

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING ALEXANDER'S RELATIONS WITH HIS SUBJECTS

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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. mythopoesis, 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 Darius 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 intangible 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.