

Studies in
Ancient
Monarchies

The Legitimation of Conquest

Monarchical Representation and
the Art of Government in the
Empire of Alexander the Great

Edited by Kai Trampedach
and Alexander Meeus

Ancient History

Franz Steiner Verlag





Studies in Ancient Monarchies

Edited by

ULRICH GOTTER (Konstanz), NINO LURAGHI (Oxford)
und KAI TRAMPEDACH (Heidelberg)

Volume 7

The Legitimation of Conquest
*Monarchical Representation
and the Art of Government in the Empire
of Alexander the Great*

Edited by
Kai Trampedach and Alexander Meeus

Franz Steiner Verlag

Gedruckt mit freundlicher Unterstützung der Fritz Thyssen Stiftung

Umschlagabbildungen:

Links: King Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. Stone panel, ca. 728 BCE.

From the Central Palace in Nimrud, now in the British Museum.

© akg / Bible Land Pictures

Mitte: Emperor Justinian. Mosaic, ca. 540 CE. Church of San Vitale, Ravenna.

© akg / Bildarchiv Steffens

Rechts: Alexander the Great at the Battle of Issos. Mosaic, ca. 100 BCE.

From the Casa del Fauno, Pompeii, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.

© akg / Nimatallah

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek:

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über

<<http://dnb.d-nb.de>> abrufbar.

Dieses Werk einschließlich aller seiner Teile ist urheberrechtlich geschützt.

Jede Verwertung außerhalb der engen Grenzen des Urheberrechtsgesetzes

ist unzulässig und strafbar.

© Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2020

Druck: Beltz Grafische Betriebe, Bad Langensalza

Gedruckt auf säurefreiem, alterungsbeständigem Papier.

Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-515-12781-3 (Print)

ISBN 978-3-515-12783-7 (E-Book)

CONTENTS

Preface	7
Introduction: Understanding Alexander's Relations with His Subjects	9
<i>Kai Trampedach / Alexander Meeus</i>	
I SELF-PRESENTATION AND ROYAL PERSONA	
1 From Early On To Become A Hero ('Held'): Mythical Models of Alexander's Image and Biography	21
<i>Tonio Hölscher</i>	
2 Staging Charisma: Alexander and Divination	45
<i>Kai Trampedach</i>	
3 Alexander and Athletics or How (Not) To Use a Traditional Field of Monarchic Legitimation	61
<i>Christian Mann</i>	
4 Violence and Legitimation: The Social Logic of Alexander the Great's Acts of Violence between the Danube and the Indus – A Conceptual Outline and a Case Study	77
<i>Matthias Haake</i>	
II LOCAL PERSPECTIVES AND INTERACTIONS	
5 Alexander's Dedications to the Gods: Sacred Space, Pious Practice and Public Legitimation	99
<i>Ralf von den Hoff</i>	
6 Communication and Legitimation: Knowledge of Alexander's Asian Conquests in the Greek World	123
<i>Shane Wallace</i>	
7 Legitimation – Unwitting and Unrequested: Alexander of Macedon's Portrayal as Devine Tool in Zechariah 9	145
<i>Wilhelm Köhler</i>	

8	Wooing the Victor with Words: Babylonian Priestly Literature as a Response to the Macedonian Conquest	165
	<i>Michael Jursa</i>	
9	Shaping the New World: Once More On the Cities of Alexander	179
	<i>Maurizio Giangiulio</i>	
III ADMINISTRATION AND INSTITUTIONS		
10	Alexander, the King of the Macedonians	197
	<i>Manuela Mari</i>	
11	On the Titulature of Alexander the Great: The Title <i>basileus</i>	219
	<i>Maxim M. Kholod</i>	
12	Alexander the Great and Asia Minor: Conquest and Strategies of Legitimation	243
	<i>Michele Faraguna</i>	
13	Alexander's Tributary Empire	263
	<i>Andrew Monson</i>	
IV EPILOGUES		
14	The Strategies of Legitimation of Alexander and the Diadochoi: Continuities and Discontinuities	291
	<i>Alexander Meeus</i>	
15	Concluding Remarks	319
	<i>Hans-Joachim Gehrke</i>	
	Abbreviations	325
	Bibliography	326
	Contributors	364

PREFACE

With one exception the papers in this volume originate in the conference ‘Alexander’s Empire: The Legitimation of Conquest’ which was held at the Villa Vigoni (Menaggio, Italy) on May 10–12, 2018. We would like to express our gratitude to the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung, whose financial support made the conference possible, and to the Villa Vigoni staff for the excellent atmosphere and the efficient logistical support. We would also like to thank Maxim Kholod for his help in the planning stage as well as those present at the preparatory workshop in Heidelberg in July 2016. To all those who participated in the conference as speaker or chair we are most grateful for their contribution to a successful conference with excellent papers, engaging debates and lively discussions.

A debt of gratitude is also owed to those who have assisted us in the editorial process: Simon Schall helped editing the general bibliography, Martina Trampedach revised the final manuscript with an expert eye, and Leonard Keidel (Heidelberg) worked assiduously in typesetting this book. Finally, we would like to thank Lindsay Holman and the Ancient World Mapping Center for efficiently delivering quick and excellent work in difficult times.

Kai Trampedach & Alexander Meeus
Heidelberg – Mannheim, February 2020

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING ALEXANDER'S RELATIONS WITH HIS SUBJECTS

Kai Trampedach / Alexander Meeus

MONARCHIC LEGITIMATION AND ITS AUDIENCES

Within a single decade (334–325 BC) Alexander III of Macedon conquered a gigantic landmass extending from Asia Minor to Central Asia and India. As was made clear from the beginning through symbolic and administrative acts, he did not aim for ephemeral loot, but for the establishment of permanent rule.¹ The main questions of the present volume result from this basic observation: How did Alexander try to achieve this goal? Did he try to legitimate his conquests, and if so, by which means? In which ways did he motivate his officers and soldiers despite enormous strain and hardship to endure ever more fighting and conquests far from home? Why did the army obey and follow its king ever further to the East? As these questions indicate, in our view it is not self-evident but needs explanation that the Macedonians and other soldiers who had already secured a great deal of booty followed Alexander as far as India.² We suggest that answers to the questions raised above are presumably to be found in the fields of both representation and administration, or in other words in Alexander's symbolic performances as well as in his economic, administrative and religious measures.

The underlying conception of our book is heavily influenced by the *Herrschaftssoziologie* of Max Weber. In this respect we follow a famous example: in 1982, Hans-Joachim Gehrke wrote a programmatic article in which he most convincingly rejected all attempts to describe hellenistic kingship with the categories of constitutional law. Referring to Max Weber, he investigated not the legality but rather the legitimacy of monarchical rule. Gehrke established that within the Weberian framework Alexander and his successors should be regarded almost as incarnations of the charismatic type of domination.³ This interpretation is still very

1 See e.g. BOSWORTH 1988a, 229.

2 Cf. the Macedonian desire to return home after the death of Dareios: Diod. 17.74.3; Curt. 6.2.15–4.2; BOSWORTH 1988a, 97: 'the opposition had been serious and it was to gather momentum over the next years'. See recently BRICE 2015; ROISMAN 2015.

3 See GOTTER 2008, 176. We write 'almost' because, as GEHRKE 2013b, 76 (=1982, 251–252) himself already emphasised, Weber's ideal types 'are abstracted from the social and political reality, in which they do not appear in pure form. Rather, the elements that characterize each type are combined with one another in the most diverse ways and proportions'. Cf. also FLAIG 2019,

influential and stimulating as is proven by fact that most studies assembled here directly or indirectly refer to it. But as research continued it became clear that we need to qualify and specify the charismatic character of Alexander's domination as well as the traditional and rational aspects of it.

Two findings of Max Weber are fundamental in this regard: first, the distinction between power ('Macht') and domination ('Herrschaft'),⁴ which invite us to analyse how (military) power developed into (political) domination. Which means did Alexander apply in order to transform the many countries which he victoriously crossed with his army into areas of domination? Weber's second fundamental finding is, in consequence, that the nature of domination should be defined by the dominated: 'every genuine form of domination', he states, 'implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience' or 'a belief in legitimacy'. Correspondingly, Weber continues, every system of domination 'attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy'.⁵ These definitions may need some qualification:

1) From this quotation alone it should already be clear that Max Weber construes his terms – as he emphasises throughout his work – in a value-free sense ('wertfrei'): it is thus a descriptive concept of legitimacy, not a normative one, which would be useless in an attempt to understand ancient phenomena on their own terms.⁶

2) In using the term 'legitimacy' ('Legitimität') Weber does not mean that the domination of the king and, eventually, his dynasty is untouchable or that it is dependent on constitutional procedure (like in some medieval, early modern or modern Western European monarchies) but he focuses on the dispositions that make the ruled obey their rulers. Yet, obedience will never simply be granted, but always depends on the expectations of the subjects, which differ according to the cultural and historical circumstances and which can be disappointed as well as fulfilled.⁷

3) Legitimacy in the Weberian sense is not a fixed quality, but needs constant communication and possibly occasional direct interaction. Hence, we prefer to use

63–64. Accordingly, Alexander's legitimation contained elements of traditional and rational domination too.

