

III

Court Society

*Political leaders must follow their followers. ...
History and theory suggest that followers create
leaders rather than the converse.*

M. Edelman, *Constructing Political Spectacle*
(1988) 37-8.

3.1 The origin of Hellenistic court society

In chapter 1.2 we have defined the Hellenistic royal court as essentially the household of the royal family, consisting of both persons and property. The nucleus of the royal *oikos* was the royal family: the king, his consort(s) and offspring. The king was the *kyrios* (head) of the *oikos* (household).¹ As the family head, he was responsible for his family's relations with the outside world. This means that he was obliged to receive ambassadors in person and give public audiences, and deal with all important matters of his household personally, including its religious affairs. However, in both the Ptolemaic and Seleukid kingdoms these responsibilities were also carried out by queens and princes. The 'extended family' consisted further of various relatives and non-kin friends, as well servants and guards. Most important among these were the so-called 'friends of the king', the *philoï tou basileōs*, who were related to the royal family by means of aristocratic guest-friendship and sometimes fictive kinship. The *philoï* society was hierarchised and structured by means of a gradually developing system of aulic offices and honorific titles.

¹ Cf. Pomeroy 1997, 23 and 28, perhaps overemphasising the absolute authority of the male family head over all aspects of his household, including authority over his wife and children.

In this chapter the persons constituting the court society will be discussed. After a brief discussion of the genesis of Hellenistic court society under Philippos and Alexander, we will first look at the royal family, the nucleus of the court. Characteristic of the Hellenistic dynasties is the relative importance of women at court. It will be argued that the prevalence of royal women can in part be explained from the importance of female family members for inheritance and succession. Next, the *philoï tou basileōs*, ‘the friends of the king’, will be discussed. Who were these courtiers? What were their (ethnic) origins, how were they attracted to court and what was their relationship with the royal family? Of special importance here are the conceptions of *philia*, ‘(ritualised) friendship’, and *xenia*, ‘guest-friendship’, as well as gift exchange and the system of honorific and other aulic titles that structured and hierarchised court society.

From the outside, the royal household presented an image of unity and harmony. In practice, the unity of the royal family, and hence of the court, was often disarrayed as a result of polygamous marriage and the absence of primogeniture in succession. At the Argead and Seleukid courts, the core of the household was divided into sub-families centred round the respective queens and their children, each having its own followers and personnel. As a result, conflict over the succession frequently broke out, often with disastrous effects. Relations between the *philoï* and the king, and between *philoï* among each another, too, were not necessarily harmonious; the reigning king was not even automatically the most powerful individual. We therefore also look at conflicts at court, and the strategies employed by kings to remain master of their own houses, particularly through the employment of ‘favourites’ to counterbalance the power of the *philoï*. It will be argued the preferred favourites were non-Greeks and women. The last part of this chapter deals with the practice of bringing up the children of the nobility together with the children of the king as royal pages (*basilikoi paides*).

Philippos II and the Macedonian nobility

The birthplace of Hellenistic court culture was fourth century Macedonia. The courts of the Diadochs were essentially imitations of the Argead court, albeit in renewed and enlarged form, and appropriating various Achaimenid elements. But in spite of Achaimenid and Greek influences, the basic appearance was Macedonian.

In pre-Hellenistic Macedonia the king shared his power with local barons, the so-called *hetairoi* or Companions of the king, who as heavy cavalry dominated the armed forces

until the reign of Philippos II.² The king was principally the war leader of the united tribes of the Macedonian people. Although ideology presented the king as an absolute monarch, he was in practice *primus inter pares* of the high nobility. The Argead family, who dominated the coastal plain around the Thermaic Gulf, was merely the most powerful of several powerful clans.³ The male heads of the mightiest noble families were called the king's *suggeneis*, 'relatives', and had the right to greet the king with a kiss.⁴ In fact, they often were tied to the king by family relations. Together they formed a war council, that advised the king.⁵ Macedonian aristocrats, particularly those ruling the mountainous hinterland, were fervently independent, and the king was entirely dependent on their support in wartime.

In the fourth century Argead kings endeavoured to monopolise political power. It was perhaps Philippos II who took the first step in breaking the prevalence of the *hetairoi* in the army by enlisting common Makedones as heavy infantry. These *pezhetairoi*, Foot Companions, although commanded by aristocratic officers, were directly answerable to the king.⁶ From the ranks of the *pezhetairoi* a royal infantry guard of 3,000 *hypaspistai* was recruited, even more closely bonded with the king. The aristocracy continued to supply the army's heavy cavalry and to derive political power from that, but now less than before: the *pezhetairoi* enabled the king to pursue a foreign policy of his own, and the Makedones

² Hammond 1989, 141, estimates that in 334 the total number of Companions was about 2,800.

³ Cf. Hammond 1989, 142. Following the defeat of the Illyrian king Bardyllis in 358, Philippos II abolished the small kingdoms of Upper Macedonia and pacified the members of their royal houses by making them Companions. Also some members of the Paionian and Odrysian royal house became Companions of the Macedonian king, among them Aristonos who commanded the Paionian cavalry at Issos and belonged to Alexander's inner circle. [Hammond 1989, 141]

⁴ Arr., *Anab.* 7.11.9; Diod. 17.77.5. Sources for the Argead court concern mostly the reign of Alexander; but because of the profound changes taking place at Alexander's court, they tend to emphasise the pre-existing situation as well as the new. Sources use *hetairoi* in two meanings: (1) to denote the heavy cavalry constituting the core of the early Macedonian army, and by extension the whole of the horse- and land-owning aristocracy of Macedonia, comparable to the Greek *hippeis*, and (2) the small group of the mightiest clans' family-heads who were the king's personal advisors and (fictive) kinsmen; cf. Hammond 1989, 53-8 and 140-8. In the Hellenistic period, *hetairoi* persisted as a military term denoting a type of noble cavalry.

⁵ Hammond 1989, 53. In all accounts of such informal meetings at Alexander's court (collected in Hammond 1989, 143-4) the council invariably discussed military matters.

⁶ Hammond 1989, 148-50; Walbank 1940, 1-2. For Philip's pursuit of absolutism see Errington 1990, 220-2.

serving as heavy infantry acquired some political influence to set off the power of the *hetairoi*.⁷ With his new model army of combined (royal) infantry and (noble) cavalry, Philippos was able to establish Macedonia as the leading power in the Balkans.

Philippos was now also able to begin a process of curtailment of the *hetairoi* at court. The expansion of Argead power beyond Macedonia required the creation of administrative offices accountable to the king. How much freedom Philippos really had in appointing officials of his own choice is difficult to ascertain, but the evidence suggests that he was rather successful in his efforts to by-pass the old nobility in favour of his personal followers and friends, whom he recruited among the lesser Macedonian nobility as well as among Thessalians and other Greeks.⁸ Theopompos expresses how the old nobles must have felt when confronted with the upsurge of favourites at court: ‘from the entire Greek and barbarian world men of debauched, villainous and servile character flocked to Macedonia and obtained

⁷ Hammond 1989, 100-106. What exactly the competence of the army assembly was is a controversial question; in the Argead kingdom the assembly acclaimed new kings at their succession, and played a part in trials of treason against the king during Alexander’s rule (Arr., *Anab.* 3.26; 4.14.3; Plut., *Alex.*, 55.3; Curt. 6.8.25), and in the Hellenistic kingdoms as well (Polyb. 5.27.5, 29.6; Plut., *Eum.* 8.3; *Demetr.* 18; Diod. 18.37.2; 19.51.1; App., *Syr.* 54). The rights of assembly, however, were not ‘official’, since there existed no (codified) Macedonian constitution: R.M. Errington, ‘The Nature of the Macedonian State Under the Monarchy’, *Chiron* 8 (1978) 77-133. The traditional view of the assembly having formal rights in Macedonian ‘Staatsrecht’ goes back to F. Granier, *Die makedonische Heeresversammlung. Ein Beitrag zum antiken Staatsrecht* (Munich 1931), but is now usually rejected, cf. R.M. Errington, ‘The historiographical origins of Macedonian Staatsrecht’, in: *Ancient Macedonia* 3 (Thessaloniki 1983) 89-101. It goes without saying, however, that the absence of formal constitutional rights does not preclude informal, ritualized powers; the assembly earned influence by supporting the king, who would not be able to command and rule without the army’s consent, being well aware that in ‘in the great mass of men that was an army’, as E.L. Doctorow wrote, ‘strange currents of willfulness and self-expression flowed within the structure of military discipline’ that no sane general suppressed (*The March*, cited from the 2006 British edn., p. 12). Thus, when Alexander had Philotas tried before the assembly to muster support for his execution against the will of the nobility, the king did so fully aware that the verdict would be binding: J.L. O’Neil, ‘Political Trials under Alexander the Great and his Successors’, *Antichthon* 33 (1999) 28-47.

⁸ Theopomp. *FHG* I 320; Polyb. 8.9.6-10.11 = *FGrH* 115 F 225a. For a different interpretation see J.L. O’Neil, ‘The ethnic origins of the friends of the Antigonid kings of Macedon’, *CQ* 53 (2003) 510-22, esp. 510-11, explaining these Greeks at Philippos’ court as an ‘error’ of Polybios which can be explained as an anachronism, viz. the presence of Greeks at the Hellenistic courts.

the title of Companion of Philip'. Athenaios, who quotes Theopompos, adds that Philippos consulted such men in even the most weighty matters, and cites as most astonishing example the case of the 'flatterer' Agathokles, the son of a Thessalian serf, who was given the command of an army and sent to the kingdom's northern marches with full administrative mandate.⁹ Another passage in Athenaios suggests that already Philippos's predecessor Perdikkas III had attempted to break the power of the high nobility at court by promoting a favourite, namely a Greek called Euphraios. This *homo novus* became so powerful at court 'that Parmenion, as soon as Philippos had become king, seized Euphraios and killed him.'¹⁰ The same Parmenion, exponent of the Macedonian high nobility *par excellence*, later became the leader of the aristocratic opposition against Alexander's pursuit of absolutism.

The absolutism of Alexander the Great

During Philip's reign Parmenion the son of Philotas, who came from a leading family from Upper Macedonia, was the king's most trusted and most successful commander. He owed his position of honour perhaps to the help he gave Philippos in getting rid of Perdikkas III's man Euphraios, or to the status of his family. In the history of Alexander, Parmenion was still in the centre of power. Alexander however continued his father's policy of creating a new elite by bestowing favours upon outsiders and lesser nobles, and eliminated his opponents at court in co-operation with these favourites. Alexander's reign is characterised by a succession of

⁹ Ath. 167b. Cf. Plut., *Alex.* 9. 'Son of a Thessalian πενέστης' is a *topos*, meant to discredit someone who has crossed a social boundary. Ath. 260a says the same of king Lysimachos (his father's name was Agathokles); H.S. Lund *Lysimachus. A Study in Hellenistic Kingship* (London 1992) 2, accepts that Lysimachos' father was a Thessalian. Paus. 1.9.5, however, claims that Lysimachos was a Macedonian, as is also concluded by I.L. Merker, 'Lysimachus, Thessalian or Macedonian?', *Chiron* 9 (1979) 31-6 and A.B. Tataki, *Macedonians Abroad* (Athens 1998), both cited after O'Neill 2003, 510 n. 5. Polyb. 8.10.5-6, in response to Theopompos' view of Philippos's court, angrily wrote that 'in speaking of Philippos and his friends not only would one hesitate to accuse them of cowardice, effeminacy, and shamelessness to boot, but on the contrary if one set oneself the task of singing their praises one could scarcely find terms adequate to characterise the bravery, industry, and in general the virtue of these men who indisputably by their energy and daring raised Macedonia from the rank of a petty kingdom that of the greatest and most glorious monarchy in the world.'

¹⁰ Carystius *FHG* IV 357 ap. Ath. 508e. Aesch., *Letter* 12.8, informs us that two Athenian friends of Philippos were given land and 'very comely wives', cf. Hammond 1989, 64.

harsh conflicts with the high nobility of Macedonia.¹¹ During the campaign in Asia, many changes in the composition of the court, and thus in the command structure of the army, took place, enabling Alexander to make decisions without the consent or against the wishes of the nobility. Several anecdotes containing verbal exchanges between Alexander and Parmenion testify to this. The most famous, and most illustrative, is the conversation recorded by Plutarch and Arrian about Darius' peace offer after the Battle of Issos: "If I were Alexander," said Parmenion, "I would accept these terms." "So would I," said Alexander, "if I were Parmenion."¹²

Alexander's initial strategy was advancing to prominent positions some young men who had been royal pages together with him, the most important of whom held the position of *sōmatophulax*, Royal Bodyguard. *Sōmatophulax* is perhaps the oldest Macedonian court title, and the title persisted in the Hellenistic period. At the court of Argead Macedonia there were seven *sōmatophulakes*. They were drawn from the (lesser) nobility and of about the same age as the ruling monarch, and were responsible for the king's safety and personal well-being. They accompanied the king wherever he went and guarded the entrance to his bedchamber together with the royal pages.¹³ The *sōmatophulakes* were not allowed to hold other offices.¹⁴

¹¹ The conflicts at Alexander's court are exhaustively discussed in S. Müller, *Maßnahmen der Herrschaftssicherung gegenüber der makedonischen Opposition bei Alexander dem Grossen* (Frankfurt am Main 2003). See also E. Badian, 'Conspiracies', in: A.B. Bosworth and E. J. Baynham eds., *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford and New York 2000) 50-95, arguing that Alexander systematically exploited tensions at his court in order to suppress opposition. Neither Müller nor Badian, however, see as the cause of these tensions Alexander's pursuit of absolutism.

¹² Plut., *Alex.* 29.4; cf. Arr., *Anab.* 2.25.2. See also Arr., *Anab.* 3.10; Plut., *Alex.* 31.5-7. Pace E.D. Carney, 'Artifice and Alexander History', in: A.B. Bosworth and E. J. Baynham eds., *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford and New York 2000) 263-285, who argues that the image of Parmenion as the opponent of Alexander in the extant biographies of the king was taken over from Kallisthenes, and thus ultimately derived from Alexander's own propaganda aimed at justifying Parmenion's death. This may be so, but it does not mean that Parmenion was not in reality an opposition figure; after all, he and his sons were killed by Alexander. Cf. E.J. Baynham, *Alexander the Great. The Unique History of Quintus Curtius* (Ann Arbor 1988), arguing that Curtius' description of Alexander's absolutism is unhistorical but reflects Roman themes of *regnum*, *libertas* and *tyrannus*, in a way reminiscent of Tacitus.

¹³ Cf. Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.7; Curt. 3.12.6; 8.6.22; 9.6.4; I *Macc.* 1.6. Towards the end of Alexander's reign, the *sōmatophulakes* were Aristonos, Hephaistion, Leonnatos, Lysimachos, Peithon, Perdikkas, Peukestas, and Ptolemaios. Only two are known to have belonged to important Macedonian families:

Alexander, however, broke with this tradition and promoted his *sōmatophulakes* to important positions in the army. In 325 he even broke with the traditional number of seven bodyguards by creating an eighth post for Peukestas, officially because this officer of the guard had saved Alexander's life during the attack on the fortress of the Mallians. In reality, Peukestas in all probability belonged to Alexander's inner circle previously, as he had already held important commands and served as the king's shield bearer. Peukestas was later assigned to the important post of satrap of Persis.¹⁵ Peukestas and the other *sōmatophulakes*—besides Peukestas notably Ptolemaios, Peithon, Perdikkas, Leonnatos and Hephaistion, Alexander's foremost favourite—became the king's principal supporters in his struggle with the leaders of the nobility. The latter were gradually removed from key positions at court and in the army, to be replaced by Alexander's protégés, culminating in the elimination of Parmenion, his sons, and followers in the winter of 330.¹⁶ The executions were followed by a drastic reorganisation

Leonnatos, a member of the house of Lynkestis (Curt. 10.7.8; Berve II, 232 no. 466), and Perdikkas, who belonged to the house of Orestis (*ibidem* no. 627); the others to all probability came from the lower nobility (Berve I, 26). When Philippos exiled Alexander from court, the friends who accompanied him were, apart from Hephaistion, Harpalos, Ptolemaios, Erigyios and Laomedon, from outside the old Macedonian nobility; all of these friends were later raised by Alexander to important offices (Arr., *Anab.* 3.6.6; Plut., *Alex.* 10.3.5), cf. the remarks of Paul Cartledge in *Alexander the Great. The Hunt for a New Past* (2004) 206. Berve I, 25, identifies as *sōmatophulakes* the *custos corporis* mentioned in Curt. 4.13.19 and 6.11.8, but here probably the Royal Pages are meant, who served as bodyguards of the king under the supervision of the *sōmatophulakes* (for royal pages at the Hellenistic courts see below, chapter 3.6). After Alexander's death, new *sōmatophulakes* were appointed for Alexandros IV—two of whom are known by name, cf. S.M. Burstein, 'I.G. II² 561 and the court of Alexander IV', *ZPE* 24 (1977) 223-5—and Philippos III.

¹⁴ Berve I, 28.

¹⁵ Arr., *Anab.* 6.28.3-4; 6.13.2; Diod. 17.99.4; cf. Schachermeyr 1970, 16 n. 13; Berve II, 318 no. 634. Although Grainger 1990, 46, perhaps goes too far in claiming that Peukestas was not a nobleman, and 'one of the very few Macedonians ever to rise from the among the common people to a position of power', he probably came from a family of lesser nobles.

¹⁶ Arr., *Anab.* 3.27; Plut., *Alex.* 49; Curt. 7.2.11-35. The accusation was high treason; thus, Parmenion's son Philotas was sentenced to death for an alleged conspiracy against the king (Curt. 6.8.1, 11.9-10; cf. Plut., *Alex.* 49.8-10). E. Badian, 'The death of Parmenio', *TAPhA* 91 (1960) 324-38, rightly argued that the conspiracy of Philotas rather was a conspiracy *against* Philotas, cf. Stoneman 2004, 69. Already in 336, in connection with the murder of Philip, Alexander had ordered the execution of two brothers from the important noble house of Lynkestis, followed two years later by

of the command-structure of the army. Both Kleitos and Hephaestion were promoted to the rank of hipparch of the Companion cavalry, the post previously held by Philotas. The elite infantry regiment of the hypaspists came under the command of Neoptolemos, a relative of Alexander associated with the Molossian royal house.¹⁷ Also other important positions were now given to young confidants of the king. As Bosworth sums up in *Conquest and Empire*:

The senior positions, the commands of army divisions operating separately from Alexander, became monopolised by a small pool of marshals, dominated by the men who had engineered Philotas' downfall: Craterus, Hephaestion, Perdikkas and Coenus. These were the intimates of the king, his counsellors and marshals. Collectively they occupied the position Parmenion had enjoyed at the beginning of the reign, but no single person was dominant and there were antipathies between them, notably that between Hephaestion and Craterus. At the same time Alexander's coevals acquired court positions, displacing the older generation of Philip. ... The promotions were balanced by demotions, most of which we cannot trace. There was, however, a special disciplinary company, known as "the unit of insubordinates", into which Alexander drafted any Macedonian troops who were known to have expressed criticism of the removal of Parmenion.¹⁸

After Gaugamela (331), Alexander also raised Persians to high office, including Darius III's brother Oxartes and the even more powerful Mazaios, who became satrap of Babylonia. They were allowed to call themselves *suggeneis* of the king—a similar title also existed at the Achaimenid court—and had the right to greet the king with a kiss, to the chagrin of many Macedonian nobles.¹⁹ To take over the empire of the Achaimenids, Alexander needed the

the murder of a third brother, Alexandros, a son-in-law of Parmenion, on the accusation of secretly corresponding with Darius (Arr., *Anab.* 1.25.1; Curt 7.1.5-9). Also the accidental death of Kleitos the Black in 328 may have been a pre-arranged attempt to eliminate a nobleman who had risen to power during Philippos's reign. Parmenion's son Philotas held the important and prestigious position of commander of the companion cavalry; after his execution, his place was taken by Alexander's protégé Hephaestion (Diod. 18.3.4; App., *Syr.* 57). Alexander's introduction of the Persian ceremony of obeisance at his court enabled him to accuse Companions who refused of treason.

¹⁷ Plut., *Eum.* 1; cf. Arr., *Anab.* 2.27.6; Berve no. 548.

¹⁸ A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire. The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1988; 2nd edn. 1993) 104; For the Unit of Insubordinates see Diod. 17.80.4; Curt. 7.2.35-8; Just. 12.5.5-8.

¹⁹ Cf. e.g. Arr., *Anab.* 7.11.6; Plut., *Alex.* 43; Diod. 17.61.3, 77.4; Curt. 6.2.10. About a century earlier, a similar hostile reaction allegedly was provoked at the Achaimenid court when Artaxerxes II gave a

support of the Iranian nobility. In some cases Alexander simply will not have been able to remove and replace all Iranian barons, and therefore preferred to formally reinstate them, at least for the time being.²⁰

Alexander sometimes favoured Iranians as favourites at his court, above all the eunuch Bagoas, as well as Greeks, most prominent among them the Cretan Nearchos and Eumenes of Kardia, who had already received landed estates and the title of *hetairos* from Philippos II.²¹ In general, the Macedonian aristocracy opposed Alexander's reforms, but in the end their resistance proved futile. How successful Alexander had been in rearranging the top positions at court and in the army became apparent directly after his death, as most *sōmatophulakes*, and hardly any members of the traditional leading families of Macedonia, acquired a substantial share in the power Alexander bequeathed.²²

Greek called Entimos the right to have breakfast in the presence of the king; the Persian high nobility king (likewise called *suggeneis* in Greek sources) 'were offended because they found that the honour was depreciated' (Ath. 48f).

²⁰ Following Alexander's return from India, several of his administrators in the centre of the empire, especially Iranians, were accused of maladministration during the king's absence, and summarily executed. Orxines, the satrap of Persis, was put to death to make place for Peukestas; to appease the local nobility, the Persian Orxines was accused of not having prevented the desecration of the tomb of Cyrus the Great. In Baktria, Artabazos was dislodged from his satrapy soon after his assignment on the excuse that he had become too old, and was replaced by Kleitos, a Macedonian.

²¹ For the career of Eumenes see now E.M. Anson, *Eumenes of Cardia. A Greek among Macedonians*. Ancient Mediterranean and Medieval Texts and Contexts 3 (Leiden 2004), who, however, argues that ethnicity was not a crucial political factor at the Macedonian court, and that Eumenes was not an outsider because he was a Greek, but primarily because he lacked family ties with the Argeads and other noble families of Macedonia. 'Relative' as a honorific title at the Achaimenid court: Arr., *Anab.* 1.15.7; 3.11.5; 7.11.1 and 6; Ath. 48e; Curt. 3.3.14 (*cognati regis*); Diod. 20.1-3.

²² W. Heckel, 'King and "Companions". Observations on the nature of power in the reign of Alexander', in: J. Roisman ed., *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* (Leiden 2003) 197-226, esp. 210-25, argues that there were surprisingly little conspiracies against Alexander, which suggests that Alexander himself instigated the conflicts. Cf. E. Badian, 'Conspiracies' in: A.B. Bosworth and E. J. Baynham eds., *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford and New York 2000) 50-95; W. Heckel, 'Resistance to Alexander the Great', in: L.A. Tritle ed., *The Greek World in the Fourth Century. From the Fall of the Athenian Empire to the Successors of Alexander the Great* (London and New York 1997) 189-227. Alexander did not, however, succeed in removing from the centre of power the family

To sum up, Philippos and Alexander endeavoured to create a court in which not ancestry but the favour of the king determined who would rise to prominence. Apparently, Alexander was exceptionally successful at this, owing to the enormous scale of his conquests. His successors inherited both the scale and the flexibility of Alexander's court. They too tried to personally select their courtiers on the basis of loyalty and merit. How successful they were in achieving this ideal remains difficult to ascertain, but it seems that at least the first Hellenistic kings had many opportunities to do so. The transition to the Hellenistic version of the Macedonian court was marked by the replacement of 'Companion of the King' by 'Friend of the King' as the genuine Greek term for a courtier. The *philoï* of the Hellenistic world will be discussed later on. First we will have a look at the core of the Hellenistic court: the royal family.

3.2 The royal household

Hellenistic kingship was a personal and charismatic form of kingship. The term *basileia* does not imply an abstract notion of a 'state'. What we would now call the state, was called the king's *pragmata*, 'the affairs of the king', that is, the interests of the royal family. We must take this literally. It is impossible to distinguish between the king as a private person and as *basileus*, between court and household, between state and dynasty. Hellenistic monarchy was essentially a family affair.²³ The political activities of Hellenistic kings were not prompted by

of Antipatros, as the latter was not present at Alexander's court but had stayed behind as regent in Macedonia.

²³ I am grateful to Josine Blok for her advice when I was preparing this section. The ancient Greek family has been studied extensively in recent years, but modern views and approaches differ greatly, mainly because the sources—in which classical Athens is over-represented—provide no coherent picture of what the Greek family was like. In the past decades, the study of the Greek family has moved from the perspective of women's history to gender studies; see especially: S.B. Pomeroy, *Families in Classical and Hellenistic Greece. Representations and Realities* (Oxford 1997); C.B. Patterson, *The Family in Greek History* (Cambridge, Mass., and London 1998); particularly interesting is C.A. Cox, *Household Interests. Property, Marriage Strategies, and Family Dynamics in Ancient Athens* (Princeton, N.J. 1998). Of several Greek words denoting 'family', οἶκος is the most notable and familiar one; the purport of the word, however, remains evasive; it could denote 'household' as well as 'family', and was at any case not a legal term, not even in classical Attika:

impersonal *raison d'état*, but by family interests, the need to defend honour and obtain new glory, obligations toward kinsmen, affiliates, friends and allies, and competition with other dynasties.

The king

In the Hellenistic world, *basileia* was not a public office but a hereditary privilege. The royal title was an inheritable family possession, like estates and other material property, or like the family's ancestral prestige. Like any individual, a king's identity was determined first of all by his family membership. The *genos* ('kin') provided the individual with prestige, protection, economic security and social networks. The association of the ruling monarch with his family and ancestors is a recurrent theme in court poetry, honorary inscriptions and texts related to ruler cult.²⁴ Hellenistic kings did not affiliate themselves with native *poleis* or tribes as the origin of their identity, as most Greeks did,²⁵ nor with the countries they ruled.

Pomeroy 1997. 20; D.M. MacDowell, 'The *oikos* in Athenian law', *CQ* 39 (1989) 10-21. Other notions of family relations existed beside *οἶκος*, viz. *γένος* (usually 'family' in the sense of 'line', 'dynasty'), and *συγγενεία* and *αγχιστεία*, both of which denote blood relationships within *and* without the household, cf. W.E. Thompson, 'Some Attic kinship terms', *Glotta* 48 (1970) 75-81. For the various Greek notions of 'family' see Patterson 1998, 1-4 with further literature in nn. 1-3, and Pomeroy 1997, 19; specifically on *γένος* see S.D. Lambert, *The Phratries of Attica* (Ann Arbor 1993) 59-74; F. Bourriot, *Recherches sur la nature du genos* (Lille 1976); D. Roussel, *Tribut et cité* (Paris 1976). In what follows I endorse Patterson's proposition that 'instead of insisting on either *οἶκος* or *γένος* as the proper and only Greek equivalent of "family", I suggest a return to the broadly practical and flexible use of the English word and acknowledge that both *γένος* and *οἶκος* fall under the semantic umbrella of "family"' (Patterson 1998, 2).

²⁴ See e.g. Theocr. 17.114-15; OGIS 219 = Austin 139. Cf. the examples and references in 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, at 112. Note that sculptured group portraits of kings and their families formed a popular subgenre of 'royal art', cf. B. Hintzen-Bohlen, 'Die Familiengruppe – ein Mittel zur Selbstdarstellung hellenistischer Herrscher', *JDAI* 105 (1990) 129-54.

²⁵ Ethnic denominations are absent from royal coins, as well as from royal letters and decrees. The one proverbial exception, the Seleukid Antiochos VII, was named 'Sidetes' because he had stayed at Side when he was exiled from court, not because he was born there; by presenting himself as 'the man from Side', Antiochos emphasised the triumph of his return. The reference to the isle of Kos as the birthplace of Ptolemy Philadelphos in Kallimachos' *Hymn to Delos* and Theokritos' *Idyll* 17 is meant

Conquered territory could be considered a personal possession, or was seen as land favoured and protected by the king. But territory never was a defining aspect of monarchy. Hellenistic kingship was not confined by geographical or cultural boundaries.

The king as a Macedonian

An exception to this pattern is the self-presentation of kings and their families as ‘Macedonian’. The Argead kings had been ‘*basileus* of the Makedones’. Philippos II added to this the title of *hēgemōn* of the Greeks; Alexander added to it the title King of Asia, the Greek rendering of the Persian title King of Kings or Great King. The Seleukids inherited the title King of Asia from Alexander; the Antigonids appropriated the prestigious title βασιλεὺς Μακεδόνων, King of the Macedonians. The Antigonids used this title *vis-à-vis* ethnic Macedonians in Macedonia; in addition they carried the title of *basileus* in its own right – a title with a broader scope, connoting claims of hegemony over diverse peoples and territories.²⁶ Still, the Seleukids and Ptolemies were Macedonian kings, too. They had Macedonian personal names which led their ancestry directly back to pre-Hellenistic Macedonia. Macedonian culture prevailed, too, in the kings’ appearance; the king normally wore Macedonian clothing and armour. Indigenous Egyptian, Babylonian, or Iranian attire was only assumed during specific ceremonial occasions before indigenous audiences. The Macedonian aspect of Hellenistic kingship was important because even the Seleukid and Ptolemaic dynasties depended on a Macedonian court elite for their rule, and on Macedonian infantry as the core element of their armies. Also *vis-à-vis* non-Macedonian subject peoples kings often presented themselves as Macedonians. On the Borsippa Cylinder, a Seleukid

to provide the king with a birth myth and associate him with Apollo, who was born on Delos; it also accentuated Philadelphos’ claims to the Aegean (see also below, chapter 4.5). On the usage and significance of (*polis*) ethnics in the Greek world see M.H. Hansen, ‘City-ethnics as evidence for polis-identity’, in: M.H. Hansen and K. Raaflaub eds., *More Studies in the Ancient Greek Polis* (Stuttgart 1996) 169-96. Hammond 1989, 69, claims that kings not even used patronymics, as these do not appear on coins; patronymics, however were as a rule used in royal letters and decrees. Cf. Hammond 1989, 69, for the (absence of) titles of Argead kings before Alexander.

²⁶ The unlimited pretensions of *basileia* were noted by G.H. Macurdy, ‘Roxane and Alexander IV in Epirus’, *JHS* 52.2 (1932) 256-61, at 258: ‘The word βασιλεία with almost no exception in Diodorus and elsewhere means royal power, *not* the country ruled over’ (e.g. Diod. 18.2.2; 20.20.2-3; 20.28.1), cf. id., ‘Note on Κατάγειν ἐπὶ τὴν βασιλείαν’, *JHS* 52.2 (1932) 261. On the *basileus*-title in the Hellenistic Age see further Bickerman 1938, 5; Aymard 1967.

propaganda text from 268 BCE, written in cuneiform Akkadian for the sake of the Babylonians, Antiochos I Soter is presented as a traditional Babylonian king who justifies his rule by calling on the Babylonian gods. Still it is stressed that the king is a ‘Macedonian’.²⁷ The ethnic refers to Macedonians as a people, not to the country of Macedonia. This might seem strange: the descendants of Ptolemaios Soter and Seleukos Nikator never set foot on Macedonian soil, they ruled over territories where even Greeks were a minority, to say nothing of Macedonians, and cultural life at court was predominantly Greek, not Macedonian.²⁸ The significance of the dynasties’ adherence to their Macedonian identity—apart from the necessity to satisfy the small Macedonian element in the army—was accentuating descent and dynastic continuity.

