

# The Court of Alexander the Great as Social System

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In his discussion of events that followed Alexander's march through Hyrcania (summer 330), Plutarch gives a succinct summary of the king's conduct and reports the clash of his closest friends, Hephaestion and Craterus (*Alex.* 47.5.9–11).<sup>1</sup> The passage belongs in the context of Alexander's adoption of the traditions and trappings of the dead Persian Great King (Fredricksmeier 2000; Brosius 2003a), although the conflict between the two generals dates to the time of the Indian campaign (probably 326). It reveals not only that Alexander was subtly in tune with the attitudes of his closest friends, but also that his changes elicited varied responses from the members of his circle. Their relationships with each other were based on rivalry, something Alexander – as Plutarch's wording suggests – actively encouraged. But it is also reported that Alexander made an effort to bring about a lasting reconciliation of the two friends, who had attacked each other with swords, and drawn their respective troops into the fray. To do so, he had to marshal “all his resources” (Hamilton 1969: 128–31) from gestures of affection to death threats.

These circumstances invite the question: what was the structural relevance of such an episode beyond the mutual antagonism of Hephaestion and Craterus? For these were not minor protagonists, but rather men of the upper echelon of the new Macedonian-Persian empire, with whose help Alexander had advanced his conquest ever further and exercised his power (Berve nos. 357, 446; Heckel 1992: 65–90, 107–33). This power required a concrete organization: the core that was formed around Alexander needed to fulfill specific personal and institutional demands in order to function successfully. For our purposes, the phenomenon of “court” is defined as the extended house of a monarch, the central functions of which can be

<sup>1</sup> Editors' note: Professor Weber completed this chapter before the appearance of A. J. S. Spawforth's “The Court of Alexander the Great between Europe and Asia,” in A. J. S. Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* (Cambridge, 2007), 82–120, and was unable to take his observations into account.

regarded as interaction, representation, and power. Alexander's court and the court society around him were rooted in a double tradition: elements emanating from the traditions of the Macedonian monarchy, which Philip more than anyone had influenced, and Persian ceremonies, which were added incrementally until, by the time of Alexander's death, a new court life had come into being as a result of the king's residence in Babylon.

An analysis of the court from 336 to 323 must take into account three factors. The first is the manner in which Alexander's court presented itself primarily as an itinerant military camp, renouncing a permanent geographic place. Hence, as a social configuration, the court was a dynamic institution, whose evolution ran parallel to the development of the monarchy itself (Borza 1990: 236–41; Hatzopoulos 1996: i. 37–42). Second, it is difficult to make a critical assessment of Alexander's court in its final form, since the king's early death and the ensuing turmoil of the Diadoch age prevented any continuation of this type of court. Therefore, one cannot put it to the test or consider the consolidation or modification of its form. Third, as far as the Alexander historians are concerned, the topic of the "court" is inextricably tied to the problem of how Alexander influenced the primary authors and how these reported the king's methods of communication and interaction on a scale that reflected their own personal involvement. On the other hand, the later or secondary authors were steeped in the terminology and concepts of the courts of the later Hellenistic kings and Roman emperors. Finally, it is difficult to make an adequate assessment of corresponding practices in the Achaemenid empire: these are derived mostly from Greek fragments (quotations or paraphrases selected for completely different purposes) – at a distance of hundreds of years – which suggest too great a degree of continuity.

Although the courts of the Hellenistic kings have aroused the interest of researchers in recent times (Weber 1997; Meissner 2000; Savalli-Lestrade 2003), for the court of Alexander there are only detailed studies on specific aspects of the theme (Berve i. 11–84; Heckel 1986b, 2003b; Völcker-Janssen 1993). Therefore, it is necessary first to explain the concept of court in terms of typology and to clear up matters of terminology. Then the court of Alexander will be treated not as a closed unit, but one in which the key categories – interaction, representation, and power – can be analyzed over the period of time spanning its starting and end points. Finally, in the last part essential developmental factors will be mentioned.

### Concept of the Court and Terminology

The concept of "court" designates, in the first instance, a spatial center in the sense of an extended house (*oikos*), which was inhabited by a ruler (*basileus, monarchos*) and from which he directed the political government and administration of his realm. This *oikos*, generally situated in a central place, could be enhanced architect-

turally in a specific manner as a palace, since it had to accommodate the ruler's increased need for display. With this, one should also include the staging of sumptuous festivities and demonstrations of wealth. The court was also an "extended house" because not only the family of the ruler in the strictest sense gathered in it, but also the social elite with whom the ruler interacted. The relationship between ruler and elite had either an informal character, if it involved the ruler's trusted men (*hetairoi* (companions), *philoï* (friends)), or a hierarchical organization with a system of court titles. One could call this group, which included also the service staff in charge of the practical organization, the closer or inner court. The determining criterion for membership in the inner court is the real or titular proximity to the ruler. There is a farther or outer court to be distinguished from the first one, which comprises guests, foreign ambassadors, and civil servants who are temporary visitors at the court. The two groups of court society were not hermetically sealed from each other, but permeable. The interaction of their members, especially members of the ruler's family or confidants, deserves close examination. Similar attention must be given to the composition of the second group with regard to their geographical and ethnic background (Macedonians, Greeks, Persians, et al.), prosopographic connections and competence (military, intellectual, etc.), which determined the selection of particular individuals.