4 M. WEBER 1978, 53: '*Power (Macht)* is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests. *Domination (Herrschaft)* is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons'.

5 M. WEBER 1978, 212–214.

6 For the difference between descriptive and normative legitimacy, see PETER 2017, §1.

7 FLAIG 2019, 67. Flaig, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, prefers the term 'acceptance' as equivalent to the Weberian 'legitimacy'; see also GOTTER 2008, 180 and PETER 2017, §1: 'Weber distinguishes among three main sources of legitimacy – understood as the acceptance both of authority and of the need to obey its commands'. We use the terms 'acceptance' and 'legitimation' interchangeably. MONSON, this volume argues against the equivalence of the terms since he considers acceptance a fundamentally weaker relationship between ruler and subject than legitimacy (even on Weberian terms). This weaker relationship consisting mostly of the inability to resist a ruler may, however, more appropriately be called acquiescence: cf. PETER 2017, §1.

the term ‘legitimation’ to indicate the communicative processes from both sides, the rulers and the ruled. Regarding the ruler’s perspective we cannot explain our approach better than in the words of Rodney Barker:

What is not always noticed is that Weber is talking not about some abstract quality, ‘legitimacy’, but about an observable activity in which governments characteristically engage, the making of claims. This activity is mentioned by Weber as part of a definition of the state. What characterises government, in other words, is not the possession of a quality defined as legitimacy, but the claiming, the activity of legitimation.⁸

4) Because charisma is by nature transgressive, it is not suitable as a foundation for legitimacy in the traditional/normative, non-Weberian sense, but destroys it.⁹ Yet, for Weber the demonstration and performance of charisma constitute a very effective strategy of legitimation – albeit depending on the audience – serving to highlight the superhuman achievements of the leader. While the various peoples in Alexander’s empire had different conceptions of kingship, for all of them the ideal ruler was expected to possess a series of virtues: in the Greek and Macedonian context, for instance, the king had to display ἀρετή, victoriousness, personal bravery, beauty, generosity, μεγαλοψυχία.¹⁰ These qualities which proved the charisma of the heroic king did not necessarily imply moral greatness.¹¹

Most papers in this volume agree that Alexander strove for the legitimation of his rule.¹² Whatever Alexander’s claim to legitimacy may have been, however, we may further ask what were or what could have been reasons for an ‘interest in obedience’ or a ‘belief in legitimacy’ for the conquered peoples of Asia, the Greek world, or the Macedonian army. In our opinion neither brute force nor money, booty and privileges would suffice as answers: first because the empire of Alexander was far too big to keep the threat of violence present always and everywhere, and secondly because social agents in general, we suppose, are at least as much motivated by a certain code of honour or traditional expectations about leadership as by material interests.¹³ Moreover, local elites such as the priesthood of Jerusalem or Babylon

⁸ BARKER 2001, 2.

⁹ See MONSON, in this volume. He is definitely correct that justice plays a role in Greek conceptions of legitimacy, but this is not the whole story. At any rate, one must not simply equate justice and legitimacy, even on a prescriptive approach: doing so has been described as ‘misplaced political moralism’: PETER 2017, §1, quoting Bernard Williams.

¹⁰ See e.g. Xen. *An.* 1.9; Arist. *Pol.* 3.17, 5.10–11; Polyb. 4.77.2–4, 10.49, 11.34.15, 18.41.5–7; Diod. 19.90–92. Cf. ROY 1998; BESTON 2000; CHANIOTIS 2005, 57–77; LENDON 2007, 115–155; MEISSNER 2007.

¹¹ See HÖLSCHER, this volume, p. 22–23: “An ancient hero as such is neither ‘good’ nor noble, and not even successful, neither setting examples nor norms of ideal character or behaviour – he is just in an elementary sense ‘great’: exceeding the normal measure of mankind, acting and suffering in super-human dimensions.”

¹² Though see the rather different view of MONSON.

¹³ Cf. *infra*, n. 18, and e.g. Polyb. 22.8.10–13; Diod. 18.62.4–5, where only Teutamos amongst a large number of Macedonians prefers money over loyalty to the Argead cause.

obviously had their own ideological reasons to proclaim the legitimacy of the new ruling power.¹⁴ Of course, this is not to deny that the process of conquest was a matter of brute force, and that the maintenance of empire will have required force too, but this aspect has received ample attention in recent years.¹⁵ In order to illuminate our questions about legitimation the focus in this book is a different one, even with regard to violence, as can be seen in a paper which reflects on ‘the social logic of Alexander’s acts of violence’: in many situations choices were to be made about whether or not to apply violence and if so, in what way.¹⁶

The army could and did protest,¹⁷ or even refuse obedience. We know of several instances of military unrest during the reign of Alexander and of his successors that were not caused by missing pay but by the feeling of dishonour on the part of the soldiery, most famously at Opis in 324.¹⁸ Therefore, reasons for the willingness to obey other than force and money should be identified.¹⁹ It is obvious that, in the wide-ranging and heterogeneous empire of Alexander, answers depend on the cultural, ethnic, or social position of the groups or individuals one is focusing on. Necessarily, then, the activity of legitimation is to be related to the question of addressees: Whose acceptance did Alexander seek to gain and in which way? Which effect did he achieve in each case with which recipients or audiences? Basically one may distinguish four audiences as potentially relevant for the king on his campaign in Asia: 1) the Macedonians at home whose sons, siblings or husbands who served – and potentially died – on the Asian campaign as well as their king were absent for a length of time never seen before;²⁰ 2) the distant Greek public which was to accept Macedonian hegemony in Greece; 3) the immediately present public of the army, subdivided into the groups of (a) the friends and companions of the king and the higher officers, and (b) the other soldiers and the camp followers; both groups together constantly had to be convinced of Alexander’s ability as a leader and the feasibility of the campaign; and 4) the respective indigenous elites whose countries Alexander just passed through or left behind as conquered territories and whose interest in obedience Alexander had to promote in order to reduce the costs of domination.

14 See the articles of KÖHLER and JURSA in this volume. The same may apply to the Egyptian priests: cf. S. PFEIFFER 2014.

15 Most vividly spelled out by BOSWORTH 1996; see also several articles in BADIAN 2012.

16 See HAAKE, this volume, who understands violence as a calculated instrument of Alexander’s legitimation activity.

17 Alexander took bad press within the army very seriously, because he feared *ne haec opinio etiam in Macedoniam divulgaretur et victoriae gloria saevitiae macula infuscaretur* (Just. *epit.* 12.5.4; cf. Diod. 17.80.4; Curt. 7.2.35–38). His reputation was obviously very important to him.

18 Arr. 7.8.2, Plut. *Alex.* 71.1, Just. *Epit.* 12.11.6. Cf. *supra*, n. 2.

19 Cf. recently also CARNEY 2015 on dynastic loyalty in Macedonia.

20 CARNEY 2015, 152 with further references on the potential effect of Alexander’s absence and the Macedonian casualties of the Asian campaign. For a somewhat different perspective, though, see MEEUS 2009a. Most evidence relates to the period after Alexander’s death, however, and memories of the king might have been more fond than sentiments during his life.

We believe that apart from the military dimension the formation and existence of Alexander's empire can be understood best from the mutual relationship between the king and these different audiences.²¹ In addressing these groups through different means (e.g. mythopoiesis, divination, athletics, violence, dedications, refoundation of sanctuaries, titulature, administrative continuity, city foundations, finance) Alexander applied strategies of legitimation.²² Lane Fox has recently criticized a similar approach for 'writ[ing] (...) as if Alexander and his officers were running a "propaganda" machine of East European proportions, in which Alexander was engaged in the "creation of belief"'.²³ Of course, no such pervasive propaganda was even possible in antiquity, but that did not prevent ancient rulers from exploiting those means of representation and communication that they did have at their disposal.

CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN ALEXANDER'S STRATEGIES OF LEGITIMATION

Questions of continuity and discontinuity open up a complex and multi-layered problem, whilst also putting the difficulty of some of the choices Alexander had to make in a clearer perspective. Conflicting interests constantly needed to be taken into account both with regard to the different levels of politics – royal persona, grand strategy, and administration – and to the different audiences that needed to be addressed – Greeks, Macedonians, and conquered peoples. The interplay between the different levels and audiences often made it impossible to reconcile all of these interests.

In matters of administration – often probably the least sensitive ones – Alexander seems to have followed in Philip's footsteps in Greek or Macedonian contexts, whilst taking over many Achaimenid practices in Asia.²⁴ He may, however, have split up satrapal competences in new ways.²⁵ Such a policy made obvious practical sense: Philip had already made significant reforms in many aspects of the state to match Macedon's ambitions, and in other respects there was no need to change what was working well. Of course, the duration of the campaign and the absence from the

21 In attempting to pursue this question in a systematic manner, we hope to contribute to opening up new perspectives on the reign of Alexander and move beyond the stalemate that has sometimes been observed – albeit perhaps with some degree of exaggeration – by outsiders to the field: e.g. DAVIDSON 2001; BEARD 2011.

22 To name most of the topics that are discussed in this volume. One may add issues like economy and infrastructure, cf. LANE FOX 2007, 293: 'Improving an under-exploited and cumbersome East was already part of the Alexander-histories, because it was part of Alexander's own outlook and self-image'. Or see with regard to the scientific exploration related to conquest: GEHRKE 2011.