Dynastic continuity

It has already been emphasised that descent was an all-important factor in the identity of individual Hellenistic kings. The *oikos* was meant to be permanent, but its members were not.²⁹ Descent determined a king’s personal charisma and legitimated his rule, for prestige (and disgrace) was hereditary.³⁰ Just as in Archaic and Classical Greece the fame of victorious athletes was inherited and kept alive by their descendants, Hellenistic kings were heirs to the (military) reputation of their forefathers, in particular the founders of the respective kingdoms: Ptolemaios Soter, Seleukos Nikator, Antigonos Monophthalmos and Demetrios Poliorketes. Centuries later kings still considered themselves to be the heirs of these men, laying claims to territories that had once belonged to the legendary founders as if it were their own *doriktētos chōra*, or ‘spear-won land’. For instance in 219 Antiochos the Great laid claim to Southern Syria because it had been part of the spoils awarded to Seleukos Nikator after the Battle of Ipsos, a century earlier, even though the Seleukids had never actually possessed that area.³¹ In 196 the same king legitimised his conquest of Thrace by

²⁷ ANET 317; Austin no. 189. For references to the Seleukids as Macedonians in literary sources see C. Edson, ‘Macedonicum Imperium. The Seleucid empire and the literary evidence’, *CPh* 53 (1958) 153-70; on the Borsippa Cylinder see Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1991.

²⁸ See chapter 4.

²⁹ Pomeroy 1997, 23.

³⁰ In classical Athens it was even believed that a son inherited the character of his father (Cox 1998, 84). On the importance of descent and kin in classical Greece see Pomeroy 1997, 67, and Patterson 1998, 1-2 with n. 3.

³¹ Polyb. 5.67.

referring to the victory of Seleukos Nikator over Lysimachos in the Battle of Koroupedion in 281.³² The territories Marcus Antonius gave to Kleopatra VII in 37 were roughly identical to the empire of Ptolemy Soter and Ptolemaios Philadelphos, nearly three centuries before.

Continuity from father to son was a central claim in royal propaganda. It is striking that Alexander the Great—supposedly the role-model for all Hellenistic kings—is absent from royal genealogies, although these even contained gods and demigods. Also absent from the official genealogies is the parentage predating the foundation of the kingdoms by the Diadochs. Ptolemaios Soter may have been known as the son of Lagos, or claimed that he was the son of Philippos II,³³ but under his successors, when the Ptolemaic kingship was firmly established, Lagos and Philippos no longer played any role in Ptolemaic propaganda. On the contrary, ‘Lagos’ does not turn up as a name in the Ptolemaic family tree, as if he was erased from history. Ptolemaic history began with the reign of Ptolemaios Soter.

The Hellenistic dynasties claimed divine ancestry. Like the Argeads before them, the Ptolemies and Attalids were the offspring of Herakles—a hero who was well suited to be an icon of kingship because of his stature as invincible warrior and saviour, and his posthumous deification as an Olympian god. This example was later followed by, among others, the kings of Pontos, Kommagene and even Numidia.³⁴ The Antigonids descended from Perseus, yet another semi-divine conqueror and saviour. The kings of the Molossians in Epeiros descended from Achilles and, since the reign of Pyrrhos, from Herakles too.

The Seleukids went even farther. They endorsed, and to all likelihood created, the myth that Seleukos Nikator was the actual son of Apollo (and thus a grandson of Zeus himself), modifying the earlier, but too drastic, attempt of Alexander to be recognised as the immediate son of Zeus-Ammon:

His mother Laodike, the wife of Antiochos, one of Philippos’ commanders, once dreamt that Apollo made love to her. And that afterwards he gave her a signet-ring with the image of an anchor engraved in the stone, and he asked her to give it to the child that would be born. The next morning when she awoke she found in her bed a ring exactly like the one she had dreamt of. And when Seleukos was born, on his thigh there was a birthmark in the shape of an anchor.

³² Polyb. 18.50; Liv. 33.38.

³³ N.L. Collins, ‘The various fathers of Ptolemy I’, *Mnemosyne* 50 (1997) 436-76.

³⁴ Herakles as ancestor: U. Huttner, *Die politische Rolle der Heraklesgestalt im griechischen Herrschertum*. Historia Einzelschriften 112 (Stuttgart 1997), esp. 65-85 (Argeads), 153-62 (Aiakids), 175-90 (Attalids).

On the day that he left to fight the Persians together with Alexander, his mother handed him the ring and told him who his real father was. ... Also all his descendants were born with an anchor on their thighs as proof of their divine descent and as natural tokens of their family.³⁵

The notion that with the coming of Seleukos Nikator a new epoch had begun, was emphasised by the introduction of a new year reckoning, the Seleukid Era. Like the Jewish, Christian or Islamic era year reckoning, which were later derived from it, the Seleukid Era counted the years from the (re)beginning of time: Nikator's first performance as king in Babylonia in 312 . This was utterly innovative, at variance with the existing Near Eastern practice of counting the years with every next king anew.

In the royal families there was a stronger tendency to repeat the same names through generations than among non-royal Greek and Macedonian elite families.³⁶ In Greek culture two considerations determined the giving of names to children. First, children could be named after their (paternal and then maternal) grandfathers or grandmothers, to emphasise descent; since the late fourth century also the practice of naming children after their fathers or mothers became customary. Second, a name could be chosen in anticipation of a child's future; a name which referred to an illustrious forebear created expectations of similar success.³⁷ In the Hellenistic dynasties these two considerations merged. Sometimes the names of mythic

³⁵ Just. 15.4.2-10. Cf. Grainger 1990, 2-3. The anchor figures as an heraldic emblem on Seleukid coins from Seleukos I to the fall of the empire, see e.g. A. Houghton, 'Some Alexander coinages of Seleucus I with anchors', *Mediterranean Archaeology* 4 (1991) 99-117; H.B. Mattingly, 'The second-century BC Seleucid counter-marks: Anchor and facing Helios head', *NAC* 27 (1998) 237-43.

³⁶ Pomeroy 1997, 71-5.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 154-5. The traditional custom of naming sons after their grandfathers was practised by the Antigonid dynasty, where the names Antigonos and Demetrios alternated, with Philippos being the most popular name for second or third sons. Among the Seleukids the names Seleukos and Antiochos were given to the first two sons but seemingly without any order; from the mid second century onward the names Demetrios and Philippos became popular too. Seleukid princesses were invariably called Laodike, Stratonike, Antiochis and Apama. The Attalid kings were alternatingly named Attalos and Eumenes. Minor hellenised dynasties in the East also had repeating (throne) names: Nikomedes and Prousius in Bithynia; Mithradates and Pharnakes in Pontos; Ariarathes in Kappadokia, Yannai (Jonathan) in the Hasmonean kingdom; Herodes in the Herodean dynasty. These were indigenous names but the method of name-giving seems to have been copied from the Macedonian dynasties – compare the varying throne names in the Achaimenid, Arsakid and Sassanian, or the names of Assyrian and Babylonian kings.

progenitors even turn up, for instance Alexander's son Herakles, and Perseus, the second son of Philippos V and, ironically, the last king of his line.

In the Ptolemaic kingdom the use of dynastic names was radical. Ever since Ptolemy Soter had by coincidence been succeeded by another 'Ptolemaios', the Ptolemaic kings gave this name to all their firstborn sons. In due course, Ptolemaios became a throne name, assumed at the accession also if a king was not named so at birth.³⁸ This custom of assuming a new name, perhaps rooted in pre-Hellenistic Macedonia, where royal women changed their names upon marriage. As a result, 'Ptolemaios' came to refer not only to the legendary forefather Ptolemy Soter, but to literally all preceding kings, and thus to the dynasty itself. During the third century the Ptolemies' firstborn daughters were still given names in the customary manner, *sc.* after their parental grandmothers—alternately Arsinoë and Berenike—and sometimes Ptolemaï̄s after their fathers and grandfathers. After *c.* 200 nearly all firstborn daughters were named Kleopatra, after the Seleukid wife of Ptolemy V. Kleopatra became a throne name too.³⁹ As a consequence, the Ptolemaic realm was for a period of 150 years continuously ruled by a royal couple called Ptolemy and Kleopatra, emphasising the dynasty's continuity. The image was enhanced by the Ptolemies' radical practice of brother-sister marriage, a perpetual self-fertilisation by means of which the dynasty distanced itself from the world of mortals.

The family's unity and continuity could also be emphasised in epithets: Philopator ('he who loves his father'), Eupator ('son of a noble father', but with divine connotations), Philometor ('he who loves his mother') and Philadelphos ('he who loves his brother'). Such dynastic epithets suggested that the succession from father to son or from brother to brother had been harmonious and legitimate, even when in reality this had not been the case. More than half of all the Ptolemaic kings had dynastic epithets, of which Philopator turns up most often.⁴⁰ Among the Seleukids ten out of twenty-six kings had dynastic epithets, mainly

³⁸ When two, or even three, full brothers successively became king, they were all called 'Ptolemy'. Given the high rate of child mortality even among elite families, it is inconceivable that all firstborn sons survived. Ptolemy XV was originally called Kaisarion. The epithet *Alexandros* used by Ptolemy X and Ptolemy XI is perhaps a reference to Alexander the Great, but may also have been these men's original personal names.

³⁹ There is one instance of three such queens who were full sisters: Kleopatra IV, Kleopatra Selene and Kleopatra Tryphaina, who were all daughters of Ptolemy VIII and Kleopatra III.

⁴⁰ Two Ptolemaic kings even had two such epithets: Ptolemy XII Philopator Philadelphos and Ptolemy XV Philopator Philometor. I have also included Kleopatra VII Thea Philopator in my counting.

Philopator and Philadelphos. Of the four ruling Attalid monarchs, three had dynastic epithets added to their names. The unity and continuity of the family was confirmed on coins, where the son was always made to resemble the father as much as possible. Specific physical features were emphasised on portraits through several generations, especially if such features could be conceived as signs of vigour and strength (in particular the typical Ptolemaic ‘strong chin’ and the bull’s neck of the early Seleukids). During the third century, kings were generally portrayed as forceful, strong-willed warriors. Later, the softer features of gods were assimilated in the portraits so that images were created which showed both human aspects as well as divine descent.⁴¹

Inheritance and succession

Hellenistic kings articulated their legitimacy in terms of inheritance. The *oikos* was, ideally speaking, permanent, hereditary and indivisible. The ideal *oikos* was furthermore hierarchical, with one male head who was vested with absolute authority over the other members of the household, and having only one heir to succeed him as *kyrios*. This son would become the new *basileus*. Thus, in theory, the kingdom was indivisible.

⁴¹ R. Fleischer, ‘Physiognomie, Ideologie, dynastische Politik. Porträts seleukidischer Könige’, in: *Akten des XIII. Internationalen Kongress für klassische Archäologie, Berlin 1988* (Mainz am Rhein 1990) 33-6, gives an overview of the evolution of family resemblance on Seleukid coins. Fleischer argues that in the second and first centuries BCE competition between various lines in the Seleukid house compelled both kings and pretenders to emphasise their descent, *c.q.* legitimacy, more strongly, but at the same time needed to distinguish themselves from their rivals; the (perhaps illegitimate) Alexandros Balas struck posthumous coins of Antiochos Epiphanes, whose son he claimed to be, on which the features of Antiochos were altered to look like those of Balas, instead of the other way round. Similarly, coin portraits of queens were made to resemble the sons in whose names they reigned; on double portraits the features of king and queen were often manipulated to resemble each other, even when they were not actually kin. This process of assimilation by which the queens’ features were manipulated to resemble those of their husbands was taken over in the Roman Principate, with the coins of Antonius and Octavia as the earliest known Roman examples, cf. S.E. Wood, *Imperial Women. A Study in Public Images, 40 B.C.-A.D. 68* (Leiden 1999).

When a king died, the inheritance was divided according to the prevalent Greek customs, but probably retaining the Macedonian practice to award a more prominent place to the deceased's female offspring.⁴² This means, first, that only agnates in the patriline could be heirs, and not affines (*i.e.* wives and their blood relatives); second, that the royal dynasties practised partial inheritance. Apparently, the inheritance was not bequeathed to all children in equal portions. Only one son would be heir to the title of *basileus* and receive the main part of the *oikos*' possessions. The other sons either stayed in the household together with their wives, children and possessions, so that the family's property remained intact, or would leave the household to found an *oikos* of their own. Partitioning of wealth and, above all, privately owned landed estates, is potentially dangerous for a monarchy.⁴³ Such partitioning, leading to fragmentation and the creation power of bases for pretenders, may well have contributed to the eventual fragmentation of power in the Seleukid and Ptolemaic kingdoms. Even full brothers of the king were therefore usually kept away from the court. In the histories of the Hellenistic kingdoms, brothers of the king seldom held significant positions at court or in the army. This for instance becomes clear from the group of powerful confidants surrounding

⁴² Classical and Hellenistic Greek society did not have a singular system of inheritance. Practices varied over time and space. The assumption that there was a more or less universal Greek *Staatsrecht* has been refuted by M.I. Finley, 'The problem of the unity of Greek law', in: *La storia del diritto nel quadro delle scienze storiche. Atti del primo congresso internazionale della Società Italiana di Storia del Diritto* (Florence 1966) 129-142. Instead, it has become increasingly clear that inheritance customs varied not only over time and place, but that even within a single polis (*viz.* Athens) various practices could exist alongside each other, cf. e.g. M. Broadbent, *Studies in Greek Genealogy* (Leiden 1968); R. Thomas, *Oral tradition and written record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989); J. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families, 600-300 BC* (Oxford 1971); D. Ogden, *Greek Bastardy in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods* (Oxford 1996); E. Lévy ed., *La codification des lois dans l'antiquité. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 27-29 novembre 1997* (Paris 2000). In some exceptional cases local inheritance laws were codified but, as orations from classical Athens demonstrate, such laws were rather ambiguous. It is therefore better to speak of inheritance *customs* than of *laws*. In the Hellenistic dynasties, queens could dispose of their dowry, which remained her and her family's possession until her sons inherited after her death.

⁴³ Royal *oikia* possessed landed estates called *chōra basilikē* in Greek sources. This was private property comparable to land owned by private persons, cities or temples, and should be distinguished from the monarchy's more ideological claim to political sovereignty over countries and peoples. Documents from Seleukid Babylonia show that *chōra basilikē* was not indivisible since portions of it could change hands through sale or donation; cf. Van der Spek 1986, 14-7 and 171-2.

Antiochos the Great, a king strong enough to determine the composition of his royal council personally. Polybios provides detailed information about the composition of his court at various moments during his reign; but beside his own sons, who successively turn up as designated successors, no relatives of Antiochos are recorded to have held positions of honour and responsibility.

Female offspring could threaten the unity of the household's property, especially if a large dowry was expected. Upon marriage a woman would bring her dowry into another family, and thus take away a portion of her own family's possession (goods or estates). This could, however, be countered by means of a marriage the other way round in the next generation, *i.e.* a daughter of the princess who had been married off was sent to her mother's native *oikos* as a bride, bringing back a dowry of equal value. This mechanism can be discerned in all royal family trees. For instance the Argeads exchanged princesses with *i.a.* the kings of Epeiros. Philippos II's wife Olympias was a daughter of the Epeirote king Neoptolemos I; Olympias' daughter Kleopatra was then married to Alexandros the Molossian, the son and successor of Neoptolemos I. The Seleukids married Antigonid and Ptolemaic princesses, and *vice versa*, but preferably exchanged women and dowries with the lesser dynasties of Asia, in particular the royal house of Pontos.

The effect was, that generation after generation bonds were forged between the Seleukid royal house and its vassal kingdoms. Sometimes kings married women from elite families of Greek *poleis*, as for example Antiochos III, Philippos V and Mithradates VI. Thus, polygamous marriages created not merely threats to the internal harmony of the monarchies, but also political opportunities. In particular the Seleukids used marriage as an imperialistic strategy. When the Seleukid line became extinct, the right to the Seleukid diadem passed to the nearest kin in the female line, at that time to be found in the Ptolemaic family. In 34 BCE, at the public ceremony known as the Donations of Alexandria, Kleopatra VII claimed the Seleukid royal title for herself and her children: Kleopatra was an immediate descendant of Antiochos the Great, whose daughter Kleopatra (I) had married Ptolemaios V Epiphanes in 193; more significantly, of the last twelve Seleukid kings, ten had Ptolemaic mothers.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ On the Donations of Alexandria see below, chapter 5.2. The mothers were Kleopatra Thea (daughter of Ptolemaios VI), Kleopatra Tryphaina and Kleopatra Selene (daughters of Ptolemaios VIII and Kleopatra III 'Kokke'); the only exception was Antiochos X Eusebes, son of an unknown wife of Antiochos IX, who himself was the son of the Ptolemaic Kleopatra Thea. T.V. Buttrey, *Studies in the Coinage of Marc Antony* (Princeton 1953) 54-86, has argued that the 'elder' goddess implicitly referred to by Kleopatra VII's epithet *Thea Neōtera*, 'The Younger Goddess', was Kleopatra Thea, the

Similarly, Antiochos IV in 170/169 had claimed tutelage of the minor Ptolemaic king Ptolemy VI, his sister's son.⁴⁵

The crown prince

The notion that the Hellenistic monarchies knew a crown prince has been disputed, notably by Daniel Ogden in *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death*.⁴⁶ I believe that this view is in need of adjustment. The Hellenistic dynasties did dispose of means to secure harmonious accession to the throne by appointing one of the king's sons as successor, and such attempts were only rarely unsuccessful. This did not, of course, preclude rivalry over the succession.

If the king had only one wife, the eldest son from this marriage would normally have had the right of primogeniture, albeit this was no iron-clad rule. However, most Hellenistic kings were polygamous and the existence of several wives complicated the succession.⁴⁷ Ogden has contended that 'amphimetric disputes'—*i.e.* conflicts between royal wives and between paternal half-brothers—were endemic at the royal courts. These rivalries structurally destabilised all three major Hellenistic dynasties and were the main cause of their collapse:

The Argead kings of Old Macedon were, for a number of reasons, polygamous. ... They failed to establish any consistent method of hierarchising their wives and the sons that were born of them; it might be said that they failed to establish any consistent principles of royal legitimacy. Their various wives were therefore in fierce competition with each other to ensure both their own status and the succession of their sons, phenomena which were intimately linked. ... The corollary was that rival wives hated each other [and that] the various groups of paternal half-siblings hated each other. ... The hellenistic dynasties that eventually succeeded

most imposing female figure in Seleukid history, who was the only other queen to use that title (indeed, the full legend *Basilissa Kleopatra Thea Neōtera* can even be read as 'The New Queen Kleopatra Thea'); for a different interpretation see A.D. Nock, 'Neotera: Queen or Goddess?', *Aegyptus* 33 (1953) 283-96, cf. T. Schrapel, *Das Reich der Kleopatra. Quellenkritische Untersuchungen zu den 'Landschenkungen' Mark Antons* (Trier 1996) 225-34.

⁴⁵ Mørkholm 1966, 68.

⁴⁶ D. Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death. The Hellenistic Dynasties* (London 1999). Cf. Cox 1998, on the instability of the classical Greek family.

⁴⁷ The practice seems to have been typically Macedonian. Some evidence for bigamous marriages other than in the Macedonian dynasties of the Hellenistic age can be found in Pomeroy 1997, 201 n. 36.

to the various parts of Alexander's empire inherited with them the same debilitating culture of unhierarchised polygamy and its concomitant, unhierarchised legitimacy.⁴⁸

It is true that succession conflicts often occurred, and that these were a major factor in the downfall of the Seleukid and Ptolemaic empires. But the fact that there were no consistent, let alone formalised, rules for the succession does not mean that kings did not dispose of methods to secure the accession of a chosen heir. The Ptolemaic practice of brother-sister marriage was one, extraordinary, strategy to preclude amphimetric disputes: as a blood relative of the king, the sister-wife had an indisputable higher status than other wives and the first born son from this marriage would naturally have the best title to the throne.⁴⁹ There were several other means to the same end. The main strategy employed was the elevation of one son above his (half)brothers by giving him far-reaching responsibilities, honours and authority. This practice existed also in Classical Greece, where a chosen heir could be given the responsibilities of a *kyrios* before the father had died.⁵⁰ A public sign of such an elevation to the status of 'crown prince' was assignment to the command of the cavalry on the left flank in battle. This place of honour was traditionally reserved for the man who was second only to the king, who himself commanded the right flank.⁵¹ We may also think of important

⁴⁸ Ogden 1999, ix-xi. Cf. the tabulation on p. xiii, where all certain and uncertain examples of 'amphimetric dispute' are collected. Cf. W. Greenwalt, 'Polygamy and Succession in Argead Macedonia', *Arethusa* 22 (1989) 19-45.

⁴⁹ The inspiration and motivation of royal brother-sister marriage is debated; the conventional explanation is to assume that it was originally a pharaonic tradition, cf. e.g. Turner 1984, 136-8. Others see it as a Ptolemaic innovation, as the pharaohs had not actually married their sisters since the end of the New Kingdom, some 700 years earlier. Ogden 1999 explained it as an attempt to annul the danger of amphimetric dispute, Hazzard 2000 as an attempt on the part of Philadelphos to reunify around himself the family descended from the Theoi Soteres.

⁵⁰ B. Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Ancient Athens* (Princeton, N.J., 1993) 67-70; cf. Cox 1998, 84.

⁵¹ Thus, in the great battles of Alexander the Great, this position was reserved for Parmenion, whether Alexander liked that or not. 'Crown princes' commanding the left flank: Alexander at the Battle of Chaironeia; Antiochos (I), the son of Seleukos Nikator, at Ipsos (Plut., *Demetr.* 29.3); Antiochos, the son of Antiochos the Great at Panion; Seleukos (IV), another son of Antiochos the Great, at Magnesia (Liv. 37.41.1). All these men later indeed succeeded to their fathers' thrones, with the exception of Antiochos the son of Antiochos, who died before his father. Such mechanisms will have been normal in most monarchies. In the later Roman Empire the designate heir was presented to the public by his riding together with the emperor in one chariot during an imperial *adventus*, cf. H. Castritius, 'Zum

independent commands in campaigns, aulic or cultic responsibilities, or the government of an important province. More far-reaching is association on the throne by granting the heir apparent the title of *basileus* while his father was still alive, with corresponding responsibilities and authority.⁵² There is no indication that in cases like these the kingship of the son was inferior to that of the king. Rather, father and son shared the same, indivisible *basileia*, stressing the eternal continuity of royalty to boot.

As in the Classical Greek family, the public unity of father and son was the primary dyad in the royal family. The moral subordination of a son to his father guaranteed that the latter was in practice senior to the former.⁵³ The best known examples of joint kingship are the earliest instances, namely the joint kingship of Antigonos Monophthalmos and Demetrios Poliorketes, of Seleukos Nikator and Antiochos Soter, and of Ptolemy Soter and Ptolemy Philadelphos. Ptolemy Philadelphos even counted his regnal years from his elevation to the position of *basileus* next to his father, two years before he became sole ruler.⁵⁴ The elevation

höfischen Protokoll in der Tetrarchie. Introitus (adventus) Augusti et Caesaris', *Chiron* 1 (1971) 365-76.

⁵² In cuneiform inscriptions from Babylonia, Seleukid co-rulers are called *dumu lugal* or *mar šarri*, terms designating a 'crown prince', 'heir apparent'. For co-regency as a mechanism for designating an heir see also R.A. Billows, 'The succession of the Epigonoï', *SyllClass* 6 (1995) 1-11. Perhaps we can see the same principle among brothers at the Attalid court: when Eumenes II died he was not immediately succeeded by his own son Attalos (III), not yet of age at his father's death, but by his brother Attalos (II); C. Habicht, 'Kronprinzen in der Monarchie der Attaliden', in: V.A. Troncoso ed., ΔΙΑΔΟΧΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ. *La figura del sucesor en la realeza helenística*. Gerión Anejos 9 (Madrid 2005) 119-26, argues that this was the result of a mutual agreement between the two brothers and that Attalos II was for a time co-ruler of Eumenes, with the title of *basileus* (cp. the rule of Antigonos III Doson in during Philippos V's minority).

⁵³ According to Greek morality the relation between a father and his sons was naturally harmonious and any public deviation from this was considered a disgrace. On the 'public unity' of father and son in classical Athens see Strauss 1993. Cf. Cox 1998, 78-84: 'common sentiment acknowledged that close affective ties should [naturally] exist between father and son (Is. 7.14; Lys. 19.55) and any known case of enmity was used against an individual's character (Lys. 14.26-7)'; any friction was concealed because the father 'was constantly preoccupied with maintaining the honor of his family members [and] the need to present a unified front between father and son was a key element to preserving one's honor'.

⁵⁴ Hölbl 2001, 35 with n. 2. On the co-regency of Philadelphos: M. D. Gyax, 'Zum Mitregenten des Ptolemaios II. Philadelphos', *Historia* 51 (2002) 49-56.

of a son as co-ruler remained a common practice, as a total of thirteen recorded cases reveals (Table 1).

	co-ruler	sole ruler		co-ruler	sole ruler
<i>Ptolemies</i>			<i>Seleukids</i>		
Ptolemy II	284-282	282-246	Antiochos I	292-281	281-261
Ptolemy V	210-204	204-180	Seleukos	280-267	—
Ptolemy VII	145	145	Antiochos II	266-261	261-246
Ptolemy VIII	170-164	164-143	Antiochos	210-193	—
			Seleukos IV	189-187	187-175
			Antiochos V	165-164	164-162
<i>Antigonids</i>			<i>Attalids</i>		
Demetrios I	306-301	301-287	Attalos II (brother)	160-159	159-138
Antigonos II	?-287	287-239			

Table 1: association on the throne, after J.E. Morby, *Dynasties of the World* (Oxford 1994).

The elevation of a favourite son above his (half)brothers offered several advantages. First, the son was moved into a position of power from which it would be difficult to remove him after his father's death. Second, the king's preference for this particular son became public knowledge, so that the loyalty of the subjects, in particular the armed forces, was directed towards his person already before he had actually become sole king. Moreover, associating a son on the throne strengthened the position of the senior king himself: the co-regent would naturally be a loyal adherent because he depended on his father's favour for the preservation of his privileged position. In other words: Hellenistic kings had various strategies at their disposal to hierarchise their wives and children. The failure to consistently employ such strategies with success therefore must have had other reasons.

The queen

In the kingdoms of the Argeads, Seleukids, Ptolemies and early Antigonids, queens played such significant roles that female power can be considered a defining aspect of Hellenistic monarchy. Of course, women feature prominently at the top of the Hellenistic kingdoms because these states were family-based: because the (first) wife of the king, who is the mother of his heir, takes central place within the *oikos*, she may also be expected to figure in the

centre of politics. However, the same may be said of many other dynasties in world histories. It does not explain the relative prominence of Hellenistic royal women as compared to other dynasties in world history.⁵⁵ In the Ptolemaic kingdom, the queen eventually became the equal of her brother-husband, until finally Kleopatra VII ruled the kingdom alone, not as regent, but as queen in her own right.⁵⁶ But also among the Argeads after Alexander's death,

⁵⁵ The fundamental study of female power at the Hellenistic courts remains G.H. Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens. A Study of Woman-Power in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria, and Ptolemaic Egypt* (Baltimore 1932); biographies of individual queens can also be found in J. Whitehorne, *Cleopatras* (London and New York 1994). On Argead queens and princesses see esp. E.D. Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman, Okl., 2000). In the past decades there has been a renewed interest in Hellenistic royal women; the bibliography of recent titles (excluding Kleopatra VII) includes A. Bielman Sanchez, 'Régner au féminin. Réflexions sur les reines attalides et séleucides', in: F. Prost ed., *L'Orient méditerranéen de la mort d'Alexandre aux campagnes de Pompée. Cités et royaumes à l'époque hellénistique* (Rennes and Toulouse 2003) 41-61; E.D. Carney, 'The career of Adea-Eurydike', *Historia* 36.4 (1987) 496-502; id., 'Olympias,' *AncSoc* 18 (1987) 496-502; id., 'The Sisters of Alexander the Great: Royal Relicts,' *Historia* 37 (1988) 385-404; id., "'What's in a name?' The emergence of a title for royal women in the Hellenistic Period', in: S.B. Pomeroy ed., *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill and London 1991) 154-72; 'Arsinoe before she was Philadelphus', *AHB* 8.4 (1994) 123-31; id., 'Olympias, Adea Eurydice, and the end of the Argead dynasty', in: I. Worthington ed., *Ventures into Greek History* (Oxford 1994) 357-380; id., 'Women and Basileia: Legitimacy and Female Political Action in Macedonia,' *CJ* 90 (1994) 367-91; id., 'Foreign Influence and the Changing Role of Royal Macedonian Women', *MDAI(I)* 5.1 (1993) 313-23; 'Women in Alexander's court', in: J. Roisman ed., *Brills' Companion to Alexander the Great* (Leiden 2003) 227-52; M. Meyer, 'Mutter, Ehefrau und Herrscherin. Darstellungen der Königin auf Seleukidischen Munzen', *Hephaistos* 11/12 (1992/93) 107-132; D. Miron, 'Transmitters and representatives of power. Royal women in Ancient Macedonia', *AncSoc* 30 (2000) 35-52; K.L. Nourse, *Women and the Early Development of Royal Power in the Hellenistic East* (diss. University of Pennsylvania 2002); J.L. O'Neil, 'Iranian wives and their roles in Macedonian royal courts', *Prudentia* 34.2 (2002) 159-77; M. Pfrommer, *Königinnen vom Nil* (Mainz am Rhein 2002); R. Strootman, 'De vrouwelijke koning. Machtige vrouwen in de hellenistische vorstendommen, 323-31 v.Chr.', *Groniek* 158/159 (2002) 45-62.

⁵⁶ On the formal aspects of the gradual transformation of Ptolemaic queens into co-rulers see Hazzard 2000. For the function of role-model Hellenistic queens may have had for upper class women see A. Bielman Sanchez, 'Régner au féminin. Réflexions sur les reines attalides et séleucides', in: F. Prost ed., *L'Orient méditerranéen de la mort d'Alexandre aux campagnes de Pompée. Cités et royaumes à l'époque hellénistique* (Rennes and Toulouse 2003) 41-61.

and in the Seleukid dynasty, the prominence of women is conspicuous. The first women wielding exceptional power among the Macedonians—Olympias, Adea-Eurydike, Arsinoë Philadelphos—appear already in the fourth century. Explanations therefore tend to focus on probable historical, *viz.* Argead, Achaimenid or pharaonic, antecedents rather than developments in the Hellenistic period. The most sensible explanation still is Macurdy's hypothesis that the apparent equality between men and women in the Macedonian royal families of the Hellenistic Age was rooted in the culture of the pre-Hellenistic Balkans *c.q.* Macedonia.⁵⁷ To this may be added the relative importance of women in the dynastic transmission of royal power, as argued above, and some Achaimenid influence added to the Argead tradition.⁵⁸ A

⁵⁷ Macurdy 1932; cf. *id.*, 'Queen Eurydice and the evidence for woman-power in early Macedonia', *AJPh* 48 (1927) 201-7.

