Lexikon der ägyptischen Götter und Götterbezeichnungen*. 2003. p.716

⁷⁹ It is also possible that the epithet is being used to distinguish Imhotep, the god/demigod from others using his name. As he increased in popularity during Amenhotep III's reign, more people named their children after him and distinguishing the Imhotep from the rest could be done by referencing his deeds in Hermopolis.

⁸⁰ Imhotep's name only appears once in the text and the epithet "The one of Hermopolis" is not in this text. But this is likely to be a Ptolemaic scribing of a much older story. An epithet could have easily been lost in translation.

The texts are undeniably Mycenaean in origin since they are written in Linear B, the language of the Mycenaeans.⁸¹ One of these texts provides information on Paieon. He was a deity whose primary function was healing and medicine.⁸² Given the other gods present in the writings, researchers of the room seem to think he is being praised as a wartime healer. With records of Paieon's appearance and role in the Iliad, this text might have to do with the Trojan War. But that is pure speculation. The most important feature of this text is the use of Paieon's name.

It has been noted that Paieon's name is etymologically not Greek.⁸³ It is a foreign name which makes sense since it seems to have originated as an Egyptian epithet. Although no conclusion has been reached concerning where the name comes from, the breakdown of the name reveals a quintessentially Egyptian feature. In Egypt it was quite common to begin a masculine name with "Pa". Pa is the Egyptian masculine singular definite article, and it most commonly appeared on names with ties to the gods.⁸⁴ This article is then immediately followed by an early variation of the Greek word for heal. It seems increasingly likely that the name *Pajawon* must have some etymological ties to Egypt.⁸⁵

Although the names are very similar, there are some noticeable distinctions between the two titles. This can be understood as a result of the language barrier of communicating across

⁸¹ In this instance the "multiple texts" to which I am referring, are referencing various Mycenaean gods. There is only one text (KN V 52) that mentions Paieon.

⁸² This conclusion has been drawn from the word for heal being part of Pajawon's name. Whether the name is drawn from the word or the word from the name is unclear. But there is a connection. Paieon as a physician fits in especially in the context of the common trope in ancient literature of the war time healer.

⁸³ Gulizio, Joann. *Religion in the Room of the Chariot Tablets*. 2001

⁸⁴ Lüddeckens, Erich. "Das demotische Namenbuch." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 102 (n.F. 27), no. 1 (1952)

⁸⁵ In the Linear B text we have, Paieon's name is written as *Pajawone* (𐀡𐀢𐀢𐀢). It is broken down into four distinct characters each carrying a consonant and a vowel, as is typical in bisyllabic languages like this one. The epithet *Pa.n.wnw* bears a striking similarity to the Mycenaean *Pajawone*, especially when one considers that *Pajawone* is in the dative form and his name in the nominative case would be *Pajawon*. The existence of the "w" that seems to disappear in later variations of Paieon's name could be attributed to its origin as an Egyptian that no longer made sense in Greek.

cultures. There is historical precedent for this type of translation and translation error occurring. During the late 19th century BCE, Cannanites were used as workers in the mining of Lapis Lazuli in what is now the Temple of Hathor in Serabit el-Khadim. There are inscriptions by the Cannanites that use the Egyptian Hieroglyphic alphabet while adapting the writing to their own language (and possibly providing the early basis of the Greek alphabet).⁸⁶ When a language is adapted there are going to be mistakes, so the remnants of the original epithet in the new name seem to be quite conclusive in understanding where the name came from.

From all the available evidence, I have conceptualized a clear pattern of events. It is likely that Amenhotep III, a man intimately familiar with the story of Imhotep ending a famine, sent representatives to Greece. It seems probable that they arrived during a time of famine in Mycenae, with the most prominent story of a famine ending most likely being the story of Imhotep in Hermopolis (a feat that would have earned him the title *Pa.n.wnw*). Shortly after this interaction, but still during this time of famine, the Mycenaeans adopted the worship of Pajawon, a healing deity recognized as a foreign deity with deep ties to Egypt.

This understanding was reached based on what remains of archaeological evidence from 3400 years ago. To confirm this theory, it would be useful to have authors and historians closer to the time period that can confirm this idea. And fortunately we have sources that are a definitive part of the historical record that seems to corroborate this idea.⁸⁷

The first historical records, according to modern historians, come from the ancient Greeks. Early historians like Herodotus and Thucydides established a new way of understanding the events of their lifetimes by inquiring about the events from a number of sources and then

⁸⁶ Biblical Archaeology Review 36/2 (2010), pp. 40-53

⁸⁷ Understanding historiography can be complicated as the definition of an historical text varies based on the time period of the reader. When I refer to an historical record here, I am referring to a text intentionally meant to record the events of the past in a manner which removes most if not all fictional (divine) influence.

combining them into one overarching narrative. In his account of the Persian Wars, Herodotus often moves away from the narrative to discuss surrounding details of the history of the people involved in the war.⁸⁸ He traveled around the known world collecting sources and information to create a complete understanding of the Persian Wars. The second book of his inquiries focuses on Egypt and Egyptian history as understood by the Hellenic people. Herodotus records that the Egyptians were the first to name the gods and their own (Greek) traditions were taken from the Egyptians.

