

I

Court, kingship and ideology

1.1 Studying the royal court

It is difficult to define what a court is. One runs the risk of either excluding too many facets, or defining it too loosely. Basically, the court is the king's immediate social milieu, consisting of (1) the circle of persons ('courtiers') around a ruler, (2) the rooms and halls where the king lives, receives guests, gives audiences and banquets, and where the rituals or royalty are performed, and (3) the larger matrix of political and economic relations converging in the ruler's household.¹ The latter is of particular importance, as these personal relations formed the networks on which royal power was based.

¹ Adamson 1999, 7. Note that the 'court' is normally defined as merely the persons surrounding the king, cf. G. Elton, 'Tudor government. The points of contact III: The court', in: id., *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government* (Cambridge 1983) 38-57: 'The only definition of the court which makes sense ... is that it comprised of all those who at any given time were within "his grace's house"'. See D. Starkey, 'Court history in perspective', in: id., *The English Court. From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London 1987) 1-24, esp. 5, for an even narrower definition, *sc.* only courtiers (*i.e.* without servants, guards, stablehands and so forth). The problem is of course, that in no two periods the court is the same; thus the Medieval European court was often peripatetic whereas Ancien Régime courts usually can be localised in one or more fixed residences, and definitions for this period more often include references to palaces (Asch 1991, 9-10). As we will see in chapter 1.2, contemporaries understood the Hellenistic royal court first of all as the king's household or *oikos*. An interesting alternative has been proposed by M.J. Rodríguez-Salgado, 'The court of Philip II of Spain', in Asch & Birke 1991, 206-44, defining the court as the place where the 'sovereign power' of the monarchy resides; this leaves open the possibility that the monarch's 'sovereign authority' can be present even when the monarch himself is absent: 'the monarch's residual authority, not his presence, was the prerequisite of a court' (p. 207). It does presuppose however the existence of a fixed residence.

Court is not a synonym of palace. Kings may maintain several palaces but normally have only one court. Neither is a palace a prerequisite for a court. Many courts in history were peripatetic, not least the Argead, Antigonid and Seleukid courts. This means that a king could hold court also *en route* in his camp (the natural habitat of *i.a.* Alexander the Great, Pyrrhos, Antiochos III and Philippos V), or on board of a ship (the Ptolemies in their floating palace Thalamegos; Kleopatra VII at Tarsos). Polybios describes the royal pavilion of the Ptolemaic army camp before the Battle of Raphia as if it were a palace, comprising a tent for public audiences.² Moreover, crucial court ceremonial such as inauguration rites took place in a public area rather than in the confines of a palace.

The modern study of the court goes back to the pioneering work of Norbert Elias (1969) and Jürgen von Krüedener (1973).³ Both tried to understand the role of the court in the development of absolutism in early modern Europe. Elias saw the royal court as principally an

² Polyb. 5.81.5.

³ N. Elias, *Die höfische Gesellschaft. Untersuchungen zur Soziologie des Königtums und der höfischen Aristokratie* (Neuwied and Berlin 1969; 7th edn. Frankfurt am Main 1994); J. von Krüedener, *Die Rolle des Hofes im Absolutismus* (Stuttgart 1973). On both classic works J. Duindam, *Myths of Power. Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court* (Amsterdam 1994) is essential reading. Both Elias and Krüedener, notably the latter, were influenced by Max Weber; this accounts for some striking similarities, as Krüedener did not consult Elias 1996 (he does however refer to Elias' civilisation theory of 1937). The point of reference for Elias, whose view of the court as a 'golden cage' for the nobility was mainly based on the memoirs of Saint-Simon, was the French court under Louis XIV; Krüedener based his model on princely courts in various German states during a much longer period. A. Winterling, *Der Hof der Kurfürsten von Köln 1688-1794. Eine Fallstudie zur Bedeutung 'absolutistischer' Hofhaltung* (Bonn 1986), contains fundamental criticism of Elias' model, based on a thorough case study; also J. Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals* (Cambridge 2003), challenges many of Elias' conclusions by comparing Versailles with the Habsburg court, extending his research to the period 1550-1780. On Elias' thinking and its influence in general see S. Mennell, *Norbert Elias. An Introduction* (Oxford 1992). For the courts of the Renaissance and Ancien Régime in general: E.G. Dickens ed., *The Courts of the Italian Renaissance. Politics, Patronage, and Royalty, 1400-1800* (London 1977); A. Buck *et al.* eds, *Europäische Hofkultur im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (3 vols; Hamburg 1981); S. Bertelli *et al.* eds, *The Courts of the Italian Renaissance* (Milano 1986); R.G. Asch and A.M. Birke, eds, *Princes, Patronage, and the Nobility. The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c. 1450-1650* (London and Oxford 1991); J. Adamson ed., *The Princely Courts of Europe, 1500-1750* (London 1999). For a critical overview of the debate since Elias 1969 see J. Duindam 'De herontdekking van het vorstelijk hof', *TvG* 108.3 (1995) 361-76.

instrument in the hands of the king to pacify the nobility. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century the development of professional standing armies, employed in conflicts fought on an increasingly large scale, gradually led to a military monopoly of the king and the growth of a centralised state apparatus. This, in its turn, forced members of the old nobility—on whose military assistance the king was no longer dependent—to leave their ancestral domains and be present near the king in order to obtain offices, military commands and prestige. At court, competition for royal favour, extensive status expenditures expected from a ‘gentleman’, and the restrictions and obligations of court etiquette and ceremonial amounted to loss of political and economic autonomy on the part of the old noble families, who turned into a toothless court nobility obligated to an absolutist monarch. Recent scholarship has adjusted or rejected many of Elias’ views. The absolutism claimed by rulers like Louis XIV presumably was an ideal rather than a reality.⁴ Even the very existence of the opposition between king and nobility, on which Elias’ model rests, has been disputed.⁵ Duindam moreover has noted that the restrictions and obligations placed upon the nobility by court life also affected the king himself. For instance the system of obligatory conspicuous consumption required the most extensive status expenditures from the ruler himself, being the person of highest rank. As the growth of the apparatus of government did not necessarily result in all power getting into the hands of the king, Duindam argued that presence at court could also be advantageous for nobles, offering them opportunities to become part of the new central power.⁶ In sum, if the early modern court really was a golden cage, as Elias maintained, the king was imprisoned in it as well.

Although Elias’ *Höfische Gesellschaft* inspired modern court history most, Kruedener’s *Rolle des Hofes* has better stood the test of time. Kruedener’s aim was to develop a model for the study of the court rather than propose a grand theory. In this model, the historical significance of the court extended beyond its role in establishing power relations between the ruler and the nobility. Kruedener also emphasised the function of the court as the principal locus for monarchic representation. According to Kruedener, the court was both a platform for competition with rival monarchies and a stage for legitimating the monarchy *vis-*

⁴ N. Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism. Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy* (London and New York 1992); on the creation of this myth see P. Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven and New York 1992).

⁵ R.G. Asch, ‘Court and household from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries’, in: Asch & Birke 1991, 1-38.

à-vis the subjects. This basic function of the court as a kind of theatrical stage makes Kruedener's model a more suitable starting-point for the study of the Hellenistic court: not only is this dimension conspicuously present in Hellenistic court culture, there even was a contemporary notion that kings were like actors displaying their *basileia* on a stage – and indeed they often literally did so, as the public pomp and ritual of Hellenistic kingship often took place in theatres, stadions or hippodromes.⁷

Four functions of the royal court

On the basis of Kruedener's model, four dimensions or functions of the court can be discerned:

1. the court as a political arena
2. the court as administrative centre
3. the court as symbolic centre
4. the court as a stage for monarchic representation

The court as a political arena combines the political, economic and social dimensions of the court. The court was the place where the wealth, power and prestige of the dynasty was accumulated and redistributed. This not only made the court an instrument of power in the hands of the ruler, it also brought advantages for those who wished to share in the power, wealth and prestige of the royal family. Acquiring a place of honour in the household of the king was a means for powerful families to exert influence on political matters, even permitting them at times to hold sway against the ruler's desire.⁸ In theory, the mechanism structuring power relations at court was the principle of proximity to the throne, *i.e.* the regulation of access to the person of the king, and the system of honorific titles, court offices and military commands, which developed to give expression to the intangible 'favour' of the king or the queen.⁹ In practice, the ruler was not necessarily in full control of the distribution of titles and offices, wealth and favour. At the Hellenistic courts, the king shared his power with numerous

⁶ Duindam 1994, 79.

⁷ Strootman 1993, 11-2; on the notion of royal ritual and court ceremonial as a form of theatre see section 5.1.

⁸ Duindam 1994, 95.

⁹ Kruedener 1973, 57: 'Abstammung als Quelle sozialer Ehre und als Ordnungsprinzip ... des Ranges [ist] im Prinzip aufgehoben und durch ein anderes Prinzip ersetzt worden: die Nähe zum Thron'.

persons or families, and sometimes the king was not even their leader. As will be argued in section 3.5, the power of the king was in reality not so absolute as official ideology claimed it was. Attempts of kings to control the composition of their household was an important source of conflict at the top of the kingdoms. Another major source of discord was conflict over the succession. Thus, internal conflict was characteristic of Hellenistic court culture but it was rarely an instrument of control in the hands of the king.

The court substituted the point of contact between the monarchy and the various ruling classes at the regional and local level.¹⁰ The courtiers (*philoï*) functioned as intermediaries. They were linked to the king and his family by networks of kinship, ritualised friendship (*philia, xenia, philoxenia*), and other personal ties, ‘surrounding the king as bees surround the queen in a hive’.¹¹ The *philoï*, in their turn, maintained personal ties with their cities and families of origin, and acted as private benefactors of other cities. They became local magnates because they were royal *philoï* or *vice versa*. Thus the court society constituted the epicentre of a complex and far-reaching network of patronage relations. ‘The court was an intermediary through which the king controlled his secondary and much wider zone of influence’, wrote Gabriel Herman, one of the very few ancient historians to have dealt with Hellenistic court culture analytically: ‘Its tentacles reached into every section of the kingdom, so that the king’s power was manifested to his subjects through the members of his court.’¹² The system, however, also worked the other way round, permitting cities and elite families to exert influence at court through royal *philoï*. Moreover, royal courts were not the only source of political power in the Hellenistic world. As long as the monarchy was strong and wealthy, kings would attract powerful men to their court and control cities and territory with their aid. But when a monarchy impoverished or lost charisma—usually the result of military failure—regional leaders turned away from the court or became political rivals.

The second dimension is the court as an administrative centre. As the Hellenistic royal court was essentially the household of the royal family, it was the centre of the (economic) management of the dynastic *oikos*: the taxation and the exaction of tribute and produce, the financial administration, and the chancellery. High ranking office-holders were ultimately

¹⁰ In general: Asch 1991, 4; Duindam 1994, 92.

¹¹ Bertelli 1986, 9.

¹² G. Herman, ‘The court society of the Hellenistic age’, in: P. Cartledge, P. Garnsey, E.S. Gruen eds, *Hellenistic Constructs. Essays in Culture, History, and Historiography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1997) 199-224, at 200.

responsible, but they were assisted by many lesser officials, servants and local tax-collectors. The court likewise was the nerve centre of the kingdom as a military organisation.

In organising a festival and games at Daphne in 166/5 BCE, Antiochos IV Epiphanes ‘brought together the most distinguished men from virtually the whole world (*oikoumenē*), adorned all parts of his palace in magnificent fashion, and, having assembled in one spot and, as it were, having put upon a stage his entire kingship (*basileia*), he left [his enemies] ignorant of nothing that concerned him. ... In putting on these lavish games and stupendous festival Antiochos outdid all earlier rivals.’¹³ This revealing fragment from Diodoros sums up the next two dimensions of the court, which are mainly ideological and representational: the court as a symbolic centre and a stage for the theatre of kingship.

The court as a symbolic centre is not originally in Kruedener’s model. What I mean with this, is that the Seleukids and Ptolemies conceived, styled and propagated their court as the heart of empire and thus the heart of the entire *oikoumenē*. The court was a kind of microcosm where the empire was exhibited. As the self-declared summit of civilisation, the court was contrasted to the barbaric, even chaotic periphery at the edge of the earth. This ideology enhanced the ruler’s self-presentation as world leader and created a sense of unity in culturally and ethnically heterogeneous empires.

The last dimension, the court as a stage for legitimisation and competition, figures prominently in Kruedener’s model. Kruedener distinguishes three closely-related aspects of the legitimating function of the court: cultisation, charismatisation and distancing. In the Hellenistic world this mainly took three forms, respectively public rituals in which the superhuman nature of the monarchy, including the king’s divinity, was revealed, the presentation of the king as a glorious warrior, and the presentation of the court as sacred and inaccessible, for instance by integrating elements of temple architecture in palaces. The function of this was to overawe not only subjects but enemies as well, for the display of wealth, military might and political power was instrumental in competing with rival kingdoms too.¹⁴ Through the display of power symbols, wealth and splendour, the ruler did more than making claims: by putting up a show he could actual gain prestige and thus increase his charisma and legitimacy.¹⁵

¹³ Diod. 31.16.1.

¹⁴ Kruedener 1973, 21-2: ‘höfisches Imponiergehabe’.

¹⁵ Kruedener 1973, 21; cf. J.H. Shennon, *The Origins of the Modern European States, 1450-1725* (London 1974) 475.

1.2 The Hellenistic royal court

‘In the court I exist and of the court I speak, but what the court is, God knows, I know not.’ With these words the twelfth century patrician Walter Map began his account of the English court of his own age.¹⁶ Concerning the Hellenistic kingdoms, the sources do not give the impression either that there existed an unanimous notion of what the court exactly was. The court is variously described as either the household of the king or the people belonging to that household as members or friends.

To designate a royal household, *oikos* or *oikia* could be used. *Oikos* connotes the extended family’s house, household, property, and interests, but does not carry a connotation of royalty. By extension it could mean ‘kingdom’. Thus, when Polybios contrasts the fortunes of the Antigonid dynasty and the Achaian League, he places the royal *oikia* of the Macedonians on a par with the confederacy of the Achaians, as two state forms.¹⁷ A more specific term is *aulē*.¹⁸ Athenaios explains that this word, which normally denotes the courtyard before or around a house or farm, is used to denote a royal household ‘because there are very spacious squares in front of the house of a king’.¹⁹ *Aulē* in other words, could also mean ‘court’, to put it somewhat ambiguously, and the people surrounding Hellenistic kings are often called ‘the people of the court’ (οἱ περὶ τὴν αὐλήν) or *aulikoi*, literally ‘courtiers’.²⁰

¹⁶ Cited from R.A. Griffiths, ‘The king’s court during the Wars of the Roses: Continuities in and age of discontinuities’, in: Asch & Birke 1991, 42-67, at 67.

¹⁷ Polyb. 2.37.7 (τῶν Ἀχαιῶν ἔθνοους καὶ τῆς Μακεδόνων οἰκίας); cf. 2.48.2; 2.50.9.

¹⁸ Diod. 31.15A.1-3; Jos., *AJ* 12.106, 185; 13.368; 16.336; 1 *Macc.* 2.46; Polyb. 4.42.2; 5.29.3, 40.4. Curt. 10.5.8 translates *vestibulus regis*.

¹⁹ Ath. 189e. Large open courtyards were indeed characteristic of Hellenistic palace architecture, cf. chapter 2.2. An additional, perhaps less plausible explanation is given by Athenaios why *aulē* came to mean ‘royal palace’: the word’s second meaning, ‘resting-place for cattle’, was associated with the fact that the royal guard used to encamp and sleep in the yard in front of the king’s house. This use of *aulē* in the context of Hellenistic kings e.g. Polyb. 4.42.2; 5.29.3, 40.4; 1 *Macc.* 2.46. For the terminology see B. Tamm, ‘Aula regia, “aulē” und aula’, in: G. Säflund ed., *Opuscula Carolo Kerenyi dedicata*. Stockholm Studies in Classical Archaeology 5 (Stockholm 1968) 135-242.