⁵⁸ For 'the concept of power as a woman's dowry' in Argead Macedonia see also Miron 2000. Nourse 2002 argues that female power among the Seleukids was not only rooted in the Macedonian heritage but also influenced by the dynastic arrangements of the Achaimenids and Anatolian monarchies, which were adapted to suit the Seleukid's own circumstances and needs, the queen's place public image as much as her involvement in politically significant activities. The problem is, that our richest source for female power in pre-Hellenistic Anatolia and the Near East, Herodotos' *Histories*, is suspect, see J.H. Blok, 'Women in Herodotus' *Histories*', in: E.J. Bakker, I.J.F. de Jong, H. van Wees eds., *Brill's Companion to Herodotus* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne 2002) 225-42, evaluating various modern interpretations of the function of women, and showing that in the *Histories* women are essential indicators of normality, especially when transgressing the borders between the feminine and the masculine: 'women whose agency is destructive, or who are cast in negative light, indicate that something is rotten in the society to which they belong' (228). This does not imply, of course, that women at the Achaimenid court were *unimportant*; on the contrary, there is evidence that Persian royal women, too, participated in royal gift exchange, receiving landed property and economic privileges from the king, see H.W.A.M. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'Περσικόν δε κάρτα ο στρατός δῶρον: A typically Persian gift (Hdt. IX 109)', *Historia* 37.3 (1988) 372-4; cf. J.M. Bigwood, 'Ctesias, his royal patrons and Indian swords', *JHS* 115 (1995) 135-40, esp. 138: 'When Ktesias implies that queen Parysatis was a property owner on a significant scale (FGrH 688 F 16.65), he is certainly correct. His testimony, and also of course that of Xen., *Anab.* 1.4.9, cf. 2.4.27, is corroborated by cuneiform evidence of her property in Babylon': M.W. Stolper, *Entrepreneurs and Empire* (Istanbul 1985) 63-4; P. Briant, 'Dons de terres et de villes: l'Asie Mineure dans le contexte achéménide', *REA* 87 (1985) 53-72, at 59-90; and G. Cardascia, 'La ceinture de Parysatis', in: D. Charpin and F. Joannès eds., *Marchands, diplomates et empereurs* (Paris 1991) 363-9. Persian royal women also played a fundamental role in the dynastic transmission of kingship. Respecting the role of royal women in

last argument, explicated later on (section 3.5), is that as a result of polygamy women were ideal ‘favourites’ to delegate power to.

Rivalry between queens and their factions could destabilise the court. We can not say, however, whether conflicts between factions centred round the respective queens were due the king’s ‘failure to establish any consistent method of hierarchising his wives and the sons that were born of them’,⁵⁹ or the result of a deliberate policy of the king to keep the court divided. There were various means for kings to favour one queen over the other. Normally, only one of the queens was awarded the title of *basilissa*. The use of this title, comparable with the title of *basileus* for a crown prince, was a crucial mechanism for the establishment of hierarchy among the king’s wives. Like the crown prince, the *basilissa* was invested with ‘kingship’.

A typical feature of royal courts throughout the ages, was that the court as it were, ‘doubled’, because the queen had her own private quarters. There is no evidence that Hellenistic palaces were divided into a male and a female part.⁶⁰ Still, we sometimes hear that

Herodotos, A. Tourraix, ‘La femme et le pouvoir chez Hérodote. Essai d’histoire des mentalités antiques’, *DHA* 2 (1976) 369-86, argued that in monarchical societies power exercised by men is only legitimate and lasting if it includes ‘the feminine’ and is transferred through it, so that women fulfill the fundamental function of assuring the transmission and the permanence of Power; although Tourraix was later criticised for trying to re-introduce Bachofen’s notion of matriarchy, ‘the notion remains of matrilinear succession as a prerequisite to patrilinear succession’ (Blok 2003, 234). Still, when all is said and done, the fact remains that compared to Hellenistic queens and princesses, Achaemenid queens are nearly invisible in the official propaganda. On Achaemenid queens see M. Brosius, *Women in Ancient Persia (559-331 BC)* (Oxford 1996).

⁵⁹ Ogden 1999, ix.

⁶⁰ To be sure, neither is there conclusive proof that private houses of Greek elite families had separate women’s quarters, although that was the official ideology, and is the modern consensus, cf. e.g. Pomeroy 1997, 29: ‘the fundamental division of private space was between male and female’; cf. id., *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (New York 1975) 71-3, and R. Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (London 1989) 13-25. For a different view see M. Jameson, ‘Private space and the Greek city’, in: O. Murray and S. Price eds., *The Greek City. From Homer to Alexander* (Oxford 1990) 172-92, who argues that ‘Greek domestic architecture does not reveal a distinction between genders’; against the image of a rigid separation of men and women in Classical Athens also D. Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society* (Cambridge 1991) 133; cf. L.C. Nevett, *House and Society in the Ancient Greek World* (Cambridge 1999) 155, concluding that there is no archaeological evidence for a strict separation of male and female spheres in Greek houses.

a queen had her own servants and dignitaries. The later Seleukid court knew an office of ‘chamberlain of the queen’, or Lord of the Queen’s Bedchamber, as Bevan translates.⁶¹ One particular chamberlain, a man called Krateros, had been appointed by the king husband from among his own confidants. Other members of the queen’s court may have been relatives of hers or men from the entourage of her father.⁶² Queen Berenike, the wife of the Seleukid king Antiochos II had a personal bodyguard of Galatian swordsmen, put at her disposal by her father, the Ptolemaic king.⁶³ This would, in a sense, answer to the Greek custom according to which a married woman would herself dispose of her dowry; the dowry normally remained the possession of her *oikos* of origin until the woman’s sons came of age, or inherited it after her death.⁶⁴ The queen’s sons and daughters would grow up under the queen’s custody, until the boys reached the age of *paidēs* and became royal pages, serving the king. It seems plausible that princesses of the same age as male pages, *i.e.* between their thirteenth and eighteenth years, would together with the daughters of *philoī* serve the queen as ladies in waiting; there is some evidence that this was indeed the case at the Ptolemaic court in the late third century.⁶⁵

⁶¹ RIG 1158: κοιτῶνος τῆς βασιλίσσης (*c.* 100 BCE). Bevan 1902, II 283. The same man also bore the title of Chief Physician of the Queen: ἀρχίατρος τῆς βασιλίσσης.

⁶² The *tropheus* who was responsible for the pages at the court of Philippos II was a kinsman of queen Olympias: Plut., *Alex.* 5.

⁶³ Just. 27.1.4-7; App., *Syr.* 65; Val. Max. 9.10 *ext.* 1; Polyæn. 8.50 (246 BCE).

⁶⁴ The formal cause of the Sixth Syrian War was a dispute over Koile Syria, which according to the Ptolemaic government had been the dowry of Kleopatra I, daughter of Antiochos III and wife of Ptolemy V. Although Kleopatra had married Ptolemy in 193, it was only after Kleopatra’s death more than twenty years that this dowry was finally claimed by the Ptolemies; however, the reigning Seleukid king, Antiochos IV, rightly held the view that Kleopatra’s son was still a minor, and instead claimed both Koile Syria and the custody for his nephew (Polyb. 28.20.9). How strong such claims were, is exemplified by the fact that later sources (Jos. *AJ* 12.154; App., *Syr.*, 5) state that Koile Syria was actually ceded to the Ptolemies on this ground in 170/169; cf. Holleaux 1968, 339; Mørkholm 1966, 67.

⁶⁵ Polyb. 15.33.11, mentioning female *suntrophoi*, ‘foster-sisters’, of the Ptolemaic queen. On *basilikoi paidēs* and *suntrophoi* see further below.

3.3 The Friends of the King

Who were the *philoī tou basileōs*, the courtiers who were attached to the royal family and household by means of ritualised friendship? Where did they come from? How did they relate to each other and to the king? In what manner were power, status and wealth distributed among them? Below, we will first look at the general characteristics of the society of friends as a social group. We will then look at their origins and ethnicity, and finally at their association with the royal family by means of *xenia* and *philia*. Thereafter, the hierarchy of the court and conflicts among courtiers will be discussed.

Friends or officials?

All political power ideally rested with the king. But even godlike kings could not rule kingdoms on their own. In order to retain, increase and exploit monarchic power, a king must share power with others. ‘Monarchs make many hands and ears and feet their own,’ Aristotle wrote, ‘for they appoint persons who are friends of their rule and of themselves as their fellow-rulers.’⁶⁶ The ‘fellow-rulers’ of the Hellenistic kings were the so-called *philoī tou basileōs*, the ‘friends of the king’, a status group forming the supreme elite of the kingdoms.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Arist., *Pol.* 1287b.

⁶⁷ φίλος and φίλος τοῦ βασιλέως are commonly found in both contemporary epigraphic texts as well as in secondary sources (Polybios, Diodoros, Appianos, Flavius Josephus, Plutarch and Athenaios); the equivalent of *philos* in Latin writings is *purpuratus*, cf. e.g. Liv. 30.42.6; Cic., *Cat.* 4.12; Curt. 3.2.10; Vitr. 2 *pr.* 1; Quint. 8.5.24. Other denominations for ‘courtiers’ in the literary sources are θεραπεία, ‘retinue’ (Polyb. 4.87.5; 5.56.7; 5.69.6; cf. Bickerman 1938, 36), οἱ περὶ τὴν αὐλήν, ‘people of the court’ (e.g. Polyb. 4.87.7; 5.26.13, 34.4, 36.1, 40.2, 41.3, 50.14, 56.5; 16.21.8; 18.55.3; App., *Syr.* 45; Jos., *AJ.* 12.125; 13.54; 17.125; 18.54). Bickerman 1938, 36, sees this as a broader, indicating *philoī* plus household personnel: ‘Atour de roi se placent les “gens de la cour”, *hoi perì tēn aulēn*, comme le langage hellénistique les appelait. Nous pouvons distinguer parmi ces “courtisans” deux groupes: “la maison du roi” et les “amis.”’ Αὐλικοὶ is a literal synonym of ‘courtiers’, but is rarely found (Polyb. 16.22.8; Plut., *Mor.* 778b; *Demetr.* 17). An interesting variant is οἱ περὶ τὴν Ἄτταλον, ‘the people of Attalos’ (Diod. 29.22). There is no indication that these different denominations had distinct meanings – *pace* Bickerman 1938, 36, who assumes that *therapeia* is the Seleukid king’s personal household of servants *et cetera*, as opposed to the king’s *philoī*, and that περὶ τὴν αὐλήν is the umbrella term for friends *and* household. None of these terms seem to have been ‘formal’ terminology, as these terms feature especially in secondary literary sources.

In co-operation with his *philoi*, a king controlled territory, peoples and cities. The *philoi* were the advisors of the king in all his undertakings, the accountants of the king's finances, the functionaries and tax collectors who administered the provinces, the generals and admirals who commanded the army and the fleet, the king's representatives in cities and his ambassadors at foreign courts.⁶⁸ They were not the employees of the king; they did not receive a regular salary. Usually born in elite families, most *philoi* did not depend on the king for an income, albeit they were rewarded for their services to the king with land, took their share of the plunder in war, and through their networks could participate in international trade. They were linked to the person of the monarch in a subtle, hierarchical system of

Furthermore, *philoi* was the umbrella term rather than *περὶ τὴν αὐλήν*, if we give credence to Polyb. 5.40, who says that Theodotos, governor of Koile-Syria for Ptolemaios IV, 'loathed the king ... and was wary of the *περὶ τὴν αὐλήν*', with whom those *philoi* are meant who were present at the court, *i.e.* in the king's presence (as opposed to those *philoi* who were at that moment absent from the court, like Theodotos himself). Polybios also once distinguishes between the *philoi* at court (*οἱ περὶ τὴν αὐλήν*), those administrating the province of Egypt (*οἱ τὰ κατὰ τὴν Αἴγυπτον χειρίζοντες*), and those responsible for administrating the rest of the Ptolemaic Empire (*οἱ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔξω πραγμάτων διατάγμενοι*). Modern literature about the *philoi* society is not very substantial; for general discussions see G. Herman, 'The "friends" of the early hellenistic rulers: servants or officials?', *Talanta* 12-3 (1980/81) 103-9; S. le Bohec, 'Les philoi des rois antigonides', *REG* 98 (1985) 93-124; G. Weber, 'Interaktion, Repräsentation und Herrschaft. Der Königshof im Hellenismus', in: A. Winterling ed., *Zwischen Haus und Staat* (Munich 1997); I. Savalli-Lestrade, *Les philoi royaux dans l'Asie hellénistique* (Geneva 1998); 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; R. Strootman, 'De vrienden van de vorst. Het koninklijk hof in de Hellenistische periode', *Lampas* 38.3 (2005b) 184-97. See also the literature referred to in section 1.2.

⁶⁸ The close ties between the king and his *philoi* finds expression in the civic decrees where we often see the standard phrase 'the king (and his family), the *philoi*, and the armed forces (*δυνάμεις*), cf. O. Kern, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Meander* (Berlin 1900) 86.15; Habicht 1958, 4; P. Hermann, 'Antiochos der Grosse und Teos', *Anadolu* 9 (1965) 29-159. *Philoi* as ambassadors: E. Olshausen, *Prospographie der hellenistischen Königsgesandten 1: Von Triparadeisos bis Pydna* (Leuven 1974); L. Mooren, 'Die diplomatische Funktion der hellenistischen Königsfreunde', in: E. Olshausen and H. Biller eds., *Antike Diplomatie. Wege der Forschung* 162 (Darmstadt 1979) 256-90.

ritualised personal ties. They were attached to the king's *oikos* as guest-friends.⁶⁹ In other words, they were servants nor officials, and it is not without reason that these men were known as the *friends* of the king.

It is unknown how many *philoï* were at the various courts at different moments, not even approximately. The only figure ever given is in Polybios' account of the Parade at Daphne in 166 BCE, where one thousand *philoï* paraded as a military unit in a procession staged by Antiochos IV Epiphanes.⁷⁰ It is highly uncertain, however, if this number reflects the number of *philoï* at Antiochos' court at that time and place. Neither is it possible to say where these people lived. During campaigns, *philoï* probably had pavilions for themselves and their retinues of servants, confidants and guards; in capital cities, they may have been lodged in the palace or stayed in private houses owned by themselves or by their own *xenoi*. In Pella several villa's dating to the Hellenistic Period were found; these may have belonged to *philoï*. It is likely that also in or near capital cities such as Alexandria, Seleukeia, or Antioch, important courtiers had their own little palaces.⁷¹

The *philoï* society was hierarchised by various means. One was the distribution of honorific court titles, court offices, and military commissions. Moreover, there existed various informal factors to allot favours and powers, which are now difficult to ascertain. The upper crunch of the *philoï tou basileōs* had a seat in the royal council, or *sunedrion*, granting them access to the person of the king on a regular basis, and hence influence on political matters. The members of the council were military generals before anything else. Writing about the court of Philippos V, Polybios calls the same *philoï* alternately 'courtiers',

⁶⁹ Cf. Nevett 1999, 174-5, on the Greek *oikos*: 'Recent work has shown that as well as a core nuclear family, individual households are likely to have housed a number of other individuals, including long-term guests, and that friends and neighbours are also likely to have been an important part of domestic life'.

⁷⁰ Polyb. 30.25.8. As Polybios says that these men were organised as a *syntagma*, there is a possibility that the 1,000 *philoï* were not pre-eminent courtiers but elite cavalymen comparable to the Companion Cavalry in Alexander's army. Cf. Weber 1997, 39 n. 50. On the parade at Daphne see chapter 5.4.

⁷¹ Cf. Polyb. 5.56.15: the wife and children of the Seleukid courtier Hermeias lived in Apameia while their husband and father was on campaign with the king. Of course we may also assume the existence of houses of *philoï* in their cities of origin as well as villa's on their landed estates.

‘commanders’, and the king’s ‘co-generals’.⁷² Below them were other levels of courtiers, also called *philoï*, not all of whom were soldiers. This means that ‘friend’ in the course of time also became to denote a formal rank, an ‘official’. This is noticeable particularly in the Ptolemaic kingdom in the second century BCE, where a wide variety of court titles is attested. The Hellenistic system of court titulature, however, was not principally a Ptolemaic invention. It grew from Argead and Achaimenid antecedents, and presumably first developed at the Seleukid court. Because we know very little about the exact meaning and function of Hellenistic court titles, it would be rash to conclude from the fact that the system apparently becomes more complex in the course of the second and first centuries, that the system became formal, static and bureaucratic. A more formal bureaucracy did develop at the lower levels of the administration, particularly in the Ptolemaic kingdom, but this tells us nothing about what happened at the core of Ptolemaic court society.

By sharing power with others, kings inevitably risked losing power to others. This is the eternal dilemma of all despotic, personal forms of rulership throughout the centuries:

It appears to be a universal principle that handing out favours is temporarily effective as an instrument of power, but eventually burdens the dispenser with newly-established interest-groups. ... Favourites could turn into rebels with remarkable speed. ... Power delegated, titles and privileges granted, places sold or given away would initially create a group loyal to the king, who usually, however, eventually turned into quick-tempered defenders of their own privilege.⁷³

Kings first of all needed helpers they could trust. Ideally, they chose as their closest collaborators men who could not themselves claim positions of importance by right of birth or otherwise, as such men are least difficult to remove from high office and thus more loyal. In other words, kings tend to select their courtiers as much on personal grounds as for their military or other professional capabilities. In practice, however, kings seldom controlled the composition of their courts entirely. Even Alexander had difficulty to remove Parmenion

⁷² Polyb. 4.87.7 (περὶ τὴν αὐλήν); 5.4.13 (ἐγεμόναι); 4.87.8 (συστρατευομένων); cf. Plut., *Mor.* 183b; Diod. 33.22. *Pace* Herman 1997, 214, who distinguishes men with power in the army from the courtiers proper; cf. K. Ehling, ‘Der “Reichskanzler” im Seleukidenreich’, *Epigraphica Anatolica* 30 (1998) 97-106, assuming a strict division between ‘civil’ and ‘military’ office-holders in the *sunedrion* of Antiochos III.

⁷³ Duindam 1994, 50-1.

from his inherited position as the second man at the Argead court. As already noticed, the first generation of Diadochs may have had exceptional opportunities to ‘hand-pick’ their friends, but not even they disposed of absolute power to appoint men of their own choosing to all crucial posts at court and in the army. Soon enough new interest-groups were established, proving increasingly difficult to control. The loyalty of the *philoï* therefore always remained a matter of constant concern for kings. The main threat was not that they would revolt. Open rebellion against the legitimate monarch was as inconceivable as in any other traditional monarchy, albeit malcontent courtiers might unite with a pretender or join a foreign court, taking their personal satellites, influence and even troops with them. Most dangerous for kings was the possibility that powerful men would remain devoted adherents of the dynasty but act at their own discretion, without the king’s consent or even against the king’s wish. This recurrent problem will be further discussed below.

Thus, paradoxically, the ideal *philos* was on the one hand dependent on, and subordinate to, the king, and on the other hand stalwart and able enough to independently command armies or rule provinces, and to frankly advise the king on important matters. Demetrios of Phaleron advised Ptolemaios Soter to read books about rulership, saying that ‘those things which the king’s friends are not bold enough to recommend to them are written in the books’.⁷⁴ This anecdote presents Demetrios as an ideal *philos* who did *not* mind mincing his words. Many are the passages in the sources where *philoï* are portrayed as either sycophantic and designing profiteers, or as a fearful lot who only flatter and dare not speak their minds in the presence of the king, let alone argue with him. In either case the results are presented as disastrous in the sources.⁷⁵ Although the motif of a king being corrupted by wicked advisors—presented as amusing anecdote by Athenaios, as moral example by Plutarch, and as political theory by Polybios—is a topos, at least it recognises, as Polybios says, that ‘the decisive importance for young kings, as leading either to their misfortune or to the firm establishment of their rule, is the judicious choice of the friends who attend on them.’⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Plut., *Mor.* 189d. A gratuitous advice since in the Hellenistic Age such books were normally written on orders of the king.

⁷⁵ For instance Diod. 28.2; Polyb. 8.22.1-3; 9.23.9; 15.34.4; Plut., *Demetr.* 17.2; Theopomp., FGrH 115 fr. 225 *ap.* Polyb. 8.9.5.

⁷⁶ Polyb. 7.14.6, adding that most young kings fail to do so.

Social and ethnic background ⁷⁷

As we have seen, the *philoï* community originated in the Argead kingdom during the reigns of Philippos and Alexander. Here the courtiers were called *hetairoi tou basileōs*, the companions of the king. The title of ἑταῖρος, although originally designating a member of the hereditary nobility of Macedonia, has similar connotations as φίλος in Greek. Both Philippos and Alexander endeavoured to remove these mighty barons of rural Macedonia from the key positions at court and in the army, and replace them with men of their own choosing. Philippos II took to awarding the title of *hetairos* at his own discretion. Alexander executed or murdered influential members of the Macedonian aristocracy to make place for his own friends, whom he recruited mainly among the lesser Macedonian nobility. When Alexander's empire was divided after his death, and each of the new kingdoms developed courts of their own, the demand for capable administrators and commanders became too great for the Macedonian nobility alone to meet. Now notably Greeks moved in to fill the gap. Initially, under Alexander and the first generation of Diadochs, members of indigenous *c.q.* Iranian aristocracies, too, rose to high office. This happened notably in the kingdoms of Antigonos Monophthalmos and Seleukos Nikator. A generation later, when the kingdoms were firmly established, non-Greek officials disappear from the sources. After *c.* 300 a new ruling ethno-class consisting of Greeks and Macedonians, came into being throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Near East.⁷⁸ The transition was marked by the substitution in formal writings of 'companion of the king' by 'friend of the king' as the preferred term to designate a courtier of high rank.⁷⁹ At the Hellenistic courts, the 'Hellenism' of the *philoï* group was in

⁷⁷ The tables in this section were presented at the international symposium on the *Post-Classical City*, Groningen 2003, and were inserted in Strootman 2005b. I would like to thank the audience of the symposium, especially Onno van Nijf, for helpful comments. I was not able to benefit from J.L. O'Neil, 'The ethnic origins of the friends of the Antigonid kings of Macedon', *CQ* 53 (2003) 510-22, and id., 'Places of origin of the officials of Ptolemaic Egypt', *Historia* 55.1 (2006) 16-25, which appeared afterwards. O'Neil presents similar figures, based in part on the same samples, but draws different conclusions.

⁷⁸ The term 'ethno-class' was coined by Pierre Briant, 'Ethno-classe dominante et populations soumises dans l'Empire achéménide: le cas de l'Égypte', *AchHist* 3 (1988) 137-73, to designate the supranational elite of the Achaimenid Empire; the Iranian identity of this elite was partly a cultural construct, partly a matter of descent.

⁷⁹ The earliest contemporary reference to φίλος is from 285 BC (Welles no. 6; cf. Walbank 1984, 69; *pace* Konstan 1997, 96). In Arrian's *Anabasis* and Plutarch's *Alexander* ἑταῖρος is used as a technical

part a cultural construct, too, but of course this does not imply that the *philoï* were not *per se* ‘real’ Greeks.

In the late fourth and early third centuries the courts of the new kingdoms offered rare opportunities to obtain prestige, influence and riches. At the same time presence at court became a prerequisite for obtaining power and status. As a consequence, high birth was no longer the principal source for pre-eminent status at court. Instead, one’s status and importance was fixed by even less tangible determinants than ‘proximity to the throne’ or ‘favour’, albeit differences in rank and status were expressed by means of court titles, etiquette, dress, and ceremonial.⁸⁰ Elias Bickerman even boldly stated that the basis of the early Macedonian states in the Near East was the mutual goodwill (*eunoia*) between the king and his *philoï*: ‘Macedonians, Thessalians, other Greeks and various non-native elements were partners in exploiting the Orient and were as isolated in the immense alien country as the king himself. They all had to sink or to swim together. This was the real meaning of the mutual “good will” of which we have just spoken.’⁸¹ Flavius Philostratos described the early Ptolemaic court as ‘a dining table in Egypt to which the most distinguished men in the world were invited.’⁸² This is not poetic licence: Hellenistic courtiers really came from all over the world, and Gabriel Herman is surely right in calling the court in the Hellenistic world a ‘cosmopolis’.⁸³

This was for instance the case with the court of Antigonos Monophthalmos. Richard Billows has listed the names of all the friends of Monophthalmos mentioned in the sources; the prosopography contains 149 entries, and in of 82 persons also the ethnicity or birthplace is known.⁸⁴ The largest ethnic group are the Macedonians: 30, including the king’s son and grandson. This number exemplifies the transition in the years following Alexander’s death:

term for the Macedonian nobility during the reigns of Philippos and Alexander; Plutarch also refers to Alexander’s confidants, especially his *sōmatophulakes*, with φίλος as a generic term meaning ‘friend’; in his biographies of Demetrios, Agis, Flaminius, and Aemilius Paullus he uses φίλος for ‘courtier’ and not ἐταῖρος. Diodoros, on the other hand, uses φίλος for both Alexander’s and later Hellenistic courtiers. Cf. Herman 1980/1981, 13.

⁸⁰ Strootman 1993, 33; Weber 1993, 40; cf. Kruedener 1973, 58; Duindam 1994, 28-30.

⁸¹ Bickerman 1983, 7-8.

⁸² Philostr. 1.22.524. Theopomp. *FHG* I 320 *ap.* Ath. 167b claims that already the confidants of Philippos II had been ‘men who had rushed to his side from very many quarters’.

⁸³ Herman 1997, 208. Cf. Le Bohec 1985.

⁸⁴ Billows 1997, 361-452.

30 Macedonians out of a total of 82 courtiers is a strikingly lower percentage than the number of Macedonians at the Alexander's court; but it is also a strikingly higher percentage compared to the courts of the Ptolemies and Seleukids in the third and second centuries. Three other courtiers came from the Balkans as well: two men from Epeiros—including Pyrrhos, the later Epeirote king, who as a youth served Antigonos' for some time—and a man called Olkias, perhaps an Illyrian. Also remarkable is the number of 'Orientals' at Monophthalmos' court: four Iranians, a Lydian and a Bithynian. The remainder consists of Greeks. Thanks to the Greek habit of using their city of origin as an ethnic, it is possible to get some idea of the total area from which Antigonos recruited his *philoï*.

In the third century the number of Macedonians at the courts decreased. But the area from which the *philoï* originally came remained immense. Interestingly, *philoï* also came from cities far beyond the kingdom's sphere of influence. For instance at the court of Antiochos the Great of a total of 37 friends of the king whose place of origin is known, no less than 21 came from cities outside his actual sphere of influence (Table 2).

	223-187 BCE
Macedonians	9
Mainland Greece	10
Aegean Islands	9
Asia Minor	6
Syria	4
Non-Greeks	3
<i>Total</i>	41

Table 2: courtiers of Antiochos III ⁸⁵

At Antiochos' court we find 9 Macedonians. There are only 3 non-Greeks; one of them is Hannibal, who had fled to the Seleukid court after the Second Punic War. The remaining 30 are Greeks. The group of Macedonians is inclusive of king Antiochos' sons Antiochos and Seleukos. Though the number of other Macedonians seems small, their relative importance

⁸⁵ After Liv. 35.18.1; 36.5.3, 11.6, 12.4; 37.13.9, 34.1, 45.17; Polyb. 5.40.1, 41.2, 45.6, 70.11; 5.79; 7.15.2; 10.29.6; 11.39.12; 20.3.7; 21.17.7; 56.1. *Suda* s.v. 'Euphorion'.

was not: in *c.* 200 three of the five most powerful Seleukid *philoï* were Macedonians.⁸⁶ Polybios mentions a ‘Mede’ called Aspasianos and an Arab prince Zabdibelos as commanders of allied troops at the Battle of Raphia, but these vassal princes were only present for the duration of the Raphia campaign.⁸⁷

Table 3 shows the origins of Ptolemaic, Seleukid and Attalid *philoï* through larger periods of time. In the case of the Ptolemies and Seleukids two periods are distinguished, the second being the time when the empires contracted.⁸⁸ All these *philoï* are Greeks unless otherwise stated.

	305-180 BCE	180-30 BCE
Macedonians	3	7
Alexandria	6	8
Kyrene	0	4
Egypt	0	4
Aegean Islands	3	3
Mainland Greece	8	10
Asia Minor	4	3
Syria and Kilikia	0	3
Cyprus	0	1
<i>Total</i>	25	47

Table 3: Origins of Ptolemaic *philoï*⁸⁹

⁸⁶ O’Neil 2003 draws the same conclusion in respect to the later Antigonids: the number of Greeks at the Antigonid court increases but Macedonians continue to dominate the most important positions.

⁸⁷ Polyb. 5.79.7-8.

⁸⁸ The tables are based on the prosopographies of Mooren 1975 and Savalli 1998, neither of which is exhaustive, with some additions. Again, the tables discard those *philoï* whose origin or ethnic is unknown. The Antigonid court is excluded because no comprehensive prosopography of the Antigonid court was available; the Antigonids relied primarily on Macedonians from Macedonia, and to a lesser degree on Greeks from mainland Greece. The differing totals for the two periods are due to the available sources.

⁸⁹ After Mooren 1975.

Of the four courtiers from Egypt in this sample, only one was an Egyptian, namely Petosarapis, a favourite (*i.e.* a manifest outsider) at the court of Ptolemaios VI.⁹⁰ At the Ptolemaic court, relatively many courtiers apparently took pride in presenting themselves as Macedonians; this ethnic does not imply that they actually came from Macedonia.⁹¹

	312-187 BCE	187-64 BCE
Macedonians	6	0
Mainland Greece	6	7
Aegean Islands	7	4
Asia Minor	15	13
Syria and Kilikia	7	10
Cyprus	2	0
Crete	4	0
Other	2	0
<i>Total</i>	49	34

Table 4: Origins of Seleukid *philo*⁹²

⁹⁰ We see here that at the Ptolemaic court a quarter of the total number of *philo* mentioned with their place of origin in the prosopography of Mooren, came from Alexandria, and none from Kyrene and Egypt, between 300 and 180. In the second period 16 of 46 came from North Africa. The greater number of ‘North Africans’ may reflect the development of a settled ruling class with landed estates in Kyrene and the Egyptian interior. However, it is not possible to conclude anything from these numbers since the total is different for the two periods. On Petosarapis and favourites in general see below.

⁹¹ On the mutual perceptions of Greeks and Macedonians up until the death of Alexander see E. Badian, ‘Greeks and Macedonians’, in: B. Barr-Sharrar and E.N. Borza eds., *Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Times*. Studies in the History of Art 10 (Washington DC 1982) 33-51. How Greeks and Macedonians thought about each other after *c.* 300 is difficult to assess; it appears, however, that being a Macedonian was very prestigious in court circles.

⁹² After Savalli 1998, with the addition of Liv. 36.5.3; 37.13.9; Polyb. 5.40.1; 41.2, 45.6, 70.11, 79.7, 8, 10, 12; 7.15.2; 10.29.6; 11.39.12; 30.3.7. The prosopography of Savalli is incomplete and random, as it contains only those *philo* of whom the title of *philos* has been explicitly attested, omitting *e.g.* such men as Antipatros and Hermeias, whose prominence at the court of Antiochos III is well attested (Liv. 37 *infra*; Polyb. 5 *infra*; 16.18.7; 21.7.9). The sample does not include sons of kings. To avoid

The Seleukids relied heavily on Greeks from Asia Minor. The percentage of *philoï* who are known to have come from Asia Minor remains unchanged even after the Seleukids had lost their possessions in Asia Minor; also the number of Greeks from the Aegean and the Greek mainland remained stable, even after direct Seleukid influence in the Aegean region had vanished.

