

KINGS AND CITIES IN THE HELLENISTIC AGE

Rolf STROOTMAN

Volume seven of the first *Cambridge ancient history*, dedicated to the centuries after Alexander (1928), has on its cover an image of the Roman she-wolf. Thus there can be no doubt that this was the period of the *rise* of Rome and the *decline* of Greek civilisation. The predominant view of the age by historians of the early twentieth century is outlined in an introductory essay by W.S. Ferguson.¹ Section IV on “The large state and the *polis*” is a lengthy complaint about the demise of “the *polis* ideal,” which was seemingly on the wane even before Chaironeia due to the rise of political and economical elites and royalist oligarchies. The single most important cause of decline, however, was the loss of political autonomy after Chaironeia: “The fatal weakness of the Greek city-states as the custodians of civilisation was their incapacity to form an all-embracing coalition” (p. 22); as a result, they were “completely shorn of their statehood, [lacking] municipal rights and a voice in the affairs of the realm of which they formed part” (24-25).

Since then, thinking about the post-classical city has changed drastically. In the second edition of volume seven of the *Cambridge ancient history* (1983), J.K. Davies titled his section (VII) on the Hellenistic city: “The *polis* transformed and then revitalized.”² And in the *Blackwell companion to the Hellenistic world* (2003) Patrick Baker boldly wrote that:

Any disruption caused by the conquest of Greece by Philip, and later by Alexander’s campaign, had relatively little effect on the Greek city-states beyond the multiplication of their numbers. Thus, the traditional model of democratic government –which gave the people control over political life, over justice and over community administration– persisted in a new, though not necessarily inferior, form. This phenomenon was most striking in the Greek city-states of Western Asia Minor which had endured centuries of Persian domination. ... After being declared free by Alexander the Great, many of them entered a significant phase of political, economic and cultural development. ... Thus, contrary to a once widespread opinion, the Hellenistic period was not one of decline for Greek city-states; rather it represented the height of their development.³

1 Ferguson 1928.

2 Davies 304-314.

3 Baker 2003, 376-377.

At first sight, this is the exact opposite of the view expressed in the 1928 *CAH*. Still the modern assumption that the *polis*, like Sicily in Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo*, changed in order to remain the same, also treats the Hellenistic city ultimately in the light of the previous period. Because the Hellenistic period has been set against the Classical age of Greece since the nineteenth century, questions of continuity and change continue to dominate the debate about Hellenistic culture. Accordingly, the emergence of the Macedonian empires, together with the supposed subsequent loss of autonomy for the city-state, is still considered the principal defining aspect of the transition from the Classical to the Hellenistic age, even by those who do not think about Hellenistic history in terms of cultural and moral decline.⁴ The view that Hellenistic cities lacked political freedom and had no voice in the affairs of the monarchies of which they formed part, remains unchallenged – the number of *poleis* may have increased after Alexander, and they may have flourished economically, but they were not longer city-states. Ensuing questions, like *how did cities adapt to empire?* or, *to what extent did they flourish despite changed political power constellations?* keep the discussion confined to a teleological cadre.

The crucial question, however, is hardly ever asked: were Hellenistic cities *really* (or, to what extent) subservient to kings? I will approach this question from two angles. First, the place and function of cities in imperial states will be outlined. Second, the dynamics of interaction between city and the royal court will be discussed. In both cases the focus is on the Seleucid Empire in the third century, although examples from other Macedonian kingdoms will occasionally be brought in.⁵

4 For instance in recent textbooks such as Shipley 2000 and Chamoux 1981, an English translation of which appeared with Blackwell in 2003; cf. the introduction to Ogden 2002, ix-xxv. The attractive image of the period as one of decadent decline, fashionable especially in the last decade of the past millennium, has its adherents too, see e.g. Green 1990. The view that Macedonian domination meant repression is central to the argument in Lape 2004, interpreting Menander's plays as acts of dissent full of coded democratic messages; for an opposite view see Major 1997, to whose review for *BMCR* 2004.06.39 I owe this reference.

5 In what follows, only Greek or Hellenized cities will be discussed because of the ample availability of sources and secondary literature, as notably the cities of Hellenistic Asia Minor have been extensively studied in the (recent) past. However, to really understand the relation between city and empire in the Seleucid kingdom, not only the *poleis* at the empire's westernmost periphery should be taken into account, but also cities located in its centre or even its eastern end; potentially interesting case-studies c.q. candidates for comparison with the *poleis* of western Asia Minor would be Arpad, Jerusalem, Babylon, Susa, and Merv.