“The Egyptians were also the first to establish the tradition of identifying names for the twelve gods, and that the Hellenes adopted this practice from them. They were also the first to assign altars, statues and temples to the gods and to carve their figures in reliefs on stone.”⁸⁹

This seems to indicate that the Greeks appropriated the practices of worship rather than the gods themselves. Worship in Egypt is an interesting ritual to adopt because it was not just the gods being worshiped. Demigods were often honored in the same way, demigods like Imhotep.

When Amenhotep’s Egyptian society made contact with the Mycenaeans, Imhotep was still widely worshiped as the demigod son of Ptah, instead of as a god himself. An examination of Imhotep as a demigod is quite useful when working with Herodotus’ work because there is a reference in the *Histories* to another demigod bearing a striking resemblance to the later form of Paieon.⁹⁰ In his chapter on Egypt, Herodotus discusses how Heracles came from Egypt to Greece.

⁸⁸ Although there are a number of erroneous claims throughout his work, the veracity of his completed work should not be discounted.

⁸⁹ Herodotus, *Histories*, 2.4. Trans. Purvis

⁹⁰ There is further discussion to come in the chapter ahead about Paieon’s evolution throughout Greek society. For the purposes of understanding this statement, Paieon eventually comes to be worshiped as Asklepios when Asklepios begins to gain popularity. The stories of these two deities are merged and Herakles’ story shares a lot in common with that of Asklepios.

Herakles, most commonly known by his Roman title Hercules, bears a striking similarity to the Greek god Asklepios. Both are demigods with an immortal father and a princess for a mother. Both were raised and trained by the centaur Chiron. Both sailed with the Argonauts and fought the Calydonian Boar. And both died, first gaining hero cults before being worshiped as gods. Another similarity they seem to share is an origin in Egypt, at least based on the works of Herodotus. To quote Herodotus once again,

“About Heracles I heard the account given that he was of the number of the twelve gods; but of the other Heracles whom the Hellenes know I was not able to hear in any part of Egypt: and moreover to prove that the Egyptians did not take the name of Heracles from the Hellenes, but rather the Hellenes from the Egyptians,—that is to say those of the Hellenes who gave the name Heracles to the son of Amphytrion,—of that, I say, besides many other evidences there is chiefly this, namely that the parents of this Heracles, Amphytrion and Alcmene, were both of Egypt by descent.”⁹¹

What Herodotus has shown here is that Egypt has definitively given Greece both religious practices and gods of their pantheon. This includes major gods (like that Paieon would become) and demigods (as Imhotep once was), and one of these demigods shares a great deal of traits with Paieon’s successor. On the note of Paieon, there is evidence that he is Egyptian in one of the oldest preserved stories in the epic cycle, Homer’s *Odyssey*.

Homer’s *Odyssey* is commonly recognized as one of the oldest sources on Greek mythology. It is also where we find one of our earliest references to Paieon. In Book IV of the *Odyssey*, Telemachus travels to Sparta to learn more about his father’s exploits from King Menelaus. At the end of the evening, Queen Helen provides everyone present in her hall a drug she had obtained from Egypt to help her guests sleep. Homer uses this Egyptian drug as a way to express his knowledge of ancient Egypt and its connection to his Greek world. Homer refers to Egyptian society and the Egyptians with this reference: “Every man is a healer there, more

⁹¹ Herodotus, *Histories*, Herodotus, 2.43. Trans. Purvis

skilled than any other men on earth. For they are of the race of Paeon.”⁹² This line has been widely understood to mean that the Egyptians are genealogically descended from the physician god, not necessarily establishing the origin of the god in Egypt.⁹³ It is giving the Egyptians an origin tied to the Hellenic world and Greek mythology, a commonly employed practice by the Greeks to explain the existence of non Greek civilizations in the ancient Mediterranean.⁹⁴ However, this interpretation is highly flawed. It is a translation rooted in the understanding of common practices of the Greek world rather than the actual definition of the words.

In Ancient Greek, the exact line reads *η γαρ παηονος εισι γενεθλης*. The definitions of *γενεθλης* in this context include race, stock or family. The best way to understand these definitions is as a way to group people tied to their origin. *Γενεθλης* can be their origin in an ethnographic sense or their origin in a familial sense. The context of this exact word is sparse in Homeric works, only being used only twice in what remains of the epic cycle.⁹⁵ However, when the word is being used as a way to define origin by familial ties or blood, Homer uses some indication immediately after making use of the word. There is a clear example of this in Homer’s *Iliad*.

During the events of Book 19, reference is made to the birth of Herakles. Zeus, quite excited about the birth of his son proclaims “Today the goddess of birth pangs and labor will

⁹² Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.231-232. Trans. Fagles

⁹³ This translation has been widely circulated by scholars such as Robert Fagles. It is not without reason as *γενεθλης* can mean origin by blood. However, this is just one of several possible interpretations. It seems race in an ethnographic sense is the best possible translation.