There is no clear, specifically coined Greek term for the concept of "court" or "court society." Instead, there are several – *oikia*, *to basileion*, *ta basileia*, and *aule* – which are difficult to separate from one another, but all have a local connotation in the sense of residence. They describe various parts of the abode or emphasize different aspects of access or exclusion (Arr. 7.25). It seems that the term *aule* is first used to describe the Hellenistic courts, and designates not only the actual court of the monarch, but also court society, including servants and the entire court management (Funck 1996: 52–4). The ruler's permanent presence was not always required in order for a residence to be considered a court – on the contrary, permanent habitation was impossible in an empire like that of the Persians, with its many residences and a Great King who, subject to seasonal and military demands, moved constantly about (Briant 1988; Nielsen 1994; Boucharlat 2001). Each of these residences constituted for a period of time a "court" along with a court management.

Basically, however, the court was located wherever the Great King or Alexander happened to be (Briant 1996: 200–4, 292–5; *HPE* 187–91, 280–3). In time of war the court was perforce a mobile headquarters. To that end, the royal tent (*skene*), equipped for organization and display, became a significant center. After the baggage of Darius fell into Alexander's hands at Issus, he took over the use of the tent and was able to host many guests. His resources were augmented by the spoils taken at Damascus by Parmenion (Arr. 2.11.10). The ancient authors make it clear that the pomp of Alexander's court was now greater than what was normal in Macedonia. Thus, practical demands and the need for ostentation could be met at the same time (Arr. 2.12.3–4, 2.20.10; Briant 1988: 265–9).

## Alexander's Court at the Start of the Persian Campaign

When Alexander acceded to the Macedonian throne, he inherited Philip's court. As the probable heir to the kingdom, he had become familiar with the structure of the court, its strengths and weaknesses. The personal interactions at the court reflected the nature of the Macedonian aristocracy, which comprised three groups: first, those who belonged to the branches of the Argead dynasty, then members of powerful Macedonian noble clans (Borza 1990: 237–8; Heckel 2003b: 200–3), and finally the so-called coeval companions (*syntrophoi*) of the new king, who had grown up with him (Heckel 1986b: 301–2; 2003: 203–5). It is important to remember that the interaction of these groups among themselves and with Alexander was rooted in the reign of Philip (Gehrke 2003a: 156).

That Alexander, born in 356, could successfully assume the succession of his father is anything but self-evident. Philip too had not begun his reign as rightful heir to the throne, but as guardian of his nephew, Amyntas. Neither had he decided on *one* marriage and *one* successor. Instead, according to Macedonian custom, he was polygamous: Philip contracted seven marriages, all of which appear to have had political implications (Kienast 1973: 30–1; Goukowsky 1991: 60–5; Carney 2003b: 228–9). Although Philip undoubtedly “trained” Alexander to be his successor for a long time, his marriage to the Macedonian noblewoman Cleopatra in 337 must have had an alarming effect on Alexander, inasmuch as his legitimacy to the throne was placed in doubt (Ogden 1999: 20–2; Müller 2003: 27–34). That Philip was strongly inclined toward his nephew Amyntas and married him to his half-Illyrian daughter Cynane pointed in the same direction. On top of this, he planned to marry off Alexander's sister Cleopatra to Alexander I, king of Molossia in Epirus and brother of Olympias, Alexander's mother – undoubtedly in order to isolate the latter (D.S. 16.91.4–92.1). These procedures show a king who was able to subordinate the members of his dynasty to his strategic demands. Even Olympias, ambitious as she might have been, often had no way to oppose these machinations (Carney 2003b: 229–334).

Philip's position seemed to be so secure that the Macedonian aristocracy imposed few, if any, limitations on him. On the contrary, his efforts toward integration had proved effective. Presumably inspired by a corresponding Persian practice (Borza 1990: 248–9), he was successful in bringing the sons of the clan chiefs from all of Macedonia into the court as “king's pages” (*basilikoi paides*). These fulfilled various obligations toward the king and represented their families at court – to say nothing of their role as hostages. Also, as a result of the practice, the barons of the Macedonian highlands experienced a “bonding” (Arr. 4.13.1; D.S. 17.65.1; Heckel 1986c: 279–85). Philip surrounded himself with a group of Macedonian nobles, the *hetairoi* (Hammond 1989b: 141–8),<sup>2</sup> among them Attalus (Cleopatra's guardian),

<sup>2</sup> Philip had, according to Theopompus (*FGrH* 115 F225b = Ath. 6.260d–261a), 800 *hetairoi* equipped with land. Alexander is credited with 2,800 *hetairoi* around 334, in reference to the *hetairoi* cavalcade.

Parmenion and his son Philotas, Cleitus the Black, Antipater, and Antigonus the One-Eyed (*Monophthalmos*) (Heckel 1992: 3–64). Although one cannot in all cases ascertain the exact provenance of these persons, their prosopographic connections and careers, they must nevertheless have been those whom Philip trusted with the most important duties. From this group the seven royal bodyguards (*somato-phylakes*) were chosen (Heckel 1986c: 288–93; Heckel 2003b: 205–8). Evidently, they were all endowed with appropriate military competence and experience in organization and administration (Errington 1990: 99–102).

Nothing is known about housing arrangements, whether the *hetairoi* (and their families) lived at the court itself or in its proximity. Also unknown is the selection process: how did they come to be part of Philip's circle? Philip could have inherited at least some of them from his predecessor(s). We are not dealing here with an aristocracy related to the ruler, nor with nobility based solely on family status, but with a group that satisfied the Macedonian code of values and which the king could put together from among the aristocracy (on game hunting see Briant 1991: 217–22; Briant 1993b: 273–4; Carney 2002: 62–5). The individual members did not carry out, as far as we can discern, a specific function: there was no link between belonging to the group, actual title, and prescribed duty. The king employed each man according to his abilities, as the occasion demanded.