CITY AND EMPIRE

We must bear in mind that monarchical empire was only a new phenomenon for the cities in mainland Greece. When the Macedonians under Philip, Alexander, and their successors became the dominant political power in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East, Greek *poleis* in Asia Minor had been accustomed to Persian hegemony for centuries, not to mention the multitude of non-Greek cities in the lands conquered by the Macedonians. The Achaemenids, like the Hellenistic kings after them, styled themselves the protectors and benefactors of cities throughout their empire – and beyond: ever since the Greek-Persian wars the Achaemenids had maintained diplomatic contacts with independent Greek *poleis*, trying to maintain a finger in the political pie of mainland Greece through a policy of divide and rule, while at the same time presenting themselves as the champions of Greek freedom. When the Thebans declared war against the Macedonians in 335, they called upon all the Greeks to join “the Thebans and the Great King in liberating the Greeks and destroying the tyrant of Greece” (Alexander).⁶

The image of the Greek city in the age of Macedonian imperialism is moreover distorted by four persistent misconceptions about the place and function of the city in the imperial framework. The first misconception is: *the Greek polis is a unique phenomenon*. That depends on definition. If we describe a ‘polis’ as an urban community or state, disposing of its own geographically delimited territory, and characterised by small size, political autonomy, social homogeneity, sense of community (‘citizenship’) and respect for (civic) law,⁷ then ‘poleis’ will be found all over the world throughout history, but especially in highly urbanised areas such as Bronze Age Syria, Hellenistic Mesopotamia, Late Antique Sogdia, Medieval Flanders or Renaissance Tuscany. Like the majority of *poleis* in Classical Greece, such city-states were normally self-governing oligarchies. The second misconception is that *civic autonomy is a Greek ideal*. It is not. Cities are almost *qualitate qua* autonomous. Self-rule is the natural state form for cities. Most cities are governed by domestic magistrates appointed by an assembly or council of some sort, which is sometimes presided over by a city-king, a high priest or a tyrant.⁸ Of course,

6 Diod. 17.9.5; cf. Plut., *Alex.* 11.7-8.

7 Definition after Oswyn Murray in *OCD*³ (1996) 1205; the presence of a city is normally not considered characteristic of a *polis* in theory, but in practice it usually is.

8 For the ideal of civic autonomy in Babylonia prior to the Hellenistic period, Van de Mierop 1999. Because of the ample evidence we know rather well that Jerusalem was as autonomous and self-governing under the Babylonian and Persian kings as it would be later under the Ptolemies and Seleucids, cf. *i.a.* Lipschits 2005, Vanderkam 2004, Bernett 2004.

radical *democracy*, such as it existed in Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries, may be unique. But democratic Athens was exceptional even in the context of fifth-century Greece. Besides, Athens' democracy did not disappear in the Hellenistic Age – on the contrary: democratic rule was supported rather than suppressed by Macedonian kings. Thirdly, *Hellenistic poleis had no independent foreign policy once they became involved with empires*. This simply is not true. The need to negotiate with kings, added to the normal dealings with neighbouring states, made diplomacy as important as ever. Moreover, Hellenistic *poleis* hardly ceased to quarrel or to make war among each other.⁹ The fourth and last misconception is: *empire is bad for civic autonomy*. That is not necessarily so. Here, too, the opposite could be true. Just as Hellenistic kingship, as John Ma once asserted, is good for your hair,¹⁰ so it can also be good for your city (as I will explain below).

Empires like the Achaemenid, Argead or Seleucid Empires, are basically tribute-exacting military organisations exercising only thin administrative control, and collecting relatively little revenue, in extensive and culturally heterogeneous territories. A steady supply of resources and manpower, as well as control of strategic roads, were the principal prerequisites of ancient imperialism.¹¹ Such empires have been referred to as 'hegemonic empires', meaning that local rulers recognise the overlordship of a 'great king', with personal ties established by marriage or other connections and cemented by gifts, and as 'military patronage states', meaning that a conquering people takes control of ethnically different populations, providing them the security that they need in order to produce the surplus the empire needs to support its army and court.¹² Such 'states' neither had the will nor the power to govern subject cities directly. Rather than trying to install outsiders as governors against the city's leaders' wishes, kings supported local political factions or elite families against their rivals, trying to manipulate the composition of the ruling oligarchy. Epigraphic evidence shows that when Hellenistic kings did intervene in city politics directly, they did so mostly

9 See Ma 2000; Chaniotis 2004 is dedicated more to inter-*polis* fighting in Greece than to the great wars of the kings in the east. Chankowski 2004 stresses the continuing military function of ephebes in the centuries after Alexander.