⁹⁴ The Trojans were considered a foreign people in Greek mythology, yet they are still descended from the same pantheon of gods. King Priam is a descendant of the titans Oceanus and Atlas. A bit of Zeus’ own blood can be found in his family tree as well, however it is more generations back than most heroes’

⁹⁵ There is another word that shares the exact definition of *Γενεθλης* in the Homeric works, *Γονος*. It is also derived from the same root. When this word is used in the *Odyssey* it is specifically asking about place of origin. And there is no immediate reference to bloodline. This further exemplifies the use of *Γενεθλης* referring to place of origin as opposed to origin by blood.

bring to light a human child, a man-child born of the stock of men who spring from my blood,”⁹⁶ As Herodotus established, Herakles was born to an Egyptian stock. So would he not be the stock/race of Paieon? No. Homer makes clear that it is the stock that specifically came from his blood.⁹⁷ The text in Homer’s *Odyssey* regarding Paieon is missing this detail, so the word Γενεθλης must be used in the ethnographic sense. Since γενεθλης is in the genitive case, a proper translation of this sentence is “For the Egyptians belong to the race Paeon is of.” Homer is talking about the Egyptians. The race to which Paieon belongs is the Egyptian race.

Nearly 5,000 years ago, one man climbed the steps of the Egyptian social hierarchy. By constructing monuments, healing men and ending famines, his legacy was assured for centuries to come. But it was impossible to imagine just how far that legacy would spread. As the Egyptians established trade networks, the legacy of that man turned god traveled with them. And he was soon adopted into the foreign pantheons. The great writers of the ancient Greek world recorded the arrival of this new god, but his name was lost in translation. Now as we continue the journey with Paieon becoming Asklepios, we will see how the name Imhotep was restored to this Egyptian physician god in the end.

⁹⁶ Homer, *Iliad*, 19.100-105. Trans. Fagles

⁹⁷ The exact “stock” being referred to in this text seems to be Perseus, Zeus’ son by the princess Danae. Perseus is also the great grandfather of Herakles.

Chapter 3: No Paieon, No Gain

Thus far we have seen the elevation of a man to a god. In Old Kingdom Egypt, Imhotep rose to prominence as a legendary polymath and the advisor to the Pharaoh. As time passed, he gained the rank of demigod and eventually god. We have seen how that demigod could migrate across the sea and be adopted by a new culture. When Amenhotep III came to power, he expanded the influence of the Egyptian Pantheon throughout the Mediterranean, and it seems as though the tradition surrounding Imhotep was syncretized by the Mycenaeans in the form of Pajawon, the proto Greek form of Paieon. The Bronze Age Collapse was followed by a new age of civilization. Religious traditions were more developed and history was better documented. This would seem to streamline the story of Paieon. We can now track the rise and fall of his worship through his cult. Unfortunately, for as popular as Paieon once might have been, his role, even in the classical pantheon, is still shrouded in mystery as the Greeks began to worship a new god of healing. As a result, Paieon leaves one of the most complex legacies of all of the Olympians. And, quite interestingly, it ends right where it began, with Imhotep.

Paieon was far from the most well known member of the Greek Pantheon. But he arguably played a more important role than most of the other Olympians throughout the early period of Greek Mythology. The only issue when looking to understand Paieon's role is that his name came to serve as an epithet for both Asklepios and Apollo. So later transcriptions of the stories often inserted Apollo or Asklepios in Paieon's place. The best way to delineate between the three gods is by studying the texts in which they appear together.

It is nearly impossible to track exactly how the Mycenaean gods morphed into the well known Greek pantheon. However, the Iliad and Odyssey suggest a clear delineation between Paieon, Apollo and Asklepios because all of these gods are brought up by name in the text, at

roughly contemporary points in the narrative. The easiest to separate of the three gods is Apollo from Paieon. In the *Iliad* both were considered Olympian gods, and there is no evidence to suggest Apollo wasn't viewed as a healer at the time. Additionally, there is one point in the battle where we know exactly where both Apollo and Paieon were. In Book five of the *Iliad*, a battle was raging outside the walls of Troy in which both the gods and humans were taking part. Diomedes was given a form of divine sight by the goddess Athena so he could see the gods escalating the conflict and attack them directly. The gods involved at this point include Athena, Aphrodite, and, most importantly, Apollo. Apollo is actively protecting his Trojan heroes and aiding his fellow Trojan supporting gods. Homer says:

“But Phoebus Apollo called to blazing Ares, ‘Ares, Ares, destroyer of men, reeking blood, stormer of ramparts, can’t you go and drag that man from the fighting? That daredevil Diomedes, he’d fight Father Zeus! He’s just assaulted Love, he stabbed her wrist—like something superhuman he even charged at me!’”⁹⁸

Upon hearing Apollo's call to arms, Ares joins the conflict, but is gravely injured in Diomedes' rage. He is rushed up to Olympus where Zeus calls upon Paieon to tend to Ares' wounds, and Paieon abides. It is difficult to tell exactly when the epithet Paieon is put into use for Apollo. Since the name itself existed at this point, it is possible that it was already in use as an epithet. Homer often uses isolated epithets to refer to gods in his works but it seems that this is not one of those circumstances as Apollo would have to be in two places at the same time, something he is not capable of. This Paieon must be a separate entity from Apollo.