When Amyntas did not succeed Philip after his murder, it was due, thanks in no small measure, to the decision of Antipater and his family to support Alexander (Baynham 1998b: 146–8); Parmenion and Attalus followed suit – the latter against his family obligations. Alexander himself secured his power in three ways, which essentially depended on court dynamics. First, he eliminated those members of the Argead dynasty who were potential rivals for the throne (Bosworth 1988a: 25–6), and thereby preempted the creation within the court of factions around other aspirants to the kingship. Second, he did not marry before the Persian campaign, especially not a Macedonian, because it would have implied a preference for one aristocratic family and because to leave an heir in Macedonia would have created an incalculable risk (Carney 2003b: 230). Third, he trusted people who had already been loyal to his father and conducted other campaigns together with them. By not granting blatant privileges he kept the *hetairoi* in balance so that existing groupings were neutralized. This meant that the third-mentioned group of aristocrats, the *syntrophoi*, did not receive their anticipated rewards until much later, as Alexander consciously opted for tradition and continuity. In the event, his decision was vindicated. The young king also succeeded in winning the loyalty and acquiescence of his helpers through selective preferment and personal acquaintance.

Serious rivalries among the members of the court could pose a danger to the king, as the famous quarrel between Hephæstion and Craterus shows. Certainly, it would be wrong to paint too harmonious a picture. It is more proper to assume permanent competition for the favor of the king and lasting (re-)creation of factions (Heckel 1986b: 305). The circumstances attendant upon Philip's murder demonstrate that there were critical voices among the members of the court and also against the king. As well, one has to take into account the opportunistic behavior of some *hetairoi* when it came to securing or improving their own positions.

Antipater's decision to support Alexander must have been made after carefully weighing the chances of survival and acceptance of the various candidates to the throne.

What then was relationship of the king to the court groupings? In general, one can assume that the communications among the Macedonian aristocracy were not based on rules of order and obedience. Under such conditions, there developed a stronger dependence on the person of the king: he, as integrative focal point, granted favor, the privileges associated with which were worth striving for (Berve i. 34–6). Certainly, it must have made a difference for *hetairoi* in their sixties and seventies whether they dealt with Philip or with Alexander. For the young king too, his relationship to the *hetairoi* closer to his own age was a different one, based strongly on common education, undertakings, and friendships.

Members of the aristocracy had no recourse to the social system if they wanted to keep or improve their position, except withdrawal to their family estates/ancestral lands. Nor did they have access to other courts, such as those of Epirus or Thrace, even less so that of the Persian Great King, unless they were prepared to engage in open rebellion and treason. In the world of the Greek *polis* a Macedonian was not necessarily well received, even if there was no doubt about the orientation of the Macedonian court toward Greece (Borza 1996, 1999; Baynham 1998b: 142–3). Since social opportunities at the court were monopolized, there was a reciprocal interest in collaboration – more so after the Macedonian court had developed into a power center in the second half of the fourth century. There were also embassies from the *poleis*, from the Persian satraps and the Great King, as well as exiles from the Persian empire (Plu. *Alex.* 5.1, 10.1; D.S. 17.2.2).

Macedonian custom required that the king be accessible and a role model: he had to be receptive to the claims of the inhabitants of the land and he conducted war not from a safe distance, but alongside his men in the front lines. Life at the court and access to the king were doubtless tempered by certain rules. One has to assume that royal audiences were regulated by established court ceremonial practices.<sup>3</sup> The king met for advice with his closest circle at the royal council (*synedrion*), but he was apparently reasonably free to determine the composition of this scarcely formalized “guild,” which drew upon the most important *hetairoi* and *philoï* (D.S. 17.16.1–2; Corradi 1929: 235–8; Hatzopoulos 1996: i. 323–59). It is highly probable that the members of the *synedrion* were recognizable by their distinctive dress including the wearing of purple clothing, which thereby projected their status. Sources also relate the communal drinking sessions (*symposion*, *potos*) of the king and his companions, which were of great importance and rooted in Macedonian tradition (Borza 1983; Völcker-Janssen 1993; Murray 1996; Nielsen 1998; Vössing 2004). Here the king's companions could make informal agreements and establish their positions and status in personal and social terms. For the king himself this

<sup>3</sup> On possible Persian models see Kienast 1973: 28–30; cf. Briant 1996: 950; *HPE* 924–5. On the presence of Barsine and her family at the Macedonian court (D.S. 16.52.3; Curt. 6.5.2–3) see McQueen 1995: 117.

was an effective means of extracting obligations from his followers and of interacting with them as equals (Borza 1983: 52–4; Müller 2003: 254–5).

A complex interdependence between the king and older and younger aristocracy is obvious: on the one hand, the king relied upon particular groups of people; on the other, he was in a position as ruler of the court to share wealth, prestige, and access to power. Success within this system depended primarily on the person of the king himself, particularly on his charisma and his ability to gain acceptance.

