

Politica antica
Rivista di prassi e cultura politica nel mondo greco e romano

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Presentazione

Questo fascicolo di *Politica antica* unisce gli atti di due giornate di studio, una di Storia greca, *Instruments of Power in the Hellenistic World*, tenutasi presso l'Università degli Studi di Bergamo il 31 marzo 2023 a cura di Monica D'Agostini, e l'altra di Storia romana, *New Perspectives on Elections and Electoral Competition in the Last Decades of the Roman Republic*, corrispondente a una sessione della *Classical Association Conference 2023* tenutasi a Cambridge il 23 aprile 2023 a cura di Eleonora Zampieri dell'Università degli Studi di Padova.

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Money Makes the World Go Round? Financial Resources as Instruments of Power in the Macedonia of Philip V

by *Monica D'Agostini*

Some time has passed since Arthur Eckstein effectively applied international relations theories to ancient politics, highlighting the sophistication of the Roman intervention in the Mediterranean¹. However, the scholar dismissed the Hellenistic political system as anarchic, considering it mainly based on military power used in a Hobbesian way to serve a “perpetual and restless desire for power after power, that ceaseth only in death”². Building on the idea that the desire to dominate others is, in some way, grounded in human nature, Eckstein presents the Hellenistic rulers as able and willing to exercise power in an unregulated and mainly violent manner in both home and foreign affairs³.

The rich scholarly research on Hellenistic epigraphy of the past few decades already speaks loudly of the complex and sophisticated web of legal, economic, and administrative interactions that shaped Hellenistic rulers’ “power over something/someone,” i.e. the capacity to attain the desired outcome by consensually grounded institutionalization of authority⁴. However, the Hellenistic art of statecraft still remains in the dark, hidden under the assumption that there was none, since it was not needed in a violence-based monarchy, nor in home or foreign affairs.

To challenge such a view, I analyzed an instance from the reign of Philip V: the 218 BC mutiny of Philip’s Macedonian army. The king resorted to diverse of instruments of power, and, above all, to a strategic use of finances, to impose his will without hopelessly compromising his relationship with the army. I followed Eckstein’s example⁵, and used theoretical instruments borrowed from modern political science to identify and analyze the instruments of power.

In a recent publication devoted to the instruments of “national power” for the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, Craig Nation⁶ states, “Power is the measure of a relationship” and “the capacity to impose

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¹ Eckstein, 2006, and 2008.

² Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1.11 (ed. Harmondsworth, 1968, p. 161)

³ Eckstein 2008, p. 143.

⁴ To name some, Hatzopoulos 1996 and 2001; Magnetto 1997; Ma 1999; Virgilio 2003; Mari 2006, pp. 209-225 and 2018, pp. 283-311.

⁵ See also recently Brisson 2023.

⁶ Nation 2012, pp. 117-158.

the desired outcome in the face of resistance". He distances himself from the idea of power as an absolute entity, since it has no objective status in and of itself, and elaborates on the model derived from Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane. They argue that where there is a situation of interdependence, the use of force is "irrelevant or unimportant as an instrument of policy"⁷.

In the late 1980s, Nye coined the term Soft Power and, in 1990, published a crucial article: "Soft Power," which later became a book⁸. The article mainly concerned the decline of the United States' influence due to a general diffusion of power. It argued that, in a system with strong economic interdependence and a high presence of transnational actors, rather than violence, another means becomes crucial to control others: Soft Power. With Soft Power, Nye defined the capacity of a political unit to influence and compete with others by means of the affiliation and adhesion it induces in the other actors – the ability to co-opt others without resorting to brute force.

Nye's study produced rich scholarly debate among political analysts. One of them, Susan Strange, suggested a structural model of power in her later work. She identified four power sectors: productive, fiscal military, and informational⁹. In official US documents, this concept of instruments of power has been introduced as Diplomacy, Information (which can be divided into cultural and intelligence), Military (actual or potential), and Economy. The acronym is DIME, and the concept highlights that military force is not the *ultima ratio* of statecraft¹⁰.

The Context

Although the theoretical framework I apply comes from modern political studies, it can offer a methodological base to highlight the policy in place in antiquity to overcome incompatibility and secure compliance among political actors. I identified a case of conflict and goal incompatibility in the Macedonian monarchy between the king and the army, where the king resorted to a purposeful and multifaceted exercise of power to resolve the conflict.

Around 218 Philip V, new king of Macedonia, clashed with his elite light-armed troops, the Peltasts and the Agema¹¹. The dispute with the soldiers was not a sudden event but the outcome of a series of tensions that occurred during Philip V's 219/218 campaign. Our source on these events, Polybius, records frictions that occurred after successful major enterprises involving high officers and soldiers: in 219 at Olympia after the seizing of Psophis and Thalamai in Elis, and again in 218 in Limnaia after the sack of Thermos in Aetolia¹².

⁷ Nye and Keohane 1977, p. 27.

⁸ Nye 1990 pp. 153-171 and 2004.

⁹ Strange 1994.

¹⁰ Nation 2012, pp. 117-158.

¹¹ On the Peltasts and the Agema, see Foulon, 1996a, pp. 53-63 and 1996b, 17-31; Juhel and Sekunda, 2009, pp. 104-108, and recently Juhel 2017, pp. 113-125. See also Fisher Bovet 2014, pp. 135-138.

¹² 219 riot: Polyb. 4.73.1-77.5; 218 riots: Polyb. 5.15.1-16.10.

These had been Philip's greatest victories in his war against the Aetolians, the so-called "Social War". Philip V engaged in the conflict as king of the Macedonians and also as leader of Hellenic Symmarchy, which comprised almost all of the Greek political communities, excepting the Athenians and the Aetolians with their Peloponnesian allies, the Eleians, and the Messenians¹³.

Philip campaigned in the Peloponnese one year after the beginning of the war, in 219/8. He led his offensive against the Eleians, whose region he conquered after seizing the city of Psophis between Elis and Arcadia thanks to his Macedonian troops. He granted to the Achaeans the control of the city and carried on the conquest of Elis and Tryphilia¹⁴. During the campaign, Philip acquired an uncommonly large and various booty after seizing Thalamai; although it was an impregnable stronghold, the city was momentarily overpopulated because many inhabitants of the area had sought refuge and could not withstand a siege. Philip, thinking that they would have fought strenuously, left the main army in his entrenched camp and himself led the Peltasts and light-armed troops through the gorge, arriving directly under the fortress. The refugees and the mercenaries were scared at Philip's approach. Thus, the mercenaries commanded by the Eleian *strategòs* Amphidamos surrendered Thalamai to the king, allowing the Macedonian army to acquire 5000 prisoners, goods, and livestock. The king went back and camped in Olympia, then headed to Heraea to sell off prisoners and booty¹⁵. While the king was in Olympia, Polybius¹⁶ records the first riot occurring in the camp. Although the historian focuses on the rivalry between the Achaean commander, Aratus of Sicyon, and Apelles, the Macedonian general and friend of the king, the clash built on the tension between the Achaean and Macedonian troops on several issues, including the management of the booty, the location of the quarters for each, and the authority of the Macedonian officers¹⁷. After summoning Apelles and Aratus as the commanders of the two groups of soldiers involved in the incident, Philip resolved the predicament by granting to the Achaeans some independence in the military management¹⁸.

The Fine

Later in 218 BC, Philip brought the war to the Aetolian homeland. He landed his troops from the sea and attacked the sacred shrine of the Aetolian

¹³ Scholten 2000, pp. 194-214 and Polyb. 4.5.2-10. Worthington 2023, pp. 47.

¹⁴ Polyb. 4.63.1-82.1: Hammond and Walbank 1988, pp. 374-377; Scholten 2000, pp. 218-220; Worthington 2023, pp. 53-54.

¹⁵ See Polyb. 4.75.1-8 and 77.5. See Kralli 2017, pp. 275-276 and 288-289.

¹⁶ Polyb. 4.76.1-7.

¹⁷ On the episode, see D'Agostini 2019, pp. 46-57 and Nicholson 2023, pp. 59-61.

¹⁸ According to Loreto 1990, pp. 331-366, based on Polybius himself, the expectation to receive an equal part of the booty is fundamental for the army: Philip's decision to apply two different criteria to his army, one for Macedonians, Thessalians, and the other armies allied of the king, and another for the Achaeans, undermined the solidity of his troops. See also Juhel 2002, pp. 401-412.

League, Thermos. The raid was a great victory for the king, who returned to the Peloponnese with an impressive booty. On the way back from the Aetolian raid, the Aetolians repeatedly hit the king's army. Still, the Macedonian elite unit of the Peltasts succeeded in driving them away from the main column¹⁹. The light infantry, the Peltasts, and their elite unit, the Agema, were much better suited than the heavy infantry for the war against the Aetolians since the tactics were based on forays rather than on open battle. This corps, in combination with the Illyrians, had become, by this time, the shock forces most appreciated by the king. In the Eleian campaign, the Peltasts had already demonstrated their value as the missile troops under the direct command of Philip. In the Aetolian expedition, they proved themselves as the best choice to embark on missions of guerrilla warfare and set the ambush for the enemy. According to Foulon, "Philippe a sans cesse encours aux services de ce corps qui, par l'excellent compromis qu'il représente entre armement et mobilité, constitue sinon l'arme absolue, qui n'existe pas, du moins l'arme à tout faire"²⁰.

According to Polybius²¹, during the celebrations in Limnaia following the campaign, the Peltasts and their commander, Leontios, fomented trouble within the encampment. Leontios attended the victory banquet together with Megaleas and Crinon, two chief Macedonian officers close to him. Polybius asserts that they were displeased and disgruntled by the king's triumph, as they had been conspiring to hinder Philip's achievements. Polybius claims that they were acting in concert with Apelles, the highest-ranking officer in the monarchy and former guardian of Philip, and identifies the following events as a conspiracy by Apelles against Aratus²². Rather than investigating Apelles' purported involvement in the tensions between Philip and his army,

¹⁹ Polyb. 5.13.1-6 and 5.14.1-7. On the Polybian account and bias on Thermos see Nicholson 2023, pp. 61-81.

²⁰ Foulon 1996a, pp. 53-63 on the role of the Peltasts in the guerrilla warfare. According to Foulon, the Peltasts were constantly in service, and therefore grew better trained and more experienced than the infantry of the phalanx. See also Sekunda 2010, pp. 446-471, on the phalanx and its limits.

²¹ Polyb. 5.15.1-7.

²² The events following the looting of Thermos are often labelled by modern scholars as the "Conspiracy of Apelles", due to Polybius' comprehensive interpretation, also clearly reflected in Plutarch. The conspiracy is named after Philip's friend and first advisor, Apelles, who allegedly wanted to overthrow Philip and eliminate Aratus, who was greatly favored by Polybius. Apelles was aided in this plot by a group of Macedonians: Leontios, Megaleas, Ptolemy, and Crinon, who reportedly disapproved of Philip's relationship with Aratus and his treatment of the Achaean League. However, rather than focusing on the personal rivalries in Philip's court, this paper is concerned with the king's relationship with the Peltasts, and the threat they came to pose to the Macedonian throne under their commander Leontios. The Conspiracy of Apelles was discussed in Walbank 1940, pp. 48-52 and pp. 56-61, and 1957-1967, I, pp. 538-562, Errington 1967, pp. 19-36, and Hammond and Walbank 1988, pp. 382-383, who think this a Polybian construction. On Polybius' bias in the account of the conflict between Philip, his elder officers and part of the army see D'Agostini 2019, pp. 95-115, Worthington 2023, pp. 59-60, who suggests that Philip purged his Court to assess his kingship, and Nicholson 2023, pp. 60-61 and note 6.

this study focuses on the king's strategy to assert his authority over the rebellious actors within his *basileia*.

When the feast was over, Leontios, Megaleas and Crinon, together with some soldiers, all allegedly intoxicated, found the Achaean commander, Aratus²³, on his way home, then proceeded to insult and throw stones at him. The fight attracted many people who came to the assistance of both parties, causing a riot in the camp among the soldiers. Eventually Philip sent some officers to ascertain the cause of the fight, and to put an end to the disturbance. Leontios, says Polybios, left without attracting any attention, whereas Aratus openly denounced the assailants. Megaleas and Crinon were identified as the instigators of the attack and admonished directly by the monarch. Philip summoned them to resolve the situation through his personal relationship with his officers, as he had done in Olympia. However, according to Polybios, Megaleas and Crinon defied Philip and stood by their positions, confirming their rage against Aratus and their intention to retaliate against him. Philip, infuriated by their defiance, levied a fine of 20 talents on each of them and ordered them to remain imprisoned until payment was made²⁴.

The use of fines for military sanctioning was prescribed by the so-called Army Code, the Amphipolis inscription considered a royal *diagramma*²⁵ preserving the late Antigonid disciplinary military code²⁶. This (fragmentary) document is composed of at least three columns and divided into thematic sections that have been identified as the general regulation of the Macedonian army²⁷. The Code prescribed military procedures and fines faced by the

²³ See the recent remarks on Aratus' role in Polybios' *Histories* in Nicholson 2023, pp. 42-48.

²⁴ Polyb. 5.15.7-9.

²⁵ Hatzopoulos 1996, II (nr. 12) and plates XII-XVI and 2001, 161-164. It was discovered on two marble stones between January and April of 1934 in the Strymon (modern Struma) River. The first thin and long stone delivers only sections of three inscription columns (A 1, A 2, A 3), and was immediately published with pictures by Roussel 1934, pp. 39-47; the other two (incomplete) columns (B 1, B 2) from the second damaged marble were studied by Feyel 1935, pp. 29-68 (with French translation of B1 and B2). See also De Sanctis 1934, pp. 515-52. Fragments preserved in the Amphipolis museum inventory Λ 905 and 908. See also ISE 114=Moretti, 1967-1976, II, pp. 108-114 (with Italian translation); and Jehel 2002, pp. 401-412, only on fragment B1 ll. 10-18 (with English translation). Other English translation: Austin 2006, nr. 90. Recently, Hatzopoulos 2016, pp. 203-216, published a fragment of a second copy of the document found in Amphipolis. After several attempts to combine the two stones in order to relate the fragments into congruous columns, Hatzopoulos has convincingly argued that it is not possible, given the current status of the evidence, to combine the fragments.

²⁶ On Hellenistic written communication see Mari 2006, pp. 209-225, and Virgilio 2010, pp. 101-122 and 2011; Bencivenni 2014, pp. 311-330.

²⁷ Specifically, the surviving part of the document gives instructions about the establishment of the camp and the distribution of quarters (A 2.5-8), the watchwords (A 3.5-7), the appropriate military gear for the soldiers and officers (B 1.1-9), the collection and division of war booty (B 1.10-18), and foraging duties (B 2.14-18). Hatzopoulos 2001, pp. 23-26, connects it to other documents: two copies of the same inscription, from Chalcis and Kynos, delivering the regulation of all the Antigonid garrisons (Hatzopoulos 2001 nr. 1.I and 1.II [pl. VII and VIII]); Nankov 2009, pp. 104-108 and pp. 137-150. It also links to this

transgressors. For instance, the fines concerning military equipment and the watchwords were paid to officers and secretaries of the army itself. Some of them were managed by the Hypaspists and the *tetrarchai*, and automatically delivered to the Hypaspists themselves, who acted as a sort of military police for significant infractions (A 2.3-4). Also the secretaries, *oi grammateis* (οἱ γραμματεῖς) (A1.7 and B1.8-9), and the *archyperetai* (B1.8-9) could collect the payment, after the *tetrarchai* fined the offenders²⁸. The king very rarely intervened in sanctioning. Among the transgressions reported to the king were those committed by officers (B1.9)²⁹. Indeed, officers appear to receive specific treatment in the Code: they were to be punished for any transgression that happened under their responsibility, as, for example, with booty (B1.10-17)³⁰; moreover, they were charged with fines higher than the soldiers' (B1.1-10). The officers were expected to set an example for their soldiers, so they had to pay for the men's wrongdoing. The higher the officer's rank, the higher the penalty he was charged.

It thus follows that Megaleas and Crinon, the officers involved in the fight in Limnaia, were reported directly to the king and sentenced by him. It is noteworthy that Philip built upon the Army Code penalty system, opting for a financial instrument over capital punishment as a means of disciplining Megaleas and Crinon for their misconduct and defiance of the royal authority. The king might have considered the potential risks of inciting discontent among the troops with a punitive measure that was perceived as violent, rather than

same codification all regulation of the recruitment and military service preserved in the fragments of two copies of the document found in Drama and Nea Potidaia (Cassandra), Niglédís, Sismanidés, 1999, pp. 807-822; Hatzopoulos 2000, pp. 825-840 and 2001, p. 24 and nr. 2.I and 2.II (pl. IX-XIV). On the military regulation, see also Noguera Borel 2006, pp. 227-237.

²⁸ According to Hatzopoulos 2001, pp. 76-80 the army was organised in *lochoi* (16 men), grouped by four in *tetrarchai* commanded each by a tetrarches. Four *tetrarchai* answered to a *speirarches* and were considered a *speira* (256 phalangites). Four *speirai* were a *chiliarchia* (1024 fighters) and four *chiliarchiai* were a *strategia* of 4096 men under a *strategos*. Each section had its management officers appointed for the administration: the *hyperetes* was the secretary of the *speira*, the *chiliarchia* had the *archyperetes* and the *strategos* was assisted by a *grammateus*. The *grammateus* and the *archyperetai* reported to the king. On the hierarchy in the camp see Moretti 1967-1975, II, pp. 108-114; Le Bohec 1993, pp. 289-320; Juhel 2002, pp. 401-412.