²⁰ Polyb. 5.26.13; 5.36.1 (general); Polyb. 4.87.7 (Antigonid court); Polyb. 5.40.2, 34.4; 16.21.8; 18.55.3 (Ptolemaic); Polyb. 5.41.3, 50.14, 56.5; App., *Syr.* 45. Jos., *AJ* 12.215; 17.125; 18.54 (Seleukid). *Aulikoi*; Polyb. 16.22.8; Plut., *Mor.* 778b; *Demetr.* 17. An interesting variant is οἱ περὶ τὴν Ἄτταλον, ‘the people of Attalos’ (II) (Diod. 29.22). Cf. E.J. Bickerman, *Institutions des*

Aulē is not ordinarily used for ‘palace’, the customary word for which is *basileion* or *basileia*.²¹ The Romans took over this usage of ‘court’ (in Latin: *aula*), and via this route it reached its present use in modern European languages (‘cour’, ‘court’, ‘Hof’).²²

In addition to *aulikoi* various other terms designating ‘courtiers’ are used in the sources. A term often encountered in ancient historiography is *therapeia*, meaning ‘retinue’. According to Bickerman, *therapeia* was the *terminus technicus* for the (Seleukid) court.²³ However, the word is not used in this meaning in royal correspondence or other primary sources directly connected to the court. Moreover, when used in the context of monarchy *therapeia* can refer to the king’s personal attendants or his bodyguard, and the difference is often unclear.²⁴ There remains however one contemporary term for ‘courtiers’ which figures in both historiography and official documents, and this is simply ‘the friends of the king’ (οἱ φιλοὶ τοῦ βασιλέως). On civic decrees, the standard formula ‘the king, his friends (*philo*), and his military forces (*dynameis*)’ is recurrently used.²⁵ In ancient historiography, too, *philo* is used most often to denote the Hellenistic court society.²⁶

Séleucides (Paris 1938) 36: ‘Atour de roi se placent les “gens de la cour”, comme le langage hellénistique les appelait. Nous pouvons distinguer parmi ces “courtisans” deux groupes: “la maison du roi” et les “amis”’. Presumably, Bickerman’s understanding of *περὶ τὴν αὐλήν* as an umbrella term for *philo* and the servants of the king is too formal. Furthermore, *philo* was a much broader term, cf. Herman 1997, 214, who draws attention to the fact that Polybios, in speaking of the Ptolemaic kingdom, contrasts the people who are actually present at court (οἱ περὶ τὴν αὐλήν) with the officials who administered Egypt (οἱ τὰ κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον χειρίζοντες) and the officials dispatched to posts in the wider Mediterranean (οἱ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔξω πραγμάτων διατάγμενοι). Apparently, all three categories consisted of *philo*.

²¹ Polyb. 10.27.9, 31.5; Diod. 19.18.1; Plut., *Luc.* 29.8; Ath. 654b; Jos., *AJ* 13.136; 14.16, 59; 17.90. The *pluralis maiestatis* Palaces was the name of the royal district in Alexandria (Strabo 508 and 524).

²² Tamm 1968.

²³ Bickerman 1938, 36.

²⁴ For instance, it is not clear at all whether Alexandros, ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπέας (Polyb. 4.87.5) at the court of Philippos V, was the king’s major-domo or captain of the bodyguard (*pace* Walbank I 536). *Therapeia* as royal retinue: Polyb. 5.39.1, 50.3, 56.7-8. As bodyguard: Diod. 33.4a. Cf. Polyb. 7.12.1; 5.50.1; 15.32.8; Diod. 31.17c; 18.27.1. An interesting variant is αὐλὰς θεραπεύειν (Ath. 189e). In place of *therapeia* also *therapontes* could be used, e.g. in Polyb. 5.39.1. Before the Hellenistic Age, Greek writers used *therapeia* also for the retinue of Persian kings, cf. e.g. Hdt. 1.199; 5.21; 7.184; Xen., *Cyr.* 4.6.1; 7.5.65.

²⁵ D. Musti, ‘Syria and the East’, in: CAH 7.1 (1984) 175-220, esp. 179.

We may conclude that, although there was no ‘official’ *terminus technicus*, a contemporary notion of a royal court did exist, conceiving the court as a distinct form of household, just as the royal palace (*basileion*) was distinguished from a genuine elite house. Terminology was not consistent, but the most precise denominations were *aulē* and *philoī*, the latter being used most often in Greek historiography and official documents. The evidence normally does not differentiate between the court as a household and as a social group, and in this sense the court is indeed not unlike the *oikos*.

Historical development

Hellenistic court culture was essentially Greek and Macedonian elite culture imported to Egypt and the Near East. The evidence for the courts of the Ptolemies, Seleukids and Antigonids reveals predominantly similarities with the Argead household in fourth century Macedonia, albeit on a much grander scale and with many ‘eastern’, chiefly Achaemenid, elements integrated in it.²⁷ The historical development of the Hellenistic court can be roughly divided into four main phases:

1. The period of imperialist expansion under Philippos II and Alexander the Great, in which growing royal autocracy leads to conflicts with the Macedonian high nobility (c. 350-323 BCE). Greek courtiers turn up already in the reign of Philippos; Alexander furthermore favours Macedonians from the lesser nobility, and Iranians.
2. The age of the Diadochs, when new courts are being set up. In this period, Greeks begin to dominate the Macedonian courts; non-Hellenic aristocrats retreat from the courts (323-c. 275).

²⁶ The Latin word for a Hellenistic courtier is *purpuratus*, because of the purple dye used to colour the clothing of the *philoī*, e.g. Liv. 30.42.6; 32.39.8; 37.23.7; 37.59.5; 42.51.2. Cic., *Cat.* 4.12; *Tusc.* 1.102; Curt., 3.2.10; 3.13.13; 5.1.37; Vitr. 2 *pr.* 1. Quint. 8.5.24.

²⁷ There are also similarities with the courts of Greek tyrants of the Archaic Age, and the rulers of Syracuse, in particular Dionysios II. The former are not very relevant, however, as there was no continuity across the Classical Age, nor was there any reference to Greek tyranny in the ideology of Hellenistic kingship other than the presentation of the king as the destroyer of tyranny. For the Achaemenid court see J.M. Cook, ‘The rise of the Achaemenids and the establishment of their empire’, in: I. Gershevitch ed., *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (Cambridge 1985) 200-91, esp. 225-38.

3. A longer period in which the institutions of the court develop and become more complex and hierarchised. The possibilities of the king to manipulate the composition of the court society decreases; kings try to check the growing power of the *philoï* by patronising (non-Greek) favourites (c. 275-150 BCE).
4. The period of the decline of the great Macedonian dynasties; their court culture and ideology is adopted by the non-Greek, semi-Hellenized dynasties emerging in their wake. Hellenistic court culture is now extensively mixed with elements from various native cultures, and becomes truly 'Hellenistic'. Hellenistic royal ritual and iconography furthermore influences the self-presentation of Roman and Parthian rulers in this period (c. 150 BCE-50 CE).

The historical background to Hellenistic court society will be further discussed in section 3.1, especially the formative period under Philippos and Alexander, which saw violent conflicts between the Argead house and the great noble families of Macedonia.

The state of the question

Unlike the courts of the later Roman and Byzantine Empire, there is surprisingly limited scholarship about Hellenistic court culture.²⁸ In the older literature, brief textbook accounts of particular courts can be found, as well as some exceptional attempts at analysis.²⁹ Most

²⁸ Recent titles are D. Schlinkert, 'Vom Haus zum Hof. Aspekte höfischer Herrschaft in der Spätantike', *Klio* 78 (1996) 454-82; H. Maguire ed., *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Cambridge, MA, 1998; 2nd edn. 2005). In particular Roman and Byzantine monarchic ritual have been the subject of ample research and debate, e.g. A. Alföldi, *Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreiche* (Darmstadt 1970); id., 'Gewaltherrscher und Theaterkönig', in: K. Weitzmann ed., *Late Classical and Mediaeval Studies in honor of A.M. Friend jr.* (Princeton, N.J., 1955) 15-55; O. Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser- und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell* (3rd edn. Darmstadt 1956); S.G. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremonial in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1981); M. McCormick, M., *Eternal Victory. Triumphal Leadership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge 1986); A. Cameron, 'The construction of court ritual. The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies', in: D. Cannadine and S. Price eds., *Rituals of Royalty* (1987) 106-36.

²⁹ E.R. Bevan, *The House of Seleucus* (London 1902) II, 273-4, evokes a rather decadent 'oriental' court for the (later) Seleukids; the chapter about the Seleukid court in E.J. Bickerman, *Institutions des Séleucides* (Paris 1938) is very good, given its date. Early attempts at analysis, but lacking theoretical

literature dealing with *philoï* is either institutional history or deals with prosopographic aspects of court society, including court titulature (which is normally believed to be more systematic and formalised than will be contended in this book).³⁰ This approach did not change with the advent of modern court studies in the 1970's and 1980's. The past decade, however, has seen relatively numerous publications on the Hellenistic court; roughly speaking, these consist of on the one hand studies of cultural, particularly literary patronage at the Ptolemaic court, on the other hand studies of the relation between cities and the court.³¹

support, are W. Otto, 'Zum Hofzeremoniels des Hellenismus', in: *Epitumbion H. Swoboda dargebracht* (Reichenberg 1927) 194-200, and G. Corradi, 'Studi sulla corte ellenistica', in: id., *Studi Ellenistici* (Turin 1929) 229-343. For a synthesis of the older literature see H.H. Schmitt, 'Hof', in: H.H. Schmitt and E. Vogt eds., *Kleines Wörterbuch des Hellenismus* (Wiesbaden 1988) 251-57, and for a more recent overview A. Winterling, 'Hof', in: *Der Neue Pauly* (1998) 661-5.

³⁰ Relevant scholarship concentrates on the Argead court under Alexander and the Ptolemaic court. Of importance is notably the work of Léon Mooren, including *The Aulic Titulature in Ptolemaic Egypt. Introduction and Prosopography* (Brussels 1975); *La hierarchie de cour ptolémaïque. Contribution à l'étude des institutions et des classes dirigeantes à l'époque hellénistique* (Louvain 1977), and 'The Ptolemaic Court System', *CE* 60 (1985) 214-22. Prosopographical treatments of particular courts, containing also valuable discussions of offices and titles, are H. Berve, *Das Alexanderreich auf prosopografischer Grundlage* (2 vols; Munich 1926), W. Peremans and E. van 't Dack, *Prosopographia Ptolemaica. VI: La cour* (Louvain 1968), and W. Heckel, *The Marshalls of Alexander's Empire* (London and New York 1992). The important article by C. Habicht, 'Die herrschende Gesellschaft in den hellenistischen Monarchien', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 45 (1958) 1-16, about the ethnicity of Seleukid notables, will be discussed in chapter 3.3. For the Antigonids in Macedonia see S, le Bohec, 'Les philoi des rois antigonides', *REG* 98 (1985) 93-124, and id., 'L'Entourage royal a la cour des Antigonides', in E. Levy ed., *Le système palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome* (Strasbourg 1987) 315-26. G. Herman, 'The "friends" of the early hellenistic rulers: servants or officials?', *Talanta* 12/13 (1980/81) 103-9, is concerned with the development and meaning of court titles. H.W. Ritter, *Diadem und Königsherrschaft* (Munich and Berlin 1965), examines the meaning of the Hellenistic diadem in the context of coronation ritual, claiming Persian origins for both, cf. id. 'Die Bedeutung des Diadems', *Historia* 36.3 (1987) 290-301.

³¹ Notable Hellenistic 'court historians' of the past decade are Gregor Weber, Gabriel Herman and I. Savalli-Lestrade. G. Weber, *Dichtung und höfische Gesellschaft. Die Rezeption von Zeitgeschichte am Hof der ersten drei Ptolemäer* (Stuttgart 1993), recognises the court society as a separate object of study. Although the title of his book seems to refer to Elias rather explicitly, Weber is primarily interested in court poetry and the place of poets at the court of the first three Ptolemies. Because it also includes more general discussion of the court, *Dichtung und höfische Gesellschaft* is nonetheless

Palace architecture, too, has only relatively recently acquired its rightful place of honour in the bibliography of Hellenistic archaeology.³² But aside from the odd obligatory reference to Elias' *Höfische Gesellschaft*, ancient historians still study their ancient courts *in vacuo*.

1.3 Hellenism and imperialism

Modern studies of Hellenistic kingship tend to emphasise the differences between the kingdoms. This has led to important new insights, particularly with regard to the Achaemenid antecedents of Seleukid monarchical ideology and imperial administration.³³ Regarding

of principal concern for historians of the early Ptolemaic court. See also G. Weber, 'Interaktion, Repräsentation und Herrschaft. Der Königshof im Hellenismus', in: A. Winterling ed., *Zwischen Haus und Staat* (Munich 1997), which is broader in scope. G. Herman, 'The court society of the Hellenistic age', in: P. Cartledge, P. Garnsey, E. Gruen eds., *Hellenistic Constructs. Essays in Culture, History, and Historiography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1997) 199-224, while concentrating on two cases of factional strife at the Ptolemaic and Seleukid courts, uses Elias 1969 but no later literature on courts and court society, and consequently assumes too much freedom on the part of the king in conferring titles and honours on *philoï*. In the same direction goes also L. Mooren, 'Kings and courtiers: Political decision-making in the Hellenistic states', in: W. Schuller ed., *Politische Theorie und Praxis im Altertum* (Darmstadt 1998) 122-33. On the function of courtiers as intermediaries between court and city see I. Savalli-Lestrade, 'Courtisans et citoyens: le cas des *philoï* attalides', *Chiron* 26 (1996) 149-81, and id., *Les philoi royaux dans l'Asie hellénistique* (Geneva 1998). For literature about the patronage of poets, scholars and scientists at court see chapter 4.1.

³² See n. 2 in chapter 2.

³³ Continuity and change in Hellenistic Babylonia: J. Oelsner, 'Kontinuität und Wandel im Gesellschaft und Kultur Babyloniens in hellenistischer Zeit', *Klio* 60 (1978) 101-16; H. Kreissig, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im Seleukidenreich. Die Eigentums- und die Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse* (Berlin 1978); R.J. van der Spek, *Grondbezit in het Seleucidische Rijk* (Amsterdam 1986); S. Sherwin-White, 'Seleucid Babylonia. A case study for the installation and development of Greek rule', in: A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White eds., *Hellenism in the East* (London 1987) 1-31; A. Kuhrt, 'Usurpation, conquest and ceremonial: from Babylon to Persia', in: D. Cannadine and S. Price eds., *Rituals of Royalty. Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge 1987) 20-55; P. Briant, 'The Seleucid Kingdom, the Achaemenid Empire and the history of the Near East in the first millennium BC', in: P. Bilde *et al.* eds., *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom* (Aarhus 1990) 40-65; A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, *From Samarkhand to Sardis. A New Approach to the Seleucid*

Ptolemaic kingship, on the other hand, it has long been customary to exaggerate its Egyptian aspect, and to view the Ptolemies first of all as pharaohs.³⁴ Continuities with pre-Hellenistic Macedonia and similarities between the dynasties are frequently played down. In this book, the courts of the major dynasties of the Hellenistic world will be discussed simultaneously. Against the prevailing view that ‘no single model accounts for Hellenistic kingship’,³⁵ I will argue that the Hellenistic royal courts had significant features and structures in common, due to intermarriage, diplomatic contacts, a comparable reliance on Greeks and Macedonians for monarchic rule, a shared Macedonian background, the continuity of elements of Achaemenid imperial organisation, and rivalry. Only after similarities have been recognised, the specific peculiarities of the respective monarchies can be estimated.