10 Ma 2003, 178.

11 See in general chapter 1 in Tilly 1990; cf. Tilly 1994. Millar 1987, 29, defined the Seleucid state as "primarily a system for extracting taxes and forming armies." Sommer 2000 emphasizes that the Seleucids collected tribute in Babylonia by means of "indirect rule" without altering traditional power systems, the position of local élites, or the autonomy of indigenous cities.

12 Vogelsang 1992, 304-15; Frye 1996, 80; Findley 2005, 93; Di Cosmo 1999.

in the capacity of mediators, taking care that their decisions were embedded in, even subordinate to, civic law.¹³

It is easy to overestimate the power of Hellenistic kings, or to take for granted the subordination of cities. In fact, kings were as dependent on cities as cities were on them. Cities commanded the infrastructure and formed the loci where surpluses were collected, both of which were essential for the exercise of the empires' core business: war-making.¹⁴ Besieging cities was a costly, time-consuming and even hazardous affair, as Alexander learned at Tyre and Antigonus Gonatas at Athens. Antiochus the Great laid siege to Bactra for more than a year without ever taking the city, and Demetrius Poliorcetes' famous 'state of the art' siege of Rhodes ended in humiliating failure. Therefore, rather than coerce cities into submission at any cost, rulers preferred to seek peaceful cooperation with urban oligarchies. This means that there was much to gain for the cities as well. Rulers would promise to protect cities against their enemies, formally grant cities *de iure* the autonomy they already possessed *de facto*, and bestow on them various benefactions, trading privileges, exemptions from taxes, and so forth. Hence the self-presentation of Hellenistic rulers as the liberators and saviours of cities. In return the cities would voluntarily succumb to the ruler, award him (divine) honours, pay tribute, provide military aid or simply acknowledge the king's formal suzerainty.¹⁵

13 O'Neil 2000; cf. Kosmetatou 1997, concluding that in the third century the Seleucids rarely interfered in the domestic affairs of Pisidian towns, even though they maintained a strong military presence in the region.

14 Hellenistic kings preferred silver bullion or coin to tribute in kind, for in the Hellenistic Age money was, as Plutarch (*Cleom.* 27.1) says, "the sinews of war"; cf. Diod. 29.6.1: "In warfare a ready supply of money is indeed, as the familiar proverb has it, the companion of success. Since he who is well provided with money never lacks men able to fight." For the importance of coined money for the Seleucid war machine, see Aperghis 2004, 29-32; cf. De Callatay 1997 and De Callatay 2000.

15 The reciprocity of the interaction between court and city is also apparent from the epigraphic evidence, as has been shown by Ma 1997: the standardised "language of euergetism" in royal letters and civic decrees, Ma argues, could not be monopolised and manipulated by any of the parties so that both were cast in well-defined, mutually profitable roles. From the reign of Seleucus II Callinicus (246-c. 225 BCE), the Seleucids dealt in like manner with principalities at the empire's fringe – Anatolia, Armenia, Arabia, Persis, Hyrcania, Bactria and Sogdia – who obtained independence and royal titles by the grace of the 'great king'; as far as the Seleucids were concerned, such rulers were vassals; they themselves probably looked upon the Seleucids as their equals. On the curious paradox of cities simultaneously claiming autonomy *and* submitting to kings, see Versnel 1990. As a famous letter of Antiochus II to Erythrai (Welles, *RC* 15; *OGIS* 223) shows, it was not considered paradoxical if the king was presented with a huge gift of gold in return for tax exemption: gift-giving was honourable while being taxed was tantamount to loss of *autonomia*.