23 LANE FOX 2018b, 204, criticising BOSWORTH 1996.

24 See the contributions by MARI, FARAGUNA, and MONSON.

25 BOSWORTH 1988a, 229–241.

homeland also created the need for new practices, or more intense use of older ones, such as the remarkably frequent campaign *agones* to boost the troops' morale, and perhaps also to compensate that the king could not preside over the games held in Dion.²⁶ Another such difference may be that Greek *theoroi* no longer simply invited the Macedonian king to their festivals, but traveled to several Macedonian cities to invite these.²⁷

In his grand strategy Alexander continued what had been started by his father Philip, who had in turn connected himself to a longstanding Greek tradition with the theme of revenge for the Persian Wars in the Korinthian League. Yet especially after the death of Dareios it could be difficult to combine anti-Persian sentiment with his claims to the kingdom of Asia. The dominant theme for the League of Korinth could be restyled as Greek freedom rather than anti-Persian revenge without insulting anyone.²⁸ When Alexander felt he needed to introduce *proskynesis* in order to maintain the respect of his Asian subjects and courtiers,²⁹ however, he seems to have underestimated the sensitivities in his Graeco-Macedonian entourage. In his use of the royal title, on the other hand, which may also have been connected to his claims in Asia,³⁰ he could be more flexible, as it was easier to adjust his practice to the relevant audience in any given situation. In the ideal case traditions turned out to be compatible, for instance with royal banquets which had existed in Argead Macedon and in the Persian Empire, and Alexander could continue both practices at once without much changes being required.³¹ At the same time, anti-Achaimenid resentment does not seem to have been limited to the Greeks. While removing the Achaimenid dynasty was a drastic transformation that perhaps did not please many Persians, other peoples such as Babylonians and Jews may have welcomed the change represented by this Macedonian king of Asia.³²

In a bottom-up process such as early Hellenistic ruler cult seems to have been,³³ the differences between groups of subjects are even more relevant – for obvious reasons: while Greek *poleis* offered cult to Philip and Alexander as a means of 'coming to grips' with the new phenomenon of royal power, to date no such cult during the lifetime of a king has been attested amongst the Macedonians themselves.³⁴ On the current evidence, in the time of Philip the practice appears to have been limited

26 See MANN, this volume.

27 RAYNOR 2016, 250–251.

28 PODDIGHE 2009, 116.

29 For *proskynesis* as an expression of social hierarchy, see MATARESE 2013.

30 Thus KHOLOD, this volume, but see also the different view in MARI's contribution.

31 MARI 2018c, 305–309. Another example seems to have been his divine descent from Zeus Ammon which was useful to Alexander in his dealings with Greeks and Macedonians as well as with Egyptians despite its different meanings for both audiences: see BOSCH-PUCHE 2014, 95–98.

32 JURSA and KÖHLER, this volume; cf. HARRISON 2011, 51–55, 73–90.

33 See recently e.g. ERSKINE 2014; O'SULLIVAN 2017.

34 MARI, this volume, quoting John Ma; cf. also JIM 2017.

to the new lands of the Macedonian kingdom, whilst it spread to the wider Greek world only under Alexander, perhaps first to Asia minor and then to southern areas of the Greek mainland – but it always remained a practice of the Greek *poleis*.³⁵ Continuity and innovation under Alexander here becomes a question of geography: a political phenomenon originating with Philip is taken to places where it is an innovation under Alexander.

This difference between Greek *poleis* incorporated in the Macedonian kingdom and those in the south is just one example of the evident fact that none of Alexander's audiences could be taken as monolithic blocks:³⁶ the theme of revenge against the Persians, much as he tried to impress it on the Athenians (cf. *infra*), may not have had much effect with them, but was very well-received in other Greek *poleis*.³⁷ It is perhaps in order to respond better to such local differences that Alexander's major dedications were not made in the great panhellenic sanctuaries, but rather in individual *poleis* (Athens, Priene, ...) or sanctuaries of a more local significance (e.g. Dion). This allowed him both to differentiate his messages and to create stronger bonds with the communities he singled out as recipients. Both aspects are being revealed particularly clearly by the dedication of enemy armour from the battle of the Granikos at Athens rather than Delphi or Olympia: of course he did so in part because of the Persian destruction of the Akropolis in 480, but it was also a way to honour the Athenians and to try and convince them that his panhellenic ideals were genuine.³⁸ This did set him apart from his father Philip who was much more strongly involved with both Delphi and Olympia.³⁹ Another way in which Alexander was very present at the local level was the way in which he inscribed his name in the landscape of central Asia by means of city foundations, as Philip had done in Thrace.⁴⁰ Likewise, when Alexander had Batis, the commander of Gaza, dragged to death after the siege, this may have seemed like a horrible and virtually unprecedented action to southern Greeks, whereas for northern Greeks like the Thessalians it was perhaps just the continuation of a traditional practice.⁴¹

With his royal persona Alexander seems to have striven for uniqueness, projecting a superhuman image of a man who could only be compared to the heroes of old, had a close relationship to the gods and did not need to boost his prestige by human means like athletic victory. Whether or not Alexander believed this himself, it is at any rate the way he wished to be seen, as is revealed for instance by his uncommon

35 Alleged divine honours for Philip in Athens are probably unhistorical: BADIAN 2012, 269–273.

36 Furthermore, their reactions may have been situationally determined, cf. CARNEY 2015, 148: 'Individuals or groups may demonstrate loyalty in one context but not another; feelings may fluctuate rapidly'.

37 WALLACE, this volume.

38 See both VON DEN HOFF and WALLACE about the dedication after Gaugamela.

39 See VON DEN HOFF, this volume, on the Philippeion; cf. MEEUS, this volume, 300–301.

40 See GIANGIULIO, this volume.

41 HAAKE, this volume.

appearance, his *imitatio Achillis*, and his charismatic use of divination.⁴² Adopting such an extreme and exceptional persona was surely a strategy that entailed great risks, but if effective it could also yield high benefits: it proved that Alexander was more suitable than anyone for holding a level of power hitherto unseen in the Greek world.⁴³

Another question is how Alexander's unprecedented financial means after the death of Dareios influenced his policy. One possibility is that they would have enhanced Alexander's power to such an extent as to have freed him from any need for legitimation,⁴⁴ but on the other hand they enormously increased the amounts he could spend on benefactions or on games for his soldiers, to name just two examples. It is surely remarkable that after 328 Alexander no longer saw the need for the charismatic exploitation of divination – or did this just not work without Aristandros? While it is questionable whether the latter was the only sufficiently charismatic seer in Alexander's entourage, it seems inconceivable that he could not have found anyone to replace Kallisthenes as court historian.⁴⁵ Other strategies, however, were continued: city foundations, games, benefactions, use of the royal title, heroic self-fashioning, and many others.⁴⁶

SOURCES, CONCEPTS AND METHODS

Studying Alexander's strategies of legitimation is often a delicate affair, since we strongly depend on late evidence for so many aspects of Alexander's career. This is one reason why epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological material frequently plays a central role in the present volume. The literary sources, however, remain of crucial importance and – without denying their inherent problems – several contributors object to hypercriticism and minimalism in interpreting them, as such an attitude would exclude that certain questions about Alexander's career can be asked at all. Thus, rather than dismissing for instance all Homeric references as literary constructs of the preserved sources, it is important to take into account how strongly

42 See esp. the contributions by HÖLSCHER, TRAMPEDACH, and MANN.

43 Perhaps this conception was inspired by Aristotle: see esp. *Pol.* 1.5.2 and 7.13.1: 'If then it were the case that the one class [rulers] differed from the other [subjects] as widely as we believe the gods and heroes to differ from mankind, having first a great superiority in regard to the body and then in regard to the soul, so that the pre-eminence of the rulers was indisputable and manifest to the subjects, it is clear that it would be better for the same persons always to be rulers and subjects once for all' (trans. RACKHAM). Cf. also *Pol.* 3.8.7, 3.11.12–13, 7.3.4, where the greater focus on virtue and justice need not be a counter-argument: Alexander need not have agreed with Aristotle in every respect (see also n. 10 above).

44 Thus MONSON, this volume.

45 See the contributions by TRAMPEDACH and WALLACE.

46 Cf. BOSWORTH 1996, 98, on Alexander being 'isolated from his own headquarters and the coterie of Greek intellectuals which had followed him to Central Asia' during his campaigns in the far east.

the Greek worldview was determined by Homer, and how much meaning Homeric references may have had in the real world of Alexander and his subjects and allies.⁴⁷ In the same vein, one could explain the campaign *agones* in Arrian's *Anabasis* as a feature of the author's own interaction with his model Xenophon, but those few occasions on which his indications are confirmed by other sources reveal that this will not do. Arrian's imitation of Xenophon – as well as the fact that he is our most detailed source – may well have played a role in his decision to report the *agones*, but that does not make them irrelevant as a feature of Alexander's campaign that can and needs to be explained.⁴⁸

Besides these often untangible aspects of the mental world of Alexander and his contemporaries, space was also put to ideological use, as several contributions to this volume reveal: in setting up dedications, donating land, settling boundaries, and founding cities Alexander put his imprint on private, political, and sacred space.⁴⁹ Here and in so many other aspects of his communication Alexander had a wide array of different media at his disposal for his political communication and monarchical representation: any objects that could be dedicated to the gods, historiography, letters, architecture, coins, and even his personal appearance to name just some examples. At the same time, in certain cases he seems to have avoided mediality, for instance in the field of agonistics: as central as this had always been in Greek political self-presentation, Alexander seems to have had no desire to participate in the panhellenic games and broadcast his victories or even in founding new festivals named after himself. He merely organised occasional games for others to compete in.