Hellenism and imperialism

The essence of the present approach is to understand the monarchies of Antigonids, Seleukids, Ptolemies and Attalids as hegemonic *empires*: supranational state systems, based on military conquest and aimed at exacting tribute rather than governing lands and populations.³⁶ When necessary, these empires interfered in local politics, or even actively stimulated economic development in order to enhance regular tax and tribute income in certain regions, like the

Empire (London 1993); H.W.A.M. Sancisi-Weerdenburg *et al.* eds., *Continuity and Change. Proceedings of the 8th Achaemenid History Workshop, April 6-8, 1990, Ann Arbor, Michigan* (Leiden 1994). It may be added that continuity in the east in the Roman period is a rather *disregarded* issue.

³⁴ For the conventional approach see D.J. Thompson, ‘The Ptolemies and Egypt’, in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 105-20, esp. 105 and 113-5, characteristically stating that ‘there was a Greek background *too* to monarchy’ (p. 113; my italics). G. Hölbl, *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches* (Darmstadt 1994), deals with the Ptolemaic kings as pharaohs and as *basileis* in separate chapters, but offers no answer to the question how these two ‘faces’ were interrelated.

³⁵ Gruen 1996, 116.

³⁶ As one of the dominant state forms in world history, empires have always attracted attention from historians. General studies of ‘empire’, sometimes containing brief sections on Hellenistic imperialism, include S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Political System of Empires* (London and New York 1963; 2nd rev. edn. London and New Brunswick, N.J., 1993); T. Sowell, *Conquests and Cultures. An International History* (New York 1998); A. Pagden, *Peoples and Empires* (London 2001). S. Howe, *Empire. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2002) is chiefly concerned with historiographic approaches to modern European imperialism and colonialism.

Ptolemies did in some parts of Egypt and the Seleukids perhaps in Babylonia.³⁷ But in general subject cities and peoples were relatively autonomous under the imperial umbrella. This was most evidently the case in Seleukid Asia, but is true of Ptolemaic, Antigonid and Attalid imperialism as well. Since co-operation with, and only rarely occupation of, autonomous cities, temples or vassal kingdoms, was vital to imperial rule, Hellenistic kingship presented itself in multiple forms. In provinces and cities the manifestation of royal rule was adapted to local and regional traditions and expectations. Following the example of the Achaimenids, Alexander had done so when he was in Memphis, Babylon, Baktra and Susa. In Egypt, the Ptolemies played the role of pharaoh for the sake of their Egyptian subjects, particularly the temple priests, including a coronation ritual in their Egyptian capital Memphis. It would be wrong, however, to homogenise Ptolemaic kingship as simply a mix of foreign Greek and indigenous Egyptian elements. The Ptolemies were pharaohs only in Egypt, not in Cyprus or Palestine, let alone in Ionia or mainland Greece – and most significantly: not in Alexandria. There is ample evidence that the Seleukids likewise modified their presentation in accordance with local culture, presenting themselves for instance as traditional Babylonian kings in Babylonia, but not elsewhere. Thus we see Antiochos Epiphanes during his short career being elected as magistrate in Athens, enthroned as pharaoh in Memphis, sacrificing to Yahweh in Jerusalem, taking part in a Syrian new year festival near Antioch, and perhaps performing a ritual of marriage with the goddess Inanna in Elam. Still, neither Seleukids nor Ptolemies ever pretended that they really *were* Babylonians, Jews or Egyptians. They never concealed that they were Macedonians before anything else.

³⁷ Ptolemaic economic dirigism in Egypt: Thompson 2003, 108-111, following the views of C. Préaux, *L'économie royale des Lagides* (Brussels 1939). M. Aperghis, *The Seleukid Royal Economy. The Finances and Financial Administration of the Seleukid Empire* (Cambridge 2004), argues that the Seleukid in Asia showed a comparable concern for economic development for the sake of increasing tribute in silver coin; cf. *id.*, 'Population, production, taxation, coinage. A model for the Seleukid economy', in: Z.H. Archibald *et al.* eds., *Hellenistic Economies* (London and New York 2001) 69-102, with the response by K. Bringmann, 'Königliche Ökonomie im Spiegel des Euergetismus der Seleukiden', *Klio* 87.1 (2005) 102-115, and my review in *BMCR* 2006-06, 40; cf. F. de Callatay, 'La richesse des rois séleucides et le problème de la taxation en nature', in: V. Chankowski and F. Duyrat eds., *Le roi et l'économie. Autonomies locales et structures royales dans l'économie de l'empire séleucide* (Paris 2005) 23-47. The Achaimenids perhaps had a similar economic policy in parts of their empire: R. Ghirsham, *Iran. From the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest* (Harmondsworth 1954) 187.

The multiform faces of monarchy, discussed especially in section 5.3, are only one side of Hellenistic imperial representation. Simultaneously an all-embracing, imperial form of kingship developed, connecting the various local forms of monarchic representation at the highest level. This unifying royal culture crystallised at the very centre of empire: the court. As will be argued throughout this book, the culture of the court was predominantly Greek, or rather ‘Hellenistic’, since the Hellenism of the court was a distinct non-ethnic, supranational form of culture, tending to smooth the regional differences among the Greeks and redefine Greek culture in the light of a more cosmopolitan world view. Thus a new, Hellenistic form of empire developed, replacing Achaimenid imperial ideology and imagery which Hellenistic kings for various reasons chose not to adopt, even though especially the Seleukid Empire was in many other respects a continuation of the Persian Empire.³⁸ In this culture of empire non-Greeks could in principle participate. Just as the kings would play varying cultural roles in accordance with their audience while retaining their Greco-Macedonian character, so too would local elites who co-operated with the empire adopt to some extent the Hellenism of the court to express their allegiance to the monarchy and be able to participate in the imperial system. Members of civic elite families, non-Greeks as well as ‘ethnic’ Greeks, developed a multiple identity which was both local and imperial, e.g. Babylonian-Seleukid, Judean-Ptolemaic, or Greek-Antigonid. Hellenism became a means of defining who did and who did not participate in the imperial order of the Hellenistic kings. The adoption of Hellenistic culture bound local elite members to the monarchy and distanced them from families who had no share in power. Thus, Hellenism became the ‘high culture’ of empire, creating a sense of commonwealth in states that were characterised by their political, ethnical, and cultural heterogeneity.³⁹ It was a non-national, ‘cosmopolitan’ form of Greekness in which indigenous

³⁸ M.M. Austin, ‘The Seleukids and Asia’, in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 121-33, esp. 127-8. Alexander and the Ptolemies even made anti-Persian propaganda in Egypt: OGIS 54 and 56; cf. Austin 2003, 128; Gruen 1996, 117; S.M. Burstein, ‘Alexander in Egypt: Continuity or change?’, in: *AchHist* 8 (Leiden 1994) 381-7.

³⁹ R. Strootman, ‘Mecenaat aan de hellenistische hoven’, *Lampas* 34.3 (2001) 187-203, esp. 205-6; cf. id. ‘Literature and the kings’, in: J. Clauss and M. Cuijpers eds., *A Companion to Hellenistic Literature* (forthcoming; Malden, Oxford, Carlton 2007). On the concept of ‘Hellenism’ in modern historiography: R. Bichler, *Hellenismus. Geschichte und Problematik eines Epochenbegriffs* (Darmstadt 1983); H.W. Pleket, ‘Hellenisme: het juk van de periodisering’, *Lampas* 21.2 (1988) 68-80; A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, ‘Introduction’, in: Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1987; R. Strootman, ‘Hellenistische Geschiedenis’, *Lampas* 38.3 (2005) 280-5.

ideas and forms could be amalgamated, not unlike Ottoman culture in the empire of the sultans.⁴⁰

To sum up: to propose a single model to account for Hellenistic kingship is exactly one of the aims of his study. According to this model Hellenistic kingship has two basic characteristics: (1) cultural differentiation of monarchical representation on regional or local levels, and (2) integration of the manifold forms of monarchical representation—pharaonic, Babylonian, Greek, Macedonian, Judean and so forth—in a comprehensive form of imperial ideology, connected with the court and existing in more or less similar form in all the major kingdoms, and being predominantly Greek in appearance.

Universal Empire

In both chapter 4 and chapter 5, it will be shown that rulers in written propaganda, public ritual and iconography cultivated not only an idealised image of being absolute rulers, but also of being rulers of empires that knew no limits.

Above, I have defined the Hellenistic monarchies as empires. Hellenistic *basileia* does not accord to modern definitions of ‘territorial state’ or ‘national state’.⁴¹ On coins and in other forms of propaganda kings never specified the territory or people over which they ruled. *Basileia*, the contemporary *terminus technicus* for the Hellenistic monarchic state, meant ‘kingship’ rather than ‘kingdom’. The Argeads as well as the later Antigonids, who styled themselves King of the Macedonians (*i.e.* the people, not the country), are somewhat aberrant in this respect, although their Macedonian kingship too may be considered a component of

⁴⁰ A supra-national form of Greekness, uniting Greeks by the feeling that they were a single people developed already before the Hellenistic Age: F.W. Walbank, ‘The problem of Greek nationality’, in: id., *Selected Papers. Studies in Greek and Roman History and Historiography* (Cambridge 1985) 1-19.

⁴¹ A territorial state, or ‘early state’, may be defined with H.J.M. Claessen, *Verdwenen koninkrijken en verloren beschavingen. Opkomst en ondergang van de vroege staat* (Assen and Maastricht 1991) 19, as a form of organisation that exercises (legitimate) power over a specified territory; cf. id., ‘The Early State. A Structural Approach’, in: H.J.M. Claessen en P. Skalník eds., *The Early State* (The Hague 1978) 533-96; typical of Hellenistic empires was their *unspecified* territory. A national state is the opposite of an empire: a state pretending or attempting to be a nation-state, *i.e.* ‘a state whose people share a strong linguistic, religious, and symbolic identity’ (Tilly, *op cit.* below, p. 2-3). In history, national states normally suppressed minorities in order to become nation states, whereas empires are by definition supra-national. The nation state, as David Mitchell stated in *Cloud Atlas*, ‘is merely human nature inflated to monstrous proportions’.

their overall title of *basileus* (the problem of the Macedonian identity of Hellenistic kings will be dealt with in section 3.2). The Ptolemies, as the location of their capital shows, saw themselves as the rulers of a maritime empire, of which Egypt was only a part – albeit the most important, and at times the only part.⁴² The Seleukids certainly were not ‘kings of Syria’. They too used the title of *basileus* without any restrictive addition, albeit they may have ‘limited’ their pretensions by carrying the title King of Asia, which they had inherited from Alexander, and which potentially contained claims to Egypt. The Hellenistic title of *basileus* was the equivalent of the eastern title of Great King. At the same time however the title referred to old Macedonia, where the *basileus* was a warrior prince amidst warrior noblemen. Thus Hellenistic kingship was presented to the outside world as absolutist and universal, whilst retaining a certain ideal of equality between the king and his companions internally.

The universalistic pretensions of Hellenistic kingship have always been underestimated in modern scholarship. The assumption that there existed a balance of power between the Hellenistic kingdoms, and moreover that Hellenistic kings themselves knew about and acceded to this principle,⁴³ has led historians to largely ignore the evidence attesting the existence of an Hellenistic ideology of universal empire. Needless to say, Hellenistic kings were not *really* world emperors. But political ideology does not always accord with political reality. In *Prestige and Interest*, Mario Liverani has brilliantly shown how monarchies in the

⁴² In the absence of a (Macedonian) ‘homeland’, historians often define the Ptolemaic empire as basically the kingdom of Egypt with some ‘overseas’ or ‘foreign’ possessions added to it. It has even been hypothesised, most influentially by É. Will, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique (323-30 av. J.-C.)* (2nd edn; Nancy 1982) I, 153-208, that this supposed ‘overseas’ expansion was the result of *defensive imperialism*.

⁴³ Thus e.g. É. Will, ‘The succession to Alexander’, *CAH* 7.1 (1984) 23-61, at 29: ‘[The period of] the Diadoch Wars, ... is [the period] which sees the elimination of the unitary idea in favour of the particularist tendency.’ For a (cautious) re-evaluation of the concept see S.L. Ager, ‘An uneasy balance: From the death of Seleukos to the Battle of Raphia’, in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 35-50, esp. 38 and 49. The view that the pretensions of Hellenistic kings were universalistic was also expressed by G.A. Lehmann, ‘Das neue Kölner Historiker-Fragment (P. Köln. Nr. 247) und die *chroniké syntaxis* des Zenon von Rhodos (FGrHist 523)’, *ZPE* 72 (1988) 1-17, and id., ‘Expansionspolitik im Zeitalter des Hochhellenismus: Die Anfangsphase des “Laodike-Krieges” 246/5 v.Chr.’, in: Th. Hantos and G.A. Lehmann eds., *Althistorisches Kolloquium aus Anlass des 70. Geburtstages von Jochen Bleicken. 29.-30. November 1996 in Göttingen* (Stuttgart 1998) 81-101 (I owe this reference to G.-J. Gehrke).

Second Millennium Near East—when political power in the east was likewise divided up among several competing empires—employed strategies to deal with the inconsistency of claims to world power on the one hand and the recognition of the existence of other monarchies on the other hand – two conflicting images that were kept radically apart as separate cognitive realities.⁴⁴ We see the same claims to universal dominance even more pronounced in the First Millennium BCE, in the empires of the Assyrians, Persians and Macedonians. What W.W. Tarn interpreted as an idealistic dream of unity of mankind, was certainly not ‘one of the great revolutions in human thought’ but the Hellenistic translation of age-old standard ideology of empire.⁴⁵ The Hellenistic kings gave this ideology a profound Hellenic form, fitting it in Greek philosophy and morality as well as Macedonian traditions of kingship. Thus they made what was originally considered an excrescence of ‘oriental despotism’ acceptable to the Greeks, and later the Romans too, who adopted and adapted it for their own use after the demise of the Hellenistic states.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ M. Liverani, *Prestige and Interest. International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600-1100* (Padua 1990).

⁴⁵ W.W. Tarn, ‘Alexander the Great and the unity of mankind’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 19 (1933) 123-166, at 123; cf. id., *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1948) I, 137-8 and 145-8. The popularity of Tarn’s view of Alexander’s idealism dwindled twenty-five years later with E. Badian, ‘Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind’, *Historia* 7 (1958) 425-44; on the discussion see R.A. Todd, ‘W.W. Tarn and the Alexander ideal’, *The Historian* 27 (1964) 48-55, and I Worthington, ‘Alexander and the “Unity of Mankind”’, in: id. ed., *Alexander the Great. A Reader* (London and New York 2003) 198-201. Although Badian exposed Tarn’s theory as romantic wishful thinking, he provided no alternative explanation for the evidence used by Tarn (the *proskynesis* incident at Baktra, the wedding at Susa, the mutiny at Opis). On Assyrian universalism see notably M. Liverani, ‘The ideology of the Assyrian Empire’, in: M.T. Larsen ed., *Power and Propaganda. A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (Copenhagen 1979) 297-317; and id. ‘Kitru, kataru’, *Mesopotamia* 17 (1981) 43-66. Achaimenid royal ideology: M. Cool Root, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art. Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire* (Leiden 1979).

⁴⁶ In relation to Roman imperialism we encounter the dream of universal empire first and most notoriously in the *Aeneid*, where it is stated that Jupiter had given the Romans rule of the entire *orbis terrarum*, and *imperium* (command) *sine fine* (Verg., *Aen.* I 278-279, cf. VI 851-853); cp. the associated Augustean concepts of *Pax Romana* and *Mare Nostrum*.