Asklepios is mentioned with some frequency by name throughout the *Iliad* in direct connection to his sons. Unfortunately for the purpose of this research, it is not because he

⁹⁸ Homer, *Iliad*, 5.455. Trans. Fagles

appeared in any form in the story. In Book Two, during Homer's catalog of ships, Homer identifies an army from Trikka saying:

“And men who settled Tricca, rocky Ithome terraced high and men who held Oechalia, Oechalian Eurytus' city: the two sons of Asclepius led their units now, both skilled healers, Podalirius and Machaon. In their command sailed forty curved black ships.”⁹⁹

Traditionally, Machaon and Podalirius were humans.¹⁰⁰ Although they were revered in a number of Asklepios' sacred cities in hero cults, they remained undisputedly human. This is important because when a god and human have children, they are identified in the text as half divine. This is the case with Achilles, Ascalaphus and Ialmenus. Even less notable contributors to the events of the *Iliad*, like the aforementioned Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, have their immortal origin attested in Homer's Catalog of Ships. Homer says:

“Then men who lived in Aspledon, Orchomenos of the Minyans, fighters led by Ascalaphus and Ialmenus, sons of Ares whom Astyoche bore in Actor son of Azeus' halls when the shy young girl, climbing into the upper rooms, made love with the god of war in secret, shared his strength.”¹⁰¹

Asklepios' sons are not recognized as demigods and there is no reference to any divine conception. This suggests that Homer and the characters in the *Iliad* recognize the sons of Asklepios, Machaon and Podalirius, as human and born to humans. Since Asklepios is recognized as their father, the implication is that Asklepios is also human. If Asklepios is human, it would be impossible for him to be tending to the wounded gods on Olympus later in the text. Asklepios, just like Apollo, is a separate entity from Paieon.

With Paieon identified as a unique entity, it is important to understand what this unique entity accomplished. Paieon's earliest attestation was in the Room of the Chariot Tablets in

⁹⁹ Homer, *Iliad*, 2.510-514 Trans. Fagles

¹⁰⁰ From the remaining fragments of the Epic Cycle, it is apparent that Machaon, Asklepios' son, dies at the hands of Eurypylus. This proves that Machaon is definitively mortal in the epic as gods are “not born to die”.

¹⁰¹ Homer, *Iliad*, 2.730-734 Trans. Fagles

Knossos where he was identified as the god of medicine and healing.¹⁰² Although modern scholars occasionally view Paieon as a predecessor of Apollo, whose domain of power consisted of a number of areas beyond medicine, Paieon's name defines him, quite uniquely, as a healer.¹⁰³ Παιηων is derived from the participle form of Ιαομαι, in Attic Greek, to heal. But there is broader context for what he accomplished according to the Mycenaeans.

Paieon was not the only god whose name was discovered on the KN V 52 Tablet in the Room of the Chariots. The other gods referenced in the Room of the Chariot Tablets include early versions of Ares, Athena and Poseidon.¹⁰⁴ The appearance of Ares, Athena and Poseidon together in a Bronze Age text, calls to mind the Trojan War, which also happens to be the most prominent post Bronze Age appearance of Paieon in Greek literature. However, there is little evidence that anything resembling a Trojan War had happened at this point. But the inclination towards a war occurring is not without cause. Knossos itself was taken over by force, by the Mycenaean Greeks. This is proven by the rapid shift to Mycenaean style graves, emergence of Linear B and heavy emphasis on weaponry.¹⁰⁵ This would suggest the Mycenaean inhabitants of Knossos at the time were well prepared for and actively engaging in war. It has been speculated by Joann Gulizio, a scholar investigating Bronze Age religion, that these tablets were referring to

¹⁰² Technically Knossos was built on Crete under Minoan control. However, since the writing was in Linear B, this had to have been written after the Mycenaean invasion of Crete. Although, referring back to Amenhotep's trip around the Mediterranean, the ambassadors went to Crete as well. But I doubt that Paieon was brought over in the same capacity as in Mycenae. It is possible that the story was exchanged.

¹⁰³ Throughout the various testimonies, Apollo has been referenced as the god of medicine, the sun, archery, music, poetry and prophecy.

¹⁰⁴ Ares is identified as Enuwarjo, the Linear B version of Enualios. Enualios is a common epithet of Ares throughout the Homeric Works. Athena is addressed as Potnia Athena, the Lady of Athens.

¹⁰⁵ Crossland, R. A., and Ann Birchall. *"Bronze Age Migrations in the Aegean; Archaeological and Linguistic Problems in Greek Prehistory."* edited by R. A. Crossland and Ann Birchall. Park Ridge, N.J: Noyes Press, 1974.

some form of warfare and Paieon is being used as a wartime physician, tending to the injuries of those wounded in battle.¹⁰⁶ For the Mycenaeans, this would prove to be a useful dedication.

The first major reference to Paieon following the Bronze Age Collapse comes in the works of Homer. But the first of his notable actions was not completed during the course of the Trojan War.¹⁰⁷ There is a lesser known story, in Greek mythology, about an attack on the gods by Herakles in Pylos¹⁰⁸. Homer writes:

“[Herakles], shot [Hades] in Pylos—there with the troops of battle dead—and surrendered Death to pain. But Hades made his way to craggy Olympus, climbed to the house of Zeus, stabbed with agony, grief-struck to the heart, the shaft driven into his massive shoulder grinding down his spirit ... But the Healer applied his pain-killing drugs and sealed Hades’ wound—he was not born to die.”¹⁰⁹

Pylos is considered one of the few sacred cities of Hades, and its king, Neleus, had somehow managed to upset Heracles.¹¹⁰ Heracles brutally attacked the king and most of his sons. A number of gods came to the aid of Neleus, Hera and Hades among them. They are both injured by Heracles’ arrows, at this point canonically dipped in the blood of the Lernean hydra. There are stories of even immortals succumbing to this deadly poison. At this point, Zeus calls upon Paieon to tend to the gods’ injuries. Given that Hera and Hades are both still alive at the time of the Trojan War, the reasonable conclusion is that the treatment is a success. It is the memory of

¹⁰⁶ The idea of a physician in times of war and battle tends to be the most common depictions of physicians until the time of Hippocrates and the establishment of new medical sanctuaries throughout the Hellenic region.