	241-133 BCE
Pergamon	18
Asia Minor	12
Aegean Islands	4
Greek mainland	2
Magna Graeca	2
<i>Total</i>	38

Table 5: Origins of Attalid courtiers ⁹³

Attalid *philoï* came primarily from the city of Pergamon and the surrounding regions of the Aegean coast of Asia Minor, as well as the Aegean islands. Only two of the Attalid *philoï* originated beyond the Aegean.

Non-Greeks at the Hellenistic courts

In an influential article on the elites of the Hellenistic monarchies, Christian Habicht has calculated that in the third century a mere 2.5% of the Seleukid ruling class consisted of non-Greeks. He based his conclusion on a sample of about 250 leading men in the empire. Different from what I did in the tables above, Habicht accepted personal names as ethnic indicators.⁹⁴ Walbank comments that

disbalance, the Greeks who sought refuge at the Seleukid court after Antiochos III's defeat by the Romans in Greece in 192 are excluded; they were included in Table 2.

⁹³ After Savalli 1998. On Attalid *philoï* see also Tarn 1913, 233; Allen 1983, 129-35.

⁹⁴ C. Habicht, 'Die herrschende Gesellschaft in den hellenistischen Monarchien', *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 45 (1958) 1-16. Cf. Herman 1997, 201.

The exclusion of non-Greeks from this circle probably reflected the prejudices of the Greeks and Macedonians rather than any incapacity or reluctance to serve on the part of the indigenous population. Racial prejudice was characteristic of the Graeco-Macedonian caste within the kingdoms at least throughout the late fourth and third centuries.⁹⁵

In the past two decades, however, Habicht's view of the Seleukid elite as an ethnically homogeneous group has become an object of controversy. Recent historiography has revived the notion that there was substantial 'oriental' influence at the heart of the Seleukid Empire, as well as Egyptian influence at the Ptolemaic court, both in terms of persons and culture. The principal arguments against Habicht's calculation have been collected by Kuhrt and Sherwin-White in *From Samarkhand to Sardis*. Apart from several methodological objections—the sample is 'statistically worthless since the evidence then was (and still is) so incomplete and random geographically and chronologically'—their central argument is that personal names are unreliable as ethnic indicators since non-Greeks often assumed Greek names in the Seleukid kingdom. Kuhrt and Sherwin-White conclude that:

What we should visualise is a small exclusive court group, close to the king and dependent on his favour, occupying the top positions in the satrapies and armies, whose male members, in the third century, *generally* had Greco-Macedonian names. How and to what degree they were interlinked with members of the various indigenous populations remains unclear at present, although some recruitment into their ranks is likely. Below that were regional élites (Greek and non-Greek) running local affairs and representing and governing the ethnically variegated mass of farmers, soldiers, artisans, herders, cult personnel, traders and slaves.⁹⁶

Although the main thrust of the argument is certainly correct—the evident existence of autochthonous elites running regional and local affairs—the assumption that in the third century non-Greeks gained admission to the highest imperial ranks on a regular basis seems

⁹⁵ Walbank 1984, 68.

⁹⁶ Kuhrt & Sherwin-White 1993, 124-5, cf. 150-1. L. McKenzie, 'Patterns in Seleucid administration: Macedonian or Near Eastern?', *MedArch* 7 (1994) 61-8, goes even further and argues that, because the Seleukid administration combined Persian and Macedonian elements, an infrastructure was created that welcomed non-Macedonians, which in turn encouraged the creation of a shared culture. Similar opinions are expressed in Shipley 2000, 222. In defence of Habicht's view: Walbank 1984, 69; Weber 1997, 40-1; Herman 1997, 208.

doubtful. The fact that non-Greeks could assume Greek names does not help to identify them. Furthermore, ethnicity is not a matter of genealogy only; it is *also* a cultural construct.⁹⁷ When non-Greeks gained access to court but assumed a double, e.g. Babylonian-Hellenic, Judean-Hellenic, or Egyptian-Hellenic identity, this of course did not make them ethnic ‘Greeks’, but it does testify to the dominance of Greeks and Macedonians, and the prevalence of Hellenic culture at the royal courts.⁹⁸ Finally, as I will expound below, the rare non-Greek courtiers who do turn up in the sources unconcealed, were favourites, rising to prominence precisely because they were outsiders.

In the empire of Alexander and in the kingdoms of the first Diadochs in the east, members of the Persian ruling class initially retained positions of influence and power.⁹⁹ As Macedonian hegemony was not yet firmly established, Alexander and his immediate successors had to collaborate with the settled elites of the former Achaemenid Empire in order to pacify and govern the conquered territories. Alexander’s policy was to come to terms with the Iranian elites rather than to try to subdue them at all cost. Many Iranian magnates retained, or were newly appointed to, positions as satraps and commanders. Some were even allowed a place of honour at the Macedonian court. The most prominent examples are Oxyathres, a brother of brother of Darius III, who was given a place in Alexander’s entourage and received the title Companion of the King, and the eunuch Bagoas, a former favourite of Darius, whose influence with Alexander is stressed twice by Curtius.¹⁰⁰ Iranians, however, were normally assigned to, or affirmed in, posts in the provinces rather than at court. These could be

⁹⁷ Cf. M. Davies, ‘Greek personal names and linguistic continuity’, in: S. Hornblower and E. Matthews eds., *Greek Personal Names: Their Value as Evidence* (Oxford 2001) 15-39, who argues that among the Greeks personal names were indicative of the cohesion and cultural continuity of a specific community. Thompson 2001 shows that in Ptolemaic Egypt native Egyptians were pre-eminent conveyors of the Greek culture which was favoured by Ptolemaic administration. On Greek identity as a cultural construct see especially J. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge 1997), and I. Malkin ed., *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge, Mass., and London 2001).

⁹⁸ On the multiple identity and loyalty of ethnic Babylonians see R.J. van der Spek, ‘Ethnicity in Hellenistic Babylonia,’ in: W.H. van Soldt ed. *Ethnicity in Ancient Mesopotamia. Proceedings of the 48e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Leiden 2002* (Leiden 2004).

⁹⁹ Cf. E.N. Borza, ‘Ethnicity and cultural policy at Alexander’s court’, *AW* 23 (1992) 21, arguing that there was no ‘formal’ policy of hellenisation at Alexander’s court.

¹⁰⁰ Oxyathres: Curt. 6.2.11; Berve no. 586. Bagoas: Curt. 6.5.23; 10.1.22-38; Berve no. 195.

important positions. Mazaïos, the able commander of the Achaimenid army in the Gaugamela campaign, became satrap of Babylonia in 331.¹⁰¹ Artabazos, another prominent figure at the court of Darius III, became satrap of Baktria in 329.¹⁰² Apparently, Alexander needed men whose families possessed authority and prestige among the Iranians, but at the same time tried to keep them away from the centre of power.¹⁰³ This is standard policy in any imperial state.¹⁰⁴

Already during the reign of Alexander efforts were made to remove Iranians from the most crucial positions. Immediately after Alexander's death, his generals planned a rearrangement of the empire in which also the remaining Iranian satraps lost their positions.¹⁰⁵ The indigenous elites reacted to their exclusion from the centre by retreating to their provincial power bases.¹⁰⁶ In relatively inaccessible regions such as northern Anatolia, Armenia, the Persis, or the Thebaid, non-Greek states eventually re-emerged to challenge Macedonian domination – but seldom in the core regions of the empires.

In Egypt, Alexander left Egyptian provincial nomarchs in office, under the supervision of the Egyptians Doloaspis and Peteisis. Their authority was limited, however, by the fact that they had no military responsibilities; the armed forces in Egypt were under the command of two Macedonians, Balakros and Peukestas, and the ultimate authority of the satrapy was

¹⁰¹ Berve no. 484; Mazaïos' son became satrap in Syria (Curt. 5.13.11); when Mazaïos died of old age he was replaced by another Iranian, Stamenes (Arr., *Anab.* 4.18.13; Curt. 8.3.17 calls him Ditamenes; Berve no. 718).

¹⁰² Berve no 152.

¹⁰³ N.G.L. Hammond, *The Genius of Alexander the Great* (Chapel Hill 1997), argues that there was complete equality between Macedonians and Persians at Alexander's court (pp. 134, 143-44, 159, 190, 201); see however the objections to this view in the review article by C.A. La'da in *Mnemosyne* 52 (1999) 757-61, at 759.

¹⁰⁴ Alexander, of course did not aim at a 'unity of mankind', or a fusion of Macedonians and Persians; he did not give the daughters of Macedonian nobles in marriage to Iranian princes. For the notion see Tarn 1948, 110-1, 137-8; against it see E. Badian, 'Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind,' *Historia* 7 (1958) 425-44; A.B. Bosworth, 'Alexander and the Iranians,' *JHS* 100 (1980) 1-21.

¹⁰⁵ On the decisions made at Babylon in 323 BCE see now A.B. Bosworth, 'The Politics of the Babylon Settlement', in: *id.*, *The Legacy of Alexander. Politics, Warfare, and Propaganda under the Successors* (Oxford 2002) 29-63.

¹⁰⁶ Iranians in Asia Minor in the Hellenistic period: Briant, 'Les Iraniens d'Asie Mineure après la chute de l'Empire achéménide (A propos de l'inscription d'Amyzon)', *DHA* 11 (1985) 167-185.

given to Kleomenes, a Greek from Naukratis.¹⁰⁷ Ptolemaios Soter also employed Egyptian functionaries, in one recorded case even in the army, but kept them at arms-length from his court.¹⁰⁸ From the reign of Ptolemaios Philadelphos onward, Egyptians almost completely disappear from the upper and middle ranks of Ptolemaic hierarchy.¹⁰⁹ They reappear only as favourites in a later phase.

An important reason why the Diadochs at first courted the former Achaimenid ruling caste was its military potential. The intense and constant warfare of the Diadochs among each other in the late third century divided the Macedonian armed forces into various smaller armies. In the resulting demand for troops, the Iranian nobility was the key to the manpower of Asia. In particular Iranian cavalry—heavily armoured nobles, the forerunners of the Seleukid kataphrakts, with their retainers—could be decisive on the battlefield.¹¹⁰ Persian

¹⁰⁷ Arr., *Anab.* 3.5; cf. Hölbl 2001, 12 with n. 11-12.

¹⁰⁸ Hölbl 2001, 27 with n. 89. These functionaries are known from hieroglyphic grave epitaphs; the meaning of their honorific titles is unclear; the sarcophagus of the Egyptian nomarch Nektanebo boasts the title of ‘the great first-ranking officer of the army for his majesty’ (Hölbl p. 27 n. 90); cf. Turner 1984, 126. Shipley 2000, 222, quotes several epitaphs of Egyptians dated to the reign of Soter; these men apparently were very influential in the province of Egypt, but not at court.

¹⁰⁹ On the social and economic privileges of Macedonians and Greeks under the Ptolemies see D.J. Thompson, ‘Hellenistic Hellenes: The case of Ptolemaic Egypt’, in: I. Malkin ed., *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Cambridge, Mass., and London 2001) 301-22. Some other relatively recent work on ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt: R.S. Bagnall, ‘Greeks and Egyptians. Ethnicity, Status, and Culture’, in: *Cleopatra’s Egypt. Age of the Ptolemies* (New York 1988); K. Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Amsterdam 1988); P. Bilde ed., *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (Aarhus 1992); W. Clarysse, ‘Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt’, in: S. Vleeming ed., *Hundred-gated Thebes. Acts of a Colloquium on Thebes and the Theban area in the Graeco-Roman Period* (Leiden 1995) 1-19; J. Ducat, ‘Grecs et Égyptiens dans l’Égypte Lagide. Hellénisation et Résistance à l’Hellénisme’, in: *Entre Égypte et Grèce. Cahiers de la Villa Kérylos* 5 (Paris 1995) 68-81.

¹¹⁰ The Persian noble cavalry was known under the Achaimenids as the king’s ‘kinsmen’, or *huvaka* in Old Persian (translated as *suggeneis* in Greek sources); they were the most prominent courtiers of the emperor and formed the core of the Achaemenid army, not unlike Alexander’s élite cavalry, the Companions. Cf. e.g. Arr., *Anab.* 4.12.1; Diod. 17.59.2. On Persian noble cavalry in the Achaemenid Empire: N. Sekunda, *The Persian Army, 560-330 BC* (London 1992) 56-7; 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, esp. 108-111. Already Alexander had 1,000 Iranian horsemen at his disposal at the Battle of the Hydaspes River in 326. In the great battles of the

aristocrats were the best horsemen in Asia, who reputedly regarded it a disgrace to be seen on foot.¹¹¹ The military success of Seleukos Nikator in the east between 312 and 303 was due to his excellent relations with the Iranian nobility, in which his Baktrian wife Apama presumably played a crucial role. The successors of Seleukos Nikator, too, relied on Iranian cavalry for their armies, and likewise maintained bonds with the Iranian families through marriages and alliances. By that time, however, Iranians were no longer prominent at court.

Xenia

As we have seen, *philoï* came from a wide range of Greek cities, often from outside the empires. An explanation of this perhaps remarkable fact is offered by Herman, who has drawn attention to the interrelation of *philia* and *xenia*.¹¹² The Greek tradition of *xenia* (or *philoxenia*)—a form of ritualised personal relationships with traits of fictive kinship, usually translated as ‘guest-friendship’—constituted supranational, ‘horizontal’ elite networks which linked men of approximately equal social status but of separate social units *c.q.* *poleis*, thus uniting the Greek world at its highest level. It was an aristocratic ideal, an archaic legacy.¹¹³ Through participation in a social sphere outside the city, civic elites distanced themselves from their inferiors. With the renewal of class distinctions in the Hellenistic *poleis*, the significance of *xenia* increased. It is worth quoting the summary of Herman’s argument in

Diadochs Near Eastern troops, notably Iranian cavalry, was prominently present. In the Battle of Gabiene in 317 Eumenes and the eastern satraps fielded about 5,000 Iranian horse supported by huge numbers of various Asian light infantry (Diod. 28.1-8); on the opposing side, Antigonos Monophthalmos had at least 1,000 Iranian heavy cavalry, 1,000 cavalry from Anatolia, and more than 10,000 ‘Asian’ and Anatolian light infantry, on a total army of 36,500 men (Diod. 19.29.1-7). Antigonos’ Iranian horsemen had Iranian commanders (Grainger 1990, 47). At the Battle of Ipsos in 302 BCE both Antigonos Monophthalmos and Seleukos Nikator fielded about 10,000 horsemen (Diod. 20.13.4; cf. Plut., *Demetr.* 28.3), numbers reminiscent of the armies of the Persian Great Kings. Cf. E. Badian, ‘Orientals in Alexander’s Army,’ *JHS* 72 (1965) 160-61; W.W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Military and Naval Developments* (Cambridge 1930).

¹¹¹ Xen., *Cyr.* 4.3.22; cf. Hdt. 136.2: ‘The Persians teach their sons between the ages of five and twenty, only three things: to ride, use a bow, and speak the truth’.

¹¹² G. Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge etc. 1987).

¹¹³ Φιλοξενία as an aristocratic ideal in the world of Homer, esp. the *Odyssey*: M. Scott, ‘Philos, philotes and xenia’, *AClass* 25 (1982) 1-19; H. van Wees, *Status Warriors. War, Violence and Society in Homer and History* (Amsterdam 1992) 44-8.

full, as it is also sheds light on the preponderance of Greek culture at the courts of the Ptolemies, Seleukids and Antigonids:

Many of the courtiers ... were recruited through the instrumentality of *xenia*, an ancient form of fictive kinship. ... The Hellenistic rulers ... availed themselves of pre-existing *xenia* networks to draw new allies into their orbit. These networks account not only for the preponderance of Greeks among the newly recruited Hellenistic court members, but also for the increasing similarities between the three courts. The Hellenistic court societies, then, did not operate *in vacuo*. Instead, they were part of a wider, interactive, international society of ritualised friends. This society had since time immemorial constituted a world of its own, binding together the social elites of the Greek world through upper-class ideals. ... As a first step towards understanding Hellenistic “court politics”, one should therefore explore the relation between court societies and friendship networks.¹¹⁴

Apart from the king’s personal or paternal *xenia* network, new courtiers could also be recruited among *xenoi* of settled courtiers.¹¹⁵ *Xenia* networks provided kings with a means to attract, from outside court circles, *philoï* who did not yet possess a power base at the court but whose families were influential within their own cities. A second advantage was that *philoï* would normally retain links with their families and cities of origin, perhaps through several generations.¹¹⁶ ‘Having turned royal officials’, Herman says, ‘these members of governing élites are often found to be acting as mediators between the kings and their own communities of origin, deriving substantial benefits from both systems.’¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Herman 1997, 208.

¹¹⁵ Plut., *Agis* 10, cf. 3.

¹¹⁶ I. Savalli-Lestrade, ‘Courtisans et citoyens: le cas des philoi attalides’, *Chiron* 26 (1996) 149-81; F. Muccioli, ‘La Scelta delle Titolature dei Seleucidi. Il Ruolo dei philoi e delle Classi Dirigenti Cittadine’, *Simbolos* 3 (2001) 295-318. Pace O’Neil 2006, 20: ‘We cannot assume that all these men had an active connection with their home cities’. In cities we find both honours for the king dedicated by *philoï* (e.g. *OGIS* 128, 171, and 255) and decrees in honour of *philoï* dedicated by the king (e.g. *Syll.*³ 462; Welles 45; *OGIS* 317. Cf); cf. Buraselis 1994, 20; Habicht 1958, 11-2.

¹¹⁷ G. Herman, s.v. ‘Friendship’, *OCD* (1996) 611-3, at 613. On *philoï* as mediators between king and cities see also Bringmann 1993, 7-24; Savalli 1996. An interesting example of the geographical range of aristocratic *xenia* in the Hellenistic Age is provided by the third century Spartan kings. King Leonidas, who had lived ‘in the palaces of satraps’, and was married to the daughter of a satrap of a Seleukid *philos* (Plut., *Agis* 10, cf. 3); when Kleomenes was driven from Sparta, he went to

This web of relations cemented the empire together, as the Greek *poleis*, being *de iure* and normally also *de facto* autonomous states within the imperial framework, were the cornerstones of imperial rule. Kings could influence civic politics through their *philoï* – their families or adherents in the cities would benefit, too, from royal favour, which gave them the advantage over other parties in the internal political struggles of the *poleis*. Thus, the *philoï* represented the interests of the cities at court, and the interests of the court in the cities.

Philia

Courtiers were called ‘friends of the king’, or simply ‘friends’, because that is exactly what they were.¹¹⁸ Various forms of dependence tied the courtiers to the king and *vice versa*, but the principal arrangement underlying the relationship was *philia*, the Greek moral complex of friendship.¹¹⁹

In modern literature it is often taken for granted that *philia* at a royal court is at odds with the autocratic nature of Hellenistic kingship; ‘royal’ *philia* must therefore be something fundamentally different from what the term *philia* was normally understood to mean in Greek societies. Thus, David Konstan takes it that *philia* between the Hellenistic *philoï tou basileōs* and the ruler was ‘less personal and affectionate, more formal and calculated than the classical ideal’ and dismisses aulic *philia* as ‘a striking instance of the application of the language of friendship to distinctly hierarchical relations between people of different social station’—itself a striking instance of the modern apprehension of the Hellenistic era as a period of cultural and moral decline—but even Herman assumes that, although *philia* may lay at the root of the relationships at court, ‘the basic obligations of friendship [ultimately] came

Alexandria with his followers and stayed at the court of Ptolemaios III, who gave him an annual pension of 24 talents; Kleomenes used that money largely to distribute gifts among own clients (Plut., *Cleom.* 32.3).

¹¹⁸ Cf. D. Musti, ‘Syria and the East’, *CAH* 7.1 (1984) 175-220, at 179. Personal ties between king and friends: 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, esp. 124 with n. 12.

¹¹⁹ Greek friendship has recently received much attention, in particular in the context of Athenian tragedy. For a comprehensive discussion of the literature see especially D. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge 1997) 1-3. Herman 1987 is mainly concerned with *xenia*.

to be superseded by obligations of service.’¹²⁰ Yet I want to argue that *philia* at royal courts was not principally different from Greek *philia* in general.

Philia may be defined as a personal, reciprocal bond of loyalty and solidarity between two or more men or women of approximately equal status who share roughly the same interests. They were committed to each other by mutual obligations, and could rely on each other for help.¹²¹ The objective of *philia* was normally to achieve a common goal, and united action towards that end was a means to strengthen and display the bond. By means of exchanging gifts and favours (*charites*) the friendship was kept alive.¹²² Though *philia* may not have been ‘a subjective bond of affection and emotional warmth’, as M. Heath defined it, neither was it ‘the entirely objective bond of reciprocal obligations’,¹²³ as loyalty between friends was regulated by morality and honour. Violation of friendship was considered highly dishonourable, even impious.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Konstan 1997, 121; Herman 1987, 164. Cf. Walbank 1984, 70. Cf. L. Smith Pangle, *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship* (Cambridge 2002), who discards Aristotle’s understanding of *philia* as an aspect of monarchic relations since that would be incompatible with the inherent equality of *philia*.

¹²¹ S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge 1986) 82.

¹²² Herman in OCD 611; Konstan 1997, 78. Cf. Scott 1982, characterising Homeric *philia* as ‘based on self-interest but wholly co-operative in action’.

¹²³ M. Heath, *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy* (Stanford, Ca. 1987), 73-4. Konstan 1997, 1, defines *philia* as ‘a mutually intimate, loyal and loving bond between two or a few persons that is understood not to derive primarily from membership in a group normally marked by native solidarity, such as family, tribe, or other such ties. Friendship is thus what anthropologists call an achieved rather than an ascribed relationship, the latter being based on status whereas the former is in principle independent of a prior formal connection such as kinship.’ However, achieved and ascribed relationships should not be dissociated so radically, as *philia* can intensify solidarity between members of a social group, as much as ethnic or social ties can strengthen friendship.

¹²⁴ On this aspect most recently F.S. Belfiore, *Murder among Friends. Violation of Philia in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford 2000). Kings themselves were also subject to the obligations of *philia*: Diod. 20.70-3-4 relates how the Sicilian king Agathokles was punished by the divine powers because he had murdered a man who was his *philos* and *xenos* (cited after Herman in OCD, 612). Traitors and rebels were severely punished when caught, their bodies mutilated and degraded; this happened for instance with the rebel Achaïos after he had been captured by Antiochos III: ‘At the subsequent meeting of the *sunedrion*, there were many proposals as to the proper punishment to inflict on Achaëus, 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 impale his body’ (Polyb. 8.21.2-3).

Like *xenia*, *philia* had traits of fictive kinship.¹²⁵ The Hellenistic aristocracies followed, it seems, Homer's saying that a good friend may be 'in no way less than a brother'.¹²⁶ Some royal *philoï* were honoured in inscriptions as the *suggeneis* or *adelphoi*, 'relatives' and 'brothers' of the king, even if they were not really related to him.¹²⁷ Such bonds of fictive kinship were no less strong than those between actual relatives. The parties involved in a *philia* relationship were ideally each other's peers, even when they were not equals in practice.¹²⁸ All *philoï* immediately surrounding the king belonged to the same status group. Hierarchy was created by various informal means, which will be discussed later. Thus, patron-client relations at the Hellenistic courts were characterised by what may be called 'fictive equality'.¹²⁹ Like the Companions in Alexander's council, the foremost *philoï* who had a seat in the *sunedrion* of Hellenistic king discussed matters of state openly with the king, even sometimes holding sway against the king's wishes.¹³⁰ This formal equality is an

¹²⁵ Herman, *OCD* 611; the word *φιλία* can also signify actual blood relationship.

¹²⁶ *Il.* 8.584-6. *Hetaireia* and *philia* as aristocratic ideals in Homeric epic: Scott 1982; Van Wees 1992, 44-8.

¹²⁷ Polyb. 4.48.5; Plut., *Mor.* 197a; 1 *Macc.* 3.32; 10.89; 11.31; 2 *Macc.* 11.12; OGIS 148; 259; cf. Liv. 30.42.6. In Classical Athens *συγγενεία* connoted all blood relatives, within and without the *oikos*, and was discerned from *ἀνχιστεία* (literally 'closest'), which was limited to blood relatives up to cousins.

¹²⁸ Equality of friends in a *philia* relationship: Herman in *OCD* 611; Heath 1987, 74; Konstan 1997, 97.

¹²⁹ In the definition of P. Burke, *History and Social Theory* (Cambridge 1992) 72, patronage is 'a political system based on personal relationships between unequals, between leaders (or patrons) and their followers (or clients). Each party has something to offer to the other. Clients offer patrons their political support and also their deference ... For their part, patrons offer clients hospitality, jobs and protection.' See however the objections raised by S. Silverman, 'Patronage as myth', in: E. Gellner and J. Waterbury eds., *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies* (London 1977) 7-19, and M. Gilsenan, 'Against patron-client relations', *ibidem* 167-83.

¹³⁰ *Pace* Konstan 1997, 121. On the *sunedrion* see below. Note that Hellenistic court society developed from the old Macedonian institution of *ἑταιρεία*, a term designating a (political) confraternity, cf. Herman in *OCD* 611. The Companions and the Macedonian king belonged to the same peer group in which the king, as *primus inter pares*, was more equal than the others. Cf. Arist., *Pol.* 5.9.6, where the relationship between a king and his common subjects is compared to the authority of a father over his children, *i.e.* an unequal relationship, whilst in *Eth. Eud.* 7.4.1-2 it is stated that a father-son relationship is *not* a form of *philia*.

aristocratic ideal, known also from Homeric and Archaic Greece.¹³¹ When Alexander, in a famous anecdote related by Curtius, exclaimed that Hephaestion ‘is Alexander too’, this answered to Aristotle’s dictum that a *philos* was ‘one’s other self’.¹³²

In the next section, the principal social dynamics that held together, and hierarchised, the *philoï* society will be discussed: gift exchange and the ritualised entertainment of friends and guests at court.

3.4 Hierarchy

The *philoï* community was a social group defined by the ideal of equality. At the same time the *philoï* community was in reality hierarchical. As the king was the focus for all aspects of the court society, a courtier’s relative status was determined by the principle of proximity to the throne, that is, the degree to which he was able to speak with the king in person, or with persons near the king, or persons near the persons near the king. Gift exchange, court titles and etiquette were instrumental in determining a courtier’s position within the court hierarchy.

In what follows, several aspects of the principle of proximity to the throne will be discussed. We will look at gift exchange as a mechanism for constructing social relations at court, the more formal system of titles, membership of the royal council, and other status determinants. In *Die höfische Gesellschaft* Norbert Elias listed what he believed to be the determinants for status at court.¹³³ Although Elias’ views have in later research been adjusted more often than not, this inventory still holds well. Elias’ status determinants are: family prestige, wealth (possessed and received), rank, military achievements, the king’s favour, and the ability to influence powerful persons (dignitaries, but also e.g. concubines of the king), membership of a certain clique, ‘esprit’, courtly behaviour and outward appearance. At the Hellenistic courts comparable mechanisms were at work.

¹³¹ Cf. Van Wees 1992, 45, who contrasts the hierarchy of the pre-Hellenistic courts in the Near East with the egalitarian ideology of the *Odyssey*.

¹³² Curt. 3.12.17; Arist., *Eth.Nic.* 1169b 6. Most recently on Aristotle’s (as well as other thinkers’) idea of friendship: Smith Pangle 2002.

¹³³ Elias 1969, 153.

Proximity to the throne

The inaccessibility of the king was fundamental in the power games played at the court. The king was *qualitate qua* distanced from other human beings, who would never meet him or had to wait long before meeting him. Waiting ritually accentuated the king's almost superhuman distance. This is a universal characteristic of despotic power. In 1995, UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali travelled to the former republic of Zaire because president Mobutu had urgently requested a tête-à-tête with him. Michael Ignatieff, who accompanied Boutros-Ghali on this trip, later recalled how surprised he was that Mobutu was nowhere to be seen when the secretary-general and his staff arrived:

President Mobutu, we are told, is still at mass. So we cool our heels in his guest palace, a suburban bungalow in a heavily guarded compound in the middle of the forest. Boutros-Ghali walks about, looks at his watch, runs his hands over Mobutu's collection of gold African figurines on their cool white marble plinths. ... Why are we kept waiting? I ask one of the secretary-general's aides. Because, he whispers, Mobutu is king.¹³⁴

The fact that most people could not approach the king, at least not directly, accentuated the privilege of those few individuals who did have routine access to the king, *viz.* the most prominent courtiers, the queen, the king's personal physician and bodyguards, and the odd favourite.¹³⁵ They acted as mediators, or 'brokers', between the king and others.¹³⁶ Pyrrhos the Molossian, who as a young prince stayed at the court of Ptolemaios Soter as a hostage, 'cultivated Berenike in particular, seeing that she was the most influential and the most

¹³⁴ M. Ignatieff, *The Warrior's Honor. Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* (London 1998) 82-3. On waiting as a means to ritually distance the ruler in the Hellenistic kingdoms see chapter 3.4.

¹³⁵ See for instance Diod. 30.10.2; Polyb. 5.26.8, 5.56.7; Jos., *AJ.* 12.17-32. Physicians: G. Marasco, 'Les médecins de cour à l'époque hellénistique', *REG* 109 (1996) 435-66; A. Jansen, 'Ad fundum. Philippus van Acarnanië en Alexander de Grote (ca. 330 v.Chr)', in: J.J.E. van Everdingen et al. eds., *Op het lijf geschreven. Bekendheden en hun lijfarts* (Amsterdam and Overveen 1995) 26-36; A. Mastrocinque, 'Les médecins des Séleucides', in: P. van Eijk, H.F.J. Horstmanshoff, P. Schrijvers eds., *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-Cultural Context* 1 (Amsterdam 1995) 143-51.

¹³⁶ The key role of 'brokers' in patron-client relations was first recognised by E. Wolf, 'Aspects of group relations in a complex society' (1956), reprinted in: T. Shanin ed., *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (Harmondsworth 1971) 50-66; cf. Kettering 1986; Burke 1992, 74; Duindam 1994, 86; Strootman 2005c, 192-3. Examples of mediators arranging meetings with Hellenistic kings: Jos., *AJ.* 12.185; 14.11.1; Polyb. 8.18.10.

virtuous and intelligent of the wives of Ptolemaios'.¹³⁷ Diodoros, probably drawing from Hieronymos of Kardia, tells how in 316 Dokimos, a partisan of Eumenes, was captured by Antigonos Monophthalmos but made a dramatic escape by negotiating with Antigonos' wife Stratonike; he later rose to high office in Antigonos' army.¹³⁸ Josephus relates how a century later a certain Joseph, an aristocrat from Jerusalem, travelled to the Ptolemaic court to obtain certain privileges for his family:

[He] privately sent many presents to the king, and to [queen] Kleopatra, and to their friends, and to all that were powerful at court, and thereby purchased their goodwill to himself.¹³⁹

Finally a meeting was arranged with the king. While Ptolemaios was travelling from Memphis back to Alexandria, Joseph waited along the road at a certain place, was invited into the royal carriage, and was given a short time to talk with the king:

With his amusing and clever conversation he made a good impression on the king, who began to like him, and he was invited for dinner at the palace, as a guest at the royal table.¹⁴⁰

Apart from the various official royal wives, also the concubines of the king often acquired power and influence at court on account of their closeness to the king. This is not always understood in the ancient sources, in which we often find the topos of the royal concubine as vulgar, unscrupulous, power-hungry courtesans, who turned kings into 'slaves' in order to rule for themselves:

¹³⁷ Plut., *Pyrrh.* 4.