Hellenistic kingship: ideology and reality

The purpose of monarchical representation is usually taken to be legitimisation of royal power. The pivotal question then must be: what was the relationship between royal representation and royal power, in other words, between image and reality?⁴⁷ To answer this question, we must first define what power is.⁴⁸

According to Max Weber's classic definition, power ('Macht') is any possibility for one actor within a social relationship to impose his will on others, even despite resistance, and regardless of the means by which it is done.⁴⁹ Naked power may become legitimate power, or authority ('Herrschaft'), when it is voluntarily accepted by the subjects because they regard it as rightful and advantageous.⁵⁰ This definition has often been questioned and modified. One important variation is given by Michael Mann, who, in the context of the political power of states, defined power as control of the means for attaining whatever goals one wants to achieve.⁵¹ Thus Mann shifts the emphasis away from the *exercise* of power—Weber's rather indeterminate imposition of one's 'Wille' or 'Befehl bestimmten Inhalts'—to the more concrete organisational *sources* of power, that is, to gain routine access to human and material resources. Recently Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler refined Mann's terminology by defining royal power in the Ancient World as the sum of the monarchy's legitimacy, military

⁴⁷ Strootman 1993, 7-8.

⁴⁸ I agree with C.F. Noreña in BMCR 2006-07, 06: 'To discuss the ideological basis of power, one first should tackle the question what power is and what it does. Any analysis of the relationship between image and power has to include a definition of power. Common sense will not do.'

⁴⁹ M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehender Soziologie* (5th rev. edn; Tübingen 1964) 38: 'Macht bedeutet jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel worauf diese Chance beruht.'

⁵⁰ M. Weber, 'Drei reinen Typen der legitimen Herrschaft', reprinted in *Methodologische Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main 1968) 215-28, esp. 215: 'Herrschaft soll heißen die Chance für einen Befehl bestimmten Inhalts bei angebbaren Personen Gehorsam zu finden.' Cf. Weber 1964, 122; O. Brunner, 'Bemerkungen zu den Begriffen "Herrschaft" und "Legitimität"', in: id., *Neue Wege der Verfassungs- und Sozialgeschichte* (Göttingen 1968) 64-79.

⁵¹ M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power. Volume 1: A History of Power from the Beginnings to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge 1986) 6, reworking the definition of T. Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action I* (New York 1968) 263.

force, administrative competence and capacity to exact surpluses.⁵² This certainly leads us further, although the connection between the named elements is not explicated.

If we accept Mann's understanding of political power as the control of resources needed to attain a political goal, two new questions arise: by what means did Hellenistic rulers obtain that control, and for what goals?

The Hellenistic empires, like any empires, were based on conquest. This may be a truism, but I will argue further on that Hellenistic monarchy was of an even more violent nature than is commonly assumed. To understand the significance of war and violence for Hellenistic kingship, I will make use of Charles Tilly's model of state formation, which in turn is an elaboration of Norbert Elias' ideas pertaining to the same, and offers a synthesis of Weber's notion of power as the enforcement of one's will and Mann's notion of power as the control of resources.⁵³ The model was developed to explain the genesis of the European national states, so much of it is irrelevant for ancient history. Relevant, however, is the central presumption that monarchical states are competitive and violent by nature. For Tilly, the 'means of coercion' with which to impose one's will even on reluctant others is simply military force. Conflicts arise when in a given territory there are several men who dispose of coercive means: kings, noblemen, chieftains, warlords. As a rule, such men will attempt to monopolise the control of resources—manpower, metals, agrarian surplus—in that territory. As Tilly puts it:

Men who controlled means of coercion ... ordinarily tried to use them to extend the range of population and resources over which they wielded power. When they encountered no one with comparable control of coercion, they conquered; when they met rivals, they made war.⁵⁴

Peace occurs only when the resources of the competitors become exhausted or when one of them is victorious, whereafter the competition continues on a vaster scale in a larger territory. The dynamics of this competition are beyond the participants' grasp and neither are they able to withdraw lest they be conquered by their rivals. Hence the endemic warfare among the

⁵² O. Hekster and R. Fowler, 'Imagining Kings: From Persia to Rome', in: id. eds., *Imaginary Kings. Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (Stuttgart 2005) 9-38, at 24-26.

⁵³ C. Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 900-1990* (Cambridge, Mass., and Oxford 1990); N. Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen* (2 vols.; Bern and Munich 1936).

⁵⁴ Tilly 1990, 17; cf. Elias 1969, 142-57.

Hellenistic kingdoms. Control of resources (Tilly uses the term ‘capital’) is essential to acquire military means. Hellenistic kings preferred taxes in silver to tribute in kind, for in the Hellenistic Age money was, as Plutarch says, ‘the sinews of war’.⁵⁵ He who controls the largest population and exacts the most surpluses, disposes of the strongest army, which in turn enables him to control even larger populations and exact more surpluses. In Tilly’s words:

Some conquerors managed to exert stable control over the population in substantial territories, and to gain routine access to part of the goods and services produced in the territory; they became rulers.⁵⁶

Monarchical states are thus the products of warfare: permanent armies come into existence, the administration of taxes and tribute is professionalised, opponents are eliminated, and an ideology of kingship develops in which the triumphant monarchy acquires, to use Elias’ term, a monopoly of ‘legitimate violence’ within the territory it controls. ‘Why did wars occur at all?’, Tilly asks. ‘The central, tragic fact is simple: coercion *works*.’⁵⁷

It goes without saying that imperial systems based on repression and intimidation alone are doomed to fail. Therefore co-operation was as important as coercion, particularly co-operation with cities. Cities commanded the infrastructure and formed the loci where

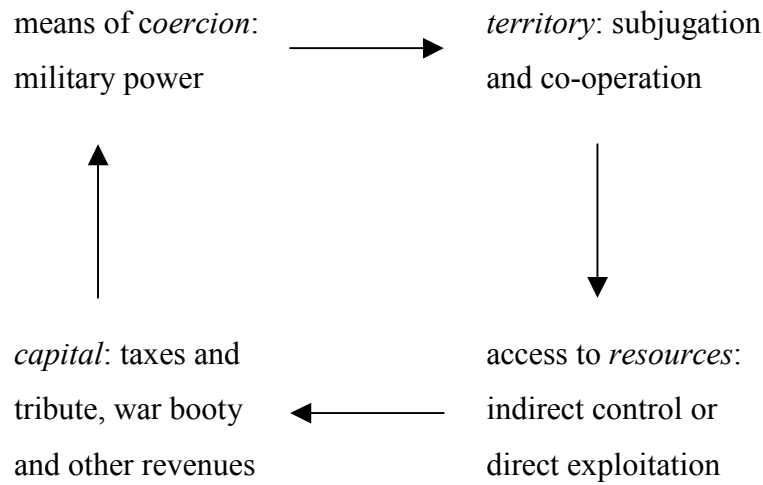
⁵⁵ Plut., *Cleom.* 27.1. Cf. Diod. 29.6.1: ‘In warfare a ready supply of money is indeed, as the familiar proverb has it, the companion of success. Since he who is well provided with money never lacks men able to fight.’ Marcus Crassus allegedly exclaimed that no man could be called wealthy unless he could afford to pay for a legion (Plut., *Crass.* 2; Cic., *Off.* 1.25; Plin., *NH* 33.134): E. Badian, *Roman Imperialism in the Late Republic* (Ithaca and New York 1968; 2nd edn. 1976) 81 with n. 20. For the importance of coined money in Hellenistic warfare see Aperghis 2004, 29-32; cf. F. de Callatay, *L’histoire des guerres mithridatiques vue par les monnaies* (Louvain 1997); *id.*, ‘Guerres et monnayage de Mithridate VI Eupator’, in: J. Andraeu, P. Briant, R. Descat eds., *Économie antique 5: La guerre dans les économies antiques* (Saint-Bernard-de-Comminges 2000) 337-64. Kings also tried to control silver mines directly, or accepted bulk metal for the production of weapons as tribute, see e.g. Curt. 9.8.1.

⁵⁶ Tilly 1990, 14.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 15. Still, it all takes place largely unplanned and even unintentional; according to Elias 1969, 13, the process of monopolisation of violence comes about ‘als Ganzes ungeplant; aber sie vollzieht sich dennoch nicht ohne eine eigentümliche Ordnung’. It may be added that until the nineteenth century, no government (and surely not the Hellenistic kingdoms) ever succeeded in completely monopolising the (legitimate) use of violence.

surpluses were collected. Only rarely did rulers lay siege to cities to actually coerce them into submission; to do so in an area as large as the Hellenistic world would be impossible. Normally a deal was made: the ruler promised to protect the city against its enemies and guaranteed the city's autonomy, in return for which the cities voluntarily succumbed to the ruler and promised to pay him tribute, or to provide military aid.⁵⁸ Hence the self-presentation of Hellenistic rulers as liberators and saviours of cities. The Seleukids furthermore formed coalitions with lesser rulers at the imperial fringe—the Black Sea region, Armenia, Arabia—who obtained independence in return for acknowledging Seleukid overlordship. As far as the Seleukids were concerned, such rulers were vassals; they themselves probably looked upon the Seleukids as their equals. Put into a simple diagram the model adapted from Tilly can be thus summarised:

⁵⁸ C. Tilly, 'Entanglements of European cities and states', in: C. Tilly and W.P. Blockmans eds., *Cities and the Rise of States in Europe, A.D. 1000 to 1800* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford 1994) 1-27. F. Millar, 'The problem of Hellenistic Syria', in: Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1987, 110-33, at 29, defined the Seleukid state as 'primarily a system for extracting taxes and forming armies.' Cf. R.L. O'Connell, *Soul of the Sword. An Illustrated History of Weaponry and Warfare From Prehistory to the Present*, who characterises the kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire as 'gangsters collecting protection money.' On the curious paradox of cities simultaneously claiming autonomy *and* submitting to kings see H.S. Versnel, 'Isis, una quae es omnia. Tyrants against tyranny: Isis as a paradigm of Hellenistic rulership', in id., *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion I: Ter Unus. Isis, Dionysos, Hermes. Three Studies in Henotheism* (Leiden 1990) 39-95. It is now increasingly becoming clear that civic autonomy was not a specific Greek ideal, but rather a generic characteristic of ancient cities, also encountered in Mesopotamia, cf. esp. M. van de Mierop, *The Ancient Mesopotamian City* (Oxford 1999). The normal policy of kings was to divide and rule; by supporting certain aristocratic families or factions within a city or region against their competitors, dependent and thus relatively loyal oligarchic regimes could be created.



The question that follows is, how did all this relate to royal ideology as expressed in court ceremonial and monarchic ritual? In chapter 5 it will be shown that the central components of the model—military means, warfare, control of territory and resources—were also the basic constituents of monarchic representation. Kings far from concealed that warfare formed the foundation of their power. On the contrary, they presented military prowess as the principal legitimisation of their rule. They did so by celebrating their personal abilities as warriors, their victories and their success as conquerors; by displaying their wealth and military strength, and by being present *with their armies* among subject populations. Even seemingly peaceful aspects of the self-presentation of rulers—as liberators of cities, god-like peace-makers, sumptuous benefactors—are ultimately derivatives of the monarchy’s military foundation. In other words, it may be argued that in these cases the *ideology* of kingship agreed with the *reality* of kingship.⁵⁹ Acquiring legitimacy meant convincing others that one was a more

⁵⁹ As opposed to the common, originally Marxist understanding of political ideology as a means to cover up or legitimise inequality or exploitation; cf e.g. Liverani 1979, 298: ‘Ideology has the aim of bringing about the exploitation of man by man, by providing the motivation to receive the situation of inequality as “right”, as based on qualitative differences, as entrusted to the “right” people for the good of all’. By ‘ideology’ I mean a set of closely related beliefs, doctrines or ideas, in this case pertaining to kingship, and upheld, believed or propagated by persons who are in some way or other part of the monarchy. Although the ideology of Hellenistic kingship may be a ‘political’ belief, it is always closely connected with popular belief or morality. On the many meanings of ‘ideology’ see M. Bloch, ‘Ideology’, in: A. Barnard and J. Spencer eds., *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*

successful warrior than one's rivals. In a world accustomed to monarchic rule for many centuries there was no need to justify the existence of kingship as such.⁶⁰ A king needed to assert that he, and only he, was the *rightful* king. This compelled kings to be victorious warriors in actuality (another explanation for the continuous warfare in Hellenistic history), to be generous and benevolent, and most of all to be *visible* in as large a territory as possible, not only in 'documentary' form (portraits on coins, statues, inscriptions) but also physically on the battlefield, in ceremonial entries into cities and in court ritual.⁶¹

(London and New York 1996; 3rd edn. 2002) 293-4; P. Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge 1992) 91-6; M. Freedon, *Ideology. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2003); J. Plamenatz, *Ideology. Key Concepts in Political Science* 6 (London 1970). Royal 'propaganda' may be roughly defined as the communication of ideology, with the intention of persuading others to accept it too, or, in our case, to persuade them to accept a certain person or family as the legitimate king or royal dynasty; cf. D. Harter and J. Sullivan, *Propaganda Handbook* (Philadelphia 1953) 95, and S. Sargent and R. Williamson, *Social Psychology* (New York 1958) 441.

⁶⁰ Although there were anti-*despotic* tendencies in the philosophy and morality of the city-dwelling Greeks, it would be exaggerated to say that the Greeks were anti-*monarchic*. The Greek cities of Asia had been familiar with autonomy under royal (Achaemenid, Hekatomnid) protection for quite a long time; a mere handful of Greeks in the urbanised heart of mainland Greece was unaccustomed to royal overlordship, but in the Hellenistic age a *modus vivendi* was found quickly enough, even there. Moreover, in the philosophy of the Pythagoreans, Plato, Xenophon, and Aristotle, monarchy was not under all circumstances condemnable. Kings furthermore exalted or recreated the myths held dear by the Greeks, deriving models for kingship from the world of the gods and imitating the heroes of epic myth (see below, chapter 1.4). In fact, in the Hellenistic period the autonomous Greek *polis* prospered rather than decayed, or, as Patrick Baker recently put it, '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 number': P. Baker, 'Warfare', in: A. Erskine, ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 373-88, at 376-7. See also J.L. O'Neill, J.L., 'Royal Authority and City Law under Alexander and his Hellenistic Successors', *CQ* 50 (2000) 424-31, showing that royal laws for cities were always embedded in, even subordinate to, civic law.

⁶¹ These three forms of representation will be treated in chapters 1.4, 5.3, and 5.4-5 respectively; for the importance of visibility see Hekster & Fowler 2005.

1.4 The Heroic Ethos

War was the principal source of power and charisma for Hellenistic monarchs, the very essence of kingship.⁶² Constant warfare was typical of the Hellenistic kingdoms. A king was *qualitate qua* a warrior before anything else. Antiochos III's *anabasis* in the east, Polybios says, 'made him appear worthy of his kingship, not only to the inhabitants of Asia, but to those of Europe as well'.⁶³ In major campaigns against worthy adversaries kings, and sometimes queens as well, were supposed to personally command the troops and lead the army into battle.⁶⁴ The king's presence in the field gave substance to honorific titles such as Nikator ('Victor'), Kallinikos ('Gloriously Victorious' – an epithet associated with Herakles), and Soter ('Saviour'). In the definition of kingship in the *Suda* it is stated that the right to rule was ultimately legitimised by success in the field.

⁶² On the importance of victory and military prestige for the legitimisation of Hellenistic kings see notably H.-J. Gehrke, 'Der siegreiche König. Überlegungen zur hellenistischen Monarchie', *AKG* 64 (1982) 247-77. See further M.M. Austin, 'Hellenistic kings, war, and the economy', *CQ* 36 (1986) 450-466; id., 'War and culture in the Seleucid empire', in: T. Bekker-Nielsen and L. Hannestad eds., *War as a Cultural and Social Force. Essays on Warfare in Antiquity* (Copenhagen 2001) 90-109. Cf. A. Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World. A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford 2004), esp. 57-62. I was unable to consult R.W.J. Taylor, *The King and the Army in the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 1991).