¹⁰⁷ Applying chronology to Greek mythology is difficult given that the legends vary by location. However, there is a definitive sequence where the story of Herakles happens before the Trojan War (which was started by the generation after Herakles’ own). Since this story is spoken of as a past event in Homer’s own works, it is clear that this is the earliest event in Paieon’s archaic mythological timeline.

¹⁰⁸ Pylos is a notable site of Bronze Age archaeology. It is also in one of the regions the embassy of Amenhotep III traveled to. It is possible the story of Imhotep was conveyed in this location, but there is little evidence of any Egyptian interaction.

¹⁰⁹ Homer, *Iliad*, 4.381-411. Trans. Fagles

¹¹⁰ There are a number of conflicting sources on the origin of this strife depending on the source. Since conflict ensued in every scenario and it does not add anything in the context of my thesis, I am omitting the varied origins of the conflict from my thesis.

this event, called to mind by Hera after Ares' injury by Diomedes, that brings Paieon into the present narrative to tend to Zeus' progeny.

At this point in the Trojan War, as described by Homer, Paieon was tending to Ares following Diomedes' attack. Homer wrote: "So great Zeus declared and ordered the healing god to treat the god of war. And covering over his wound with pain-killing drugs the Healer cured him: the god was never born to die."¹¹¹ This moment in the text is a further example of Paieon's ability to heal gods.

It is possible Paieon appears at some other points in the Epic Cycle, but reference to this god has not been found on any remaining Homeric fragments. According to story order, the next surviving example we have of Paieon's role in the archaic period is in Homer's *Odyssey*. Although Paieon doesn't actually have a role in the story being told, there is a significant reference to him. As the Spartan festivities during Telemachus' voyage wind down. An Egyptian herb is given to the guests. And it is said of the Egyptians. "Every man is a healer there, more skilled than any other men on earth. For they are of the race of Paieon."¹¹² This line has been expounded upon at length already. But to reiterate, this line seems to confirm Paieon's origin in ancient Egypt according to Homer.

The next reference to Paieon chronologically is in a fragment by Hesiod. Once again, Paieon is distinct from Apollo, the only other major medical deity at this period. With Hesiod saying "Unless Phoebus Apollo should save him from death, or Paieon himself who knows the remedies for all things."¹¹³ It is difficult to determine the surrounding context of this fragment.

¹¹¹ It is interesting to note that in this scenario Zeus is only saving Ares because he is his son. Zeus openly tells Ares that had he been born to anyone else, he would have cast him into Tartarus for his aggressive tendencies. This doesn't contribute much to the argument but it does show that Paieon's skill is something Zeus typically reserves.

¹¹² Homer, *Odyssey*, Book IV. 4.231-232. Trans. Fagles

¹¹³ Hesiod, *Fragment of Unknown Position 2*

From what is written, the implication is that Hesiod is providing an explanation for who can save someone who is dead or dying.¹¹⁴ He states that Apollo can save this man from death, or Paieon can, because Paieon knows the remedy for any ailment, death included. Based on the Homeric works, it doesn't seem as though Apollo is capable of curing gods. He was on the battlefield when Ares, who was fighting on his side, was injured. But Ares had to be brought to Paieon to be healed. Further, every injured god in the Homeric works is not "born to die" so the fact that the only opportunity for physical relief is Apollo or Paieon would imply that the "patient" in this scenario is human. Paieon has now been identified as a divine physician capable of curing gods and men. He can also seemingly reverse death. These details are all important because they are the attributes that will be mapped onto Paieon's successor as the Greek physician god, Asklepios.

After these references, allusions to Paieon in Classical myth decline in number. He has an occasional invocation and reference is made to him on a statue base, but it is typically as an epithet of Apollo.¹¹⁵ The reason for this is that as time went on, a new physician god grew in popularity in northern Greece and usurped Paieon's position as the definitive god of healing in the south. Although I have posited that Paieon's origins lie in Egypt, as a Greek god, his worship seems to be centered in the southern part of the Greek world. The first attestation of Paieon was found on Crete and it was written in the language of the Bronze Age Peloponnesian Greeks. But it didn't take long for Paieon to be, quite literally, wiped off the map around the 5th century BCE as a new physician god, Asklepios, rose to prominence.

¹¹⁴ While Glenn Most translates this fragment from Hesiod as Apollo "[saving] him from death", the use of the word *ὑπεκ* means that Apollo is saving him from under the grasp of Thanatos. There is conjecture over what exactly this means. Is Apollo saving him from death itself or saving someone on the verge of death? I have always interpreted death as consisting of a transitory period where the soul is pulled from the body by Thanatos or Hermes and transported to the Underworld. In some retellings of the story of Asklepios reversing Hippolytus' death, such as that by Vergil in his *Aeneid* among others, Asklepios is depicted as pulling Hippolytus from this transitory period. This is why it seems likely that in this fragment, Paieon is reversing death.

