IV

Cultural and Scientific Patronage

4.1 The Birdcage of the Muses

In the Hellenistic world royal courts were the focal points of cultural and scientific developments. Notably in the third century BCE, literature, technology, philosophy, and visual arts flourished due to generous patronage by kings, queens, princes and courtiers.[1] The Ptolemaic court at Alexandria was the greatest centre of art and learning in the Hellenistic east, followed, at some distance, by the peripatetic courts of the first three Antigonids and early Seleukids, and later for a short while also the Attalid court at Pergamon.

Characteristic of Hellenistic court patronage was its preference for experiment and innovation.[2] Protected and encouraged by kings, Eratosthenes calculated the circumference of the earth, Aristarchos formulated the unorthodox theory that not the Earth but the Sun was the centre of the universe, Hero built a steam engine, Euklides and Archimedes innovated mathematics, Herophilos and Erasistratos caused a revolution in medical science by charting the human vascular and nervous system on the basis of empirical research.[3] Also in the field

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[1] The English language unfortunately knows no equivalent of the Dutch term *mecenaat* or German *Mäzenat*; unless otherwise stated, in this chapter 'patronage' will be used to denote the sustenance and protection of artists, poets, scholars, and scientists by courtiers and members of the royal family.

[2] R. Strootman, 'Mecenaat aan de hellenistische hoven', *Lampas* 34.3 (2001) 187-203. I would like to thank dr. M.P. Cuypers for many inspiring discussions about the nature and aims of Hellenistic poetry during our collaboration for the course 'Literary patronage in Alexandria and Rome' for the Classics Department of Leiden University in 1998-1999.

[3] On Herophilos and his innovation of medicine see H. von Staden, *Herophilus. The Art of Medicine in Early Alexandria* (Cambridge 1989).

of literature there was an inclination to experiment and a preference for originality.[4] Kallimachos formulated new standards for poetry, Theokritos and his followers developed bucolic literature, Apollonios reinvented epic, and Aratos and Nikandros introduced the quasi-scientific didactic poem. And to complete this enumeration: also technology, geography, ethnography, historiography, and philosophy thrived at the courts of the Hellenistic kings.[5]

A comparison, made by Dutch scholars, of courtly patronage in various cultures and periods has shown—against the prevailing view that investments in culture increase in times of crisis—that court patronage is in general most successful in periods of political and economical stability.[6] The Alexandrian court in the first half of the third century BCE fits this pattern perfectly, and the other courts of that age to a lesser extent as well.

The importance of the royal court for Hellenistic literature and science is more often acknowledged in present scholarship. This is a new development. Until recently Hellenistic literature was usually considered to be *l'art pour l'art*, art for art's sake with no social relevance, produced in ivory towers offered by kings to poets for apparently no other reason than that it pleased them to do so.[7] Hellenistic poets wrote poetry for other poets. Their work

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[4] See B. Effe, 'Klassik als Provokation. Tradition und Innovation in der alexandrinischen Dichtung', in: W. Vosskamp ed., *Klassik im Vergleich. Normativität und Historizität europäischer Klassiken* (Stuttgart and Weimar 1993) 317-30. Cf. M. Hose, 'Der alexandrinische Zeus. Zur Stellung der Dichtkunst im Reich der ersten Ptolemäer', *Philologus* 141 (1997) 46-64, esp. 46-8. To denote the Greek literature of the last three centuries BCE I will speak of 'Hellenistic' and not of 'Alexandrian' literature; no such genre ever existed in reality. The designation 'Alexandrian poetry' should be reserved for poetry written in the city of Alexandria – itself a very diverse whole ensemble of styles and genres. Cf. G. Zanker, *Realism in Alexandrian Poetry. A Literature and its Audience* (London 1987) for an even narrower definition, *sc.* only the poetry of Kallimachos and his followers, excluding Apollonios and Theokritos.

[5] It should be noted that cultural life in the Greek *poleis*, and cities in general, did not cease; literature thrived outside the courts too. Only the courts were relatively more succesful in this respect.

[6] J.T.P. de Bruijn, W.L. Idema, F.P. van Oostrom eds., *Dichter en hof. Verkenningen in veertien culturen* (Utrecht 1986).

[7] So for instance Fraser 1972, I 312 and Green 1990, 84. Unlike the study of Roman poetry, regarding which patrons-client relations have long been, and still are, extensively studied; cf. e.g. H. Bardon, *Les empereurs et les lettres lattines* (Paris 1940); Woodside, M., 'Vespasian's patronage of education and the arts', *TAPhA* 73 (1942) 123-9; P. White, 'The presentation and dedication of the Silvae and the Epigrams', JRS 64 (1974) 40-61; M.L. Clarke, 'Poets and patrons at Rome', *G&R* 25 (1978) 46-54; K. Quinn, 'The poet and his audience in the Augustan age', *ANRW* II 30.1 (1982) 75-180; M. Morford,

had no social or cultural relevance and, 'going far beyond the bounds of good taste',[8] was of less value than the literature of the Classical Age.[9] Hellenistic science, too, has long been considered brilliant but useless.

Crucial to the perception of Hellenistic poetry as socially and culturally irrelevant has been an epigram on the *mouseion* at Alexandria during the rule of Ptolemaios II Philadelphos, written by the poet Timon, who sneered that

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'Nero's patronage and participation in literature and the arts', *ANRW* II 32.3 (1985) 2003-2031; R.R. Nauta, 'Keizer Nero en de dichters', in: De Bruijin et al. 1986, 17-37; S. Franchet d'Esperey, 'Vespasien, Titus et la littérature', *ANRW* II 32.5 (1986) 3040-86; K.M. Coleman, 'The emperor Domitian and literature', *ANRW* II 32.5 (1986) 3095-3111; B.K. Gold ed., *Literary and Artistic patronage in Ancient Rome* (Austin 1987); P. White, *Promised Verse. Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge, Mass., and London 1993); R.R. Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons. Literary Communication in the Age of Domitian*. Mnemosyne Supplements 206 (Leiden 2002). The study of Roman literary patronage has been boosted due to the influential conceptual model developed by R.P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge *etc.* 1982), cf. R.R. Nauta, 'Maecenaat en censuur in de vroege Romeinse keizertijd', *Lampas* 19 (1986) 34-76.

[8] E.A. Barber, 'Alexandrian literature', in: CAH (1928) 249-83, at 271, in a paragraph aptly titled 'Pedantry'.

[9] 'The extension of Macedonian control … marked the end of an epoch; and literary decline accompanied political decay.' This view, here expressed by D.E.W. Wormel, 'Alexandrian poetry', in: D.R. Dudley and D.M. Lang eds., *The Penguin Companion to Classical and Byzantine, Oriental and African Literature* (Harmondsworth 1969) 22-3, at 22, goes back to U. von Willomawitz-Moellendorf, *Hellenistische Dichtung in der Zeit von Kallimachos* (Berlin 1924). This German classicist took a sincere interest in Hellenistic poetry and tried to excite critical interest especially by presenting it as *l'art pour l'art*,[9] elaborating the romantic notion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that only art for art's sake was real art. This notion can still be found in textbooks, e.g. A.W. Bulloch's introduction to Hellenistic poetry in the authoritative *Cambridge History of Classical Literature. Volume 1, Part 4: The Hellenistic Period and the Empire*, P.E. Easterling and B.W. Knox eds. (Cambridge etc. 1989) 1-58, and even quite recently scholars have argued that Hellenistic court poetry was entirely devoid of political or social meaning, cf. e.g. E.-R. Schwinge, *Künstlichkeit von Kunst. Zur Geschichtlichkeit der alexandrinischen Poesie* (Munich 1986), and A. Kerkhecker, Μουσέων ἐν ταλάρῳ – Dichter und Dichtung am Ptolemäerhof', A&A 43 (1997) 124-44.

In the thronging land of Egypt
There are many who are feeding,
Many scribblers on papyrus,
Ever ceaselessly contending,
In the birdcage of the Muses.[10]

When this text is cited as proof of contemporary disapproval of royal patronage, the fact that Timon himself served a monarch is usually passed over in silence. Timon was a *philos* of Antigonos Gonatas, the enemy of Ptolemaios Philadelphos, and the epigram is the product of competition between courts, claiming that Gonatas' poets are better than those of Philadelphos.[11]

Since some decades classicists have been reconsidering the 'birdcage'. Hellenistic literary texts are now more often related to the social and cultural contexts in which they were produced and consumed, in particular the court.[12] Still, many problems remain to be solved.

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[10] Timon fr. 12; *ap* Ath., 1.22d. Eur., *Hel.* 174, uses the word *mouseion* to denote 'the place where [birds] sing', and Timon is probably playing with this double meaning. For the *mouseion* of Alexandria see below.

[11] Yet another interpretation is given by Green 1990, 87, who assumes that Timon wrote against the *mouseion* out of rancour because 'he had failed to get a sinecure there himself'.

[12] An early attempt at such an approach is Frederick Griffiths' *Theocritus at Court* (Leiden 1979). Many others have since followed. Of particular importance is the work of Gregor Weber, who has rooted Alexandrian poetry solidly in its historical context, convincingly correlating the production of poetry to festivities, ceremonies, and other courtly events, esp. in the meticulous study *Dichtung und höfische Gesellschaft. Die Rezeption von Zeitgeschichte am Hof der ersten drei Ptolemäer* (Stuttgart 1993); cf. id., 'The Hellenistic rulers and their poets. Silencing dangerous critics?' *AncSoc* 29 (1998-99) 147-74; 'Poesie und Poeten an den Höfen vorhellenistischer Monarchen', *Klio* 74 (1992) 25-77; and 'Herrscher, Hof und Dichter. Aspekte der Legitimierung und Repräsentation hellenistischer Könige am Beispiel der ersten drei Antigoniden', *Historia* 44 (1995) 283-316. A comparable approach of historians at court is B. Meissner, *Historiker zwischen Polis und Königshof. Studien zur Stellung der Geschichtsschreiber in der griechischen Gesellschaft in spätklassischer und hellenistischer Zeit* (Göttingen 1992). Of interest in this respect is also the work of Susan Stephens, who investigates political ideology in Ptolemaic court poetry: 'Callimachus at court', in: M.H. Harder ed., *Genre in Hellenistic Poetry*. Hellenistica Groningana 3 (Groningen 1999) 167-85; 'Writing Epic for the Ptolemaic Court', in: M.A. Harder *et al*. eds., *Apollonius Rhodius*. Hellenistica Groningana 4 (Louvain 2001) 195-215; and esp. *Seeing Double. Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Berkeley

What exactly was the place and status of artists, poets, scholars and scientists in the culture and social structure of the court? For what reasons did they prefer the court to the *polis*? What motives did rulers have for patronising arts and sciences on a large scale, and why did they stimulate innovation? And, concerning poetry: how can we explain that most of the now extant court poetry was not directly concerned with kingship or court life?

Usually studies of Hellenistic patronage concentrate on a single craft, mainly literature, and isolate it from other disciplines.[13] I believe however that even if one only wishes to understand the nature and meaning of Hellenistic court poetry it also the position of physicians, painters, and technicians must be taken into consideration.

This chapter is divided into five parts. I will first discuss the main questions which at present dominate the debate about Hellenistic literature and its relation to the court; next the origins and historical development of Hellenistic patronage will be outlined. The second subchapter focuses on the question why the Hellenistic monarchies invested so much in the arts and sciences. What were the advantages for the monarchy? How can we make sense of, say, the invention of machines or the development of such literary genres as bucolic poetry and mime in the context of court culture? The third subchapter is concerned with the motivation of artists and intellectuals to work for kings. What advantages were in it for *them*? I will argue that artists, scholars and writers were not employees, but *philoi*, their relation with the king being formalised by means of *philia* and *xenia*. After a subchapter on the ideological bearings of scholarship and philosophy at court, encomiastic court poetry will be discussed. What messages did such texts convey about contemporary notions of imperial rule and the legitimisation of kingship?

Hellenistic court poetry: l'art pour l'art?

Various new interpretations of Ptolemaic literary patronage have been put forward in the past two decades. Graham Zanker stresses the Greekness of Alexandrian poetry, and explains the Ptolemies' concern for Greek culture as caused by a general feeling of alienation among their Greek and Macedonian subjects in Egypt: poetry helped to give the Greeks in Alexandria and

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2003). Also the supposed *artistic* inferiority of Hellenistic poetry has been challenged, most fervently by G.O. Hutchinson, *Hellenistic Poetry* (Oxford 1988).

[13] In only one case science: T.W. Africa, *Science and the State in Greece and Rome* (New York, London, Sydney 1968). Examples from the field of literary studies are discussed further on. An extensive bibliography on Hellenistic poetry is maintained by M.P. Cuypers for Leiden University at www.gltc.leidenuniv.nl.

Egypt a new sense of cultural belonging.[14] E.-R. Schwinge, although he does relate Alexandrian poetry to the court, simply finds poetry incompatible with the appreciation of political power: any poetical laudation of kings and queens must therefore have ironical undertones, and between the lines the monarchy was criticised, not praised.[15] A. Kerkhecker dismisses the existence of a substantial genre of 'court poetry' altogether by narrowing its definition.[16] Instead, he argues that Alexandrian poetry was a kind of by-product of Ptolemaic patronage: writers were attracted to the Ptolemaic court as Museum scholars whose main task was 'scientific'; in their spare time these scholars wrote learned *l'art pour l'art* poetry ('Fussnotendichtung'). Alan Cameron argues the opposite, namely that Alexandrian poetry was produced for the general public and had a public relevance similar to that of literature in Classical Athens; in other words: it was written *at* court, but not *for* the court. [17] This view is hard to reconcile with the learned and complex nature of the poetry of, say, Apollonios or Kallimachos – an objection that can also be raised against the comparable standpoint defended by Zanker.

Admittedly, it *is* difficult to see an immediate social or political relevance in most of the preserved court poetry. Only a minority of it is panegyric. Hence, critics focus on encomiastic poetry, or try to decipher 'hidden' encomiastic messages in other texts, often by relating Alexandrian poetry directly to the monarchic ideology of pharaonic Egypt, and sometimes with complete disregard of the evidence from the Seleukid and Antigonid kingdoms.[18] But how can we account for the popularity at the royal court of such genres as

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[14] G. Zanker, 'The nature and origin of realism in Alexandrian poetry', *A&A* 29 (1983) 125-45.

[15] Schwinge 1986. When, for instance, a contemporary of Kallimachos reads Call., *Ep.* 51, in which queen Berenike is praised as the fourth Grace, Schwinge assures that we can be certain that he 'beschliesst den Lektüre mit einem verstehenden, weil den Preis in seiner Ambivalenz durchschauenden Lächeln' (Schwinge 1986, 72). Similarly, J.B. Burton, *Theocritus' Urban Mimes. Mobility, Gender, Patronage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1995) 134, suggests that there may be an ironic undertone in Theokritos' description of the royal Adonis Festival in *Idyll* 15.

[16] Kerkhecker 1997, defining 'court poetry' as either occasional poetry for courtly events ('Literatur bei Hofe') or poetry about court life or the person of the king ('Literatur über den Hof').

[17] A. Cameron, *Callimachus and his Critics* (Princeton 1995).

[18] T. Gelzer, 'Kallimachos und das Zeremoniell des ptolemäischen Königshauses', in: J. Stagl, ed., *Aspekte der Kultursoziologie* (Berlin 1982) 13-30; L. Koenen, 'Die Adaption ägyptischer Königsideologie am Ptolemäerhof', in: E. van 't Dak ed., *Egypt and the Hellenistic World* (Louvain 1983) 143-90; R. Merkelbach, 'Das Königtum der Ptolemäer und die hellenistischen Dichter', in: N.

bucolic poetry, mime, riddle poems or pattern poems? Only Weber has seriously tried to solve this problem. He argues that the king derived prestige from literary patronage as such, irrespective of a poem's substance.[19] Weber presumably is right. However, in order to fully understand the social function and cultural meaning of Hellenistic poetry, the contents of poems should not be dis-regarded. I will return to these problems in the following subchapter. First the evolution and principal characteristics of Hellenistic patronage of the arts and sciences need to be outlined, including a brief discussion of the *mouseion* at Alexandria.

Historical evolution of Hellenistic court patronage

The practice of patronage at the Hellenistic courts was rooted in Greek and Macedonian traditions. Naturally, also the courts of the Achaimenids and their predecessors had harboured poets and artists. But the distinct Greek character of Hellenistic patronage compels us to look for its origins in the world of the Greek *poleis* and foremost to Argead Macedon.[20]

Greek artistic patronage flourished notably in the heyday of tyranny in the seventh and sixth centuries.[21] Archaic poets and philosophers often read their work in an aristocratic context, especially the *symposion*, because through an aristocratic audience fame and prestige could best be obtained, as well as, if necessary, an income. Of the early patrons, the Samian oligarch Polykrates was by far the most magnificent. His entourage included poets, physicians, architects, and sculptors.[22] Other tyrants who were renowned for their cultured courts were Hipparchos of Athens, Hieron I and Gelon of Syracuse, and Arkesilas of Kyrene.[23] In the fifth century collective bodies of citizens, rather than individuals, supported

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Hinske ed., *Alexandrien. Kulturbegegnungen dreier Jahrtausende im Schmelztiegel einer mediterranen Großstadt* (Mainz 1981) 27-35; P. Bing, *The Well-Read Muse. Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (Göttingen 1988); S.A. Stephens, 'Egyptian Callimachus', in: *Callimaque. Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* 48 (Geneva 2002) 235-69; idem, *Seeing Double. Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Berkeley 2003); S. Noegel, 'Apollonius' *Argonautika* and Egyptian solar mythology', CW 97 (2003/2004) 123-36. For a more careful approach of the supposed Egyptianising tendency in Alexandrian poetry see Hunter 2003, 46-53.

[19] Weber 1992 and 1993.

[20] So also Weber 1992, 77.

[21] For an overview of literary patronage in pre-Hellenistic Greece, with emphasis on Pindar, see B.K. Gold, *Literary Patronage in Greece and Rome* (Chapel Hill and London 1987) 15-30.

[22] Gold 1987, 19 with nn. 19-22.

[23] *Ibid*. 20-1, 22-3.

the arts. In Athens, patronage by the *dēmos* included the commissioning of great building projects—the Athenian Parthenon being the high peak—which manifested the confidence and power of the *polis* instead of boosting the prestige of aristocratic families.[24] In the Hellenistic Age, private benefactors re-established their position as the principal patrons of the arts in the Greek cities.

Meanwhile, in monarchic Macedon, the Archaic tradition of court patronage continued in the Classical period.[25] At the end of the fifth century, king Archelaos—whose policy it was to present himself as a philhellene and a benefactor of the Greeks—entertained famous Greeks at his court. These included the poets Euripides, Agathon, Timotheos, and the painter Zeuxis.[26] After a period of political instability of some forty years, Philippos II was the next Macedonian monarch who earned himself a reputation as a magnanimous patron of the arts. Philippos attracted to his court *i.a.* the comedy poet Anaxandrides,[27] and hired Aristotle to tutor his son Alexander and the royal pages. The court of Alexander was also a prominently cultured one.[28] Alexander himself was noted for his knowledge of Greek literature—in particular the works of Homer, Pindar, and Euripides—and for his interest in science and philosophy. During Alexander's campaigns in Asia, a large band of poets, historians, and scientists followed him, among them the prominent intellectuals Anaxarchos and Pyrrho.[29] Like Alexander, the Diadochs were accompanied on their campaigns by writers and

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[24] L. Kallett-Marx, 'Accounting for culture in fifth-century Athens', in: D. Boedeker and K. Raaflaub eds., *Democracy, Empire and the Arts in Fifth-Century Athens* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998) 43-58.