⁶³ Polyb. 11.39.16. Victory as justification of kingship and praise for victorious kings: Polyb. 1.9.8; 4.2.7; 5.54.1, 34.4-10, 82.2, 87.3; 11.39.16; 18.6-7, 41.6-7; 28.1.6; Plut., *Demetr.* 17; 41.3; 50; *Pyrrh.* 11; *Mor.* 183; Diod. 20.76.7; 33.28a; App., *Syr.* 11.1.1, 3.15, 3.25; Strabo 13.4.2; *OGIS* 219, 1.34; 273; 332, 11.22-3; 239. In c. 138 the pretender Diodotos ('Tryphon'), in order to find support from the Senate for his rebellion against the Seleukids, sent a solid gold image of Nike weighing 10,000 staters to Rome, 'because he supposed that the Romans would accept Victory ... and would acclaim him as king' (Diod. 33.28a). In App., *Mac.*, 10.10, it is said that in order to demonstrate the Antigonid power, the fleet of Philippos V 'utterly destroyed all forces that sailed against him'. Cf. E.S. Gruen, 'The coronation of the diadochoi', in: J.W. Eadie and J. Ober eds, *The Craft of the Ancient Historian. Essays in Honor of Chester G. Starr* (Lanham 1985) 253-71; J. Seibert, 'Zur Begründung von Herrschaftsanspruch und Herrschaftslegitimation in der frühen Diadochenzeit', in: id. ed., *Hellenistische Studien. Gedenkschrift für Hemann Bengston* (Munich 1991) 87-100.

⁶⁴ Adcock 1953, 171; Préaux 1978, 186-9; Gehrke 1982, 255-6; Walbank 1984, 66.

It is neither descent nor law which gives monarchy to men, but the ability to command an army and to handle affairs competently. Such was the case with Philippos and the Successors of Alexander. For Alexander's natural son was in no way helped by his kinship with him, because of his weakness of spirit, while those who had no connection with Alexander became kings of almost the entire *oikoumenē*.⁶⁵

Although only they are mentioned, the dictum applies not to the Diadochs alone. Later Hellenistic kings needed military prestige too. The absence of primogeniture in Hellenistic succession (see chapter 3.2) made the acquisition of personal prestige something of continuous relevance. The meaning of the definition in the Suda is not that the Diadochs *lacked* legitimacy and compensated this deficiency with military success, but on the contrary, that they, 'who fought permanently',⁶⁶ were actually *more* legitimate than Alexander's offspring because of their military success and individual *aretē*.⁶⁷

War and legitimacy

Victory in war was considered a prerequisite for the establishment of peaceful, civilised life.⁶⁸ Especially the defeat of barbaric people, being morally and culturally outside the pale, could be seen as the triumph of Order over Chaos. In the third century, kings often actively sought

⁶⁵ Suda s.v. 'Basileia'; with 'Philippos' is meant Philippos III, who is here confused with Alexandros IV. The same notion existed in many other cultures; it was as important in Achaemenid Persia and Republican Rome: P. Briant, 'The Achaemenid Empire', in: K. Raaflaub and N. Rosenstein eds., *War and Society in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds* (Cambridge 1999) 105-28; W.V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (Oxford 1979) 11-2; cf. J. Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (London 1993) 268.

⁶⁶ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 12.3.

⁶⁷ Cf. Gruen 1985.

⁶⁸ Characteristic is Polyb. 13.9.2-4: 'The Gerraians begged the king [Antiochos III] not to abolish the gifts the gods had bestowed on them: peace (εἰρήνη) and freedom (ἐλευθερία). The king, when the letter had been interpreted to him, said that he granted their request.' Cf. Polyb. 4.3.8; 5.103.5-6; and 11.39.16, where respectively Antigonos Doseon, Philippos V, and Antiochos III are lauded by their contemporaries as keepers of the peace by means of victory. In the Ancient World, 'peace' generally speaking was not a lofty ideal but meant 'security' above all, and security could be best attained through military supremacy: L. de Blois, 'Het begrip vrede bij de Israëlieten, de Grieken en de Romeinen', in: L. de Blois and G.H. Kramer, *Kerk en vrede in de Oudheid* (Kampen 1980) 9-21, at 9.

after military confrontations with Celts, at that time the barbarian ‘others’ *par excellence*.⁶⁹ Celtic tribes had invaded Greece and Asia Minor in the 270s. Notably their attack on the central panhellenic shrine of Delphi came as a shock to all Greeks and was considered an attack on civilisation itself.⁷⁰ Though the crisis was over within a year—the Greeks found out soon enough that the dispersed Celtic war bands could be easily defeated when forced to engage in a pitched battle—the image remained of ferocious subhumans who had come from the earth’s periphery to strike at the heart of civilisation. This image, which was equated with the invasion of Xerxes and even the war between the Olympian gods and the Giants, was exploited in political propaganda by all Greek-Macedonian dynasties for years to come.⁷¹ The boast of having defeated Celts in battle enhanced the claim that the king was a saviour,

⁶⁹ The Greek (and Roman) view of Celts and other barbarians has been studied extensively in the past decades, notably, but not exclusively, in the context of the debate on ‘alterité’. For Greek and Roman attitudes to the Celts see generally Sidebottom 2002, 16-21; further literature includes B. Kremer, *Das Bild der Kelten bis in der augusteischen Zeit. Studien zur Instrumentalisierung eines antiken Feindbildes bei griechischen und römischen Autoren* (Stuttgart 1994); S. Mitchell, ‘The Galatians: Representation and reality’, in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 280-93; T. Bridgman, *Hyperboreans. Myth and History in Celtic-Hellenic Contacts* (London and New York 2004). C. Lacey, *The Greek view of Barbarians in the Hellenistic Age* (diss. Boulder 1976), argues that in late classical and early Hellenistic times the Persians, the traditional barbarians *par excellence*, were no longer feared and loathed because they had been conquered; they now rather became subject to curiosity and finally found some sort of acceptance as co-inhabitants of an expanded Greek world; the ‘new barbarians’ had to come from beyond the boundaries of these expanded horizons, and (Celtic) ‘northerners’ and (Asian) nomads were most suitable for this purpose.

⁷⁰ For an account of this war and its aftermath see G. Nachtergaele, *Les Galates en Grèce et les Sôtéria de Delphes* (Brussels 1977); H.D. Rankin, *Celts in the Classical World* (London and Sydney 1987); Gabbert, 1997, 21-8; J.B. Scholten, *The Politics of Plunder. Aetolians and their Koinon in the Early Hellenistic Era, 279-217 B.C.* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2000).

⁷¹ For the ‘Celtic’ victory propaganda of the Antigonids, Seleukids, Ptolemies and Attalids see L. Hannestad, ‘Greeks and Celts: The creation of a myth’, in: P. Bilde *et al.* eds., *Centre and Periphery in the Hellenistic World* (Aarhus 1994) 15-38; and R. Strootman, ‘Kings against Celts. Deliverance from barbarians as a theme in Hellenistic royal propaganda’, in: K.A.E. Enekel and I.L. Pfeijffer eds., *The Manipulative Mode. Political Propaganda in Antiquity* (Leiden 2005) 101-41. On encomiastic representations: S. Barbantani, *Φάρτις νικηφόρος. Frammenti di elegia encomiastica nell'età delle Guerre Galatiche* (Milano 2001).

benefactor and liberator of the Greek cities, in spite of the fact that the victors often employed Celtic warriors as mercenaries in their own armies.

Even minor victories could be turned into pretentious propaganda. In 275 Pyrrhos of Epeiros defeated an army column of Antigonos Gonatas by a surprise attack on its rear, which was guarded by Celtic mercenaries.⁷² Though Celts constituted only a small part of Gonatas' force and Antigonos' unemployed phalanx had surrendered without a fight, Pyrrhos was well aware that the defeat of these barbarians, as Plutarch says, 'added more to his reputation than anything else he had done', and propagated this battle as 'the greatest victory he had ever won'.⁷³ The shields taken from the Celts were dedicated in the sanctuary of Athena Itonis, conspicuously located along the main artery between Greece and Macedonia. The epigram inscribed above the trophies became famous among the Greeks.⁷⁴ The Macedonian shields that had been captured were dedicated to Zeus in Dodona, accompanied by a boastful inscription presenting Pyrrhos as the liberator of the Greeks from Macedonian oppression:

This metal destroyed Asia, rich in gold.

This metal made slaves out of the Greeks.

This metal now lies masterless by the pillars of Zeus of the Water-streams,
the spoils conquered from proud-voiced Macedonia.⁷⁵

Attalos I assumed the title of king and the epitheton Soter after he was able to boast to have defeated the Galatians in battle.⁷⁶ Although Celts were the preferred enemies, any 'barbaric' people would do. Alexander and the Seleukids posed as the defenders of civilisation against Central Asian horse nomads; in the last lines of the Hymn to Demetrios, the role of the barbarian is given to the Aitolians.⁷⁷

⁷² Just. 25.3.1-5; Paus. 1.13.2; Plut., *Pyrrh.* 26.3-4. Cf. P. Levèque, *Pyrrhos* (Paris 1957) 557.

⁷³ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 26.5; cf. Paus. 1.13.2.

⁷⁴ The epigram is cited in chapter 4.2.

⁷⁵ Paus. 1.13.2.

⁷⁶ Strabo 13.4.2. Bickerman in *Berytus* 8 (1843/44) 76-8, states that Attalos did not assumed the kingship because of a defeat of Galatians, but because of a victory over Antiochos Hierax; it is true that Hierax, and the Seleukids in general, were the most important adversaries of Attalos, but there was much greater propaganda value in stressing victory over the Galatians, Hierax' allies (so also Allen 1987, 29 n. 4).

⁷⁷ Although the Aitolians were Hellenic, their *koinon* lacked cities, the key signifier of Classical Greek civilisation. They were considered a backward and unreliable people by the civic Greeks, especially

It was dishonourable for a king if his *esprit de combat* was below expectation. For example Ptolemaios IV Philopator, of whom Polybios derisively says that he was more disposed to poetry than to fighting; Polybios castigates Ptolemaios less for being idle than for harming his own reputation, which eventually cost him the loyalty of his army and the support of the people of Alexandria.⁷⁸ Defeat in battle signalled that one was unworthy of kingship. In written accounts of kings fleeing from the battlefield, the image of the king losing or taking off his diadem and royal robe figures as a standard metaphor for the loss of the right to be king.⁷⁹ The most elaborate example of this topos is Plutarch's account of a battle between Pyrrhos and Demetrios in 287. Demetrios was King of the Macedonians at that time, but lost that title when Pyrrhos defeated him in battle. When Demetrios saw that all was lost, he took off the signs of royal status, hoping to escape unnoticed. Pyrrhos, at the same time, did precisely the opposite: 'For it happened that he had taken off his helmet, and he was not recognised by anyone, until he put it on again and by its high crest and goat-horns made himself known to all.'⁸⁰ The Macedonian troops immediately went over to Pyrrhos and hailed him as their king. Demetrios meanwhile 'put on a humble soldier's mantle and sneaked away' – 'behaving like an actor', as Cavafy added, 'who when the performance is over changes his clothes and departs.'⁸¹

after they had become the major military power in Central Greece: Scholten 2000, 1-28. For the Demetrios Hymn see below, chapter 5.3.

⁷⁸ Polyb. 5.34.4-10. Cf. Polyb. 5.87.3: 'He was not averse to peace, ... but rather too much inclined to it, being drawn towards it by his indolent and depraved habit of life', and at 14.12.3-5 he adds that 'Ptolemaios Philopator ... abandoned entirely the path of honour (καλός) and took to a life of dissipation'; and when later in his reign he was forced into a war against his will, Polybios wastes no words on it because it 'contained nothing worthy of note, no pitched battle, no sea-fight, no siege.' See C. Préaux, 'Polybe et Ptolémée Philopator', CE 40 (1965) 364-75.

⁷⁹ Defeated by the Romans, Tigranes the Great threw himself unrobed and unarmed at the feet of Pompey, offering him his diadem (Plut., *Luc. & Cim. Comp.* 3.4); when Perseus surrendered to the Romans, he arrived accompanied only by one of his sons, wearing a mourning garment instead of a purple robe (Liv. 45.7.3-4). Cf. Arr., *Anab.* 2.11.5; Plut., *Alex.* 33.5 (Darius III); Plut., *Aem.* 12.1 and 23.2 (Perseus); Plut., *Luc.* 36.6 (Tigranes I); Plut., *Luc.* 17.4 (Mithradates VI).

⁸⁰ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 11.5-6, cf. *Demetr.* 44.6.

⁸¹ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 11.6.; Cavafy, 'King Demetrios', trans. R. Dalven. An even more elaborate reversal takes place in Plut., *Aem.* 23.1: Perseus turns his royal robe *inside out* and flees the battlefield unnoticed.

Warfare formed the practical basis of monarchic rule. Military means were employed to enforce control over territories and populations in order to exact the resources needed to finance military power, and Hellenistic kings never concealed the violent basis of their power. On the contrary: killing was an important duty of kings, and warfare was the central theme in royal ideology, from which all other components of royal legitimisation—*sotēria*, *euergesia*, *tryphē*—were ultimately derived. Like royal pomp, battles were ephemeral events. Warfare therefore was immortalised in victory monuments, on paintings decorating royal palaces,⁸² by court historians, in epic, and in memorials at panhellenic sanctuaries.⁸³ Victory could even be commemorated by means of recurrent festivals.⁸⁴

The king's presence in the field boosted the army's morale more effectively than a regimental banner or magical field standard could ever do. When Antigonos Gonatas was about to engage in a naval battle with the Ptolemaic fleet, and was warned that the ships of the enemy far outnumbered his own, the king replied: 'But how many ships do you think my presence is worth?'⁸⁵ The presence of a king could moreover demoralise the enemy. When the council of Antiochos III discussed the revolt of Molon, one courtier advised the king to proceed to the east without delay to be 'personally present at the theatre of events', because 'once the king presented himself before the eyes of the people with an adequate force, ... he [Molon] would soon enough be seized by the people and delivered to the king.'⁸⁶ When the troops of Antiochos finally faced Molon's rebel army, the king at the head of his cavalry guard rode towards the rebels, who, 'as soon as they came in sight of the king, went over to

⁸² I. Scheibler, *Griechische Malerei der Antike* (Munich 1994) 154-8.

⁸³ For hunting and battle scenes as a (royal) art genre in the Hellenistic age: Pollitt 1986, 38-41 (hunting) and 41-6 (battle); cf. T. Hölscher, *Griechische Historienbilder des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Wurzburg 1973) 122-69; B.R. Brown, *Ptolemaic Paintings and Mosaics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957). See Hintzen-Bohlen 1990 on various forms of memorial set up by Hellenistic kings in panhellenic sanctuaries.

⁸⁴ Jos., *AJ* 12.11: Ptolemaios Philadelphos decreed that the day on which his navy had defeated the fleet of Antigonos Gonatas was to be 'remarkable and eminent every year through the whole course of his life.'

⁸⁵ Plut., *Mor.* 183c-d; cf. Plut., *Demetr.* 50; Caes., *BCiv.* 3.109.