Likewise, it becomes all the more clear that Alexander's actions cannot simply be considered in isolation but were always part of his public role and persona, and that understanding his deeds and behaviour requires more contextualising and less of a character driven approach to the study of his reign.⁵⁰ The relevant question – and the one that can be answered – is thus for instance not so much Alexander's religiosity, but the religious persona he wished his subjects to see, regardless of personal belief. That does not mean, however, that such instrumentalisation of his religious persona must preclude genuine religious belief on Alexander's behalf: these are by no means mutually exclusive.⁵¹ This realisation allows us to move beyond such polar opposites as rationality and irrationality: without claiming that Alexander's every move was rational and calculated – the murder of Kleitos surely proves

47 See esp. the contributions by HÖLSCHER and TRAMPEDACH.

48 See MANN, this volume, with the table on p. 65–66.

49 See esp. VON DEN HOFF, WALLACE, GIANGIULIO, and FARAGUNA. KÖHLER shows how the existing conceptions of space of the conquered peoples could likewise play a role in the way they perceived Alexander.

50 See HAAKE, p. 81 with reference to HOWE 2016, 177.

51 See TRAMPEDACH (esp. n. 12) and VON DEN HOFF.

the opposite – many of his actions may have been more deliberate than their apparent irrationality might *prima facie* suggest.⁵²

It would thus seem that Alexander was very much in control of his public persona, and this raises the question whether Alexander and his staff were particularly successful not only thanks to their military talents but also by virtue of their communication skills and their capacity to cater to the expectations of their audiences. It is this question that the following contributions aim to answer.

52 See e.g. HAAKE, this volume, on extreme violence.

I

SELF-PRESENTATION AND ROYAL PERSONA

FROM EARLY ON TO BECOME A HERO ('HELD'): MYTHICAL MODELS OF ALEXANDER'S IMAGE AND BIOGRAPHY*

Tonio Hölscher

THE QUEST FOR ALEXANDER'S 'GREATNESS'

Alexander III of Macedonia, as a historical figure, significantly exceeded the dimensions of the classical Greek concept of human beings: this was endorsed by posterity through granting him the epithet 'the Great'. By his 'greatness' he followed the heroes of myth in many respects: this was universally remarked in historical accounts. In particular, he traced his descent back to Herakles from his father's side and to Achilles from his mother's, and moreover presented himself as the son of Zeus: this is clearly attested by ancient authors.¹ Modern scholars hold very diverse views about the significance of these manifestations of Alexander, and have expressed very diverging judgements on his general historical role, reaching from a rational army leader to a heroic conqueror, from a great founder of culture to a ferocious destroyer. In particular, controversies have arisen about the impact of Homeric heroism on Alexander's personality, behaviour, and achievements.² The intention of the following considerations is not to resume these old discussions on Alexander's references to specific heroes of myth but to widen the horizon of the question: first, by a reflection on categories of heroism in antiquity, and secondly, by a shift of the perspective from Alexander's punctual manifestations to the general conceptualisation of his public persona and role. In this way one might get a better understanding of how deeply rooted and how comprehensively conceived these references to the figures of myth were in Alexander's mind, and how early this

* My thanks go to Alexander Meeus and Kai Trampedach for numerous bibliographical indications, to Alexander Meeus also for the correction of my English text. Moreover, I am grateful to Matthias Haake and Andrew Monson, my respondents at the Villa Vigoni conference, for helpful criticism and stimulating questions.

1 Herakles: HUTTNER 1997, 86–123. – Achilles: AMELING 1988; A. COHEN 1995; VON DEN HOFF 1997. – Zeus: BOSWORTH 1988a, 282–284. – In general on Alexander's claims to heroism and divinity: BOSWORTH 1988a, 278–290.

2 Recent positive voices: LENDON 2005, 115–139; GEHRKE 2013a. – Critical: HECKEL 2015; MAITLAND 2015.

self-image was formed, i.e. whether he started his war against the Persian Empire from the beginning with such far-reaching ambitions, or conceived his role in such dimensions only after his first victorious battles against the Persian Empire and the Great King.³ Behind this specific issue the general question arises as to how far such ideal (or ideological) concepts should be understood either as the results of previous real historical situations and experiences or as efficient and powerful agents in historical reality. The following contribution will argue in favour of the early origins of Alexander's claims to heroic status.⁴ Regarding the intensity of Alexander's reference to the heroes of myth it is essential to ask how far he conceived of himself as their genealogical descendant, or rather compared himself and his historical feats with their mythical deeds, or else considered himself a hero of his own, equivalent to them. In order to approach these questions, two phenomena will be dealt with that do not directly concern these heroes but will lead immediately to Alexander's individual person: on the one hand his appearance, i.e. the concept of his visual self-image, on the other hand the design of his life, i.e. his conceptual biography. Both aspects imply an approach of cultural anthropology, based on literary as well as iconographical testimonies.

For the early stages of Alexander's life, the reliability of the literary sources is notoriously under debate. Without aiming to enter too far into these controversies, the following considerations are based on such testimonies that seem to have some intrinsic plausibility.

THE GREEK CONCEPT OF A HERO AND THE CATEGORIES OF MYTHICAL HEROISATION

As is well known, the concepts of hero and heroism are widely diverging in intercultural comparison. Even within Greek culture there are diverse notions: on the one hand the mighty recipients of religious cult who were venerated as *hērōes*, on the other hand the famous 'heroic' figures of myth, in the German sense of 'Held/Helden', as it is adopted here.⁵ Regarding Alexander, it is important to note, contrary to current assumptions, that ancient heroes, even the mythical 'Helden', are fundamentally beyond ethical and moral categories. An ancient hero as such is neither 'good' nor noble, and not even successful, neither setting examples nor norms of ideal character or behaviour – he is just in an elementary sense 'great': exceeding

3 For this controversy see e.g.: BOSWORTH 1988a, 19: 'From the outset heroic emulation was an abiding spur to action'; *ibidem* 281: 'There is no evidence for Alexander's early conception of his divine or heroic status'.

4 For a similar view see A. COHEN 1995. The opposite position was forcefully defended at the conference by Andrew Monson.

5 See BURKERT 1977, 312–319; BREMMER 1994, 12–13; BOEHRINGER 2001, 25–46; HIMMELMANN 2009, 7–28, 81–85 and 2010; GEHRKE 2010; MEYER / VON DEN HOFF 2010. Cf. the thoughtful essay on an alternative concept of 'hero' by FINKELBERG 1995.

the normal measure of mankind, acting and suffering in super-human dimensions. This neutral notion of 'greatness' has its equivalent in a value-free concept of glory, *kleos*: what is widely reported.⁶ In this sense heroic figures first of all arouse a sort of value-neutral fascination – which can turn into admiration as well as into fright and horror. However, it would be totally misleading to set off positive and negative aspects against one another since both belong inseparably together. Herakles would not be the greatest culture hero without his horrendous atrocities, Achilles would not be the most glorious war hero without his cruel and bloody furor⁷. The same goes for Alexander who, in his personality as well as in his actions, exceeded the standards and norms of classical *polis* citizens and *polis* states, thus forming his unique historical role. And as with the heroes of the mythical past, this role was not designed to constitute an example for imitation and emulation but to demonstrate his individual uniqueness. Indeed, neither Herakles nor Achilles were general models of ideal behaviour, they were just unique and unreachable figures which only equally ambitious persons could claim as models and equivalents, such as Demetrios Poliorketes, Pompeius, Iulius Caesar, Augustus.⁸ As we shall see, the concept of historical 'greatness', which was established in this sense, kept this absence of ethical categories beyond classical antiquity – as a measure of pure historical energy and power.

The elevation of present-time persons to a sphere of super-human quality always implies, explicitly or implicitly, some reference to the heroes of the mythical past. Such references can be constructed in different ways, implying different strategies of endowing a person with glory, power or legitimacy:⁹

Paradigmatic references. In this strategy the referential mode is comparison. Statesmen or army-leaders take heroes of myth as their model, comparing their own achievements and power with a specific hero's deeds and force. Here, the primary focus is on factual accomplishments and their underlying personal qualities. Such glorifying comparison with figures and achievements of the mythical past was open to all who might plausibly comply with such a claim. In this sense Perikles compared his campaign against Samos with the Trojan war, declaring it even superior to its mythical model. Often, however, such comparisons only refer to single aspects, in the case of the Samian campaign to its military expenditure, without *eo ipso* elevating the protagonist to a mythical level.¹⁰

Genealogical references. Here the referential mode is descent. Noble families trace their origins back to mythical ancestors. Thereby they do not so much insist on unique heroic achievements or exemplary ethical qualities but make a general

6 NAGY 1979, 2013, esp. 26–47.

7 In this sense see also GEHRKE 2010.

8 *Imitatio Alexandri*: MICHEL 1967; KÜHNEN 2000; TROFIMOVA 2012; MOORE 2018; PALAGIA 2018; see now DORKA MORENO 2019.