[25] For a comprehensive overview of court patronage in pre-Hellenistic Macedonia see Weber 1992.

[26] *Ibid.* 64-5. Green 1990, 84 with n. 19; Borza 1992, 173. Euripides wrote a tragedy *Archelaos* for the king.

[27] Hose 1997, 50.

[28] For a comprehensive discussion of the evidence for poets, artists and scholars at Alexander's court see Berve 1926 I, 65-81.

[29] The cultural and scholarly entourage of Alexander further included the philosopher Onesikritos of Astypalaia, the engineer Diades, the physician Philippos of Akarnania, the historian Kallisthenes of Olynthos, and the poets Agis of Argos, Anaximenes of Lampsakos, Pranichos, Pyrrhos of Elis, and Choirilos of Iasos (Weber 1992, 67-8; cf. Berve 1926 I, 71). Of the many poets known to have formed part of Alexander's peripatetic court, no (reference to) important works have remained: they either produced bad poetry, or (which is more likely given the rather peripatetic nature of Alexander's court) occasional poetry; Weber 1992, 76, ascribes the lack of poetic output of Alexander's court 'nicht zuletzt an seinen dezidierten Anforderungen und Eingriffen.'

historians, like the epigrammatist Leonidas, a client of Pyrrhos, and the historian Eumenes of Kardia, who worked for the first three Antigonids.

The third century was the golden age of cultural and scientific patronage. Artists and poets were given commissions on a grand scale. Scientists, astronomers, mathematicians, and physicians were allowed a free hand to pursue their investigations. Vast sums were spent on ambitious building projects, including not only the building of temples, palaces and other monuments, but the planning of entire cities. Some artists' work concerned kingship in a direct manner: palaces had to be built and adorned with sculptures and wall paintings; kings and queens had to be portrayed; laudatory poems had to be written; *philoi* and other guests of the kings had to be entertained during symposia; philosophical treatises were needed to demonstrate that autocratic monarchy was the best form of government.

In the Hellenistic period, kings and courtiers of course did not possess an all-embracing monopoly on stimulating artistic and scientific creativity. Many alternatives to royal patronage remained, as cultural life in the Greek *poleis* did not change dramatically. Literature thrived also outside the courts; civic festivals still included poetic contests for poets and playwrights.[30] But Hellenistic writing from the *poleis* is now all but completely lost.[31]

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[30] Particularly Athens, home of the Academy and Lyceum, remained a major centre of learning, albeit, it seems, with royal support (Diog. Laert. 4.38-9; cf. 5.67). The stoics Zeno and Theophrastos preferred the prestigious Athenian Lyceum to court life, although they accepted the protection and the odd commission of Antigonos Gonatas (Diog. Laert. 7.6 and 5.37). Strato in his later years gave up his position as head of the Alexandrian Museum to succeed Theophrastos as head of the Lyceum (Diog. Laert. 5.58). In other cities members of the local elite, oligarchs and petty rulers acted as patrons. Poets and playwrights still took part in literary contests at civic festivals. In fact, the kings' own policy of founding new *poleis* increased the opportunities for finding patronage other than that of the kings. Theophrastos claimed that philosophers were true citizens of the world who could find employment in any country (Vitr. 6.2); indeed, the wandering philosopher, who travelled from one city to another, working as a teacher and teaching cosmopolitanism, became a common figure in the Hellenistic cities, cf. P. Parsons, 'Identities in diversity', in: Bulloch *et al.* 1993, 152-70, esp. 156. The celebrated cynic Bion of Borysthenes made a career out of teaching, giving lectures, and enjoying hospitality throughout the Greek world, and only in his old age accepted an invitation of Antigonos Gonatas to become part of his entourage.

[31] R.L. Hunter, 'Literature and its contexts', in: A. Erskine ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford 2003b) 477-93, esp. 477-9.

But neither cities nor individuals were able to keep up with the kings, who far outdid all others in the magnificence and scale of their patronage and building programs. Kings may not have patronised the majority of *all* the Greek writers and thinkers, but particularly in the third century they did patronise the majority of the most famous and most important ones. This is what Philostratos meant when he described the Ptolemaic court as 'a dining table in Egypt to which the most distinguished men in the world are invited.'[32]

The most successful patrons in Alexandria were the first three Ptolemies: Ptolemaios I Soter, Ptolemaios II Philadelphos, and Ptolemaios III Euergetes. Their principal rivals were Seleukos I Nikator, Antiochos I Soter and Antigonos II Gonatas. The court of Gonatas included Aratos of Soli, Persaios, Bion of Borysthenes, Alexandros the Aitolian, Antagoras of Rhodes, Menedemos of Eretria.[33] Some names of renown are recorded for the early Seleukid court as well: the architect Xenarios, responsible for the elaborate city designs of Antioch and Laodikeia;[34] the sculptor Eutychides of Sikyon, a pupil of Lysippos, who made the famous Antioch Tyche;[35] the physician Erasistratos; and the historian Berossos. From *c.* 274 to 272, Antiochos I entertained Aratos of Soli at his court for some years. Later Seleukid kings were well-known as patrons of philosophers.[36] Antiochos III was the protector of the poet Euphorion.[37] However, with their court firmly settled at Alexandria and their vast wealth, the early Ptolemies had a decisive advantage over their peripatetic Seleukid and Antigonid antagonists. The Ptolemaic court became crowded with 'philologists, philosophers, mathematicians, musicians, painters, athletic trainers, and other specialists'.[38] Many of these were attached to the *mouseion* founded at Alexandria by Ptolemaios I (see below). When Ptolemaios III died in 221, Alexandria gradually lost her unequalled status as the world's centre of art and learning. Nevertheless the names of several important writers of the later Hellenistic period are connected with that city, including the bucolic poets Moschos and Bion, the technologists Philo of Byzantium and Hero of Alexandria, and the philologist Lysianas. In

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[32] Philostr., *VS* 1.22.524. This is reflected in a story told about the Athenian playwright Philemon (368/60-267/63): on his deathbed Philemon had a vision of nine girls leaving his house, and this was believed to be symbolic of the Muses having left Athens (Diod. 23.6).

[33] Diog. Laert. 2.110; 4.46; 7.6.9; 9.110; Plut., *Mor*. 1043c. Cf. Hose 1997, 62 with n. 98.

[34] Downey 1963, 31-2.

[35] *Ibidem*, 35.

[36] Bevan 1902 II, 276-7.

[37] *Suda*, s.v. 'Euphorion'. Cf. Bevan 1902 II, 276.

[38] Ath. 4.184b-c.

fact, Alexandria remained a cultural and scientific centre far into the Roman era. But now other centres emerged or re-emerged to rival Alexandria: Athens, Pergamon, Rhodes, Antioch, Rome.[39] In the second century the court of the Attalids, too, rose to prominence as a centre of patronage. The Attalids offered their hospitality to celebrities such as the philologist Krates of Mallos, and the poets Apollodoros of Athens and Nikandros of Kolophon. The latter, whose works on farming and bee-keeping influenced Virgil, is now mainly remembered as the author of two, typically Hellenistic, didactic poems: *On Poisonous Animals* and *Antidotes to Poison*. Antiochos IV Epiphanes, victor in two campaigns against the Ptolemies, also managed to turn his court into a leading centre of Greek artistic activity.[40] New rivals of the Macedonian kings appeared. In the first place the non-Greek, but Hellenized monarchs of Asia Minor, who increasingly manifested themselves as benefactors of Greek culture during the second and first centuries, and secondly philhellene Roman aristocrats who brought Greek intellectuals, willing or unwilling, to Italy. Moreover, non-royal Greek private persons tried to outdo royalty. When at the beginning of the second century the personal library of Theophrastos, including some original manuscripts of Aristotle, was put up to auction, it was not bought for the royal libraries of Alexandria or Pergamon, but by a civilian named Apellikon of Teos. Even Athens experienced a modest cultural renaissance. This happened in 145 after the seizure of power by Ptolemaios Physkon, who forced all members of the *mouseion* who had backed the losing side in the dynastic struggle that preceded his *coup* to leave Alexandria and settle elsewhere.[41]

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[39] Hose 1997 argues that the patronage of Greek literature at the Ptolemaic court was deliberately terminated in the second century because the dynasty was by then able to legitimise itself through the ‘power of tradition’ and therefore was no longer in need of literary propaganda; however, the (relative but not dramatic) decline of Ptolemaic cultural and scientific patronage after the rule of Ptolemaios III may have had more to do with the loss of the Ptolemies’ hegemony over the eastern Mediterranean and conflicts among the Ptolemies, which destabilised the court. On Rhodes as a centre of learning see K. Bringmann, ‘Rhodos als Bildungszentrum der hellenistischen Welt’, *Chiron* 32 (2002) 71-82. For Attalid patronage see Hansen 1971, 390-433.

[40] Bevan 1902 II, 276.

[41] Ath. 4.184c.

The *mouseion* of Alexandria

The focus of Alexandrian scholarship was the *mouseion* or Museum with its fabled library.[42] The *mouseion* was both an institution and a building, although the library was kept in various places throughout the city, including the Serapeion. It was here that scholars are said to have been given a free reign. But the *mouseion* did serve a practical purpose: the education of the royal children and royal pages.

The Museum was founded by Ptolemaios Soter, who appointed as its first president (*epistatēs*) Demetrios of Phaleron, former tyrant of Athens and a peripatetic philosopher of some renown; Demetrios was also commissioned to set up a library, which was attached to the institution of the Museum or formed part of it.[43] Soter's successor Ptolemaios Philadelphos turned the Museum into the celebrated centre of learning for which it is now remembered. The Museum was still operational when Strabo visited Alexandria at the end of the first century BCE. According to Strabo the Museum was part of the royal district of the city (*basileia*), and he describes it as a huge complex of buildings and gardens:

> The Museum also forms part of the *basileia*; it has a covered promenade, an arcade with recesses and seats and a large house in which is the dining hall of the learned members of the Museum. This association of men shares common property and is headed by a priest of the Muses, who used to be appointed by the kings but is now appointed by Caesar (Augustus).[44]

In Classical Greece a *mouseion* was both a sanctuary of the Muses and a school.[45] Whether or not the Alexandrian Museum was inspired by Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum, as is

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[42] On the *mouseion* and library of Alexandria see Fraser 1972, I 312-9; L. Canfora, *The Vanished Library. A Wonder of the Ancient World* (London 1989); A. Erskine, 'Culture and power in Ptolemaic Egypt. The Museum and Library of Alexandria', *G&R* 42 (1995) 38-48; R. McLeod, *The Library of Alexandria. Center of Learning in the Ancient World* (London 2000). Ancient libraries in general: L. Casson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* (New Haven 2001).

[43] Euseb. 5.8.11; Plut., *Mor.* 1095d; Aristeas 1.10. The connection of library and *mouseion* follows, apart from the involvement of Demetrios with both, from the fact that Strabo 17.1.8, our main source for the buildings and institutions of the Alexandrian palace district, does not mention the library, whereas he does mention the *mouseion*; other sources neither make a distinguish between the two.

[44] Strabo 17.1.8. No remains of the *mouseion* have been found.

[45] A *mouseion* originally was a temple sacred to the Muses, and as such a place that was both their seat of residence, and a sanctuary where they were worshipped. The most famous pre-Hellenistic *mouseion*

sometimes contended (both were called *mouseion* too),[46] its magnitude was unprecedented. And whether or not the surviving accounts of the number of books owned by the Ptolemies, are exaggerated, the library of Alexandria was by far the largest collection of books the world had ever seen.[47]

Despite its fame, next to nothing can be said about the Museum with any certainty. The association comprised primarily philologists and other professional scholars, rather than creative artists, although they could be both. The Ptolemies supported them at least by providing meals, lodgings, servants, and pleasant surroundings to work in – not to mention an inspiring intellectual and highly competitive atmosphere.[48] Their work was dedicated to the Muses, as the original sacred character of the *mouseion* had not become obsolete in Hellenistic times: an annual festival for the Muses was held in the Museum and its *epistatēs* also bore the responsibilities of a priest.[49] The latter was normally also the official first tutor of the royal children and the pages.[50]

Other dynasties maintained similar albeit less brilliant institutions. The Seleukids had a library and a *mouseion* at Antioch.[51] If they had one in Antioch, there probably also was one

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was on Mount Helikon: a temple adorned with the statues of famous artists where the manuscripts of such celebrities as Hesiod were kept (Ath. 14.629a). There also was a temple of the Muses at Athens (Paus. 1.25.8). As the Muses are best worshipped with music, song, dance, and words, these sanctuaries became cultural centres already in the Classical period, often comprising a library, and the word also came to mean ‘school’, although this does not imply that its religious character was lost in the course of time (Fraser 1972, I 312).

[46] Diog. 4.1; cf. Ath. 5.187d; Plut., *Mor.* 736d. Cf. Hose 1997, 51-2; Green 1990, 85.

[47] The *Letter of Aristeas* claims that Demetrios of Phaleron began the library with 200,000 volumes and hoped to see it grow to at least half a million; cf. Gell., *NA* 7.17.3. Concerning the burning of part of the Library’s holdings by Caesarean troops in 48/7 BC, Ammianus Marcellinus (22.16.13) claims that no less than 700,000 scrolls were lost in the fire, against Seneca’s estimated 400,000 (*Tranq.* 9.5). Caesar’s misconduct in Alexandria did not put an end to the library’s pre-eminence: Antonius replenished the depleted collection with 200,000 scrolls from the library of Pergamon; the library survived more fires and it was not until 651 CE that it was finally destroyed by troops of the Arabian conqueror ‘Amr ibn al-‘Ās.

[48] Call. fr. 191 Pfeiffer; Timon fr. 12, see above p. 191-2.

[49] Strabo 17.1.8; Vitr. 7 *pr.* 8. Cf. Fraser 1972 II, 467 n. 34.

[50] *P.Oxy* 1241. Known tutors of the royal princes and pages include Philitas of Kos, Strato of Lampsakos, Apollonios of Rhodes, Aristarchos of Samothrake, cf. Delia 1996, 41-51, esp. 49.

[51] *Suda*, s.v. ‘Euforion’; Malalas 235.18-236.1. Cf. Downey 1961,132.

in Seleukeia on the Tigris, if not elsewhere as well. The Attalid library at Pergamon boasted at least 200,000 volumes.[52] The library of the Antigonids was splendid enough to be eagerly claimed by Aemilius Paullus as his personal booty after the defeat of King Perseus in 168.[53]

4.2 Prestige and competition

Patronage of arts and sciences by rulers is an almost universal phenomenon. For the rulers of the Ancien Régime patronage of art and science 'seemed … to have a moral and political dimension and to be part of statecraft.'[54] And at the courts of Renaissance Italy 'the practice of art patronage and art collection, were obviously regarded as activities related, but not secondary, to the exercise of power, [and] were considered operational expenses.'[55] The dichotomy of on the one hand autonomous art, and on the other hand art serving political, propagandist purposes, is a modern convention. Galileo Galilei, as one historian put it, 'fixed one eye on the moons of Jupiter and the other on his patron'.[56] Historians studying early modern Europe recognise that during the Renaissance and the Ancien Régime royal patronage guided the emergence of modern science and art (Lytle & Orgel 1981; Kent et al. 1987; Moran 1991a; Biagioli 1993; Griffin 1996).[57] In the study of Hellenistic culture, however, the traditional notion that art and science are incompatible with political power still prevails.

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[52] Plut., *Ant.* 58.

[53] Plut., *Aem.* 28.

[54] A. Stroup, 'The political theory and practice of technology under Louis XIV', in: Moran *op.cit.* below, 211-34, at 211.

[55] F. Gardini, 'The sacred circle of Mantua', in: Bertelli *et al*. 1986, 77-126, at 93. The Ottoman sultans of the Renaissance period went even further. Patronage of literature was an institutionalised, almost bureaucratic part of Ottoman government, involving a large body of 'state poets' who received regular salaries from the crown, while financial officials carefully administered the expenditures, cf. B. Flemming, 'Turkse dichters en hun patroons in de vijftiende en zestiende eeuw', in: De Bruijn *et al.* 1986, 167-81, esp. 170-1.

[56] B.T. Moran, 'Patronage and institutions. Courts, universities, and academies in Germany: An overview, 1550-1750', in: Moran 1991, 169-83, at 169.

[57] G.F. Lytle and S. Orgel eds., *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton 1981); W.F. Kent, P. Simons, J.C. Eade eds., *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford and New York 1987); B.T. Moran ed., *Patronage and Institutions. Science, Technology, and Medicine at the European Court,*

What, then, was the social function and cultural meaning of court patronage? Why did rulers find it so important? For what reasons did they encourage innovation, and even the pursuit of unorthodox ideas? Regarding literature, the question will be raised why kings patronised especially Greek writers. What was the significance of the promotion of Greek culture by Macedonian kings who ruled largely non-Greek populations? I shall identify five motives – five advantages for the monarchy, which together may explain the prominence of arts and sciences at the heart of Hellenistic imperialism.[58] I have labelled them usefulness, prestige, competition, accumulation and Hellenism.

Usefulness

Obviously, much of what was produced was practical in a direct manner. This was the case first of all with the encouragement of the study of ballistics for the sake of improving military technology.[59] Philo the technician wrote that in Ptolemaic Alexandria technicians 'were heavily subsidised because they worked for ambitious kings who appreciated craftsmanship'[60] In the early Hellenistic period the techniques of making catapults and other siege machinery improved rapidly, as well as the development of fortifications and warships—the latter became bigger and bigger in a ceaseless arms race between the kingdoms—inducing F.W. Walbank to write that 'warfare was basic and fundamental to all major powers of the hellenistic age and it is not surprising that this was reflected in the patronage and direction of military technology'.[61] Hero fitted it all neatly in an ideological framework when in the introduction to a treatise on ballistics he stated that the development of military technology

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1500-1750 (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge 1991). M. Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier. The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism* (Chicago and London 1993); D. Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge 1996).

[58] The arguments in this subchapter were earlier expressed in Strootman 2001, and in a lecture for the Oikos-study group 'From Alexandria to Rome' in Groningen in 1999; I would like to thank Annette Harder and Ruurd Nauta of Groningen University for inviting me to attend these sessions.

[59] Fraser 1972, I 429.

[60] *Belop.* 50.29. On patronage of technology in Alexandria, and the function of the mouseion in this respect, see G.E.R. Lloyd, *Greek Science after Aristotle* (London 1973) 3-7; Africa 1968, 46-67.