⁸⁶ Polyb. 5.41.8-9. Cf. Polyb. 5.51.8, where Zeuxis assures that the lands under Molon's control 'would evidently resume their allegiance and join the king' as soon as Antiochos and his army arrived.

him.’⁸⁷ Conversely, when the king was slain, the battle was lost, and consequently the whole campaign. For this reason kings were often targeted by enemy champions. Alexander made use of that knowledge when attacking Darius at Issos and Gaugamela. At Issos he was ‘seeking for himself the rich trophy of killing the king’, who ‘cut a conspicuous figure, at once providing great incentive to his men to protect him, and to his enemies to attack.’⁸⁸ But at the Granikos it was Alexander who was attacked by noblemen in search of glory:

The Persians came charging at them with a shout. ... A large number closed in on the king, who stood out because of his shield and the crest on his helmet, on each side of which there was a plume striking for its whiteness and its size. Alexander received a spear in the joint of his cuirass, but was not wounded. Then the Persian generals Rhoisakes and Spithridates came at him together. Side-stepping the latter, Alexander managed to strike Rhoisakes ... with his spear, but when the spear shattered he resorted to his sword. While the two were engaged hand-to-hand, Spithridates brought his horse to a halt beside them and, swiftly pulling himself up from the animal, dealt the king a blow with his barbarian sabre. He broke off Alexander’s crest, along with one of the plumes, and the helmet only just held out against the blow, the blade of the sword actually touching the top of the king’s hair. Spithridates then began to raise the weapon for a second blow, but Kleitos got there first, running him through with his spear. At the same moment Rhoisakes also fell, struck by a sword-blow from Alexander.⁸⁹

This description, bringing back the battle to single combat between aristocratic warriors, is reminiscent of the battles in the *Iliad*. It is not a literary construction of Plutarch; Arrian describes the same event in much the same words.⁹⁰ The ultimate origin of their mutual source presumably is the propaganda of Alexander himself, who was eager to be known as a new (and better) Achilles.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Polyb. 5.53.2. Cf. Walbank 1984, 74, writing that Molon’s soldiers’ belief in the king’s ‘divinely favoured personality with an overwhelming claim to [their] loyalty’ was enhanced by ‘the frequent repetition of such cult titles as “Saviour” and “Benefactor” which marked the king out from ordinary men.’ It also worked the other way round: the king’s frequent presence on the battlefield generated loyalty and was an important factor in proving that the claims inherent in the cult titles were true.

⁸⁸ Curt. 3.11.7.

⁸⁹ Plut., *Alex.* 16.6-11; trans. J.C. Yardley.

⁹⁰ Arr., *Anab.* 1.14.6-8.

⁹¹ According to Plut., *Pyrrh.* 16.8-10, a similar incident happened during the Battle of Herakleia: ‘During the fighting Leonnatos the Macedonian noticed that one of the Italians had singled out Pyrrhos and was riding towards him, following his every movement. At length he said to the king: “O King, do

By demonstrating heroism a king proved that he was worthy of kingship, turning ideology into reality. The heroic ethos of the king as a valiant spear-fighter put him on a par with the mythic heroes of ancient times. The countries over which a king ruled were considered his, or his family's, *doriktētos chōra*, 'spear-won land'.⁹² This must be taken literally. *Doriktētos chōra* can be translated as 'war booty', a reward for personal bravery and hence a private possession. As a private possession, spear-won land was inheritable.⁹³ Just like Achilles would not accept that Agamemnon took Briseïs from him, so the descendants of Seleukos Nikator, even in formal diplomacy, never accepted that Ptolemaios Soter had taken possession of Koile Syria, which was their ancestor's price after the Battle of Ipsos.

Alexander's preoccupation with his ancestors Achilles and Herakles is well-known. Arrian says that Alexander preferred to die in battle, 'doing great deeds, worth hearing to men of later generations, and dying gloriously'.⁹⁴ Alexander slept with the *Iliad* under his pillow and like Achilles, whom he wished to outdo, Alexander wanted to be known as 'the best of the Greeks'. His favourite passage in the *Iliad* was line 3.179: 'a good king and a mighty spear-fighter'. To attribute this to Alexander's so-called unique personality is simplistic: the ultimate source for such 'personal' details is Alexander's own propaganda. His visit to Achilles' tomb in the company of Hephaistion, his dramatic mourning of the latter's death, and so on – it all added up to the construction of an image of the king being as 'epic' as

you see that barbarian who is riding the black horse with white feet? He looks like a man who is planning some desperate action. He never takes his eyes off you, he pays no attention to anybody else, and it looks as though he is reserving all his strength to attack you. You must be on your guard against him." Pyrrhos replied: "Leonnatos, no man can avoid his fate. But neither he nor any other Italian will find it an easy task once they get to close quarters with me." Even as they were speaking, the Italian wheeled his horse, levelled his lance and charged at Pyrrhos. Then in the same instant that the Italian's lance struck the king's horse, his own was transfixed by Leonnatos. Both horses fell, but Pyrrhos was snatched up and saved by his friends, while the Italian, fighting desperately, was killed.' Of course, Plutarch is stressing the resemblance between Alexander and Pyrrhos; however, the incident, related in much the same words by Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 19.12, presumably goes back to a contemporary Greek source, perhaps Timaios (Nederlof 1940, 91-3) and may ultimately derive from real efforts by Pyrrhos to emulate or surpass Alexander.

⁹² Polyb. 9.36.3. Cf. Justin 15.1; Diod. 19.57.1-2.

⁹³ Polyb. 5.67.4-13: Antiochos III claimed Koile Syria in 218 because it had been awarded to Seleukos I for his share in the victory at Ipsos, almost a century earlier. Cf. Polyb. 28.1.4.

⁹⁴ Arr., *Anab.* 6.10.5.

Achilles. Alexander was certainly not unique in his self-presentation as an Homeric warrior. Theokritos in *Idyll* 16 promised to make Hieron of Syracuse, ‘the Achilles of our time’, as immortal as the heroes of the *Iliad*, and praised Ptolemaios Philadelphos as a mighty spear-fighter in *Idyll* 17. In art, statues such as the so-called Terme Ruler, portrayed rulers as naked heroes, holding a spear as their only sign of royalty. But most importantly, kings demonstrated manly virtue—variously denoted as *andreia*, *andragathia*, and *aretē*—by means of theatrical heroism on the battlefield, where invariably they commanded the shock cavalry on the right flank.⁹⁵ Polybios says that Philippos V proved that he was a real king and won a high reputation among both the Macedonians and the Greeks (including his enemies), ‘because of his ability and daring in the field’:

For it would be difficult to find a prince more richly endowed by nature with the qualities requisite for the attainment of power. He possessed a quick intelligence, a retentive memory,

⁹⁵ In the context of Hellenistic history, the nouns ἀνδρεία (‘manliness’ or ‘manly virtue’) and ἀνδραγαθία (valour in battle) denote display of courage, especially the latter as the former is a broader virtue. The relation between ἀνδρεία and ἀρετή is variable; the first could be a part of the latter, or a stage on the road to *aretē*: LSI, s.v. ἀνδρεία; J.K. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford 1974) 165-7. For some general observations on the varying and shifting meanings of *andreia* see the introduction to I. Sluiter and R.M. Rosen eds., *Andreia. Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden 2003). Ἀνδραγαθία had a mainly martial connotation and in inscriptions is regularly used to denote the military distinction for which an *andreion*, an award for being (among the) best, is given to an individual; L. Robert in *Antiq. Class.* 35 (1966) 429 has defined it thus: ‘ἀνδραγαθία dans les inscriptions honorifiques est le courage des soldats, des officiers ou des rois en campagne’. Cf. idem, *Laodicée du Lycos* (Paris 1969) 307 n. 2: ‘Le mot ἀνδραγαθία comme ἀνδρεία ne désigne pas, vaguement, ‘le mérite’, mais très précisément le courage physiques (athlètes, etc.), et surtout militaire et ἀνδραγαθία des actions d’éclat à la guerre, et non des mérites’; *andragathia* is connected with ἀριστεία, praise or reward for valour in battle: see W.K. Pritchett, ‘Aristeia in Greek warfare’, in: id., *The Greek State At War II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1974) 276-90, giving an overview of the use of ἀριστεία and ἀνδραγαθία in Greek epigraphy and historiography of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. On images of masculinity in representations of Hellenistic kings see J. Roy, ‘The masculinity of the Hellenistic king’, in: L. Foxhall and J. Salmon eds., *When Men Where Men. Masculinity, Power and Identity in Classical Antiquity* (London and New York 1998) 111-35. For Hellenistic Greek attitudes towards masculinity in war in general see Chaniotis 2004, 102-4.

and great personal charm, as well as the presence and authority that becomes a king, and above all ability and courage as a general.⁹⁶

The fearlessness of kings is contrasted with the lack of perseverance of their enemies. Notably barbarians were said to be liable to the madness sent by Pan. Again, the Greek image of the Celts was pivotal; the Celts were known to be ferocious warriors, but their irrational ferocity bordered on insanity and could easily change into irrational panic.⁹⁷ Of course, Hellenistic kings were not always victorious in reality. Military setbacks however did not figure in royal propaganda. Like Assyrian, Persian and Egyptian kings, Hellenistic rulers hardly ever admitted defeat; their public self-presentation was all big victory.⁹⁸

The theatre of battle

A pitched battle was the occasion *par excellence* for a king to win prestige. Battle was honourable. Polybios depicts the battle of Raphia in 217 as a personal duel between Antiochos III and Ptolemaios IV to finish their families' age-old feud over the possession of Koile Syria: '[they] resolved to decide these matters by battle'.⁹⁹ The chief objective of a battle was to win, of course. Still, the conduct of the king and his troops on the battlefield was in many respects ritualised and full of religious behaviour. Moral obligations could even supersede tactical sense.¹⁰⁰ The king's obligation of honour to be at the head of his troops is at variance with the

⁹⁶ Polyb. 4.77.1-3; cf. 4.81.1. Similarly, Pyrrhos 'was not so much hated for what he had done as he was admired for making most of his conquests in person' (Plut., *Demetr.* 41.3).

⁹⁷ Rankin 1987, 55-6; Strootman 2005a. The Celts, it was said, feared nothing, but this had nothing to do with courage: it was based on *thumos*, the irrational absence of fear caused by lack of self-control: Arist., *Eth.Nic.* 3.5 b 28: 'Anybody would be mad or completely bereft of sensibility if he feared nothing, neither earthquake nor wave of the sea, as they say of the Celts'; the classic text for Celtic fearlessness is Arr., *Anab.* 1.4: 'Alexander asked the Celtic envoys what they were most afraid of in this world, hoping that his glorious name was known as far as their lands, or even further, and that they would answer: "You, my lord!" However, he was disappointed ... for the Celts replied that their worst fear was that the sky might fall on their heads.' Cf. Paus. 10.21.2; Poseidonios *ap.* Ath. 154c; Liv. 38.17; Polyb. 2.19.4, 11.3.1. Celtic Pan-ic: Paus. 10.23.5; Lucian, *Zeuxis* 8-11; cf. Bevan 1902 I, 139. Cp. the panic of Darius III on the Alexander Mosaic, discussed below.

⁹⁸ For the ideology of victory in Assyrian royal propaganda consult Liverani 1979 and 1981.

⁹⁹ Polyb. 5.79.1, 82.2, 86.7.

¹⁰⁰ Cp. the discussion of Caes., *BG* 5.24-37 in Sidebottom 2002, 99-106: 'contrary to much that has been written on the subject, generalship is not a universally constant activity. What generals do, and

general trend among the civic Greeks that generals ought to stay behind the lines to encourage the troops and ‘manage the battle’, instead of exposing themselves to danger in the first ranks.¹⁰¹

On the eve of battle, the king personally performed the sacrificial rites to call up divine assistance. Alexander sacrificed to local deities, perhaps the equivalents of Zeus, Athena and Herakles, before the Battle of Issos. Before the Battle of Pydna, Perseus sacrificed to Herakles.¹⁰² Victory signalled that the gods had indeed answered to the call. It was Zeus who bestowed victory on kings, often with the help of Athena Nikephoros.¹⁰³ Because of his connection with the divine, the king himself was a source of good omens: Zeus would send a dream promising victory (sometimes with Alexander present in it) or make his favour known through signs, for example an eagle flying above the field.¹⁰⁴ Sometimes, epiphanies of divine beings were actually seen in the midst of the *mêlée*. Pan aided Antigonos Gonatas against the

are expected to do, in battle are products of their culture’; cf. p. 108-9, arguing that the fact that Philippos and Alexander were able to implement tactical changes during battle means that they were in reality not constantly engaged in the fighting personally, as the sources suggest they did.

¹⁰¹ Sidebottom 2002, 108-9.

¹⁰² Curt. 3.8.22; Plut., *Aem.* 19.2.

¹⁰³ When Alexander II Zabinas, in need of funds, in c. 123 removed a gold statue of Nike from the Zeus temple at Antioch, he jokingly said that ‘Victory had been offered to him by Zeus’: Just. 34.2.5; Diod. 34.28; Jos., *AJ* 13.269; cf. Plut., *Demetr.*, 29.3, where the cry ‘Zeus and Victory!’ is used as password in Antigonos’ army camp. Antiochos I Soter thanked his victory in the Battle of the Elephants to his ancestor Apollo, and subsequently established a cult of Apollo Soter in the royal city Seleukeia, where he had buried his deified father Seleukos Nikator (IG 4458). Particularly in the Attalid kingdom the cult of Athena as bestower of victory was central to monarchic propaganda: Allen 1983, 121-9; Strootman 2005a, 124-34.

¹⁰⁴ R. Parker, ‘Sacrifice and Battle’, in: H. van Wees ed., *War and Violence in Ancient Greece* (London 2000), sees a shift in the importance of soothsaying before battle at the beginning of the Hellenistic Age: from external divine reassurance for civilians-turned-soldiers, legitimising the authority of civic generals, to Alexander’s person substituting for omens. On warfare and religion in the Classical and Hellenistic Greek world: W.K. Pritchett, ‘Religion and Greek warfare’, in: idem, *The Greek State At War. Part III: Religion* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1979) 1-10. Dreams of victory containing Alexander e.g. Plut., *Pyrrh.* 11.4-5.

Celts, in the Battle of Lysimacheia in 276, striking the enemy with terror; in 166, Dionysos made his appearance during the Battle of Mount Tmolos to aid Eumenes II.¹⁰⁵

After the troops had taken their position on the field, the king, followed by a cortège of *philoï* and horse guards, rode along the line of battle to show the soldiers his presence, and his forward position between them and the enemy. Speeches were delivered, especially to the Macedonian infantry.¹⁰⁶ At the Battle of Raphia, Ptolemaios IV, commanding the army together with queen Arsinoë, as well as Antiochos III reminded their troops of the prestige of the dynasty: ‘Since neither king could cite any glorious and generally recognised achievement of his own, both of them having but recently become king, they reminded their phalanxes of the glorious deeds of their ancestors in order to inspire them with spirit and courage’.¹⁰⁷

The troops addressed, the king gave the sign for the attack. At Sellasia in 222 Antigonos Doseon waved a purple banner to signal the start of the battle.¹⁰⁸ Alexander carried the sacred Shield of Athena from Ilion with him into battle during the storming of the town of the Mallians.¹⁰⁹ Pyrrhos was recognisable on the battlefield by his helmet with goat-horns.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Strootman 2005a, 113 and 128; cf. Gabbert 1997, 26-7; Hansen 1971, 120-9. For a complete overview of divine aid in war in Greek historiography see W.K. Pritchett, ‘Military epiphanies’, in: idem, *The Greek State At War. Part III: Religion* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1979) 11-46. On divine manifestations in general: H.S. Versnel, ‘What did ancient man see when he saw a god? Some reflections on Greco-Roman epiphany’, in: D. van der Plas ed., *Effigies Dei. Essays on the History of Religions*. Numen Supplement 51 (Leiden 1987) 42-55, making a strong case for the authenticity of the belief that gods could actually be present among men. G. Wheeler, ‘Battlefield epiphanies in Ancient Greece: A survey’, *Digressus* 4 (2004) 1-14, offers psychological explanations, particularly post-traumatic stress disorder.