¹³⁸ Diod. 19.16; J. Hornblower, *Hieronymus of Cardia* (Oxford 1981) 125-8. C.P. Jones, 'Hellenistic history in Chariton of Aphrodisias', *Chiron* 22 (1992) 91-102, comments that 'it is a likely suggestion that [Dokimos] betrayed his companions in return for a promise of advantage in the service of Antigonos' (94).

¹³⁹ Jos., *AJ.* 12.185.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibidem.* Cf. Jos., *AJ* 12.4.8, concerning the same queen: when a man called Arion was thrown in jail although he was innocent, his wife 'informed Kleopatra of this ... (for Arion was in great esteem with her), [and] Kleopatra informed the king of it.' On Josephus' sympathy for Kleopatra III: P.W. Haider, 'Judith - Eine zeitgenössische Antwort auf Kleopatra III. als Beschützerin der Juden?', *Grazer Beiträge* 22 (1998) 117-28.

In the temples of Alexandria there were many statues of Kleino, the cupbearer of Ptolemaios Philadelphos, representing her in a chiton and holding a rhyton. And are not some of the richest houses [in Alexandria] owned by Myrtilon, Mnesis and Potheïne? But what are Mnesis and Potheïne but flute-players, and was Myrtilon not one of those vulgar professional mime actors? And was Ptolemaios Philopator not the slave of the prostitute Agathokleia, who brought the kingdom to the brink of collapse? ¹⁴¹

This passage unwillingly demonstrates the power of the ‘official’ royal *maîtresse*. These women presumably were not the depraved common girls they appear to be in antipathetic historiography. For instance Ptolemaios Philopator’s principal *maîtresse*, the ‘prostitute’ Agathokleia, a ‘Samian dancing girl’ according to Plutarch, was in reality the sister of Agathokles, the highest ranking *philos* of the king.¹⁴² Likewise Alexander’s concubine Barsine – if she was indeed a concubine and not a wife – was the daughter of a Persian nobleman and had been married to the celebrated Achaemenid general Memnon.¹⁴³ Polybios’ claim that Ptolemaios Philadelphos set up statues of his concubines in sanctuaries indicates that being a royal concubine was a public role, an aulic office *avant la lettre*, comparable with the *maîtresse en titre* at the court of Louis XV.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Polyb. 14.11.2-5. Similar characterisations of Agathokleia are in Plut., *Kleom.* 33; Just. 30.1.7; Strabo 17.795; Ionn. Antioch. *FHG* IV 558. Strabo dubs the king ὁ τῆς Ἀγαθοκλείας; both Polybios and Justin accuse Agathokleia of having murdered the *basilissa* Arsinoë, and Polybios 15.25.12 holds her indirectly responsible for the death of Philopator himself. Cf. Diod. 33.13, who relates how Eirene, a concubine of Ptolemaios VIII, persuaded the king to commit murder; conversely, Jos., *Ap.* 2.55, relates how the same Eirene persuaded the king not to murder Jews; the latter story is reminiscent of the book of *Ester*: a central element in this Jewish novel from the Hellenistic period is the queen’s role as a broker.

¹⁴² Plut., *Amat.* 9; Polyb. 14.11.5.

¹⁴³ Just. 11.10.2; 13.2.7; Curt. 10.6.13; Diod. 22.20.1, 28.1; cf. Plut., *Alex.* 21; *Eum.* 1. Cf. Berve no. 206. Barsine’s father Artabazos was a leading figure at the court of Darius III, cf. Berve no. 152. Alexander’s son by Barsine, Herakles, probably was not a bastard but his legitimate heir.

¹⁴⁴ On the *maîtresse en titre* see C. Hanken, *Gekust door de koning. Over het leven van koninklijke maîtresses* (Amsterdam 1996): in this readable account of the evolution of the ‘office’ of concubine at the French court during the Ancien Régime, the author shows that the changing position of concubines reflects changing political circumstances *c.q.* the evolution of the French national state in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Another title used in the eighteenth century was *maîtresse déclarée*, which indicated an even more formal and public character; other official denominators

Gift exchange

The principal instrumentality that created and maintained bonds between a king and his *philoï* was the exchange of gifts. As Plutarch sceptically remarked: ‘kings hunt for men by attracting them with gifts and money, and then catch them.’¹⁴⁵

Gift exchange was a central element in the ideal of *philia*.¹⁴⁶ It also was tantamount to the royal virtue of generosity, a form of conspicuous consumption, of *tryphē*. In *Idyll* 17, the court poet Theokritos praises Ptolemaios Philadelphos as a man who is ‘generous with gifts, as a king befits, generous to cities and loyal friends.’¹⁴⁷ Magnanimity was a crucial component of the Hellenistic ideal of kingship, and kings were obliged to live up to that ideal. In a society where honour depended on appearances as much as on behaviour, giving lavish gifts was a pre-eminent mechanism by which kings could confirm their superior status and prove that they indeed possessed such infinite wealth as they were supposed to possess. Royal gifts went out, first of all, to the gods, then to relatives and friends, and finally to cities and temples. Although royal euergetism in cities is at present the best known and most studied form of royal gift giving, the munificence of Hellenistic kings toward their *philoï* was equally legendary in ancient times.¹⁴⁸

In anthropological theory, the principal function of gift exchange is the creation or affirmation of social relations. The process of exchanging gifts is often highly ritualised. It serves no economic aim, even though the circulation of goods brought about by gift exchange often has important economic consequences.¹⁴⁹ H.J.M. Claessen has distinguished between

included *maîtresse du Roi* and *maîtresse actuelle* (Hanken (1996, 96). Cf. Nikolaos of Damascus *FHG* III 414 *ap.* Ath. 593a, about Myrrhine, a concubine of Demetrios Poliorketes: ‘although he did not give her the diadem, he gave her a share in the royal power.’

¹⁴⁵ Plut., *Cleom.* 13.5.

¹⁴⁶ Konstan 1997, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Theocr., *Id.* XVII 124-5; cf. *Id.* XVI 32-3.

¹⁴⁸ For instance Ath. 48f; 49a; Sokrates of Rhodes *FHG* III 96 *ap.* Ath. 148a; Jos., *AJ* 12.40-1; 12.59; 13.82.

¹⁴⁹ S. Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York 1986), and *idem*, ‘Gift-giving and patronage in Early Modern France’, *French History* 2 (1988) 133-51; cf. Burke 1992, 74. On gift exchange in general see Burke 1992, 69-71. The economic aspects of gift exchange is a central theme in the archaic economy model of the school of Polanyi; however, Polanyi strictly distinguished between reciprocity (social) and redistribution (economic), acknowledging that the latter

four forms of royal gifts: ‘gifts’ (incidental donations), ‘renumerations’ (incidental gifts in return for some service or other), ‘salary’ (regular payment in return for services), and ‘offerings’ (various gifts to gods, priests or temples).¹⁵⁰ All forms are apparent in the Hellenistic kingdoms. The *philoï*, the people closest to the king, received mainly ‘renumerations’ in exchange for gifts or as rewards for specific services. Unwritten rules regulated what kind of present was proper in a given context.¹⁵¹

The most rewarding gift for the king to give was land. The distribution of landed estates among the *philoï* provided them with status, as well as a source of income. Not even royal executives such as satraps or court officials received a regular salary. They too were granted farmland to exploit, often including buildings, labourers and slaves.¹⁵² Estates could be managed *in absento*.¹⁵³ In addition to landed estates, kings could give their friends trading privileges, or the revenues of villages and harbours, and even cities.¹⁵⁴ Thus the requirements

was essentially a by-effect of the first; cf. G. Dalton ed., *Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Economies. Essays of Karl Polanyi* (New York 1968) xxxv.

¹⁵⁰ H.J.M. Claessen, ‘The Benevolent Lord’, in: H.J.M. Claessen and P. Skalnik eds., *The Early State* (The Hague 1978) 563-7.

¹⁵¹ Ath. 194a. Alexander gave fifty talents to the page who had warned him of a conspiracy (Curt. 8.10.26, cf. 8.6.19); Strato of Lampsakos received no less than eighty talents for tutoring the children of Ptolemaios Philadelphos (Diog. Laert. 5.58).

¹⁵² Van der Spek 1986, 179-80. Although royal concern with agricultural economy was not unknown in the Seleukid and Ptolemaic empires, Van der Spek shows that land grants were primarily political measures. For gifts of land see e.g. Curt. 8.10.26; Plut., *Alex.* 15.2; 1 *Macc.* 10.39; Plut., *Pomp.* 36.4. Cf. Hammond 1989, 55. On the difficult legal status and ambiguities of royal land grants, mainly, but not exclusively, in the Seleukid kingdom, see Van der Spek 1986, 154-61.

¹⁵³ Apollonios, major-domo of the Ptolemaic *oikos*, managed his possessions in the Fayum (some 2,500 ha. of land)—a gift of Ptolemaios Philadelphos, well known from the famous Zenon Papyri—through his steward, the Karian Zenon. It is impossible to tell whether the king gave from the private estates owned by the royal *oikos* or from ‘state land’, but Van der Spek 1986, 159, is surely right in stating that the question is irrelevant because it is equally impossible to define the difference between the king’s private land and state land.

¹⁵⁴ Hammond 1989, 142. Van der Spek 1986, 159, lists several instances of cities given by the Seleukids and others to favourites, including Telmessos, Tarsos and Ptolemaïs in Palestine; it is difficult to say what this means exactly, but probably the ‘possession’ of cities meant having a monopoly of levying tolls or taxes. This practice is also known from the Achaimenid kingdom, cf.

of the court provides a partial explanation for the endemic warfare among the Hellenistic kings: territorial gains provided new sources of income and new estates to distribute among the *philoï*, not to mention plunder.¹⁵⁵

Ever since Marcel Mauss wrote his classic essay ‘on the gift’ it has been accepted that gift-giving is subject to three rules: the obligation to give, to receive, and to reciprocate.¹⁵⁶ It was unbalanced reciprocity. The person with the highest status was obliged to offer the most valuable gifts or favours. This was first of all a matter of honour. It functioned as a means to secure that the person with the lesser status would not be able to fully reciprocate and would remain indebted and dependent. In an anecdote told by Plutarch, a courtier who requested of Alexander dowries for his daughters was offered fifty talents; when the courtier politely retorted that ten talents would be more than enough, the king said: ‘Enough for you to receive, but not enough for me to give.’¹⁵⁷

The apparent bluntness of such a request (the courtier in the anecdote after all asked for ‘only’ ten talents) is not surprising. It was not dishonourable to ask for gifts.¹⁵⁸ Any person who managed to appear before the king was expected to make a request, which would normally be complied with, although it was normal that a petitioner before the king would first present a gift himself. This could be a material gift, but also a service.¹⁵⁹ Josephus informs us that if the initial gift was too small relative to one’s status, the king could be displeased; if, however, the gift of the petitioner was accepted by the king, the request would be granted.¹⁶⁰ Then one could expect to be rewarded for their gifts or services with interest. In Greek morality working for pay was considered to be tantamount to servitude, but to be rewarded for services with gifts, honours or privileges was honourable.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, the distribution of royal gifts was a form of public allocation of the king’s favour, and helped

H.W.A.M. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, ‘Περσικὸν δὲ κάρτα ὁ στρατὸς δῶρον: A typically Persian gift (Hdt. IX 109)’, *Historia* 37.3 (1988) 372-4.

¹⁵⁵ Plut., *Alex.* 15.3-6; 34.1; *Eum.* 3.14; Just. 11.5.5.

¹⁵⁶ M. Mauss, *Essai sur le don* (Paris 1925).

¹⁵⁷ Plut., *Mor.* 127b.

¹⁵⁸ Ath. 211b; Aristodemos *ap.* Ath. 246e.

¹⁵⁹ J.J. Jansen, ‘Het geschenk des konings’, in: H.J.M. Claessen ed., *Macht en majesteit. Idee en werkelijkheid van het vroege koningschap* (Utrecht 1984) 51-9, at 51.

¹⁶⁰ Jos., *AJ* 12.217 and 219.

¹⁶¹ Konstan 1997, 81-2.

determine the receivers' place within the court hierarchy.¹⁶² Thus, the exchange of gifts created both horizontal bonds of loyalty as well as vertical bonds of dependence to hold the formal equality of the *philoï* in check.¹⁶³

Apart from the quantity and value of gifts, the status of the person who gave them mattered. To be rewarded by a king increased one's status enormously. In many pre-industrial societies objects that had been in contact with the king's body attained a certain 'sacred' quality.¹⁶⁴ For this reason the Hellenistic kings, like the Achaimenids before them, gave away the cups and plates from their own table after banquets.¹⁶⁵ The occasions for gift exchange *par excellence* were the banquet and the symposium (see below, section 3.4).

The obligation to be generous placed a heavy financial burden on the king.¹⁶⁶ Still kings could not permit to fall short of expectations and loose face.¹⁶⁷ In order to satisfy their

¹⁶² Jansen 1984, 55-6, explains that one's proximity to the throne determined one's receiving royal gifts; it was also the other way round. Jansen rightly points out that common soldiers who received their payment from the crown, were therefore closer to the king than other subjects; in the context of the Hellenistic kingdoms this means that Macedonian military settlers who received royal gifts in the form of farmland in the provinces or regular payment when under arms, as well as incidental gratuities were closer to the king than the average subject, or even members of civic and rural elites.

¹⁶³ So also Herman 1987, 106.

¹⁶⁴ Jansen 1984, 58.

¹⁶⁵ The purple garments given to *philoï* as status symbols (see below) may have been woven on the looms of the king's wives or daughters; it was customary at the Argead court (and at the Greek *oikos* of the classical age as well) that the women would weave the menfolk's clothing, cf. Hammond 1990, 270.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Plut., *Demetr.* 25.4: before setting out to meet Antonius for the first time at Tarsos, Kleopatra 'provided herself with many gifts, much money, and such ornaments as her high position and prosperous kingdom made it natural for her to take'. In Elias' model of the court, the aristocrats' obligation to live up to their status and to be generous emptied their pockets; the king profited from this because it made them dependent on royal generosity; this view is now no longer tenable, as the financial burden naturally weighed most heavily on the shoulders of those higher up *viz.* the king; cf. Duindam 1994, 86 and 95: If the nobles were to be tricked into status consumption, the monarch had to subject himself to the same rules of conduct. He, too, was the prisoner of the spending pattern. He could not control the game without participating in it. It is important to note that the pressure to prove one's superior status was greater on the monarch than on anyone else.'

¹⁶⁷ This phenomenon was first noted by F. Barth, *Political Leadership among the Swat Pathans* (London 1959); cf. Burke 1992, 69-70. Hellenistic kings who lacked funds would be criticised as

friends, kings were forced spend extravagantly, whether they could afford it or not. An impression of the vast expenses is given by this description of a ‘gift hoard’ stockpiled by Mithradates Eupator, which fell in the hands of the Romans:

In the city of Tauri, which Mithradates used as a storehouse of furniture, were found two thousand drinking-cups made of onyx welded with gold, and many cups, wine-coolers, and drinking-horns, also ornamental couches and chairs, bridles for horses, and trappings for their breasts and shoulders, all ornamented in like manner with precious stones and gold. The quantity of this store was so great that the transfer of it occupied thirty days.¹⁶⁸

As a consequence, kings ran the risk of over-consumption, which would erode the financial foundation of their military power, or even lead to dependence on wealthy *philoï*.¹⁶⁹ When a courtier once asked Ptolemaios V Epiphanes where he would find sufficient money to finance a campaign against the Seleukids, the king pointed to his *philoï* and said: ‘There, walking about, are my money-bags.’¹⁷⁰ Antiochos III was at the beginning of his reign financially dependent on his *philos* Hermeias.¹⁷¹ Kings could forestall this risk by distributing symbolic gifts. Purple clothing, tableware used at royal symposia, were in itself valuable, but were first

misers. In an amusing anecdote about Lysimachos—a practical joker with a dark sense of humour—the king threw a scorpion in the mantle of one of his *philoï*; the latter retaliated by requesting a gift of one talent from the king, who was thus scared out of his wits himself (Ath. 246e). Ptolemaios IV Philopator met with conspiracies and *philoï* going over to the Seleukid court because he was not able to fulfil their demands (Polyb. 5.34.4, 10).

¹⁶⁸ App., *Mithr.* 12.17.15; trans. H. White.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Duindam 1994, 86: ‘Extravagant expenditures to confirm the pretense of power and status eroded the financial foundation. Status expenditures had to be reduced, resulting in the loss of face and thus loss of power. The king could avoid this by finding new sources of income. This in turn led to dependence – on the assemblies of estates or on private *financiers*.’

¹⁷⁰ Diod. 29.29. On the wealth of *philoï*: Diod. 33.20; Polyb. 15.25.28; Agatharchides *FHG* II 476 *ap.* Ath. 155d. Governors in the Hellenistic kingdoms were responsible for levying troops, using the provincial revenues to arm and pay them. It is possible that *philoï* who received important commands in the king’s army were likewise supposed to equip the soldiers under their command from their own resources, and that this was as compulsory as it was honourable, like liturgies in Classical Athens, but also brought profits in the form of booty and slaves; Apollonios, the wealthy Ptolemaic courtier and land-owner known from the Zenon Papyri, had become rich from trading slaves from Syria.

¹⁷¹ Below, subchapter 3.5.

of all tokens of intangible rewards such as ‘protection’ or ‘favour’; golden crowns (*stephanoi*) were gifts of honour, normally given as rewards for bravery in war.¹⁷² Such gift accompanied the distribution of honorific titles, which indicated a person’s position in the court hierarchy.¹⁷³ Also favours, privileges, and titles could be considered appropriate gifts. Philippos and Alexander rewarded men who had served them with Macedonian citizenship.¹⁷⁴ Speaking of the gift exchange complex in modern Sicily, one well-informed observer thus summed it all up:

Another characteristic custom of the Sicilians is giving presents. The number of presents given on Sicily is astonishing. This is because a present is a tangible mark of respect. The more presents you get, the more important you are.¹⁷⁵

The ostentatious distribution of gifts is inextricably intermixed with its counterpart, the ostentatious receiving of gifts. This is how Plutarch describes the elevation of a man to the status of an honoured *philos* of Mithradates Eupator:

When the old man woke up that morning, he saw that tables were placed in his house upon which stood gold and silver vessels; and a band of servants, eunuchs and pages brought him rich garments; and a horse, caparisoned like those of the royal *philoï*, stood before his door. ... The pages informed him that the king [Mithradates VI Eupator] had also bestowed on him the large estate of a man who had recently died, and that all this was a mere foretaste of what was yet to come. ... So he put on his purple robe, leaped upon his horse and rode through the city, crying: ‘All this is mine!’¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² 1 *Macc.* 10.20. Ath. 211b states that in the Hellenistic kingdoms only *philoï* had the right to wear purple and golden *stephanoi*. A handsome example of a *stephanos* is in the archaeological museum in Thessaloniki; helmets adorned with golden and silver *stephanoi* can be seen on the Alexander Mosaic and the Alexander Sarcophagus.

¹⁷³ A similar custom existed at the Achaemenid court, from which the giving of tableware may have been a borrowing, cf. Hdt. 9.20; Xen., *Anab.*, 1.2.27, 8.28-9; Lucian 59.39. Among the Persians receiving a sword was especially symbolic of the king’s favour, cf. J.M. Bigwood, ‘Ctesias, his royal patrons and Indian swords’, *JHS* 115 (1995) 135-40; Sancisi 1989.

¹⁷⁴ Hammond 1989, 141.

¹⁷⁵ G. Falcone, *Cosa Nostra* (Paris 1991).

¹⁷⁶ Plut., *Pomp.* 36.4-5. Plutarch tells this story as a morality tale about a poor old man’s sudden turn of fate; but the story is rooted in actual history as the protagonist was in reality the father of

Court titles

The ranking of *philoï* in the court hierarchy was regulated and explicated by means of court titles and offices.¹⁷⁷ The complex of aulic titulature was a form of formalised informality. The distribution of titles was part of the complex of gift exchange at court. Titles were presented by the king as gifts, comparable to, and presumably coming together with symbolic material gifts.¹⁷⁸

Hellenistic court titulature developed from the basal system of titles of the fourth century Argead court, and developed through the adoption of Achaimenid influences at the courts of Alexander and the Seleukids, into a more complex and refined system in the second century that is best attested for the Ptolemaic kingdom. Albeit the system of court titles at the later Ptolemaic court appears to have become somewhat formalised at the lower levels of the *philoï* society, the *philoï* society did not change into a bureaucracy.¹⁷⁹ A *philos*' actual position at court was *indicated* by his title, not determined by it. Rank and influence with the king were also indicated by less clear-cut signs, now lost to the historian. There is no Hellenistic Saint-Simon to inform us on the subtle details that determined and reflected status at court. But it is self-evident that intangible signs of status and favour existed alongside

Stratonike, one of the king's favourite wives. The giving of a horse is reminiscent of Achaimenid practice (Xen., *Anab.* 1.2.27); protocol at the Irano-Hellenic court of the Mithradatids will have predicated on both Greek and Persians Iranian, albeit Plutarch's frame of reference was Greek. On Mithradates' *philoï* see Sullivan 1990, 42-4.

¹⁷⁷ Modern literature concentrates on Ptolemaic court titles. Of significance are *i.a.* H. Willrich, 'Zum hellenistischen Titel- und Ordens-wesen', *Klio* 9 (1909) 416-21; W. Peremans and E. van 't Dack, *Prosopographia Ptolemaica. VI: La cour* (Louvain 1968).); L. Mooren, 'Über die ptolemäischen Hofrangtitel', in: *Antidoron W. Peremans sexagenario ab alumnis oblatum*. *Studia Hellenistica* 16 (Leuven 1968); *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); G. Herman, 'The "friends" of the early hellenistic rulers: servants or officials?', *Talanta* 12-3 (1980/81) 103-9. I. Savalli-Lestrade, *Les philoi royaux dans l'Asie hellénistique* (Geneva 1998).

¹⁷⁸ Demetrios of Skepsis *ap.* Ath. 155b.

¹⁷⁹ *Pace* Walbank 1984, 70; Herman 1987, 164. Although a bureaucracy existed, esp. in Ptolemaic Egypt, the *central* government of the Hellenistic kingdoms was informal and personal. Even in the Roman Empire in its heyday, a bureaucratic administration existed alongside, or rather *below*, an informal court elite: P. Garnsey and R. Saller, *The Roman Empire. Economy, Society and Culture* (London 1987; 2nd ed. 1990) 20-42.

public titles and material badges of rank. The evidence sometimes hints at such status indicators. Polybios repeatedly reports that at meetings of the Seleukid royal council the man with the highest status had the honour of speaking first, from which we may deduce that the sequence of other speakers was determined by, and indicative of, status as well; invariably, the king was the last to speak – and to decide. At several courts, *sc.* of Alexander, Antiochos the Great, and Mithradates, we hear of etiquette requiring that a select band of *philoï* greeted the king when he woke up in the morning – a clear sign of rank and status comparable to the well-known ceremony of the French court in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁸⁰

The evidence for honorific titulature is relatively abundant but it is uneven and scattered. Because of the disparate nature of the evidence, the meaning of many titles is puzzling, and their relative status elusive. In the context of the Ptolemaic court Léon Mooren has distinguished between ‘honorific titulature’, *i.e.* titles awarded *honoris causa*, and ‘real aulic titulature’, *i.e.* titles indicating concrete aulic functions, such as major-domo, chamberlain or master of the hunt.¹⁸¹ Military and governmental offices belong to the latter category, too, as *philoï* manned all higher administrative and military posts. Also titles like *stratēgos* or satrap were indicative of one’s place in the court hierarchy, although Mooren does not include these. Albeit these categories are helpful for the modern historian, they do no justice to the complexity of Hellenistic aulic titulature. Most ‘real’ aulic titles were of course honorific as well, and may perhaps better be called honorific offices. The system of titles furthermore was not static, but open to change.

Unproportionally numerous evidence for titles from the Ptolemaic empire are extant. Titulature at the Seleukid court seems to have been near identical to that at the Ptolemaic court; both systems influenced each other, with the Seleukids initially having ascendancy over the Ptolemies.¹⁸² The Antigonids stuck to the old Macedonian titles predating Alexander, retaining for instance the honorific office of *sōmatophulax* at the heart of the court hierarchy.¹⁸³ In the Seleukid and Ptolemaic kingdoms a process of subdivision of titulature took place, and a more formal hierarchy with permanent offices developed after *c.* 200. A similar process began at the Antigonid court during the reign of Philippos V.¹⁸⁴ But even

¹⁸⁰ Curt. 8.6.13 (Alexander); Polyb. 8.21.1 (Antiochos); Plut., *Pomp.* 32.4 (Mithradates). See also below, chapter 5.5.

¹⁸¹ Mooren 1975, 2.

¹⁸² Bickerman 1938, 31; Mooren 1975, 2 and 5.

¹⁸³ Diod. 30.10.2, 30.11.1. On this title see above, chapter 3.1.

¹⁸⁴ Le Bohec 1985.

when lesser positions of honour declined into specific professions, at the uppermost levels there always remained an informal circle of powerful men surrounding the king whom Polybios calls ‘the most prominent of the people of the court’.¹⁸⁵

In the system of honorific titulature the word *philos*—an honorific title in itself—was of central importance.¹⁸⁶ We hear of such titles as First Friends (πρῶτοι φίλοι), Honoured Friends’ (τιμώμενοι φίλοι), and First and Highly Honoured Friends (πρῶτοι καὶ πρωτιμώμενοι φίλοι) at both the Seleukid and Ptolemaic courts.¹⁸⁷ These titles were probably introduced already in the early third century. What exactly they implied is unknown, but we may assume that they indicated status differences at the very least. Less elusive are two other notable titles attested for all the courts: Kinsman of the King (συγγενῆς τοῦ βασιλέως) and Foster-Brother of the King (σύντροφος τοῦ βασιλέως).¹⁸⁸ Both titles indicated that one had grown up with the ruling monarch as a royal page; apparently the title of *suggenēs* could also be awarded *honoris causa*.¹⁸⁹ Hellenistic kings, at least the Seleukids, addressed their *suntrophoi* as ‘brother’ and their (former) *tropheus*, *i.e.* the man who had been

¹⁸⁵ Polyb. 5.41.3: τοῖς ἐν ὑπεροχαῖς οὔσι τῶν περὶ τὴν αὐλήν. For a different view: Herman 1997, 215.

¹⁸⁶ Ath. 155b.

¹⁸⁷ Walbank 1984, 70 and Mooren 1975 *passim*. Honoured Friends also τιμώτατοι φίλοι (Jos., *AJ* 12.53). Πρῶτοι φίλοι also: Jos., *AJ* 13.13.85; 1 *Macc.* 11.27; 10.65.

¹⁸⁸ Συγγενῆς: Arr., *Anab.* 7.11.1 (Argeads); 1 *Macc.* 11.31; 2 *Macc.* 11.12; *OGIS* 148, 259; cf. Liv. 30.42.6; Polyb. 4.48.5 (Seleukids); Plut., *Mor.* 197a (Antigonids); Jos., *AJ* 16.288; 17.93; 17.220 (Ptolemies). σύντροφος: Polyb. 5.9.4 (Antigonids); Polyb. 5.82.8; 31.13.2; *OGIS* 247, 1-3; 2 *Macc.* 11.22 (Seleukids); Polyb. 15.33.11; 22.22.1-2 (Ptolemies); Polyb. 32.15.10 (Attalids).

¹⁸⁹ Ath. 48f; Jos., *AJ* 16.288; 17.93; 17.220; *OGIS* 148; Polyb. 4.48.5; 1 *Macc.* 10.20. On *sungeneia* as fictive kinship see A. Erskine, ‘Distant cousins and international relations: Syngeneia in the Hellenistic World’, in: K. Buraselis and K. Zoumboulakis, eds., *The Idea of European Community in History. Conference Proceedings II* (Athens 2003) 205-216. The title perhaps had Persian antecedents: at the Achaimenid court *suggeneis* were noblemen who were closely attached to the king, and formed a ceremonial bodyguard around him; see Arr., *Anab.* 1.15.7; 3.11.5; 7.11.1; 7.11.6; Ath. 48e; Curt. 3.3.14 (*cognati regis*); Xen., *Cyr.* 1.4.27; Diod. 20.1-3. De *hetairoi tou basileōs* mochten zich ‘verwanten’, *suggeneis*, van de vorst noemen en hadden als enigen het voorrecht de koning ter begroeting te kussen (Arr., *Anab.* 7.11.6). But Arrian speaks also of *hetairoi* as the king’s *sungeneis* at Alexander’s court; they were the only ones who had the right to greet the king with a kiss (Arr., *Anab.* 7.11.6).

in charge of the pages, as ‘father’.¹⁹⁰ In this way, ties of ritualised friendship were strengthened by means of fictive kinship.

To the category of ‘real aulic titulature’ belong first of all titles connected with the domestic affairs of the royal household. At the Ptolemaic court the principal dignitary seems to have been the *dioikētēs*, the major-domo; he was aided by a steward, who was responsible for the reception of guests and the progress of symposia and banquets.¹⁹¹ Other officials of high rank were the Chamberlain and the Captain of the Bodyguard.¹⁹² There were several

¹⁹⁰ ‘Brother’: 1 *Macc.* 11.30 (Seleukid, c. 160 bc); ‘father’: Jos., *AJ* 12.127, 12.148; 13.126; cf. Diod. 33.4.1.

¹⁹¹ *Dioikētēs*: *P.Tebt.* 8 = Austin 265 (reign of Ptolemaios II); cf. R.S. Bagnall, ‘Ptolemaic correspondence in P.Tebt. 8’, *JEA* 61 (1975) 168-80; *dioikētēs* is often translated as ‘first minister’ or ‘chief financial minister’, but such designations do not belong in the context of a court; a more useful comparison is that with the ‘Grand-Maître de l’Hôtel’ of the Ancien Régime, *i.e.* the dignitary responsible for the daily (economic) affairs of the household and by consequence of the entire kingdom. This Ptolemaic office perhaps developed from the chiliarchate in the reign of Alexander and the last Argead kings. The chiliarch was the major-domo who controlled the affairs of Alexander’s household, ‘the filter through which matters had to pass on the way to the king’, cf. Grainger 1990, 18-9, who supposes that the chiliarchate was created by Alexander as an *ad hoc* measure to meet with the sudden increase of court affairs after the conquest of the Achaimenid Empire; however, Sancisi 1980, 176, has drawn attention to the similarities between the Argead chiliarch and the Achaemenid office of *hazarpat*, the major-domo of the Persian court, who was second only to the king. See also Ehling 1998, 97-106, claiming that the designation ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν προαγμάτων attested for courtiers of Antiochos III and Antiochos IV in literary sources was a formal, initially non-military Seleukid ‘office’ existing along with an office of ‘commander in chief’ of the army. At the Antigonid court the major-domo perhaps was called ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπείας (Polyb. 4.87.5, 8). Stewart: ἔδευτρος (Ath. 167b; Argead, c. 225); ἀρχεδεαστρος (Jos., *AJ* 12.2.12; Ptolemaic, c. 250).