[61] Walbank 1981, 195. For technical aspects see E.W. Marsden, *Greek and Roman Artillery. Part 1: Historical Development* (Oxford 1969), and the illustrations in D.B. Campbell, *Greek and Roman Siege Machinery, 399 BC-AD 363* (London 2003). Extant ancient studies of ballistics are collected in E.W. *Marsden, Greek and Roman Artillery. Part 2: Technical Treatises* (Oxford 1971).

was necessary to secure *ataraxia*, the Stoic notion of absence of disturbances, thus linking his own work with the peace warranted by the monarchy.[62]

The work of artists, too, served basic practical needs of the court: designing palaces, decorating these with frescoes, mosaics and sculptures; portraying the king and queen for coins; writing poetry for royal festivals and celebrations;[63] entertaining courtiers, guests and ambassadors. A wealth of occasional poetry written for the court must have existed which has not been preserved. Against this background the erudite but at first sight irrelevant content of much court poetry should be understood: its social relevance was partly to entertain the king and his courtiers during symposia and banquets,[64] offering them subjects for debate and hence opportunities for competition, and binding them together as a social group. Even those poems in which we *do not* find (or understand) 'hidden' encomiastic messages may be classified as court poetry. The inventive, humorous character of epigrams; virtuoso and erudite bucolic poetry, so typical for the early Hellenistic period; the preference for obscure versions of myths and learned allusions to Homer or Hesiod; the preference for rare words; the obsession with far-away lands and the mythical past – they are all features of typical court poetry, written for the sake of a self-confident, educated upper class distancing itself from others by its erudition and time for leisure.[65] By means of allusions and suggestion court poets prompted the audience, as it were, to 'decode' the text.[66] To quote only one example, the pattern poem 'Syrinx', attributed to Theokritos:

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[62] Hero, Belop. 71. Cf. Marsden 1971, 19; Green 1990, 479.

[63] Poetry for royal festivals: Weber 1993, 165-82; Zanker 1987, 24-5; Griffiths 1979, 120. Cf. Mineur 1984, 10

[64] On court poetry as sympotic poetry: Cameron 1995, 71-7. Sympotic poetry at the Seleukid court: Ath. 155b; 211d; 555a.

[65] It is not surprising that pastoral poetry in the Roman Empire, from Virgil onward, was easily turned into a vehicle for ruler praise; cf. G. Binder, 'Hirtenlied und Herrscherlob', *Gymnasium* 96 (1989) 363-5, who perhaps undermines his own argument by emphasising the non-monarchic nature of Theokritos' bucolic work.

[66] Cf. G. Zanker, *Modes of Viewing in Hellenistic Poetry and Art* (Madison, WI, 2004), who takes into consideration also description of objects and visual art in poetry as a means of allusion. E.A. Barber in the volume on the Hellenistic period of the 1928 *Cambridge Ancient History*, unwittingly hits the nail on the head when he says disapprovingly that 'the *Alexandra* is one vast riddle' and expresses his amazement that even Kallimachos 'does not spare his audience. Thus in his elegiac *Victory of Sosibius*, he refers to the victor on the strength of his Isthmian and Nemean successes as "twice-

The bedmate of nobody, mother of the warmonger,
bore the nimble pilot of the stone-swapped's nurse;
not the horned one fed by the son of the bull,
but the once-heart-burning for the P-less Itys,
named whole but is double, loves a girlish
split-voice, wind-blown child of the sound,
who made a sharp sore for the Muses,
violet-crowned, to sing his hot desire,
conquered the parricide-like army,
drove them out of Tyre's maiden,
to whom this Simichid Paris
gives the blind's fold blight
which enjoy, man-treading
a gadfly of Lydia's queen,
fatherless thief's son,
box-legs, delights in,
plays sweet tunes
to your mute girl,
an unseen
Kalliope.[67]

This is indeed 'one vast riddle', more like a cryptogram than a poem. The answer to all the riddles is invariably 'Pan'. But the fun of it obviously was not to give the answer, but to clarify the question. Whether 'Syrinx' was written by Theokritos or not, this kind of erudite riddle poetry is aristocratic, leisure class poetry. It is not surprising that the genre matured at the symposia of the early Ptolemaic court, where courtiers competed in learning, wit and

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crowned hard by both children, the brother of Learchus and the infant who was suckled with Myrine's milk." A hard nut to crack without a mythological dictionary!' (p. 271). Interestingly, it was in this period that (mythological) dictionaries were first made. It is likely that Lykophron's notoriously difficult *Alexandra* is not an example of Alexandrian poetry, but a product of the Attalid court: see E. Kosmetatou, 'Lycophron's *Alexandra* reconsidered. The Attalid connection', *Hermes* 128 (2000) 32-53.

[67] Cited after A. Holden, *Greek Pastoral Poetry* (Harmondsworth 1974) 197. The ascription of this poem, preserved in the *Palatine Anthology*, to Theokritos is uncertain.

poetry, discussing seemingly 'irrelevant' or light-hearted topics *as if* they had all the time in the world. At the Seleukid court it was 'customary' that courtiers discussed scholarly and literary topics during symposia,[68] exactly like the Arcadian herdsmen do in the pastoral poems of Theokritos and Bion:

> Spring, Myrson, or winter, autumn or summer, which do you prefer? … Come, tell me. We've plenty of time for a chat.[69]

An example of the social relevance of court poetry is also Theokritos' fifteenth *Idyll*, better known as 'The Adonia'. In this mime two immigrant Alexandrian women, Gorgo and Praxinoa, together with their children and a slave, proceed to the palace for the annual Adonia Festival in the royal gardens, organised by Arsinoë Philadelphos. As the crowd slowly progresses, the two women praise the rule and *tryphē* of Ptolemaios and Arsinoë. But they themselves are portrayed with typical aristocratic contempt for the 'middle classes'. They babble. They have a Dorian accent. They complain about their good-for-nothing husbands, discuss pecuniary matters, are fearful of snakes and (royal) horses, quarrel with their fellow-citizens, jump the queue. But as soon as anything royal comes into view, Gorgo and Praxinoa are overwhelmed with admiration for the splendour of the court:

> Gorgo: 'Praxinoa, come here! Look at those tapestries, see how fine they are and how graceful. Fit for a god, don't you say?' Praxinoa: 'Lady Athena, what craftsmen they must have been to make these, what artists to draw the lines so true. Those figures stand and move as if they are really alive.'

Immediately after these words of praise it is time to laugh again, when a man turns up, saying:

> Be quiet you stupid woman! Stop that ceaseless chatter. Like turtledoves you are! I swear your oohs and aahs will be the end of me.[70]

The mocking tone subsides only when a professional singer of the court starts chanting a hymn to Adonis. This hymn, parenthetically praising queen Arsinoë as Aphrodite incarnate,

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[68] Ath. 211d.

[69] Bion 3.1-8.

[70] Theocr., *Id*. 15.125-32 and 138-41.

was of course earlier composed by Theokritos, sung in actuality at the Adonis Festival, and later incorporated in *Idyll* 15.[71] By ridiculing the reactions of the common *politai*, who for one day in a year are allowed into the palace gardens, the courtiers for whom this poem was intended distanced themselves from the bourgeoisie below the court circles, and by laughing at its expense, their group cohesion was boosted.[72]

In a similar manner we may understand why Hellenistic *mechanikoi* so often developed machinery and illusionist devices with seemingly no other purpose than to impress – 'a collection of elaborate mechanical toys [and] curiosities [of] complete irrelevance', as Peter Green puts it.[73] But Hellenistic technology was not irrelevant. Amazing inventions such as Ktesibios' pneumatic organ or Hero's robot in the shape of Herakles, which could automatically shoot an arrow at a hissing serpent, were functional in the context of the court; again, as amusement and subjects for debate. In fact, the presentation of *automata* and other amazing devices is a familiar phenomenon at many courts throughout history. But the technological principles demonstrated by means of these so-called 'toys' were also applied to more practical purposes.[74] Ktesibios' twin-cylinder water-pump—presented at court in the

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[71] For a historical discussion of the hymn see R.L. Hunter, 'Mime and mimesis: Theocritus, *Idyll* 15', in: M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit, G.C. Wakker eds., *Theocritus*. Hellenistica Groningana 2 (Groningen 1996) 149-69, esp. 158-66.

[72] H. Boutellier, *Solidariteit en slachtofferschap* (diss. VU Amsterdam 1993), stellingen: 'Niet wat we mooi vinden bindt ons, maar wat we afwijzen.' It is apparent from the poem that only Greek citizens are allowed to attend, and that Gorgo and Praxinoa are well-to-do, but not elite women. The poem has in the past been taken as evidence for the emancipation of women in Ptolemaic Alexandria, see e.g. F.T. Griffiths, 'Home before lunch. The emancipated woman in Theocritus', in: H.P. Foley ed., *Reflections of Women in Antiquity* (New York 1981) 247-73; Burton 1995, 145. However, the occasion for which Gorgo and Praxinoa leave the house without their husbands is the celebration of a religious festival, and from lines 27-37 it is clear that these women still are not expected to go to the market to do the shopping.

[73] Green 1990, 478-9.

[74] K.D. White, '"The base mechanic arts"? Some thoughts on the contribution of science (pure and applied) to the culture of the Hellenistic Age', in: Green 1993, 220-32, with references to further literature about the functionality and diverse applicability of Hellenistic mechanics. Automata were also used in public celebrations to impress the crowd; for instance the Grand Procession of Ptolemaios Philadelphos (below, chapter 5.4) included a seated statue of the nymph Nysa, nurse of Dionysos which 'could rise up automatically without anyone putting his hands to it, and after pouring a libation of milk from a gold saucer it would sit down again' (Ath. 5.198f). A. Schürmann, *Griechische*

form of a musical instrument—and in particular the water-lifting device invented by Archimedes for Ptolemaios Philadelphos could be used for irrigation,[75] a most tangible contribution of the king to the fertility of the land.

Prestige

As mentioned above, G. Weber has explained the absence of direct references to the monarchy in most court poetry by proposing that kings derived prestige from literary patronage as such, irrespective of a poem's content. As we just saw, content *does* matter, however, albeit in a way different from the explicit allusions Weber was thinking of. But the main thrust of the argument is surely right. By accommodating the arts and sciences at his court a king met several of the requirements for being an ideal ruler. He proved to be hospitable, benevolent and generous. The accumulation of art and knowledge in the house of the king, a form of *tryphē*, moreover added to his charisma as a rich and wise man by association.

In the Renaissance, the connection between politics and the arts was sustained by a theoretical basis in the ideal of the 'learned prince'. The ruler combined *potentia* and *sapientia*, that is, political power and wisdom. Rulers aimed at this ideal for the sake of prestige. Both Castiglione's *Cortigiano* and Machiavelli's *Il principe* stress the importance of acquiring a good reputation by impressing one's social environment, playing a social role regardless of one's 'real' preferences or qualities. Machiavelli stresses especially the political use of cultural patronage, advising that 'a prince ought to show himself a lover of ability, giving employment to able men and honouring those who excel in a particular field'. But above all, Machiavelli goes on, 'a prince should endeavour to win the reputation of being a

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Mechanik und antike Gesellschaft (Stuttgart 1991), argues that the inventions of Ktesibios, Hero, Archimedes and others were widely used in society, e.g. in mining, in harbours, or in construction; she also argues that the Hellenistic dynasties, notably the Ptolemies but others as well, deliberately promoted technological research for precisely this reason. Cf. C.J. Tuplin and T.E. Rihll eds., *Science and Mathematics in Ancient Greek Culture* (Oxford 2002). The mathematician Pappos of Alexandria (fourth century CE) informs us that the mechanikoi of the school of Hero found it a necessary part of their work to invent θαύματα, useless but amazing things, as well as practical devices; cf. W. Swinnen, 'Over technologie in Alexandrië', *Hermeneus* 57 (1985) 152-161, esp. 152-3.

[75] Diod. 1.34.2; Strabo 17.1.52; Vitr. 10.6.1-4.

great man of outstanding ability [himself]'.[76] Thus, sponsoring art, literature, and science was one way to publicly demonstrate the taste, learnedness, and wisdom of the ruler, but better still was philosophising or writing oneself. The Renaissance period may have been the apogee of the cult of the learned prince, but it was no exclusive Renaissance, or European, phenomenon. Throughout history, rulers dabbled in science and literature. Princes like Charles d'Orléans, John I of Brabant, Süleyman the Magnificent, or Lorenzo de' Medici, also called the Magnificent, were not only great patrons of the arts, but poets of some distinction themselves.

The Hellenistic period likewise had its learned princes. Being wise (*sophia*) and shrewd (*phronēsis*) were standard claims of Hellenistic kingship. For this reason the best of teachers were hired to tutor princes and pages.[77] Indeed, several Hellenistic rulers were not merely patrons but personally involved in literature, scholarship, or historiography. Alexander was called 'a philosopher in arms' by a contemporary, but the same can be said of many other

[76] *The Prince*, translated by George Bull (Harmondsworth 1961) 121. Cf. W. Eamon, 'Court, academy, and printing house. Patronage and scientific careers in late Renaissance Italy', in: Moran 1991, 125-50, esp. 32; Biagioli 1993, 2 with n. 4.

[77] Evidence for Aristotle as Alexander's tutor is collected in Green 1990, 86 n. 26. Alexander's first tutor was a certain Lysimachos the Akarnanian who was favoured by Alexander because he nicknamed him 'Achilles' (and himself 'Phoenix', after Achilles' tutor): Plut., *Alex*. 5.8; 8.2; 26.1-2; Arr., Anab. 1.12; Plin. *NH* 7.108; Athen. 537C; Onesicr. *FGrH* 134 F 38. In an inscription from Ephesos, Attalos II praised his nephew's tutor, emphasising literary skills and moral worth: *Inschriften von Ephesos* no. 202, after Roy 1998, 113, who notes also the association of two statues of Ptolemaic kings with statues of poets and philosophers in the sanctuary of Sarapis at Memphis (Zanker 1995, 172-3), and comments that 'beyond the immediate historical or political circumstances this is clearly a celebration of universal learning as a quality of the good ruler' (p. 113 n. 24). Kallisthenes, pupil and nephew of Aristotle, was in charge of the *basilikoi paides* at Alexander's court. Another pupil of Aristotle, Demetrios of Phaleron, was *epitropos* of the children of Ptolemaios Soter and Eurydike, teaching them general philosophy and the philosophy of kingship. Soter's children by Berenike (including the later king Ptolemaios Philadelphos) were educated *i.a.* by Strato, Philetas, and Zenodotos, cf. Bulloch 1989, 198-200. Persaios, a student of Zeno and a philos of Antigonos Gonatas tutored Gonatas' son Halkyoneus, and Eufantes of Olynthos was the tutor of Antigonos Doson. Some of the philosophers who were employed by kings to educate their sons and pages wrote treatises on kingship to instruct their pupils in the art of ruling (see below).

kings.[78] Ptolemaios Soter was a historian, his account of Alexander's campaigns counts as one of the most authoritative sources for the subject.[79] He is also known to have written a tragedy called *Adonis*.[80] Ptolemaios Philadelphos was an 'amateur' scientist,[81] and the same was said of Attalos III. Antiochos VIII wrote poetry in the style of Nikandros; Galen quotes some verses from his poem on poisonous snakes.[82] Often, kings created epigrams and short poems in the context of symposia. Thus, Philippos II improvised a lampoon on Demosthenes during a drinking-bout after his victory at Chaironeia.[83] Three epigrams on the appearance of Aratos' *Phainomena*, by Leonidas, Kallimachos and Ptolemaios II are extant, and Ptolemaios Euergetes and Philippos V are known epigrammatists as well.[84] King Artavazd II of Armenia (55-31) wrote plays and other literary compositions in Greek.[85]

Competition

Famous men at court were walking status symbols. They played an important part in the competition between royal courts. Kings tried to outdo each other in appropriating the most famous men, and in the beginning the Ptolemies seem to have won most of the time. Many anecdotes, mainly in Diogenes Laertius, feature philosophers who refused to come to a royal court, although most of these did maintain bonds of *philia* with royal families. Antigonos

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[78] Onesicr. FGrH 134 F 17a. Alexander, it was said, was eager to learn about atomism and infinity, and enjoyed discussing these with Anaxarchos of Abdera, a student of Demokritos who accompanied him on his campaigns in Asia (Plut., *Alex.* 8.28; Diog. Laert. 9.60).

[79] Ptolemaios may have subtly magnified his own part in Alexander's campaigns, and left out the darker sides of his predecessor's reign, but his books were nevertheless considered to be the most reliable source by Arrian (*Anab.*, *pr.* 1). C.B. Welles, 'The reliability of Ptolemy as an historian', in: *Miscellanea di studi alessandri in memoria di A. Rostagni* (Turin 1963) 101-16, acknowledges Ptolemaios' tendency to exaggerate his own role, but finds the bias understandable and unimportant. For a more critical approach see A.B. Bosworth, 'Windows on the truth', in: *id.*, *Alexander in the East. The Tragedy of Triumph* (2nd ed.; Oxford 1998) 31-65; cf. R.M. Errington, 'Bias in Ptolemy's History of Alexander', *CQ* 19 (1969) 233-42.

[80] *TrGF* I, 119. Also Ptolemaios Philopator probably wrote tragedies (Mineur 1985, 128).

[81] Cameron 1995, 83; Green 1990, 84; Mineur 1985, 128.

[82] Gal. 14; cf. Plin. *HN* 20.264.

[83] Plut., *Demosth*. 20.3.

[84] Cameron 1995, 83, who suggest that the epigrams were written for a contest at a royal symposium.

[85] C. Burney and D.M. Lang, *The Peoples of the Hills. Ancient Ararat and Caucasus* (London 1970) 201.

Gonatas put pressure on Zeno, founding father of stoic philosophy, to join his court. Zeno turned down the invitation and sent his pupil Persaios instead.[86] Gonatas did, however, succeed in enticing Alexandros the Aitolian away from the Ptolemaic court. Conversely, Antiochos I for some years stole, or borrowed, Aratos from the Antigonid court.[87] The Ptolemies tried to persuade the celebrated Theophrastos to give up Athens for Alexandria (Theophrastos instead sent his pupil Strato), and tried to acquire Stilpo, head of the Megarian philosophical school.[88] When the Indian king Bindusara, son of Chandragupta, once asked Antiochos Soter to send him a sophist, the Seleukid king refused,[89] even though the two rulers maintained good relations.[90] One source even claims that Ptolemaios Soter was prepared to use force to bring philosophers to his court,[91] and Aristophanes of Byzantium was reputedly locked up in Alexandria when it came out that he planned to join the Attalids.[92]

Patronage was a continuation of war with other means.[93] Just as kings would send athletes or horses to the games, so too they would compete with one another in poetry, scholarship and science. For this reason, kings were looking for *quality*, for the best poets and philosophers, and were not particularly keen on docile propaganda-makers. In my view this policy also accounts for the innovative nature of notably Alexandrian literature and scholarship. In the past it has been believed that Greek poets and scholars who worked for monarchs bartered away their integrity and freedom. However, even a brief glance at the evidence suffices to see that the opposite was the case: there had never been so much intellectual and artistic freedom in the Greek world as at the royal courts of the Hellenistic

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[86] Diog. Laert. 7.6-9; cf. Plut., *Mor*. 1043c.

[87] Downey 1961, 87 with n. 3; Bevan 1902 II, 276 with n. 4. At the request of king Antiochos, Aratos prepared an edition of the Odyssey and the Iliad.

[88] Zeno: Diog. Laert. 7.6; Theophrastos: Diog. Laert. 5.37; Strato: Diog. Laert. 5.37; Stilpo: Diog. Laert. 2.115.