¹¹⁵ Didyma Statue, British Museum Item 1859

Scholars suggest that Asklepios, like Imhotep, was once no more than a well regarded human.¹¹⁶ He was a wandering physician whose capabilities earned him a divine reputation, and he was eventually brought into the Greek Pantheon. However, if this idea is true, it is quite easy to see where this legend began. Arguably the most famous sacred city of Asklepios is Epidauros in the Peloponnese. It is the site where, according to legend, he was born and rescued or left abandoned depending on the interpretation. Thus it would be quite easy to conclude that this was the origin of his story. But there is no evidence of a cult of Asklepios or any type of worship anywhere in the Peloponnese prior to the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. All of the testimonies referencing Asklepios describe a deep connection to Northern Greece, in Thessaly.

Thessaly was considered a place of magic and witchcraft in the ancient world, often depicted as filled with snakes.¹¹⁷ As a healer, Asklepios would have engaged in a number of practices related to curative magic, and by reversing death, a form of necromancy, Asklepios was directly connected to witchcraft. All of Asklepios' connections to magic and the snake affixed to his staff, his revered symbol of power, seems to mark Thessaly as his home. It was also known for its horses and half horses thanks to the Centauromachy fought between the Lapiths and the Centaurs.¹¹⁸ The Centaurs were Asklepios' cousins through his maternal uncle, and he was instructed from a young age by the centaur Chiron. Thessaly and the northern part of Greece are embedded into the basic story of Asklepios. But he is also connected to the region through familial ties.

¹¹⁶ Edelstein, Emma J., and Ludwig Edelstein. *Asclepius; a Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1945.

¹¹⁷ Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 6.5. Braund

¹¹⁸ It is also attested that Apollo first spotted Coronis, Asklepios' mother, on horseback. This is owing to her identity of a woman of Thessaly.

Asklepios was the grandson of the Thessalian King Phlegyas and, as mentioned, he was brought up on Mount Pelion by Chiron, like many other heroes of Greek mythology. In the *Iliad*, it is said of his sons:

“And men who settled Tricca, rocky Ithome terraced high and men who held Oechalia, Oechalian Eurytus’ city: the two sons of Asclepius led their units now, both skilled healers, Podalirius and Machaon. In their command sailed forty curved black ships.”¹¹⁹

All of this links Asklepios to Thessaly while providing no connection to Asklepios’ sacred city of Epidauros.

Epidauros is not part of Asklepios’ original story nor is it something inherited by the right of his family either. The most information we have concerning Podalirius and Machaon’s mother, Epione, is that she may have originated in Kos.¹²⁰ So the Oechalian and Trikkan armies, and associated kingdoms, were definitely inherited from Asklepios, but with the glaring omission of Epidauros. This omission in the Homeric works is due to the fact that Epidauros didn’t become a part of the story of Asklepios until after the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.

Epidauros has always been the site of healing for reasons beyond religious worship. It is just a good spot for healing people with two naturally occurring features: a spring and some distance from the nearest city. Each of these features served both religious and realistic functions: springs were commonly used for purification rituals and they provided real treatment.¹²¹ An individual is already increasing their chances of survival and making a full recovery just by cleaning out their wounds in these springs. The distance from the city was used to make sure the air that sick people were breathing was clean.¹²² The air within the city limits is

¹¹⁹ Homer, *The Iliad* 2.831-835

¹²⁰ Walton, Alice. *Asklepios* p.4

¹²¹ King, Helen. *Health in Antiquity*. p.32-58

¹²² King, Helen. *Health in Antiquity*. p.32-58

going to be more polluted than out in the countryside. The wooded area of the Sanctuary of Asklepios has the additional benefit of hosting a number of dogs whose saliva has antiseptic agents.¹²³ Indeed, the ancient Greeks in the area would get licked by a dog and would miraculously be healed, which is why, in later art, Asklepios is depicted with a dog at his side.

This natural affiliation with medicine is what made the site the perfect fit for the epicenter of healing deity worship. I should preface this next section with the fact that there is no evidence of Paieon's worship at Epidauros specifically, Paieon was worshiped in the region for centuries but the site of the current sanctuary has only yielded evidence of a temple to one, lesser known Bronze Age god of healing, Maleates.¹²⁴ Archaeological excavations of the site that is now the Temple of Maleates Apollo have uncovered evidence of an open air altar with a number of dedications and offerings including references to the offering of three cakes.¹²⁵ Worship of Maleates was practiced at this site through the Geometric period. Eventually records show that the patron god of Epidauros changed. As the title Maleates Apollo suggests, worship at this site would soon be taken over by Apollo. This site was popular for the worship of Apollo's predecessor, another physician god. Would it not be likely for Asklepios's predecessor, a god revered in the region, to be worshiped in the same manner? Maleates eventually get subsumed into the worship of the more popular god Apollo. It is emblematic of the larger issue of Bronze Age gods disappearing in favor of more popular Classical gods.