¹⁹² ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶνος: Porphyr. *FGrH* 260 F 20; *RIG* no. 1158 (Seleukid, reign of Antiochos IX); ἡγεμον τῶν ὑπασπιστῶν: Polyb. 7.16.2 (Seleukid, 216-5); Jos., *AJ.* 12.17 (Ptolemaic, c. 300). A captain of the bodyguard is perhaps also the ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπείας mentioned in Polyb. 4.87.5 and 87.8, cf. Diod. 18.27.1 (Antigonid, reigns of Antigonos III and Philippos V), though this title may as well indicate the office of Major-Domo, cf. Walbank, *Polybios* 536; the Achaemenid major domo (*hazarpat*) was also in charge of the king’s personal bodyguard (Sancisi 1980, 176), but Achaimenid influence on the Antigonid court is unlikely.

titles that may be translated as Chancellor or (Chief) Secretary.¹⁹³ The financial affairs of the royal *oikos* were managed by a (Chief) Treasurer.¹⁹⁴ We also hear of more specialised offices like Master of the Pages and Master of the Hounds.¹⁹⁵ A comparable office was that of head of the royal museum and library at Alexandria, responsible for the intellectual education of the king's children and the royal pages.¹⁹⁶ A special place of privilege and honour was held by the king's personal physician.¹⁹⁷ He was in charge of a staff of doctors and servants.¹⁹⁸ The physician's relative proximity to the person of the king or the queen made him well suited for the role of intermediate between the ruler and those who wished to obtain favours.¹⁹⁹ Several

¹⁹³ ἐπὶ τοῦ γραμματεὺς: Polyb. 4.87.8 (Antigonid, c. 225); γραμματεὺς: Polyb 15.27.7 (Ptolemaic, 203); ἐπιστολογραφός: Polyb. 31.3.16 (Ptolemaic). Cf. Polyb. 5.54.12, who mentions an ἀρχιγραμματεὺς of the royal army (Seleukid, 220-1).

¹⁹⁴ ταμίης: Ath. 493f, 494a (Ptolemaic); ἐπὶ τοῦ νομίσματος: Plut., *Aem.* 23.3 (Antigonid, 168), cf. Plut., *Luc.* 29.8. Aulic treasury-accountants should be distinguished from the regional treasure-guardians and citadel commanders known as θησαυροφύλαξ or γαζοφύλαξ, cf. e.g. Diod. 19.18.1 (Argead, 317 BCE) and 30.11.1 (Antigonid, 169 BCE); the latter guarded (not: managed) hoards stored away in strongholds for the financing of campaigns; how Allen 1983, 9 n. 4, can describe Philetairos' post as γαζοφύλαξ and commander of the Pergamon citadel for king Lysimachos as 'certainly not a military [position]', eludes me.

¹⁹⁵ Master of the Pages (τροφεύς) Plut., *Alex.* 5 (Argeads); Polyb. 31.13.1; *OGIS* 148, 256; App., *Syr.* 68; 1 *Macc.* 11.1, 31-2 (Seleukid); Jos., *AJ* 12.127, 148; 13.126-7; Plut., *Ant.* 5.31 (Ptolemaic). On the *tropheus* see further below. Master of the Hounds (ἀρχικυνηγός): Bevan 1902 II, 283 (Seleukid); this is an honorific office meaning perhaps Master of the Hunt; it may also mean just what it says, i.e. someone responsible for the royal hunting dogs.

¹⁹⁶ Strabo 17.1.8; *P.Oxy* 1241. Cf. Fraser II, 467 n. 34. On the Museum see below, chapter 4.4.

¹⁹⁷ ἀρχιατρός or simply ἰατρός: i.a. Plut., *Alex.* 19; Diod. 17.31.6 (Argead); Plut., *Mor.* 195a-b (Molossian); *RIG* no. 1158; Polyb. 5.56.1, 81.6; Porphyry. *FGrH* 260 F 20 (Seleukid); Polyb. 5.81.6 (Ptolemaic).

¹⁹⁸ Apollonphanes, chief physician of Antiochos III, is said to have been only one of several court doctors, and probably was in charge of the others (Polyb. 5.56.6-7).

¹⁹⁹ As is demonstrated by the deeds of Apollonphanes, personal physician of Antiochus III, who was 'a great favourite' of the king (Polyb. 5.56-7, esp. 56.2). Ptolemaios IV's physician Andreas was quartered in the king's own pavilion during the Raphia campaign (Polyb. 5.81.6; cf. Fraser I, 370). Alexander's prodigious trust in his physician Philippos the Akarnanian gave rise to a popular story recorded by Plutarch (*Alex.* 19 and 77; cf. Just. 12.47.6). In the original version of a related popular Roman tale—recorded by no less than fourteen writers in various versions—the consul Fabricius

court physicians were at the same time famous medical scientists, for instance Herophilos, Erasistratos and Krataios.²⁰⁰

The most important offices—major-domo, chamberlain, chancellor—were first of all honorific offices indicating status and proximity to the throne. Of course, these dignitaries were ultimately responsible for the duties indicated by their titles, but each of them had the requisite staff and assistants to carry out these duties in their stead. In Josephus' account of the arrival of the seventy Judean scholars who came to translate the Tora, the king ordered the steward to take care of the reception of the guests, but the steward forthwith delegated this to a lesser dignitary:

Now the man who was appointed to take care of the reception of guests, Nikanor by name, called for Dorotheos, whose duty it was to make provisions for [guests], and ordered him to lodge and feed every one of them, as had been ordered by the king.²⁰¹

The existence, at the middle levels, of more dignitaries such as this assistant-steward is self-evident. At the lower levels furthermore were various household servants who were not *philoï*: cashiers, grooms, cupbearers, stablehands, musicians, cooks, palace guards, all of whom have been attested, as well as muleteers, clerks, bakers, barbers *et cetera*, whose presence at court can be assumed, as well as slaves.²⁰²

rejects an offer from one of King Pyrrhos' intimates to poison his king; the traitor is Pyrrhos' physician Nikias, his proximity to the king making such an offer plausible (Plut., *Pyrrh.* 21.14-5; *Mor.* 195a-b; cf. Nederlof 1978, 170-4).

²⁰⁰ Herophilos and Erasistratos both worked at the court of Ptolemaios II Philadelphos; the latter had also been the personal physician of Seleukos I Nikator. Krataios, the physician of Mithradates Eupator, was a famous pharmacist and botanist. Hdt. 3.129-37 ascribes a similar fame to Demokedes of Kos, the Greek physician of Darius the Great. On medical scientists at the Hellenistic courts see further below, chapter 4.4.

²⁰¹ Jos., *AJ* 12.2.12-3. Similarly we hear of βασιλικοὺς τροπεζίταις at the Ptolemaic court, 'cashiers' or 'paymasters', *i.e.* lesser officials of the treasury, and presumably answerable to the Chief Treasurer.

²⁰² Cooks: Ath. 405e. Cupbearers: Polyb. 14.11; Ath. 195e; Agesarchos, *FHG* 67 *ap.* Ath. 425e; 606b. Grooms: Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.1; cf. Curt. 5.1.42; 8.6.4. Musicians: Ath. 43bc (Argeads); Ath. 603d-e; Polyb. 14.11; Ath. 167a, 350a, 603b; Mime-players and dancers: Diod. 34.34; Ath. 195e; 607c-d. Hammond 1990, 270, believes there were no slaves at the Argead court, at least until Alexander's campaign in Asia: '[because] at the Macedonian court the royal women made their menfolk's clothes and the Pages waited on the king; it was a slaveless set-up.' However, the royal women's

As was already suggested above, military titles were also indicative of status within the court society, court and army being interwoven. Army commanders were always at the same time *philoï*. All men mentioned by Polybios as members of the royal councils of Antiochos III and Philippos V are also mentioned as the kings' supreme military commanders in the field.²⁰³ For instance Philippos, a *suntrophos* of Antiochos III, was commander of the elephants in the Battle of Raphia (217 BCE) and the Battle of Magnesia, 27 years later.²⁰⁴ The most common title was *stratēgos*, general, but also more precise titles existed, for example Chief Commander of the Fleet in the Ptolemaic kingdom or Commander of the Peltasts in the entourage of Philippos V.²⁰⁵

The royal council

At the heart of the court was the *sunedrion*, the royal council.²⁰⁶ Membership of this council was more substantial than any court title or office. The *sunedrion* was a council of advisors of the king, as exists in most monarchic states. Kings were morally obliged to discuss important matters with the council, in particular foreign affairs and warfare, and could not easily dissent

responsibility for making clothes derived from their status as daughters and wives; they may have been assisted by slaves. The pages certainly did not perform all the duties Hammond suggests; rather, they formed a screen between the king and his servants, as we are informed that grooms saddled the kings' horse and that the pages merely brought the horses to the king and helped him to mount (Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.1; Curt. 5.1.42; 8.6.4); likewise, the pages' duty to wait on the king at table presumably meant that they took over food and drink from the kitchen personnel and placed it on the king's table. On royal pages see further below. The existence of slaves at the Hellenistic courts after Alexander is not in doubt.

²⁰³ For a different view: Herman 1997, 214; Ehling 1998, 104.

²⁰⁴ Polyb. 5.82.8; Liv. 37.41.1; App., *Syr.* 33.

²⁰⁵ Polyb. 15.25.37: ἐπὶ τοῦ ναυτικοῦ; 4.87.8: ἐπὶ τοῦ πελταστῶν.

²⁰⁶ Jos., *AJ* 12.25 (Ptolemaios II). Polyb. 15.25.27 (Ptolemaios V). App., *Syr.* 11.2.9; Polyb. 5.41.6; 5.49.1; 5.49.5-6; 5.50.3; 5.52.1; 5.58.2; 8.21.2; 11.3.13-4 (Antiochos III). Diod. 34.1.1; 34.16 (Antiochos VII). Polyb. 4.23.5; 4.24.8; 5.2.1; 5.4.13; 5.16.5; 5.102.1; Diod. 28.2 (Philippos V). Other: App. 11.3.14; Jos., *AJ* 17.106; 17.132. Polyb. 7.5.2; 15.25.26; 16.22.10. Cf. Liv. 35.17.3, 42.50.1, 42.51.1 (*consilium*). A royal council existed in Argead Macedonian long before Philippos II (Walbank I, 470). On Ptolemaic and Seleukid councils see 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.

from their council's decisions, even as the council formally only advised the king. If a deceased king left a minor successor, the *sunedrion* could rule in his place.²⁰⁷ Still, the authority of the royal council was unofficial and informal; in literary sources the *sunedrion* appears as the single most important body in the government of the kingdoms, but the word is absent from inscriptions.

A *sunedrion* consisted of the king and the most powerful of his *philoï*, just as the council of Alexander consisted of representatives of the high nobility of Macedonia, the *hetairoi*. Ideally, these were men of the king's own choosing. In practice, however, the king did not necessarily have the last saying in the composition of the *sunedrion*. In case of disagreement the most influential person or faction could enforce a decision against the king's will. To the outside world, however, king and council would always present an image of unity. Polybios understood this when he added the following concluding sentences to a lengthy reconstruction of a meeting of Philippos V's council in 218/7 :

Finally the king spoke, if indeed we are to suppose that he gave his own opinion; for it is hardly believable that a seventeen year old boy was able to decide about such grave matters of the kingdom. It is, however, the duty of writers to attribute to the supreme ruler the expression of opinion which prevailed at his council, while it is open for the reader to suspect that such decisions and the arguments on which they rest are due to his associates and especially to those closest to his person.²⁰⁸

An important aspect of the ideal of equality was forthrightness.²⁰⁹ *Parrhēsia*, 'freedom of speech', was fundamental in Athenian democracy, but frankness of speech in itself was originally an aristocratic ideal, a central virtue in the Greek concept of friendship.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Polyb. 4.76.1, 87.7; 7.5.2-3; 15.25.26; 18.53.5; Caes., *BCiv* 3.105. One of the council-members was appointed guardian of the child-king (*epitropos*): Polyb. 15.25.21; 16.22.10; Diod. 30.15.1; 2 *Macc.* 3.7; 11.1; 13.2; Caes., *BCiv* 3.108 (*nutricius*).

²⁰⁸ Polyb. 4.24.1-2.

²⁰⁹ Curt. 3.12.16; Plut., *Alex.* 9; Polyb. 5.27.6.

²¹⁰ Konstan 1997, 93-4; A. Momigliano, 'Freedom of speech in Antiquity', in: P.P. Wiener ed., *Dictionary of the History of Ideas 2. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas* (New York 1973) 252-63. ²¹⁰ On *parrhēsia* and Classical democracy see I. Sluiter and R.M. Rosen eds., *Free Speech in Classical Antiquity*. Mnemosyne Supplement 254 (Leiden 2004), esp. the contribution of K. Raaflaub, 'Aristocracy and Freedom of Speech in the Graeco-Roman World', 41-61, tracing the development of

Typically, many passages in Plutarch's *Moralia* dealing with *parrhēsia* take the form of conversations between a king and a courtier. In a letter ascribed to Isokrates, the author praises the *parrhēsia* of the addressee, Diodotos, a former courtier of Philippos II, noting that:

Those rulers who have a praiseworthy earnestness of soul regard this [frankness] as useful, whereas those whose nature is weaker than the powers they possess despise it, believing that it would compel them to do what they do not want to do; they do not realise, however, that those who most dare to disagree concerning what is advantageous are the very ones who afford them the maximum capacity to do what they wish. For it stands to reason that monarchies ... cannot endure in power by relying on those who speak only to please. ... But if they put their trust in those who speak frankly for the best then much is salvaged even in situations that seem headed for ruin.²¹¹

The frankness of speech that was expected from a good courtier, even when it meant disagreeing with the king, is exemplified by the topos of the king who brings himself to ruin by not listening to his counsellors. To quote only example:

When his *philoī* advised him to wait for reinforcements ... he (Ptolemaios Keraunos) would not listen to their words. King Ptolemaios was killed and the entire Macedonian army was destroyed by the Celts.²¹²

Again, the reality may have been less ideal – as is suggested by another topos: the king who after a promising start is corrupted by power and becomes a tyrant, surrounding himself with sycophants and parasites:

oligarchic freedom of speech among equals (*isēgoria*) to its broader, democratic meaning as the recognition that 'everyone had a right to say everything', for which the term *parrhēsia* was introduced. On *parrhēsia* and democracy see now also A.W. Saxonhouse, *Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens* (Cambridge 2006). In the meantime, the aristocratic ideal of frankness among equals of course did not altogether disappear, least of all in Macedonia.

²¹¹ (Ps.)Isocr., *Ep.* 4. Compare Kleitos' sneer at Alexander, urging him to allow the Macedonian Companions 'to speak out freely what [they] wished to say, or else not to invite to supper men who were free and spoke their minds, but to live with barbarians and slaves, who would do obeisance to his white tunic and Persian girdle' (Plut., *Alex.* 51.3).

²¹² Diod. 22.3.1.

[Then] the king (Antiochos III) held a council regarding the Roman War. There each tried to outdo each other in fighting-spirit, since each thought that he would win greater favour in proportion to the severity of his attitude towards the Romans, while others assailed the insolence of their demands, seeing that they were imposing terms upon Antiochos the Great King of Asia.²¹³

The royal council acted, in continuation of former Argead practice, as a tribunal in cases of treason against the king.²¹⁴ Again, this was an informal prerogative. The *sunedrion* was not a formal judicial court; its members tried their peers because treason was first of all violation of *philia*, and perhaps also because it was a noble prerogative to be tried by equals.²¹⁵ The *sunedrion* was also present when the king received foreign ambassadors.²¹⁶

Friends or flatterers?

The manner in which they behaved distinguished courtiers from non-courtiers. Rules of conduct form a central feature of court culture, the importance of which was already recognised by Elias, albeit he wrongly attributed to the king a free rein in manipulating court etiquette to his own discretion.²¹⁷ Polybios provides a rare description of the ideal Hellenistic courtier, in his portrayal of the Ptolemaic *philos* Aristonikos:

Aristonikos, a courtier of King Ptolemaios, was a eunuch but in his youth had become a *sunthropos* of the king. As an adult he proved to be more masculine in courage and character than eunuchs usually are. For he was a born soldier and spent most of his time in the company of other such men, and studying military matters. He was also very good in the art of conversation. In addition to that he was by nature benevolent (which is rare) and generous.²¹⁸

²¹³ Liv. 35.17.3-4.

²¹⁴ Diod. 19.46.1-4.

²¹⁵ Arr., *Anab.* 1.25.1 (*hetairoi*); Diod. 19.46.1-4; Polyb. 5.29.6; 8.21.2-3.

²¹⁶ Diod. 28.12; Polyb. 2.50.1-2; 4.23.4-5.

²¹⁷ Elias 1969, 135; cf. Duindam 1995, 97-101.

²¹⁸ Polyb. 22.22.1-5 *ap. Suda* s.v. 'Aristonikos'. The picture is highly reminiscent of the ideal courtier as depicted in Baldesar Castiglione's dialogue on etiquette from 1528: 'I believe his first duty is to know how to handle expertly every kind of weapon, either on foot or mounted, to understand all their finer points, and to be especially well informed about all those weapons commonly used among gentlemen.' A courtier should furthermore be 'courteous, compassionate, generous, affable and charming as a companion, lively and diligent in serving and forwarding the advantage and honour of

Erudition and *esprit* characterised the true courtier.²¹⁹ Good behaviour and sharp-wittedness were essential in the competition for favour and status. Hellenistic courtiers are often depicted as flatterers (*kolakes*) and parasites (*parasitoi*) who use words to please their royal hosts. The character of the flatterer, who would say anything to please a powerful host, is well known from Hellenistic comedy and moral writings from the imperial period.²²⁰ ‘At dinner I am a wit, and cause much laughter and praise my host’, says a parasite in a comedy of Epicharmos, and already Philippos II enjoyed being surrounded by men ‘who could say funny things’.²²¹ The image of the courtier as flatterer testifies to the importance of the art of conversation at the Hellenistic courts, especially during banquets and symposia. Josephus tells how a jester at the Ptolemaic court, ‘who was appointed for jokes and laughter at festivals’ was called upon by the guests during a symposium, and made jokes at the expense of one of the *philoi*; when this man retaliated with an even more clever joke, ‘the king admired his answer, which was so wisely made, and directed them all to make an acclamation, as a mark of their approval of his jest.’²²² And when Ptolemaios Philadelphos entertained Jewish scholars at his court, ‘he began to talk philosophically to them, and asked everyone of them a philosophical question ... and when they had explained all the problems that had been proposed by the king about every point, he was well-pleased with their answers.’²²³ The complexity and learnedness of court poetry, with its references to obscure versions of myths and ingenious literary allusions,

his friends’, and should have ‘knowledge of so many subjects that he can readily vary his conversation a great deal and adapt himself to the qualities of those with whom he has dealings.’ Cited after G. Bull’s translation, Harmondsworth 1967 (2nd abbr. edn. 1995) 11 and 25-6.

²¹⁹ Strootman 1993, 59. Various anecdotes about conversations between kings and philosophers attest to this: See e.g. Ath. 493e-494b; Diog. Laert. 50.7.177. Sharp-wittedness was also a necessity at the courts of the Ancien Régime, as apparent from the works of insiders such as Castiglione or Saint-Simon, and excellently illustrated by Patrice Leconte’s well-informed film *Ridicule* (1996) about the court of Louis XVI. As we have seen above, the young Judean aristocrat Joseph who travelled to Egypt to acquire privileges from the Ptolemaic king in Jos., *AJ* 12.17-32, was successful because he impressed the king with his intelligence and wit.

²²⁰ See esp. the collection of anecdotes in Ath. 235.

²²¹ Epicharmos CGF 96 *ap.* Ath. 235f-e; cf. Eupolis, *CAFI* 301 *ap.* Ath. 236f. Philippos II: Ath. 435c.

²²² Jos., *AJ* 12.4.9.

²²³ Jos., *AJ* 12.2.12.

give some idea of the level of sophistication that was required to take part in the table talk at court.²²⁴

Dress codes

‘Without clothing,’ Thomas Carlyle wrote in 1831, ‘the whole fabric of Government, Legislation, Property, Police, and Civilized Society, are dissolved, in wails and howls.’²²⁵ Ever since the pioneering work of Herbert Spencer,²²⁶ sociologists and anthropologists have been aware of the almost universal need for expressing one’s social status by displaying material status symbols, notably on ceremonial occasions. It goes without saying that clothing and other forms of personal adornment are instrumental in expressing status and identity. Clothing is communicative of a person’s social, economic or official position in society; it has the ability of moving others to deal with this person in the culturally appropriate manner. Clothing therefore expresses symbolic messages known and understood by others.²²⁷ Such

²²⁴ On aulic poetry see below, chapter 4.

²²⁵ T. Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus. The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* (London 1869; orig. 1831) 59-60; cited after Schwarz (*op. cit.* below) 28.

²²⁶ H. Spencer, *Principles of Sociology* II (New York 1880).

²²⁷ Cf. P.G. Bogatyrev, *The Function of Folk Costume in Moravian Slovakia*. Approaches to Semiotics 5. Translated by R.G. Crun (The Hague 1971; orig. 1937) 83: ‘In order to grasp the social functions of costumes we must learn to read them as signs in the same way we learn to read and understand languages.’ This basic assumption was elaborated by A. Schwarz, ‘Uncovering the secret vice. Toward an anthropology of clothing and adornment’, in: Cordwell & Schwarz 1979, 23-46, at 23: ‘The ability of clothing to express certain principles and emotions, and move men to act in the cultural appropriate manner may be called its symbolic or rhetorical power; through their capacity to symbolize a social order, clothes are related to social action and communication in a dynamic way’. According to M.A. Roach and J.B. Eicher, ‘The language of personal adornment’, in: Cordwell and Schwarz 1979, 7-21, costume ‘suggests the behaviors (roles) of people on the basis of their ... multiple connections with each other and can, therefore, distinguish the powerful from the weak, the rich from the poor, ... the leader from the follower’. P. Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris 1979), amalgamated the social function of clothing with his concept of ‘taste’. For a bibliography of the history and sociology of clothing see W. Winkelmoen, ‘Nieuwe textielhistorische literatuur’, *Textielhistorische Bijdragen* 31 (1991) 194-6. See further: M.J. Horn, *The second Skin. An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing* (2nd edn. Boston 1975); T. Polhemus ed., *Fashion and Anti-Fashion. An Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* (London 1978); S.B. Kaiser, *The Social Psychology of Clothing and Personal Adornment* (New York 1985); A.

messages are aimed at two audiences: members of the social group that one wishes to belong to, and non-members from whom one wishes to be distanced. In most societies to this day, individuals are morally obliged to dress in accordance with the social status allotted to them by society.²²⁸ The dynamics were usually not determined by legal prescriptions but by unwritten rules which were well known to all members of society and respected by most of them. Status markers could be monopolised by their expensiveness and rarity, by morality or even by legislation.²²⁹ In the monarchies of Early Modern Europe one could see that a man belonged to the court by the colour and cut of his tunic, and the ornaments he wore. The Ottoman court of the same period knew even stricter rules, concerning for instance the colour of caftans and the height of turbans. Through the medium of his costume the Ottoman courtier's status and the specific aulic duties he exercised were indicated.

The precise character of such codes at the Hellenistic courts is hard to determine due to lack of evidence. It is impossible to say what subtle signs indicated differences in rank and status among the *philoï*, what distinguished the important from the very important. Still, the general principles of court dress in the Hellenistic age can be reconstructed. Tradition was all-important. Contrary to the modern western practice, in which status symbols can be acquired by all social groups provided they can afford them, and the trend-setters are constantly at pains to find new ways of distinguishing themselves, status symbols in the ancient world were not dynamic and generally remained current for centuries. A fundamental aspect of the dress of *philoï* was that it was a derivation of the dress of the king. Not only was their dress basically the same as that of the king, *philoï* also received their clothing from the king.

Ribeiro, *Dress and Morality* (London 1986); R.P. Rubinstein, *Dress Codes. Meaning and Messages in American Culture* (Boulder etc. 1995).

²²⁸ Cf. G. Lipovetsky, *L'Empire de l'éphémère. La mode et son destin dans les sociétés modernes* (Paris 1987), who contrasts this with the gradual democratisation of clothing in the Western world since the French Revolution; it seems however that the main effect of this process of democratisation has been that people *voluntarily* dress in accordance with their social status.

²²⁹ M. Reinhold, 'On status symbols in the Ancient World', *CJ* 64.7 (1969) 300-4; cf. the important remarks by L. Bonfante in her introduction to J.L. Sebesta and L. Bonfante eds., *The World of Roman Costume* (Madison 1994) 3-10, at 5. In the Ottoman Empire before 1800 the wearing of furs expressed status, but specific furs were linked to court offices; only the sultan wore black fox: P. Mansel, *Constantinople. The City of the World's Desire, 1453-1924* (Harmondsworth 1995) 67.

Clothing was instrumental in constructing the cohesiveness of the *philoi* group, as by clothing in like manner the *philoi* expressed their loyalty to each other and to the king.²³⁰

What did a *philos* look like? It is difficult to tell what differences there were between the courts of the respective kingdoms. The overall picture is a high degree of similarity. The costume in which *philoi* appeared in public is fairly well known from written sources, mosaics and frescoes, although most of the pictorial evidence dates to the early Hellenistic period. The most distinctive elements were riding boots (*krepides*), hat (*kausia*), and short mantle (*chlamys*).²³¹ This means that *philoi* wore, at least on ceremonial occasions, the traditional costume of the Macedonian Companion aristocracy, just like the king himself.²³² *Chlamys* and *krepides* were used in the whole of Greece, but the combination was typical for aristocracies in Thessaly and Macedonia. Moreover, the Macedonian *chlamys* differed in shape and size from the Greek version. It was a short mantle in the shape of a semicircle,

²³⁰ The importance of clothing for group cohesiveness is a recurring theme in the essays collected in J.M. Cordwell and A. Schwarz eds., *The Fabrics of Culture. The Anthropology of Clothing and Personal Adornment* (The Hague, Paris, New York 1979). For instance I. Pokornowski, 'Beads and personal adornment' (pp. 103-17) argues that among the Yoruba of Nigeria and Benin the wearing of beads provides a feeling of unity; beads are also employed to validate the authority of the king, who expresses his association with society by wearing a beaded crown on ceremonial occasions; H.J. Drewal, 'Pageantry and power in Yoruba costuming' (189-230) also stresses the importance of clothing as a means of expressing allegiance in Yoruba society: 'Attire also often defines a person's membership in social, religious, or economic groups within the community and substantial amounts of money are devoted to ... outfits worn by all members on ceremonial occasions.' On group cohesiveness in general, see M.A. Hogg, *The Social Psychology of Group Cohesiveness. From Attraction to Social Identity* (New York etc. 1992).

²³¹ *Krepides*: Plut., *Ant.* 54.5; *Mor.* 760b; Hdn. 4.8. *Krepides* originally were sandals with straps as high as the knees, under which cloth was worn: E. Neuffer, *Das Kostüm Alexander des Grossen* (diss. Giessen 1929) 24. *Kausia* and *chlamys*: Polyb. 15.33.4; Plut., *Cleom.* 13.2; s.v. 'krepides' in: K.D. Morrow, *Greek Footwear and the Dating of Greek Sculpture* (Madison 1985). On Greek costume in general see G. Losfeld, *L'art grec et le vêtement* (Paris 1994), and J. Laver, *Costume in Antiquity* (London 1964).

²³² Macedonian *hetairoi* dressed this way are depicted on the Alexander Mosaic from Pompeii, the so-called Alexander Sarcophagus in the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul, the frescoes in the Eastern Tomb and Kinch Tomb at Lefkadia and the monument of Krateros in Delphi. The traditional costume of the king: Plut., *Mor.* 178d; *Ant.* 54.5; *Demetr.* 41.4-5, cf. Ath. 253d-254b; 535f; Val. Max. 5.1 ext. 4. Plut., *Ant.* 54.5; Eusthatios *ad Od.* 1399, Hdn. 4.8.1-2.

which was attached with a clap on one of the shoulders; the mantle originated in Thessaly or Macedonia as a rider's cloak and could also be worn over a cuirass. It is this variant of the *chlamys* that we see on the Alexander Sarcophagus and the mosaics of Pella.²³³ On the Alexander Mosaic Alexander wears a long-sleeved tunic under his armour, and this piece of cloth seems typical for Northern Greece and Macedonia as well. The Companion cavalrymen on the Alexander Sarcophagus likewise wear long-sleeved tunics over Greek-style chitons. Unlike the *chlamys*, the *kausia* was fully Macedonian – a piece of traditional ‘folk costume’ that originated long before the Hellenistic age. A *kausia* was a cap made of wool, leather, or felt and looking like a beret.²³⁴ In pre-Hellenistic Macedonia *kausiai* were worn by the ruling classes and had military connotations.

²³³ Neuffer 1929, 22; C. Saatsoglou-Paliadeli, ‘Aspects of ancient Macedonian costume’, *JHS* 113 (1993) 122-47, esp. 143. The evidence for the *chlamys* in Greek culture is discussed in L. Heuzey, *Histoire du costume antique* (Paris 1922) 116-41; cf. M. Bieber, *Griechische Kleidung* (Berlin 1928) 69. An important clue for the shape of the Macedonian *chlamys* is given by Plut., *Alex.* 26.5 and Plin., *NH* 5.62, who both compare the ground plan of Alexandria with the shape of a *chlamys*.

²³⁴ See especially Saatsoglou 1993, 122-47, who discusses written and material evidence. The material evidence is catalogued by P. Dintsis, *Hellenistische Helme* (Rome 1986). Because the word *kausia* is not mentioned in Greek literature before 326 BCE, much has been made of its origin. It has been related to the better known Thessalian *petasos* and has therefore often been translated as ‘broad-brimmed hat’; this identification is now discarded because it cannot be supported by material evidence. The *kausia* of the written sources has been identified also with the mushroom-shaped soldier's cap known from Hellenistic terracotta figurines; on the basis of this identification D.B. Thompson, *The Terracotta Figurines of the Hellenistic Period* (Princeton, N.J. 1963) 53-55, has suggested an oriental origin for the *kausia*. B.M. Kingsley took this to heart and argued that the *kausia* originated in Bactria and can be identified with the modern *chitrali*, the mushroom-shaped woollen cap worn by men in eastern Afghanistan and north-west Pakistan: B.M. Kingsley, ‘The “chitrali”. A Macedonian import to the West’, *Afghanistan Journal* 8.3 (1981) 90-3; ‘The cap that survived Alexander’, *AJA* 85 (1981) 39-46; ‘The *kausia* diadematophoros’, *AJA* 88 (1984) 66-8. It is more likely, however, that the *kausia*—mentioned in the sources mainly in relation to kings and aristocrats—looked like the berets depicted e.g. on Baktrian coins and the hunting mosaics of Pella; cf. E.A. Fredericksmeier, ‘Alexander the Great and the Macedonian *kausia*’, *TAPhA* 116 (1986) 215-27. A.M. Prestianni-Galliombardo, ‘*Kausia* diadematophoros in Macedonia. Testimonianze misconosciute e nuove proposte’, *Messana* n.s. 1 (1989) 1-13, at 9, has argued that the *kausia* was an exclusive royal head-gear that was introduced by Alexander himself. More probably the cap originated in the Balkans much earlier (already Neuffer 1929, 23-4) but made its debut in the Greek sources only after the Macedonian expansion under Philippos and Alexander, cf. Saatsoglou 1993, 145,

During the reigns of Philippos II and Alexander this attire was the distinctive dress of the Companion aristocracy. It remained in use throughout the Hellenistic age; in the kingdoms of the Antigonids, Seleukids and Ptolemies it was the standard costume of the court nobility.²³⁵ Courtiers of other kings may have followed suit, especially in the Attalid and Baktrian monarchies. Antigonid courtiers dressed in the Macedonian manner because Macedonia was the central power base of the Antigonid dynasty. Ptolemaic and Seleukid nobles dressed in the Macedonian manner because Macedonia was *not* the power base of these dynasties: the Macedonians living in Asia and Egypt were a privileged people who had all the more reason to make their ethnicity visible, in order to distinguish themselves, and to express allegiance with their compatriots and with the monarchy. The further away from Macedonia, it seems, the stronger the need to cling to Macedonian traditions. This is demonstrated by the fact that Baktrian kings appear on their coins wearing conspicuous *kausiai*, whilst Antigonid kings never bothered to be portrayed with it. Greek *philo*i perhaps wore Macedonian costume as well. Also Egyptians or Iranians who managed to gain access to the courts of the Ptolemies and Seleukids respectively, will have put on the prescribed clothing, just as they would assume Greek names.