9 For what follows see already HÖLSCHER 1999. – For a different attempt at categorisation see A. COHEN 1995: *aemulatio, imitatio, comparatio*.

10 Plut. *Per.* 28.

claim to noble rank and social prestige – without elevating the descendants *eo ipso* to the level of mythical heroes. Often such mythical ancestors are not the greatest heroes of the past but those of secondary rank: In Athens not Theseus but Neleus for the Peisistratids, Boutes for the Eteoboutadai, in Rome not Hercules and Aeneas but their sons, Anton for Antonius, Iulus-Ascanius for the Iulii.¹¹ It was above all the great royal dynasties of Sparta and Macedonia that traced their origins back to Herakles himself. Compared with paradigmatic models, genealogical references make a stronger claim for an exclusive relation of an individual family or person to a specific mythical ancestor. Thus, all great generals of the Late Roman Republic venerated Venus in a paradigmatic sense as their victory goddess, but then Julius Caesar claimed her as his genealogical forebear, detracting her from his rivals, and creating a nightmare for Pompey. Likewise, Aeneas had been the founding hero of all Romans, until Julius Caesar promoted him as the forefather of the Iulii.¹²

Local references. Here the referential mode is local succession. The historical Athenians conceived themselves, without claiming a specific genealogical descent, as the successors of the mythical Athenians under the kings Kekrops, Erechtheus, and Theseus. In the same way, Kimon and his co-strategoi were celebrated after their campaign against Eion as worthy successors of king Menestheus, the leader of the Athenian army against Troy. Thereby, again, the historical protagonists were not raised into the sphere of mythical heroes, but here too an exclusive relation to those figures of myth was created which could not be claimed outside of Athens.¹³

References of identity. A much more pretentious claim is made when historical persons pose as re-incarnations of a mythical hero. Already before Alexander the local tyrant Klearchos of Herakleia Pontike presented himself as a son of Zeus, with clothes, attributes and a purple face assimilating him to the father of the gods. Nikostratos, an army-commander in the service of Artaxerxes Ochos, also went to war against Sidon in the attire of Herakles. The physician Menekrates from Syracuse used to dress up as Zeus, surrounded by adherents clothed as Apollon and Hermes.¹⁴ Alexander himself is reported to have appeared at banquets with attributes of Herakles, Hermes, Ammon, and even Artemis.¹⁵ The painter Apelles portrayed him holding the thunderbolt of Zeus, and with the same attribute he is represented on the obverse of the exceptional silver medaillons, with the reverse depicting Alexander's fight against king Poros riding on an elephant.¹⁶ As is well-known, Hellenistic rulers liked to present themselves as a 'New Dionysos' or a 'New Herakles'.

11 See, however, AMELING 1988, 661–664 for non-royal families tracing their origins from great heroes.

12 Venus and Late republican army leaders: SCHILLING 1954, 267–345.

13 Kimon and Eion: Aeschin. 3.183–185. RÜCKERT 1998, 100–103; DI CESARE 2015, 59–70.

14 Klearchos: Souda s.v. Klearchos. – Nikostratos: Diod. 16.44.3. – Menekrates: Ath. 7.289b–c. See WEINREICH 1933, 9–19.

15 Ehippos (*FGrHist* 126) F5.

16 Apelles, Alexander with thunderbolt: Plin. *NH* 35.92. – Poros medaillons: HOLT 2003.

Personal equality. The ultimate referential mode is equivalence. In this sense, present-time protagonists presented themselves as authentic heroes, equal to the heroes of myth in 'greatness'. This strategy was on the one hand particularly risky because it totally depended on the individual person's forcefulness. On the other hand, if it was applied successfully, it could achieve great effects: for all other references quoted above could only be realised through punctual manifestations and achievements, whereas a man's own heroic 'greatness' could be permanently demonstrated in his entire persona, appearance, and *habitus*.

ALEXANDER AND HIS MYTHICAL MODELS

Starting from these categories of reference to the heroes of myth, it may become more precisely understandable 1. which concepts and messages Alexander aimed to express and distribute by his reference to the heroes of myth, 2. whether and to what degree he was unique in doing so, and 3. from what time these concepts shaped his self-conceptualisation as a ruler.

Without doubt, Alexander took Herakles as well as Achilles as paradigmatic models of his own heroic role. Herakles was to him the great hero who had accomplished the most glorious individual deeds, penetrating to the edges of the known world, often getting to the brink of exhaustion and destruction – but in the end gaining the recognition as the son of Zeus and reception among the immortal gods. Achilles, on the other hand, was the radiant model of a youthful hero, phenotypically almost undistinguishable from himself: the central hero of the war against Troy, which Alexander interpreted as the archetypal war of the Greeks against Asia, and in general the war hero par excellence, especially in his combination of raging furor and invincibility. Alexander's fate to follow Achilles also by his early death was of course not intended but was in some respect implied in this extreme concept of a heroic life.

Yet, Herakles as well as the heroes fighting against Troy had already been taken as exemplary models by other statesmen and army-leaders.¹⁷ Therefore it was essential for Alexander to claim both these heroes exclusively as his genealogical forefathers. By doing this, he became unique in a double sense: firstly, while these greatest paradigmatic heroes could be chosen as models also by others, they belonged to him personally through genealogical ties; secondly, while the genealogical ancestors of others were normally heroes of second rank, Alexander claimed for himself the greatest protagonists of the mythical past.

These references to the heroes of myth start early in his life, and they follow a significant structural pattern. The primary intention is to assimilate Alexander to the model of those heroes, but *de facto* the heroes are assimilated to the model of Alexander. In order to appear as pre-figurations of Alexander, the heroes are made

17 Herakles: above n.14. Heroes against Troy: above n.13.

compatible to him in those aspects in which they are meant to appear as his models. It is a reciprocal interrelation in which Alexander is taken as a model of gods and heroes – in order that gods and heroes become the models of Alexander.¹⁸

The head of Herakles appears from the beginning of Alexander's own coinage on the obverse of his tetradrachms, juxtaposed with the seated Zeus on the reverse.¹⁹ Unfortunately, the date of the introduction of these types, either at the beginning of his campaign in 334 or after the battle of Issos in 333 BC, is still controversial. The old debate, however, whether the head wearing a lion's cap depicts Herakles himself or Alexander in the hero's guise, has recently been concluded: it can only represent Herakles himself, as an autonomous mythical figure, in his quality as Alexander's genealogical forefather and paradigmatic model. This reference of Herakles to Alexander remained mostly implicit, presupposing the viewer's knowledge of the king's mythical lineage, but in some specimens, as Martin Dorka Moreno has demonstrated, it was made explicit by raising locks over the hero's forehead, assimilating him to Alexander's *anastole*. These heads too do not portray Alexander as a New Herakles: they depict Herakles with the traits of Alexander, in order to make the present king appear as the reflection of the mythical hero.²⁰

Achilleus became an important point of reference for Alexander early in his life.²¹ His *paidagogos* Lysimachos is reported by Plutarch to have gained favour at court by speaking of Alexander as Achilleus, of his father Philip as Peleus, and of himself as Phoinix. In a period when rulers and military leaders posed in the roles of mythical heroes (see above), and in the atmosphere of the Macedonian court where some years later a statue of the king was carried in a procession among the images of all gods and where Aristotle read the *Iliad* with the young prince, such heroic acclamations are anything but improbable; Plutarch may well have gotten his information from Kallisthenes, a pupil of Aristotle who was a colleague of Lysimachos and an eyewitness of Alexander's education.²² After the death of Philip II, Demosthenes ridiculed Alexander's – obviously well-known – ambitions by calling him a Margites, a parody of the Homeric Achilleus.²³ At the outset of his campaign to Asia Alexander made a programmatic sacrifice at the alleged tomb of Achilleus near Troy; before the battle of Issos he called Thetis, Nereus, and the Nereids for

18 See HÖLSCHER 1971, 43–51.

19 PRICE 1991, esp. I, 85–88; TROXELL 1991; TROXELL 1997; LE RIDER 2007, 8–16; MITTAG 2016, 164–165. The ideological concept of the coins' iconography – Zeus and Herakles on silver, Athena and Nike on gold – is already apparent in Alexander's sacrifice rituals for Zeus, Athena, and Herakles on altars built by him at the European and the Asian side of the Hellespont: Arr. *Anab.* 1.11.7. In my view the mostly accepted date of the beginning of Alexander's coinage after Issos is not yet the last word.

20 DORKA MORENO 2019, 121–140.

21 HECKEL 2015 holds the view that even Arrian presents all anecdotes on Alexander and Achilleus as pure *logoi*; but see *Anab.* 7.14.4, quoted by Heckel himself on p. 24.