²⁹ A 1.5-8: "the *tetrarchai* must go the rounds in turn without any light and anyone who is sitting down or [sleeping] while on guard duty the *tetrarchai* shall fine one drachma for every offence and the secretaries (*grammateis*) shall obtain the payment [of the fine...]" A 2.1-4 "[...if they do not report] the offenders [to the king] they shall be fined three twelfths (?)⁵¹ which shall be given to the hypaspists in the event of their being first to send in a written denunciation of the offenders".

³⁰ B1.10-17: "Concerning discipline over war booty. [if] anyone brings booty to the camp, [the] *strategoi* taking with them the *speirarchai* and the *tetrarchai* [and] the other officers, and together with these the atten[dants] in sufficient numbers shall go to meet them at a distance of three stades in front of the camp, [and they shall not allow] those who captured the booty to keep it. And should any insubordination [of this kind] take place, the [*strategoi*] and *speirarchai* and *tetrarchai* and *archyperetai* shall pay a sum equivalent [to what each of them owes?] *vacat*".

employing a strategy that would de-escalate the situation. The financial instrument enabled Philip to diminish the influence of the rebellious officers within the military, both among their subordinates and among higher-ranking officers, without resorting to a death sentence that might have provoked the ire of their supporters.

Nevertheless, the usual amount for ordinary sanctions was usually obols and drachmas. The penalties were all pre-established, based on written rules³¹. Therefore, the twenty talents Philip V sanctioned his officers were certainly an impressive sum and must have appeared uncommon to the Macedonian army, even for high-ranking officers³². We can find mention in Polybius of similar amounts in economic transactions involving communities of people or institutions: for example Philip paid an yearly subsidy of twenty talents to hire of 30 Illyrian galleys, and the Achaeans paid 17 talents to the Macedonian army for every month of war they spent campaigning in the Peloponnese³³. Moreover, 50 talents was the yearly sum that Macedonia had to pay after the second Macedonian war to Rome for ten years as part of the war indemnity³⁴. The fine was thus commensurate to the enormous amounts exchanged in “interstate” financial transaction and sustained by communities of people rather than private individuals.

Hearing of the abnormal fine, Leontios, who had so far avoided being involved in the dispute, challenged the king, coming to Philip’s tent with the Peltasts to question the king about the arrests. He was a member of the Council, and Antigonos Dason, the late predecessor and tutor of Philip V³⁵, had made him captain of the Peltasts to ensure his support for the new king³⁶. Maybe Leontios thought he could influence the king’s decision, also using his troops’ privileged role in the Macedonian army. Philip refused to discuss the royal verdict and confirmed his decision. However, after he anchored at Leucas and distributed the spoils to the army, he summoned his Friends to a council to try Megaleas’ case³⁷.

³¹ B 1.1-9: “... they shall punish according to the written rules (ζημιούτωσαν κατὰ τὰ γεγραμμένα) those who are not bearing the arms appropriate to them: two obols for the *kotthybos* (cloth cuirass), the same amount for the *konos* (helmet), three obols for the sarissa, the same amount for the dagger, two obols for the greaves, a drachma for the shield. *Vacat* In the case of officers double the fine for the weapons mentioned, and two drachmas for the cuirass and one drachma for the half-cuirass. The *grammateis* and the *archyperetai* shall receive the fines after reporting the offenders to the king”. Translation adapted from Hatzopoulos 1996 nr. 12=2001 nr.3. On the hierarchy in the camp see Moretti 1967-1976, II, pp. 108-114; Le Bohec 1993, pp. 289-320; Juhel 2002, pp. 401-412.

³² Worthington 2023, p. 59 argues that these circumstances were exceptional, and Philip wanted to make a point.

³³ Polyb. 4.29.7 on the Illyrian galleys; Polyb. 5.1.11-12 on the Achaean payment to the Macedonians.

³⁴ Liv. 33.30.6-7. Philip had to pay a war indemnity of 1,000 talents - half paid immediately and the rest in ten annual instalments of 50 talents.

³⁵ D’Agostini 2019, pp. 22-28.

³⁶ Polyb. 4.87.7-8.

³⁷ Polyb. 5.16.2-10.

The Council of Friends was involved in military discipline as a sanctioning college, which would intervene only under exceptional circumstances, such as those related to the division of the booty (A 3.2-4). The decision of Philip to summon the Council to re-evaluate (Polyb. 5.16.5: αὐτὸς δὲ συναγαγὼν τοὺς φίλους ἀπέδωκε κρίσιν τοῖς περὶ τὸν Μεγαλέαν) the fine he had given Megaleas appears uncommon. On the one hand the penalties were all pre-established, on the other hand, in Olympia and Limnaia, the king had resolved the conflict after listening to the people involved. He had acted as judge without debating the situation with his Council. Therefore, it apparently was not necessary to re-try a case after the king had already delivered his verdict, but, after Leontios challenged him over it, Philip sought the support of the Council to shore up his decision ³⁸.

At the hearing, when witnesses came forward, Crinon and Megaleas were not able to refute the accusations and the Council confirmed the fine of twenty talents. Although the Council did not change the penalty, they mitigated the king's decision, granting Leontios permission to bail out Megaleas, while Crinon, condemned by the king's Friends, remained under arrest. The trial thus caused no apparent opposition between the king and the Council. The king flexed his judicial authority, likely counting on having the loyalty of the majority of the officers, who confirmed their support to him despite Leontios' opposition. Nevertheless, while acknowledging the legitimacy of Philip's claim to twenty talents, the Council also facilitated dialogue between the king and Leontios, thereby contributing to the de-escalation of the conflict affecting the Macedonian leadership.

The option of imposing a fine allowed the Council greater latitude within the royal juridical process. Although the members of the Council were free to express their opinions, as Leontios did, a capital sentence would have left them with no alternative but to confirm Philip's judgment because rejecting the royal decision would have been tantamount to mutiny. Conversely, the fine allowed for the possibility of releasing the offenders on bail, as Leontios did with Megaleas. It also allowed Megaleas' and Leontios' affiliates and subordinates to pay the debt owed to the king. Moreover, the financial instrument afforded the potential for subsequent clemency toward the recalcitrant officers. A pardon could be granted at a later date, contingent upon a change in attitude or circumstances. Therefore, money proved a more flexible and versatile instrument than brute force for managing the *basileia* and opposition to Philip because it afforded the king and the Council greater freedom of action in accordance with circumstances.

³⁸ Polybius is the only extant source on these events, and unfortunately his pro-Arasteian bias affects his account and his reading of the Macedonian political system. He interpreted the hearing of the Council of Friends not as a meeting concerning the riot and its punishment, but a trial for the far-reaching political intrigue of Apelles against Aratus, the so-called "Conspiracy of Apelles": Errington 1967, pp. 19-36, and recently Worthington 2023, pp. 59-60. Hatzopoulos 1996, pp. 298-303 expands the Apelles affair to investigate the judicial authority of the army: concerning the Council hearing, he convincingly states that Philip had to summon it in order to strengthen its position; see also Anson 2008, pp. 135-149.

The Mutiny

The conflict within the army was exacerbated at Corinth later that year, 218. Philip arrived there with his whole force right after selling, in Tegea, all the booty of the triumphant expedition in Laconia and, in particular, against Sparta. The king had again accomplished victory thanks to the Peltasts, whom he had personally led into battle, in conjunction with the Illyrian and mercenary contingents³⁹. After leaving his forces in Corinth to rest and celebrate, he left for Lechaemum,⁴⁰ but, after his departure, the whole camp erupted in a tumult. The Peltasts and the Agema felt they were being treated unfairly, and were unhappy with their share of the booty. They argued that their portion of the spoils was not commensurate with their duties on the battlefield⁴¹. In protest, they pulled down the doors and broke through the roof of the royal apartments, and the uproar shattered the quarters closest to the king's friends and those of the king himself⁴².

Despite Philip's ostensible moderation in the punishment of Megaleas and Crinon, a sense of discontent had begun to emerge among the troops. This was presumably due to the fact that the king had not yet addressed the underlying cause of the soldiers' discontent, namely the unequal distribution of the spoils⁴³. Indeed, during the Social War, Philip's tactics and strategy were primarily reliant on the Peltasts. The king himself had often led these sections into battle: they, together with the Illyrians and the mercenaries, were the most militarily active in the expedition and responsible for the successes in Aetolia and Laconia⁴⁴. Noticeably, the mentioned riots happened after the acquisition of large war prizes. The tensions in the camp over the division of the booty after the expedition in Elis and the conquest of Thalamai only worsened after the tours in Aetolia and Laconia.

To recover from such a hazardous predicament, Philip returned from Lechaemum to Corinth and gathered the Macedonians in assembly in the theatre. He did not privately summon the officers but directly addressed the whole army. The troops divided themselves into those who protested the partition of the booty and those who defended the king's position. Philip spoke to them, exhorting them to return to discipline and rebuking them severely for their conduct. The content of this speech is lost; it might have addressed the shared experience and cultural identity of the king and his troops, pointing

³⁹ Polyb. 5.22.1-23.10. Walbank 1940, pp. 57-58; Coppola 1993, pp. 144-146; D'Agostini 2019, pp. 101-103.

⁴⁰ Polyb. 5.24.10-12.

⁴¹ Worthington 2023, p. 61 argues that Philip V diverted his liquid money to running his costs.

⁴² Polyb. 5.25.1-3. See also Foulon 1996a, pp. 53-63.

⁴³ Polyb. 5.25.1. asserts that the Peltasts and the Agema's allegations were baseless. He claims that the true motivation behind the complaint was to disguise an alleged secret conspiracy involving Leontios, his protégé Megaleas, and Ptolemy, who was collaborating with Apelles to impede Philip's kingship. See note above on the Conspiracy of Apelles.

⁴⁴ D'Agostini 2019, pp. 68-91.

out their betrayal and appealing to them to return to the Macedonian codes. Philip gave priority to re-establishing his relationship with the forces and securing the troops' commitment to him and to the campaigns⁴⁵. However, great turmoil and protest followed because some wanted the ringleaders to be arrested and interrogated, while others asked for a peaceful resolution and an indemnity request.

The conflict between Philip and the Peltasts bears resemblance to the dispute between Alexander and his troops at Opis in August 324⁴⁶. Similarly, Alexander addressed the troops with a speech, emphasizing the shared experience and the reciprocity of their relationship. However, in contrast to Philip V, Alexander directed the Hypaspists to apprehend the ringleaders, who were subsequently sentenced to death⁴⁷. Alexander's authority and position were markedly superior to those of Philip V. Furthermore, Alexander's vast, predominantly Asian empire offered a distinct historical context in comparison to Philip's Macedonian *basileia*. It is, however, noteworthy that Philip's actions diverged significantly from those of his Macedonian predecessor. Philip did not pursue legal action against the perpetrators of the assault on his council and his tent, despite the fact that it constituted a clear act of insubordination by a portion of the military forces. He knew who the leaders were, but he pretended not to. Polybius asserts that Philip did not prosecute the offenders for political reasons⁴⁸. Similarly, as in the case of Megaleas and Crinon, he was concerned that the situation might escalate further, and therefore sought to avoid any violent means in favour of pursuing a political solution. He thus prioritized the restoration of his authority, issuing a direct appeal to his soldiers rather than punishing the Peltasts. He concealed his sentiments and gave the impression of satisfaction.

Despite Philip V's avoidance of direct confrontation with the rebellious Peltasts, the prevailing atmosphere of tension within the army persisted⁴⁹. Not long after the riot, while the king was in Phocis, Megaleas evaded the conditions of his bail and subsequently sought refuge in Athens and then Thebes. This resulted in a further deterioration of the situation. Leontios, the commander of the Peltasts, was obliged to provide bail for Megaleas, but Philip did

⁴⁵ Anson 2008, pp. 135-149.

⁴⁶ On Opis, see Carney 1996, pp. 19-44. The episode was delivered by several ancient sources, Arrian 7.8.1-12.4 is the richest version, Diodorus 17.108.2-3 and 17.109.2-3, and Plutarch Alex. 71.1-5 summarize the episode, whereas the Latin accounts of both Justin (12.11.5-12.10) and Curtius Rufus (10.2.8-4.2) suffer from lacunae, and are both influenced, according to Carney, by the Roman military experience – although Justin's Trojan version is similar to Arrian's. See also Prandi 2013, pp. 181-183 and 186-188.

⁴⁷ The violent action, arrest, and punishment of the most blameworthy, are present in all the sources except Plutarch. Arrian says he sentenced them to be executed right away, as does Justin, maybe reporting the same tradition (Arr. *Anab.* 7.8.3; Just. 12.11.8-9). Diodorus (17.109.2) does not mention Alexander's order to kill them. And Curtius (10.2.30 and 10.4.2) reports that they were arrested but sentenced to death later.

⁴⁸ Polyb. 5.25.5-7.

⁴⁹ Especially after the king recalled Apelles to Corinth from Chalcis but treated him coldly.

not act with immediate haste. Before taking any action against Leontios for his role in Megaleas' misconduct, the king dispatched the Peltasts to Triphylia with another *philos*, Taurion, on the pretext of some urgent service. Once the Peltasts had departed, Philip ordered the arrest of Leontios with the intention of putting him on trial and holding him accountable for the actions of Megaleas.

By deploying the Peltasts, Philip was able to physically separate Leontios from his support base. This serves to corroborate Philip's concern for the allegiance of the troops, most notably those who had been followers of Leontios and his subordinates, namely Megaleas and Crinon. Moreover, Leontios had previously demonstrated his value as a military commander. His military charisma and competence had been an asset in Philip's campaigns. It is possible that the king may have attempted one final mediation before relinquishing such a valuable resource.

By withholding information from the Peltasts, the king demonstrated an understanding of the significance of information and intelligence as tools, and the potential consequences of their mishandling. Indeed, the situation deteriorated further when the Peltasts were made aware of Leontios' arrest. They sent a delegation to the monarch, requesting that the Leontios case not proceed in their absence. They even threatened the king, indicating that they would view his disregard as a form of disrespect, and offered to post bail for Megaleas on behalf of Leontios. They proposed a joint subscription for the payment, suggesting that they would assume financial responsibility⁵⁰.

The Peltasts' proposal confirmed that twenty talents was beyond the economic capacity of even Council members like Leontios. Philip had deliberately set fines at a level that exceeded the capacity of the officers to pay: when he applied them in accordance with the established code of conduct, he imposed a penalty that was effectively impossible for the offender to discharge. The imposition of the fine had the effect of neutralizing Megaleas and might have had the same result for Leontios; however, it did not affect the Peltasts. The fine could be paid by a joint effort of the elite corps. Collectively, the Peltasts demonstrated the capacity to mobilize financial resources on a scale comparable to that of federations like the Achaeans and communities of people like the Illyrians. Consequently, the tension between Philip and the Peltasts was not solely a matter of military discipline; it also pertained to financial support and political authority for the Antigonid monarchy. The intervention of the elite corps served to weaken the effect of the fine and to demonstrate the power and resources of the Peltasts, as well as their influence within the army and on the monarchy.

Faced with a direct confrontation with the elite corps, the king moved toward a more definitive solution. Polybius reports that the king resolved to execute Leontios at an earlier date than he had initially planned, in order to ensure the absence of the Peltasts⁵¹. It is uncertain whether the trial took place, although the Peltasts appear to have been aware that a hearing for Leontios was scheduled or imminent. In the previous trial of Megaleas, the Peltasts had

⁵⁰ Polyb. 5.27.1-8.

⁵¹ Polyb. 5.27.8.

expressed their objections via Leontios. In this instance, however, the king proceeded with the condemnation and execution, not only disregarding the pleas of the Peltasts, but deliberately choosing to act without them. Consequently, when the financial penalty proved ineffective, Philip resorted to violence and killed Leontios, but even then, he sought a way to do so that would minimize the negative reaction of the army. It is notable that, as a final act, Philip apparently did not replace Leontios with another officer, but rather bound the Peltasts to himself and personally led the corps in the following campaigns.

The Roman Parallel

The economic instrument could create interdependence, as with the distribution of booty. It could also help manage the relationship between king and army, as with a common set of rules and punishments found in the army code. The twenty talents demanded by Philip from Leontios not only deprived Leontios of the means to influence the political scene, but also deprived his party of its financial resources. This fine was closely linked to a death sentence, as two stages, one financial and one violent, were used to weaken the political opponent.