The representation of the kingdom took place on two levels: on one level, through the embodiment of monarchy and the monarch through delegates and representatives outside the court ambience, as, for example, at places of Panhellenic significance such as Delos, Olympia, or Delphi (Bringmann and von Steuben 1995: s.v. "Philip II");<sup>4</sup> on the second level, in the projected image of the monarchy at the court and the capital city, such as in feasts for the court itself or for people outside of the court, for example, in the palaces of Pella and Aegae or in mobile structures if the king was traveling. The archaeological findings do not give a conclusive picture of this, nor have we learned a great deal about Alexander's living quarters (Arr. 1.17.4, 1.27.2; Plu. *Alex.* 9.3). Primarily, it seems that the Macedonian court was equipped for feasts only on a small scale, such as the above-mentioned *symposia*. Events on a larger scale required other venues: the wedding of Cleopatra to Alexander of Epirus was celebrated in the theater of Aegae, which lay in the vicinity of the palace (D.S. 16.91.4–95.5; Drougou 1997). Diodorus informs us, under the year 335/4, that before the departure to Persia there was a nine-day-long *panegyris* organized in Macedonian Dion with sacrifices and dramatic *agones*, in which the participants – *philoï*, *hegemones*, and *presbeis* – were served in a banqueting tent with 100 recliners (D.S. 17.16.4; Aneziri 2003: 57; Vössing 2004: 69–70).

Already under King Archelaus poets were patronized. Philip and Alexander continued this tradition even if big names and actual works are lacking (Plu. *Alex.* 4; 10.2–3; Weber 1993: 44–51). One did not publicly seek prestige through the fostering of intellectuals or individual scientific fields. Thus, the residence of Aristotle at the court in Pella (343–340) was dependent upon his role as educator of the successor to the throne (Plu. *Alex.* 5; Rubinson 1993; Scholz 1998: 153–65; Alonso 2000; Carney 2003a). Aristotle's nephew Callisthenes is exceptional in that he performed the function of official historian of the Persian campaign, but there were also various philosophers and poets whose exact duties, apart from intellectual conversation on different occasions, remain unclear.<sup>5</sup> One may assume that some intellectuals joined the expedition voluntarily, or on the recommendation of others, and endured the hardships of campaigning in order to gain financial profit and prestige (see Tritle, ch. 7).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> According to Plu. *Alex.* 4.9 Philip had his Olympic victory in the chariot race coined. On the golden staters see Le Rider 1977: 413 with pls. 53–6.

<sup>5</sup> For Agis of Argos, Aischrion, Anaxarchus of Abdera, Anaximenes of Lampsacus, Pranichus of Pierion, Pyrrhon of Elis, and Choerilus of Iasos, see Berve i. 66–72; Weber 1992: 68–9; Carney 2003a: 53–61.

<sup>6</sup> On an alleged reward for Pyrrhon (or Choerilus) with 10,000 gold coins for a poem of praise (Sext. *Emp. Adv. Gramm.* 282b), see Decleva Caizzi 1981: 136ff.; Brunschwig 1992: 59–60.

The court provided an organizational framework for the exercise of power. The *synedrion* of the king and his companions played a role in its operation; there was also a royal treasury<sup>7</sup> as well as a royal chancellery. The latter fulfilled diverse functions, primarily the completion of private and official written correspondence, the compilation of important individual notifications, and the keeping of the royal diaries. One must assume that there were many free and non-free civil servants, besides the *basilikoi paides* (Berve i. 39–42; Scholl 1987). Their names or job descriptions are not known to us for want of evidence, but they fall into the general category of “service” (*therapeia*: Berve i. 25). This service met the personal needs of the king and those demands which were necessary for the successful accomplishment of different external relations (Berve i. 55–64; Hatzopoulos 1997). In short, it was more than merely a power structure for the maintenance of the rule over the different parts of the empire. The king rather had to deal with energetic demands: here one notes Alexander’s benefactions to individual cities in Asia Minor which went beyond the pure rhetoric of freedom and changes in internal politics. They consisted of land and monetary donations, as well as freedom from taxation or compulsory contributions.<sup>8</sup> Little is known about the settlement of the corresponding regulations or the involvement of courtly structures and their staff (Alfieri Tonini 2002; Faraguna 2003).

### Alexander’s Court in Babylon

After his return from the east, Alexander dwelt again in the nucleus of the Persian empire, Susa and Babylon. Here he had at his disposal the Great King’s palaces and their infrastructure, which implied an end to the mobile camp structure and new possibilities for royal representation (Funck 1996: 46–52; von Hesberg 1996: 84–5; Brosius 2003a: 181–7).

The interactive relations within the court’s society and its composition changed in three ways. First, Alexander’s inner circle was no longer restricted to Macedonians alone; there were now Sogdianians, Bactrians, and especially Iranians, either from the aristocracy or the Great King’s family, for example, Oxyathres (brother of Darius) and Oxyartes (Roxane’s father) among the *hetairoi* (Berve, nos. 586, 587; Collins 2001: 263–4).<sup>9</sup> Following Persian custom, “relatives” (*syngeneis*) of the king were added to the original all-Macedonian group. The implied proximity to the king, expressed by the bestowal of the diadem, was accompanied by duties and privileges (Arr. 7.11.2–6; Gauger 1977: 157; Vössing 2004: 49–50, 86; otherwise Briant 1996: 321–2; Jacobs 1996: 275, 283; *HPE* 309–10). These could be attached

<sup>7</sup> On Harpalus see Berve i. 303–4; ii. 75–80, no. 143; Hammond 1989b: 187–92.

<sup>8</sup> On the sending of spoils to cities and temples in Greece see Bringmann and von Steuben 1995: s.v. “Alexander d. Gr.”; Whitby 2004: 35–7. On the probable return of art objects which were stolen by the Persians see Bringmann and von Steuben 1995: no. 319.