[89] Ath. IV 184b-c.

[90] G. Woodcock, *The Greeks in India* (London 1966) 50-2.

[91] Diog. Laert. 2.115.

[92] Vitr. 7 *pr*. 5-7.

[93] The competitive nature of court patronage was emphasised by Kruedener 1973, 21-2, regarding the courts of Early Modern Europe, where ‘ein heftiger Wettbewerb entbrannte, ein Konkurrenzkampf, der sich … vorwiegend auf dem Felde der festlichen Kunst abspielte und zu dem die verschiedene Disziplinen wie Musik, Dichtung, Malerei, Architektur zum dekorativen Gesamtkunstwerk vereinigt ins Treffen geführt wurden’.

Age. There opportunities existed to freely do and say things that public morality in the Classical *polis* would have made difficult, if not entirely prohibited. The early Ptolemaic court in particular was a safe haven for intellectuals with unorthodox, even subversive views. The philosopher Theodoros of Kyrene, called Atheos, the Blasphemer, was expelled from Athens because of his alleged denying of the existence of the gods, but a later notorious 'atheist', Euhemeros of Messene, found a warm welcome at the court of Kassandros and later in Alexandria, where he was encouraged rather than thwarted.[94] At the court of Ptolemaios II, Aristarchos of Samos developed his revolutionary heliocentric theory, even though this theory was widely criticised, not only on scientific, but especially on moral grounds.[95] And the Ptolemies enabled the physicians Herophilos and Erasistratos to perform systematic dissections of human cadavers – a practice that was as unique and progressive as Aristarchos' hypothesis, and provoked similar hostile reactions.[96]

Poetry, in particular epigram, could be used to celebrate victories over other rulers and dynasties, or simply malign rivals. We already saw the epigram by the Antigonid courtier

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[94] Diog. Laert. 2.102-3; Ath. XII 611b; Cic., *Tusc.* 1.102. Cf. M. Winiarczyk, 'Theodoros ὁ ἄθεος', *Philologus* 125 (1981) 64-94. Euhemeros of Messene propagated the view that the Olympian gods were originally ancient kings who had been deified (*FGrH* 63 *ap.* Diod. 6.1.2-10), and this blurring of the distinction between man and god can also be understood, 'according to taste', as advancing a rationalisation of atheism (S. Hornblower, s.v. 'Euhemerus' in OCD, p. 567). Euhemeros in Alexandria: Fraser 1972 I, 289. Greek words for 'atheism' were οὐνομίζειν, 'not recognizing the gods', and ἀναιρεῖν, 'to remove the gods'; ἄθεος denoted impiety or being abandoned by the gods, cf. R. Parker s.v. 'Atheism' in OCD, p. 201.

[95] Diog. Laert. 7.174. The main scientific argument against the heliocentric hypothesis, was that it conflicted with empirical observation; philosophical and moral objections were put forward first of all by Kleanthes, who held that the theory conflicted with astral, *i.e.* divine, determination. Aristarchos' hypothesis was hardly influential until the Renaissance, and Africa 1968, 66, may be right in supposing that the idea was only recorded *because* it was subversive. The only astronomer who perhaps accepted, and used, Aristarchos' ideas was his near contemporary Seleukos of Seleukeia on the Red Sea, who tried to explain the ocean tides by accepting the notion of a rotating earth: Strabo 1.1.9; 16.1.6; Plut., *Mor.* VIII 1006c. On the revival of heliocentrism in the Renaissance see O. Gingerich, *The Book Nobody Read. Chasing the Revolutions of Nicolaus Copernicus* (New York 2004).

[96] It was rumoured that with the approval of the king, Herophilos performed vivisection on convicted criminals: Celsus, *De Med.*, pr. 23-4. Cf. H.F.J. Horstmanshoff, 'Sectie en anatomie in Alexandrië', *Hermeneus* 57 (1985) 142-51, esp. 150-1.

Timon, ridiculing the Alexandrian *mouseion*. Similarly, Kallimachos put down the Seleukids by writing that 'The Assyrian river (*sc.* the Euphrates) has a broad stream, but carries down much filth and refuse on its waters'.[97] At a state banquet in 336 shortly before Philippos II's planned invasion of Asia, the king's guests were entertained by a popular actor, Neoptolemos, who sang verses pertaining to the Persian campaign, 'rebuking the wealth of the Persian king, great and famous as it was, and suggesting that it could be overturned some day by fortune.' And when (probably) Leonidas of Taras wrote the votive inscription for the Celtic shields which Pyrrhos dedicated to a Thessalian deity after he had defeated Antigonos Gonatas, the poet both celebrated his patron's victory over the barbarians and belittle Gonatas' martial qualities:

> These shields, now dedicated to Athena Itonis,
> Pyrrhos the Molossian took from the fearless Celts
> after defeating the entire army of Antigonos: no great wonder:
> the Aiakids are valiant spear-fighters, now as well as in the past.[98]

Accumulation

The hunt for knowledge had yet another political purpose. Knowledge denoted power, control.[99] As one epigram to Lorenzo de' Medici proclaimed: 'Because you know everything, O Medici, you are all-powerful.[100] Also the Hellenistic kings' efforts to control culture and knowledge were not unlike their efforts to control territory, wealth, and manpower. It included control not only of various forms of art and science, but also of the knowledge of nature and culture in various, preferably far away countries. For this reason exotic plants and animals were gathered in the palace gardens of Alexandria.[101] The animals were presented to the

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[97] Call., *Hymn* 2.108-9.

[98] Plut., *Pyrrh.* 26.5. The epigram is also preserved in Paus. 1.13.2 and Diod. 22.11, and has been ascribed to Leonidas of Taras, cf. Nederlof 1940, 190 n. 7. Aiakos is the ancestor of the *hērōs* Pyrrhos-Neoptolemos, Achilles' son, who was the founder of Pyrrhos' dynasty; when Celtic mercenaries in his own service desecrated the royal tombs at Aigai in 274, Pyrrhos' reputation was badly damaged (Plut., *Pyrrh.* 26.6-7). On Pyrrhos' 'Celtic' victory propaganda see Strootman 2005a, 114-16.

[99] Eamon 1991, 39; cf. Griffin 1996, 39-44.

[100] *Sic sapis, o Medices, omnia sicque potes*. Cited after Eamon 1991, 32.

[101] Ath. 654. The early Ptolemies are known to have organised, since *c.* 280 BCE, expeditions of exploration into Africa, mainly along the sea routes through the Red Sea, with the aim of acquiring

public during the Ptolemaia Festival. In this context one may also think of Berossos' *Babyloniaca*, a history of Mesopotamia commissioned by Antiochos I, Manetho's *Aegyptiaca*, the same for Egypt, and the translation of the *Thora* that Ptolemaios II ordered.[102] Josephus has Ptolemaios Soter say that his main motivation for having this translation made was his eagerness to do 'a work glorious to myself.'[103] Thus, the accumulation of knowledge at court showed how far-reaching and all-embracing royal power was. It made the court appear as a microcosm, the place where the whole world came together, including the best poets and scholars of the entire (Greek) *oikoumene* whose fame stretched far beyond the borders of actual, political control.

Collecting books was yet another means of accumulating and controlling knowledge, a form of symbolic attainment of the world. According to Josephus, it was Ptolemaios Soter's ambition 'to gather together all the books that were in the inhabited world.'[104] Tradition has preserved several tales about the eagerness of the first Ptolemies to obtain books, colourful accounts of their almost maniacal efforts to lay their hands on them.[105]

Hellenism

This brings us to one last, but fundamental, characteristic of court patronage: its overall Hellenic nature.[106] Non-Greek artists, writers, and scholars were almost completely absent

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elephants and exotic animals. Cf. M.J. Versluys, 'Op jacht in het land van de zwarte mensen. Het jachtfries van een graftombe in Marissa', *Hermeneus* 66.5 (1994) 314-9, at 317-8; L. Casson, 'Ptolemy II and the hunting of African elephants', *TAPhA* 123 (1993) 247-60. Scenes from the Grand Procession have been associated with the Nile Mosaic from Palestrina: F. Coarelli, 'La pompe di Tolomeo Filadelfo e il mosaico nilotico di Palestrina', *Ktema* 15 (1990) 225-51; A. Steinmeyer-Schareika, *Das Nilmosaik von Palestrina und eine Ptolemäische Expedition nach Äthiopien* (Bonn 1978) 52-97. On depictions of Egypt in Roman art see now the excellent treatment by M.J. Versluys, *Aegyptiaca Romana. Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 144 (Leiden 2002).

[102] W. Orth, 'Ptolemaios II. und die Septuaginta-Übersetzung', in: H.-J. Fabry and U. Offerhaus eds., *Im Brennpunkt: Die Septuaginta. Studien zur Entstehung und Bedeutung der griechischen Bibel* (Stuttgart 2001) 97-114.

[103] Jos., *AJ* 12.49, cf. 12.55.

[104] Jos., *AJ* 12.20.

[105] Examples are collected in Green 1990, 89; cf. Africa 1968, 62.

[106] I am aware that most scholarship of the past decades assumes the opposite, notably regarding Ptolemaic court poetry. For instance Merkelbach 1981, 27-35, argued that Kallimachos and Theokritos

from the courts. And when they were present—Berossos, Manetho, the translators of the *Septuaginta*—they wrote in Greek. Alexandrian poetry is distinguished by its depreciation of anything Egyptian. In other words, kings protected not just science and culture, but *Greek* science and culture. Likewise, they promoted the study of the Greek past. Alexandrian philologists studied 'classic' poetry, in particular Homer. Hellenistic poets were obsessed with the Greek mythological legacy. The main difference between Classical and Hellenistic literature, is that the latter tended to smooth the regional differences among the Greeks. Thus they redefined Greek culture in the light of a new, more cosmopolitan world view.

The Hellenism of the court was instrumental in creating an imperial elite culture, intensifying a process of Hellenisation that was also at work in the *poleis*, independently from the kingdoms In world history, court culture has often served to tie together local elites, creating coherence in culturally and ethnically heterogeneous empires, and binding these elites to the political centre by 'the power of memory, of imagination, and of language'.[107] Hellenism defined who did, and who did not, participate in the imperial order.[108]

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endeavoured to develop an interpretation of Ptolemaic monarchy that combined Greek and Egyptian concepts of kingship. A kindred view has been put forward by Stephens 1999, 167-85, who claimed that Kallimachos' *Hymn to Zeus* was written for the celebration of the Egyptian Heb-sed festival, an annual celebration of the birth and accession of Horus; the equation of Horus with Zeus, however, is quite implausible. W.H. Mineur, *Callimachus' Hymn to Delos* (Leiden 1984) 10-8, connects yet another poem of Kallimachos to Egyptian tradition; but apart from one *possible* mention of Egypt ('the two countries') as being *part* of the Ptolemaic empire, the *Hymn to Delos* contains no reference to Egypt, let alone to pharaonic ideology (Hunter 2003, 168).

[107] Burke 1992, 57.

[108] Cf. A. Mehl, 'Die antiken Griechen: Integration durch Kultur', in: K. Buraselis and K. Zoumboulakis eds., *The Idea of European Community in History. Conference Proceedings* II (Athens 2003) 191-204, shows how in the Hellenistic periods non-Greeks strove after 'the Greek way of life', signified by membership of the gymnasion. Conversely, those who were excluded from the imperial order often reacted by accentuating indigenous culture; this was the case in Judea in the 160's, when an orthodox version of Jewish culture was constructed in opposition to the Hellenised allies of the Seleukids, as is apparent from 1 and 2 *Maccabees*; cf. R. Strootman, 'Van wetsgetrouwen en afvalligen: religieus geweld en culturele verandering in de tijd der Makkabeeën', in: B. Becking and G. Rouwhorst eds., *Religies in interactie. Jodendom en Christendom in de Oudheid* (Zoetermeer and Utrecht 2006) 79-97.

The focal point of that imperial order was the court. It was here that Greek culture was reinvented to become a universal imperial culture. It happened at all the courts in a very similar manner, due to mutual influences and competition. It was continued at the court of the indigenous kingdoms of the later Hellenistic Age: Pontos, Bithynia, Hasmonean and Herodean Judea. Even the Numidian king Mikipsa, a contemporary of the emperor Augustus, 'was the most civilised of all the Numidian kings, and lived much in the company of cultivated Greeks whom he summoned to his court. He took great interest in culture, especially philosophy'.[109]

By concerning themselves with Greek culture on a grand scale, and in the centres of their kingdoms, Macedonian rulers presented themselves as protectors and benefactors of the Greeks. In part, they did so because the Greek (and Macedonian) populations formed the cornerstones of Macedonian imperial rule. Moreover, this Hellenism had a distinct 'cosmopolitan' character that transgressed the multifarious cultural and linguistic zones of the Hellenistic states. It could thus contribute to cohesion in states which were characterised by their political, ethnical, and cultural heterogeneity. Cosmopolitan Hellenism transgressed also the borders of states. It created a certain sense of world unity. This may be what the historian Menekles of Barke meant when around 200 he boasted that Alexandria had become the teacher to all the Greeks and barbarians.[110]

4.3 Bonds between patron and client

In this subchapter I will argue that cultural and scientific patronage was an organic part of court society. The poets, scholars, and scientists working for the king were for the most part not his employees, but genuine courtiers, *philoi tou basileōs*. Some prominent men of letters even belonged to the upper echelons of the court. Conversely, members of the *sunedrion* often distinguished themselves as philosophers or (occasional) poets. Competition was the principal force that encouraged poets and others to create.

This point of view runs counter to the notion that poets, scholars, or artists working at a court were the king's servants, giving up their integrity and demeaning themselves to the writing of laudatory poems, philosophical tracts in defence of monarchic rule, and produced

[109] Diod. 34.35. Note the correlation between 'civilised' and 'Greek'.

[110] Fraser I, 517-18, with II, 165 n. 324.

only second-rate works.[111] In older scholarship we often find painstaking efforts to disconnect Hellenistic poetry and science from the court. Thus in a handbook on post-classical Greek science we are assured that 'there were many scientists who received no help whatsoever from rich patrons. Many of those who did scientific work were no doubt men of means.'[112] However, the idea that the principal motive for seeking patronage was material benefit is erroneous. To be sure, many poets and philosophers were men of means too, and there were many opportunities to make a living outside the court.

Modern depreciation of royal patronage may in part be attributed to the nineteenth-century ideal of the artist as an independent individual. But the notion was popular in Antiquity too. Greek intellectuals of the imperial period blamed their Hellenistic predecessors for dancing attendance to kings, and praised those who refused to do so. They relished in anecdotes about philosophers outwitting kings in private conversations. Athenaios for example dismissed the members of the Alexandrian Museum altogether as parasites.[113] Diogenes Laertius relates with approval how the philosopher Stilpo of Megara went into hiding when he learned that Ptolemaios Soter intended to bring him to Alexandria.[114] According to another popular story, Anaxarchos of Abdera, an expert in atomic theory, bartered away his scientific integrity by his efforts to please the 'amateur' philosopher Alexander.[115] Called back to order by an Indian wise man, Anaxarchos repented and rigorously abandoned court life.[116] Other stories give the impression that the association with kings was not only intellectually restrictive, but even physically dangerous. The physician Chrysippos was beaten like a slave at the Ptolemaic court for some obscure affront.[117] His was a better fate still than that of the philologist Zoïlos, who was crucified for having offended

[111] See for instance Africa 1968: 'In the Hellenistic age, many scientists exchanged independence for the patronage of kings' (p. 2), and 'learned the arts of discretion and subservience' (p. 48); Green 1990, 241, sees 'blatant flattery' every time that Theokritos mentions the name of Ptolemaios Philadelphos, and concludes that 'there is always a price to be paid for patronage'; Schwinge 1986, 40-82, holds that kings repressed free poetry but believes that the poets in turn criticised the kings between the lines.

[112] Lloyd 1973, 6.

[113] Ath. VI 240b; XV 677e.

[114] Diog. Laert. 2.115.

[115] Plut., *Alex.* 8, 28, 52; Diog. Laert. 9.60. An alternative explanation will be given later on.

[116] Plut., *Alex.* 8, 28, 52; Diog. Laert. 9.60-3.

[117] Diog. Laert. 7.186.

Ptolemaios Philadelphos.[118] The aforementioned Anaxarchos was tortured to death when he fell into the hands of a Cypriot prince whom he had once offended.[119] But the most horrible fate of all befell the poet Sotades of Maroneia. Sotades had mocked the incestuous marriage of Ptolemaios Philadelphos and his sister Arsinoë with the infamous line: 'You are pushing the prong into an unholy fleshpot'.[120] Sotades fled the court but was hunted down by Philadelphos' admiral Patroklos; when he was finally caught, the poor soul was locked up inside a leaden chest and thrown into the sea.[121] The message is clear: kings are short-tempered despots, and intellectuals should better refrain from criticising them and, preferably, keep their distance altogether.

But do anecdotes like these really prove that royal patronage was oppressive and demeaning? They do not, of course. Even if we accept the stories about Chrysippos, Zoïlos, Anaxarchos, and Sotades as historical fact, these stories are about kings taking revenge for personal insults. They are not about whimsical tyrants who oppress criticism as such. As we have seen in section 3.4, free speech was a cardinal virtue of court society. We can be sure that no king ever *forced* a poet to write poetry.[122] Poets lauded kings in encomiastic texts because they believed in it – because they themselves were part of the monarchic system, deriving status and privileges from it.

[118] Vitr. 7.8-9.

[119] Diog. Laert. 958-9.

[120] trans. Green 1990, 82; Cameron 1995, 18, translates more freely but also more to the point: 'It's an unholy hole he's shoving his prick in'. For a discussion of these lines and their various possible explanations see Cameron 1995, 18-20; on Sotades in general see: M. Launey in *RÉA* 47 (1945) 33-45.

[121] Plut., *Mor.* 11a; Hegesandros *ap.* Ath. XIV 620f-621a.

[122] Poets and other intellectuals flocked to the court out of 'free will'. There are several examples of men who worked for more than one royal patron. Aratos of Soli not only worked for Antigonos Gonatas but also for some time joined the court of Antiochos I; Alexandros the Aitolian was the guest of both Ptolemaios Philadelphos and his enemy Gonatas; Erasistratos worked first for the Seleukids, then for the Ptolemies (Plut., *Demetr.* 38); Theokritos, though he mainly worked for Philadelphos, addressed one of his poems to Hieron of Syracuse (*Id.* 16); Archimedes visited Alexandria and presented his celebrated water screw to the Ptolemaic family, although he is first of all known as a *philos* of Hieron. A study of the relation between Dutch writers and their patrons in the first half of the twentieth century has shown that the patrons (both private persons and institutions) had no influence on the content of the work of the writers whatsoever: H. van den Braber, *Geven om te krijgen. Literair mecenaat in Nederland tussen 1900 en 1940* (Nijmegen 2002).