Similar cases in the Hellenistic world are hard to identify. Recently, however, fines in the military sphere of the Roman Republic, during the same era of Philip V, have been studied and can offer some material, despite the two very different political systems⁵². Apparently, in the Roman Republic the financial penalties were mostly attested as imposed on soldiers reluctant to submit to the levy, or to draft dodgers. The punishments were excessive fines or confiscation of property. Generals may have been blamed harshly for their military failures, but were very rarely threatened with full confiscations, great fines, and capital charges. However, in the Roman political arena, we do find some cases of prosecutions of generals accused of misappropriation of booty⁵³, which then allowed their enemies to use monetary sanctions to hinder their political careers. One case stands out due to the high profile of the accused: Marcus Livius Salinator and Lucius Aemilius Paullus, consuls in 219, accused of unfair division of the booty in connection with the war against Demetrius of Pharos. After their campaign against the Illyrians and their triumph, on the expiration of their term of office, the People condemned the former and acquitted the latter.⁵⁴ The effect of the trial and fine was such that Livius Salinator retired from Rome and lived in political isolation for more than seven years⁵⁵.

⁵² Piacentin 2022, pp. 79-93.

⁵³ It seemed to be distributed as a reward to whoever helped to win the battle. Piacentin 2022, pp. 97-100. Kay 2014, p. 31.

⁵⁴ Liv. 22.35.3 (on the repercussions for L. Aemilius Paullus); 27.34.3-7; 29.37.4; 29.37.13-15; Val. Max. 4.2.2; [Aur. Vict.] *De vir. Ill.* 50; Frontin. *Str.* 4.1.45. *De vir. Ill.* 50 says Livius was tried for *peculatus*, Frontinus *Str.* 4.1.45 claims it was because of the mismanagement of the spoils. See Piacentin 2022, p. 100.

⁵⁵ Salinator's fine is recorded by Suetonius *Tib.* 3. On the effect of the trial: Liv. 27.34.3-7.

The close timing of the episode with Megaleas, Crinon, and Leontios and the Roman case of Salinator should not be overlooked. In 218 BC, both Salinator and Leontios, victorious generals and high-profile political actors, were neutralized through a fine related to their supposed military conduct. It is unlikely that Philip was not aware of Salinator vicissitudes, if not directly, then at least through his advisor, Demetrius of Pharos, whom Salinator had defeated in Illyria⁵⁶. Indeed, Philip's awareness of and curiosity about the Romans is attested in the 217-15 epigraphic dossier from Larisa⁵⁷. The report collects two letters from Philip to the local *tagoi*, and two decrees from the Thessalian city of Larisa. It was depopulated because of the Aetolian incursions and the last months of the war, when Thessaly had taken the worst of it. Therefore, as the city needed new citizens for husbandry, Philip pressured the Larisians to extend their citizenship to a number of resident Thessalians or other Greeks. In the second letter, from 215, Philip described the Roman practice as an example to follow for the citizens of Larisa⁵⁸. Philip's information on the Romans was neither precise nor entirely correct, but he thought emulating Roman administrative procedures could improve the Greek and Macedonian ones. In light of the Larisian epigraphic reference to Roman administration, I deem it possible that Philip's political use of a fine to sideline Leontios and avert the threat of a mutiny by the Peltasts might have been influenced by his awareness of the Roman practice (however indirect and imprecise) of preferring fining to capital execution of a citizen.

Conclusions

In managing his army, Philip used four instruments of power: negotiations with high-ranking officers as a diplomatic strategy, the reinforcement or weakening of the interdependence between the king and the army as an economic strategy, cultural and ideological strategies enacted through public meetings, and finally the decision to eliminate those who publicly opposed the king's will. Notably, the use of financial leverage to influence officers and soldiers represents a novel approach. Although the Army Code established a system of fines to regulate the conduct of the troops, Philip further refined this instrument and employed money as a means of diminishing the influence of his opponents, thereby circumventing the use of lethal force. By replacing capital trials and punishments with monetary penalties, Philip was able to prevent the discontent of the army's elite corps from escalating. This was made possible by the fact that even when they did not rely on mercenaries, Hellenistic militaries were composed of professional soldiers who were not only socially, politically, and culturally aligned with their leadership, but also financially invested. The considerable resources and influence wielded by these professional corps

⁵⁶ On Demetrius see Coppola 1993.

⁵⁷ *Syll.*³ 543; *IG IX* 2.517. See recently Hannick 1968, pp. 97-104; Mari and Thornton 2016, pp. 139-195 and D'Agostini 2019, pp. 147-151.

⁵⁸ *Syll.*³ 543 ll. 26-39.

eventually posed a threat to Philip's leadership. Such groups were evidently the most invested in the war effort and demanded to be entitled to a substantial portion of the spoils. Collectively, they were capable of competing financially with the king. The role these groups played in the war effort and their access to resources gave them a significant degree of political influence within the monarchy, which Philip was unable to ignore or openly challenge.

The sources offer a multifaceted and dynamic portrayal of the Macedonian monarchy, wherein the king employed diverse strategies to impose his will or to co-opt other agents. It would appear that he was not always at liberty to deploy the instruments of power that he desired. Rather, he was compelled to engage in a process of negotiation and interaction with a diverse array of political actors, including military personnel, elite corps, foreign troops, officers, and the *philoï*. These actors were not to be overlooked, as they constituted the very foundation upon which the monarchy was built. Moreover, economic and resource considerations were of paramount importance in the Macedonian Hellenistic political system, influencing the distribution of political authority and power.

Ultimately, the parallels between the cases of Leontios and the Peltasts and that of Salinator lead us to consider the impact of alternative political paradigms and practices on Hellenistic monarchies. Such practices may have been derived from both eastern and western interactions, indicating that political and administrative strategies transcended the boundaries of ancient military institutions and were a constant factor in the reshaping of power in the Hellenistic Mediterranean.

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Abstract

In 218, Philip V, King of Macedonia, faced a dangerous mutiny. His elite corps, the Peltasts and Agema, felt they were being treated unfairly and were unhappy with their share of the spoils. In protest, they pulled down the doors and broke through the roof of the royal apartments, and the riot destroyed the quarters closest to the king's friends and the king himself, according to Polybius 5.25.1-3. The episode was the latest in a series of riots and acts of insubordination in the Macedonian army involving soldiers and some senior officers, Megaleas and Crinon, protected by Philip's *philos*, Leontios. In order to manage the growing tensions, Philip used various instruments of power. This paper is an analysis of these instruments, and in particular of the financial one. Philip used it in accordance with the common military code of the Macedonian army. However, he deliberately took it to an extreme. By applying to the episode theoretical instruments borrowed from modern political studies, the paper shows that the king resorted to a purposeful and multifaceted exercise of power to overcome incompatibility and secure compliance among the political actors involved.

Keywords: Antigonid, Macedonia, fine, military police, elite corps, Peltasts.

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From Alexandria to Helikon: King, Queen, and *Koinon* in the Valley of the Muses

by Alex McAuley

In this article I aim to reconsider the intersection of two principal institutions of power in Hellenistic world and the instruments through which they exercised that power: Hellenistic monarchies on the one hand, and the regional federations that figure so prominently in the geography of power in Hellenistic Greece on the other¹. To do so we shall turn to the local context of the Valley of the Muses in Boiotia which provides a fitting case study for this interaction between royalty and a federal league in support of a religious festival, the Mouseia, organised by the nearby *polis* of Thespiai. The subject of royal-federal relationships is, however, not without its preconceived notions that often remain implicit in the scholarship, particularly when it comes to the civic communities of the Greek Mainland. *Basileis*, *koina*, and *poleis* all come laden with historiographical baggage that that must be unpacked before turning to the Valley of the Muses in which many of these assumptions still loom large, thus a brief review of the scholarly history is in order. The 19th century model of the evolution of Greek society was largely characterized by the idea that tribal and ethnic affiliations gave way to archaic kingship, which in turn gave way to the more complex idea of communal sovereignty in the *polis*². The rise of Macedonian style monarchy then stifled the autonomy and agency of the *polis*, which led to its impoverishment and stagnation.³ In this analytical framework, the return of monarchy after the reign of Alexander the Great thus represented a step back towards an older, more oppressive system that was implicitly at odds with the idea of a civic community in control of its own fate. Hellenistic *basileia*, therefore, was thought to have come at the expense of the *eleutheria* and *autonomia* of Hellenistic *poleis*⁴.

¹ A draft of this article was presented at the workshop *Instruments of Power in the Hellenistic World. Gli strumenti del potere in età ellenistica* on 31 March 2023 at Università degli Studi di Bergamo, at the kind invitation of Prof.ssa Monica D'Agostini. I would like to thank her for organising the workshop along with the other participants for their invaluable contributions. I would also like to thank Prof Dr Hans Beck for sharing an early draft of his manuscript, and to AP Jeremy Armstrong here in Auckland for discussions of this paper.

² Droysen 1877 goes so far as to characterise the period by a transfer of sovereignty from the abstract civic community to the individual person of the monarch. Much of this follows the invective of Demosthenes (9. 26-29) *au pied de la lettre*.

³ On this Glotz 1928, p. 428 famously declared that the Battle of Chaeronea “donnent une date précise à ce grand événement, la fin de la cité grecque”.

⁴ For this old orthodoxy, see Giovannini 1993, p. 266 who most clearly articulates the idea that Greek civic communities were in irrevocable decline due to the power of Hellenistic monarchs.

Until the latter half of the twentieth century, the Greek federation was understood as means by which Greek *poleis* could unite in order to create a bloc of power whose influence was greater than the sum of its constituent parts⁵. In the face of Hellenistic monarchy, the federation represented the only hope for groups of *poleis* to preserve their *autonomia* and *eleutheria*. Monarchy and royalty, in this construct, are fundamentally antithetical, and Hellenistic *koina* are the instruments by which the latter sought to counteract the strength of the former. This assumption has laid at the core of federal scholarship for much of the subject's history⁶. E. Freeman, writing with the recent memory of Greek unification and the contemporary shadow of the American Civil War, understood federalism as the means by which to restore freedom in a country that was struck by both internal division and foreign domination⁷. The perceived tension between federalism and monarchy also aligns neatly with the view of the Hellenistic Greek Mainland as being divided and conquered by the Antigonids – a view that remained prevalent in scholarship until the early 2000s and in many ways is still difficult to extricate. Indeed, Larsen wrote in 1968 that even though the Hellenistic monarchs did not cause the disappearance of federalism, the sort of leagues that we see after Chaeronea represented 'a different federalism', one in which the *koina* of the Greek Mainland had to contend with monarchy either by counteracting it through combining forces or by soliciting royal support in order to strengthen their position in struggles against other federations⁸. In Larsen's framework, these power players then invited Roman intervention into their regional conflicts with such profound effect for the Greek Mainland⁹. Rather than being a mechanism of regional collaboration, in the Hellenistic period *koina* are something of a means of collective bargaining with a more powerful overlord.

This broader scholarly context is relevant to our discussion because it tends to shape how individual pieces of evidence are understood: otherwise ambiguous inscriptions containing royal correspondence such as those from Thespiiai can be read with an ominous or adversarial tone if we assume an oppositional relationship between kings and *poleis*, in precisely the same way that M. Feyel in 1942 viewed a robust corpus of civic and federal epigraphy as fatalistically confirming Polybius' allegations of regional decline and decadence. When Polybius is removed from the equation a very different picture of Boiotia's reginal vitality emerges from the evidence, just as viewing royal-civic

⁵ See Beck & Funke 2015 for an overview of current approaches to Greek Federalism, and McInerney 2013.

⁶ On this assumed opposition as discussed by Busolt, Swoboda, Ehrenberg, and Larsen, see Beck & Funke 2015, 5-9.

⁷ Freeman 1893. This summary is drawn from Beck & Funke 2015's summary of the historiography of Greek federalism. See also Lehmann 2015 on the influence of Greek federalism on the framing of the American constitution.

⁸ Larsen 1968, pp. 303-306, where he presents a paradigm of struggle among the federations for dominance in which the monarch becomes a key player as someone whose allegiance can shift the balance of power. The alternative is the need for federations to unite with one another to fight against monarchical power, i.e. Larsen 1968, p. 305-315.

⁹ See Larsen 1968, p. 363ff.

interaction through the lens of mutually beneficial collaboration brings a very different dynamic to the fore. In this article, I want to get away from this oppositional understanding of the relationship between kings and *koina* and instead follow in the steps of recent scholarship that takes a more nuanced view. I aim to shift the focus away from a purely institutional or structural understanding of this interaction between royalty and federalism, and instead consider how – i.e. through what mechanisms – this interaction took place. The inspiration behind this approach comes in large part from a recent volume in honour of E. Carney which makes a compelling case for the need to consider the role played by interpersonal relationships and dialogues in the Hellenistic world¹⁰. Accordingly, in what follows I will consider how these institutional relationships between Hellenistic monarchies and federations are mediated through personal connections.

To do so this article will focus on Hesiod's homeland in the foothills of Mount Helikon in the Valley of the Muses near Thespiai in Boiotia, and use the development of the games of the Mouseia in the second half of the third century as a compelling case study for better understanding both the softer side of the relationship between kings and *koina* and the mechanisms through which it was fostered¹¹. Before turning to this, though, a few comments should be made about how our understanding of this interaction between monarchy and federalism in the Greek Mainland has shifted in recent years to show that Boiotia was by no means the exception that proves the rule of royal-federal interaction. We shall then turn to how the Ptolemies involved themselves in the religious landscape of the Boiotian league through their patronage of various local festivals, before examining how Thespiai sits in the longer trajectory of Ptolemaic interaction with Boiotian federalism¹². In the process, I hope to bring to light a more personal dynamic of the instruments of power used by Hellenistic kings, queens, and *koina*. As with so much of ancient politics this relationship was mediated by direct interpersonal connections that bound otherwise separate institutions. The interpersonal bond, rather than the institutional structure, thus becomes the real instrument of power in this interaction between Alexandria and Mt Helikon.

1. *Rethinking the relationship between basileus and koinon*

As mentioned above, the interaction between Hellenistic royalty and *koina* is often characterized as being either coercive or outright antagonistic, and these assumptions must be examined before broadening our perspective somewhat. As is usually the case when it comes to Hellenistic kingship, Philip II casts

¹⁰ See especially the introduction by D'Agostini, Anson, and Pownall 2021, and the volume's review by McAuley in «JHS», 142, pp. 415-416.

¹¹ Roesch 1965 remains a principal reference work on Hellenistic Thespiai, as does Roesch's compendium of inscriptions *I. Thesp.* published online in 2009.

¹² For a helpful overview of the Boiotian *koinon* see Beck & Ganter 2015, and Schachter 2019.

a very long shadow over the contemporary understanding of royal-federal interaction. For the latter case, the league of Corinth established by Philip II at the end of his conquest of the Greek Mainland is the example *par excellence*. As B. Smarczyk's structural analysis of the League has revealed, this *koinon* was essentially a mechanism through which Philip II sought to maintain both his own hegemony over the Greek Mainland and peace among its constituent states¹³. The League thus becomes the instrument through which royal authority is organized over Greek *poleis* through a system, as Smarczyk puts it, 'that corresponded to the expectations and "moral" standards of his [Philip II's] time'¹⁴. The position of *hēgemōn* at the top of the League thus provided Philip with a judicial backing and structure for exerting monarchical authority over all of its constituent members in the defence of the *koinē eirēnē*. Essentially the same paradigm is at work with the subsequent Hellenic League of Antigonos Monophthalmos and Demetrios Poliorcetes, and the same mechanism was revived by Antigonos III Doson in 224 with a similar structure, though this was somewhat more problematic¹⁵. In these, then, we find the institutional place of the king at the top of the federal structure in order to cement the influence of the former over the latter in a system that can be characterised as instrumental at best, or exploitative at worst.

If the relationship between kings and *koina* was not exploitative then it was often viewed as being inherently antagonistic, and here only a few examples will suffice. According to Larsen's reading of the situation in the Peloponnese during the latter half of the third century BC, Demetrios II sought to prop up the regimes of tyrants as a means of balancing the power of the Achaean League.¹⁶ Following the analysis of K. Freitag, the region of Akarnania and its on-again-off-again federation were caught in the power struggle between Philip V and the Aitolian League¹⁷. Philip V managed to wrench several cities away from the Aitolians, only for the region to again be identified as a target zone for Aitolian expansion with Roman support according to Livy¹⁸. Financial contributions of Hellenistic kings to various leagues are likewise often viewed through the lens of *realpolitik* in this competitive environment. Benefactions such as those by Ptolemy V to the Achaian League or Eumenes to the Achaian League are often viewed as essentially bribes or payoffs with a practical motivation¹⁹.

¹³ Smarczyk 2015, pp. 451-458 on this league.

¹⁴ Smarczyk 2015, p. 454.

¹⁵ Smarczyk 2015, pp. 458-464 on these Antigonid Hellenic Leagues. On the League of Antigonos III Doson see the authoritative study of Scherberich 2009.

¹⁶ Larsen 1968, pp. 305-308.

¹⁷ Freitag 2015, pp. 77-82.

¹⁸ Livy 26.24.11-15, as discussed by Freitag 2015, p. 77.

¹⁹ On Ptolemy and the Achaian League see Polyb. 22.9.3 and 24.6.3, as discussed by Post 2019, p.106. On this broader interaction between the Ptolemies and the Achaian and the Aitolian Leagues see Grabowski 2012. Polyb. 22.7.3 mentions Eumenes' gift of 720 talents to the *synodos* of the League in 185 BC. See Rizakis 2015 on the structure of the League more generally.