¹⁰⁶ Polyb. 5.53.5; 5.83.1-84.1; 8.13.5.

¹⁰⁷ Polyb. 5.83.2-84.1. Note that neither of the two kings referred to past achievements of the *army*.

¹⁰⁸ Polyb. 2.66.10-11, cf. 5.84.1. The entire army starting its advance *en masse* after a sign has been given by its supreme commander may also be understood as a ritualisation of the idea that a civilised army is a disciplined army; for this notion, an elementary part of the Greek cultural construct that is now usually called ‘the western way of war’, see the discussion in the first chapter of Sidebottom 2004, 1-15, aptly titled ‘At my signal unleash hell’, a quotation from the film *Gladiator* (1999), Ridley Scott’s flimsy remake of *Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964). A modern version of the myth of the ‘western way of war’ was propagated by V.D. Hansen in *The Western Way of War. Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (New York 1989), and *Why the West Has Won. Carnage and Culture From Salamis to Vietnam* (London 2001).

¹⁰⁹ Arr., *Anab.* 6.13.2.

On the Alexander Sarcophagus in Istanbul, Alexander wears a helmet shaped as a lion's head, equating him with Herakles and perhaps meant to call up the hero's strength and valour in the king.¹¹¹

In limited campaigns, skirmishes, mountain warfare and other small enterprises, kings relied on Macedonian professionals. During great battles, however, the field army consisted of troops drawn from all parts of the kingdom.¹¹² The Seleukid battle lines at Raphia and Magnesia, recounted in detail by Polybios and Livy, are microcosms presenting the Seleukid *Vielvölkerreich* in miniature – the empire presented as army.¹¹³ The centre consisted of Macedonian heavy infantry, or infantry dressed and trained as Macedonians, including the elite corps of the Silver Shields and Bronze Shields. Next to these various 'native' units were employed, dressed and armed in accordance with the traditions of their homelands: horse archers from Central Asia, Thrakian and Lydian swordsmen, Galatian warriors, Persian and Agrianian archers, Babylonian and Arab light infantry, the so-called *kardakes*, and numerous others.¹¹⁴ All units, with the exception of allied troops, were led by Macedonian and Greek

¹¹⁰ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 11.5-6.

¹¹¹ Alexander was believed to have actually inherited the bodily strength and moral qualities of his ancestors Achilles and Herakles: Diod. 17.1.5; Plut., *Alex.* 2.1; cf. Huttner 1997, who distinguishes three functions of Herakles in monarchic ideology: as ancestor of the royal house (pp. 211-252), as patron-god of kings and queens, coming to their aid especially in battle (253-70), and as a model for royal conduct (271-318).

¹¹² For the composition of the Seleukid army see Bar-Kochva 1976 and 1993, 430-31, 567-70; Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993, 53-61; Sekunda 1997. Although troops could be sent by all the satraps of the empire, the bulk of the auxiliaries was drawn from areas near the location of the campaign.

¹¹³ Polyb. 5.80.3-13; Liv. 37.40.1-14. The armies at Raphia and Magnesia can be taken to be the typical composition of a Seleukid army in major battle (Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993, 55). As is well known from Herodotos' catalogue of Xerxes' army at Doriskos in Thrakia (Hdt. 7.61-99), as well as the accounts of the battles of Issos and Gaugamela, Achaimenid royal armies at maximum strength had a similar multi-ethnic organisation; cf. Briant 1999, 118-20, arguing that during the Persian invasion of Greece Xerxes brought, alongside a real army consisting of Iranian troops, a 'parade army' of token ethnic contingents that did not participate in the actual fighting.

¹¹⁴ 1,000 *Kardakes* were present at Raphia; Polybios classifies them as light or semi-light troops, being combined with a contingent of 500 Lydian javelin throwers. The meaning of *kardakes* remains obscure, the most popular translation being 'Kurds'; Briant 1999, 120-2 proposes that in the Achaimenid army *kardakes* were a unit of professional heavy infantry, recruited from various subject

commanders, although these were presumably assisted by native officers. At the flanks the heavy cavalry was positioned: around the king the *Agema* of 2,000 royal horse guards, the *kataphrakts*, and the Iranian heavy cavalry.

Roman and pro-Roman sources contrast contrasting the fear-inspiring but feeble ostentation of Hellenistic armies with the soberness and firmness of Romans legions. Plutarch says that ‘the barbarous hordes from all corners, and all their discordant and dreadful cries, [their] armour inlaid with gold and precious stones’¹¹⁵ of Mithradates Eupator, ‘the most warlike and hostile of all the kings’,¹¹⁶ at first did not fail to spread consternation among the Romans:

The air could not contain the shouts and clamour of so many nations forming in array. At the same time Median and Skythian garments, intermingled with bronze and flashing steel, presented a flaming and fearful sight as they surged back and forth so that the Romans huddled together behind their stockades; also the pomp and ostentation of their costly equipment was not without its effect and use in exciting terror; indeed, the flashing of their armour, which was magnificently embellished with gold and silver, and the rich colours of their Median and Skythian garments, intermingled with bronze and flashing steel, presented a flaming and fearful sight as they surged to and fro, so that the Romans huddled together behind their stockades.¹¹⁷

But in the end, the Hellenistic preference for ‘splendour without substance’ inevitably resulted in fiasco, after which, Plutarch assures his readers, Mithradates lost no time in completely remodelling his army in Roman fashion.¹¹⁸ The same topos is evident from an anecdote about Hannibal related by Aulus Gellius:

peoples but uniformly equipped, under the command of Persian officers, but this does not clarify their presence in the Seleukid empire.

¹¹⁵ Plut., *Luc.* 7.3. Mithradates’ warships, Plutarch adds, instead of having room for weapons and ammunition, contained ‘baths for concubines and luxurious apartments for women’ (7.5).

¹¹⁶ Plut., *Luc.* 3.2.

¹¹⁷ Plut., *Sulla* 16.2-3.

¹¹⁸ Plut., *Luc.* 7.4-5. Cf. Plut., *Mor.* 197c-d: ‘When king Antiochos [III] arrived in Greece with a great force, and all were terror-stricken at the great numbers of men and their armaments, Flamininus told a story for the benefit of the Achaians. He said he was in Chalkis dining with a friend, and was amazed at the great number of the meats served; but the friend laughed and said that it was all pork, differing only in their seasoning and the way they were cooked. “So then”, he said, “you should neither be

Antiochos [III] was displaying to him on the plain the gigantic force which he had mustered to make war on the Roman people, and was manoeuvring his army glittering with gold and silver ornaments. He also brought up chariots with scythes, elephants with turrets, and horsemen with brilliant bridles, saddlecloths, neck-chains and trappings. And then the king, filled with vainglory at the sight of an army so great and so well-equipped, turned to Hannibal and said: ‘Do you think that all this can be equalled and that it is enough for the Romans?’ Then the Carthaginian, deriding the worthlessness and inefficiency of the king’s troops in their costly armour, replied: ‘I think all this will be quite enough for the Romans, even though they are most avaricious.’¹¹⁹

Such descriptions were meant to create a contrast with the soberness and discipline of the Roman legionaries, but they do give some idea of the impression that Hellenistic kings wished to make on their enemies.

Hellenistic kings invariably commanded the heavy cavalry on the right flank of the line. The king in battle sat on his horse like a throne, surrounded by aristocratic elite cavalry, still called Companions in the age of Polybios in the Antigonid and Seleukid kingdoms. This was a peculiar characteristic of Hellenistic warfare. Classical Greek generals, Achaimenid kings and Roman commanders preferred the centre.¹²⁰ The Hellenistic kings’ position on one of the flanks with the cavalry stems from the king’s prestige as a horseman, typical of Macedonian aristocratic culture.¹²¹ The preference for the *right* flank as the place of greatest honour is probably due, ultimately, to the fact that most people are right-handed: just as a warrior wielded his spear with his right hand, so the royal cavalry on the right was supposed

amazed at the king’s forces when you hear names like Pikemen (λογχοφόροι), Super Heavy Cavalry (καταφράκτοι), Foot Guards (πεζεταίροι) or Two Horse Archers (αμφιπποτοξότας) – all these are no more than Orientals differing only from each other in their apparel!”

¹¹⁹ Gell., *NA* 5.5.2-6.

¹²⁰ Greek and Roman commanders sometimes encouraged their troops on foot as hoplite or legionary: E.L. Wheeler, ‘The general as hoplite’, in: V.D. Hanson ed., *Hoplites. The Classical Greek Battle Experience* (London and New York 1991) 121-70. Hellenistic kings fought on horseback.

¹²¹ Phylarchos, *FGrH* 81 F 49, states that a good king was *qualitate qua* a good horseman. Cf. Alexander’s melodramatic affection for Boukefalos. Mithradates the Great was famous for his bodily strength and horsemanship: ‘he was so strong that he could hurl a javelin while riding a horse, and could ride one thousand stades in a single day, changing horses at intervals’ (App., *Mithr.* 16.112).

to deal the enemy the decisive blow.¹²² The metaphor could be extended to include the defensive role of the cavalry on the *left* flank: the warrior's shield arm. Because of right-handedness, 'right' also had a positive symbolic, even religious connotations. In Classical Greece the left was connected with the secular, the right with the sacred.¹²³ No Hellenistic king ever behaved otherwise. The inherent tactical risk—that even a successful charge could lead the supreme commander with his cavalry astray, thereby dangerously exposing the right flank, as was the case with Alexander's charge at Gaugamela and Demetrios' charge at Ipsos—apparently was taken for granted:

After battle, it was again time for sacrifice, to give thank-offerings to the gods for success, and to pay the last honours to the dead, again with the king functioning as the principal priest. To bury the dead, Classical Greeks used to conclude an unconditional burial truce; Macedonians among each other did the same.¹²⁴ The concluding sacrifice, a peaceful activity, followed by a ritual, festive meal of the king and his military commanders, signalled that by means of victory order and peace had been restored.¹²⁵ The altar erected for this purpose, together with the tomb or monument for the fallen and the *tropaion*, made the battlefield a sacred area for time to come.¹²⁶

Theatrical heroism

Ancient accounts of Hellenistic battles, even when written centuries later, often echo the idea that the king personally decided the outcome of the fight. The king was sometimes even presented as fighting alone, unaided by others. This is remarkable. In the Greek world view

¹²² Cf. Polyb. 5.54.9: After the defeat of Molon, 'Antiochos rebuked the rebel troops at some length, and then gave them his right hand in sign of pardon.'

¹²³ P. Vidal-Naquet, *Le chasseur noir. Formes de pensée et formes de société dans le monde grec* (Paris 1981; 2nd rev. edn. 1991).

¹²⁴ The 8,000 Macedonian dead of the Battle of Kynoskephalai in 197 remained unburied until three years later Antiochos III ordered the bones to be buried in a magnificent tomb: Liv. 36.8; App., *Syr.* 16; cf. Plut., *Flam.* 8 for the total of the Macedonian casualties.

¹²⁵ Polyb. 5.14.8. Cf. Sidebottom 2002, 17.

¹²⁶ In 218 BCE Philippos V, 'on reaching the site of the battle between Antigonos [Doston] and Kleomenes (*viz.* Sellasia), he encamped there, and next day after inspecting the field and sacrificing to the gods on each of the hills Olympos and Evas, he resumed his march' (Polyb. 5.24.8-9). The tomb of the slain was regarded as a *heroon*: W.K. Pritchett, 'The battlefield trophy', in: idem, *The Greek State At War. Part II* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1974) 246-75, at 299-70, with n. 68.

fighting in formation, *i.e.* the very opposite of fighting individually, was considered a distinguishing characteristic of civilised armies.¹²⁷ Thus the king is distinguished from an ordinary soldier, and moved away from cultural conventions of normality – only not in the direction of barbarity, but towards the heroes of epic myth. In 208 the army of Antiochos III was saved from a surprise attack of Central Asian warriors, due to the king's personal courage:

The Baktrian cavalry ... came up to attack their adversaries while they were still in marching order. The king, understanding how important it was to withstand the first charge of the enemy, called together two thousand of his cavalry who used to fight round him; all the others he ordered to change formation where they were, and put themselves in their usual order for battle, while he himself with the force I just mentioned encountered the Baktrians and halted their first charge. It appears that at this occasion Antiochos fought more brilliantly than anyone else who was with him. ... In the battle Antiochos' horse was transfixed and killed, and he himself received a wound in the mouth and lost several of his teeth, thereby gaining a greater reputation for *andreia* on this occasion than on any other.¹²⁸

This image of the king as a *promachos*, deciding the outcome of battle virtually single-handedly, is reminiscent of the aristocratic champions in the *Iliad*.¹²⁹ Similarly Pyrrhos of Epeiros, in a battle in Macedonia in 291, engaged in single combat with Pantauchos, a Macedonian general; Plutarch describes the episode deliberately in epic style:

A fierce battle ensued and the fighting was especially violent around the two commanders. Pantauchos was by general consent the best (*aristos*) fighting-man of all Demetrios' generals. He combined courage (*andreia*), strength and skill in arms with a lofty and resolute spirit, and he challenged Pyrrhos to hand-to-hand combat. Pyrrhos, for his part, yielded to none of the kings in valour and daring: he was determined to earn the fame of Achilles not merely through

¹²⁷ Sidebottom 2002, 19-20.

¹²⁸ Polyb. 10.49.7-14.

¹²⁹ For single combat in epic literature see V.M. Udwin, *Between Two Armies. The Place of the Duel in Epic Culture* (Leiden 1999), maintaining that the duel is the defining characteristic of epic culture. Specifically on *promachoi* in the *Iliad* see H.W. Singor, 'Nine against Troy. On epic *phalanges*, *promachoi*, and an old structure in the story of the *Iliad*', *Mnemosyne* 44 (1991) 17-62, and id., '*Eni potestas machedsthai*. Some remarks on the *Iliadic* image of the battlefield', in J.P. Crielaerd ed., *Homeric Questions* (Amsterdam 1995) 183-200; O. Hellmann, *Die Schlachtszenen der Ilias* (Stuttgart 2000). For the 'heroic' nature of Argead kingship see Tarn 1927, 44-72.

his ancestry but through his prowess in the field, and he advanced beyond the front rank of his troops to confront Pantauchos. First they hurled javelins at each other, and then coming to close quarters, they drew their swords and fought with all their strength and skill. Pyrrhos received one wound, but inflicted two on Pantauchos, one in the thigh and one along the neck. Finally he drove his opponent back and forced him to the ground, but he could not kill him outright, as his friends came to the rescue and dragged him away. This victory of their king's uplifted the Epirotes' spirits and inspired by his courage they succeeded in penetrating and breaking up the Macedonian phalanx; then they pursued their enemies as they fled, killed great numbers of them and took five thousand prisoners.¹³⁰

In another episode, Pyrrhos is even said to have been seized with epic war-frenzy when fighting the Mamertines, who had attacked the rear guard of his army column:

Pyrrhos ... at once rode to the rear, helped to drive off the enemy, and exposed himself fearlessly in fighting against men who were not only courageous but well-trained in battle. The enemy became all the more elated when Pyrrhos was struck on the head with a sword, and retired a little away from the fighting. One of them, a man of giant stature clad in shining armour, ran out in front of their ranks and challenged Pyrrhos in a loud voice to come forward if he were still alive. This infuriated Pyrrhos, and in spite of the efforts of his guards to protect him, he wheeled round and forced his way through them. His face was smeared with blood and his features contorted into a terrible expression of rage.¹³¹ Then before the barbarian could

¹³⁰ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 7.4-5; trans. I. Scott-Kilvert. See Diod. 17.83.4-6, for a comparable description of the *andreia* of Alexander's commander Eriguio, accepting a challenge for a duel with the Persian general Satibarzanes (cf. Curt. 7.4.33-40 and Arr., *Anab.* 3.28.3). Note that Pyrrhos' imitation of Achilles is not presented here as *imitatio Alexandri*; as a descendant of Achilles, Pyrrhos was believed to have inherited the qualities of his ancestor as well. Plutarch compares Pyrrhos with Achilles also at 13.2 and 22.8. Cf. I. Sluiter, 'Homer in the dining-room: An ancient rhetorical interpretation of the duel between Paris and Menelaus (Plut., *Quast.Conv.* 9.13)', *Classical World* 98.4 (2005) 379-86, for Plutarch's literary use of the *Iliad*'s being 'so fundamental to any educated person', that his readers would know all underlying facts connected with a small quotation, perhaps even knowing them by heart; this article was kindly brought to my attention by Michel Buijs.