As mentioned above, in the Renaissance the impetus for progress in art and science came from princely patronage. Galileo dedicated his astronomical discoveries to Cosimo II de' Medici, just as Johannes Kepler dedicated his to the emperor Ferdinand II.[123] They did so in the expectation that some kind of material or immaterial reward would be returned. Yet men like Galileo and Kepler, as well as many other clients of Renaissance rulers, were innovative, even unorthodox thinkers, whose integrity is beyond doubt. It appears, then, that the early modern court did not restrict artists and scientist, but, on the contrary, provided them with chances and encouragement. It is for this reason that Vasari advised artists who desired freedom to join a prince's court, where they would no longer be dependent on the demands and restrictions of the public art market.[124] As I have asserted previously, Hellenistic art and science was stimulated towards innovation and exploration by royal patronage.

Another important aspect is the fact that the sources show no indication that artists and intellectuals at court formed a special category as distinct from 'normal' courtiers. To all account they were first of all *philoi* of the king. It was not exceptional that philosophers or other writers were given political, diplomatic or military responsibilities. For instance the scholar Onesikritos of Astypalaia—a pupil of Diogenes and the author of an account of Alexander's campaigns—served Alexander as a navigator in India, and in 325/4 was lieutenant to the admiral Nearchos. The philosopher and statesman Demetrios of Phaleron was a political advisor of Ptolemaios Soter; as a courtier Demetrios even became involved in faction conflicts after Soter's death.[125] Hieronymos of Kardia worked both as an historian and as a military commander for the Antigonids. Antigonos Gonatas appointed the stoic philosopher Persaios as commander of the Akrokorinthos citadel.[126] Many philosophers served as diplomats.[127] The celebrated architect Sostratos of Knidos, builder of the Pharos

[123] P. Findlen, 'The economy of scientific exchange in early modern Italy', in: Moran 1991, 1-24 with nn. 3 and 4; M. Biagioli, 'Galileo's system of patronage', *History of Science* 28 (1990) 1-61; W.B. Asworth jr., 'The Habsburg circle', in: Moran 1991, 137-67: 137. Interestingly, Copernicus' *De Revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543), banned by the Church in 1616 because of its heliocentrism, was dedicated to pope Paulus III.

[124] In a similar vein Aristotle advised the wise man to 'fall in love, take part in politics and live with a king' (Diog. Laert. 5.31).

[125] Diog. Laert. 5.77-8. He chose the losing side and was later imprisoned by Ptolemaios Philadelphos.

[126] Plut., *Aratus* 18, 23; Diog. Laert. 7.9.36; Ath. 4.162b-d, XIII 607a-f. The stoic however failed to hold his ground against Gonatas' enemy Aratos of Sikyon.

[127] Fraser 1972 I, 557; Weber 1993, 424.

Lighthouse, served his patron Ptolemaios Philadelphos as an ambassador.[128] Conversely there are many examples of 'normal' courtiers who were also writers, like Nearchos, Alexander's admiral, who wrote on India and the Indian Ocean, or Samos, a leading *philos* and *suntrophos* of Philippos V, who was also a famous poet.[129]

Theokritos and Hieron

If poets, artists and intellectuals were not servants, what was the nature of their relationship with the king? There is one piece of contemporary evidence that is most illuminating in this respect. This is Theokritos' sixteenth *Idyll*, better known as 'The Graces'. *Idyll* 16 is principally an encomium for the Sicilian ruler Hieron II. It is also a request for a gift and an attempt of the poet to be accepted by Hieron as *philos*. As a consequence, the poem provides valuable first-hand information regarding the relation of king and poet. Because Theokritos came from Syracuse,[130] it is usually held that the poem was written at the beginning of his career, and that he moved to Alexandria because Hieron was not interested.[131] That is possible, but the poem itself does not warrant this conclusion.

Idyll 16 is one of Theokritos' finest, but also one of his most puzzling works.[132] A striking feature of the poem is its virtuosity—a blend of Homeric stateliness with colloquial language, folksong and mime—as if the poem's very language, as Griffiths has proposed, was meant to advertise Theokritos' professional skills and versatility.[133] Theokritos also cunningly evoked the styles of Bakchylides and Pindar. Both had enjoyed the patronage of Hieron's namesake and predecessor, the fifth century Syracusean tyrant Hieron I, a ruler who was

[128] Ath. 5.203c-e.

[129] Polyb. 5.8.6.

[130] Theocr., *Epigr*. 27.

[131] Bulloch 1989, 30; Green 1990, 240 with n. 59. Theokritos' principal patron was Ptolemaios II Philadelphos: the poet refers relatively often to Philadelphos and his family (*i.a*. in *Id.* 7.93; 14.59-64; 15.46-9, 94-5), and among his extant works there is one encomium to that king (*Id.* 17), as well as a fragment of a poem entitled *Berenike*. A further indication that Theokritos was connected with the Ptolemaic court, is his apparent familiarity with the Alexandrian palace in *Id.* 15.

[132] Secondary literature on Theokritos is vast and expanding. For a selective list: Bulloch 1989, 205-6; or see the comprehensive bibliography at www.gltc.leidenuniv.nl. Historical approaches to *Idyll* 16: Griffiths 1979, 9-50; L.-M. Hans, 'Theokrits XVI. Idylle und die Politik Hierons II. von Syrakus', *Historia* 34 (1985) 117-25; Gold 1987, 30-7.

[133] Griffiths 1979, 9.

particularly renowned for his protection of the arts.[134] Theokritos now urges the second Hieron to support poetry too, in particular the poetry of Theokritos. You must keep your money moving, he tells the ruler:

> What is the use of money that is hoarded away in great piles in some chest? A wise man uses his wealth, first taking care of his own needs, and then of those of, say, a poet. Many dependants and relatives count on his generosity. He sacrifices offerings on the altars of the gods. He is a generous host, guests are always welcome at his table. … But most of all he honours the servants of the Muses.[135]

With these words Theokritos is not encouraging Hieron to become hospitable. The presentation of the ruler as a generous host who entertains many guests in his house is any Hellenistic ruler's self-image. Theokritos merely asks to be invited too. Such a straightforward request is by no means ignoble. Kallimachos, in the concluding prayer to his *Hymn to Zeus* (91-6), also bluntly asks Ptolemaios Philadelphos for a reward. By alluding to Pindar, who had praised the hospitality of the first Hieron's hearth,[136] Theokritos embeds his request in the moral complex of *xenia*, guest-friendship, with its ideals of generosity, gift exchange, and reciprocity. Throughout the poem, Theokritos plays with the double meaning of *charites*, 'graces', as favours and as goddesses; the latter impersonate poetry, so that it becomes clear that Theokritos offers his writings to Hieron as gifts, for which he expects gifts in return. As we have seen in chapter 3.3, *xenia* and *philia* were the fundamentals of court society. Theokritos reminds Hieron of the fact that hospitality and generosity are more than social obligations – they are also honourable, and therefore advantageous to Hieron himself. As everyone knew, an honourable man was *qualitate qua* a magnanimous man who dealt out gifts in order to gain greatness and prestige.[137] The higher one's status, the greater one's generosity was expected to be. This was a central Greek virtue and particularly important in aristocratic households, notably the court.

But apart from the prestige to be gained from hospitality and generosity, Theokritos mentions yet another reason why Hieron should extend his *xenia* to include the poet Theokritos. The argument is as simple as it is, by modern standards, presumptuous (but

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[134] Griffiths 1979, 9; on Hieron's I patronage of the arts see Gold 1987, 21-30.

[135] Theocr., *Id.* 16.28-38.

[136] *Pyth.* 1.88, 3.69, cf. 3.71 and *Ol.* 1.10-1.

[137] Cf. *e.g.* Arist, *Eth.Nic.* 4.2.

unpretentiousness was of course *not* a central Greek virtue): reward me, and you'll buy yourself immortality.[138] After all, who would ever have remembered the long-haired sons of Priam, or Achilles, or wandering Odysseus, had not Homer put their deeds into words? Now, thanks to poetry, not only the old heroes are remembered, but even Odysseus' swineherd has become famous. Hieron—'the Achilles of our age', as Theokritos calls him—also needs a poet to immortalise his heroic exploits and spread his glory 'across the Skythian Sea' (*i.e.* as far as the world border), so that:

> Your name will forever live on gloriously, even when Death takes you away to deep and dark Hades, so that you will not languish honourless on the shores of cold Acheron, bewailing your fate as though you were some common labourer with hands blistered by wielding a spade, and having inherited nothing but tears.[139]

However, the praise that Hieron actually receives from Theokritos is rather commonplace. Hieron is a great man who vanquishes his enemies and brings a new Golden Age.[140] No specific battle or heroic feats of this new Achilles are mentioned.[141] But Theokritos is not yet finished. As Griffiths has noted, the poet states in what follows that in the Greek notion of reputation (*kleos*) the words count as much as the deeds: only praise sung by a *great* poet will for all posterity reach such a large and wide-spread audience that the poem's protagonist will be truly immortalised.[142] Conversely, the ambitious poet is in need of a *great* subject matter to

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[138] Modern commentators have often been surprised by the poet's frankness; as one translator commented: 'It is not easy to beg with dignity, but Theocritus … does so with remarkable and unexpected success' (Gow 1953, 63). But Theokritos' apparent frankness is *parrhēsia*, a virtue that was central to *philia* and *xenia*, and therefore not remarkable at all.

[139] Theocr., *Id.* 16. 39-44.

[140] On the ideological aspects of *Idyll* 16 see below, subchapter 4.5.

[141] This may be due to the fact that Theokritos wrote *Idyll* 16 when Hieron was still a tyrant and had not yet routed the Mamertines at the Longanos River, the victory which made him a king in *c.* 265, whereafter he started his long and unusually peaceful reign. The absence of the word βασιλεύς in itself is no proof for an early date of this poem, cf. R.L. Hunter, *Theocritus and the Archaeology of Greek Poetry* (Cambridge 1996) 83. To be sure, Theokritos did not become the author of a new *Iliad*.

[142] Griffiths 1979, 14.

attain fame.[143] In other words: the prestige of the poet will, in a sense, be added to the accumulated prestige of the patron, and *vice versa*.[144]

Several conclusions concerning the aims of literary patronage may be inferred from *Idyll* 16. First, the hospitality and generosity offered to a poet is in itself honourable and boosts a king's reputation. After all, beneficence was one of the central virtues of the ideal Hellenistic king. Second, poetry is the means *par excellence* to make the deeds of kings public and spread reputations to the edges of the earth.[145] Third, the patron may profit from the fame of the poet with whom he maintains a patronage relationship. But most importantly, *Idyll* 16 shows that the relation between patron and poet was defined in terms of *xenia*, and that this relationship was *reciprocal*.[146]

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[143] Griffiths 1979, 14, suggests that Theokritos alludes to Pindar and other poets of old because their relation with Archaic tyrants was likewise characterised by mutual benefit.

[144] Cf. Griffiths 1979, 14: 'Pindar's victory in songs mirrors that of his patrons in sport; both parties are immortalized equally through their poetic relationship.' A similar notion of mutuality one also encounters in Renaissance literary patronage, cf. J.P. Guépin, 'Ariosto, de ideale hofdichter', in: De Bruijn *et al*. 1986, 93-113: 112: 'De poëzie adelt de geschiedenis, de geschiedenis verleent ernst aan de poëzie' ('Poetry ennobles history, history lends earnestness to poetry'). Compare also these lines of the Turkic poet Fuzuli (*c.* 1495-1556), addressing his patron the Ottoman governor of Baghdad: 'I give you a splendid shelter, a house of everlasting gaiety. I make you a tall building that is like Paradise and the Garden of Eden. Yes, choose this as your dwelling-place until the Youngest Day, and loiter undisturbed in this garden of pleasures. By God! This work is certainly not a bad work, and it will suffice, if one desires a famous name. This is my goal: that your name will be immortal in this world, so that … both me and you, will be spoken of by everybody.' Cited after Flemming 1986, 171. It is noteworthy that authors of the Roman period equated the prestige resulting from the writing of literature with glory earned by political and military achievements, e.g. Aristid. *Or*. 50.49 and Arr., *Anab*. 1.12.5; cf. J.J. Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism* (Amsterdam 1995) 45-51, esp. 51.

[145] Cf. lines 121-2: 'And let poets take up the great glory of Hieron and proclaim it abroad past the Skythian sea'.

[146] When Ptolemaios VI Philometor was driven from Alexandria and fled to Rome, the king took up residence in the house of the painter Demetrios the Topographer, who had been his guest in Alexandria (Diod. 31.18.2; Val. Max. 5.1.1): king and artist were each other's *xenoi*, and this presupposed a *mutual* obligation to offer hospitality and assistance. Diodoros writes that Philometor lived in humble circumstances but it is unlikely that an artist who had given up the protection of a king for a better position in Rome was a poor man.

Reciprocity

The reciprocal nature of patronage is repeatedly stressed in *Idyll* 16. Whatever it was that Theokritos hoped to get from Hieron apart from his friendship, he expected it to come as a gift, or rather as a *return gift*, since he had first offered the ruler a poem. The morality of *xenia* prescribed that if Hieron accepted, he would be obliged to reciprocate. In the same vein Eratosthenes dedicated his mathematical treatise *On the Duplication of the Globe* to Ptolemaios III and another, untitled, treatise to Arsinoë II,[147] and the botanist Krataios named a newly discovered medicinal herb *mithridatia* after his patron Mithradates Eupator.[148] Archimedes, when he visited Alexandria, offered his host Ptolemaios Philadelphos the design of a new water screw, which was successfully employed to improve the fertility of the Nile Valley.[149] Gifts could be refused. The poet Antiphanes once read from a new comedy of his to Alexandros Balas, 'who, however, made it plain that he did not like it altogether' – a rather dreadful sign of royal disfavour.[150] Conversely, a king could himself ask for a gift, in which case we come close to what we would now call a commission. A royal request probably lay behind Berossos' *Babyloniaca* and Manetho's Egyptian history.

What were the benefits for the poets, scholars and scientists who offered their work to kings? Of course one must first think of material rewards, as gift exchange is also a form of economic exchange.[151] But perhaps more importantly, gift exchange was also a mechanism to determine the social status of both giver and receiver. This means that the value of rewards was in part immaterial. Hegesianax received a gift of money *and* a court title form Antiochos the Great as a reward for having entertained the king and his *philoi* by reciting his work.[152] The Epicurean philosopher Diogenes received status gifts, including the costume of a *philos*, from Alexandros Balas.[153] Here again there is no substantial difference with other courtiers.

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[147] Ath. 27b.

[148] Plin. *HN* 25.26.62.

[149] Diod. 1.34.2; Strabo 17.1.52; Vitr. 10.6.1-4.

[150] Ath. 555a.

[151] Ptolemaios Soter gave Strato of Lampsakos the astronomical sum of eighty talents in return for tutoring his son (Diog. Laert. 5.58). Also Aristotle was richly rewarded for his services to the Argeads (Athen. 398e; Sen., *Dial.* 27.5; Diog. Laert. 5.12-6; Gell., *NA* 3.17).

[152] Demetrios of Skepsis *ap.* Ath. 155b. The same Hegesianax served Antiochos III also as an envoy; he was sent to Greece in 196 to negotiate with Flamininus (Polyb. 18.50.4-5; App., *Syr.* 6).

[153] Ath. 211d.

And the Ptolemaic title of *epistatēs*, 'head of the *mouseion*',[154] was an aulic title, not unlike other functional titles like chamberlain, *epitropos*, or master of the hunt. Consequently, we may infer that the production of literature or scholarship was instrumental in obtaining access to the presence of the king, or more precisely, being admitted to royal banquets and symposia. This in turn was a means to acquire status, favours, or privileges, not only for oneself but also for one's family or friends. Participation in royal banquets is to all likelihood also the background to a notorious anecdote about Ktesibios of Chalkis; when he was asked by someone what he had gained from working for the Ptolemies, Ktesibios replied: 'free meals!'[155]

Competition and innovation

The court was the epicentre of power. It was a place where the lines separating the hierarchical layers of society could be crossed. But to win the favour of the king—or the queen, a prince, or an important *philos*—one had to attract attention and dispose of a network of personal contacts.[156] Other *philoi* to all likelihood acted as brokers.[157] This challenged men to prove their worth and demonstrate their skills, in one word, to *distinguish* themselves. And as the focal point for the presentation of work was the banquet and the symposium, one also had to prove that one was able to *entertain*. Anaxarchos of Abdera used his knowledge of atomism to gain access to Alexander, who was much interested in theories about infinity and enjoyed discussing these with Anaxarchos. Competition among poets accounts largely for the mannerism and erudition of Hellenistic literature, with its almost snobbish allusions and its partiality for obscure myths and rare words. One reason why the work of court poets was so subtle and intellectual was the necessity to distinguish oneself before an audience of courtiers

[154] Strabo 17.1.8.

[155] Ath. 4.162e-f.

[156] One extant poem is dedicated to a courtier of high rank, Kallimachos' *Victory of Sosibios*. Kallimachos wrote his *Victory of Berenike* for Berenike II, sister and wife of Ptolemaios III; it is possible that Theokritos wrote *Idyll* 15 for queen Arsinoë II, who had organised the Adonia Festival the poem describes. Meissner 1992 also contends that historians found their way to court via social networks, *c.q*. upper-class *xenia*.

[157] The evidence does not allow reconstruction of such relations; on brokers at the Roman imperial court see P. White, '*Amicitia* and the profession of poetry in early imperial Rome', JRS 68 (1978) 74-92, and notably R.R. Nauta, *Poetry for Patrons. Literary Communication in the Age of Domitian* (diss. Leiden 1995) 305-92.

– an audience that was critical and perceptive, and longed to be confirmed in its self-image as an educated upper class. Taking this into consideration, we can easily understand why even propaganda texts could become literary masterpieces, like Theokritos' encomium for Ptolemaios Philadelphos or Kallimachos' *Hymn to Zeus*.

The entire set-up predicated on competition, not unlike the competition among other courtiers at all. Hence the envy that according to some sources spoiled the atmosphere at the *mouseion*.[158] Rivalry could even be formalised as open contest, when for instance poets and courtiers competed by writing epigrams on the same subject.[159] Competition induced technicians to build ingenious *thaumata*, mirabilia, to entertain courtiers at symposia or to impress the king's subjects during festivals. Technologists needed to invent things, preferably amazing machines and *automata*. Deinochares designed a magnetic device to make a cult image of Arsinoë Philadelphos float in the air, a plan that was actually executed.[160] In *From Alexander to Actium* Peter Green has collected many such marvels, a list worth quoting from to give some impression of what was going on at court:

> Ktesibios' water clock … was clearly splendid entertainment: puppets emerged, propelled by rack and pinion, black and white cones were turned to show the time, pebbles or balls were dropped into a bronze basin to count the hours, and at noon horns were blown by some kind of pneumatic device. Even more astonishing was the presentation, in Hero's automatic puppet theatre, of the drama Nauplius, with dolphins playing round a ship that sank in a storm, lured onto the rocks by wreckers, leaving Ajax to swim ashore and be greeted by an epiphany of Athena amid thunder and lightning.[161]

With the successful demonstration of such thaumata a technician could win esteem and praise from courtiers or king, which in turn improved one's status. Here we may think of an epigram written by the Alexandrian courtier Hedylos of Samos (*c*. 270) in which Ktesibios is lauded for making a rhyton in the form of the Egyptian god Bes which produced a trumpet-sound when used; in the poem, Hedylos invites his fellow-courtiers to go and see the rhyton in the

[158] Green 1990, 87, speaks of 'backbiting jealousy and paranoia' and draws parallels to his own professional environment.