<sup>9</sup> The only Greeks who were among the *hetairoi* of Alexander from before were Eumenes and Nearchus. Alexander continued the practice of Philip: Völcker-Janssen 1993: 39–40.



to various functions outside of the court, such as with the administration of a satrapy (Briant 1996: 350–9; *HPE* 338–47). It is hard to say on what basis Alexander selected individuals. In essence it seems that it was the relationship of these persons to their predecessors. It is also not known “how the Persians regarded their role in the corps of Alexander’s bodyguards and the Companions” (Brosius 2003a: 176). Nevertheless, Alexander tried to expand his circle of helpers by integrating some of the Achaemenid elite and, in this way, to preempt any tendency toward resistance or disintegration (Högemann 1992: 344–51).

The significance of this step does not end with the change in the membership of the king’s circle. More decisive was the very fact of the adoption of Persian traditions of court and kingship (Wiesehöfer 1994: 149–51). The relationship of the Great King to his circle was *not* characterized by the usual Macedonian accessibility, but rather by restriction of access (Briant 1996: 270–1; *HPE* 258–9). Whereas an elevated position befitted the Great King in his appearances, the Persian elite exercised a different type of social contact with the king. Not only did the nobility hold titles that were more honorific than functional, but the distance between the Great King and the elite was manifest in the practice of *proskynesis* (Wiemer 2005: 137–40). The position of the Great King was recognized in the ritual of hand-kissing and bowing. The failure of Alexander’s attempt in 327 to introduce and impose this ritual was due to the resistance of his Macedonian friends. While Alexander submitted to the wishes of the elite on this offensive Achaemenid ceremonial, he tried to strengthen his position by cultivating his own image (Wirth 1993: 355–61). Significantly, there were no Persians among the *somatophylakes*: this may suggest that not all members of the Persian elite acknowledged Alexander’s status or wanted to collaborate with him. Alexander could have pressed for greater consideration from the Persians, but he would have run into massive resistance from the Macedonians in whom he had the greatest confidence. The native elite was denied immediate and responsible participation in the victories of Alexander.

The dynamic at Alexander’s court also changed as the forces of war and conquest brought new men into the circle of Macedonians around the king. Gone were the men of the old guard: Antipater functioned as the king’s representative in Macedonia and Greece, but exercised no immediate influence on the court or Alexander’s inner circle (Carney 1995: 371–2). The same was true of Antigonos, left behind as satrap of Phrygia. Attalus, Parmenion, Philotas, and Cleitus were murdered either at the beginning or during the course of the campaign (Müller 2003: 55–133). The latter three were not receptive to Alexander’s orientalizing policies (Heckel 2003b: 215, 221–2). But these did not have an influential and open advocate to express their resistance, while Alexander had the possibility of disengaging himself from traditional Macedonian circles. New opportunities opened up especially for younger *hetairoi*, mostly for the group of persons to whom Alexander was already close and to which Coenus, Hephaestion, Leonnatus, Craterus, and Perdikkas belonged. The same was true for other friends of Alexander’s youth, such as Laomedon, Harpalus, Ptolemy, and Nearchus. From this pool, the seven *somatophylakes* were taken. Criteria for membership in that group are not entirely clear (Berve 25–30; Rubinson 1977: 415; Gehrke 2003a: 66–7). This was a sworn community, welded together by

numerous shared experiences and exertions but also under tremendous pressure of competition and inclined to be jealous of one another. The abilities and skills of these individuals lay again in the military and organizational area, but there were also specialties: for instance, Peucestas, through contact with the native elite and population, possessed a special linguistic ability (Berve, no. 634; Heckel 1986c: 290–1; Brosius 2003a: 177–8). But in other respects, intellectual abilities or prestige in literature, science, and art were not of great importance at the time for the *hetairoi*, even if Eumenes, Ptolemy, and others could demonstrate their competence in them (von Hesberg 1998: 205–10).

Generally, personal acquaintance with Alexander, absolute loyalty to him, and the faithful execution of duties, especially military, played the decisive role in bringing individuals into his circle. Alexander imposed mostly his own opinions, especially in personal matters. Apparently, even toward Hephaestion he made it clear that he was the source of each and every privilege (Plu. *Alex.* 47.9; Müller 2003: 258–9). With the increasing size of his empire, Alexander was dependent on a rising number of trusted helpers. He took some of them, at least, from his circle of Persian followers. Lastly, the Macedonian *hetairoi* were left with even fewer alternatives than before, unless they wanted to lose their status or even their lives, other than to work together with Alexander and in accordance with his wishes – something which was not always disadvantageous (Plu. *Eum.* 2.5–6; Hatzopoulos 1996: i. 335).

Finally, Alexander's marriages and the procreation of heirs also changed his status and position at the court from what it had been at the beginning of the campaign. It is true that the consequences of this change in behavior did not become clear until the war for his inheritance which followed his death. Nevertheless, already during his lifetime, his actions took on more than merely symbolic importance. The marriage to Roxane bypassed the Achaemenid (and, of course, also the Macedonian) elite, and Alexander could thereby retain a measure of independence – which he clearly did.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the multiple weddings at Susa in 324, when he married Stateira, the daughter of Darius III, who had been taken captive after the battle of Issus, and also Parysatis, the daughter of Artaxerxes III (Ogden 1999: 44–5; Carney 2000b: 108–11), sent a different signal. Now it was about creating a broader elite for the empire. For this reason Alexander appeared no longer (only) as a Macedonian king, even if Macedonian custom predominated. He took a clear leading role and, here too, his trusted Macedonians were left with no alternative but to cooperate. These weddings strengthened the ties of the Persian “relatives” with the king. None of the women took an active role, not even a visibly political one.<sup>11</sup> At the end of his life Alexander placed less and less importance on

<sup>10</sup> On Alexander and Barsine see Ogden 1999: 42–3, 47–8; Carney 2000b: 101–5. On Alexander and Roxane see Ogden 1999: 43–4; Carney 2000b: 105–7.