But this antagonism and coercion between Kings and *koina* is only part of the story, and recent studies have led us to view the structural interaction between royalty and federalism in a very different light. Several of the contributions to the 2015 edited volume of H. Beck and P. Funke reveal that rather than being antithetical, in several contexts royal authority had always been part of regional federal structures. In Molossia and Epiros, federal systems emerged out of the combination of a religious amphictyony and a tribal monarchy. Their institutions almost always featured the king prominently, and there does not seem to be an inherent tension in the interaction between the region's *ethnē*, its sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona, and the Molossian kings²⁰. M. Hatzopoulos has shown that far from being bucolically governed by a king surrounded by his tribal *hetairoi*, Argead Macedonia was rather characterised by a delicate interplay among Macedon's kings, urban communities, and regional administration. The constitution that emerges 'combined a strong kingship, religious as much as military, an aristocracy centred around the court... and a sort of democracy both on the "national" and the local level'²¹. The development of the League of the *nesiōtai* in the Aegean always occurred in the context of different monarchical powers vying for dominance, thus a royal-federal interface was consistently built into its institutional structure, as did many of the often-shadowy Cretan federal states²². This revised picture of the relationship between Hellenistic monarchy and federalism has led K. Buraselis to argue in 2021 that rather than being oppositional, kings and *koina* could instead be understood as symbiotic creatures who both benefited from and depended on each other in the structural geography of the period²³. When we discard assumptions of antagonism or exploitation in federal-royal relationships of the period, a very different view of the dialogue between the Ptolemies and the member states of the Boiotian *koinon* can be glimpsed.

2. Thespiiai and the Ptolemies

With all of this in mind we now turn to our case study of the relatively humble city of Thespiiai in the second half of the third century to see precisely how this softer interaction between king and *koinon* plays out through personal ties²⁴. Thespiiai, a *polis* in south-western Boiotia, was a community that had long been part of the Boiotian League both before and after it was dominated by Thebes²⁵. Following the analysis of H. Beck and A. Ganter, by the middle of the third century the centre of gravity in the Boiotian League had shifted away

²⁰ Meyer 2015 for an overview of this, especially pp. 308-314.

²¹ Hatzopoulos 2015, pp. 339, and the rest of his contribution for this interaction between the king and the local administrative structures of Macedon.

²² Buraselis 2015 on the *nesiōtai* and Chaniotis 2015 on the Cretan example.

²³ Buraselis 2021.

²⁴ On the archaeological history of the region and the findings of the long-running regional survey near Thespiiai, see Bintliff et al. 1999 and 2007.

²⁵ Again see Roesch 1965 and the introduction to *I.Thesp.* for an overview of the community's history.

from Thebes and towards the prominent sanctuaries of the region: the sanctuary of Athenia Itonia near Koroneia, the temple of Poseidon at Onchestos, among several others²⁶. Thespiiai counted among them given that the sanctuary of the valley of the muses at the foot of Mt Helikon was certainly in its local orbit. It is therefore more accurate to speak of the Boiotian League as a regional *koinon* mediated through a network of sanctuaries rather than a monolithic institution with a capital. The salient consequence of this that if one wanted to gain access to the League's structures of power, then its regional sanctuaries were an excellent starting point. The prominence of the region's sanctuaries in its federal structures of power led to what Knoepfler identified as a renaissance and expansion of its cults and festivals during the third century in particular²⁷. This case study alone stands as a compelling counterweight to the prevailing notion that such regional cults declined into irrelevance during the period in favour of new 'imported' deities²⁸.

Between 250-200 BC we see the festivals of the Pamboiotia, the Ptoia, and the Basileia massively expanded along with the sanctuaries that housed them²⁹. Thespiiai was certainly no exception to this wave, and it is in this context that we find the Ptolemies becoming involved in the local world of this corner of the Boiotian *koinon*³⁰. S. Barbantani aptly identified the key vector of this engagement when she wrote 'tra l'Egitto et la Beozia esisteva inoltre uno speciale *trait-d'union* culturale et religioso: il culto delle Muse'³¹. There are diverging analyses of some of the particulars of Ptolemaic patronage of the Muses in Boiotia, but this reconstruction draws heavily on the contributions of A. Schachter's *Cults of Boiotia* and his 2016 chapter, along with D. Knoepfler in 1996 and S. Barbantani in 2000³². The basic series of events is as follows: at some point in the 220s the games of the Mouseia were re-instituted and

²⁶ Beck & Ganter 2015, pp. 149-157. See also Ganter 2013 on the cultic dimension of Boiotian ethnogenesis.

²⁷ Writing on the decade of 230-220, Knoepfler 1996, p. 166 states that this time 'se caractérise, en Béotie même, par une réactivation très remarquable des cultes civiques'. Barbantani 2000, p. 152 also links this to the broader development of festivals in Boiotia.

²⁸ This calls to mind Walbank's famous assertion that in the Hellenistic Period 'old certainties had gone and though ancient rites were still zealously performed in the conviction that what was traditional should be observed, many people were at bottom agnostics or even atheists. The observance of established rituals must have meant little to many worshippers' (Walbank 1981, pp. 208-209).

²⁹ See the relevant entries in Schachter 1981-1994 on these festivals, especially p. 2.150-159 on the Mouseion of Thespiiai. Roesch 1982, p. 126 on the sanctuary of the Muses and Knoepfler 1996 on the development of the games of the Mouseia. On the Ptoia, see Müller 2014, and on the Basileia see Schachter 1981-1994, p. 3.116-117. On the festival of the Pamboiotia and its federal connotations see also Schachter 1978 and 1994.

³⁰ Knoepfler 1996. Also Barbantani 2000, p. 152.

³¹ Barbantani 2000, p. 152.

³² Knoepfler 1996, Schachter 1981-1994, volume 2 pages 150 ff, and Schachter 2016, 344-371. See also Feyel's reconstruction in 1942, pp. 88-132. Schachter's 2016 chapter on the competitions is a reprint and revision of his 2010-2011 article on the same topic in *Rudiae* 22-23, pp. 29-61.

included thymelic competitions attested beyond Thespiai³³. At some point in the early 210s BC, five of the thymelic competitions were elevated to stephanitic status – *aulētēs*, *aulodēs*, *kitharistēs* and *kitharōidos*, and epic poetry. *Theōroi* and the involvement of the Nemean and Isthmian *technitai* are also attested at this point. Around 209 Thespiai and the League decided to make the games pentaeteric and expanded the competition to include dramatic categories with larger prize monies³⁴. These were in turn advertised with *theōroi*, and the first celebration of the expanded Mouseia would have taken place around 204 BC. Later in the 170s BC the theatre was expanded, and a stone *skēnē* installed. The overall trajectory is thus the revival and expansion of the games of the Mouseia by the city of Thespiai, which in turn elevated the perceived status of the games and expanded the scope and number of the competitions involved. The sanctuary itself was accordingly expanded in order to accommodate this³⁵.

An inscription found on a marble block in 1895 tells part of the story of the instruments by which these local Boiotian games were expanded. The inscription contains a letter in the Boiotian dialect written by either the Boiotian League or the city of Thespiai – Schachter prefers the League – from c. 225/220 in which the games in honour of the muses are expanded³⁶. Lines 8-10 of the inscription, however, refer to an earlier series of events in which letters from the king and queen had been received and recorded. Although the stone itself is mutilated, the essence of its meaning can still be determined: at some point in the past the queen (and presumably the king as well) had written to the *koinon* and to Thespiai to support the establishment of the thymelic games. Based on letter spacings M. Feyel and L. Robert believed that this referred to a king and queen named Ptolemy and Arsinoe, and probably an heir whose name cannot be determined³⁷. Given the conventions of Ptolemaic onomastics, it is safe to assume that the heir was also named Ptolemy in the perpetuation of the dynastic trend. This inscription combined with other fragmentary letters of an unspecified king to the Boiotian *koinon* and the city of Thespiai leaves us with the very likely conclusion that with the support of the League, Thespiai had sought and received support and financing for the games of the Muses from

³³ Following Schachter 2016, Appendix 4 (p. 371), which provides the alternative chronologies. In this article I follow Schachter's identification of three stages of the games' development. The narrative is drawn from Schachter 2016, pp. 346-353.

³⁴ Schachter 2016, p. 351.

³⁵ See also Barbantani 2000, p. 147-150 on the development and evolution of the games in the context of other Ptolemaic patronage of sanctuaries linked to the Muses.

³⁶ I Thesp. 155, text restored by Feyel 1942. The inscription is also SEG 46.536. The relevant lines (following I Thesp) are 8-11:

τῶ<v> προγόνων, ἐπιδικουόντας τὰ τε ἀποκρίματα τὰ γε]-
 γραμμένα πρότερον πῶθ' ἄμε παρ τῷ βασιλείῳ Πτολεμήῳ(?)]
 10 κῆ τὰς βασιλίσσ[ας Ἀρσινόας(?) κῆ τῷ βασιλείῳ — —]
 κῆ τὰ παρ τὰς πόλ[ιους προγεγονότα φιλόανθρωπα πὸ]-

³⁷ Schachter 2016, pp. 356-357. The full publication history of the decree is found in the commentary to I.Thesp 155 = (I. Thesp. volume 4, p. 18).

Ptolemy III and Berenike II at some point in the last decade of their reign³⁸. We shall return to this dynamic below.

The support of Ptolemy III and Berenike II for the games of the Mouseia through the *koinon* and the city of Thespiiai by all accounts provided the Mouseia with a firm foundation on which to build. Roughly a decade later we have another document from Thespiiai that reveals more about how the games were further publicized and expanded. A limestone block dating to around 215 BC contains a decree of the Isthmian and Nemean *technitai*³⁹. The decree records that the *agōnothetēs* Hierokleos had sent letters from the *koinon* of the Boiotians and the city of Thespiiai requesting that the *technitai* recognize a change in the status of some of the competitions to stephanitic or crown games⁴⁰. Specifically, the five thymelic categories of *auletēs*, *aulodēs*, *katharistēs*, *kitharōidos*, and epic poetry are upgraded to stephanitic status, and the *technitai* for their part are happy to recognize this⁴¹. There are a few things to note about this decree⁴². First, on a procedural level it is revealing here to see the cooperation between the league, one of its member states, and the *technitai* in the promotion of this local festival - all of which occurs in response to something that was first enabled by royal benefaction. This is a fascinating instance of several different Hellenistic instruments of power coming together in a collaborative – and mutually beneficial manner. The same stone also contains an Athenian decree accepting three of the categories of competition – epic poetry, *aulodēs*, and *auletēs* – as being isopythic as well as stephanitic⁴³. A further network is going to be established as well: the letter requests that the *technitai* approve a

³⁸ The other royal letter to Thespiiai is Schachter 2016, dossier inscription 1a = *I. Thesp.* 154. Note that the inscriptions *I. Thesp.* 152, 153, and 154 are all royal letters to the city.

³⁹ *I. Thesp.* 156, c.215, *SEG* 46.536, Schachter 2016, appendix 1 document 3. The relevant lines are 1-16:

ὁ θυμηλικὸς ἀγῶν στεφανίτης πρῶτον ἐγένετο·
col. II.2:
ἀγωνοθετοῦντος Ἱεροκλέος, ἱερέως δὲ
τῶν Μουσῶν Μνασίωνος, ἀπὸ δὲ
τῶν τεχνιτῶν Αἰσχύλου, καὶ δόγμα-
5 τα περὶ τοῦ ἀγῶνος τῶν Μουσειῶν.
τεχνιτῶν· ἔδοξε τοῖς τεχνίταις
τοῖς ἐξ Ἴσθμοῦ καὶ Νεμέας· ἐπειδὴ
παραγενόμενος πρῶτον τῆς
10 Ἱεροκλῆς παρὰ τῆς πόλεως Θεσ-
πιέων καὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῶν Βοι-
ωτῶν ψηφίσματά τε ἀπέδω-
κεν καὶ ἐπιστολὴν ἐν ἧι παρε-
κάλει τοὺς τεχνίτας, τῆς
πόλεως τῶν Θεσπιέων προ-
15 κεχειρισμένης τὸ ἀγῶνα
τὸν ἐν τῷ Ἐλικῶνι

⁴⁰ See also Barbantani 2000, pp. 147-148.

⁴¹ ll.16-23 of the inscription.

⁴² Drawing from Schachter 2016, pp. 347-351's comments on what he identified as the 'second phase' of the competition and Barbantani 2000, pp. 148-149.

⁴³ *I. Thesp* 156 (*bis*) and 157, Schachter 2016, document 4.

change in the year in which the Mouseia are celebrated in order to give the city and *koinon* time to send embassies to various cities and *koina* announcing the change through their theoretic networks. This must have been successful, as we have a list of victors from the Mouseia that can be dated to 209 BC by the federal and city archons in which the competitions mentioned above are recorded as being stephanitic – therefore these victors would have won crowns and cash prizes, while the other competitors would have won cash prizes alone⁴⁴. All of this, again, must in some form spring from the funds and support given by the Ptolemies.

But the benefaction the Ptolemies and their support of the Mouseia was not simply a one-off affair, and neither was it limited to one generation of the dynasty. In the same year of 209 BC a decree of Thespiai details a benefaction made by Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III in support of the sanctuary of the Muses⁴⁵. The royal pair are recorded as having given 25,000 drachmae from the proceeds of a consecrated fund in Egypt. The city of Thespiai then decided to purchase lands using these funds and lease them out on certain terms, and the proceeds from this rental income would yield 1,701 drachmae per year⁴⁶. The same document mentions that by this point the games of Mouseia had been expanded to include dramatic competitions, and were made pentaeteric – i.e. they took place every four years. Over the four year cycle, then, this benefaction from the Ptolemies would yield 6,804 drachmas, which according to W. Slater’s calculations in 2010 would be enough to cover the cost of a dramatic agon⁴⁷. Thus, with the support of the Ptolemies over two generations of the dynasty, the fully expanded and revitalised games of the Mouseia would have first been celebrated in their new pentaeteric and dramatic form in 204 BC⁴⁸. At this point we can pause for a moment and think about the instruments of power through which this was achieved. A. Schachter provides an apt summary of this process as he writes ‘what we have been dealing with is a process by which the polis of Thespiai with support from the Boiotian federal government and the backing of Isthmian and Nemean technitai organised and developed over a period of years a formally structured agon’⁴⁹. As mentioned earlier, in this process we find the intersection of federalism, *polis* institutions, regional sanctuaries, the networks of *theōria* and *theōrodokia*, along

⁴⁴ Schachter 2016, pp. 348-349. The victors’ lists from 209 are *I. Thesp* 161 and 163.

⁴⁵ *I. Thesp* 62, the relevant lines mentioning the Ptolemaic benefaction are 1-8.:

θεο[ί. ἐ]πι[ί Φιλωνος(?)]
 ἄρχοντος, βασιλεὺς Πτολεμῆος βασιλείος Πτο-
 λεμῆω κῆ βασιλίσσα Ἀ[ρσινόα συνεσσαπέστι]-
 λαν ἐς τῶν καθιρωμένων τῆς Μώσης(?) τεμνῶν
 5 τὰς ποθόδως ἀργυρίων δραχ[μὰς {825,000 dr.}]⁸. ἔδοξε τῇ πό-
 λι οὐτ[ῶν] τῶν χρεμάτων γὰ[ρ] ἰαράς ὠνευσάσθη]
 κατ τὸ ψάφισμα τῷ δάμῳ

⁴⁶ Schachter 2016, p. 351, and Barbantani 2000, pp. 148-151.

⁴⁷ following Slater 2010, p. 263, cited by Schachter 2016, p. 351. See also Barbantani 2000, pp. 51-152.

⁴⁸ Schachter 2016, p. 352, and note 22.

⁴⁹ Schachter 2016, p. 357.

with the *technitai*, which all coalesce and collaborate in a fairly humble corner of the much larger Hellenistic world. The only point that I would add to A. Schachter's summary here is the key role of Ptolemaic royalty in provided the funds with which to put this entire process into motion.

3. *Interpersonal Interactions among basileus, polis, and koinon*

In and of itself the experience of Thespiiai is an illustrative example of mutually beneficial royal and federal interaction in the Hellenistic world, but there is somewhat more to the story. We must next consider the mechanisms through which this interaction between kings, queens, and *koinon* unfolds in the context of Boiotia. In the process a basic question presents itself: by what means does a Boiotian city like Thespiiai go about seeking – and receiving – a donation from the Ptolemaic monarch in Alexandria? How exactly does this long-term relationship between Alexandria and Mt Helikon develop? The answer lies in the role played by personal relationships in the Hellenistic world, and I would argue that this is precisely the means by which the interaction between the Ptolemies and Thespiiai is ultimately brokered. There are two such relationships at work: the first is between the civic community of Thespiiai and the individual Ptolemaic king and queen, and the second is between individual courtiers of the Ptolemies and the civic communities of the region. We shall consider each in turn.