[159] Cameron 1995, 83.

[160] Fraser 1972 II, 168. See also the interesting reconstruction of this device in M. Pfrommer, *Königinnen vom Nil* (Mainz am Rhein 2002) 61-75.

[161] Green 1990, 479.

temple of Arsinoë Zephyritis where it was exhibited.[162] Competition for favour was a driving force behind such technical innovation, and can also help explain the experimental nature of Hellenistic literature and art.[163]

The court provided, on a regular basis, an audience that was both educated and influential. Poetry and treatises were read, inventions were demonstrated, new ideas proposed. This happened notably at symposia and other festivities, when the king entertained guests and courtiers.[164] Of course, not all court poetry aimed exclusively at court circles.[165] Some of it was certainly written for a broader audience of Greek *politai* and *Makedones*, for example epigram, inscribed at sanctuaries, or hymns sung during festivities such as the *Hymn to Adonis*, incorporated in Theokritos' *Idyll* 15. We can be sure however that most of it was in the first instance written for an elite circle of educated royal friends, who were eager for new things and returned the most prestigious gifts. Competition for honour and prestige was a major drive in the life of a Greek poet, and to be associated with such an elite milieu increased one's status more than success among lower levels of society. The members of the upper level of the court society had their own networks of *xenoi* and maintained relations with their

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[162] Swinnen 1985, 153.

[163] The agonistic nature of Hellenistic science was also recognised by R. Netz, *The Transformation of Mathematics in the Early Mediterranean World: From Problems to Equations* (Cambridge 2004), who sees an intense and sudden rise of competition at the beginning of the Hellenistic Age: 'the space of [mathematical] communication [became] an arena for confrontation, rather than for solidarity. The relation envisaged between works is that of polemic. A Greek mathematical text is a challenge' (p. 62, cited from the review by Anne Mahoney for BMCR 04.10.25). On poetic competition esp. in Archaic and Classical Greece see D. Collins, *Master of the Game. Competition and Performance in Greek Poetry* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); and for the Ptolemaic court S. Barbantani, 'Competizioni poetiche tespiesi e mecenatismo tolemaico. Un gemellaggio tra l'antica e la nuova sede delle Muse nella seconda metà del III secolo a.C. Ipotesi su SH 959', *Lexis* 18 (2000) 127-73.

[164] Weber 1993, 165-70; Cameron 1995, 71-103.

[165] The audience of specifically Alexandrian poetry is a much debated question, cf. *i.a*. Griffiths 1979, Zanker 1987, and Cameron 1995. Griffiths and Zanker identify only Ptolemaic royal *philoi* as the intended audience for Alexandrian poetry, since, as Zanker says, Alexandrian poetry because of its complexity obviously was not written for 'the urban masses of Alexandria' (p. 18); Cameron adds that 'no one in pagan antiquity ever wrote (non-dramatic) poetry for such an audience'. But does this leave 'small audiences of highly cultivated patrons' as the only alternative (p. 56)? It certainly was not necessary to understand all allusions and hidden meanings to appreciate Alexandrian poetry, and not *all* Alexandrian poetry is incomprehensible.

families' cities of origin. The court was the nucleus of an international elite infrastructure through which poems or ideas could circulate throughout the Hellenistic world.

4.4 Royal studies: new images of the world in scholarship and philosophy

Various academic disciplines were prominently practised at court: philosophy, astronomy, historiography, ethnography and geography – genres that in themselves were not typical court genres, but nevertheless flourished at the courts.[166] They reveal the efforts, characteristic of this period, to develop views of the universe and the world as an integrated whole, an idea closely connected with the ideology of boundless empire of the Macedonian kingdoms.

Philosophy

The most obvious gift a philosopher could present to a king, was a philosophical tract on kingship. Although a comparable genre was known in pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamia and Egypt, the background to the Hellenistic *Fürstenspiegel* was mainly Greek philosophy.[167] The notion of ideal rulership was developed by writers such as Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and Isokrates. But the treatise Περὶ βασιλείας, 'On Kingship', flourished notably in the Hellenistic age. The aim of such texts was twofold. First they were meant to instruct (future) kings in the art of ruling, or in the art of giving the impression that one was a wise, just and legitimate ruler. Second, by spreading such texts among a wider audience, kingship was propagated. Unsurprisingly, many, if not all, of these texts were written in a patronage context. One of the first to do so, was Aristotle, who wrote two treatises on kingship at the court of King Philippos II for the instruction of Alexander.[168] The life of Alexander himself

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[166] On the relations between kings and philosophers see H.-J. Gehrke, 'Theorie und politische Praxis der Philosophen im Hellenismus', in: W. Schuller ed., *Politische Theorie und Praxis im Altertum* (Darmstadt 1998) 100-21.

[167] P. Hadot, 'Fürstenspiegel', *RE* 8 (1972) 555-632, esp. 556-68.

[168] Arist., fr. 646/8, 658 Rose. Cf. Plut., *Mor.* VI 329b; Strabo 1.4.9; *Vita Aristotelis Marciana* fr. 430, 15 Rose. Aristotle also wrote treatises for Alexander: *On Kingship* and *In Praise of Colonies*; he possibly also wrote two works called *The Glories of Riches* and *Alexander's Assembly*, both of them undatable, cf. M. Brocker, *Aristoteles als Alexanders Lehrer* (Berlin 1966) 30. The question whether Aristotle's biological studies were in part based on material sent to him by Alexander is dealt with i.a.

became an example for later kings.[169] Thus, Onesikritos of Astypalaia, a philosopher who worked at the court of Alexander, wrote an idealised life of Alexander, following the model of the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon's moral biography of the world conqueror Cyrus the Great. An extant fragment of this lost work in Strabo—dealing with Alexander's conversation with the Indian gymnosophists—presents Alexander as the ideal philosopher-king of Platonism.[170] Representatives of all major philosophical schools wrote treaties on kingship, with the exception of the cynics. Most are now lost (including those written by Zeno, Kallisthenes, Kleanthes, Sphairos, Persaios) and of others only fragments have survived (Ekphantos, Diotogenes, Sthenidas).[171]

Stoic philosophers worked most fervently on the theme of ideal kingship, and indeed kings favoured stoic philosophy most of all. The stoic image of a cosmic order held together by a single divine power was a perfect model for the rule of kings. In the Stoic cosmology, Zeus was the central, active principle of cosmic harmony. A similar role was ascribed to the king on earth: the king was the pivot of terrestrial order, whose task it was to guarantee peace, justice, and prosperity. The fundamental stoic principle that the arrangement of the world was divinely ordained was useful too. The ideal state as perceived by Zeno, the founding father of Stoicism, was almost indistinguishable from the official royal view of the world as empire.[172] Zeno was a *philos* of Demetrios Poliorketes, whose son, the later king Antigonos Gonatas, he educated.[173] Gonatas himself used to discuss matters of state with stoic advisors and it was said that they actually influenced his decisions.[174] At least two of these, Persaios and Kleanthes, wrote tracts on kingship for Gonatas.[175] At the later Antigonid court, the philosopher and tragedian Euphantes of Olynthos was tutor and subsequently friend of Antigonos III Doson, to whom he dedicated a treatise *On Kingship*.[176] The stoic Sphairos,

by J.S. Romm, 'Aristotle's elephant and the myth of Alexander's scientific patronage', AJPh 110 (1989) 566-75, who answers this question negatively, as the title indicates.

169 Hadot 1972, 589. Besides that of Alexander, the life of Herakles was also reworked by philosophers to become an example for kings: Diog. Laert. 6.16.104.

170 Strabo 15.63.65.

171 Collected in L. Delatte, *Les traités de la royauté d'Ecphante, Diotogène et Sthénidas* (Liège 1942).

172 See H.C. Baldry, 'Zeno's ideal state', *JHS* 73 (1959) 3-15.

173 Tarn 1913, 223.

174 Diog. Laert. 2.143.

175 Hadot 1972, 589.

176 Diog. Laert. 2.110.

another author of propaganda traits, enjoyed the patronage of the Spartan king Kleomenes, and later of Ptolemaios III and Ptolemaios IV.[177] Even cynic philosophy accepted and defended kingship as part of a fixed arrangement of social and political roles in society, a view that was propagated by *i.a.* Bion of Borysthenes, another courtier of Gonatas.[178] The concept of *parrhēsia* again is important here. From the Classical period down to the Imperial age, ritualised frankness of speech defined the philosopher's attitude towards those wielding power.[179] This made them valuable counsellors for rulers. But most of all *parrhēsia* was important to uphold the honour of the philosophers as free men, and the honour of the king as a virtuous ruler.

Astronomy

The stoic view of the cosmos was deeply influenced by a science that flourished especially in the Hellenistic age: astronomy. From the first Ionic philosophers to Aristotle, the Greeks, like any people, had always been interested in the heavenly bodies, but in the late fourth and early third centuries the study of the heavens acquired a new quality and was influenced by Babylonian astronomy.[180] Royal courts played a crucial role in this development. Greek interest in Babylonian astronomy was part of a broader interest in the world resulting from the Greeks' widening horizon, creating new forms of geography and ethnography. Kings took a keen interest in astronomy and stimulated research in this field. Following the example of Alexander, the Seleukids opened up Babylonian knowledge to the Greek world by their

[177] Diog. 7.177, 185; Plut., *Cleom.* 11. Cf. Hadot 1972, 589; Africa 1968, 62.

[178] Diog. Laert. 2.46-57.

[179] J.-J. Flinterman, 'Sophists and emperors: A reconnaissance of sophistic attitudes', in: B.E. Borg, *Paideia. The World of the Second Sophistic* (Berlin and New York 2004) 359-76, esp. 361-4; see p. 362 n. 10 for more literature on *parrhēsia* as a defining aspect of philosophers' attitudes *vis-à-vis* kings and emperors.

[180] F. Boll, 'Die Entwicklung der Astrologie auf klassischen Boden', in: C. Bezold, F. Boll, W. Gundel, *Sternglaube und Sterndeutung. Die Geschichte und das Wesen der Astrologie* (4th edn; Leipzig and Berlin 1931) 15-28, esp. 21-3. I prefer the term 'astronomy' to 'astrology'. The ancient Greeks and Babylonians saw no discrepancy between a scientific and a metaphysical approach to the stars. Even Aristotle, *Met.* 8.1074b, believed in the divinity of the heavenly bodies. Babylonian astronomy was metaphysical as well. To be sure, even in the modern age, Copernicus and Galileo, the acknowledged founding fathers of scientific astronomy, hardly distinguished astronomy from what we would now call astrology (Africa 1968, 65).

patronage of Chaldean wise men.[181] The most important—or most legendary—of these was the priest, horoscoper and writer Berossos, who worked for Antiochos I. The Seleukid policy of promoting Babylonian astronomy laid the foundations of Hellenistic astronomy.[182]

Soon other royal houses encouraged astronomy as well. The Ptolemaic court was home to some of the more 'scientific' manifestations of astronomy. Important were Aristarchos of Samos, who theorised a short-lived heliocentric view of the solar system, and Hipparchos of Nikaia, whose systematic study of the movement of the stars laid the foundations of the grand astronomical synthesis of Claudius Ptolemaios in the second century CE.

It is only a small step from the harmonious arrangement of the heavens in astronomical theory, via Stoic cosmology, to royal ideology. One interesting case of kingship and astronomy coming together was the discovery by Ptolemaios Euergetes' court astronomer Konon of a new constellation near Leo. The discovery of this constellation was at once incorporated in royal ideology: it was presented as literally new, being a lock of hair that Euergetes' queen Berenike had promised to offer to the gods in exchange for the safe return of her husband from the Third Syrian War; the deposition of the hair in the temple of Aphrodite-Arsinoë at Zephyrion, we can be sure, had been a public ceremony. Kallimachos thereupon produced a panegyric, 'The lock of Berenike', in which it was related how the lock had miraculously disappeared from the temple and through divine intervention was deified and placed among the stars.[183] The constellation was named the Lock of Berenike, which name it still has today, and became a crucial aspect of the cult of Berenike that subsequently developed.[184]

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[181] Diod. 2.31.2; App., *Syr.* 58. Cf. Eddy 1961, 115 n. 30.

[182] It was said that Berossos later moved to Kos where he gave lectures in astronomy; the Athenians honoured him with a statue, and later tradition credited him with the invention of a common sundial (Burstein 1978, 5).

[183] Two papyrus fragments of 'The Lock of Berenike' have been found; the rest of the poem is known only from a Latin imitation by Catullus (66), cf. P. Bing, 'Reconstructing *Berenice's Lock*', in: G. Most ed., *Fragmente sammeln* (Göttingen 1996) 78-94: 94.

[184] K.J. Gutzwiller, 'Callimachus' Lock of Berenice. Fantasy, Romance, Propaganda', *AJPh* 113 (1992) 359-85, draws attention to the fact that the constellation 'discovered' by Konon had in fact already been described by Aratos (*Phaen.* 146); Gutzwiller expresses a rather cynical view of Kallimachos' and Konon's contributions to Ptolemaic propaganda: 'Conon's part in the hoax was simply to find a suitable place for the lock in the sky; he decided upon a cluster of stars that Aratus had

The preoccupation with astral phenomena in Hellenistic royal ideology, in particular the comparison of the king with the sun, is discussed elsewhere in this book. Astronomy could be employed to underpin the philosophical notion that kingship was part of a divine, cosmic order. This ideology is evident from the *Phainomena* of Aratos of Soli, the literary showpiece of the Antigonid court under Gonatas.[185] This long didactic poem offers an all-embracing view of the universe as a well-ordered, balanced unity. The poem is more philosophical than scientific, and contains many mythological elements. Aratos does not explicitly refer to his patron Gonatas in the text, but in the allegorical introduction he describes Zeus in terms of universal rule – not only in the heavens, but on earth as well:

> From Zeus let us begin, he, whom we mortals never leave unmentioned; full of Zeus are all the roads, all city squares, full the oceans and the harbours: in every way we all have need of Zeus.[186]

The praise of Zeus Kosmokrator is followed by a long poetical celebration of the Golden Age and the rule of Justice. [187] Thus the association with monarchy is evident from the start.

Historiography, geography and ethnography

As we have seen, Theokritos says in *Idyll* 16 that the best thing a poet can do for a king is to immortalise his name and glorify his heroic deeds. It has often been argued that Hellenistic poetry existed for a large part of (now lost) epic, dealing not only with mythological and legendary subjects, but also with the achievements of contemporary kings. Little Hellenistic epic has been preserved, however. The only epic poem to have survived in its entirety, Apollonios' *Argonautika*, is a mythic tale, not about Hellenistic kings at all, although its

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a few years earlier proclaimed nameless. Callimachus had the more difficult task of fleshing out the myth in an appealing literary form' (p. 373).

[185] Aratos is also known to have written an encomium and a marriage hymn for Gonatas (Green 1993, 141-2).

[186] Aratus, *Phaen*. 1-4.

[187] Lines 98-136. Cf. Hose 1997, 62: 'der Zeus des Arat ist … ein absoluter Göttermonarch, der sein ganzes Reich vollständig beherrscht – und durch eine unüberbrückbare Distanz von den Beherrschten getrennt ist.'

relevance for the Ptolemaic monarchy is now increasingly better understood.[188] The idea that epic about the deeds of Hellenistic kings was a prominent genre, first put forward by Ziegler in 1934, was therefore later rejected by many.[189] Recently however, new (papyrological) evidence suggests that Ziegler may have been right after all,[190] and that such once-famous works like Choirilos' epic of Alexander, written in the king's lifetime,[191] or Simonides' *Galatika*, celebrating Antiochos I's victory over the Celts, are only the top of the iceberg.[192] Such epic texts created an image of the king as an Homeric hero, a blend of myth and history.

A more subtle way to heroise kings was through the writing of history. Many historians found employment at royal courts.[193] Kallisthenes of Olynthos wrote a history of Alexander, which was strongly propagandistic. It lauded Alexander as the champion of Hellenic culture, glorified his military achievements, and defended his claims to divine paternity. Kallisthenes also wrote a history of the preceding period for Alexander; it was called *Hellenika* and ended with Alexander's birth in 356. Such histories mixed history with myth. In a sense, court historians were the real epinicians of the Hellenistic Age.

Characteristic of court historiography was also the interest in other cultures and far-away countries.[194] Although not a new phenomenon at all, a relative abundance of travel

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[188] See for instance S.A. Stephens, 'Writing Epic for the Ptolemaic Court', in: M.A. Harder *et al*., eds., *Apollonius Rhodius* (Louvain 2001) 195-215.

[189] K. Ziegler, *Das hellenistische Epos: ein vergessenes Kapitel griechischer Dichtung* (Leipzig 1934). Ziegler's suggestion has been challenged notably by Cameron 1995, but was accepted by Zanker 1987, 1-2.

[190] See now the important survey by S. Barbantani, *Φάτις νικηφόρος. Frammenti di elegia encomiastica nell'età delle Guerre Galatiche*. Supplementum Hellenisticum 958-969 (Milano 2001). I would like to thank dr. Barbantani for kindly drawing my attention to her work.

[191] Zanker 1987, 1; Weber 1992, 67-8; Berve 1926 I, 71.

[192] Suda s.v. 'Simonides'; cf. Barbantani 2001, 208-14. Several other Greek poets of the third century are said to have composed epic poems called *Galatika*, of which fragments remain, cf. Rankin 1987, 99; Barbantani 2001, *passim*.

[193] See B. Meissner, *Historiker zwischen Polis und Königshof: Studien zur Stellung der Geschichtsschreiber in der griechischen Gesellschaft in spätklassischer und hellenistischer Zeit* (Göttingen 1992).

[194] For a general discussion of the new interest in the world, especially during Alexander's reign, see K. Geus, 'Space and Geography', in: Erskine 2003, 232-45. See further K. Broderson, *Mastering the World. Ancient Geography* (London 1999). Geography and ethnography in Ptolemaic Alexandria: Fraser 1972 I, 520-53; II 750-90.

accounts by Nearchos, Pytheas and Megasthenes bear witness to a growing interest for geography and ethnography in the early Hellenistic period. Kings' interest in geography and ethnography is manifest from the expeditions kings sent off to explore strange new lands, and from the presence of geographers and non-Greek scholars at court. Berossos has already been mentioned. His *Babyloniaca* was a chronological account of the mythic and historical past of the world through Babylonian eyes, and a general introduction to Babylonian culture as a whole.[195] Its three books were written in Greek and dedicated to Antiochos I Soter in *c*. 281.[196] Following the Seleukid example, Ptolemaios I Soter or Ptolemaios II Philadelphos encouraged the Egyptian priest Manetho to write an *Aegyptiaca*, also in Greek, and likewise making Egyptian knowledge available to Greeks (and to modern egyptologists as well, since Manetho's arrangement in thirty dynasties is still used as a chronological framework).[197] To the same category belongs the translation of the Thora at the court of Ptolemaios Philadelphos.