The earliest evidence of Asklepios being born in Epidauros comes from the late fourth century BCE where Isyllus, a poet from Epidauros, says "Then in the perfumed temple [in

¹²³ Vallejo, José Ramón, Dídac Santos-Fita, and José Antonio González. *The Therapeutic Use of the Dog in Spain*

¹²⁴ It has been suggested that, in addition to being a healing deity, Maleates was also a god of the hunt. This might contribute to his association with Apollo. But according to R. A. Tomlinson in his work *Epidauros*, this claim remains uncorroborated.

¹²⁵ Jayne, Walter Addison. *The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilizations*. p.338

Epidauros] Aigle bore him, and the noble son of Zeus together with the Fates and Lachesis the noble midwife eased her birth pains.”¹²⁶ Prior to this piece, every source had Asklepios born in Thessaly. The Homeric Hymn says of Asklepios “in the Dotian plane fair Coronis bare him.”¹²⁷ Although Epidauros would come to be seen as his home following the fourth century, there is evidence that later writers still recognized Thessaly as his home. In the first century AD, Strabo described Tricca, a region in Thessaly as the place “where Asclepius is said to have been born.”¹²⁸ and Hyginus wrote that “Asclepius, the son of Apollo and Coronis, [came] from Tricca.”¹²⁹ This later account, which recognizes Coronis as Asklepios’ mother, still asserts that he comes from Tricca. All of these accounts going back to the archaic period and into the Roman Empire acknowledge that Asklepios has no ties to Epidauros through his origin story. But Epidauros was a sacred location for healing gods throughout that period, indicating the strong worship of a different physician god, a god subsumed into the worship of Asklepios. The people of Epidauros are countering the popular narrative and changing their belief system to restore the importance of their city as a sacred place of healing. In the fourth century we have the first (and often contested) evidence of Asklepios being born in Epidauros. Something must have changed around then making Asklepios rise in importance.

In the earlier part of the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians were forced to deal with the Athenian plague. At this time period the understanding of diseases, at least to the Greeks, was severely limited. Disease was just the gods showing their displeasure at the actions of mortals. This was the case in the opening books of Homer’s *Iliad* and it is what the Athenians thought of

¹²⁶ In this instance, Aigle is another name of Asklepios’ mother, Coronis. Isyllus, *Inscriptiones Graecae* 128.48-50. Trans. Edelstein and Edelstein

¹²⁷ Homer, *Homeric Hymns* 16.1-3. Trans Crudden

¹²⁸ Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo* 14.1.39. Trans. Hamilton and Falconer

¹²⁹ Hyginus, *Fabulae* 14.21. Trans. Grant

their plague. They believed this was Apollo punishing them and declaring himself as an ally of the Spartans (at least according to an oracle).¹³⁰ The lack of faith in one god of healing during a plague would naturally lead to an increase in the popularity of another. So as the turmoil of the fifth century concluded, the Cult of Asklepios saw rapid growth. It began in Athens and spread outward along Greek trading routes.

One of the most prominent routes for trade and travel in the ancient world was the Troezen road. This was the path Theseus famously took from his mother's home in Troezen to his father's kingdom of Athens. This path took Theseus from the Peloponnese through Epidauros and Corinth, across the isthmus into Attica and up to Athens. If one were to avoid traveling by sea, this would be the only way to get from Attica into the Peloponnese. It seems like this path follows the spread of the worship of Asklepios in real time. Therefore it seems reasonable to conclude that the Athenian Plague brought about a larger worship of Asklepios. In the immediate aftermath of the final outbreak of the plague (420 BCE), a Sanctuary of Asklepios was constructed in Athens. As word of Asklepios' importance spread, cults began to emerge along the Troezen road, before the cult center was established in Epidauros. The people residing along the Troezen road and in the Peloponnese already had a well regarded god of healing in Paieon. So the most important attributes of Paieon were syncretized with Asklepios as he came into Epidauros. Asklepios was given the epithet Paieon and he became capable of reversing death.

Euripides' *Hippolytus* seems to corroborate this point. This play is said to have been written in 428 BCE, roughly the same time as the outbreak of the Athenian Plague.¹³¹ As the plague was ongoing, the impact of the plague on the worship of Asklepios would not have been

¹³⁰ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. 2.7. Trans. Warner

¹³¹ Euripides., and Hazel Estella. Barnes. *Hippolytus in Drama and Myth*. The *Hippolytus* of Euripides, a New Translation by Donald Sutherland. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960.

apparent. In simpler terms, Epidauros' was not yet a part of Asklepios' story. Asklepios' residence in Epidauros, in close proximity to Troezen, is what allows him to tend to Hippolytus following his accident. Hippolytus is killed but Asklepios resurrects him, bringing the wrath of Zeus down upon himself. But in the play Hippolytus remains dead and Asklepios is not even mentioned.¹³² The death cure itself is quite revealing here as no reference is made to Asklepios using the death cure until he was syncretized with Paieon. In one of his fragments, Hesiod says "unless Apollo himself should save him from death, or Paieon who knows the cure for all things."¹³³ This is a reference to death being cured with Paieon cited as doing the curing. Since Hippolytus' story requires Asklepios residing near Troezen in Epidauros, Euripides' play had to come before this version of the myth was canonized and no reference to Asklepios' death cure existed until after he "moved into" Epidauros. This created the definitive story of Asklepios.¹³⁴