The relationship between a given region or city and the reigning king and queen can take many forms and be mediated through many channels. A recent study of S. Tufano on local historiography in Boiotia begins to shed some light on how Thespiiai would have appealed to the Ptolemaic court and monarch⁵⁰. Following in the footsteps of Schachter, Tufano does not think it is a coincidence that at precisely the same time as we see Thespiiai and the *koinon* approaching the Ptolemaic court for support, we also see a flurry of literary activity in the region. According to Tufano, the appearance of three local authors must be connected to these overtures to the Ptolemaic court made by the city and the broader region⁵¹. At the end of the third century, we find attestations of a work by Aphrodisios and/or Euphemos of Thespiiai on his hometown, Περὶ τῆς πατρίδος, and another author from the city, Amphion of Thespiiai, wrote a history of the sanctuary of the muses entitled Περὶ τοῦ ἐν Ἐλικῶνι Μουσειῶν. Nikokrates of Boiotia was either from the city or an expert who wrote of it in his work titled either Περὶ Βοιωτίας or Βοιωτικά. The presentation of these manuscripts to the Ptolemaic court and the Mouseion in Alexandria would not only have piqued the intellectual interest of the court but would also have created a link between the Mouseia of Helikon and Alexandria. All of this of course would also serve to stroke the Ptolemaic ego by further emphasizing their connection with the Muses, which of course had been carefully cultivated since the time of Ptolemy II.

⁵⁰ Tufano 2019, pp. 54-58.

⁵¹ Tufano 2019, pp. 54-62.

There is also a hint of a more personal approach made by the Boiotians towards the Ptolemies. Based on a fragmentary papyrus, it seems that Thespiai and Orchomenos sought to win the support of Arsinoe III by sending her an elegiac poem, only a few lines of which survive but that still give us a sense of the context⁵². These two regional sanctuaries which figured prominently in the Boiotian federation seem to have made a direct personal approach to Arsinoe for her support of the muses and the Charites, respectively, in return for which the queen perhaps figures on several coin types minted at roughly the same time in Thespiai as they were in Orchomenos⁵³. Pausanias later records (9.31.1) that a bronze statue of an unspecified Arsinoe – either II or III – could be found in Helikon, likely therefore in the sanctuary of the Muses⁵⁴. All of this, of course, serves to create a more personal and direct connection between the monarch and the region along with its federation, and reveals a deep attunement to not just the currents of brute force and authority in the Hellenistic world but also, more subtle directions of power and thought.

The second means by which the *koinon* and its members sought royal support was through cultivating a relationship with an influential figure at the court, and it is here that the infamous Sosibios, son of Dioskourides comes into the picture⁵⁵. Sosibios was regent for Ptolemy IV at the time of his accession and by all accounts the *de facto* ruler of the kingdom who arranged for the death of several members of the royal family when the new king came to the throne⁵⁶. Earlier in his life Sosibios had maintained close ties to the Greek mainland and was attested as a victor at several athletic competitions like the Isthmian, Nemean, and Panathenaic games, to the point that in around 240 Callimachus composed an elegy about his victories, the Delians honoured him with *proxenia*, and Knidos put up a statue of him⁵⁷. Interestingly, Sosibios is attested as having been given *proxenia* by two cities in Boiotia – Orchomenos and Tanagra – at roughly the same time as the games of Thespiai and Orchomenos were being expanded with royal support⁵⁸. Regardless of whether he was given *proxenia* during the reign of Ptolemy III or Ptolemy IV, the institution was a means of creating a personal link between a given community and an external individual – in this case a highly influential member of the Ptolemaic court⁵⁹. The fact that Sosibios came to fame during the reign

⁵² On the elegy see Barbantani 2000. The papyrus itself is *PHeid* 189 = SH 959, line 3 of which has the name 'Arsinoe'. Lines 13-17 mention Thespiai and Orchomenos. This is also included as document 11 in Schachter 2016, p. 267.

⁵³ For instance, *SNG Cop* 406; *BCD* 612 in Thespiai, *BMC* 39 for Orchomenos, See also Arsinoe III on *Svoronos* 1161; *SNG Cop* 649-650; *BMC* 5 in Alexandria.

⁵⁴ On the identification of this see Barbantani 2000, p. 154 note 109.

⁵⁵ See Schachter 2016, Appendix 2 (pp. 368-369) and Barbantani 2000, 157-158 on these proxenic links.

⁵⁶ On the career of Sosibios see Hölbl 2001, 127-134.

⁵⁷ Hölbl 2001, p. 127 and Barbantani 2000, pp. 157-158. The elegy in honour of him is Callimachus fr. 384, *sōsibiou nike*

⁵⁸ Schachter 2016, p. 368. *IG VII.507* contains a decree of Tanagra for Sosibios, and *IG VII.3166* from Orchomenos.

⁵⁹ Based on the archon's patronymic in the decree from Orchomenos, Schachter 2016,

of Ptolemy III and was a political force to be reckoned with during the reign Ptolemy IV and Arsinoe III in turns implies that perhaps he is the bridge that allowed Thespiiai and Orchomenos to seek the support of two generations of the Ptolemaic family, all with the backing of the *koinon*. The *koinon* itself later would use *proxenia* given to a courtier as a means of creating a relationship with Antiochos III, according to John Fossey⁶⁰. Indeed, there are other citizens of Alexandria and Canopus who are attested as having been granted *proxenia* by Thespiiai itself and Tanagra as well⁶¹. With all of this in mind it perhaps comes as little surprise that Ptolemy IV himself was attested as a victor in the games of Zeus Basileus at Lebadeia, which was one of the most prominent festivals in the Boiotian federal calendar at this point⁶². Where better to see the intersection of Ptolemaic ruler cult with Boiotian federal prominence than the games of the *basileia*?

There are two concluding thoughts that emerge from this reconsideration of the dynamic interaction among kings, queens, and *koina*. The first is that when we place this interplay among the Ptolemies, the League, and Thespiiai back into the broader strategic picture it is clear that this was not done purely out of *noblesse oblige* on the part of the Ptolemies. In around 225 Ptolemy III had deserted the Achaian League of which he had previously been hegemon in favour of supporting Kleomenes of Sparta, and this would not have been popular among the Boiotians given their alliance with the Achaians⁶³. This Ptolemaic largesse in Boiotia was a softer means of making overtures to the Boiotian League and perhaps mended the fences that were destroyed by Kleomenes. Having the support of the Boiotian *koinon*, or at least a good relationship with them, was certainly beneficial to the Ptolemies. But this is only part of the picture, and when we consider the religious and ideological milieu in which we see this relationship between the *koinon*, Thespiiai, and the Ptolemies develops then we begin to realise that there must be more at work here than simply cold hard politics. Instead, we find another example of the symbiosis between kings and *koina* that was described by Kostas Buraselis⁶⁴. All of this is a far cry from the sense of hegemony and coercion that traditionally dominates our understanding of this royal-federal interaction.

T. Howe has recently discussed the idea of the burden or obligation of precedent among the Hellenistic dynasties: particularly in the Ptolemaic context, the actions of one royal couple set the standard and expectations to which

p. 368 thinks that both decrees could have been passed during the reign of Ptolemy III. Regardless. We have here clear links between Sosibios and Boiotia which can be reasonably dated to the 220s, precisely the same time as the re-organisation of the festival.

⁶⁰ Fossey 2014, p. 6 describing the proxenic honours of a certain Ἐὐδάμος Νίκωνος' who was said have the ear of the king. Eudamos was also honoured by Argos, Rhodes, Byzantium, Chalcedon, and Cyzicus.

⁶¹ Barbantani 2000, p. 157, and Fossey 2019, pp. 10 and 110.

⁶² Fossey 2014, p. 109.

⁶³ Schachter 2016, pp. 356-357.

⁶⁴ Buraselis 2021.

subsequently royal couples must conform⁶⁵. From this perspective we must also acknowledge that the relationship between the Ptolemies and Boiotia was something passed down and elaborated over subsequent generations of the dynasty. Hans Beck has recently reconstructed the Ptolemies' longer involvement with the Boiotian League stretching back to the *theoi philadelphoi*, and this allows us to view their interaction with Thespiiai against a much broader backdrop⁶⁶. Before 281 Arsinoe II, then married to Lysimachus, was honoured by Thebes for her *kalokagathia* in supporting the restoration of the city⁶⁷. A few years later, now married to Ptolemy II, she and her brother-husband were initiated into the mysteries of the Kabiroi in Samothrace, and the pair gave generously to the sanctuary with both money and monuments. There also happened to be a prominent sanctuary of the Kabiroi outside Thebes which was massively expanded thanks to some sort of royal support in the 270s.⁶⁸ All fingers point towards the Ptolemies as the source of this Boiotian benefaction, triangulated through the shared cult of the Kabiroi at Samothrace⁶⁹. So perhaps Ptolemy III and Ptolemy IV then were not spending money in Boiotia purely in response to immediately pressing political or strategic concerns, but rather because it had become Ptolemaic custom to do so⁷⁰. This relationship between the Ptolemies and the Boiotian *koinon* as it manifests itself in the Valley of the Muses near Thespiiai is not then yet another episode of the cold coercion of a Hellenistic federation by a domineering Hellenistic monarch, but rather just another episode in a much longer relationship and much longer dialogue between this particular king and queen, and this particular *koinon*. And beyond neither being transgressive nor oppositional, their relationship was ultimately created and renewed by interpersonal relationships among the instruments of power that bound the Hellenistic world.

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⁶⁵ This was presented as part of the Distributed Conference *Power, Royal Agency, and Elite Women in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* during a session held on 4 March 2022. The presentation was entitled *Tangled up in Things; or, Negotiating Agency and Power in a World of Human-Object Entanglement*, and a publication is forthcoming.

⁶⁶ Beck 2024, pagination forthcoming. I thank Hans Beck for sharing an early version of the manuscript with me. The relevant section for this discussion is '3. Boiotia: Immersion in regional exchange', and the current pagination is 297ff.

⁶⁷ The text, according to Beck 2024, p. 297, survives in two fragments held in Thebes, and reads ':[Πτ]ολεμαί[ι]ο[ς] Λυσιμάχου | [ὑπ]έρ βασιλέως [Λ]υσιμάχου | [Αρ]σινόην τὴν αὐτοῦ | [γυν]αῖκα καλοκ[α]γαθίας ἔνεκ[α].'

⁶⁸ With royal benefaction recorded at IG VII 2419.

⁶⁹ Beck 2024, pp. 297-300.

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Abstract

This article uses the interaction between the Ptolemaic Royal Family and the Valley of the Muses in Boiotia as a case study for examining two dynamics: first, the relationship between Hellenistic royal and Hellenistic federations; and second, the role played by interpersonal interaction in mediating these relationships. After reconsidering the dominant assumption that koina and basileis were antagonistic and often antithetical institutions of power, the article then summarises recent research on royal-federal interaction that suggests a more symbiotic relationship. From there, a reconstruction of Ptolemaic involvement with the city of Thespiiai in Boiotia and the nearby sanctuary of the Valley of the Muses at the foot of Mt Helikon follows. The reinvigoration and expansion of the games of the Mouseia is considered in response to recurrent acts of royal patronage, as well as the support of the Boiotian koinon. From there, the precise mechanisms through which this benefaction was brokered

are identified as first the relationship between the city of Thespias and the Ptolemaic royal couple, and second between the region of Boiotia and the influential courtier Sosibios. In sum, this article argues that Ptolemaic benefaction in the Valley of the Muses was a mutually beneficial example of royal interaction with a regional federation and one of its constituent communities, and that interpersonal relationships were the means by which this was developed.

Keywords: Boiotia, Thespias, monarchy, federalism, Ptolemies, festival competitions, Mouseia.

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Antiochos III: Soft Power in War and Diplomacy

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In a conference devoted to the oriental politics of Antiochos III held in Nancy in 2016¹, I began my paper by referring to the Chinese strategist Sun Tzu (VI-V cent. BC). He is the alleged author of a treatise on warfare that was organized in its present form around the IV century BC. The work attributed to Sun Tzu was composed during the period known as the Warring States (481-221), a historical phase in which China was divided into seven kingdoms in a state of permanent rivalry. In his treatise, Sun Tzu invited military leaders to adopt a strategy similar to the behavior of water². Just as water adapts to any container and always assumes new forms according to its container, the army must adapt to any condition by changing its strategy according to the circumstances. Therefore, the secret of victory lies in a manifold strategy where field battle is not always the best way to achieve victory. Thus, a good general was expected to avoid confrontations as much as possible and to have more recourse to stratagems to subdue the enemy without crossing swords³.

If we turn our attention to the reign of Antiochos III (223-187) and more generally to the multipolar system of the Hellenistic age, we could find interesting analogies with the situation of China during the Warring States period. From the very beginning of his reign and for most of it, Antiochos was engaged in military operations against several opponents, which earned him the reputation as a warlike and conqueror king according to the ideology of Hellenistic kingship. Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge the significant impact of the negative portrayal of Antiochos III in surviving ancient historiography, particularly in the works of Polybius and Livy. These texts, which are openly pro-Roman, do not offer a particularly sympathetic account of a ruler who challenged Rome by going into defeat. The loss of all Seleucid historiography has resulted in the absence of an alternative narrative that could have significantly contributed to the formulation of a more balanced

¹ The present contribution draws on my paper published in French in the proceedings of the conference *Antiochos III et l'Orient* held in Nancy, Université de Lorraine, 6-8 June 2016 (Coloru 2017, pp. 303-318), and an unpublished paper presented on Saturday 22 August 2015 at the *Seleukid Study Day V: Rome and the Seleukid East* held in the Université libre de Bruxelles.

² On the behavior of water in Sun Tzu see Lévi 2000, pp. 37-42; Andreini, Biondi 2014, pp. xxii-xxiii.

³ On warfare in imperial China see Di Cosmo 2009.

assessment of the reign of Antiochos III⁴. In the following pages, I would like to show that Antiochos also mastered what today we call soft power skills. To do so I will focus on a few episodes from his campaign in the Upper Satrapies and his clash with the Romans.

1. *Antiochos and his Anabasis (212-205)*

Antiochos was not the first Seleucid ruler to organize a campaign in the so-called Upper Satrapies. Seleucos I, the founder of the dynasty, had built his power on the conquest of these regions. In a period between ca. 236 and 227, Seleucos II, Antiochos' father, waged a campaign to recover the satrapies of this larger sector of the Seleucid territories that had broken away from the empire on the death of Antiochos II (246). However, he was not able to fulfill the undertaking⁵. As for Antiochos III, the fragmentary narrative of Polybios is our main source on his eastern campaign. In the surviving text of Polybios, the first stage of the military expedition opens with the description of Seleucid military operations in Sophene⁶. In the past, this Armenian kingdom had been in the Seleucid sphere of influence but had taken advantage of the crisis affecting the kingdom of Syria in the aftermath of the Third Syrian War (246-241) and the War of the Brothers to slip away from the control of its overlords⁷. A clear sign of this situation was that according to Polybios, the young king Xerxes, and his father before him, had ceased to pay the tribute due to the Seleucid kings. In the face of the resistance of Sophene, Antiochos decided to lay siege to the town of Arsamosata, the seat of Xerxes. Grainger emphasizes that the siege of Arsamosata was intended to weaken Xerxes' royal charisma and deprive him of any support from his court. Worried by the fear that the fall of its capital could also lead to the loss of its entire kingdom, the king of Sophene deemed it appropriate to come to terms with Antiochos. The latter agreed despite the opinion of his *philoï*, who advised him to dethrone Xerxes and replace him with his nephew Mithridates. On this occasion, Antiochos remitted the majority of the tribute that, however reduced, stood at 300 talents, 1.000 horses, and 1.000 mules with their equipment. On the other hand, Antiochos gave his sister Antiochis in marriage to Xerxes. The plan of Antiochos is clear: through a dynastic marriage, Antiochos aims to exert his influence over the kingdom without being forced to leave a garrison there. It is also crucial to consider that royal women (such as Cynnane, Olympias, Apama, and Stratonike) were accompanied by a retinue to their new homes, and within this retinue, there were also armed escorts. Antiochos, therefore, had an additional

⁴ For further information on Seleucid historiography and the issues related to the loss of this documentary material, see Primo 2009.

⁵ An inscription attests Seleucos' presence in Media before the clash with Arsaces I of Parthia, see Coloru 2018, pp. 9-12. For a recent study on the reign of Seleucos II and his eastern campaign see Strootman 2013, pp. 129-150.

⁶ Polyb. 8.23.

⁷ Capdetrey 2007, pp. 131-132, 253; Chrubasik 2016, pp. 35, 55-59; Traina 2017, pp. 377-378.

motive to proceed with the campaign without concern for Xerxes precisely because Antiochis had arrived with her retainers, who accompanied the princess and represented the Seleucid interest in that region⁸. In the following years, Antiochos' strategy took a more imperialistic turn as he ordered his sister Antiochis to murder Xerxes⁹. After that, he had the country split into two parts, which he assigned to two local rulers, Artaxias and Zariadris, who acted as Seleucid officers¹⁰. By doing so, Antiochos was able to integrate Armenian territories into the Seleucid imperial space and control them by proxy.