Greek geography and ethnography were often integrated in historical writing. Hieronymos of Kardia used his experiences as a military commander for a digression in his *Histories* about Arabia.[198] Significantly, especially the regions untouched by Hellenistic

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[195] S.M. Burstein, *The* Babyloniaca *of Berossus* (Malibu 1978) gives both a translation of the extant parts of *Babyloniaca*, and a good general introduction to Berossos and his work. A. Kuhrt, 'Berossus' *Babyloniaka* and Seleucid rule in Babylon', in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White eds., *Hellenism in the East* (London 1987) 32-56, discusses the ideological aspects of the *Babyloniaca* in view of the establishment of Seleukid rule in Babylonia. A comprehensive edition and translation of both Berossos and Manetho is G. Verbrugghe and J.M. Wickersham, *Berossus and Manetho. Native Tradition in Ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt* (Ann Arbor 1996).

[196] Burstein 1978, 5.

[197] For the priority of Berossos to Manetho see Burstein 1978, 4 n. 2. Manetho became a legendary figure in due course. That the *Aegyptiaca* was written for the court can *i.a.* be conjectured from the fact that six books of didactic hexameters on astrology, the 'Αποτελεσματικά ('Forecasts'), written probably in the second and third century by various authors, were dedicated 'to Ptolemaios' to support the false claim that these were written by Manetho.

[198] A.B. Bosworth, 'Hieronymus' ethnography: Indian widows and Nabataean nomads', in: idem, *The Legacy of Alexander. Politics, Warfare, and Propaganda under the Successors* (Oxford 2002) 169-209.

imperialism attracted attention; information about unknown lands even was invented.[199] K. Geus has pointed out the lack of distinction between empirical knowledge, legend, and even fiction in Hellenistic geographical writing: 'Above all, there grew a sizeable body of utopian literature: the writings of such as Hekataios of Abdera, Euhemeros of Iamboulos, and the legends about the fantastic voyages of Alexander. … Fictitious travelogues and ethnographic accounts about peoples living at the edges of the world [are] characteristic of this literature.'[200] The Seleukids were particularly interested in India and the Indian Ocean, the Ptolemies in Africa and Arabia. Both dynasties made efforts to explore sea and routes, and to obtain knowledge of the earth and of the customs, wildlife, and flora, in far away lands. Private traders, royal expeditions, and embassies brought back such knowledge and the palace gardens filled with exotic beasts and plants.

Preoccupation with exotic, rare and stupendous things evidently had a political dimension. By bringing together things from the entire known world, preferably from its fringes, monarchies demonstrated how far their power reached and that their court was the world's epicentre. Berossos and Manetho made knowledge of the history and culture of conquered peoples available to Greeks, and symbolically integrated them in the Greek-Macedonian imperial commonwealth.[201] Alexandria was abundantly adorned with Egyptian spolia—sphinxes, obelisks, pharaonic statues—connoting Ptolemaic dominance over wealthy Egypt.[202] Geographers, notably the great Eratosthenes of Kyrene, meanwhile strove to bring

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[199] Geus 2003, 242; both Strabo and Arrian claim that the Macedonians deliberately falsified geographical information in order to promote the glory of Alexander (Strabo 11.7.4; Arr., *Anab*. 5.3.2-3; *Ind.* 5.10).

[200] Geus 2003, 242.

[201] Appropriation of foreign knowledge served a similar purpose for Hellenistic imperialism as oriental studies did for European colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; it was in like manner characterised by a mix of veritable intellectual interest and political legitimisation. On this ambiguity of modern imperialism see of course E.W. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London 1978).

[202] Underwater archaeologists have in recent years recovered obelisks of Seti I, columns of Ramesses II, sphinxes of Sesostris III and Psammetichos II. Cf. J.-Y. Empereur, 'Travaux récents dans la capitale des Ptolémées', in: *Alexandrie: Une mégapole cosmopolite*. Cahiers de la Villa Kérylos 9 (Paris 1999) 25-9; for illustrations see Grimm 1998, and the coffee-table book L. Foreman, *Cleopatra's Palace. In Search of a Legend* (1999).

together the totality of the earth, with all its aspects, into a single scientific system.[203] The ambition and scale of such endeavours reveal the massive pretensions of Hellenistic imperialism. The court was the centre of this all-embracing imperial order, the place where knowledge of the entire world was gathered.

4.5 The poetics of power: the ideology of Ptolemaic panegyric

Most literature produced by the courts was not directly concerned with kingship as such. This has often led scholars to the rash conclusion that most of it was not connected with the monarchy or the court.[204] But as I have argued above, non-laudatory poetry usually concentrated on topics favoured at court, for example etiological myth of bucolic fantasy. Enough ruler praise has been preserved to be certain that this also was a cardinal theme in Hellenistic court poetry. Below we will have a look at the substance of these texts, albeit admittedly the evidence stems mainly from early Hellenistic Alexandria.

Much of the outright panegyric poetry may have been lost since it was often occasional poetry, perhaps never meant to be written down at all. Still, enough of it has remained to descry some returning motives in panegyric poetry; the most notable of these is

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[203] Fraser 1972 I, 34, 100; On Eratosthenes: P.M. Fraser, 'Eratosthenes of Cyrene', *ProcBritAcad* (1970) 176-207; K. Geus, *Eratosthenes von Kyrene* (Munich 2002). Eratosthenes, a genuine *homo universalis* who also wrote philosophical, mathematical, and philological tracts, a *Geography* in three books, in which he divided the earth on a mathematical base into areas (*sphragides*, literally 'seals', a term borrowed from land measurement terminology). His revolutionary measurement of the circumference of the earth in *On the Measurement of the Earth* still counts as a stunning scientific feat. Mnaseas of Patara (or Patrai), perhaps a student of Eratosthenes active in Alexandria around 200, likewise wrote a grand synthesis of geographical, ethnographical, historical and mythological subjects covering the entire world; see now P. Cappelletto, *I frammenti di Mnasea. Introduzione testo e commento* (Milano 2003).

[204] Thus e.g. Taeger 1957 I, 373-80, who finds no reference to 'official ruler cult' in the Alexandrian poets and Aratos. Deification of rulers can however be found in *i.a.* Kallimachos' *Lock of Berenike* and Theokritos' *Idyll* 17, and it is certainly mistaken to disconnect aulic poetry from 'official' ideology (if such a category existed at all). Rather, court poetry, esp. panegyric, ought to be seen as part of Hellenistic royal ideology, not as merely reflecting it.

the image of the whole world as one empire.[205] Explicit laudatory texts included panegyric,[206] paeans, epinician odes, and epic. Epigrams also could be appropriate gifts to please kings and courtiers, and to celebrate special events or successes of the dynasty. Ruler praise and imperialist propaganda was often incorporated in other poetry, which also tended to concentrate on topics associated with monarchy. Theokritos, for instance, wrote poems on the 'royal gods' Herakles and Dionysos (*Idyll* 24 and 26). In the *Aitia*, Kallimachos' collection of poems on origins (but also on evolution and progress), Herakles figures prominently as well, emphasising his role as saviour and culture hero, bringing civilisation to barbarians.[207] Apollonios' depiction of Jason as *primus inter pares* of the Argonauts perhaps reflected the position of the early Ptolemies *vis-à-vis* the members of their *sunedrion*.[208] A more obvious connection with imperial ideology is the image of the Argonauts' travelling to the ends of the earth, leaving a trail of sacred objects and rituals wherever they go, and the crucial theme of tension between order and chaos.[209] The *Aitia* includes tales about (political and cultural)

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[205] For older literature on the theme of world empire in Hellenistic panegyric see Hunter 2003, 168 (*op.cit*. below); the same theme is also noticeable in (late) Roman panegyric, cf. U. Asche, *Roms Weltherrschaftsidee und Aussenpolitik in der Spätantike im Spiegel der* Panegyrici Latini (Bonn 1983); cf. R. Rees, *Layers of Loyalty. Latin Panegyric, AD 289-307* (Oxford 2002) 88-9.

[206] I use 'panegyric' or 'encomium' as general terms to denote a poem in praise of a person c.q. a king or queen. For a discussion of the technical difference between various forms of Greek laudatory poetry—praise (ἔπαινος), encomium (ἐγκώμιον), panegyric (πανηγυρικός), epideictic (ἐπιδεικτικός)—see D. Russell, 'The panegyrists and their teachers', in: M. Whitby ed., *The Propaganda of Power. The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Leiden, Boston, Cologne 1998) 17-49, esp. 18-21. For the courtly context of the Argonautica see R.L. Hunter, *The* Argonautica *of Apollonius* (Cambridge 1993) 152-69.

[207] Harder 2005, 246.

[208] Hose 1997, 60. The monarchic intent of the *Argonautika* remains a matter of debate; Apollonios' Jason at any rate does not provide a very inspiring heroic model, cf. R. Hunter 'Le "Argonautiche" di Apollonio', in: M. Fantuzzi and R. Hunter, *Muse e modelli. La poesia ellenistica da Alessandro Magno ad Augusto* (Rome and Bari 2002) 121-75, esp. 130-7. Also Herakles' role is difficult to connect with the monarchy because he is not the leader.

[209] Notably the peoples living around the Black Sea are presented by Apollonios as far removed from Zeus (sc. civilisation), signified by their rejection of *xenia* in their dealings with the Argonauts, cf. B. Pavlock, 'The Black Sea Peoples in Apollonius' Argonautica', in: G.R. Tsetskhladze ed., *Greek and Roman Settlements on the Black Sea Coast* (Bradford 1994) 14: 'In the case of Aeëtes, the impiety towards Zeus is most pervasive, and his implicit challenge to Zeus's authority is portrayed in the

expansion, as well as the promise of a Golden Age.[210] Four encomiastic poems of Theokritos have stood the test of time.[211] We have (fragments of) seven panegyric poems, three panegyric intertexts in hymns, and epinician odes for two courtiers and a queen of Kallimachos.[212] Kallimachos and Theokritos were active at the Ptolemaic court under Ptolemaios II Philadelphos and Ptolemaios III Euergetes. Euphorion, court librarian of Antiochos III, wrote an eulogy of Seleukos Nikator,[213] and a poem for a certain Hippomedon, perhaps the known courtier of Ptolemaios III.[214] Epigrams dedicated to the prominent Ptolemaic *philoi* Kallikrates and Sostratos by Poseidippos have survived,[215] and anagrams of the names Ptolemaios and Arsinoë by Lykophron.[216] There is also the notorious Athenian Hymn to

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narrative by a significant cluster of images of Giants and Gigantomachy.' The images of Gigantomachy and Titanomachy were employed to propagate the ideal of the king as vanquisher of barbarians and champion of order and civilisation; on Giants/Titans in Hellenistic poetry, esp. the *Hymn to Delos*, see Mineur 1984, 171-185; cf. Hunter 1993, 162-9. For a systematic analysis of the itinerary of the Argos see R.J. Clare, *The Path of the Argo. Language, Imagery and Narrative in the Argonautica of Apollonios of Rhodes* (Cambridge 2002) 33-83, and 119-72 for the homeward journey; on order-disorder as a theme in the *Argonautika* see pp. 231-60. Cf. J.J. Clauss, 'Cosmos without imperium: the Argonautic journey through time', in: M.A. Harder et al., eds., *Apollonius Rhodius* (Leuven 2000) 11-32. It is furthermore noteworthy that Argo is also a heavenly sign (M.P. Cuypers in BMCR 2005-05, 25).

[210] Harder 2005, 246.

[211] *To Hieron* (*Id.* 16), *To Ptolemy Philadelphus* (*Id.* 17), *Hymn to Berenice* (fr. 3 G), and *Marriage of Arsinoë* (SH 961; this poem has also been ascribed to Poseidippos). All of Theokritos' encomiastic texts are comprehensively discussed in W. Meincke, *Untersuchungen zu den enkomiastischen Gedichten Theokrits* (diss. Kiel 1965).

[212] Panegyrics: *The Lock of Berenike* (fr. 110 Pfeiffer), *The Wedding of Berenike* (fr. 392 P.), *The Deification of Berenike* (fr. 228 P.), *Elegy to Magas and Berenike* (fr. 388P.), the *Charites Epigram* (*Ep.* 51, in praise of Berenike the wife of Ptolemaios III), *Hymn to Delos,* and *Hymn to Zeus* (the latter two in praise of Ptolemaios II). The intertexts are in *Hymns* 1, 2, and 4. Epinician odes: *Victory of Sosibios* (fr. 384 and *P.Oxy* 1793, 2258), *Victory of Polykles of Aigina* (fr. 198 P.), and *Victory of Berenike* (SH 254-269); cf. cf. T. Fuhrer, 'Callimachus' epinician poems', in: M.A. Harder, R.F. Regtuit, G.C. Wakker eds., *Callimachus* (Groningen 1993) 79-97.

[213] *Suda*, s.v. 'Euphorion'.

[214] Euphorion, fr. 174 Pfeiffer (CA 58), and fr. 30 P. (CA 36).

[215] Fraser 1972 I, 557; Weber 1993, 424.

[216] ἀπὸ μέλιτος, 'Of Honey', and ἰὸν Ἥρας , 'Violets of Hera' (Mineur 1985, 128).

Demetrios Poliorketes of Hermokles, of whom also two fragments of *paeans* to Antigonos Monophthalmos are extant.[217]

From Zeus to Ptolemaios

We already encountered the comparison of Zeus, the principle of divine harmony, with the king, the principle of world order, in philosophical, especially Stoic writing. This belief is present in court poetry as well, being for instance a pivotal element of Aratos' poetic cosmology. It is also essential in Theokritos' seventeenth *Idyll*, an encomium for Ptolemaios Philadelphos.[218] This poem pays much attention to Philadelphos' birth and the deification of his parents, and probably was written for either a birthday celebration or, which is more likely, the anniversary of the apotheosis of Ptolemaios Soter and Berenike *c.q.* the celebration of the Ptolemaia Festival (below, section 5.4). In the opening lines of the poem Theokritos sings:

> With Zeus let us begin and with him, Muses, let us end,
> for in our song and praise he is supreme among the immortals.
> But when singing of men let Ptolemaios be named first,
> last and throughout, for he is the most excellent of men.[219]

Zeus is King of Heaven, Ptolemaios King of the World. Later in the poem, Theokritos refines this notion. When Ptolemaios was born, he says, 'the heavens opened' and a great eagle descended, 'a bird of omen, a sign from Zeus'. Three times the eagle cries above the cradle, thus making it known that Ptolemaios is Zeus' chosen one.[220] At that point Theokritos has described how his father, Ptolemaios Soter, has acquired a place among the gods on Mount Olympos after his apotheosis:

> Now the Father has even made him equal in honour to the blessed
> Immortals and a golden throne in the house of Zeus

[217] Hermokles, SH 491, 492. The Hymn to Demetrios will be discussed in chapter 5.3.

[218] On this poem R.L. Hunter, *Encomium of Ptolemy Philadelphus* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 2003).

[219] Theocr., *Id.* 17.1-4.

[220] *Ibid.*, 79-84.

was made for him.[221] Beside him in friendship sits Alexander,
destroyer of the Persians, the god of the glittering crown.
Facing him the seat of Herakles the Kentaur-killer
has been established, made from solid adamant;
here he joins in feasting with the heavenly ones,
rejoicing above all in the sons of his sons
from whose limbs the son of Kronos has lifted old age,
and his own descendants are called immortals now.[222]

Ptolemaios has bequeathed to his son a limitless empire and inexhaustible wealth, making the Ptolemaic *oikos* the symbolic centre of the world:

(…) All the sea and all the land
and the rushing rivers are subject to Ptolemaios.
Huge numbers of horsemen gather around him,
huge numbers of shield-bearing warriors clad in glittering bronze.
He is more wealthy than all other kings together,
such riches arrive each day at his sumptuous *oikos*
from all directions (…).[223]

Where Philadelphos rules, there is peace:

(…) His people can work their fields in peace,
for no enemy crosses the teeming Nile by land
to raise the battle cry in towns that are not his,
no enemy jumps ashore from his swift ship
to seize with weapons the cattle of Egypt.
Too great a man is settled in those broad fields,
golden-haired Ptolemaios, skilled with the spear.[224]

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[221] For δόμος ἐν Διὸς οἴκωι as Mount Olympos see Hunter 2003, 112-3.

[222] Theocr., *Id.* 17.16-25. For the significance of Herakles in Ptolemaic ruler cult see Huttner 1997, 124-45; cf. Hunter 2003, 116-7.

[223] Theocr., *Id.* 17.91-6.

[224] Theocr., *Id.* 17.97-103.

The image of the king as a 'spear-fighter' was central to the ideology of all Hellenistic kingdoms. The king was an Homeric hero, whose personal bravery as a *promachos* brought his kingdom victory.[225] In lines 5-8 Theokritos declares that he will celebrate the 'marvellous deeds' of Ptolemaios like earlier have honoured the deeds of heroes. In lines 53-56 Ptolemaios is even directly compared with Diomedes and Achilles, both of them great spear-fighters too, and the latter once, like Ptolemaios now, the best of men.

In the *Hymn to Zeus*, Kallimachos, too, compares the rule of Ptolemaios Philadelphos to the rule of Zeus.[226] Kallimachos presents Philadelphos as the only real king on earth because he is Zeus' chosen one:

> From Zeus come kings. … You [Zeus] gave them cities to protect. And you yourself are seated in the citadels of the cities to judge those who rule their people badly, and those who rule well. You have bestowed on them wealth and abundant prosperity – on all of them, but not in equal measures. This you can clearly judge from our ruler, for he far outweighs all the others. In the evening he accomplishes what he has thought of in the morning. Indeed, the greatest things in the evening but the lesser as soon as he thinks of them. But the others need a whole year to accomplish such things, and some other things not even in one. Others, again, you prevent from accomplishing anything at all, and you utterly frustrate their ambitions.[227]

In the *Hymn to Delos* Kallimachos equates his king with Apollo.[228] In the Hymn, Kallimachos relates how the pregnant Leto is moving towards the isle of Kos to give birth to Apollo, when suddenly a voice comes from her womb:

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[225] For the heroic ethos of kings see chapter 1.4.

[226] J.J. Clauss, 'Lies and allusions. The address and date of Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus*', *CA* 5.2 (1986) 155-7, argues that Kallimachos presented this poem—which focuses on Zeus' birth and enthronement—to Philadelphos on (the anniversary of) his accession as co-regent in 285/4; see nn. 3-5 for a discussion of alternative views.

[227] Callim., *Hymn* 1.78-88.

[228] R. Pretagostini, 'La nascita di Tolomeo II Filadelfo in Teocrito, *Idillio* XVII e la nascita di Apollo in Callimaco, *Inno a Delo*', in: G. Arrighetti and M. Tulli eds., *Letteratura e riflessione sulla letteratura nella* cultura classica (Pisa 2000) 157-70. On the *Hymn to Delos* in general see W.H. Mineur, *Callimachus, Hymn to Delos* (Leiden 1984). Kallimachos probably wrote the poem between 271 and 265 for Ptolemaios Philadelphos' birthday or the anniversary of his accession; the two occasions were only two weeks apart and may have been celebrated simultaneously in one feast: Mineur 1984, 10-8. W.W. Tarn, *Antigonos Gonatas* (Oxford 1913) 211-41, has suggested that the

> Mother, do not give birth to me there. I am not displeased with the island, nor do I begrudge it, as it is beautiful and has good pasture grounds, like any other; but another god [*sc.* Philadelphos] has been promised to her by Fate, one of the sublime lineage of the Saviours: under his power, not unwilling to be ruled by a Macedonian, will be the two lands and the countries that lie on the sea, as far as the ends of the earth, where the swift horses always carry Helios.[229]

Again, Ptolemaios' power is unlimited: it stretches from sunrise to sunset.[230]

Peace and prosperity

Another significant theme that is—indirectly—present in the *Hymn to Zeus*, is the connection of the king with the fertility of the land, a wide-spread notion in the Ancient World. Kallimachos places the birth of Zeus not on Crete, but gives preference to a myth according to which Zeus' birthplace was Arkadia. Arkadia, until then a dry and inhospitable country,

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Hymn was not commissioned by Philadelphos, but by his wife Arsinoë as a 'birthday present'. E. Cahen, *Les hymnes de Callimaque* (Paris 1930) 281-3, and C. Meillier, *Callimaque et son temps. Recherches sur la carrière et la condition d'un écrivain à l'époque des premiers Lagides* (Lille 1979) 180-91, believe that the Hymn was ordered by the Delians, to be performed on Delos.