22 Plut. *Alex.* 5.5, cf. 24.6–8.

23 Aischin. 3.160; Plut. *Dem.* 23.3; Marsyas (*FGrHist* 135) F3. See LANE FOX 1973, 60–61; below p. 40–41. I owe the reference to this important fact to Kai Trampedach.

help and protection.²⁴ In the visual arts the reciprocal assimilation between Alexander and Achilleus begins somewhat later, around 300 BC: on coins of Larisa Kremaste in Thessaly Achilleus appears, as Ralf von den Hoff has shown, with the *anastole* and long curled locks of Alexander; and the famous statue of the so-called Alexander Rondanini depicts Achilleus putting on his armour, with heroic hairstyle, his head vigorously turned up and his wide open eyes looking into the distance: an ideal brother of Alexander.²⁵ One may add Pompeian paintings of an Alexander-like Achilleus at the court of Lykomedes, setting off for the Trojan war, that are often thought to reproduce an original Greek painting of around 300 BC.²⁶ Achilleus, too, is assimilated to Alexander, in order to appear as Alexander's prefiguration.

IMITATION OF HEROES VERSUS AUTONOMOUS HEROISM

Nevertheless, one may also observe that in the literary sources references from Alexander to Achilleus and Herakles are often not made explicit, not even when they seem to be obvious. When he visited Delphi in order to get a positive prediction for his war campaign against Persia, he is said to have dragged the reluctant Pythia into the temple. To some degree he followed Herakles who allegedly had robbed the Delphic tripod in order to get an oracle from her, but this act was not so much an imitation of but an equivalent to his ancestor's daring deed²⁷. During his campaigns Alexander underwent, like Herakles, immense labours and hardships, like Herakles he penetrated to the 'end of the world', heard of and even ran into the Amazons, and at the point of his final turn back he built twelve towering altars, obviously as counter-parts of the famous 'Columns of Herakles' – but his great mythical prototype is rarely mentioned²⁸. When he conquered the gigantesque rock mountain of Aornos, he even surpassed Herakles who had failed to do so.²⁹ And to extend this series with another model: when Alexander after the death of Dareios captured the usurper Bessos, he is reported to have bent down two trees, tied up his victim and let him be torn into pieces. This is hardly conceivable without thinking of Theseus and Sinis, but again the reference is not made explicit by Plutarch.³⁰

24 Troy, Tomb of Achilleus: Arr. *Anab.* 1.12.1; Plut. *Alex.* 15.4; Diod. 17.17.3. AMELING 1988, 676–679; A. COHEN 1995, 484–485. – Issos: *FGrHist* 148, 44, col. II.

25 Coins of Larisa Kremaste: VON DEN HOFF 1997, 20–22. – Alexander Rondanini: VON DEN HOFF 1997 *passim*.

26 KOSSATZ-DEISSMANN 1981, nr. 54; HÖLSCHER 1971, pl. 9, 1.

27 Plut. *Alex.* 14.4. I am grateful to Kai Trampedach for having pointed out this case to me. The authenticity of this story may be controversial but the lack of an explicit reference to Herakles is significant.

28 Labours and hardships: see Arr. *Anab.* 3.18.6, 20.1, 21.6 etc. For the ideal of heroism see FINKELBERG 1995. – Amazons: Arr. *Anab.* 4.15.4, 7.13.2–6; Plut. *Alex.* 47. – Twelve altars: Arr. *Anab.* 5.29.1–2; Plut. *Alex.* 62.4.

29 Arr. *Anab.* 4.28.1–4, 4.30.4.

30 Plut. *Alex.* 43.

This feature may be understood as an indication that the authors did not so much want to present Alexander as an imitator of specific figures of myth but as a hero equal to them, with his own heroic qualities. And this again could mean that Alexander himself did not always make such references explicit but left things more or less open. If he had explicitly referred in those situations to Herakles, Achilleus, or Theseus, should we not expect that the earliest authors in particular, such as Ptolemaios, Aristoboulos, and Kallisthenes, who had participated in his campaigns, would have mentioned it?

Of course, this is speculation *e silentio*. But in fact there are clear indications that Alexander increasingly conceived of himself not only as a paradigmatic imitator, nor only as a genealogical successor, but as a hero of his own, equal to the great protagonists of myth. Particularly significant is his relation to the Dioskouroi. Before the banquet which eventually led to the murder of Kleitos, Alexander is reported to have made a sacrifice to the twin heroes: according to Arrian, ‘for some reason or other, this came to his mind’.³¹ In the subsequent conversations some of his companions flattered him by saying that the deeds of the Dioskouroi, and even those of Herakles, were not comparable with his own achievements. In fact, however, the Dioskouroi were not particularly convincing paradigms for Alexander to identify with, nor did their dual number comply with Alexander’s basic uniqueness. On the other hand, however, this sacrifice was not a single momentary action, for the great painter Apelles painted a famous picture of Alexander, crowned by Nike, standing between the Dioskouroi.³² Obviously the heroic twins, being the sons of Zeus, were chosen in order to attribute the same rank to Alexander. With his claim of being an offspring of Zeus, Alexander was also equal to Herakles, and even more to Achilleus, who would likewise have been Zeus’ son, if the father of the gods had not withdrawn from Achilleus’ mother Thetis because of an oracle saying that she would give birth to a son who would surpass his father in strength and power. Alexander was not only the genealogical successor of these heroes but at the same time their (quasi) ‘brother’.

In this sense, the following observations and reflections will focus on two specific aspects of Alexander that reveal the essence of his personality – not, however, his individual psyche but his public role: on the one hand his ‘image’, on the other hand his biography. Both notions do not focus on contingent reality but on conceptual construction: not Alexander’s factual physique and physiognomy, but his intended public appearance; not the multifarious course of his life but the conceptual order and sequence of his public roles.

31 Arr. *Anab.* 4.8.2–3; Plut. *Alex.* 50.4.

32 Plin. *NH* 35.93–94.

IMAGE AND BIOGRAPHY BETWEEN CONTINGENT REALITY AND INTENTIONAL CONCEPTUALISATION: PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Here, again, some theoretical preliminaries seem to be appropriate. Alexander's visual appearance is known to us only from his portraits and through written descriptions; his life is only attested in the form of literary texts. This poses problems of methodology. Regarding the art of portraiture as well as the literary genre of biography, scholars now agree that these are basically interpretative products, presenting the visual appearance and the factual course of life of individual persons from the perspective, i.e. according to the conceptual categories and the intended messages of their authors. Modern theories of the media and of constructivism make these insights irreversible. As a consequence, historians either try to find out, through critical analysis, the author's intention in order to uncover the underlying reality of the historical 'Lebenswelt': this is the normal procedure with biographies. Or they take the artistic/linguistic product in its specific medium as the only accessible reality, without any possibility to penetrate to some kind of real historical 'Lebenswelt' behind it: this is the way portraits are normally dealt with.

This *aporia* can be resolved by a theoretical reflection on what is meant by 'reality'³³. The reality of the 'Lebenswelt' is not a pre-given contingent fact which is transformed by 'art' into some meaningful cultural product, text or image, for the reality of the 'Lebenswelt' itself is already a product of cultural conceptualisation. On the one hand, human beings perceive the reality of the 'Lebenswelt' in the categories of their cultural systems, on the other hand they shape their 'Lebenswelt' according to the concepts of the culture in which they live. In this sense, the real 'Lebenswelt' is a construct: a medium in which we perceive, and through which we express cultural meaning. Therefore, representations of the 'Lebenswelt' in art and literature are not transformations of meaningless material reality into a fundamentally different product of cultural meaning – an assumption that inevitably creates problems of uncovering the underlying reality: they are translations of meaning from the medium of the conceptually shaped 'Lebenswelt' into the conceptualising media of literary texts and visual forms.

These general considerations become immediately evident in the concrete visual appearances as well as in the paths of life of individuals in specific societies. Both are strongly moulded by cultural concepts.

Human beings, as social actors, shape their appearance and behaviour in many ways: by clothes, jewellery and attributes, hairstyle, beard or beardlessness, cosmetics and skin decoration, mimics and gestures, postures and movements. Thereby they express social roles and claims, personal character, occasional psychological states and reactions, or intentional messages. By such visual self-styling humans present themselves as living images.

33 On what follows see HÖLSCHER 2016 and 2018, 209–211, 217–228. See also the thoughtful reflections on 'art and reality' in A. COHEN 2010, 17–19.

Likewise, human lives are shaped by cultural models and social structures: by concepts of gender differences, by the order of age classes, by social and political grouping, and by the expectations regarding the roles and forms of behaviour connected with these structures. Individual biographies are strongly moulded by such conceptual models.

ALEXANDER'S APPEARANCE AND SELF-PRESENTATION

The portraits of Alexander, in particular those created in his own lifetime, are strikingly different from each other. From such diverging versions no reliable idea of his individual physiognomy can be deduced. Obviously, these variants are expressions of diverging views of patrons, artists and their public regarding Alexander's character and his public role. These differences have been fully explored in former scholarship and are set aside here.³⁴

All of his portraits, however, follow one and the same basic type which apparently goes back to Alexander's real appearance. To sum it up briefly: he is beardless and wears full curly locks, raising over his forehead in the form of the so-called *anastole* and falling down to his neck. Long hair, together with a beardless youthful face, constitute the appearance of a bright youthful hero. In art, this was the appearance of youthful gods and heroes, like Apollon and Helios, Achilleus and Theseus. Raising forelocks, in general, were understood, and used in art, as a sign of physical strength: in wild disorder for giants, satyrs, also for Poseidon, in majestic symmetry for mighty father gods, such as Zeus or Asklepios. Alexander's *anastole*, in particular, was interpreted as an indication of his lion-like manliness. In addition, some further traits were considered characteristic of him: the emphatic turn of his head towards one side, directing his gaze into a far distance, and the vivid glow of his 'humid' eyes, both appropriate expressions of the great conqueror's *pothos* and *pathos*.