In the following steps of the campaign, the war against Arsaces II of Parthia was undoubtedly more challenging. The extant excerpt from Polybius dealing with the operations of Antiochos in Parthia shows that the Seleucid army was successful in contrasting the Arsacid forces both while crossing the Elborz range and during the siege of the town of Sirynx¹¹. However, the Polybian fragment interrupts before we can know more about the continuation of the operations. It is only thanks to a very short reference in Justin's anthology from Trogus' *Philippic histories* that we learn that after a pitched battle in which Arsaces distinguished himself for his outstanding bravery Antiochos, eventually, concluded an alliance with the Parthian king¹². In addition to the fact that Justin omits to report the clauses of this treaty, it is difficult to understand why Antiochos finally opted for an alliance with the Parthians especially because Justin mentions Arsaces' valor in battle but does not specify whether this confrontation ended in a Parthian or a Seleucid victory. It seems sensible to argue that the Parthian fierce resistance convinced Antiochos that it was better to control this satrapy in a way almost similar to that adopted in Sophene and later in Bactria, i.e. by leaving Arsaces on the throne while requiring some kind of allegiance to the Seleucid dynasty. We should argue that the treaty compelled Arsaces to provide troops to Antiochos. We could relate this clause with the presence, among the Seleucid troops, of units practicing military techniques typical of the people of the steppe, such as the cataphracts at the battle of Panion in 200 and the Dahae mounted archers at Magnesia in 189. In this regard, it is important to recall that originally the people who, following the lead of Arsaces I, took over Parthia issued from the Dahae confederacy¹³.

When Antiochos entered the Bactrian territory, at the height of the ford of the river Arius (Hari-rud), he obtained a first victory against the Bactrian cavalry and advanced to Bactra, the seat of Euthydemus¹⁴. A two-year siege began, but during this long period, as numismatic sources suggest, Antiochos

⁸ I am indebted to Monica D'Agostini for this insightful reflection.

⁹ John of Antioch, fr. 122 (ed. Roberto 2005).

¹⁰ Capdetrey 2007, pp. 131-132; Kosmin 2014, pp. 156-157.

¹¹ Polyb. 10.27-31.

¹² Just. *Epit.* 41.5.7.

¹³ Strab. 11.9.2-3. See also Coloru 2024, p. 319.

¹⁴ Polyb. 10.49.1.

undertook military actions to isolate Euthydemos. Indeed, it seems that the Seleucid king seized the strategic settlement of Ai Khanum in Eastern Bactria and that he carried out operations in the north of the country which allowed him to control, albeit temporarily, Sogdiana or at least the city of Samarkand¹⁵. Despite these military exploits, Antiochos failed to take Bactra, and the threat of an invasion of nomads – be that real or alleged – made the king understand that he needed to accept Euthydemos as an ally. Antiochos was aware that his campaign in Bactria was taking him too much time and was retaining him too far from the Mediterranean. Again, the conflict ended with the assertion of Seleucid supremacy, but without direct control of the territory. Again, Antiochos sought to strengthen his sway in the area through a dynastic marriage between one of his daughters and Demetrios, son and crown prince of Euthydemos. In addition, the king increased his forces by having Euthydemos give Indian war elephants and supplies for the army¹⁶.

In the south of the Hindu Kush, where the Seleucids never exerted any authority since the treaty concluded between Seleucos I and king Chandragupta in ca. 305, Antiochos asserted his power by taking advantage of the irreversible crisis of the Mauryan empire in north-west India. The account of Polybios only mentions a treaty with the Indian king Sophagasenos, whose rule would encompass by and large Paropamisades and Arachosia. The name Sophagasenos is a Hellenized rendering of Indian *Subhagāsena* but the name is absent from any Indian king list and we could assume that this individual reigned over a kingdom born from the dissolution of Mauryan authority in the westernmost sector of its empire. Polybios' source for this episode – as well as for the whole *Anabasis* – comes from someone belonging to the Seleucid court and who accompanied Antiochos in his eastern campaign. This source does not tell whether Sophagasenos was related to the Mauryan dynasty or not: what mattered the most was establishing a historical link between Seleucos I and his descendant Antiochos to present the latter as a worthy heir of the founder of the dynasty and conqueror of India. It is for these reasons that I think that Tarn is right in assuming that Polybios – and his source – had in mind the treaty between Seleucos and Chandragupta Maurya of 305 BC when he reports that Antiochos “renewed his friendship (φιλίαν ἀνενεώσατο) with Sophagasenos, king of the Indians”¹⁷. From Polybios' narrative, there were no military engagements between the two kings. It is all too evident that the presence of a large and powerful army was a sufficient reason to push Sophagasenos to accept a peaceful solution even if that meant paying a heavy tribute to Antiochos to remain on the throne.

¹⁵ See Atakhodjaev 2013, pp. 213-246; on the Seleucid occupation of Bactria and Sogdiana during the anabasis of Antiochos III see Kritt 2015, pp. 62-63, Martinez-Sève 2017, pp. 271-302; on Antiochos's monetary production during his eastern campaign see Iossif 2017, pp. 48-51, 63-65.

¹⁶ Polyb. 11.34.9-10.

¹⁷ Polyb. 11.34.11. Tarn 1951, pp. 50, 130, 154. On the contrary, Thapar 1961, p. 190 thought that Polybios was referring to the friendship between Antiochos II and Aśoka.

Although Polybios considers that the *Anabasis* of Antiochos ended after the extraction of the tribute from the Indian king, there is however a corollary to the story reported by the historian. In fact, around 205 BC Antiochos was also active in the Persian Gulf, where made an expedition against Gerrha, a city to be identified perhaps with Taj on the Eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula¹⁸. Other fragments of Polybios relate that the Gerrheans asked the king to spare their territory and their freedom, which Antiochos granted them in exchange for gifts. In diplomatic terms, the expression stands for the collection of a tribute, which consisted of 500 talents of silver, 1000 talents of incense, and 200 of *stakté* (oil of myrrh). The campaign in the Gulf also included a mission to the island of Tylos (Bahrain), a trip that we can believe had the same purpose as the one to Gerrha.

The military campaign in the Upper Satrapies makes it clear that Antiochos was able to display both military and diplomatic skills to his benefit. When he found himself in the impossibility of imposing direct control on the former Seleucid satrapies of Eastern Iran and Central Asia, Antiochos preferred to exert remote control through alliances and dynastic marriages, which allowed him to intervene in the affairs of those countries. The troops that he collected in the East enabled him to deploy a considerable force for his future conflicts in the Mediterranean. At the same time, his military exploits provided him with a real image benefit that he would exploit to gain authority and influence in the eyes of other contemporary powers, as already noticed by Polybios in his final appraisal of the eastern expedition of Antiochos.

2. Intelligence. The Secret War of Antiochos III

Another important aspect elaborated by Sun Tzu is that war is based on lies. If we apply this principle to Antiochos, we can see that the king was able to capitalize on the ideological significance of his *Anabasis* particularly on the eve of and during the war against the Romans. Intelligence and diplomacy played an important role in this framework. An institution similar to a modern diplomatic corps did not exist in Antiquity¹⁹. As for the Seleucid kings and other Hellenistic monarchies, the task of diplomatic envoy was usually entrusted to the *philoï* or to close relatives (e.g. Antipater, the cousin of Antiochos III), but also to individuals who had proven skills in the use of discourse or mastered the study of history such as Hegesianax, who, in addition, had been a tragic actor before becoming one of the friends of Antiochos III²⁰. The knowledge of the Seleucid past united to the ability to master the art of acting could offer an advantage in negotiations. Even the Romans considered

¹⁸ Martinez-Sève 2010, pp. 60-61.

¹⁹ See Battistoni 2015, p. 176.

²⁰ On Hegesianax see Savalli-Lestrade 1998, pp. 29-30, n° 32. On the hypothesis that Antiochos had chosen Hegesianax for his talents as a historian, see Carsana 1996, p. 35. Hegesianax and other learned members of the Seleucid court contributed significantly to the narrative of Antiochos' political acts, see Visscher 2019, pp. 61-85.

historical memory as one of the main qualities a negotiator was supposed to have: a clear example of such an opinion is provided by an episode dating to the last phases of the Second Punic War. In 203, the young envoys sent by the Carthaginians to Rome made the senators indignant because they did not have any knowledge of the treaties ratified between the Carthaginians and the Romans at the end of the First Punic War²¹. Livy provides us an example of Hegesianax skills when he recounts that the Seleucid envoy to the Senate justified the rights of Antiochos over Lysimacheia and Thrace based on documented historical facts dating back to the wars of the Diadochi. In his speech, Hegesianax seems to have recalled what happened during the battle of Curupedium in 281, when Seleucos I had defeated and killed the king of Thrace, Lysimachos. This victory enabled him to englobe his enemy's possessions into his kingdom. Then, Hegesianax described the policy followed by Antiochos I and his successors in European Thrace, an area that should belong to the Seleucid sphere of interests as a consequence both of the defeat of Lysimachos and the following treaty between Seleucos and Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia through which the two powers had established their respective borders²². In the following pages, we will focus on a few episodes in which Antiochos had recourse to intelligence, diplomacy, and ruse to prevail over the Romans.

3. *Antiochos, Hannibal, and a secret mission*

In 194 BC, before the outbreak of the Roman-Syrian war (192-188), Antiochos sent Hegesianax and Menippos on a diplomatic mission to Rome²³. Officially, the king had claimed that he did not want to engage in a conflict with the Roman Republic. However, the extant sources and especially Appian relate that the Seleucid king was planning a war against Rome²⁴. According to Appian²⁵, Antiochos was already trying to strengthening internally his dynasty (marriage between his son Antiochos the Younger and his own sister Laodice) and seeking for allies through dynastic marriages (the betrothal of his daughters to Ptolemy of Egypt, Ariarathes IV of Cappadocia, and Eumenes II of Pergamon) and treaties (alliance with the Galatians)²⁶.

The Seleucid delegation acted accordingly with Antiochos' claim of looking for peaceful relations with Rome, and even in this circumstance, the envoys took time to report the requests of the Senate to Antiochos and avoid the situation from degenerating. On the contrary, Appian states that the mission

²¹ Livy 30.16.9. See Stouder 2015, pp. 60-61.

²² For the importance of the victory at Corupedium in the framework of the Seleucid construction of space and the policy of the Seleucids in European Thrace, see Kosmin 2014, pp. 80-92.

²³ Livy 34.59-60; App. *Syr.* 2.6; Diod. Sic. 28.15.

²⁴ Rich 2015, pp. 81-82.

²⁵ App. *Syr.* 1.4-2.6.

²⁶ App. *Syr.* 1.4 states clearly that all these actions were part of his plan for a war against Rome. Antiochis married Ariarathes, Cleopatra Syra married Ptolemy V. On the other hand, Eumenes II rejected Antiochos' offer to marry one of his daughters.

was twofold: officially, the envoys had to ask the Romans why they had imposed such heavy conditions on the king, who was their ally²⁷. Yet, the secret goal of the mission was to know the real intentions of the Senate toward Antiochos²⁸. Hegesianax and Menippos had barely left Rome when a diplomatic delegation came from Carthage to inform the Senate that the king of Syria was preparing for the war with the assistance of Hannibal. Livy and Appian give us a full account of this planned secret attack²⁹. Hannibal's plan can be summarized as follows:

- Antiochos had to set up a fleet of 100 warships, an army of 10.000 infantry, and 1.000 cavalry.

- According to the strategy of carrying on the war in the enemy's home, Hannibal would sail to Carthage to convince the town to declare war on Rome and attack Italy. Meanwhile, Antiochos should invade Europe with the rest of the army, invade Greece, and wait for a suitable time to sail to Italy.

As the plan, for obvious reasons, could not be put into writing, Hannibal sent Ariston the Tyrian to Carthage to communicate the plan to the supporters of Hannibal in town³⁰. In the account of Livy, Ariston is nothing but a servant, while Appian states that he was a trader who used his profession as a cover. The latter is a more plausible version as traders were often employed as informants and agents. It seems that he had some experience as an intermediary or fixer because according to Livy Hannibal chose him specifically for these qualities. Antiochos supported the efforts of Hannibal to convince Ariston through bribes and promises. Ariston should have used some secret signs to prove that he was a messenger from Hannibal. The news of the organization of the plan spread quickly into town and became of the public domain at the point that the council of Carthage was bound to discuss the matter, and summoned Ariston to question him. He declared his innocence by saying that he had not brought any written message. However, he found himself in a delicate position because he did not provide a clear explanation for his staying in Carthage as well as for being in contact only with supporters of the Barcid family. After a bitter debate, the sufetes did not reach a decision thus allowing Ariston enough time to plan his escape from Carthage. At dusk, he hung some tablets above the place where the magistrates would meet every day and in the third watch he boarded his ship and fled from the town. The following day, the sufetes found and read the tablets, which said that Ariston had no special instructions for anyone, but general instructions for the magistrates. Since the charge was so generalized, the inquiry on a few men became less tight, but it was still decided to send envoys to Rome to report the whole story.

²⁷ App. *Syr.* 2.6.

²⁸ Corey Brennan 2009, p. 181, observes that: "the covert gathering of intelligence was a major function of embassies in all periods, amply documented in the *De legationibus* and when ambassadors are effectively cut off by their hosts from vital information, they should be reckoned to have at least partly failed in their mission».

²⁹ Livy 34.60-61; App. *Syr.* 2.7 reports that Antiochos informed Hannibal about his plan of invading Greece first and then waging war against the Romans.

³⁰ Livy 34.61; App. *Syr.* 2.6-7

Quite probably, Livy exaggerates by purpose the ineptitude of Ariston in keeping his mission secret when he says that the enemies of Hannibal could be informed of his mission because he showed himself in town. In addition, he suggests that Ariston's decision to make the plan public was a stratagem conceived to escape from the difficult situation in which he found himself. We should not forget that Livy based his account on the official declarations of the Carthaginian delegation, which, for its part, was trying to show its goodwill towards Rome and avoid any suspicion of disloyalty. As for Appian, he does not speak at all of an interrogation of Ariston. In his account, the enemies of Hannibal just learn of the presence of the Tyrian in town and start searching for him. Ariston manages to escape from Carthage, but the night before leaving, he secretly goes to the city's main square and posts some letters in front of the Council building. Their content showed that Hannibal was inciting the authorities of Carthage to join Antiochos against the Romans. Appian explains that Ariston did this to protect the friends that Hannibal had in town from the charge of collaborating with Rome's enemy³¹.

The council of Carthage had all the interest in convincing the senators of its non-involvement by telling them that the plan had been made public because Ariston and the party of Hannibal failed to keep it secret. If after the audition Ariston was suspected of being a spy, it is difficult to explain why his moves were not controlled: he was left free to leave and then post a message to the sufets in the "busiest part of the city", and hire a boat to escape from the town. One might think that the council had made up the story of the summoning of Ariston to avoid the suspicion of involvement. That the Romans feared the possibility that Hannibal could really undertake such an enterprise can be inferred by the same Livy when speaking of Antiochos' second thoughts about the plans of Hannibal:

The question of Hannibal also detained him. And at first, the open ships which he had planned to send with him to Africa were delayed³²

This suggests that despite Antiochos ultimately declining to pursue the initial strategic plan, he had in fact intended to deploy a naval fleet in order to accomplish that mission.

4. Spreading false information, 1. Antiochos' interpretation of documents

Since 198, Antiochos started his plan for the re-establishment of the Seleucid sovereignty over Asia Minor. Livy writes that Antiochos' strategy was twofold:

³¹ App. *Syr.* 2.8.

³² Livy 35.42.

the double purpose of trying to win over the cities which had been under the control of Ptolemy along the whole shore of Cilicia, Lycia, and Caria, and of aiding Philip with his army and navy – for that war had not yet been ended³³.

The kingdom of Pergamon was targeted by Antiochos as well. To this end, a Seleucid detachment had made several incursions inside the Pergamene territory and also occupied some lands that Attalos I had taken to Achaïos some eighteen years before. A Pergamene mission to Rome obtained the retreat of the Seleucid contingents at least from some coastal areas, but not from the whole of the occupied territories³⁴. To counter the Pergamene embassy, Antiochos sent his envoys to Rome³⁵. The answer given by the Senate was communicated by the same Antiochos in 197 when the king, who by this time had started military operations in Cilicia, received a delegation from Rhodes that was concerned with the advance of the Seleucid army in Anatolia. The Rhodians asked Antiochos not to sail beyond the Chelidonian promontory in Cilicia³⁶. According to Livy, Antiochos replied that he would not break the friendship with the Romans, and in support of his statement, he mentioned both his recent diplomatic mission to Rome and the Senate's decree to him. Livy adds that the Seleucid envoys were received and dismissed politely because at that time the outcome of the war against Philip V of Macedonia was still uncertain³⁷. Antiochos sent also his agents to Rhodes so that they could inform the citizens about the alleged decree of the Senate.

Was this the real answer given by Rome to the Seleucid envoys? Our doubts are justified because the reports on Roman negotiations with Antiochos conducted in Lysimacheia in 196 provide a completely different version of the story³⁸. In that circumstance, the Roman delegation stated that since the king left Syria to campaign in Asia Minor he was displeasing to the Senate. In addition, Antiochos was requested to give back all the cities that he had taken from Ptolemy V and likewise surrender to the Romans the cities formerly in possession of Philip V that he had occupied by taking advantage of the war between that king and Rome³⁹.

It is difficult to believe that Rome had suddenly changed its views on Antiochos' actions in Asia Minor. What we know of the Roman policy towards

³³ Livy 33.19.

³⁴ Will 2003, p. 180.

³⁵ Livy 33.20.8-9.