[229] Callim., *Hymn* 4.162-70. This Hellenistic technique of employing mythological spokespersons in encomiastic contexts, perhaps an invention of Kallimachos, was carried over to Roman panegyric: K. Coleman, 'Apollo's speech before the Battle of Actium: Propertius 4.6.37-54', in: A.F. Basson and W.J. Dominik eds., *Literature, Art, History. Studies on Classical Antiquity and Tradition. In Honour of W.J. Henderson* (Frankfurt am Main 2003) 37-45; on Kallimachos' influence on early Roman panegyric see also A. Gosling, 'Political Apollo: From Callimachus to the Augustans', *Mnemosyne* 45.4 (1992) 502-12; W. Wimmel, *Kallimachos in Rom. Die Nachfolge seines apologetischen Dichtens in der Augusteerzeit* (Wiesbaden 1960); cf. R.L. Hunter, 'Epilogo romano', in: Fantuzzi & Hunter 2002, 533-65.

[230] Hunter 2003, 168, notes that the reference to 'the two lands' (ἀμφοτέρη μεσόγεια, presumably Upper and Lower Egypt) is 'one of the few now commonly accepted "Egyptianizing" references in the Hymns'; remarkably, Hunter, although normally critical about such interpretations, also accepts an Egyptian origin of the sun symbolism. Bing 1988, 30-35, notes the instances where the disorderly world before Apollo is contrasted with the peace and harmony that follow the birth of the god; in my view this is also the meaning of the association of Apollo's with Ptolemaios' birth.

enjoys instant fertility when Zeus is born, and turns into a land of bliss.[231] In Theokritos' encomium for Philadelphos images of fertility and good fortune abound:

> Wealth and good fortune are his in abundance;
> vast is the land that he rules and vast the sea.
> Countless countries and countless races of men
> raise their crops thanks to the rain sent by Zeus,
> but none is so fruitful as Egypt's broad plains
> where the flooding Nile drenches and breaks up the soil.[232]

Theokritos' sixteenth *Idyll* ('To Hieron') emphasises the causal connection between kingship on the one hand, and the prosperity, peace, and harmony of the land on the other, even more explicitly. The poet first describes a confused, violent world in which greed prevails over honour, war over peace, and the barbaric Carthaginians have the better of the civilised Greeks. The coming of Hieron, Theokritos prophesises, will change everything. He will restore peace and order to Sicily. See how the Carthaginians already tremble for fear as the warrior Hieron girds himself for battle, 'with a crest of horsehair shadowing his gleaming helmet.' Only a handful of barbarians will be left alive, to return to Africa and spread the fame of Hieron 'with tidings of the deaths of loved ones to mothers and wives.' When all this has been done, Theokritos beseeches the gods to

> Grant that the original inhabitants may repossess their cities, and restore what has been destroyed by the hands of foes. May the soil be tilled again and bring forth crops, while bleating sheep in countless numbers grow fat upon the pastures. … May fallows be ploughed and become fertile, while the cicada, watching the shepherds in the midday sun, makes music in the foliage of the trees. May weapons rust under cobwebs and may the battle-cry become a forgotten sound.[233]

[231] Call., *Hymn* 1.18-35. Kallimachos defends his preference for the Arkadian version, by saying that the Cretans' claim that their country was Zeus' birthplace cannot be true because Cretans are liars (9-10).

[232] Theocr., *Id*. 17.77-83.

[233] Theocr., *Id*. 16.88-97.

The idyllic, pastoral world that Theokritos conjures up is reminiscent of the Golden Age at the beginning of time in Greek mythology, an earthly paradise also known from Mesopotamian and Israelite mythology.

To bring peace, war must first be waged. Chaos has to be defeated to secure order. A common theme in royal ideology was the presentation of the king as vanquisher of barbarians. Although in *Idyll* 16 the Carthaginians are brought up as the barbarian foes,[234] the archetypal enemies of the Hellenistic order were the Celts. Antigonos Gonatas used his victories over the Celts to legitimise his usurpation of the Macedonian throne, and both Antiochos I and Attalos I styled themselves *sōtēres* after they had defeated the Asian Galatians in battle. In 276 Celts had invaded Greece but were defeated at Delphi. The victory was attributed to the intervention of Apollo himself.[235] The mythic saving of Greece figures also in Kallimachos' *Hymn to Delos*, but Kallimachos manages to give Ptolemaios Philadelphos part of the honour, although the Ptolemaic king had no part in it at all, when Apollo, still speaking from inside Leto, prophecies that:

> A time will come when both he [*sc.* Philadelphos] and I shall fight the same battle, when against the Greeks a barbaric sword is raised, a Celtic Ares, the later born Titans, who from the edge of the earth [236] will approach fast as snow and in numbers equal to the stars. … The strongholds and villages of the Lokrians and the Delphic heights and the Krissaian plains and the gorges of the mainland will be trampled underfoot from all directions. [The Delphians] shall see thick smoke coming from their neighbours; and not just from hearsay, but from the temple they shall see from afar the bands of enemies, and then beside my tripod the swords and the shameless necklaces and the hateful shields … Part of those shields shall be my price, whereas the other [shields], which saw their masters perish in the fire, shall be placed by the Nile, as the great booty of a king who did all he could. Future Ptolemaios, I give you these prophecies, and you will praise in the days that are yet to come the prophet, who was still in his mother's womb.[237]

[234] On anti-Carthaginian *topoi* in *Idyll* 16 see Hans 1985, who traces Theokritos' images back to 'official' Syracusean propaganda. Note that Pindar, to whom Theokritos continually alludes, related the Syracusean defeat of the Carthaginians to the myth of the Titans (*Pyth*. 1).

[235] On Celts and kings see below, chapter 1.4.

[236] ἑσπέϱου ἐσχατόωντος, 'the uttermost west'.

[237] Callim., *Hymn* 4.171-90.

What ‘Apollo’ is referring to here, is the suppression of a mutiny of Celtic mercenaries in Philadelphos’ own army during the First Syrian War (274-271). Ptolemaic forces had managed to isolate the mutineers on an island in the Nile, and then destroyed them by setting the island’s vegetation on fire.[238] Thus, Kallimachos was able to equate Philadelphos’ triumph in Egypt with Apollo’s victory in Greece. Both were saviour gods who delivered the world from the barbarians. Simultaneously, Philadelphos betters his rival Antigonos Gonatas, whose victory over the Celts in the Battle of Lysimacheia (277) had given him the prestige to become master of Macedonia. In the *Hymn to Delos*, only Apollo is credited with the victory in Greece, and Gonatas’ name is not mentioned. Moreover, in the *Hymn to Apollo* Kallimachos writes:

> Whoever fights against the blessed gods, fights with my king;
> whoever fights against my king, fights with Apollo.[239]

Presenting the king as the earthly champion of the gods was not the privilege of the Ptolemies alone. Philippos V used a famous poem on Zeus by his *suntrophos* Samos, son of Chrysogonos, to claim the same. In 218 the Antigonid king had demolished Thermos, holy place of the Aitolians, in retaliation of some sacrilegious act of the Aitolian League. When the army departed, a line from Samos’ poem was left behind as graffito on a ruined wall:

> Seest thou how far the divine bolt hath sped? [240]

This simple line had far-reaching implications. It compared Philippos’ military activities with the lightning striking down, and thus implicitly associated Philippos with Zeus. It presented Philip’s power as boundless, reaching even to the remotest of places. It presented Philippos as a just ruler who punishes the wrongdoers on behalf of the supreme god, for whose wrath no-one can hide anywhere.

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[238] Paus. 1.7.2.

[239] Call., *Hymn* 2.26-7.

[240] Polyb. 5.8.5-6.

4.6 Conclusion: The ivory tower

In this chapter we have looked at forms and functions of artistic and scientific patronage at the Hellenistic royal courts. Two principal questions were raised: 1) for what reasons did artists, scholars, and scientists strive after a place at court, and 2) what motives did rulers have for patronising the arts and sciences?

I have argued that the place of artists, scholars, and scientists at the royal court was not fundamentally different from that of other courtiers. They were not forced to become the 'servants' of kings; there remained various other opportunities for them to work and make a living. They flocked to the court for the same reason as other courtiers did: because at court status, power and privileges could be obtained, and artistic stimulus to boot. Their relationships with the kings were characterised, not by submission, but by reciprocity, especially the exchange of prestige. Although the court supplied artists with subjects, there was only limited patron guidance, and clients were left free to pursue their own goals. For many of these men, their roles as courtiers was integral to their science or art, and these two aspects cannot be separated. Competition between poets, scholars offers one explanation for the often unorthodox and innovative nature of their work.

The appreciation of kings and their *philoi* lent authority to works of literature or philosophy. *Philoi*, and notably the king himself, were certified arbiters of taste. Because of their rank and education they qualified as judges of quality and merit, and their approval contributed to legitimate new ideas and art forms. Everyone knew that Alexander had his portraits made only by Lysippos, who therefore clearly was the greatest sculptor alive. Conversely, the fame of the artists and scholars was added to the prestige of the patron. Works of art were offered to kings and courtiers as gifts and subsequently became their possessions.

Patronage was significant for two of the basic functions of the court: the court as a stage for the cult of kingship, and the court as the focus of competition with other dynasties. In cultural and scientific patronage the two functions merged. The splendour of a court's system of patronage was clearly meant to increase the glory of the king and his dynasty, and to humiliate his rivals. Moreover, some forms of art were suitable for explicit propaganda. This was the case with literature, historiography and the visual arts. But all forms of patronage also had more oblique ideological significance.

Because kings tried to outdo each other in the magnificence of their patronage, there was a strong tendency to strive for new and amazing things. Progress in science, technology, and culture gave prestige to the patrons, and kings thus had good political reasons to stimulate

experiment and innovation. Competition also underlay the specific interest of the court in military technology, *viz*. the development of artillery, siege engines and warships. It should be remembered that v*is-à-vis* cities kings were the champions of freedom – specifically of *autonomia*, *eleutheria* and *dēmokratia* if a city was Greek. It is not surprising therefore that kings were, too, the champions of freedom in the field of the arts and sciences. It was important for a king not to be looked upon as a repressive tyrant.

World Empire and Golden Age

The court supplied poets and philosophers with typical aulic topics and forms: aetiology, dynastic history, pastoral fantasy, urban mime, panegyric, sympotic epigram, 'Fürstenspiegel'. And of course mythological subjects that could be directly or indirectly associated with kingship or empire: Herakles as *sōtēr*; barbarians living on the world's edge; military victory over barbarians; the battle between the Gods and the Titans (or Giants); the primordial Golden Age; Greek colonisation myth; Apollo and Zeus. The diversity of topics favoured at court come together in two main themes: the ideal of universal empire and the promise of a golden age. Claims to universality can be recognised first of all in the association of terrestrial monarchy with the heavenly kingship of Zeus, and in the comparison of royal rule with the power of the sun. In the next chapter we will see that universal empire was also a *Leitmotiv* in the ceremonial and ritual representation of monarchy.

Closely related to the dream of world empire is the promise of a (new) golden age. Here, too, the image of the sun is relevant. As in many other Near Eastern cultures, Hellenistic kingship was believed to be connected with the prosperity, even the fertility of the land. Moreover the ruler was presented as a divine or semi-divine saviour, whose military prowess safeguarded peace. The shepherd symbolised the peaceful life. In bucolic poetry the world is idealised as a place of bliss and tranquillity, where the vicissitudes of love are the main worry of men and gods alike. Also in the *Argonautika*, herdsmen are associated with an idyllic world of order and peace. The pastoral communities that the Argonauts encounter during their voyage are sometimes deliberately reminiscent of Hesiod's description of the mythic Golden Age.[241] As we have seen, the promise of a new Golden Age is also prominent in Theokritos' *Idyll* 16 and 17, in Kallimachos' *Hymn to Delos*, and in Aratos' *Phainomena*. In other literary texts the opposite of the royal order is put to the fore: the barbarian, peripheral Other who

[241] H. Bernsdorff, *Hirten in der nicht-bukolischen Dichtung des Hellenismus*. Palingenesia 72 (Stuttgart 2001) 66-89; cf. e.g. *Argon*. 2.649-60; 4.964-78.

threatens civilisation but is vanquished by Herakles or the king, or voluntarily adopts Hellenic culture. A cardinal trait of much court literature is its emphasis on the progress and expansion of civilisation. This is particularly the case with Kallimachos' collection of poetry, the *Aitia*. For instance Kallimachos' poems about Herakles concentrate on his role as saviour and culture hero; Herakles defeats monsters and pacifies barbaric peoples by introducing Greek culture.[242] And this brings up one last, but fundamental characteristic of court patronage: its distinctive, deliberate Hellenic character.

Hellenism and empire

Non-Greek artists, writers, and scholars were almost completely absent from the courts. Notable exceptions such as Berossos, Manetho, and perhaps Seleukos of Seleukeia,[243] prove the rule, especially since they, too, used the Greek language for their writings. 'Alien wisdom', such as Babylonian astronomy, was neatly incorporated in Greek philosophy or science. Kings also promoted the study of the Greek past. Alexandrian poets were intensely interested in the (mythic) origins of Greek culture. They integrated in their works an enormous variety of mythological, geographical, historical, and religious material, making good use of the vast knowledge collected in the royal library. In the Alexandrian *mouseion*, philologists meticulously studied the poets of the Greek past, notably Homer. It would be anachronistic to understand the obsession of the Alexandrians with the Greek legacy as a form of nationalism. It would also be wrong to attribute it to some idealist concern on the part of the monarchy for a supposed feeling of homesickness or culture shock among Greeks living 'abroad'. Such an explanation cannot be applied to Mediterranean *poleis* like Alexandria or Antioch, where Greeks formed both the upper class and the majority of the population. Court poetry was definitely not aimed at the whole of the Greek population, but only to well-educated upper classes, first of all royal *philoi*. The *philoi* were of mixed origin, but they

[242] Harder 2005, 246.

[243] 'Theopais Babylon: een multiculturele stad in de Hellenistische tijd', *Lampas* 38.3 (2005) 198-213, esp. 208-9, listing several ethnic 'Chaldeans' who became famous among the Greeks as astronomers and philosophers; the most notable of these was Diogenes of Seleukeia on the Tigris, a Babylonian who became head of the Athenian Stoa in the middle of the second century BCE (Strabo 16.1.16; Plut., *Mor*. 1.5.328d); his Babylonian name perhaps was Uballissu-Bēl. The others are the astronomers Naburianos (Nabu-rimanni), Kidenas (Kidinnu) and Soudinos (Strabo 16.1.16), and maybe the stoic Apollodoros of Seleukeia (Nabu-iddin?). Whether these men, too, were connected with a royal court is unknown.

united by a shared 'high' culture. Finally, and most importantly, if court poetry indeed in the second instance reached an educated audience of regional and civic upper classes, as I have proposed, this is inclusive of Hellenized *non*-Greeks, who had a multiple—e.g. Greek-Egyptian, Greek-Babylonian, Greek-Jewish—identity because their elite status in part depended on their loyalty to the empire.[244]

Unlike Classical Greek literature, Hellenistic literature tended to smooth out national and tribal differences between the Greeks, and reinvented Greek culture in the light of a new, more cosmopolitan world view in which there was also place for Hellenized non-Greeks. At the same time the Hellenism of the court was a noticeable elitist culture. The combination of these two aspects may help to clarify the purport of the promotion of Hellenistic culture at the royal courts.

First, Hellenism was instrumental in the creation of group cohesion and identity among the royal *philoi*. Particularly the courtiers at the early Antigonid, Ptolemaic, and Seleukid courts had disparate origins. They were ethnic Macedonians, various types of Greeks, as well as the odd Iranian, Egyptian, or Illyrian. A shared elite culture bound them together. This culture should of necessity be pan-Hellenic, acceptable and understandable for all. Moreover, by their appreciation of difficult and erudite matters, courtiers elevated themselves above other social groups – more or less analogous to the way that palace architecture accentuated the aloofness of king and court by the physical separation of the palace from the city in which it stood (see section 2.1). The utilisation of knowledge and taste as a means of distancing is noticeable in most court societies in world history: 'The court, shielded from the outside world, … projects an image of itself as mysterious and inaccessible; its power is enhanced by [the] double aim of seeming both very learned and very glorious.'[245]

At the same time culture served as an instrument to give cohesion to the empire. Imperial states normally administer territories and populations indirectly, *viz*. through contacts with regional and local elites, and the Hellenistic empires were not exceptional in this respect. Just like the Austrian emperors favoured High German culture to unite their *Vielvölkerstaat* at the top level of society, and the multi-ethnic elite in the Ottoman Empire was united by Ottoman culture and language—a blend of Persian, Arabian, Byzantine, and Turkic influences—so, too, did Hellenistic kings employ a generic, non-national form of Greekness

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[244] For multiple identity see above, n. 98 on p. 131.

[245] S. Bertelli, 'The courtly universe', in: S. Bertelli, F. Cardini, E. Garbero Zorzi eds., *The Courts of the Italian Renaissance* (Milan 1986) 7-38, at 17.

as a culture of empire. It was specifically Hellenism that was promoted, partly because the kings and most of their courtiers had Macedonian or Greek roots, partly because Greek cities formed the cornerstone of Macedonian imperial rule. By concerning themselves with Greek culture on a grand scale, rulers presented themselves as philhellenes. Moreover, the Hellenism of the court had a distinct cosmopolitan character that transgressed the multifarious cultural and linguistic zones of the Hellenistic world, and could also be adopted by non-Greeks. The evidence for second century Judea—1 and 2 *Maccabees*, Flavius Josephus—makes clear that at the regional level Hellenic culture was specifically adopted by upper class families who derived status political prevalence from royal favour; at the same time, those Judean families who failed to profit from the imperial system tended to oppose Hellenism on the rebound, and conspicuously embraced autochthonous local culture. Thus Hellenism, in states that were characterised by political, ethnical, and cultural heterogeneity, contributed to a sense of imperial commonwealth, a certain sense of world unity even. Royal patronage of Greek art, poetry, and scholarship made it manifest that the royal court was the heart of this unifying culture.

Hellenistic poetry was not *l'art pour l'art*. Neither was there any *science pour science*, for that matter. But both science and poetry *were* produced in, and for, an ivory tower: the ivory tower of the court and its various satellites in the province.