At the time, such images of a king and army-leader were a sensation without precedents. Leading statesmen of classical times, like Perikles, had been represented as bearded middle-aged dignitaries, embodying paternal authority. Alexander's father Philipp II still had followed this model. Alexander, it is true, had indeed come to power at a very young age, but normally beardless young men of the age of junior citizens, *neoi*, were portrayed with the short-cut hair of athletes. How consciously Alexander broke away from this model becomes clear from his representations together with Hephaestion: His companion is short-haired, he himself wears

34 On the portraits of Alexander see in particular: HÖLSCHER 1971; STEWART 1993; REINSBERG 2004; HÖLSCHER 2009; VON DEN HOFF 2014; DORKA MORENO 2019.

long heroic locks. It was a unique programmatic appearance which Alexander significantly kept in his iconography until the end of his life.³⁵

Yet, although the elements of Alexander's portraits were pre-given in earlier representations of youthful gods and heroes, he is not assimilated thereby to any specific divine or mythic figure. Alexander is depicted as a hero of his own, with his characteristic combination of youthful brightness and manly vigour, and in this visual form he became vice-versa a powerful model for later images of youthful heroes.³⁶

The historical power of this heroic type, however, was founded in the fact that this image was not confined to art but was embodied by Alexander himself in his actual appearance. This is, firstly, to be concluded from his portraits: if the most diverging variants of his images coincide in the afore-mentioned fundamental traits, then there is a high degree of probability that these correspond to his real appearance. Secondly, and even more important: if Alexander wanted to be represented in his portraits as a youthful hero, beardless and with long hair, then he could easily realise this 'image' also in his physical apparition. Thirdly, confirmation comes from written sources reporting that Hellenistic rulers like Demetrios Poliorketes and Roman *imperatores* like Pompey aimed to imitate Alexander's appearance, referring obviously not to his images but to his real physical look.³⁷ Fourthly, and in the same vein, Alexander's beardlessness was soon received in the entire Hellenistic world as the normal male fashion: this too must have been caused by his real visual appearance, not only by his portrait statues.

This *habitus* of a young 'heroic' ruler was formed in a reciprocal interplay between art and life. Alexander followed the 'image'-type of youthful mythical heroes which basically existed in imagination and in works of art. But he transformed this imagined 'image' in his real corporeal appearance into a living being – and thereby, vice versa, he strongly influenced not only the forms of real-life self-styling among his followers but also the representation of mythical heroes and living rulers in art.

This unprecedented heroic image of Alexander is first attested in his early portrait type represented by replicas from the Athenian Akropolis and at Erbach (fig. 1).³⁸ Its

35 For Alexander's self-stylisation, beardless and with long hair, see HÖLSCHER 1971 and 2009; ALONSO TRONCOSO 2010. Alexander and Hephaistion: STEWART 1993, 209–214, 338–339, fig. 72, 136, 144–145, 146–153. – Before Alexander, long hair is exceptionally worn by one of the – anonymous! – young horsemen on the Parthenon frieze: the ideal was 'in the air'.

36 HÖLSCHER 1971.

37 *Imitatio Alexandri*: see above n. 8.

38 STEWART 1993, 106–110; DORKA MORENO 2019, 52–56. Dorka Moreno denies any 'decidedly heroic or even divine connotation' in the Akropolis type, interpreting it as a purely youthful appearance, an exemplary model of Athenian youths. This, however, means to negate the very exceptional character of this portrait type – which cannot be disproved by two single (and equally exceptional) horsemen on the Parthenon frieze and on a recently discovered grave relief. Like these figures, the Akropolis Alexander is elevated by his appearance above the normative

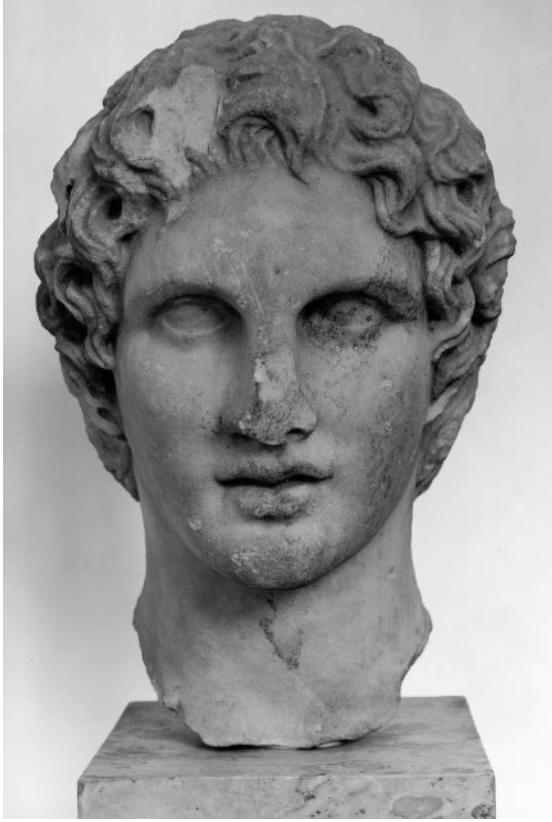


Fig. 1: Portrait of Alexander the Great. Athens, Akropolis Museum, Inv. 1331. Late Hellenistic copy after original of ca. 340–336 BC (Greece). Photo Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Athen.

approximate date can be fixed on the basis of its style to around 340–330 BC. The age of the young king, as he is represented here – which in Greek portraits is not a very reliable indication – at least does not contradict this. A more precise date of the Akropolis-Erbach type, before the campaign against Persia, can be derived from a comparison with other portraits: Alexander looks younger here than in his later portraits by Lysippos which seem to have originated in Asia Minor and Egypt and thus must date to ca. 330 BC (fig. 2–3). This is confirmed by this type's Attic character: Alexander is characterised as a beautiful youth, of charming *charis*, in the *habitus* of classical youthful Athenians, and in the style of Athenian workshops. Conceptually, this portrait belongs to the early phase of Alexander's life: after his departure to Asia his portraits are more stamped by the dynamic concept and style of Lysippos. Most

type of athletic youths, not in the religious sense of 'heroic' or 'divine' status, but in the sense of a striking heroic ('heldenhafte') appearance.

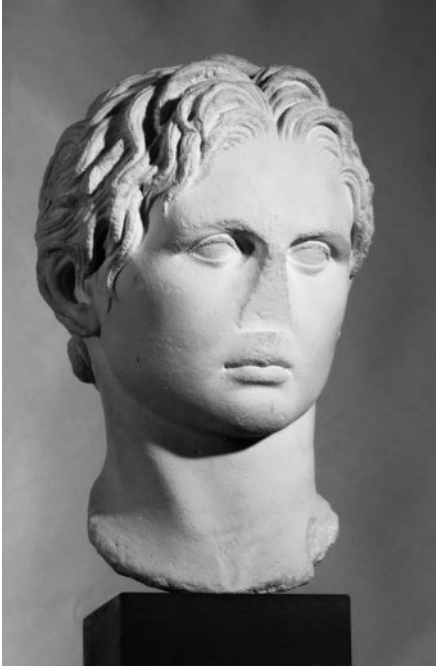


Fig. 2: Portrait of Alexander the Great. München, Glyptothek, loan Schwarzenberg. Roman copy after original of ca. 334–330 BC (Asia Minor?). Photo Hubert Vögele after plaster cast Institut für Klassische Archäologie der Universität Heidelberg.

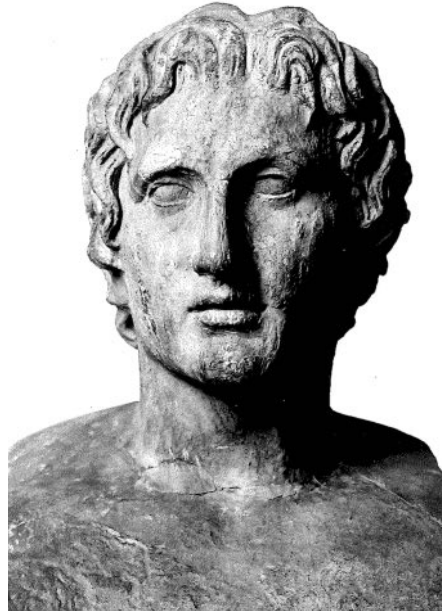


Fig. 3: Portrait of Alexander the Great. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Inv. MA 436. Roman copy after original of ca. 330 BC (Alexandria?). Photo Archive T. Hölscher.

probably, the original portrait statue of the Akropolis-Erbach type was created and erected somewhere in Greece, most likely in Athens, either after Chaironeia in 338 or at Alexander's accession to the throne in 336 BC.³⁹

The time when Alexander, in contrast to his companions, adopted this hairstyle in his real appearance can only approximately be determined. The most likely moment is his transition into the class of ephebes which, at least in Athens but most probably also in other places, was celebrated with a sacrifice of the long children's hair and the adoption of the short athletes' haircut. At this age Alexander might have started his divergence from the normal hairstyle of young men and his adoption of a new 'heroic' image.