By wearing Macedonian costume, courtiers also expressed allegiance to the non-noble *Makedones* who constituted the royal phalanxes. Plutarch relates how the ‘nationalistic’ feelings of these *Makedones* could be stirred by traditional dress:

who concludes that: ‘The new archaeological evidence reaffirms the reliability of the ancient sources, attributing [*kausia*, *chlamys* and *krepides*] to the Macedonians long before their campaign to the east. Therefore *argumenta e silentio* seem to be on the retreat in the face of ... new archaeological material being discovered in Northern Greece’. On the shape and material of the *kausia* see Saatsoglou 1993, 136-7. The *kausia* is best known from portrait coins of Greek-Baktrian coins; another fine example is the one worn by the young man depicted with an older woman on the Boscoreale Fresco, a Roman copy of a third century Greek original, who was for that reason in the past rendered a hellenistic king and queen, esp. Alexander IV and Olympias; F.G.J. Müller, *The Wall Paintings From the Oecus of the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor in Boscoreale* (Amsterdam 1994), finds this wishful thinking and argues that the fresco depicts Achilles and Thetis, albeit dressed as Hellenistic aristocrats.

²³⁵ Plut., *Mor.* 760b; *Pyrrh.* 11.6, cf. *Demetr.* 44; *Eum.* 6.1-2, 8.6-7; *Ant.* 54.4-6; *Mor.* 760b; Polyæn. 5.44.5; Diod. 17.7.3; Onesikritos FGh 134 F 17a *ap.* Strabo 15.1.63-5, cf. Plut., *Alex.* 65. For the reliability of Plutarch as a source for Hellenistic royal dress: W.J. Tatum, ‘The regal image in Plutarch’s *Lives*’, *JHS* 116 (1996) 135-51. Cf. Bevan 1927 I, 119; Neuffer 1929, 22-7; Bickerman 1938, 32; Aymard 1953, 401; Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 1993, 137-9.

For the Macedonians longed for him [*sc.* Krateros] exceedingly, and if they should only see his *kausia* and hear his voice, they would go over to him with a rush, with all their arms.²³⁶

The fact that the Macedonian troops were to recognise Krateros by his *kausia* implies that the cap was not worn by the common rank and file but only by their commanders. The same conclusion may be drawn from the lion-hunt mosaic from Pella. The mosaic, dating to the Antigonid period, perhaps depicts the famous tale of how Krateros saved the life of Alexander during a lion hunt near Susa.²³⁷ The two young men are shown nude, but despite their ‘heroic nakedness’ and idealised, almost god-like features, both wear a *chlamys* and one of them a *kausia*, being the only attributes to make them recognisable as noblemen of the Macedonian court.

Still, the wearing of *kausiai* and *chlamydes* as such was not the prerogative of kings and courtiers. What qualified such clothing as aristocratic, was the use of purple dye. Purple was, together with the diadem, the attribute of royalty *par excellence*. There were various forms of purple, a dye made from sea snails in an extraordinary labour-intensive process, the most valuable, reddish variant being ‘royal purple’ or ‘Tyrian purple’. The sheer cost as well as tradition prohibited non-elite groups to wear it. In the ancient Near East the wearing of costumes dyed with royal purple was monopolised by kings and royal dignitaries; in Classical Greece ‘royal’ purple was associated with the gods. The use of purple dyes by Hellenistic kings and their courtiers referred to both traditions. The clearest indication that purple was the crucial badge of rank of Hellenistic courtiers is the fact that the Latin translation of *philos tou basileōs* is *purpuratus*.²³⁸ There is some evidence that apart from the king only *philoī* had the right to wear clothing that was in part dyed with royal purple of Tyre.²³⁹ The two young men

²³⁶ Plut., *Eum.* 6.1-2. Polyæn. 5.44.5 relates how the Achaimenid commander Memnon together with his officers put on *kausiai* to make some Macedonian soldiers believe that they really were their general Kalas and his staff.

²³⁷ Ph. Petsas, *Pella. Alexander the Great's Capital* (Thessaloniki 1978) 55; cf. 95-7 with figs 8 and 9, and 99-102 with figs 12-15. The same incident is commemorated on the votive monument of Krateros at Delphi.

²³⁸ 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; Vitruv. 2 *pr.* 1. Quint. 8.5.24.

²³⁹ Ath. 211b; Phylarchos *FGrH* 81 F 41 *ap.* Ath. 539e; *ibidem ap.* Ath. 540a. Ath. 211b.

on the lion hunt mosaic from Pella wear white *chlamydes* with red borders.²⁴⁰ Also remains of paint on the Alexander Sarcophagus show that Companion cavalrymen had red purple borders on their *chlamydes*. According to written evidence, the dress of later *philoï* was coloured with this dye as well.²⁴¹

Philoï received their purple clothing from the king. Purple dresses were perhaps the most prestigious gifts dealt out by kings to their courtiers. When Eumenes of Kardia once gave purple mantles and hats to his bodyguards, Plutarch comments that:

They were delighted to receive from him the same honours as kings bestow upon their *philoï*; for Eumenes was empowered to distribute purple *kausiai* and *chlamydes*, and this was a special gift of royalty among the Macedonians.²⁴²

When in 326 Onesikritos of Astypalaia was sent off as an ambassador to the Indian gymnosophists near Taxila, Alexander gave him a *chlamys* and a *kausia* as the tokens of his assignment.²⁴³ At the time 1 *Maccabees* was written, *kausiai* and *chlamydes* were still symbols of royalty in the Seleukid kingdom: when Antiochos Epiphanes lay dying in c. 164 and appointed a *philos* named Philippos as regent for his successor Antiochos V Eupator, who was still a minor, Philippos received the king's mantle and hat as badges of his office.²⁴⁴ We know from the same source that purple clothes were also given to allies and friends outside the court.²⁴⁵ Receiving such gifts was a mark of being accepted into the circle of the king's friends. This was instrumental in the king's efforts to control the exit and entrance of the *philoï* group.

²⁴⁰ Petsas 1978, 95-7. Cf. N. Sekunda, *The Army of Alexander the Great* (London 1984) 10.

²⁴¹ Ath. 211b; 539f; Diod. 17.77.4-5; Plut., *Eum.* 8.6-7; Justin. 12.3.8 (who adds gold embroidery to the purple dresses).

²⁴² Plut., *Eum.* 8.6-7.

²⁴³ Strabo 15.1.63-5.

²⁴⁴ 1 *Macc.* 6.15.

²⁴⁵ 1 *Macc.* 10.20 relates that the Makkabean leader Jonathan, an ally of Alexander Balas, was given the titles of *philos* and *adelphos* of the king, and received a purple dress and a golden wreath (*stephanos*); cf. 1 *Macc.* 10.62. Likewise Dorimachos, leader of the Aitolian League in the late third century, received a *kausia* and a *chlamys* when he became the ally of the Antigonid king in 221 (Polyb. 4.4.5).

3.5 Factions and Favourites

Theoretically, the king decided who would become a *philos*, and directed the distribution of offices and titles. The *philoï* depended on the king's grace for obtaining and preserving status at court. Assignments in the army and the government were ideally given on a temporal and *ad hoc* basis. As Polybios says, kings 'measured friendship and enmity by the sole standard of expedience.'²⁴⁶ Thus, kings tried to forestall the emergence of a hereditary, independent court aristocracy. An anecdote about Antigonos Gonatas exemplifies this ideal:

When a young man, the son of a brave father, but not himself having any reputation for being a good soldier, suggested the propriety of his receiving his father's emoluments, Antigonos said: 'My boy, I give money and presents for the excellence of a man, not for the excellence of his father.'²⁴⁷

In practice, however, royal power was never in the hands of the king alone. The Hellenistic kingdoms were governed by elites who were dependent on the monarchy as institution but not necessarily on the individual monarch. Kings often found it difficult to unseat a *philos* once he had acquired a position of power and influence. Philippos and Alexander had successfully pacified the hereditary nobility of old Macedonia; but in the course of the third century new aristocracies with hereditary prerogatives came into existence, and ancestry again became a criterion for status at court. The longer the kingdoms existed, the more the families of leading *philoï*—who were rewarded for their services to the crown with riches, estates and status—acquired sources of income and prestige of their own. This could be particularly troublesome when the royal title passed from a deceased king to his successor. If the succession had been pre-arranged by the former king, the transition to a new *sunedrion* might take place gradually and placidly, especially when the companions of the new king included sons of his father's *philoï*. Frequently, however, a new king would find it troublesome to replace the sitting members of the royal council with his own intimates.²⁴⁸ Attalos III at his accession allegedly killed all *philoï* of his father.²⁴⁹ Landed estates distributed among the friends of a king may in theory have been open to reconsideration by his successor, but in

²⁴⁶ Polyb. 2.47.5.

²⁴⁷ Plut., *Mor.* 183d.

²⁴⁸ For a contrary view see e.g. Hammond 1989, 55; Herman 1997, 215; Roy 1998, 111.

²⁴⁹ Diod. 35-35.3.

practice this was not so easy. Thus in a decree of Kassandros, the king confirms gifts of land made by Philippos II and Alexander III, even though Kassandros was an enemy of the latter.²⁵⁰ To be sure, even strong and able kings like Antiochos the Great or Philippos V took to secret negotiations, scheming and even murder to get their predecessors' men out of the way and replace them by their own friends. With the gradual development of a hereditary nobility of land-owning *philoï* it became increasingly difficult for kings to appoint confidants. They therefore needed to develop new ways to sideline or obligate office-holders.

Norbert Elias saw the Early Modern court as exclusively a centre of royal power. Recent studies have shown the limitations of royal power in the age of Absolutism even at the court. Duindam, in his critique of Elias' model, has noted that:

The monarch bestowed favors upon parts of the elite to bind them, and subsequently eliminated troublesome opponents in cooperation with those elites. The elite in turn interceded at court for its own clientele. The pyramids of clienteles kept the various parts of a territory together, ... [and] it was rare that the monarch was the sole source of income and prestige for nobles.²⁵¹

At the Hellenistic courts, too, *philoï* had obligations towards their own friends and relatives. Powerful *philoï* maintained retinues of their own.²⁵² The size of a *philos*' personal following, and the status of his *xenoi*, was indicative of his own standing and power.²⁵³ But being a patron also involved obligations to act in the interest of one's clients. Moreover, *philoï* often acted at court in the interest of their cities of origin.²⁵⁴ *Philoï* possessed sources of income,

²⁵⁰ Hammond 1989, 55, who, however, understands this decree as evidence of a new king's freedom to 'appoint his own selection of leading Companions'. For Kassandros' enmity towards Alexander see the interesting remarks in A.B. Bosworth's classic article 'Alexander the Great and the decline of Macedon', *JHS* 106 (1986) 1-12, esp. 11-2.

²⁵¹ Duindam 1994, 79.

²⁵² Plut., *Cleom.* 32.2; Diod. 34.3.1; Ath. 245a; Agatharchides *FHG* II 476 *ap.* Ath. 155d. According to Ath. 251c the philosopher Persaios, a *philos* of Antigonos Gonatas, even had a parasite of his own, a certain Ariston of Chios.

²⁵³ Herman 1997, 216; cf. Herman 1987, 151.

²⁵⁴ I. Savalli-Lestrade, 'Courtisans et citoyens: le cas des philoi attalides', *Chiron* 26 (1996) 149-81, discussing five examples of Attalid courtiers, shows that the activities of *philoï* were not only directed by the king's interests, but that also their relations with their *poleis* determined their actions.

power and status in the form of landed estates. This is a central paradox of the court: the land that had originally been rewarded to courtiers by the crown in order to bind them, inevitably made them less dependent on the crown.

The Hellenistic courts were fundamentally discordant – not only because of the endemic disputes over precedence among the sons and wives of the king, but also because *philoï* competed with each other for the king's favour.²⁵⁵ These two forms of power struggles were interwoven. *Philoï* joined forces in informal factions led by a powerful man or woman—a queen, a prince, a leading man from the *sunedrion*—to secure their position and to best their rivals. Important men tried to gather around them a following as large as possible, both as a source of power and as a tangible sign of their importance at court.²⁵⁶ For example in 203, the *stratēgos* Tlepolemos plotted against Agathokles, who was at that time the most powerful man among the Ptolemaic courtiers:

Tlepolemos, who wished to win over generals, commanders and lesser officers, entertained such men most lavishly at banquets; and on these occasions ... he would make remarks about Agathokles and his family, cautiously at first, then putting him down more openly, and finally flagrantly insulting him. ... As his guests always laughed with him and contributed something of their own witticism to his jokes, the matter soon reached the ears of Agathokles. Their enmity was now complete, and Agathokles lost no time in making insinuations against Tlepolemos himself, accusing him of disloyalty to the king and of planning to help [the Seleukid king] Antiochos take over control of the kingdom.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ As Lane Fox 1979, 431, commented on the court the Alexander: 'Men who love a powerful or popular man do not therefore love each other, and it is no surprise that Craterus, for example, hated Hephaistion, Hephaistion hated Eumenes and Eumenes hated the leader of the Shield Bearers [*sc.* Hephaistion].' Note that in this list the most powerful man is also the most hated. Cf. the fundamental remarks of Burke 1992, 58, on social groups: 'It cannot be assumed that every group is permeated by solidarity; communities have to be constructed and reconstructed. It cannot be assumed that a community is homogeneous in attitudes or free from conflicts'. On conflict as a characteristic of Ancien Régime courts: Duindam 1994, 28-30. On the instability of the Greek *oikos* in general: Cox 1998, 130-67.

²⁵⁶ Herman 1997, 216.

²⁵⁷ Polyb. 15.25.31-4; cf. 50.10-4; Plut., *Cleom.* 32.3. When Aristaios, 'one of the most intimate friends', wished to obtain freedoms for the Jews in Alexandria, he first secured the goodwill of two powerful *philoï*, Sosibios of Taras and Andreas, the captains of the guard; subsequently, when he

Through their involvement in the rivalry called ‘amphimetric disputes’ by Ogden, *philo* could win a lightning career if the prince they supported succeeded to the throne, but risked exile or death when this was not the case. The philosopher Demetrios of Phaleron, for example, was imprisoned by Ptolemaios Philadelphos because he had backed Philadelphos’ half-brother in the struggle over the succession won by Philadelphos’ faction.²⁵⁸ Kings tried, for better or for worse, to profit from the rivalries between their *philo* through the principle of divide and rule. Often, however, the king did not succeed in remaining a lofty arbiter but became himself a party in factional conflicts.

Antiochos the Great versus the *philo*

The latter may be exemplified by the problems that confronted Antiochos III when he succeeded to the throne in 223 . Polybios provides a detailed, and well-informed, account of these events.²⁵⁹ The *sunedrion* inherited by Antiochos from his predecessor Seleukos III was dominated by the faction of a *philos* called Hermeias. This Hermeias was a more powerful and influential figure at the Seleukid court than the new king. Polybios makes it clear that it was Hermeias who made the decisions, repeatedly stating that Hermeias prevented Antiochos from appointing his own friends to important positions. All that the young monarch could do, was allying himself with a rival faction, centred round Epigenes, an experienced, older general. This resulted in a vicious power-struggle between Epigenes and Hermeias. The latter gained momentum when an army mutiny broke out because of arrears of pay. Because the new king’s treasury was still empty—there had not yet been a major campaign to acquire the necessary financial resources—Hermeias offered to pay the troops from his own funds, but demanded in return that Epigenes and his followers would be banished from the court:

The king was much displeased with this proposal ... but troubled as he was by Hermeias’ machinations and enthralled by the obligations of the court, and permanently surrounded by a

made his his petition before the king and the *sunedrion*, Sosibios and Andreas supported him, and persuaded to king to make a decree in accordance with Aristaios’ request (Jos., *AJ* 12.17-32).

²⁵⁸ Diog. Laert. 5.77-8.

²⁵⁹ Polyb. 5 *passim*; these events are also discussed by Herman 1997.

host of guards and courtiers, he was not even master of himself, so that he gave way and acceded to the request.²⁶⁰

Shortly after, Hermeias rid himself of his rival by accusing Epigenes of having sided with the rebel leader Molon. Producing a forged letter from Molon, Hermeias had Epigenes executed without even consulting the king: ‘The king was forced to admit that Epigenes had merited his fate, and the courtiers, though they had their suspicions, were afraid to utter them.’²⁶¹ It was only after Antiochos had achieved two resounding military victories—against Molon in Babylonia and against the Armenian king Artabazanes—that he had obtained enough prestige and wealth to stand up against Hermeias. Still, the removal of Hermeias’ and his men from the key positions at court and in the army was a hazardous undertaking. As he was constantly surrounded by dignitaries and commanders, and accompanied by Hermeias every single day, Antiochos had no opportunity to deliberate with his own confidants. A key role in the plot against Hermeias was played by the chief physician Apollophanes, the only courtier, apart from Hermeias, with whom the king could speak in private. Pretending that the king was seriously ill, ‘Apollophanes and his physicians relieved of their functions for a few days his usual administrative and military attendants’. During these days Antiochos secretly discussed matters with his own friends and Hermeias’ enemies. By pretending that he needed early walks in the cool of the morning to recover, Antiochos managed to lure Hermeias away from the army camp, where he was ambushed and stabbed to death by Antiochos’ friends. Messengers were sent to Apameia to order the execution of Hermeias’ family.²⁶²

A similar conflict accompanied the accession of Philippos V to the Antigonid throne in 218 . Like Antiochos III, Philippos had inherited a council dominated by the *philoï* of his predecessor, Antigonos Doson. The *sunedrion* became divided into two factions, both trying to win the favour of the new king – even though Doson ‘in his will ... had left orders how and by whom each matter was to be managed with the aim of leaving no pretext for rivalries and quarrels among the courtiers (περὶ τὴν αὐλήν)’.²⁶³ One faction was led by a certain Apelles, the other by Alexandros, the Captain of the Bodyguard, and Taurion, ‘minister of

²⁶⁰ Polyb. 5.50.4-5. Polyb. 26.1 and Diod. 31.16 criticise Antiochos IV for breaking the rules of court etiquette by fleeing from his *philoï* and conversing with the common people of Antioch; cf. Herman 1997, 204.

²⁶¹ Polyb. 5.50.14.

²⁶² Polyb. 5.56.1-15.

²⁶³ Polyb. 4.87.7.

Peloponnesian affairs'; Apelles was allied with Leontios, the Captain of the Peltasts, and Megaleas, the Chief Secretary.²⁶⁴ Initially, Apelles was triumphant: 'the governors and dignitaries in Macedonia and Thessaly referred all matters to him, while the Greek cities in voting gifts and honours made little mention of the king, but Apelles was all in all to them.'²⁶⁵ The king first secured the collaboration of Apelles' enemies, then publicly made known that Apelles had fallen into disfavour. Polybios makes it seem as if Apelles was at that moment at the height of his power:

After arriving with great pomp owing to the number of officers and soldiers who had flocked to meet him, [Apelles] proceeded immediately to the royal quarters. He was about to enter, as was his custom, when one of the guards, acting by orders, stopped him, saying that the king was engaged. Disconcerted by this unexpected affront, Apelles ... withdrew much abashed, upon which his followers at once began to drop away quite openly, so that finally he reached his private quarters accompanied only by his own servants. So brief a space of time suffices to exalt and debase men all over the world, and especially those in royal courts, for those are in practice like counters on a reckoning board. For they at the will of the reckoner are now worth a copper and now worth a talent, and courtiers at the nod of the king are at one moment universally envied and at the next universally pitied.²⁶⁶

Apelles, because of his prestige and power, 'was still invited to state banquets and received other such honours, but took no part in councils and was no longer admitted to the king's intimacy'. Apelles and several of their followers committed suicide; his remaining associates were put on trial before the *sunedrion* and the army assembly, on charges of cowardice and insult, and ultimately executed.²⁶⁷

The role of the favourite

As a counterweight to the power of settled *philoï*—whose privileges became increasingly hereditary especially after *c.* 200 —kings could promote 'favourites', *i.e.* outsiders who did not dispose of power bases (landed estates, wealth, hereditary privileges, *et cetera*)

²⁶⁴ Polyb. 4.87.5-8: ἐπὶ τῆς θεραπείας; ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ Πελοπόννησον; ἀ ἐπὶ τῶν πελταστῶν; ἐπὶ τοῦ γραμματείου.

²⁶⁵ Polyb. 5.25.5.

²⁶⁶ Polyb. 5.26.9-14.

²⁶⁷ Polyb. 5.26.15-29.6.

comparable to those of genuine courtiers. By making favourites their closest advisors kings were able to bypass the *sunedrion* with its settled members, and screen themselves off from the *philoï*.

The promotion of favourites is an all-time, almost universal principle of monarchic rule. The ideal favourite was elevated by the ruler to a position of power to which he himself had no title through noble descent or acquired social status, and that he could never have obtained without the king's grace, so that he was entirely dependent on the king for the preservation of his status. Preferably, a favourite would have no children to whom he could transmit his power, at least not officially.²⁶⁸ Thus, Achaimenid, Late Roman and Byzantine rulers patronised castrates, and the rulers of the Ancien Régime often favoured members of the clergy.²⁶⁹ The favourite would also take responsibility for unpopular measures, or take the blame when things went wrong. Hence the negative reputations of favourites, also in our sources for the Hellenistic period:

Philippos [V], the king of the Macedonians, had by him a certain knavish fellow, Herakleides of Taras, who in private conversations made many false and malicious charges against the *philoï* whom Philippos held in high esteem. Eventually Philippos sank so low in impiety as to murder five leading members of the *sunedrion*. From that point on his situation deteriorated, and by embarking on unnecessary wars he came near losing his kingdom at the hands of the Romans. For none of his Friends any longer dared speak their minds or rebuke the king's folly for fear of his impetuous temper.²⁷⁰

When Philippos' popularity dwindled because of his lack of success against the Romans, he blamed Herakleides for it, and had him locked up.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Burke 1992, 48.

²⁶⁹ On favourites at the courts of the Renaissance and the Ancien Régime see H. Elliott en L.W.B. Brockliss eds., *The World of the Favourite* (London 2000). On eunuchs as favourites in the Late Roman Empire: K. Hopkins, 'The political power of Eunuchs', in: *idem, Conquerors and Slaves* (Oxford 1978) 197-242.

²⁷⁰ Diod. 28.2; cf. Polyb. 13.4. Philippos two other favourites, Demetrios of Pharos and Aratos of Sikyon, were also Greeks (Polyb. 5.12.5, cf. 2.47.5).

²⁷¹ Diod. 28.9; Liv. 32.5. In 171 or 170, Antiochos IV put down riots in Antioch by sacrificing Andronikos, his vice-regent in Syria: Andronikos' purple robe was taken from him, after which he was given over to the angry mob to meet his death: 2 *Macc.* 4.30-8; P. van 't Hof, *Bijdrage tot de kennis van Antiochus IV Epiphanes, koning van Syrië* (Amsterdam 1955) 91-2. The same Andronikos

Hellenistic kings employed various sorts of favourites: exiles, defectors from rival courts, foreigners, eunuchs and—last but not least—women.

First, exiles and defectors: men who had, forcibly or voluntarily, abandoned their aboriginal social milieu, and became dependent on the favour of a new host.²⁷² The host, in return, offered security and a chance to gain status and influence. The most exemplary instance is Hannibal, who took refuge at the Seleukid court in 196 after his defeat by Scipio in the Second Punic War. Hannibal became a senior advisor of Antiochos III during the Seleukid-Roman war of 191-188.²⁷³ Although the Carthaginian commander was obviously an anomaly in the Seleukid *sunedrion*, distrusted and hated by the other *philoï*, Hannibal nevertheless enjoyed the full confidence of the king, who sought his advice in personal interviews and gave him important commands.²⁷⁴ The hunt that the Romans made for Hannibal secured his loyalty to Antiochos. Another example is Alexandros the Akarnanian, a former Captain of the Bodyguard or major-domo at the court of the Antigonid king Philippos V.²⁷⁵ After Philippos had been defeated by the Romans at Kynoskephalai, Alexandros attached himself to the Seleukid court, where he made an exceptional career, becoming a

had been responsible for the murder of the son of the preceding king Seleukos IV, in whose name Antiochos had for a short while ruled as regent; see Mørkholm 1966, 45. According to Diod. 30.7.2, Andronikos was killed on account of this murder, which probably had been ordered by Antiochos.

²⁷² The prominence of exiles at court is also stressed by O’Neil 2003, 516: ‘Such men did not have an independent power base and were reliant on royal favour for their influence’; cf. Habicht 1958, 9; Le Bohec 1985, 323. Plutarch informs us that when Kleomenes of Sparta together with his followers fled to Alexandria, Ptolemaios III Euergetes welcomed him and sought to win him with kindness and honours; the king furthermore promised Kleomenes that, as soon as the opportunity arose, of course, he would send him back to Greece with sufficient ships and money to regain his kingship; meanwhile, Ptolemaios gave him an annual pension of 24 talents, the greater part of which Kleomenes spent to win support among ‘the other Greek refugees who were in Egypt’ (Plut., *Cleom.* 32.3).

²⁷³ Liv. 34.42.6-14: *comite et consiliario eodem ad bellum*; cf. 37.45.16; Polyb. 21.17.

²⁷⁴ Distrusted by the *philoï*: Liv. 34.14.4-5, 19.1; 41.2-3, 42.5-14; cf. App., *Syr.* 10. Trusted by the king: Diod. 29.3; Liv. 34.19.7, 42.6-14; 36.6.7, 15.2, 41.2, cf. 34.7.1-21; 37.8.3, 24.4. A similar career was that of Demetrios of Pharos: having lost his petty kingdom in Illyria to the Romans in 219, Demetrios made his escape to the court of Philippos V, whose advisor he became; Demetrios was a born scapegoat: accused by the Romans of having been the aggressor in the Second Illyrian War, he was later blamed for having urged Philippos to make war on Rome; for his career see Polyb. 2.10-11, 16-19; 5.101-8; 7.12.

²⁷⁵ Polyb. 4.87.5; 4.87.8: ἐπι τῆς θεραπέιας. Cf. Liv. 35.18.1-8.

member of the royal *sunedrion* specialised in Greek and Roman matters, and serving the king as a general during the war in Greece in 191 BC.²⁷⁶ The admiral of Antiochos' fleet during the war with Rome, Polyxenidas of Rhodes, who had a seat in the *sunedrion*, was also an exile.²⁷⁷ Following the Roman occupation of Greece in 191 Antiochos III offered hospitality to many Greek leaders, mainly Aitolians, who had fought the Romans; they were merciless delivered to their enemies at the Treaty of Apameia in 188.²⁷⁸

Also, men could go over from one king to another on a more voluntary basis – because the former ruler had violated the unwritten laws of *philia*, or because friendship with a rival king was believed to be more rewarding. When an influential *philos* changed sides, members of his own personal network of friends followed him.²⁷⁹ Such apparent 'treason' was consistent with the principles of *xenia*.²⁸⁰ The offence of having violated the original friendship prevented a return to the former ruler and therefore secured such men's loyalty. An interesting case is the career of Theodotos the Aitolian, a Ptolemaic *philos* who became a favourite of Antiochos the Great. As the Ptolemaic governor of Koile-Syria, this Theodotos had successfully defended the northern entrances to his province against the superior forces of Antiochos in the first year of the Fourth Syrian War (219-217). However, as own his king, Ptolemaios IV, failed or refused to give him proper rewards and honours for his services, Theodotos was deeply insulted. He retaliated by sending a letter to Antiochos, offering to come over to his side with his entire following, and to surrender to him the cities that were in his power. Antiochos accepted. Theodotos took possession of Ptolemaïis in the name of the Seleukid king and even dispatched a force to occupy Tyre. Ptolemaios reacted by sending troops from Egypt to lay siege to Theodotos in Ptolemaïis, but these had to retreat when Antiochos arrived with his army.²⁸¹ Theodotos reward was a lightning career at the Seleukid court. Already the following winter he was given the command of all garrisons in Koile-Syria, and in the campaigning season of 218 held several important commands in the

²⁷⁶ Liv. 35.18.2; 36.11.6, 20.5.

²⁷⁷ Liv. 37.10.1; App., *Syr.* 21; cf. Liv. 36.43.4-7.

²⁷⁸ Liv. 36.12.4; 37.45.17; Polyb. 21.17.7.

²⁷⁹ Polyb. 5.70.10.

²⁸⁰ Herman 1987, 8.

²⁸¹ Polyb. 4.37.5; 5.40.1-3, 61.3-6, 61.8-9, cf. 5.62.2. Several important Ptolemaic officers followed Theodotos to the Seleukid court, cf. D. Gera, 'Ptolemy, son of Thraseas and the Fifth Syrian War', *AncSoc* 18 (1987); J.D. Grainger, *Hellenistic Phoenicia* (Oxford 1991) 98.

Seleukid field army.²⁸² At the Battle of Raphia in 217 he commanded the 10,000 Silver Shields, the Seleukid elite infantry corps.²⁸³ On the eve of this battle, Theodotos made himself a name by a daring action: sneaking into the Ptolemaic army camp in the dead of night with only two companions, he found his way to the Royal Pavilion, killed the guards, tried (unsuccessfully) to assassinate king Ptolemaios, and returned alive and unharmed – a feat that seems to have been inspired more by his personal desire for revenge than by a wish to impress Antiochos, whose favour he already had secured.²⁸⁴ The last time we hear of Theodotos the Aitolian is during the war with Achaïos (216-213 BC), when, together with two other generals, he led the decisive assault on the besieged citadel of Sardis.²⁸⁵

Another type of favourite was the social outsider. A well-known instance is the remarkable rise of Peukestas at the court of Alexander. Peukestas, belonging at best to the lesser Macedonian nobility, was an infantry officer for whom Alexander, in defiance of tradition, created an eighth *sōmatophulax* office.²⁸⁶ Peukestas soon after became satrap of the Persis and remained one of Alexander's most loyal collaborators until well after the king's death. A similar devotion to Alexander characterised his secretary Eumenes of Kardia. As a Greek, Eumenes was an anomaly in the top ranks of the Macedonian court, but Alexander nonetheless favoured him, and his loyalty to the Argead house remained proverbial even after Alexander's death. The promotion of Greeks at the Argead court, in opposition to ethnic Macedonians, goes back to Philippos II. But with the enormous influx of Greeks to the Hellenistic courts in the age of the Diadochs, the dichotomy between Greeks and Macedonians dwindled. At the Seleukid and Ptolemaic courts of the later Hellenistic period non-Greeks, notably Iranians and Egyptians, turn up as favourites, as well as eunuchs.²⁸⁷ At the Ptolemaic court for instance we encounter a certain Aristonikos—the ideal courtier discussed in a previous section of this chapter—who was a prominent *philos* of an unknown

²⁸² Polyb. 5.66.5, 68.9-10, 69.3.

²⁸³ Polyb. 5.79.3.

²⁸⁴ Polyb. 81.1-7.

²⁸⁵ Polyb. 7.16.1-18.10.