³⁶ Noteworthy detail added by Livy 33.20 where he reports that the Chelidonian promontory was famous for an ancient treaty between the Athenians and the Persian kings. Livy alludes to the so-called Peace of Callias (449) which called for the Persians to keep their warships east of Phaselis and the Chelidonian Islands. This statement clearly suggests a parallel between the Seleucids and the Achaemenids. This was part of Roman propaganda, which aimed to represent Antiochos III as a new Xerxes and the war of Rome against Syria as a re-enactment of the Persian Wars, see e.g. Tsitsiou-Chelidoni 2007, pp. 23-44; Almagor 2019, pp. 87-133.

³⁷ Livy 33.20.

³⁸ Livy 33.39-41.

³⁹ Livy 33.39.

the Seleucid kingdom shows that the Republic had always been against the attempts of Antiochos to occupy Anatolian territories that were no longer under Seleucid control. This was the case for the incursions in the territory of the kingdom of Pergamon as well as the campaigns in Cilicia, Caria, and Lycia. During the Isthmian Games in Corinth in 196, the proconsul Flamininus told the Seleucid envoy Hegesianax that his king should not attack the possessions of Ptolemy V and Philip V in Asia Minor. The only exception to this policy occurred during the reception of the embassy of Antiochos to Rome in 194. According to Livy (34.58.2-3), the same Flamininus said to Hegesianax and Menippos that Rome would give the king a free hand in Asia as long as he did not set foot in Europe⁴⁰.

We can suppose that in 198 the Senate just took time and gave the envoys a vague answer that Antiochos took as a license for pursuing his plan of reconquest. Thus, we may infer that Antiochos transmitted to the Rhodians his own interpretation of the decree of the Senate. This was likely a stratagem to avoid Rhodian interference. We know that this was not enough as Rhodes engaged in “maintaining the freedom of the cities allied with Ptolemy, which were threatened with war by Antiochos”⁴¹. The help given by the island to the Romans consisted of both military reinforcements and information concerning the plans of Antiochos. Nevertheless, the Rhodian opposition was almost unable to contrast the advance of the Seleucid army that, by the end of the year, had already reached the Straits.

5. *Spreading false information, 2. The king is dead*

Let us now focus on the conference of Lysimacheia. In the course of the negotiates, the Roman delegation put off the question of the aggressive campaign of Antiochos in Asia Minor and Europe because of the sudden news concerning the death of the young king Ptolemy V⁴². Both Antiochos and the Roman envoys pretended not to know anything about that, but they all had secret plans. On the one hand, L. Cornelius sailed to Egypt to meet Ptolemy’s successor fearing that he might change his foreign policy towards Rome. As for Antiochos, according to Livy, he was already planning an invasion of Egypt by taking advantage of the difficult situation of the country during the dynastic transition. Livy, who draws on the narrative of Polybios, agrees with the latter’s idea of the existence of some sort of agreement between Antiochos and Philip V of Macedonia to partition the kingdom of Egypt among themselves⁴³. This plan would be consistent with the long story of wars between

⁴⁰ On the contrary, Appian (*Syr.* 2.6) does not mention Flamininus’ offer. Rich 2015, p. 83 interprets this anomaly as a voluntary omission of Appian whose narrative wanted to present Syria and Rome as two hostile powers since the beginnings.

⁴¹ Livy 33.20.11.

⁴² Livy 33.41.

⁴³ Livy 31.14.4-5; App. *Mac.* 4.1; Just. *Epit.* 30.2.8; *FGrHist* 260, Porph. fr. 45. See Ma 1999, pp. 75-76; Brisson 2023, p. 134.

Syria and Egypt because both countries had been exploiting internal conflicts to make territorial gains. Antiochos planned to reach Egypt after having gathered his fleet. He sailed from Lysimacheia to Ephesos – which at the time was his headquarters – and carried out an action of diversion by sending envoys to Flamininus to assure him that he would not move from the town. John Rich points out that the story of this delegation to Flamininus was present only in Livy (and Polybios), while Appian, who draws on different sources, does not speak of this diplomatic mission at all, but reports that the king stayed in Ephesos where he welcomed Hannibal⁴⁴. It seems that Appian here insists on providing a negative picture of the diplomatic relations between Syria and Rome. In both cases, however, Antiochos' actions denote a preference for using deception or seeking the collaboration of the enemies of the Romans. As it is easy to imagine, the king kept sailing to Egypt, but according to Livy, when the fleet attained Patara on the Lycian coast, Antiochos was reached by the news that Ptolemy was still alive and therefore was forced to abort the mission⁴⁵.

6. *Spreading false information, 3. Exaggerating the news*

In 192 BC, Antiochos sent his envoy Menippos to the council of the Aetolian League to gain its support against the Romans in Greece⁴⁶. Antiochos was still waiting for the whole of his army to gather, but he tried to bluff on the real entity of his forces, and this move actually worked. The effects of this propaganda were boosted by the words of Thoas, one of the supporters of Antiochos in the Aetolian League: “with lies like those about the king, with which, multiplying his forces in his harangues, he [*Thoas*] had roused the passions of many in Greece, he excited the hopes of the king also”⁴⁷.

The speech of Menippos before the council of the Aetolians, and afterward before the Achaeans, was a masterpiece of storytelling. We may reconstruct its content by putting together the extant parts of the speech that Livy scattered through his narrative: the core of the story was still the same, but Menippos may have added more and different details depending on the situation. He not only insisted on the incredible numbers of Antiochos' infantry and cavalry or the huge extension of the lands he had conquered, but he also added exotic details to fascinate the audience. Antiochos was a great king coming from the remote East to bring freedom to Greece. He had elephants brought from India; his soldiers belonged to people whose names had never been heard of in Greece before such as the Dahae, the Medes, the Elymaeans, and the Cadusians. Among them were soldiers employing the war techniques of the people of the steppe such as the cataphracts and the Scythian/Parthian mounted

⁴⁴ App. *Syr.* 1.4; Rich 2015, p. 81.

⁴⁵ Livy 33.41; App. *Syr.* 1.4.

⁴⁶ Livy 35.32-50.

⁴⁷ Livy 35.42.

archers⁴⁸. The fleet of the king was conducted by skilled seamen from Phoenicia (Sidonians, Tyrians, Aradians) and Pamphylia (Sidetes)⁴⁹. Menippos also stressed the amount of gold and treasures at the king's disposal. As a result, the council of the Aetolian League was deeply impressed by this speech and decided to support Antiochos in his conflict against Rome. The story of this *Syrian Armada* went viral, to use a trendy term, and was being continuously used as a *passé-partout* to obtain the support and/or the submission of Greek states and cities. For instance, the Aetolian general Alexamenos told this story to Nabis of Sparta; afterward, it was told by the Seleucid envoy before the council of the Achaeans held at Aegion⁵⁰. After the Seleucid victory at Delion over the troops of Chalcis, the Seleucid envoys employed the same arguments to convince the Euboean town to open its gates to Antiochos.

7. Conclusion

In a speech delivered to the Athenians in 192 BC, Cato the Elder said that Antiochos would wage war through epistles and fight with pen and ink.⁵¹ The aim of this speech was indeed that of depicting Antiochos as a cowardly ruler who could not pose a real threat to his warlike opponents. Yet, Cato was unintentionally acknowledging that Antiochos was an individual who was capable to react to challenges by putting into action unconventional – from a Roman point of view – skills. The examples I put forward show how Antiochos could adopt multiple strategies to overcome his enemies and gain as many advantages as a particular situation could offer. Diplomacy and intelligence were just as important tools in his foreign policy. Not different from what happened in other Hellenistic dynasties, the Seleucids could boast a long experience in this field and used their expertise as an integral part of their strategy. The secret war of Antiochos bore fruits in the preliminary phases of the conflict, but apparently, he did not know how to make capital of this success. However, we would be in error if we ascribed the victory of Rome only to its military superiority. Many factors came into play, especially the fact that the king made the mistake of discouraging too early and giving up vital positions without fighting. At that point, diplomacy would be, and was, no more effective. Had he followed the advice of Hannibal of forcing Rome to fight on two fronts, as reported by Livy, probably the story of Asia Minor would have been different.

⁴⁸ Livy 35.48.3.

⁴⁹ Livy 35.48.6.

⁵⁰ Livy 35.42; 35.48. Note the derogatory comment of Livy about the speech of Menippos: "Like most men who are fed by royal bounty".

⁵¹ ORF, fr. 20.

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Abbreviations

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how, in his military operations, the Seleucid ruler Antiochos III did not always resort to armed confrontation with his opponents. On the contrary, he was able to deploy "soft power" strategies through the use of diplomacy, stratagems and the use of intelligence. The paper focuses on the ruler's anabasis in the Upper Satrapies and the phases immediately preceding the outbreak of the war against Rome. Antiochos ultimately manages at the same time to remain true to the image of the warrior ruler according to the dictates of Hellenistic kingship and to develop refined techniques of conflict management at a distance.

Keywords: Antiochos III, Seleucid empire, Roman Republic, Asia Minor, Greece, soft power, Hellenistic Far East.

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Land-Leasing in Mylasa: Civic Resilience Through Public-Private Economic Collaboration

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Studies in the economic history of Greek cities have significantly contributed to our understanding of policy making processes in the *polis*, unveiling many aspects of its juridical and administrative life and allowing us to better grasp the pragmatic underpinnings of power and ideology. The study of public economy has proved particularly inspiring regarding Hellenistic cities, not only thanks to the richer documentary evidence from this period, but also because reassessing the economy strategies of post-classical Greek cities has had a remarkable impact on our appreciation of the liveliness and resilience of the *polis* system in a post-Alexander age dominated by kingdoms and confederations. In other words, if many clues confirm Louis Robert's statement that the Greek *polis* did not die at Chaeronea¹, this conclusion appears even more compelling when we consider the financial tools Hellenistic cities had at their disposal and their ability to combine them to respond to economic needs and challenges even in times of particular instability in the geopolitical scenario of the eastern Mediterranean world².

The purpose of this paper is to consider one aspect of this vast topic by focusing on a rich epigraphic dossier from Mylasa and its *chora*. The relevant evidence sheds light on the practice of leasing out agricultural lands belonging to the local gods (Zeus, Apollo and Artemis, and Sinuri) as a strategy to protect and increase public wealth³; the solution I would like to discuss is the design of a financial model by which the interests of private entrepreneurs were not only supported by civic policies, but played a seminal function in the achievement of public goals.

¹ Robert 1969, p. 42.

² Among the many relevant studies, the numerous works by L. Migeotte remain fundamental (see esp. Migeotte 1984; 1992; 2006; 2014); on the economic life of Hellenistic cities, see also the papers collected in Chankowski 2005a and in Archibald, Davies, Gabrielsen 2011; cf. Gabrielsen 2013.

³ In Greek cities, capitals and estate properties belonging to the gods were a particular section of the public treasury, which was administered by specific officials and with priority given to the accomplishment of rituals and the maintenance of the sanctuaries: see Papazarkadas 2011; Rousset 2013 and 2015; Dreher 2015. However, large sacred funds could also be used by cities as a source of capital that could be borrowed by public institutions or lent at interest to private citizens (see Chankowski 2005b and 2011). See Chankowski 2005b and 2011, pp. 142-243, on the recent scholarship convincingly rejecting the idea that sanctuaries managed their funds separately from the *polis*: civic officials oversaw all types of public funds, including those belonging to the gods.

The Mylasa dossier has been recently republished with a detailed commentary by I. Pernin, whose study provides the starting point to the present discussion⁴. Although a connection between the leasing of sacred land and the financial administration of sanctuaries is a common feature of Hellenistic Asia Minor⁵, the Mylasa dossier presents some peculiarities that are worth summarising here. The evidence from this city testifies to an unparalleled model of transaction by which civic institutions used sacred funds to purchase plots of agricultural land which were then immediately leased out to their former owners. If the sellers/tenants paid the annual fee and respected the rules agreed upon at the moment of subscribing the contract, they were entitled to use the rented plots as if they were still private property (*eis patrikà*), in the sense that the leasing contract would be valid forever and could be bequeathed to the tenants' descendants. This is not the sole type of contract attested in Mylasa, but it is unique to this city and seems to characterise the Mylasa dossier throughout its history⁶. Moreover, at least some of the preserved agreements show that the rental fee (*phoros*) could combine payment in money and in kind⁷. Unfortunately, the evidence is too scanty in this respect, making it impossible to understand what role agricultural products played in the leasing system in Mylasa and how they might have contributed to the effort of collecting public food supplies, thus protecting the city against crop failures caused by human or natural factors.

Scholars agree that the sell-and-lease contracts were in use in Mylasa for a period of a few decades – possibly up to half a century⁸ –, but lack of a certain absolute chronology prevents us from understanding the precise historical contexts, and therefore the specific reasons and challenges that led the institutions of this city in Caria to develop this unique method of fostering interaction between the sacred funds of the city and private entrepreneurs. The common opinion favours a date between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century BC⁹, implying that the institutions of Mylasa tried to deal with the uncertainties and conflicts that accompanied the constitution of the Province of Asia and, later, the war between Mithridates and Rome. Against

⁴ Pernin 2014, pp. 296-445. For the history of studies on the Mylasan lease contracts, see Pernin 2014, pp. 402-404, in addition to the contributions mentioned below in this paper. The evidence provides a list of demographic and administrative partitions of Mylasa that operated as independent agents, but with similar strategies, in the leasing of sacred lands under their control: for Mylasa itself, the tribe of the Otorkondeis administered the properties of Zeus of the Otorkondeis; the demos of Olymos, a formerly independent city incorporated in the *chora* of Mylasa, managed the sacred funds and lands of Apollo and Artemis; finally, the *syngeneia Pormounou* supervised the treasury of the Carian god Sinuri; cf. Pernin 2014, pp. 383, 418-422.

⁵ See Pernin 2014, pp. 485-508 for a comparative analysis of land lease contracts in the Greek world.

⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the clauses featured in the Mylasa standard leasing contracts, see Behrend 1973; Descat, Pernin 2008, pp. 308-310; Pernin 2014, pp. 424-426.

⁷ Pernin 2014, pp. 321-322.

⁸ Descat, Pernin 2008; Pernin 2014, pp. 406-408.

⁹ See Pernin 2014, pp. 405-412, with the previous references.

this background, which exposed land properties and capitals to the risks of Roman taxation and raids, a rapid change in the status of large portions of arable land into sacred land would reduce risks by putting a limit to the amount of precious metal available in sanctuaries, while at the same time multiplying the portions of land subjected to legal and divine protection. An alternative view places the origins of the sell-and-lease contracts in Mylasa shortly after the treaty of Apamea (188 BC), with a growing success in the central decades of the 2nd century¹⁰. In this case, the Mylasa dossier would shed light on the attempt by the city to launch an ambitious project of acquisition of land through public funds, intended to strengthen the city's economy and to increase Mylasa's institutional control over its expanding *chora* after the end of Seleucid dominion over western Asia Minor¹¹.

Scholars have observed that in Mylasa, sacred lands leased out to private tenants were subject to a strikingly low rental fee. In the preserved cases, the evidence shows that the gods' treasury would need more than twenty years before the annual rental fees would pay back the money invested to purchase a plot¹². This point raises some fundamental questions since the evidence shows that the Mylasan purchase-and-lease transactions were initiated by civic institutions: they passed a decree allocating a certain sum from the sacred funds of a deity and then entrusted publicly elected officers with the task of searching for adequate plots to be bought for the interest of the gods¹³. This must imply that the Mylasan ruling class considered this system effective regardless of the low rate of the rental fee. Based on the low fees requested by public institutions, B. Dignas has suggested that the administrators of the public funds only aimed at assuring the sanctuaries an independent budget to pay the costs of ritual routine¹⁴. While leasing out sacred lands was a common means to cover ritual expenses in many sanctuaries in the Greek world¹⁵, this purpose alone cannot explain the particular proactivity shown by the Mylasan institutions in

¹⁰ For the higher chronology see Ashton, Reger 2006, followed and developed by Descat, Pernin 2008.

¹¹ A detailed reassessment of the dossier's date lies beyond the specific purpose of this note. I intend to deal with this and other related problems posed by the Mylasa dossier in a future contribution.

¹² For discussion see esp. Chandezon 1998, p. 36; Pernin 2014, pp. 440-441. Blümel 1995, no. 7 (Pernin, no. 211, from Olymos) indicates a purchase cost of 6,500 dr., which corresponds to an annual rental fee of 234 dr. Accordingly, it would have taken almost 28 years to the treasury of Apollo and Artemis to get their initial investment repaid by rent. *IK Mylasa* I 212 (Pernin, no. 151), a contract concerning the lands of Zeus of the Otorkondeis, reports a purchase price of 7,000 dr. and a yearly rent of 300 dr. In this case, the sacred fund would have recovered the invested money in 23 years.

¹³ Pernin 2014, pp. 422, 445.

¹⁴ See Dignas 2000; cf. Dignas 2002, 98-106.