Asklepios was born in Epidauros to a mortal mother and an immortal father and then trained by the centaur Chiron. This story concludes with Asklepios being struck down by Zeus for reversing death, but he is brought to Olympus as a god. This story is filled with the remnants of the past great physician gods of Mediterranean civilizations, and perhaps that's what ensured its survival. Asklepios and his story were worshiped throughout the end of paganism in the ancient world. In some cases his sanctuaries are still being used as hospitals to this day. It seems like a fitting end to the history of this great physician. But it has been said that history has a

¹³² Euripides, *Hippolytus*

¹³³ Hesiod, *Fragment of Unknown Position 2*

¹³⁴ The only texts that suggest Asklepios cured death prior to his introduction in Epidauros are the play *Alcestes* and the Pindar's 3rd Pythian Ode. In the Pythian Ode, reference is made to Asklepios' death and the surrounding details. But Asklepios' ability to reverse death is never brought up. In Euripides *Alcestes*, Asklepios is referenced as having "raised up the vanquished". What this means exactly is unclear. It could refer to him saving Hippolytus which might still be a result of the influence of Paieon's story on Asklepios before the mass merging in the Peloponnesian War. But it could also refer to Asklepios pulling someone from the aforementioned transitory period before complete death rather than reversing death itself. This story is also being set around the Thessalian king *Alcestes* which seems to further connect Asklepios and his story with Northern Greece as opposed to the Peloponnese.

cyclical nature and the evidence of this is present here. As Egypt was taken under the dominion of the Greeks through the conquest of Alexander the Great, Egyptian identities were assigned to the Greek gods. It was not difficult for Asklepios, the human born demigod turned god of medicine, to be given a new identity. But, in reality, the god Paieon Asklepios was not receiving a new identity, he was being given back something he had lost over the millenia, his birth name. The cycle began once again as Paieon, as Asklepios, as this great physician once again was recognized as Imhotep.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Oxyrhynchus 11.1381

Conclusion

It may seem impossible to discover the origins of the Greek gods, or any gods for that matter. This is completely alright as I have not engaged in this research to prove that a Greek god is real. The purpose of this research is to understand the crucial role of physician/healing gods in the Mediterranean world. This would be impossible without understanding the importance of Paieon, a physician god who seems to have been forgotten by most scholars. However, there remains a way to understand who he was, and that is to expand the focus of research beyond the typical sources of Greek mythology. Greek literature makes it clear that Paieon is not a Greek god in the typical sense, as he did not originate in Greece. This makes it easier to explore his identity because there is more information on medicine and healing coming from his homeland of Egypt. This could be completely overlooked if the field of research was limited to the Greek world.

Historians tend to narrow their research to a very particular time period or area of study. Every historical moment is created through the intersection of thousands of different lifetimes, and it is nearly impossible to record them all. Even the earliest historians understood this problem. This is particularly clear in the works of Herodotus, the “Father of History”. Herodotus spent years working to compile his inquiries into the events of the Persian Wars. He obtained accounts from people all around the ancient Mediterranean. Students of history often struggle with his work due to the tangents he seems to go on quite frequently, but the events recorded in these tangents do ultimately contribute to the decisions made during the events of his Histories. With so much information to work with, it can be difficult for historians to examine the world outside of the events they are researching. Others engaging in research related to Paieon might conclude that there is enough to study in the Greek world, so it is pointless to look beyond it.

However, by studying Egypt to understand Greece, historians are provided with 2000 years worth of additional historical records.

Although Herodotus is considered the first historian, the Egyptians were creating more accurate historical records centuries before his birth. When looking at the early history of Greek civilization, there are only fragments to gather information from. But across the Mediterranean, in Egypt, history was already being well recorded. The only way to properly understand Paieon is to study the 3000 years of human history that encompassed his rise and fall. It is a large undertaking, but it is well worthwhile.

The records created throughout these 3000 years reveal a clear pathway for Imhotep's ascension to an immortal status, and it was followed by examples of a Bronze Age cultural exchange that allowed this early physician's work and legacy to be brought to a larger audience. The work of Imhotep left an impact on the Greek world that influenced the way the ancient Greeks engaged in the worship of healing deities, including Paieon. Without an understanding of ancient Egyptian history and the way it impacted the world, Paieon would continue to be ignored by scholars. He would be seen as no more than an epithet of a more popular god. This is quite frustrating as Asklepios wouldn't exist as the death curing god without Paieon's influence.

It is time to stop thinking about mythology as fictional tales created solely for entertainment value. Mythology was a product of the real world and it impacted the real world, because, simply put, it was a way of rationalizing the world. The gods existed because humans needed some way to exert control over the dangerous and terrifying natural forces of the world. The most important god of the ancient civilizations was the human born physician god. This god was the representation of human control on a divine level. Healing is a human activity. To Margaret Mead, this action marked the beginning of a civilization. The appearance and adoption

of physician gods at points of mass societal change in Mediterranean civilizations is almost poetic. These gods deserve to be remembered as more than epithets and monster movie villains. They should be remembered as the story of life triumphing over death, the story of humanity conquering the natural world. It is a story that continued to evolve with the changing identity of the physician gods beginning with one man in ancient Egypt, Imhotep.

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