The autonomy thus obtained could be quite real. Even Alexandria, Antioch and Pergamon had a *boule* and *ekklesia*, and governed themselves.¹⁶ Most cities were ungarrisoned.¹⁷ There sometimes was an *epistates* in a city, but this presumably was not simply a royal official with full power of attorney but rather a citizen who was also a *philoxenos* of the royal family, and who acted as intermediary. Kings were of course obliged to offer in actuality the security they promised to cities in return for tribute and allegiance. Thus, cities maintaining direct relations with a king became, to borrow a term from the Holy Roman Empire, *Reichsunmittelbar*, that is, safeguarded against the territorial ambitions of nearby principalities and rival cities exactly because of their subjugation to a powerful but absent emperor. Presumably, most *poleis* of the Greek mainland were not so unhappy about the Battle of Chaironeia, where the Macedonians destroyed the supremacy of Athens and Thebes, who had dominated the other Greek states for so long. What better protection for a small *polis* in central Greece against the expansionist aggression of Athens than the tremendous military power of the Macedonian king? Indeed, when Alexander's army sacked Thebes in 335, they were joined by troops from many surrounding Greek *poleis*, who had come to settle old grudges against the Thebans.¹⁸ Long distance trade benefited, too, from the relative stability and security offered by the empire. Moreover, the need to mobilise resources impelled the empire to safeguard and even actively encourage economic growth.¹⁹

16 For the "democratic machinery" of the Ptolemaic "capital" Alexandria, Fraser 1972 I, 93-115. Even cities in the Macedonian homeland were administered by an *ekklesia*, *boule* and civic magistrates under the Antigonids: Hatzopoulos 2001, 190-1; cf. Hatzopoulos 1996 I, 1270-65 and II, 54-110. For a different view, see Grainger 1990, contending that Seleucid cities in northern Syria were not autonomous and hence not real *poleis*.

17 At least not in the sense of being held hostage by an occupation force in the city's main stronghold(s), which is meant by the ideal of being "exempt from garrisons" in e.g. Antigonus' declaration of Greek independence in 314 (Diod. 19.61); in practice, garrisons could offer protection as well and for that reason could be present with the consent of the city. On garrisons and cities see Labarre 2004. Couvenhes 2004 shows that mercenary garrisons were sometimes hired by cities; in case of good behaviour soldiers could be rewarded by the city with the grant of citizenship.

18 Arr., *Anab.* 1.8.8 names Phocians and Boeotians, with Plataeans foremost among the latter, cf. Plut., *Alex.* 11.5; Diod. 17.13.6 names Thespians, Plataeans, Orchomenians 'and others', Just. 11.3.8 Phocians, Plataeans, Thespians and Orchomenians. Cf. Kosmetatou 1997, 5-37, esp. 21-22, arguing that in the third century relations between the Seleucids and the Pisidian cities were very good because of the protection offered by the Seleucid troops stationed in the region against the Galatians; to express their allegiance, cities carved Macedonian shields on public monuments, and the citizens of Sagalassos even adopted the Seleucid war elephant as an emblem for their official state seal which they used through the Roman period.

19 See notably Aperghis 2004, arguing that the Seleucids took a keen interest in the economies of the various regions of the Near East and Central Asia and actively encouraged economic growth throughout their empire, notably with regard to cities.

CITY AND COURT

In a letter to Miletus, Seleucus II assures the citizens that he is well-disposed to the city because the ‘friends’ of his deceased predecessor (*patrikoi philoi*) have informed him about the attitude of Miletus towards his family.²⁰ This document captures the pivotal significance of *philia* for the functioning of the Seleucid imperial network. International networks of friendship and guest-friendship known as *philia*, *xenia*, and *philoxenia* linked elite families in Greek or Hellenised cities with the royal court. These networks were instrumental in the court’s policy of influencing the internal politics of cities; they also offered cities opportunities to exert influence on political matters at court. In the Seleucid empire, the royal court was the point of contact between the monarchy and the various ruling classes at the regional and local level.²¹ The friends of the king functioned as intermediaries.

The ancient Greek tradition of *xenia* (or *philoxenia*) – a form of ritualised personal relationships with traits of fictive kinship, usually translated as ‘guest-friendship’ – constituted supranational, ‘horizontal’ elite networks which linked men of approximately equal social status but of separate social units c.q. *poleis*, thus uniting the Greek world at its highest level.²² It was an aristocratic ideal, an archaic legacy.²³ Through participation in a social sphere outside the city, civic elites distanced themselves from their inferiors. *Xenoi* of the Seleucid family who served as courtiers, commanders or ambassadors would normally retain links with their families and cities of origin, presumably through several generations.²⁴ They often acted as mediators between the kings and their own

20 *I. Didyma* 493; *OGIS* I 227; Welles, *RC* 22 lines 7-9. Milesian *philoi* of the Seleucids: Hermann 1987.