<sup>11</sup> For Olympias and Cleopatra in Macedonia and Epirus see Miron 2000: 37–8; Carney 2003b: 231–4, 250–1; for the legendary exaggeration of Olympias' behavior see Hammond 1989b: 34–5; Carney 1995: 383. On the Achaemenid queens see Brosius 1996: 105–19, and on the activities of Roxane, Ogden 1999: 46–7.

his relationship with the Argead dynasty and the considerations of the Macedonian nobility linked to it.

The preceding discussion of the inner workings of court society makes it clear that we are dealing with a new, artificially created elite. At the beginning of his reign Alexander had to accept the trusted men of his father and the Macedonian clan chiefs, but as time progressed they were removed from the inner circle and military office and replaced by friends of Alexander's youth. Their destiny was inextricably linked to that of their king. Moreover, his position was so strong that he could not only impose his will on them, which they enforced in concert with him, but also demand that they accept the increasing integration of the Iranian elite into the military and command structure. Even if Alexander surrounded himself mostly with Macedonians, the *hetairoi* were threatened by the ongoing integration of the Iranian elite and their connections through marriage. The deaths of Parmenion, Philotas, and Cleitus made it clear – regardless of the circumstances – who monopolized the violence. Some, like Craterus, were torn between loyalty to the king and conservative principles, and opted for silence. Finally the king's dependence on members of his aristocracy declined, particularly as distance and extended absence from the homeland weakened links to Macedonia. Even though they ruled together, considered each other *hetairoi*, and recognized a connection with each other and the king (Stagakis 1970: 99–100; Gehrke 2003a: 92–3), Alexander represented the focal point of a “personal kingdom.” It was not by coincidence that he designated his friend Hephaestion chiliarch and – as vizier in the Persian style – second man in the new empire (Wirth 1993: 345–7; Collins 2001: 259–62, 268–74).

Access to the king, especially at the audiences, was now subject to stricter regulations and court ceremonies which made clear the personal nature and style of the monarchy. The *somatophylakes* decided who was allowed to see the king, and when (Berve 18–20, 27–8; Collins 2001). This process of increasing ceremony was in accordance with the fact that by 330 Alexander had already taken over not only parts of the ornamentation of the Persian Great King (Ritter 1965), but also his court system with its great number of offices and dignitaries, countless servants and concubines (D.S. 17.77.4; Scholl 1987; Briant 1989). Among the servants, slaves, and especially eunuchs, unattested at the Macedonian court (Tougher 2002b), played a great role: they belonged in their institutionalized organization to the outward appearances of court ceremony. This also prevented the concentration of power in the hands of one family (Briant 1996: 279–88; 2002d: 268–77): staff disposition implied a different kind of dependence and personal relation to the king (Llewellyn-Jones 2002).

The increase in ceremony becomes clear in the use of the royal tent architecture: to arrive there, as Phylarchus describes, one had to pass rows of elite troops (Ath. 12.539d–e = *FGrH* 81 F41; Briant 1996: 246–9; *HPE* 234–7). It is clear from the passage that purple clothing was a distinction and an external sign of royal favor (Ritter 1965; Blum 1998: 49–65, 191–210). Ephippus informs us that the clothing of the king represented a mixture of Macedonian and Persian elements: “on almost all other occasions he had for daily use, a purple cloak and a white and purple

undergarment and the wide-brimmed hat with the royal diadem" (Ath. 12.537e–f = *FGrH* 126 F5).<sup>12</sup> Ehippus also asserts that Alexander, in his closest circle, dressed as he saw fit, sometimes appearing as Ammon or Artemis, another time as Hermes or Heracles. The use of costumes is informative inasmuch as it shows Alexander striving to direct his image to a specific point of acceptance through the temporary assumption of a divine role. Whether there was an explicit demand for divinity linked with it is impossible to say. In any case, Alexander reacted sensitively to the reactions of his circle. The fact that he had to play many roles created greater difficulties than one would expect – the costume was among other things a good protection.

External appearances were also important among the *hetairoi*: the ancient authors stress that "the followers of Alexander, too, lived more than luxuriously," though it is not always clear whether this behavior was exhibited during or after the king's lifetime. "One of these was Hagnon. He had golden nails in his boots. When Cleitus 'the White' dealt with state affairs he did business with those who came to him, while he walked around on purple rugs" (Phylarchus and Agatharchides in Ath. 12.539c = *FGrH* 81 F41 and 86 F3; *Plu. Alex.* 40.1; von Hesberg 1996: 88; Carney 2002: 62). Other extravagant behaviors do not seem to have been an exception. They provided the opportunity for the *hetairoi* to make their status visible outside Alexander's circle.

In addition to official appearances, Alexander interacted with his *hetairoi* in the *synedrion* and in particular in the symposium, which also had a corresponding Persian tradition in the form of royal banquets (Ath. 4.143–6: Briant 1996: 297–309; Murray 1996: 18–20; *HPE* 286–97; Vössing 2004: 38–51). Discussions and drinking bouts with members of the inner circle were features of court culture right up to Alexander's death. They occurred within a representative framework and ideally with freedom of speech – when the king tolerated it (Ehippus in Ath. 12.537d = *FGrH* 126 F4; Nielsen 1998: 117–18). Alexander also participated in other symposia which were hosted by the *hetairoi* in their living quarters (Arr. 7.24.4–25.1; Ael. *VH* 3.23). Equality among the participants remained important, although some Persian elements, perhaps such as the seating order, pursued a contrary tendency (Vössing 2004: 90–2).