¹³¹ δεινὸς ὄφθῆναι τὸ πρόσωπον; B. Perrin translates: 'a countenance terrible to look upon'. For even more 'epic' behaviour ascribed to Pyrrhos see Plut., *Pyrrh.* 22.9 (προσιδεῖν δεινὸς ἐφάνη τοῖς πολεμίοις) and 30.7. Cp. the 'epic duel' between Philopoimen and the Spartan king Machanidas, related in Polyb. 11.17.7-18.7, and discussed by Chaniotis 2004, 193-7, who surmises that 'Polybios must have heard of this combat ... from eye-witnesses'; cf. pp. 195-7 for the Hellenistic Greek

strike, he dealt him a tremendous blow on the head with his sword. So great was the strength of his arm and the keenness of the blade that it cleft the man from head to foot, and in an instant the two halves of his body fell apart. The barbarians halted and came on no further, for they were amazed and bewildered at Pyrrhos and believed him to be a superhuman being.¹³²

The hero changing shape and cleaving his opponent in halves – these are images we normally associate with the Achilles in the *Iliad*, Hagen in the *Nibelungenlied*, or Cúchulainn in the *Táin bó Cúailnge*. But even though the quotations above are literary renderings by an author whose main concern was not writing history, the allusions to Homer or epic warfare in general are no inventions of Plutarch, but authentic: they surely go back to contemporary image-building of kings who wished be known as heroic warriors. It is not uncommon that historical kings are transformed into legendary heroes in later epic traditions.¹³³ Here it happened already during the kings' lives by means of deliberate propaganda. Thus, the only preserved copy of a battlefield painting, the Alexander Mosaic from the Casa del Fauno in Pompeii, typically presents Alexander as *promachos*, eager to engage in single combat with Darius.¹³⁴

obsession with war narrative, esp. hand-to-hand combat, in general; Chaniotis rightly suggests that 'reading or listening to narratives of how aggressors were destroyed gave their enemies a sense of relief' (p. 197).

¹³² Plut., *Pyrrh.* 24.2-4; trans. I. Scott-Kilvert. Like the preceding quotation from Plutarch, this passage goes back to contemporary panegyric, probably the Epeirote biographer Proxenos, who, as a court historian of Pyrrhos', has a predilection for homeric scenes: Nederlof 1940, 174-5; cf. idem 1978, 207.

¹³³ N. Voorwinden, 'Het Germaanse heldenepos. Een verleden in dienst van het heden', in: M. Schipper ed., *Onsterfelijke roem. Het epos in verschillende culturen* (Baarn and Schoten 1989) 62-80, discussing this development at 62-6, conceptualised for the *Nibelungenlied* and the Dietrich of Bern cycle by A. Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung* (Potsdam 1941) 153-62; cf. W. Haug, 'Andreas Heuslers Heldensagenmodell: Prämissen, Kritik und Gegenwurf', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum* 104 (1975) 273-92.

¹³⁴ The Mosaic, now in the Archaeological Museum in Naples, was copied from a famous painting, reflections of which have been preserved in other media. On the mosaic consult B. Andrae, *Das Alexandermosaik aus Pompeji* (Recklinghausen 1977); P.J. Holiday, 'Roman triumphal painting: its function, development, and reception', *The Art Bulletin* (March 1997); A. Cohen, *The Alexander Mosaic* (Cambridge 1997); K. Stähler, *Das Alexandermosaik* (Frankfurt am Main 1999). M. Donderer, 'Das Pompejanische Alexandermosaik: Ein ostliches Importstück?', in: *Das antike Rom und der Osten: Festschrift für Klaus Parlasca zum 65. Geburtstag* (Erlangen 1990) 27-8, suggested that the mosaic was originally made in the east, perhaps decorating a palace, and was imported to Italy; most

Alexander is depicted with an obsessed, lion-like look.¹³⁵ Upon looking Alexander in the eye, Darius, like Hektor at the approach of Achilles, panics and turns, chased by Alexander. So there is also an element of hunting in the Alexander Mosaic, intensified by Alexander's predator-like expression and Darius' frightened countenance.¹³⁶

Heroism in ideology presupposes that kings were obliged to perform heroic deeds on the battlefield, either in actuality or in some ritualised manner. Of course Pyrrhos' frenzy did not really enable him to cleave a man in two with a single blow—although most contemporaries who heard probably believed it—but the duel as such probably took place in reality. As is well-known, Alexander's recklessness often put himself and others in danger. But Alexander was not as exceptional in this respect as his later biographers made him appear to be. To be sure, Hellenistic kings seldom died peacefully, perishing in battle with a frequency not encountered among Achaimenid kings or Roman emperors.¹³⁷ Fleeing from the battlefield was considered the greatest disgrace for a king.¹³⁸ Notably Seleukid kings are said

scholars agree, however, that all the mosaics in the Casa del Fauno were made by a local workshop, cf. E. Pernice, *Pavimente und figurliche Mosaiken. Die hellenistische Kunst in Pompeji* 6 (Berlin, 1938) 94; P.G.P. Meyboom, 'I mosaici pompeiani con figure di pesci', *Mededeelingen van het Nederlands Historisch Instituut te Rome* 29 (1977) 49-93, esp. p. 72 n. 271.

¹³⁵ It has been argued that for the sake of this image he was represented with the light brown eyes of a lion, although written sources attest that this was not the real colour of his eyes: P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, 'Alexander's eyes', in: idem, *Studies in Greek Colour Terminology* (Leiden 1981) II, 170-2; the evidence for Alexander's looks is collected in C. de Ujfalvy *Le type physique d'Alexandre le Grand d'après les auteurs anciens et les documents iconographiques* (Paris 1902).

¹³⁶ In Hellenistic royal ideology, as in myth, hunting and battle are often equated (below, chapter 5.5).

¹³⁷ For example Pyrrhos, Lysimachos, Ptolemaios Keraunos; Antigonos I, Demetrios II, Antigonos III, Seleukos II, Antiochos III, Antiochos IV, Demetrios I, Alexandros I, Antiochos X, Antiochos XII, Ptolemaios VI, Ptolemaios X. Several others were murdered or committed suicide.

¹³⁸ In particular Perseus' cowardice after Pydna became a moral example: he hang on to his life 'with idle hope' (Diod. 31.9.3-7), because 'to those who have failed, nothing seems so sweet as life, although things worse than death happened to them; and this is what befell Perseus' (Plut., *Mor.* 198 b); cf. A.J.L. van Hooff, *Zelfdoding in de Antieke Wereld* (Nijmegen 1990) 138-9. Comparable judgements in App., *Syr.* 11.3.16, 4.20; Plut., *Luc. & Cim. Comp.* 3.4; Liv. 44.42.1-2; see Bar-Kochva 1976, 86, for more examples.

to have committed suicide after defeat in order to save their family's honour and to escape the humiliation of captivity.¹³⁹

The most striking examples of personal bravery in the sources at our disposal regard the age of Alexander and the Diadochs. The duel between commanders may indeed have been typical of Balkan warfare in the fourth century and before.¹⁴⁰ H.-J. Gehrke has shown,

¹³⁹ Including Antiochos VII Sidetes, Demetrios II and Alexandros II Zabinas. See K. Ehling, 'Selbstmorde von Seleukidenkönige', *Historia* 50.3 (2001) 376-8, with a complete list of suicidal kings on p. 376; Ehling argues that the belief that for a king suicide was a noble way to die was influenced by Epicurean philosophers, whose presence at the later Seleukid court is indeed attested; for this reason, *philoï* of dead Seleukids would claim that their former master had committed suicide even if this was not the case. However, among the Hellenistic philosophical schools, the Epicureans approved least of voluntary death. Furthermore, the notion that it was dishonourable to survive failure was not restricted to the Seleukids (the most famous examples being Mithradates VI and Kleopatra VII) as in Greek and Roman thought from Archaic to Christian times, justifiable *autothanasia* was conceived first of all as an ostentatious act connected with honour, and the prevalent motive given in the sources is fear for loss of face: Van Hooff 1990, 162-4, cf. 114-22 and 137-50.

¹⁴⁰ On the 'heroic' character of Argead kingship see Tarn 1927, 44-72. A similar kind of aristocratic heroism existed in Iranian warfare as well. In Diod. 17.83.5-6, for instance, the Persian general Satibarzanes challenges the Macedonian commander to single combat in Aria in 328. And Diod. 17.6.1-2 informs us that Darius III became king because of his *andreia* 'in which he surpassed all other Persians': 'Once when king Artaxerxes was campaigning against the Kadusians, one of them with a wide reputation for strength and courage challenged a volunteer among the Persians to fight in single combat with him. No other 'dared accept, but Darius alone entered the contest and slew the challenger. ... It was because of this prowess that he was thought worthy to take over the kingship' (trans. C. Bradford Welles). Persian sources affirm that bodily strength, good bowmanship and horsemanship were central elements of the Persian ideal of kingship, e.g. DNR (inscription of Darius I, Naqs-i Rostam); XDNb (inscription of Xerxes); cf. Sancisi 1980, 178; Briant 1999. G. Gropp, 'Herrscherethos und Kriegsführung bei Achämeniden und Makedonen', in: J. Ozols and V. Thewalt eds., *Aus dem Osten des Alexanderreiches. Völker und Kulturen zwischen Orient und Okzident* (Cologne 1984) 32-42, after discussing the courage and martial qualities expected from Persian kings, argues that Alexander's subjugation of the Achaimenid Empire was in part due to the respect he had won by his courageous behaviour during battle, and that Darius 'lost his throne' because of his cowardice; although this is an attractive idea—Alexander's acceptance by the Iranian nobility was no doubt enhanced by his ostentatious bravery—Gropp accepts far too uncritically the Greek sources claiming that Darius fled from the field for fear of hand-to-hand combat with Alexander. For a diametrically opposite view see Jona Lendering's revisionist view of the Battle of Gaugamela in

however, that an heroic ethos remained an essential component of royal self-presentation until the end of the Hellenistic Age.¹⁴¹

The theatrical heroism of the king was not only Homeric emulation. It was a Near Eastern tradition, too. In both Egypt and Mesopotamia the image of the king standing his ground whilst surrounded by overwhelming numbers of enemies was a topos in royal propaganda: the king has been betrayed by his allies, or even deserted by his own troops, making his stand a heroic fight of the one against the many. The best known example is the contemporary depiction of Ramesses the Great's at the Battle of Kadesh.¹⁴² Also in Assyrian victory inscriptions the king of Assur is always represented as fighting numerous, even numberless enemies banding together against him. The enemies' numerical superiority reveals their moral inferiority: because they dare not confront the Assyrian king on equal terms they are cowards who lack the support of the gods.¹⁴³ Hence the standard presentation of the enemy as 'rebel', 'traitor' or 'liar'. In Achaimenid inscriptions all those who do not submit to the Great King are collectively denoted as *drauga*, 'lie', a word with religious connotations implying that the king's enemies were impious evil-doers, enemies of the cosmic order of Ahuramazda.¹⁴⁴ In the same manner, Seleukid kings were presented as prevailing over either 'traitors' or 'barbarians', against all the odds, and 'with divine favour and aid'.¹⁴⁵ In the epic poem *Galatika*, the court poet Simonides of Magnesia wrote that Antiochos Soter crushed the Celts while being outnumbered ten to one.¹⁴⁶ And Antiochos III, 'elated by his success [against the rebel Molon] and wishing to overawe and intimidate the barbarous dynasts whose dominions bordered on and lay beyond his own dominions, so as to prevent their furnishing anyone who rebelled against him with supplies or armed assistance, ... decided to march

Alexander de Grote. De ondergang van het Perzische Rijk, 340-320 v.Chr. (Amsterdam 2004) 168-174; an English translation of the relevant chapter is online at www.livius.org.

¹⁴¹ Gehrke 1982, 266-8.

¹⁴² The so-called Poem of Pentaur on the Papyrus Sallier gives a first person account of the pharaoh's exploits, who says *i.a.*: 'Here I stand / All alone / There is no one at my side / ... / But I find the favour of Amun / Far better help to me / Than a million warriors or ten thousand chariots'.

¹⁴³ M. Liverani, 'Kitru, kataru', *Mesopotamia* 17 (1981) 43-66.

¹⁴⁴ Sancisi 1980, 178.

¹⁴⁵ OGIS 219; Austin 139.

¹⁴⁶ An outline of the content of Simonides' *Galatika* is preserved in Lucian, *Zeuxis* 8-11. Cf. Barbantani 2001, 208-14; Bar-Kochva, 1973; Rankin 1987, 99; Strootman 2005a, 116 n. 58.

against them.¹⁴⁷ Rebel princes who could not be subjugated could, paradoxically, be turned into autonomous vassals by the grace of the king. In 206/205, Euthydemos, the semi-independent ruler of Baktria was defeated in battle by Antiochos III but could not be wholly subdued. Seleukid propaganda, preserved in Polybios, claimed that Euthydemos received an envoy of the king, a *philos* called Teleas, and reasoned with him:

... that Antiochos was not justified in attempting to deprive him of his kingdom. He himself had never revolted against the king, but after others had revolted he had possessed himself of the rule (*archē*, not *basileia*) of Baktria by destroying their descendants. After speaking at some length in the same sense he begged Teleas to mediate between them in a friendly manner and bring about a reconciliation, entreating Antiochos not to grudge him the name and state of king, as if he did not yield to this request, neither of them would be safe; for considerable hordes of Nomads were approaching; and this was not only a grave danger to both of them, but if they consented to admit to them, the whole empire would certainly relapse into barbarism. After speaking thus he dispatched Teleas to Antiochos.¹⁴⁸

Thus, continuing both Achaimenid and Argead tradition, Hellenistic kings needed to possess, or pretend to possess physical strength and fighting skills, and courageousness in battle. Dynastic succession alone was not enough to become a legitimate king, as the absence of primogeniture in the Hellenistic royal families made every single brother or half-brother a potential rival.

¹⁴⁷ Polyb. 5.55.1. Both rebels and barbarians were de-humanised in propaganda, and treated accordingly in reality. In keeping with ancient Near Eastern traditions, the bodies of the generals who revolted against Antiochos III were first mutilated, and then crucified in a conspicuous place. Molon's body was exposed on the cross at the foot of Mount Zagros (Polyb. 5.54.6-7), and after the capture of Achaïos the council discussed 'many proposals as to the proper punishment to inflict on Achaïos, and it was decided to lop off in the first place the unhappy prince's extremities, and then, after cutting off his head and sewing it up in an ass's skin, to crucify his body.' Barbarians, in particular Celts, who according to Polyb. 18.37.9 were a people without culture, were routinely accused of incest, cannibalism, and necrophilia in Greek historiography, cf. e.g. Poseidonios *ap.* Diod. 5.32-3 and Strabo 4.43. Paus. 10.22.2 described the atrocities committed by Celtic warriors during the invasion of Greece in 279 as 'unlike the crimes of human beings'; for the gruesome details see Strootman 2005a, 118-21.

¹⁴⁸ Polyb. 11.39.1-5.