21 On the Hellenistic royal court see now my dissertation (2007), with full bibliography.

22 Herman 1987, 208: “Many of the courtiers ... were recruited through the instrumentality of *xenia*, an ancient form of fictive kinship. ... The Hellenistic rulers ... availed themselves of pre-existing *xenia* networks to draw new allies into their orbit. These networks account not only for the preponderance of Greeks among the newly recruited Hellenistic court members, but also for the increasing similarities between the three courts. The Hellenistic court societies, then, did not operate *in vacuo*. Instead, they were part of a wider, interactive, international society of ritualised friends. This society had since time immemorial constituted a world of its own, binding together the social elites of the Greek world through upper-class ideals. ... As a first step towards understanding Hellenistic ‘court politics’, one should therefore explore the relation between court societies and friendship networks.”

23 For *philoxenia* as an aristocratic ideal in the world of Homer: Scott 1982; Van Wees 1992, 44-48.

24 Savalli-Lestrade 1996; Muccioli 2001. In cities we encounter both honours for the king dedicated by *philoi* (e.g. *OGIS* 128, 171, and 255) and decrees in honour of *philoi* dedicated by the king (e.g. *Syll.*³ 462; Welles 45; *OGIS* 317).

communities of origin, deriving substantial benefits from both systems.²⁵

Philia may be defined as a personal, reciprocal bond of loyalty and solidarity between two or more men (or women) of approximately equal status who share roughly the same interests. They were committed to each other by mutual obligations, and could rely on each other for help.²⁶ The objective of *philia* was normally to achieve a common goal, and united action towards that end was a means to strengthen and display the bond. By means of exchanging gifts and favours (*charites*) the friendship was kept alive.²⁷ The parties involved in a *philia* relationship were ideally each other's peers, even when they were not equals in practice.

It should be noted that 'Friend of the King' was only to a limited extent a *terminus technicus* for 'courtier' because the term by itself did not presuppose actual presence at court, which means that oligarchs in *poleis* could be *philoï* too.²⁸ Thus the court society constituted the epicentre of a complex and far-reaching network of patronage relations through which kings could control cities.²⁹ But the system worked bottom-up as well, permitting cities and elite families to exert influence at court through royal *philoï*. The majority of the *philoï* who were actually present at the (peripatetic) Seleucid court, or who served the royal family as provincial officials and ambassadors, seem to have been predominantly Greeks (with a small upper stratum of ethnic Macedonians).³⁰ They came

25 Herman 1996, 613. On *philoï* as mediators between king and cities, see Bringmann 1993. Herman 1980/81 has listed civic decrees honouring *philoï*, mainly from third century Athens, Samos, Ephesos and Delos.

26 Goldhill 1986, 82.

27 Konstan 1997, 78; cf. Scott 1982, characterising Homeric *philia* as being 'based on self-interest but wholly co-operative in action'. For *philia* and Hellenistic court society see Strootman 2007, 119-80.

28 More specific and to the point is *peri ten aulen*, 'the people of the court', or *aulikoi*, literally 'courtiers'; however, despite Bickerman 1938's assertion that these were technical terms, they do not figure in official contemporary documents (unlike *philoï*). *Aulē* is commonly used in Greek historiography to denote a royal court, cf. Tamm 1968. Another term designating what we would now call 'courtiers' is *therapeia*, 'retinue'. The designation *philoï tou basileos*, however, is used most often to denote the Hellenistic court society in both historiography and epigraphy; in official texts, the standard formula 'the king, his *philoï*, and his military forces (*dunameis*)' is used. For a full discussion of the terminology in the sources, see Strootman 2007, 13-4.