39 This is the *communis opinio* in recent scholarship. Identification with one of the attested images, e.g. on the Athenian Agora or in the Philippeion at Olympia, is not impossible but difficult to prove.

ALEXANDER'S HEROIC BIOGRAPHY

A confirmation of these results can be found in the conceptual structure of Alexander's biography. This structure is modelled, beyond the contingent vicissitudes of his extraordinary life, by a traditional order of age classes and their respective social roles. In this sense, Alexander was a most 'successful designer of a life lived as a project'.⁴⁰ As a premise, it is instructive to have a look at the concepts of age classes in early Greek communities and in Greek myth. Details varied from place to place, but there was a basic structure.⁴¹

In historical times, the sons of *polis* citizens passed their childhood, as a *pais*, in their parents' house, mostly in the care of their mother, in well-to-do families of a *paidagogos*. – Thereafter, in the age of adolescence, as *ephebos*, from 16 to 18, there followed a period of physical and social introduction into the world of adult men. In early times, as it is attested for Crete and for Sparta, the youths were sent out of the city to the far-off woods and mountains where they would develop their physical strength, by hunting animals and coping with the challenges of the wilderness. In Crete this was done in the company of an elder male companion who also had to introduce his youth into the social rules and norms of maleness. In later periods, this physical and social education was more and more transferred to the extra-urban gymnasia. At the end of this phase, at the age of 18 to 20, the young men were integrated into the community of citizens as full members.⁴² – There followed another phase, of ca. 10 to 12 years, as a *neos*, during which the young men continued living in their parents' house, participating as junior citizens in the people's assembly, and fighting as junior warriors for the safety and glory of their city, but also making their way in their social circles, and finally looking for a wife. – Only at the age of ca. 30, as *aner*, did they enter into full manhood, implying marriage, the foundation of their own household, and the capacity of taking on responsibility and magistracies in the citizen community. – At the age of 60, as *geron*, they used to retire from the tasks of the *polis* and the family.

The same concept, just in bigger dimensions, was predominant in the life of mythical heroes. Sometimes, the course of their lives was disturbed or changed by the vicissitudes of individual destiny, but the basic pattern is always clear. It is the pattern observed in actual historical societies.

Theseus passed his childhood at Troizen with his mother Aithra. In order to prove that he had reached the age of adolescence he heaved up a huge rock under which his father had hidden a sword and a pair of sandals, the symbols of manhood.

40 For a first sketch of what follows see HÖLSCHER 2009, esp. 54–59. Quotation from A. COHEN 1995, 483.

41 See GARLAND 1990; DeCOSTA LEITAO 1993; KAMEN 2007; TIMMER 2008; ÖZEN-KLEINE 2016.

42 For the phase of adolescence see JEANMAIRE 1939; VAN EFFENTERRE 1949; WILLETS 1955, 7–17; BRELICH 1958, 124–129; VIDAL-NAQUET 1981; BRELICH 1989, 196–207; SCHNAPP 1996; LUPI 2000; WALDNER 2000, 82–101.

In his phase as an *ephebos* he set out for Athens, accomplishing a series of heroic deeds against wild brigands and a monstrous sow. This was his way to the male world of his father who, at his arrival at Athens, received and recognised him as his son, heir, and future successor. Then, as an adult *neos*, Theseus committed himself to the community of Athens, liberating the territory from the devastations of the bull of Marathon, and accompanying the youths and maidens to Crete in order to overcome the Minotaur and to save Athens from the annual tribute of young life. There, he won the love of Ariadne, his potential wife – from whom, however, he is recalled, in order to assume the kingship of Athens.⁴³

Perseus, having been exposed on the sea in a wooden chest, together with his mother Danaë, and being stranded on the island of Seriphos, was received and brought up by Diktys, a brother of the local king Polydektes. If Diktys was a fisherman, as later sources inform us, Perseus passed his childhood in the care of his mother and his phase as an *ephebos* with an educator in a liminal zone, at the sea-shore. Later, when Perseus had grown up and came with his mother to the palace, and when the king harassed the attractive woman, he courageously defended her, showing the qualities of a *neos* and a potential successor to the throne. As such he was sent out by the king in order to kill the Gorgo at the western edge of the world. At the end of this phase he freed the princess Andromeda from the terrible sea-dragon in far-off Ethiopia, took her as his wife, and after various adventures rightfully took possession of the kingship at Argos.⁴⁴

Jason, as a *pais* and *ephebos*, was given by his father to the Centaur Chiron on Mount Pelion, who was the most famous educator of great heroes. At the age of 20, as a *neos*, he came back to his home city Iolkos and claimed the succession of the illegitimate king Pelias. So as to prove his valour he was sent out, together with a group of other youthful heroes, to Kolchis, at the eastern end of the world, in order to bring back the Golden Fleece. There he won the love of the king's daughter Medeia and took her as his wife. He returned to Iolkos, and finally to Korinth, where he failed to marry the king's daughter and to establish his rule.⁴⁵

Finally, Achilleus. He too was given by his father Peleus to Chiron on Mount Pelion, becoming a famous mythical paradigm of ideal education, represented on a great number of archaic and early classical vases. Having grown up and reached the age of a young warrior, he participated in the war against Troy which lasted, not by chance, for ten years, corresponding to the life phase of a *neos*. At the end he comes up against Penthesilea, the queen of the Amazons, falling in love while he kills her. He dies at the threshold of full manhood, before marriage, before the final triumph over Troy, and without returning to Greece where he would have taken over the rule in his inherited land.⁴⁶

43 JEANMAIRE 1939, 228–383; SOURVINOU-INWOOD 1979; NEILS 1987; CALAME 1990.

44 SCHAUENBURG 1960; TOPPER 2007.

45 CLAUSS 1993.

46 NAGY 1979; KOSSATZ-DEISSMANN 1981; HÖLSCHER 2019, 60–81.

One could continue with other heroes, such as Bellerophon, Paris, not least with Herakles, whose path of life is, however, more complex.

If we read Alexander's biography against this backdrop of heroic lives, many common traits become apparent. Many of the great mythical heroes traced their lineage back to a god or goddess: Herakles and Perseus to Zeus, Achilles to Thetis, Theseus to Poseidon, and so forth. It is well known how willingly Alexander accepted to be called, and later also himself pretended to be, the son of Zeus.⁴⁷

From early on, Alexander's life was conceived and formed according to the categories of age classes.⁴⁸ According to Plutarch, Demosthenes called him a boy in the Illyrian War, and a youth in the Thessalian campaign, whereupon Alexander would have answered that in front of the city wall of Athens he might prove to be a man. Particularly remarkable, so Plutarch writes, was the fact that Alexander took over the Macedonian kingdom at the age of twenty, which was a traditional date of entering into the class of adult young men.⁴⁹

Alexander's education by high-ranking teachers, such as Leonidas and Lysimachos, is well attested. Particularly famous was the appointment of Aristotle who is said to have read the *Iliad* with him, as a preparation for his future as a warlord, but also to have taught him the art of healing.⁵⁰ The place where this education was accomplished was not the royal palace at Pella but a remote sanctuary of the nymphs near Mieza, in the hilly inland of Macedonia where Pliny mentions a famous cave of stalactites.⁵¹ Without doubt, this was not an intimate situation of togetherness between the philosopher and the prince: obviously, Alexander was educated there together with other sons of elite families, and certainly there were various tutors providing them with a broad physical and intellectual education. The atmosphere of this remote place may be gathered from the hunt painting of the royal tomb of Vergina, with a group of naked youths on horseback.⁵² Nevertheless, the relation between Aristotle and Alexander must have been particularly important. All this is strongly reminiscent of the education of Achilles by Chiron on Mount Pelion. The wise Centaur, too, was reported to have taught his pupils not only the practice of hunting but also the art of healing and of playing the lyre.⁵³ The literary sources do not suggest an explicit reference between the historical and the mythical couple of

47 See BOSWORTH 1988a, 282–284.

48 For Macedonian age classes see HATZOPOULOS 1996a.

49 Plut. *Alex.* 11.1–6.

50 Plut. *Alex.* 7–8. TRAMPEDACH 1994, 54–55 reduces the influence of Aristotle on Alexander, without negating it totally. On the alleged portrait set up by Alexander see VOUTIRAS 1987.

51 Plin. *NH* 31.30. – For the city of Mieza and the site of the (extra-urban) sanctuary see PETSAS 1966, 5–12; PAPAZOGLU 1988, 150–152; BILLOT 1989; ERRINGTON 2000. BOSWORTH 1988a, 20 speaks of a 'miniature Academy'; yet, Plato's Academy was a periurban place while Mieza was located in the *eschatia*.

52 SAATSOGLU-PALIADELI 2004; BORZA / PALAGIA 2007; FRANKS 2012.

53 For sources and images see KOSSATZ-DEISSMANN 1981, nr.19–93, pp.40–42, 53–55. For the comparison with Alexander and Aristotle see already AMELING 1988, 667–668.