

Strootman, R. 2007. *The Hellenistic Royal Court. Court Culture, Ceremonial and Ideology in Greece, Egypt and the Near East, 336-30 BCE*. PhD thesis, Utrecht University.

In this first comprehensive study of the Hellenistic royal court, various aspects of court culture are discussed in correlation: the social, cultural and formal aspects of court society, palace architecture, royal patronage of the arts and sciences, and monarchical representation in ceremonial and public ritual. An appendix about *regalia* discusses the costume of the king, the royal diadem, the sceptre and purple dye.

The focus is on the three principal Macedonian dynasties: the Antigonids, Ptolemies and Seleukids. Due to intermarriage, diplomatic contact, a shared Macedonian background and a shared Achaemenid legacy, the court culture of these empires was more similar than is usually assumed.

The author shows how social relations at court were determined by the moral complex of *philia* (ritualised friendship) and *xenia* (guest-friendship), together with the accompanying practice of gift-exchange. Since the courtiers (*philoï tou basileôs*) retained bonds with their families and cities of origin, and had at their disposal international patronage networks of their own, kings were able to exert influence through their friends; conversely, elite families and cities could exert influence at court through the *philoï*. Poets, scholars and scientists working at court had a place in the complex of *philia* relations too. They offered their work to members of the royal family and high-ranking courtiers as gifts in return for favours, privileges and honours; moreover, the international personal networks of important courtiers were instrumental in the diffusion of writings and new ideas.

A fundamental characteristic of Hellenistic kingship is the adaptation of royal representation to various local traditions. For instance the Ptolemies were inaugurated as *basileus* in Alexandria and as pharaoh in Memphis, and the Seleukids participated in the Akitu Festival in Babylon as if they were Babylonian kings. Court culture, however, was essentially Hellenic. Thus, Hellenistic monarchy had many faces but rising above them all was an umbrella form of imperial representation which was truly 'Hellenistic', intermixing different traditions of kingship in a Greco-Macedonian framework which was instrumental in the creation of a sense of imperial commonwealth in these culturally heterogeneous empires.

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