29 Herman 1997, 200.

30 Habicht 1958. Habicht's calculation that about 95% of the upper echelons of the Seleucid imperial administration considered itself Hellenic, has been rejected by many scholars, most fervently by Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1993, 124-125; it has been defended by Herman 1997, 208, and Weber 1997, 40-41. Non-Greek officials were present at secondary levels, besides, of course, constituting the bulk of regional and local aristocrats and rulers.

from a wide range of Greek cities, even from beyond the empire's actual boundaries.³¹ In his biography of Antigonus Monophthalmus, Richard Billows has listed the names of the *c.* 150 known *philoï* of this king. In 82 instances an *ethnikon* has been preserved. The list reads as if every single *polis* in the Greek world was represented at the Antigonid court by at least one man: Byzantium, Athens, Lampsacus, Rhodes, Olynthus, Cyzicus, Miletus, Amphipolis, Heracleia Pontica, Cos, Teos, Halicarnassus, Erythrai, Larissa, Elaea, Plataea, Thera, Eresos, Tiejion, Chios, Samos, Tenedos, Cyrene and more.³² The Seleucids relied heavily on Greeks from Asia Minor and the Aegean. Of the *philoï* of Antiochus III mentioned by Livy and Polybius as serving the king at any time in his reign, *c.* 25% came from mainland Greece, 25% from Asia Minor, and another 15% from Aegean islands, the remainder being Greeks and non-Greeks from Syria and Iran. The *philoï* at Antiochus III's court had disparate places of origin such as Acarnania, Chalcis, Thessaly, Aetolia, Achaia, Rhodes, Cos, Gortyn, Byzantium, Cyzicus, Seleucia Calycadnus, Alexandria Troas, Caria, Cyme, Antioch on the Orontes and Seleucia in Pieria. Even in the reign of Mithradates Eupator – whose empire was much smaller than Antiochus III's and whose court was dominated by Iranian aristocrats – we encounter representatives of Lesbos, Athens, Sinope, Amisos, Scepsis, a Laodicean and a Stratonicean, holding important positions in the entourage of the king.³³

The fuel of *philia* was gift exchange.³⁴ With lavish gifts kings confirmed their superior status and obligated their friends and other retainers. It was not dishonourable to ask for a gift. A person operating in the *xenia*-network of the Seleucid family who managed to appear before the king (or one of his queens, a prince, a satrap, a kinsman of the king or an important courtier) was allowed to ask for benefactions, privileges or material gifts. He could do so on behalf of himself and his family, his own *philoï*, or his *polis*. The petitioner would be expected to first present a gift himself, but the person with the highest status was obliged to offer the most

31 The tables showing the ethnicity and places of origin of early Antigonid, Seleucid, Ptolemaic and Attalid courtiers presented in 2003 at the *Post-Classical City* symposium in Groningen, have been printed in Strootman 2005, and were inserted in Strootman 2007, 124-9. Comparable material, but with different conclusions, has been presented O'Neil 2003 and 2006.

32 Billows 1997, 361-452.

33 Savalli-Lestrade 1998, nos. 3, 7-10, 13, 16; App., *Mithr.* 21, 48, 117. Against the *c.* 10 Greeks at Mithradates' court, the names of another 10 probable non-Greek courtiers are known: App., *Mithr.*, 2, 19, 70, 76, 79; Strabo 13.1.66; Savalli-Lestrade 4, 12, 14.

34 Konstan 1997, 4. On the significance of gift exchange at the Hellenistic courts, see Strootman 2007, 143-148.

valuable gift or favour.³⁵ If the petitioner's initial gift were accepted, his request would be granted. Thus, the exchange of gifts created both horizontal bonds of loyalty as well as vertical bonds of dependence.

CONCLUSION

The Hellenistic *polis* did more than survive and multiply. Cities may have become dependent on the ruler's goodwill, but the opposite was true, too. In the ensuing negotiations there was much to gain for the cities, first of all their independence.

The *philoï tou basileos* acted as intermediaries and negotiators. They represented the interests of the cities at court and the interests of the court in the cities. A *philos* did so either as the representative of his own *polis* or as a 'broker' between the representatives of a *polis* and the king; in both cases *xenia* and *philia* networks linked the *polis* to the court. The exchange between king and city – e.g. divine honours for the king in exchange for benefactions and privileges for the city – was embedded in the moral complex of gift exchange, which in turn formed part of the moral complex of ritualised friendship with its ideology of mutual aid and shared benefit.

Utrecht University

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35 Since Mauss' classic essay on the gift (1925), it is generally accepted that ritualised gift exchange is subject to three rules: the obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. Unequal reciprocity was a means to secure that the person with the lesser status would not be able to fully reciprocate and thus would remain indebted and dependent – hence the anecdote in Plut., *Mor.* 127b, about a courtier who asked Alexander for dowries for his daughters, and was offered fifty talents; when the courtier politely retorted that ten talents would be more than enough, the king said, "Enough for you to receive, but not enough for me to give."

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