²⁸⁶ Arr., *Anab.* 6.28.3-4; cf. Berve no. 634. The fact that the *sōmatophulax* and later king Lysimachos, although he was certainly a Macedonian (Paus. 1.9.5; cf. Just. 15.3.1), could be branded a Thessalian *peneste* by his enemies (Theopomp. *FGrH* F 84 *ap.* Ath. 260a) indicates that he, too, may have risen on the social ladder in an extraordinary manner.

²⁸⁷ The relative importance of such men contrasts sharply with the fact that Egyptians in general were conspicuously absent from the Ptolemaic court, cf. O'Neil 2006, 17-8.

Ptolemaios of the second century BCE; he was both an Egyptian and a eunuch.²⁸⁸ There is also an unidentified Egyptian from Memphis, known from the hieroglyphic grave-stele of his grandmother Thatot, where it is stated that he was ‘in the king’s service and transmitted reports to the magistrates; the king preferred him to his courtiers for each secret counsel in the palace.’²⁸⁹ Between 169-4, Ptolemaios VI had an Egyptian favourite called Petosarapis, known also by the Greek name of Dionysios. Diodoros says that Petosarapis wielded greater influence at court than anyone else; he also says that Petosarapis tried to stir rebellion and tried to win control of the kingdom himself.²⁹⁰

The Seleukid Demetrios II (145-139 and 129-125) relied on a general called Dionysios the Mede, perhaps a eunuch, and both Antiochos VII (139-129) and Antiochos IX (113-95) favoured a eunuch called Krateros.²⁹¹ Still eunuchs were not a common presence at the Ptolemaic and Seleukid courts,²⁹² albeit they were relatively less rare at the courts of the

²⁸⁸ Polyb. 22.22.1-5 *ap. Suda* s.v. ‘Aristonikos’. After the death of Kleopatra I, the Ptolemaic kingdom was for a short while ruled by Lenaios, a freedman, and the eunuch Eulaios, who acted as regents for the young Ptolemaios VI (Van ‘t Hof 1955, 50). Cf. O’Neil 2006, 18, listing Jewish officials in Ptolemaic service, among them Onias and Dositheos, to whom Ptolemaios Philometor is said to have entrusted his entire army; Onias, perhaps the same as the high priest known from 1 and 2 *Maccabees*, who had been removed from office by Antiochos IV, later supported Kleopatra II in her struggle against her brother Ptolemaios VI (Jos., *Ap* 2.49; cf. Fraser 1972, 83, 222; Hölbl 2001, 190).

²⁸⁹ J. Quaegebeur, ‘The genealogy of the Memphite high priest family in the hellenistic period’, in: D.J. Crawford *et al.* eds., *Studies on Ptolemaic Memphis*. *Studia Hellenistica* 24 (Louvain 1980) 43-82, at 78-9; cf. Turner 1984, 126-7.

²⁹⁰ Diod. 31.15.1-4.

²⁹¹ Diod. 33.28.1; *RIG* no. 1158. O’Neil 2006, 18, draws attention to the fact that in Hellenistic Egypt the designation *Perses* was not necessarily a precise ethnic, but was used to describe non-Greeks with a Hellenised identity, cf. J.F. Oates, ‘The status designation Πέρσης, τῆς ἐπιγόνῆς’, *YCS* 18 (1963) 69, 109. Diodoros’ ‘Mede’ is probably an even less precise designation of ethnicity.

²⁹² Eunuchs at Hellenistic courts: Curt. 6.6.8; Porph. *FGrH* 260 F 20; (Seleukid, 2nd half 2nd century); Liv. 35.15.4 (Seleukid, 193); Diod. 30.15.1 (Ptolemaic, 169); Caes., *Civ.* 3.112 (Ptolemaic, c. 50). Livy and Curtius are suspect: the latter informs us that Alexander’s palace was filled with ‘365 concubines ... attended by a herd of eunuchs, also accustomed to prostitute themselves’, and Livy claims that Antiochos III had his own son murdered by eunuchs, ‘who normally serve kings by committing such crimes.’ The presence of eunuchs at court goes back to the Achaimenid Empire; Alexander’s trusted eunuch Bagoas (Curt. 10.1.22-38; cf. Berve no. 195) was originally a favourite of King Darius III: he was thus an outsider in more than one respect. In Hellenistic Greek culture eunuchs

non-Greek (Iranian) kingdoms of the Hellenistic period.²⁹³ When they do turn up—*viz.* the above mentioned Aristonikos, Krateros, and Dionysios—it is clear that they are favourites.²⁹⁴ The ideal favourites, however, were neither foreigners nor eunuchs, but women.

For various reasons, queens were considered the most trustworthy persons to whom power could be delegated, especially when a king was on campaign far from the geographical centre of his kingdom.²⁹⁵ For instance when Antiochos III was campaigning in the Aegean, having his eldest son with him, his consort Laodike represented him as monarch elsewhere, maintaining diplomatic contacts with the cities of Asia Minor on his behalf and having authority over the royal treasury:

Queen Laodike to the council and people of Iasos, greetings. Having often heard my brother recall the help he constantly provides to his friends and allies, and how when he recovered your city which had been afflicted by unexpected natural disasters, he restored to you your freedom and your laws, and for the rest he intends to increase the citizen body and bring it to a better condition; and since it is my policy to act in accordance with his zeal and eagerness and because of this to confer a benefaction on those citizens who are destitute, which would be of general advantage to the entire people, I have written to Strouthion, the financial official (*dioikētēs*), to have brought to the city every year for ten years 1,000 Attic medimnoi of corn to be delivered to the peoples representatives. ... If you continue to be (well) disposed towards my brother and in general towards our house as is fitting, [and] gratefully remember all our benefactions, I will try to help in securing in every way the other benefits I intend to confer,

primarily served as priests of *e.g.* Kybele, Dea Syria and Hekate, but these cults are unrelated to the courts, cf. A.D. Nock, 'Eunuchs in Ancient Religion', in: *idem, Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Oxford 1972) 7-15.

²⁹³ P. Guyot, *Eunuchen als Sklaven und Freigelassenen in der griechisch-römischen Antike* (Stuttgart 1980) 92-120.

²⁹⁴ In the late fourth century eunuchs were also entrusted with the care of treasures; Alexander placed the citadels and treasuries of Babylon and Persepolis under the command of the Iranians Bagophanes (Berve no. 197) and Tiridates (Berve no. 754), who probably were eunuchs. Also Philetairos, who guarded the Lysimachid, later Seleukid hoard at Pergamon until his revolt in 283 was a eunuch; E. Kosmetatou, 'The Attalids of Pergamon', in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003) 159-74, esp. 158-9, argues that Philetairos was not only a eunuch, but also a native Paphlagonian.

²⁹⁵ Strootman 2002.

acting in accordance with the wishes of my brother. For I know that [he] is very eager to bring about the restoration [of the] city. Farewell.²⁹⁶

Queens held an ambiguous position in the Hellenistic kingdoms. On the one hand they were outsiders in the male world of the government and army, on the other hand central figures in the royal families. In the letter to Iasos we see the queen in her role as manager of the *oikos*. As consort of the reigning king and mother of his son(s), having a central place in the *oikos*, the queen was part of *basileia*, impersonating royal authority. Because of polygamous marriage—she could in principle be replaced—the mother of the heir apparent could be expected to be a loyal ally of the reigning king, and to regard the interests of her husband’s family as her own. A queen was promoted to this cardinal position by conferring on her a diadem and the title of *basilissa*. As Macurdy has argued, the title *basilissa* (instead of the common *basilinna*) when found on the coins of queens who were acting as regents for an absent husband, or for minor sons, ought to be understood as ‘female king’ rather than as ‘the wife of the king’.²⁹⁷ Indeed, the role of queens was not simply confined to ‘female’ responsibilities like public and private cult or the internal management of the *oikos* – as regents they necessarily took over the male duties of their husbands or sons, transgressing the traditional borders between the feminine and the masculine, sometimes even playing a leading role in the male domain *par excellence*: the battlefield.²⁹⁸

In Laodike’s letter to Iasos, the bond between the king and his principal consort is emphasised by the queen’s designation of her husband as ‘brother’ – an expression of fictive kinship related to the actual kinship between king and queen in the Ptolemaic family.²⁹⁹ Just a

²⁹⁶ Austin 156; *SEG* 26, 1226 (c. 195). The ‘natural disasters’ probably refers to an earthquake.

²⁹⁷ Macurdy 1932, 8; cf. Carney 1991. According to W. Huss, ‘Das Haus des Nektanebis und das Haus des Ptolemaios’, *AncSoc* 25 (1994) 111-8, *basilissa* could also mean ‘princess’, as there is epigraphic evidence for a ‘*basilissa* Ptolemaïs in the Ptolemaic kingdom; however, the title may be used here for the same reason as the title *basileus* was used to designate a crown prince (see above).

²⁹⁸ For example Olympias fought a battle against the Macedonian army of Philippos Arrhidaios, and later commanded troops against Kassandros; Arsinoë III accompanied her brother and husband Ptolemaios IV at the Battle of Raphia, together; and Kleopatra VII was personally in command of her fleet at Actium; cf. Blok 2002, 240, on the image of the ‘fighting queen’ Artemisia, who is presented as both masculine and feminine in the *Histories*.

²⁹⁹ In his correspondance from the field, Antiochos III likewise emphasised that Laokide was his other self by calling her ‘our sister and queen’, cf. Austin 151 and 158. One may perhaps compare here the

king's son could be appointed heir apparent by awarding him a central place in the government and the army, and the title of *basileus*, the *basilissa* was raised to power by granting her a central place in royal cult, court ceremonial or panegyric.³⁰⁰ Therefore, when a king died or was taken prisoner, leaving only minor sons, the principal wife frequently was able to step into the breach, drawing on her husband's prestige and her own status as mother of the successor.³⁰¹

pre-eminence of women at the top of Italian mafia clans, in particular the family-based Neapolitan Camorra and Calabrian 'Ndrangheta (but in sharp contrast to the Cosa Nostra of western Sicily, which is based on a rigid hierarchical structure of elected members rather than family ties, and where women's role is traditionally confined to propaganda): there, wives, mothers and sisters fulfill a strikingly similar role (as well as being liable to comparable negative judgments by outsiders). In her fascinating book *Mafia Women* (2nd ed., London 1998), Clare Longrigg describes how the Neapolitan gangster Raffaele Cutolo, who ruled 'by force of personality' from his prison cell for thirty years, 'put together a trusted group of directors, led by his sister Rosetta. ... Giuseppe Marrazzo, the writer who helped create the Cutolo myth, implied an incestuous relationship between brother and sister' (12), and some even state that Rosetta was the real leader of the Cutolo clan (14-5). 'But perhaps the greatest mark of Rosetta Cutolo's intelligence, and the reason she survived, ... is that she did not try to take her brother's place: she remained in the background, taking care to give the impression that she only acted on his behalf' (33). Concerning Carmela Giuliano, the wife of Luigi Giuliano, known as *'o re*, a member of the Neapolitan police commented that: 'Her husband is a king, but she is the one who wears the trousers. When he is in prison she does everything. *People feel the boss's authority in her presence*' (44, my italics).

³⁰⁰ Cf. C. Wikander, 'Religion, political power and gender. The building of a cult image', in: P. Hellström and B. Alroth eds., *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World* (Uppsala 1996) 183-8. Ptolemaic queens figure relatively notably in the poetry of Kallimachos, e.g. fr. 392 (on the marriage of Philadelphos and Arsinoë, but dedicated to the latter), fr. 228 (on Arsinoë's apotheosis), *Epigram* 51 (in which Berenike I is compared with Charis), as well as the *Coma Berenices*, and *Victoria Berenices*.

³⁰¹ Concerning Classical Athens, V. Hunter, 'The Athenian widow and her kin', *Journal of Family History* 14 (1989) 291-311, remarks that wives 'knew the financial details of their husband's *oikos* to the point, particularly after his death, having managerial control of the estate, [and] it was her task 'to keep her husband's estate intact against encroachment by kinsmen or neighbors' (p. 300, cited from Cox 1998, 74).

3.6 The Royal Pages

An important group of persons at the Hellenistic royal courts were the *basilikoi paides*, or royal pages: age groups consisting of youths between about their fourteenth and eighteenth years.³⁰² The pages were to the royal court what ephebes were to a *polis*. They were the sons of nobles, including the king's own sons. They were educated and trained at court, and waited on the king. It was originally an Argead institution, continued in the kingdoms of the Antigonids, Seleukids and Ptolemies 'until the kings from whom the Romans many years later took away all power'.³⁰³ There is some evidence that a similar institution for girls existed at the Ptolemaic court.³⁰⁴ Although the institution of *basilikoi paides* had its roots in pre-Hellenistic Macedonia, the education of these youths—whose age corresponds to that of ephebes in Hellenistic Greek cities—was also in keeping with current Greek educational practices, viz. *paideia* and *ephēbeia*.³⁰⁵ Pages were important for court culture for two

³⁰² The common Greek term is βασιλικοὶ (δὲ) παῖδες or simply παῖδες; Curtius and Livy literally translate as *regii pueri*; alternative designations encountered in Curtius are *puerorum regia cohors* (10.7.16) and *nobiles pueri* (10.5.8); Alexander's pages are also referred to as 'bodyguards': σωματοφυλακίαι (Diod. 17.65.1), *custodia corporis* (Curt. 5.1.42).

³⁰³ Curt. 8.6.6. Berve I, 39, disputes the continuation of the institution because 'es scheint [nicht] glaublich, dass diese eng makedonische, durchaus philippische Institution unverändert, gleichsam als Fremdkörper, in die neue Herrschaft übernommen ward'; but the distinct Macedonian character makes continuation all the more plausible. *Basilikoi paides* under the Diadochs: Curt. 10.8.3; Diod. 28.3, 29.5; 19.91.4; Plut., *Eum.* 3.5; cf. Billows 1997, 246-50. At the Ptolemaic court: Polyb. 15.33.11; cf. Mooren 1975, 2-7 and 52-80; Fraser I, 101-2; Herman 1980/81, 103-49. Seleukids: Polyb. 5.82.13; 30.25.17; 31.21.2; 2 *Macc.* 9.29; cf. Bevan 1901, 283-4; Bickerman 1938, 38. Antigonids: Polyb. 15.33.11; Liv. 44.43.5; 45.6.7-8. Mithradatids: Plut., *Pomp.* 36.4.

³⁰⁴ Polyb. 15.33.11 mentions 'some young girls who had been Arsinoë's σύντροφοί. In the Grand Procession of Ptolemaios Philadelphos were 500 παιδίσκαι—'young girls' or female pages?—dressed in purple chitons with gold girdles. (Ath. 200 e).

³⁰⁵ The age of *paides* and ephebes varied from place to place. In classical Athens *paides* were roughly between 12 and 17 years old and ephebes between c. 18 and 20. In the Hellenistic age a more distinct dichotomy between primary and secondary education evolved; civilian *paides* were then usually under 14 years old, and ephebes between 14 and 18; in Hellenistic times, too, intellectual education for girls became more common among civic elites. Ex-ephebes were called *neoi*, (young) adults; the corresponding aulic title presumably was *neaniskos*, as we know that the Ptolemaic courtier and poet Kallimachos, a scion from a leading family of Kyrene, made his literary debut when he was a

reasons: because, as hostages, their presence at court was a means to control and pacify the nobility,³⁰⁶ and because kings normally recruited their principal collaborators among the men together with whom they themselves had been pages, their boyhood friends so to speak.

Origins

Detailed evidence for royal pages concerns mainly the court of Alexander the Great. Because of the so-called Pages Conspiracy—an attempt to murder Alexander in 327—the institution of *basilikoi paides* at the Argead court has received ample treatment by Alexander's biographers, in particular Arrian and Curtius.³⁰⁷ The classic text is Curtius 8.6.2-6:

It was the custom for the Macedonian nobility to entrust their grown-up sons to the kings for the performance of duties comparable to the services of slaves. They took turns keeping watch at night at the door of the king's bedchamber, and let in his women through an entrance other than that watched by the armed guards. They also took the king's horses from the grooms and presented them for the king to mount; they accompanied him in the hunt and in battle; and they were educated in all aspects of the liberal arts. They regarded it as a great honour that they were allowed to wait on the king at his table.³⁰⁸ No one had the right to flog them save the king. This fellowship formed, as it were, a training school for the commanders and officials of the Macedonians, and from it came the kings whose descendants many generations later lost all their power to the Romans.³⁰⁹

νεανίσκος τῆς αὐλῆς (Cameron 1995, 3-5). For Macedonian antecedents see E.D. Carney, 'Elite Education and High Culture in Macedonia', in: W. Heckel and L.A. eds., *Crossroads of History. The Age of Alexander* (Claremont 2003) 47-63.

³⁰⁶ Grainger 1992, 6.

³⁰⁷ For the evidence for royal pages at the Argead court see N.G.L. Hammond, 'Royal Pages, personal pages, and boys trained in the Macedonian manner during the period of the Temenid monarchy', *Historia* 39.3 (1990) 261-90; cf. Hammond 1994, 40-4; Heckel 1992, 237-98. On the Pages Conspiracy: Hammond 1981, 196-99; Bosworth 1993, 118.

³⁰⁸ *Praecipuus honor habebatur quod licebat sedentibus*, lit. 'were allowed to sit'; see however Cameron 1995, 83 n. 82: 'But the King and his Friends *reclined*. The point is that pages *sat* while their elders reclined. Only adult males were allowed to recline.'

³⁰⁹ Curt. 8.6.1-6; cf. 5.1.42; 8.6.4; 10.8.4; Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.1. Cf. Aymard 1953, 403-4; Hammond 1989, 56 n. 21.

Arrian writes that it was Philippos II who had first created a pages corps:

[Philippos] was the first who ordered that the sons of Macedonian nobles who had reached the age of *paides* should be sent to the royal court; and besides general attendance on his person, the duty of guarding him when he was asleep had been entrusted to them.³¹⁰

On the basis of this passage, modern historians have assumed that Philippos copied the practice from the Achaimenid court, where according to Xenophon a similar institution existed.³¹¹ However, as Bevan already noted, such an institution might easily have started in any monarchic state.³¹² There is indeed evidence for the presence of pages in pre-Hellenistic Macedonia dating back to the late fifth century BCE.³¹³ Hammond explains Arrian's claim by suggesting that Philippos established 'the final form for the school', but that it was 'invented' much earlier. Although this surely makes sense, it remains questionable whether the institution was ever wilfully invented at all. It seems more likely that it developed from a traditional form of fosterage that gradually became institutionalised, although of course it never became a 'school' in the modern sense.

Organisation and duties

The *basilikoi paides* were young aristocrats who carried weapons and possessed horses.³¹⁴ In Alexander's time they were organised in the same manner as the Companion cavalry. We are informed that in 331 the pages corps at Alexander's court consisted of two hundred youths, subdivided in units of fifty youths each, corresponding to the tetrarchies and *ilai* of the Companion cavalry.³¹⁵ In a procession staged by Antiochos IV in c. 165 there marched 600 royal pages.³¹⁶

³¹⁰ Arr., *Anab.*, 4.13.1; cf. Curt. 8.6.2.

³¹¹ Xen., *Cyr.* 8.6.10 and *Anab.* 4.13.1; references to modern literature in Hammond 1990, 261 n. 2.

³¹² Bevan 1902 I, 123; so also Berve I, 39; cf. the arguments added by Briant 1994, 298-302.

³¹³ Collected in Hammond 1990, 261-4; cf. Hammond 1989, 56 with nn. 22-3.

³¹⁴ Curt. 5.1.42; 8.6.2-3; 10.5.8, 8.4; Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.1, 16.6; Diod. 17.65.1; 19.27.3, 29.5; Val. Max. 3.3 *ext.* 1. cf. Diod. 17.79.5.

³¹⁵ Diod. 19.28.3 and 19.29.5. Cf. Hammond 1989, 56 with n. 24. When in 331 a fresh levy was sent from Macedonia to Alexander in Babylon, the pages marched eastward in a fifty strong squadron (Diod. 17.65.1; Curt. 5.1.42). Hammond 1990, 265-6, argues *contra* Berve I, 37, that this was the first time that pages arrived at Alexander's army camp; however, the royal pages were as a rule educated at

The main tasks of the pages at Alexander's court was to wait on the king, serve as his bodyguards, and to guard his personal belongings.³¹⁷ When on guard duty, the pages were under the command of one of the seven *sōmatophulakes*.³¹⁸ They rode with the king in battle and during the hunt, and thereby acquired military experience.³¹⁹

After Alexander *basilikoi paides* probably came from leading families in the kingdom's provinces, and were the sons of *philoï* and foreign *xenoi*. The king's own children, too, were *basilikoi paides* during their adolescence. It is not known on what grounds other boys were admitted to the pages corps. Neither is it possible to say whether also non-Macedonian and non-Greek magnates sent their sons to court, as one would expect particularly in the Hellenistic Near East. It would have been an excellent way to create bonds between indigenous princely dynasties and the Seleukid house, and given the wide-spread practice of dispatching sons as hostages it is likely that it happened indeed. Evidence, however, is meagre. There is one famous instance: Mithradates, the son of Ariobarzanes, an Iranian prince in the entourage of Antigonos Monophthalmos, of whom it is said that he had been a 'youth companion' and of the same age as Antigonos' son Demetrios; but the fact that King Antigonos considered this Mithradates a threat to his rule, and therefore wished to execute him, is perhaps of more significance here.³²⁰

The pages were under the supervision of a court dignitary usually called *tropheus*, Foster-Father. The office of *tropheus* was a position of great honour already at the court of

court, and Alexander's army camp *was* the court. Shortly after Alexander's death, in 322, Eumenes of Kardia had 200 pages with him. At the Battle of Paraitakene in 317 Eumenes fielded two squadrons of fifty pages (Diod. 19.27.3), against his opponent Antigonos Monophthalmos' three such units (Diod. 19.29.5); both commanders stationed the pages near themselves.

³¹⁶ Polyb. 30.25.17; cf. Walbank III, 611.

³¹⁷ Curt. 8.6.21; 10.8.3; Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.1-4; Diod. 17.65.1, 79.5.

³¹⁸ Curt. 8.6.22; Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.7.

³¹⁹ Arr., *Anab.* 4.13.1-2, 16.6; Curt. 5.1.42; 8.8.3; Diod. 16.93.4; 19.27.3, 29.5. Cf. A.S. Chankowski, 'L'entraînement militaire des éphebes dans les cités grecques d'Asie mineure à l'époque hellénistique: nécessité pratique ou tradition atrophée?', in: J.-C. Couvenhes and H.-L. Fernoux eds., *Les Cités grecques et la guerre en Asie Mineure à l'époque hellénistique. Actes de la journée d'études de Lyon, 10 octobre 2003* (Paris 2004) 55-76, who stresses the effective military role played by aristocratic ephebes in the defence of the polis and on the battlefield.

³²⁰ παῖς ἐταῖρος: Plut., *Demetr.* 4.1. This Mithradates—an ancestor of Mithradates Eupator—later founded the royal dynasty of Pontos.

Philippos II.³²¹ Even after their accession to the throne, kings normally held their former *tropheus* in esteem, addressing him as ‘father’ in correspondence.³²² A good example is Krateros, a courtier of Antiochos IX, who had been the king’s *tropheus* and was honoured by his former pupil with an impressive series of aulic offices and honorific titles: ‘Foster Father of Antiochos Philopator; First Friend of King Antiochos; Chief Physician and Chamberlain of the Queen’.³²³ The *paides* who were brought up together with the king were afterward honoured as the king’s *suntrophoi* or Foster-Brothers, and addressed one another as ‘brother’.

Education

The *tropheus*—the aulic counterpart of the civic *paidonomos*—was not himself the teacher of the pages. Learned men and other skilled professionals were appointed as tutors to train the pages in multifarious skills. The education was both physical and intellectual. The royal princes and young nobles were prepared for their later tasks as military commanders and administrators, as well as trained in all the liberal arts.³²⁴ The best known example of such a teacher is Aristotle, who was invited to the court of Philippos II when Alexander had reached the age of thirteen and his education together with other pages began. Aristotle taught the

³²¹ Plut., *Alex.* 5.

³²² Polyb. 31.20.3; Plut., *Ant.* 5.31; *OGIS* 148, 256; 1 *Macc.* 11.1, 11.31-2; Jos., *AJ* 12.127, 12.148, 13.126-7, 148; Diod. 33.4.1. Cf. Hammond 1989, 57; Berve I, 38; Bevan 1902 II, 283, 302; Bevan 1927, 236.

³²³ τροφεὺς Ἀντιόχου Φιλοπάτρος τῶν πρῶτων φίλων βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου καὶ ἀρχίατρος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ κοιτῶνος τῆς βασιλείσσης: *RIG* no. 1158. The text comes from the base of a statue of Krateros found in Delos, perhaps his native city. On him: App., *Syr.* 68; Jos., *AJ* 13.271; Eus. 1.257; Porphyrios, *FGrH* 260 F20.

³²⁴ This was already the case at the Argead court: Curt. 5.1.42 and 8.6.4. The education of pages will not have differed much from the education of *paides* from civic elite families in the Hellenistic Greek cities; even, developments and innovations in educational practices in the Hellenistic age may have started at the courts. The curriculum known to have been taught to elite children in the cities included philosophy, literature, writing, recitation, and sometimes music and the writing of verse, as well as various branches of sport. See E.D. Carney, ‘Elite Education and High Culture in Macedonia’, in: W. Heckel and L.A. eds., *Crossroads of History. The Age of Alexander* (Claremont 2003) 47-63. Generally in elite education: M.L. Clarke, *Higher Education in the Ancient World* (London 1971); N.M. Kennell, *The Gymnasium of Virtue* (1995); R. Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind. Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton 2001).

pages mainly philosophy and politics.³²⁵ He was not a *tropheus*—Alexander’s foster-father was Leonidas, a kinsman of his mother Olympias—nor even was he the only tutor at Philip’s court.³²⁶ Neither was it exceptional that Alexander was educated by a tutor of such standing, or that as an adult Alexander appeared as a man of learning who enjoyed the works of poets like Telestos and Philoxenos, discussed atomic theory with Anaxarchos, and quoted Homer.³²⁷ Kassandros, the son of Antipatros, who had been a page together with Alexander, knew the *Iliad* by heart too.³²⁸ Later kings also did their best to attract intellectuals of renown to their courts to tutor the princes and other pages. Alexander himself appointed Aristotle’s pupil Kallisthenes as tutor of the pages. Ptolemaic pages received their intellectual education from the scholars who worked in the Museum of Alexandria, and this may well have been the principal reason why this institution, as well as similar institutions in the other kingdoms, was founded.³²⁹ The pages at the court of Ptolemaios Soter were educated by, among others, Strato, and at the court of Ptolemaios Philadelphos by Aristarchos, Apollonios of Rhodes and perhaps Kallimachos.³³⁰ Antigonos Gonatas brought the stoic philosopher Persaios to his court for the same reason. Furthermore, prominent representatives of major philosophical schools—Aristotle, Zeno, Kleantes and many others—wrote treatises on the art of kingship for the benefit of the king’s children. Perhaps sons of kings were even sent abroad for higher education after their training as a page had ended.³³¹

Conclusion

Even when the royal pages were indeed ‘quasi-hostages for their fathers’ good behaviour’, it will have been above all honourable to have one’s son enrolled in the corps, and to have him become a personal valet of the present, and perhaps a foster-brother and companion of the future king. Conversely, it was prestigious for a king, too, to be served and guarded, not by

³²⁵ Plut., *Alex.* 7.

³²⁶ Plut., *Alex.* 5.

³²⁷ Poetry: Plut., *Alex.* 8. Atomism: Diog. Laert. 9.60-3; cf. Plut., *Alex.* 28.

³²⁸ Ath. 620.

³²⁹ *P.Oxy* 1241; cf. Fraser I, 330-3; Green 1990, 86 with nn. 27 and 28.

³³⁰ On the probability that Kallimachos was a tutor of royal pages: C. Meillier, *Callimaque et son temps. Recherches sur la carrière et la condition d’un écrivain à l’époque des premiers Lagides* (Lille 1979) 9-21.

³³¹ Antigonos Gonatas was educated by Zeno in Athens. Antiochos Grypos also studied in Athens as a youth (App., *Syr.* 68); the Attalids perhaps sent their sons to Rhodes for further study (Polyb. 31.31).

mere servants and soldiers, but by sons of nobles. Pages revealed the magnitude of a king's power, since by putting their sons under the care of the king the fathers publicly acknowledged his sovereignty.

Bringing up the children of powerful men at court, under the custody of the king, cut off from their families, was a means to create a loyal elite and to shape noble identity.³³² The loyalty of pages to the royal house was proverbial. Only the pages together with their commanding *sōmatophulax* were trusted enough to guard Alexander's bedchamber when he was asleep, and pages were the last to remain loyal to Perseus after the Battle of Pydna.³³³ The bonds of loyalty between pages and the princes with whom they were brought up were very strong. Kings preferably recruited their closest *philoī* from the ranks of their former fellow-pages. Such men were the king's *suntrophoi*, 'foster-brothers', a form of fictive kinship that creating loyalty and mutual moral obligations for life. The mutual loyalty between Alexander and Hephaistion was proverbial. But an identical friendship existed between Antiochos the Great and his youth companion Antipatros. The Macedonian Antipatros was the most prominent member of the Seleukid court next to the king during Antiochos' entire reign; he commanded the prestigious right flank in the Battles of Raphia and, almost thirty years later, Magnesia (together with the young crown prince Seleukos). In 190 he was sent, together with Zeuxis, to Sardis as an ambassador to negotiate peace with the Romans, with a mandate to accept terms in the name of the king. Antipatros also led the embassy sent to Rome to ratify the Treaty of Apameia.³³⁴ On the other hand, the institution of

³³² Duindam 1994, 30.

³³³ Liv. 45.6.7-8.

³³⁴ Raphia: Polyb. 5.79.12, cf. 5.82.9; Magnesia: Liv. 37.41.1; Embassy to Sardis: Polyb. 21.7.9, 16.4; Liv. 37.45.5-6; embassy to Rome: Liv. 37.51.10, 55.3; 56.8. Antipatros was also present as a cavalry commander at the Battle of Panion in 200 (Polyb. 16.18.7) and in 217 led an embassy to Ptolemaios IV to negotiate peace after the Seleukid defeat at Raphia (Polyb. 5.87.1). On his title: Polyb. 5.79.12: βασιλέως ἀδελφοῦς, and 5.87.1: ἀδελφίδος. Livy's claim (37.41.1; 37.55.3) that Antipatros was 'the son of Antiochos' brother' is surely a mistranslation of Polybios, as Antiochos himself was only about 25 years old at the time of the Battle of Raphia, *pace* Bevan 1902 II, 109, 111. The assumption that Antipatros was a son of Antiochos' older brother and predecessor on the throne is also implausible as it would give him a better title to the throne than Antiochos himself. The fact that Polybios nowhere in Book 5 recounts how Antipatros became a member of the court (as he does for all other leading friends of Antiochos), and the long time span of his collaboration with Antiochos, leaves no doubt that he was of the same age as the king and probably had been a page together with him, as the designation

the corps of *basilikoi paides* may in one respect also have endangered the personal domination of the king over his court: if the *paides* were indeed (in part) the sons of *philoï*, the pages system was tantamount to the emergence of an hereditary aristocracy at the royal courts, and thus may have gradually undermined the kings' freedom in choosing their friends.

adelphos already implies. He may have owed the king's remarkable confidence to having been among the group of friends who together with the young king plotted against Hermeias (Polyb. 5.56.13).