The court became increasingly more important as a center of power and coordination. As with the *somatophylakes*, many of the *hetairoi* were continuously on the road with commissions. These forms of interaction promoted an ever stronger dynamic of competition among the *hetairoi*, who were responsible for insuring that no resistance against Alexander was successful (Rubinsohn 1977: 418–19; Badian 2000a). Also for this period there is no indication of the granting of secondary favors through the members of Alexander's circle. No danger threatened the king in this

<sup>12</sup> On the diadem and Kausia see Ritter 1965: 55–62; Bosworth 1988a: 158. For its significance see von Hesberg 1999: 68–9; Collins 2001: 260–1; Gehrke 2003a: 154.

way. He was capable of imposing himself and in spite of equality marked the differences in rank and status with merciless punishments (Plu. *Alex.* 57.3; Berve no. 502; Müller 2003: 194–202). It does not come as a surprise that this effected a more strict opportunistic behavior, criticized in the Greek sources as flattery (*kolakeia*) and which stands out all the more sharply against the background of the resistance of a few. The Conspiracy of the Pages and the events that led to the murder of Callisthenes made this clear to everyone (Gehrke 2003a: 73; Virgilio 2003: 41–2).

The reactions of Cassander, who in 324 arrived in Babylon as a representative of his father, Antipater, provide an important confirmation of the changes that had taken place at court. Much that he witnessed he found highly irritating and, according to Plutarch, frequently angered Alexander with his ill-timed laughter. In fact, he was so roughly treated by the king that for years afterward he could not look upon even an image of Alexander without experiencing physical tremors (Plu. *Alex.* 74.1–6; Berve no. 414; Wirth 1989: 204–5, 213; but see Meeus, ch. 13, p. 250). It is no wonder that rumor held the family of Antipater and Cassander responsible for poisoning Alexander (Landucci Gattinoni 2003).

Representation at the court (i.e., display of wealth and power) remained important until the end of Alexander's power, particularly because this was a very significant element in the tradition of the Persian monarchy. In the words of Nicobule (Ath. 12.537d = *FGrH* 127 F2), "during meals, all possible artists were occupied with competing to provide pleasure for the king. Even during his last meal Alexander recited from memory and played out a certain scene of Euripides' *Andromeda* and then drank unmixed wine with a passion, inciting others to do the same" (see also Weber 1992: 68; von Hesberg 1999: 69). Greek elements were fostered as before. Poets and philosophers followed the court, but no quality works were produced, which took the king as their theme (Arr. 1.12.2; Weber 1993: 49–50). Instead, conflicts arose between Macedonians of the closest court society and those intellectuals who were too compliant were dismissed as flatterers (Curt. 8.5.7–8; Völcker-Janssen 1993: 81–4); even among the intellectuals themselves there was conflict (Brunschwig 1992: 66ff.; Müller 2003: 124–31, 138–40). That Callisthenes' role as promulgator of deeds of Alexander for a Greek and Macedonian audience was not assigned to anyone else after his death can be explained by the changed necessities (Golan 1988; Faraguna 2003).

In reports such as those of Nicobule one can discern the essence of royal daily life. The mass marriage in Susa in 324 constituted an outstanding event, whose extravagance, described in detail by Chares of Mytilene, undoubtedly corresponded with its function of impressing both participants and spectators (Ath. 12. 538c–d = *FGrH* 125 F4; Murray 1996: 19–20; Vössing 2004: 82–4). Along with the description we have a list of the invited artists. Chares, a participant in the campaigns and an eyewitness of the events he described, is a valuable source for the organization of the audiences and ceremonial occasions (*eisangeleus*). The feast took place in a tent, probably the tent of the Great King (Hammond 1989b: 219–20; Schäfer 2002: 21ff.): mobility and transience underscored its uniqueness.

Another event for which great expenditures are attested is the banquet at Opis, with its 9,000 participants, in the summer of 324. For the purpose of this discussion Alexander's immediate political intentions are not important (Arr. 7.11.8–9; Vössing 2004: 84–6); what is noteworthy is the fact that great care was taken with the representative process – the seating order of the people (Llewellyn-Jones 2002: 26) and the religious ceremonies in the Greek manner. The target group of this extravagance was not the inner court society. The court opened itself up to special subjects: the Macedonian soldiers. Alexander's conciliatory gesture compensated for the troops' evident decline in importance, for it was no longer about a Macedonian kingdom with Macedonian elite troops, but the domination of Asia, which could be maintained, if necessary, by native forces on location (Fredricksmeier 2000).

The presentational aspect became stronger again during the sojourn in Ecbatana (winter 324/3). Here Alexander organized athletic and music competitions (Arr. 3.1.4; Bloedow 1998), as he had done before, only on this occasion with 3,000 athletes and artists who came by sea and overland from Greece. Furthermore, he gave continuous banquets for his inner circle (Arr. 7.14.10; Plu. *Alex.* 72.1; Borza 1983: 50–1). Above all, the 10,000 talents allegedly spent for the games on the occasion of Hephaestion's burial and his monumental tomb in Babylon, still unfinished at the time of Alexander's own death, must be mentioned (Völcker-Janssen 1993: 100–16; Borchhardt 1993; for its historicity see Palagia 2000; McKechnie 1995). It is important to note that these tombs were not planned for Ecbatana or Macedonia, but for Babylon. If one considers the artistic arrangements and their effect on the participants in the funeral feast, especially the *hetairoi* and Macedonian soldiers, then Hephaestion's memorial looms large. That Alexander buried there in the grandest and most extravagant manner (Völcker-Janssen 1993: 103–5) the one *hetairos* who had most supported his plans shows clearly that it was Babylon that Alexander considered as the center of his new empire.

As far as the *hetairoi* are concerned, one can conclude that they were integrated into the framework of power, whether as satraps or military commanders or in other roles demanded by the occasion. It is true that there was no external threat to the empire, yet the transition from the Achaemenid to Macedonian power was anything but easy. For the transition, the banquet played a pivotal role as a central place for the exchange of gifts, which exemplifies the reciprocity so essential to the Persian system of benefaction (Wiesehöfer 1980: 8–11, 17–18). Moreover, an important part of the transition was Alexander's conduct toward the *poleis* in Greece and Asia Minor, in whose internal affairs he intervened massively with the decree regarding the repatriation of the exiles (D.S. 18.8; Wiemer 2005: 160–4; Zahrnt 2003; see below Poddighe, ch. 6).

Alexander could fall back on the administrative structures of the Achaemenids in much stronger measure than before. They were all the more necessary since the empire, with its immense expansion, demanded a high level of organization (Koch 1990: 217–18; Klinkott 2000). This was true, as well, for the royal chancellery and the royal treasury, whose resources served not only for the exhibition of wealth, but

also for the financing of new enterprises, such as the planned Arabian campaign (Koch 1990: 235ff.).

### **Balance: Factors of the Evolution**

There are differences and commonalities in the two phases described above, and in how the court and court society represented itself. The courtly interaction between Alexander and the aristocracy in the first phase is characterized by an attempt to accommodate different groups. Alexander was still greatly dependent on Macedonian tradition. His behavior toward the inner circle was characterized by friendship and intelligent calculation, which gave individuals influence without their own families becoming a threatening factor. At the end of Alexander's life the Macedonian aristocracy around him was more homogeneous. Nevertheless, it had to accept a "strengthening" from the Persian elite. Opportunistic behavior increased, especially after all attempts at resistance to the king failed and there was no alternative for Greeks or Macedonians – nor even the Persians – in his entourage except collaboration. Numerous reports (despite their anecdotal character) of intrigue at the court, including men who were in his confidence, reflect the high potential for conflict in such relationships. The concentration around the king had not revealed, at least at Alexander's death, the delegation of power as a structural weakness. Alexander's circle was not ordered in fixed ranks except for the Achaemenid structures to which Hephaestion's official position belonged. This followed not least from the circumstance that the representation of ruler and court served not only exorbitantly the integrative self-depiction of the ruling society, but also enabled the collaborators to depict themselves within it without touching the actual leading role – the king was without an alternative. At first, the representation proceeded in the rather modest ways of the Macedonians and carried with it a minimum of ornate ceremony, overlaid with the outward appearance of equality within the elite. For feasts of greater dimensions, one had to call upon auxiliary constructions. Achaemenid traditions brought new qualities and dimensions to the ceremonial matters. The representation of the ruling society to different groups of subjects played a decisive role. Exhibitions of immense wealth in quantity and quality took on a special significance. The tradition of a certain intellectual style of the court society, which in the meanwhile was established in Macedonia, found no parallel in its Persian counterpart (Briant 1996: 339–42; *HPE* 327–30; van der Spek 2003).

Since the administrative and military threads run together in the court, it also served to secure power. The lack of institutions competing with the court meant there was neither an alternative to it nor a threat. Neither were there threats from the population of a capital city, as occurred in the later Hellenistic empires. The assumption of the corresponding Achaemenid organizational units made the practical change easier. With the passing of time, Greek and Macedonian affairs became less interesting and were displaced by current demands and future plans.

Under Alexander the Great there was a convergence of Macedonian and Achaemenid traditions in the monarchy. This assimilation was consciously orchestrated; it was throughout a carefully measured experiment and, above all, a selective one. The basic receptivity to the "other" led to something new, which was individually tailored for Alexander. Its character is not least recognizable by the fact that Alexander's successors gave up many of its elements again. The unity of extreme opposites, which are represented at different levels in the persons and attitudes of Hephaestion and Craterus, was possible only in the person of Alexander himself.

On the other hand, Alexander was successful in organizing the composition of his circle in a way that furthered his goals and supported *his* cause with all its strength and considerable abilities at different levels. This implied more than a mere exchange of individuals: it had its foundations in the composition of courtly structures that were decisively fostered by Philip and in changes introduced by Alexander.

The self-reinforcing tendencies of war and military success, resolutely fostered by allies such as Hephaestion and Craterus, combined with continuous military campaigns, allowed the elite to become a "closed society." All participants were completely cut off from other links (such as the Macedonian homeland) and were closely attached to each other in their administrative and military duties. It is true that this ruling society was not hermetically sealed, but in essence its members kept to themselves. The almost permanent state of exception, which became the daily life of the court, is symbolized best by the tent of the king, which only at the end of Alexander's life was replaced by fixed structures and nevertheless was still in use (von Hesberg 1996: 89). The "itinerant court" distinguished itself from the static residence not because the circle of persons who were present or the range of actions which started there were different. Alexander's "itinerant court" lacked fixed structures in the periphery. He ran out of time to establish them in Mesopotamia.