¹⁵ See esp. Chankowski 2005b and 2011; Caneva forthcoming. In Mylasa, the purpose of financing rituals is explicit when contracts stipulates that a part of the annual fee is to be paid in kind through measures of incense and/or oil: for incense, see *IK Mylasa* I 216 (Pernin, no. 153), *SEG* LIV 1094 (Pernin, no. 143), *IK Mylasa* II 818 (Pernin, no. 184); on oil, perhaps used for lamps, see *IK Mylasa* I 216 (Pernin, no. 153), *I.Sinuri* 46 A+C and 46 B (Pernin, nos. 214-215).

purchasing new agricultural estates at a certain point in their history. Scholars thus generally agree that the purchase-and-lease system developed in Mylasa was meant to provide the city with a tool to multiply safe and long-lasting estate investments and thus to increase the city's economic reserves, which were stored and protected as sacred properties of the gods. From this perspective, low rental fees for the sellers/tenants would ensure that the search for lands to be purchased for the gods would be successful. Moreover, the conversion of a growing part of the gods' monetary capital into land property would free the sanctuaries from the risks of accumulating large quantities of precious metal, which could be exposed to the risk of over-taxation, theft, or raids¹⁶.

Thus, by purchasing and leasing out lands at a low fee, the managers of Mylasa's sacred funds set the premises for a flourishing market as the strategy by which the city multiplied land properties also met the interests of local entrepreneurs. In addition to lowering property taxes¹⁷, families selling and then renting parts of their agricultural land would free up capital to invest without losing their right to cultivate the land at a limited annual fee. As a result, various documents shed light on the use of sell-and-lease transactions by families wishing to expand their agricultural estates in the Mylasan countryside. The same documents also highlight these families' capacity to combine land ownership and financial activities in a flexible way. For instance, the dossier concerning the transactions of a certain Thraseas, son of Polites, shows that this wealthy owner sold two plots of his land to Zeus of the Otokondeis, then took them back for rent; these plots bordered two other estates owned by the Otokondeis tribe, which had already been leased out to Thraseas himself and his brother Drakon; finally, another neighbouring plot was cultivated by the same Thraseas, who had received it as pledge for a loan granted to the legitimate owner Dioskourides. Thraseas and his family therefore deployed a hybrid strategy that included land ownership, sell-and-lease transactions, and cultivation of land pledged by debtors¹⁸.

Public-private economic collaboration in Mylasa is not limited to this convergence between the interests of public institutions and private entrepreneurs. In what follows, I will discuss more in detail a few documents concerning the sacred funds of Olymos which reveal that the interaction between public and private actors deeply affected the system of management of sacred funds. By means of the decree *IK Mylasa* II 802 (Pernin, no. 167), the people of Olymos approved the purchase of new land for Apollo and Artemis and assigned the corresponding sum to the public officers in charge of purchasing land for the gods. However, the public officers would not receive the allocated fund directly from the city, but from three *prodaneistai*. *IK Mylasa* II 801 (Pernin, no. 166) provides more information about this charge as the decree preserves the personal names of the *prodaneistai* and specifies the sums that the land

¹⁶ See Williamson 2021, pp. 222-224, who stresses the link between the Mylasan management of agricultural land and the advantages of sanctuaries' *asylia*.

¹⁷ Sosin 2014, pp. 49-57.

¹⁸ Pernin 2014, nos 144-152 with commentary on pp. 318-319, 442.

purchasers shall withdraw from each of them: 4,000 dr. from Sibilos, a lost amount from Euthydemos, and the remainder from Hekatomnos.

The word *prodaneistes* usually refers to private individuals who advanced money to institutions for public expenses¹⁹. However, in this case the three individuals carrying out this function were clearly handling public money which already belonged to the treasury of Apollo and Artemis²⁰. Thus, the Olymos *prodaneistai* are not private bankers lending money to institutions for public expenses, but wealthy and respectable citizens entrusted with a part of the treasury of the gods in a form of trusteeship: (part of) the money of the gods was kept on deposit by private individuals of renowned integrity, who were liable to the city for their preservation and perhaps for the active augmentation of Apollo and Artemis' wealth. Although not operating as private bankers, these trustees were probably involved in some forms of financial activity related to the gods' money. As proposed by R. Bogaert, it is possible that the city allowed them to lend a part of the capital at interest to fellow citizens; the resulting income would be shared between the *prodaneistai* and the gods²¹.

I think the share of the gods in this transaction is referred to by a rather obscure clause of the decree *IK Mylasa II 802* by which the demos of Olymos stipulates that the sum fixed for the rental fee associated with the newly purchased land shall be "no less than half the interest on the price paid" (*scil.* for the purchase of the land).²² If my proposal is correct, then this clause confirms that our three *prodaneistai* were more than simple custodians of the gods' money: the Olymos institutions allowed them to act as trustees of Apollo and Artemis' capital in exchange for a part of the interest earned by lending the gods' money to private citizens. The integrity of the capital had to be guaranteed by the *prodaneistai* and the profit that the city derived from it was presumably higher than the rate by which the same institutions calculated rental fees on the gods' sacred lands, when these were leased out. In principle, this difference would protect the interests of private *prodaneistai*, whose service was economically more effective for the city in the short term. However, the people of Olymos considered the purchase-and-lease system as a valuable way of expanding the gods' land properties, even though the annual interest earned by leasing out sacred lands was lower than what private trustees would give back to the gods' treasury in the same period. This must mean that although the model of capital accumulation ensured by *prodaneistai* was more appealing in the short term, public institutions were ready to lose a part of this immediate profit for the safer and longer-lasting perspective of owning and leasing out sacred lands. Thus, when the institutions decided that it was time to increase the land properties of Apollo and Artemis, they would accept a slower

¹⁹ Bogaert 1986, p. 269.

²⁰ Pernin 2014, p. 426.

²¹ Bogaert 1986, p. 269.

²² Lines 6-7: μισθῶσαι αὐτὰ εἰς] ἢ πατρικὰ ἐνθήκης τε μὴ ἐλάσσονος τῶν ἡμίσω[ν διὰφόρων τῆς τιμῆς [τῶν ἐγγαίων δεδομένης ...]. Pernin 2014, p. 336 translates the word *diaphora* as *intérêts*, understanding it as the surplus in an account balance, but fails to interpret this clause in relation to the activity of the *prodaneistai*.

pace of wealth accumulation, on condition that the loss was limited to no more than 50% of the annual interest yielded by the *prodaneistai*.

This picture confirms the great ability of the Mylasan institutions to exploit the tools available for the financial administration of a public capital. Even more interesting for us, it reveals that the public institutions of Olymos had the same dynamic approach to combining land ownership and financial activities as the family enterprises mentioned above. As we shall see, this similarity is clarified by the close overlap between private entrepreneurs and civic policy makers. The prosopographical data from the Mylasan documentation allows us to identify a pool of distinguished citizens who carried out, and often combined, different functions in the administration of sacred lands. A revealing case is related to a certain Demetrios, son of Hermias, who appears as the first officer in charge of the land purchase in almost all the extant transactions from Olymos. In two cases, Demetrios also acted as the proponent of the decree by which the purchasing process was initiated by the city; furthermore, his name appears in a list of guarantors and in a document where he is mentioned as the legal representative of his daughter, who owned a land neighbouring a leased farm. Finally, many among Demetrios' relatives appear at various levels in our documentation, allowing us to identify one of the most prominent economic and political elite families of Mylasa²³.

The evidence concerning the *prodaneistai* in Olymos brings the overlap between public institutions and private entrepreneurship to an unseen level of identity. Indeed, the decree mentioning their names also refers to the same persons in the list of officers entrusted with the purchase of new sacred land, together with the aforementioned Demetrios, son of Hermias. In this case, their full name is provided together with the priestly charges they were carrying out for the city: Euthydemos, son of Theoxenos, priest of Zeus Eleutherios; Hekatomnos, son of Ouliades, priest of Zeus Labraiundos (*sic*); and Sibilos, son of Diodoros, priest of Dikaiosyne.²⁴ An interesting detail is that their names are followed by an indication of their priestly duties. This is a constant feature in the way people accomplishing official tasks are mentioned in decrees and contracts from Hellenistic Mylasa: any public service rendered as priest of a certain divinity is made explicit, a detail revealing how important this role was to stress the prestige and reliability of the people involved in the management of the gods' properties.

The conclusion we can draw from this picture is that in Olymos, three distinguished citizens operating as trustees of the gods' treasury were also

²³ On Demetrios, see Pernin 2014, p. 429 and *passim* (commentaries on the documents from Demetrios' dossier).

²⁴ *IK Mylasa II* 801, lines 21-22. The identity between the officers and the above-mentioned *prodaneistai* is proved by lines 4-7, which stipulate the amount of money to be withdrawn from every trustee. There, Euthydemos, Hekatomnos and Sibilos are only mentioned by their personal name. This is at odds with the practice of Mylasan lease contracts, which mention the full name (including the father's name) of a person together with his priestly charge, if applicable. We must conclude that their full identity is stated elsewhere in the same document, as it happens at lines 21-22.

members of the collegium in charge of purchasing the sacred land of the gods. This transaction would happen with a part of the public money which the same persons kept on deposit for the city. Once they were appointed members of the public committee for the purchase of lands, the *prodaneistai* would transfer the money to themselves (and their colleagues) to buy new agricultural plots. Just as they were expected to make good use of sacred money in their capacity of trustees of Apollo and Artemis, so they were requested to manage the transactions with land sellers in a way profitable to the city when they served as civic officers. In other words, these distinguished citizens should not abuse their position of power by making a deal that would penalise the city for withdrawing a part of the public money they kept on deposit. The terms of a reasonable deal were legally determined by the demos of Olymos: the future income from the leasing of the newly purchased sacred lands should not be lower than 50% of the annual interest the city received from the *prodaneistai* as trustees of the sacred funds.

In Mylasa, the system of purchase and leasing of sacred lands was managed at an institutional level by a ruling class whose members came from wealthy families that were directly interested in such transactions. Their economic power was expressed through a dynamic mix of economic strategies in which both land cultivation and financial entrepreneurship found their place. The close public-private collaboration we have described ensured a continuous transfer of financial techniques from the private to the public sphere, and *vice versa*. It is certainly possible to see in this ostentatious overlap between public and private operators the risks of a conflict of interest destined to favour certain families, who were better organised as powerful groups of interest, to the detriment of others. However, this point of view would grasp only a part of the dynamics activated by such a system, which at least in principle does not seem to have precluded other potential actors from enjoying its advantages.

It is reasonable to think that, although guided by the strategic priorities of the highest-ranking individuals and families of the Mylasan society, the administrative system of sacred land management allowed for a certain level of openness and competition among the members of the city's ruling class. From this perspective, the rules of reciprocity and the importance of social prestige (cf. the exhibition of the priestly function) in a system where each member could potentially take up different tasks in the management of sacred lands can be expected to have worked as regulators of participation in the sacred land market, making it possible that the parties involved acknowledged not only the legitimacy of economic transactions, but also of their operators.

There is no doubt that, given the functioning of this system, the interests of the gods of Mylasa coincided to a large extent with the interests of the city's ruling class. However, as the demos of Olymos shows, institutions managed to exert some control over transactions by stressing which limits in pursuing one's private interests should not be trespassed. Violating these agreements would affect the social prestige of private entrepreneurs, making them lose face and probably depriving them of the possibility to take advantage of a position of power in the future. All in all, in Mylasa, this dynamic balance seems to have ensured, at least for a few decades, that private interests could

contribute to the public purpose of preserving and increasing the city's wealth and resilience.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the epigraphic dossier of land lease contracts from Mylasa as a case study revealing the financial know-how of a Hellenistic *polis* and the high level of collaboration between public institutions and private entrepreneurs in the administration of the sacred treasuries of the gods. Although a certain degree of conflict of interests must have existed on the account of the overlap between political and economic power in Mylasa, it appears that this risk was mitigated by public institutions by promoting competition and reciprocity between the members of the ruling class. By advertising social prestige and respectability as seminal requisites to access the advantages offered by the system, institutions tried to and, to a certain extent, managed to exert control on individual interests and let them contribute to the common purpose of preserving and increasing the city's wealth and resilience.

Keywords: Mylasa, land lease, sacred funds, public economy, public-private collaboration.

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Redefinitions of Power Through Narrative: Aratus, Phylarchus, Polybius, and Plutarch

by *Emma Nicholson*

Introduction

This article considers the differing presentations of the third century BC Achaean leader, Aratus of Sicyon, in his own *Memoirs*, Phylarchus' *Histories*, Polybius' *Histories*, and Plutarch's *Aratus*, *Cleomenes*, and *Philopoemen*. It explores how each author and text defined and redefined Aratus' leadership and competed with each other through their individual purposes, styles, and textual choices to control the historical perception and memory of this leader. It also reflects on how the historical persona of Aratus gradually shifted through these literary reconfigurations, alongside the more practical establishment of Aratus' cult at Sicyon, into a symbol of heroism, brilliant leadership, and pride for the Achaean League and Peloponnese in the centuries after his death.

Before we begin, it should first be recognised that we can only make inferences about Aratus' presentation in the first two texts, since Aratus' *Memoirs* is entirely lost to us and Phylarchus' work only survives in fragments. Full comprehension and evaluation remains impossible, therefore. References and comments by both Polybius and Plutarch provide us with enough of an idea of what was contained in each of these primary texts, however to allow some brief comments about their presentation of the Achaean leader.

The Lost Accounts

*Aratus and His Memoirs*¹

As noted above, we can only make cursory remarks about Aratus' *Memoirs* since it is now only known through references by Polybius and Plutarch ("Υπομνηματισμοί: Polyb. 2. 40.4; Plut. *Arat.* 3.2)². Yet, we know that it covered the liberation of Sicyon in 251 BC, extended down to the battle of Sellasia in 222/1 BC (Polyb. 1.3.2), and did not cover Aratus' relationship with Philip V of Macedon or his time at the Macedonian court. It may have been written during this later period of Aratus' life, therefore. It also contained more than thirty books and was written in minute detail, probably covering one year per

¹ For the life of Aratus of Sicyon, see Walbank 1933; Beck and Eckstein "Aratos of Sicyon" *BHJ* 231; and Economou 2020, pp. 67-91.

² Polyb. 1.3.2; 2.40.4; 2.56; Plut. *Arat.* 3.2, 32, 33.2, 38, *Ag. and Cleom.* 15, 37(16), 40(19); and *Philop.* 8.5-7.

book³. As *apologia* (Plut. *Cleom.* 15), it was also not written with the intention of presenting a balanced and full historical account of Aratus' career and character, but instead of defending his political decisions and leadership and creating a righteous and vindicated image of the author⁴. It did not present a balanced, historical persona therefore. While Polybius states that Aratus' *Memoirs* was "very truthful and clear" (Polyb. 2.40.4: *λίαν ἀληθινούς καὶ σαφεῖς*), Plutarch finds it less reliable and convincing in places (cf. Plut. *Arat.* 33.3-4, see below), and even Polybius admits that Aratus omitted sensitive topics (Polyb. 2.47.11: *ὧν χάριν ἔνια τούτων οὐδ' ἐν τοῖς ὑπομνήμασι κατέταξεν*; Plut. *Arat.* 38.7)⁵. The *Memoirs* was, moreover, as Plutarch noted, "composed as a by-product, and off-handedly with the first words that occurred to him" (*Arat.* 3.2: *παρέργωγος καὶ ὑπὸ χεῖρα διὰ τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων ὀνομάτων ἀμυλλησάμενος*)⁶. Aratus' autobiography was probably not, therefore, a well thought out treatise on his life and career produced for its own sake, but rather a reactionary piece countering challenges to Aratus' conduct while in power⁷. This casual and slapdash style may have resulted from Aratus' lack of interest in rhetoric (Plut. *Arat.* 3.2), his desire to counter criticisms of his leadership with speed, and his focus on *doing* politics rather than writing politics. If he was writing this work during the end of his political career while at the court of Philip V, there may have been little time to dedicate to its construction.

Through Polybius and Plutarch, we know that Aratus' *Memoirs* fit the general tendency of autobiography at the time to underline the political role and achievements of the protagonist and defend his conduct. It included exaggerations of success, accusations against adversaries, falsehoods, and significant silences⁸. If Plutarch's *Life of Aratus* preserves anything of Aratus' original words, the Achaean leader may have recorded his liberation of Sicyon and the Acrocorinth (Plut. *Arat.* 4-9,16-24), as well as his crossing to Egypt (*Arat.* 12-13), in dramatic tones; although it is impossible to untangle the original from Plutarch's restyling and embellishments⁹. Aratus seems also to have heavily criticised other generals and statemen in the *Memoirs*, including those whom he called allies (Plut. *Arat.* 38.4) and specifically Antigonos Doson (Plut. *Cleom.* 16.3). Plutarch was also unconvinced by two of Aratus' assertions about his conduct, suggesting that he in places presented falsehoods about his conduct

³ For the contents and length of Aratus' *Memoirs*, see *FGrHist* 231 and Stadter 2015, pp. 163-164.

⁴ See Tarn 1913, appendix 3 and Walbank 1933, p. 7.

⁵ Porter 1937, pp. xvi-xvii; Walbank 1970, p. 293 = 2002, p. 93; Gruen 1972, p. 609. For discrepancies and lies in the *Memoirs*, see Marasco 2011, pp. 110-112.

⁶ All translations are my own.

⁷ Plutarch indicates that men began to blame Aratus for many of actions of the Achaeans and Macedonians after the alliance with Antigonos Doson (Plut. *Arat.* 45.1-2).

⁸ Marasco 2011, pp. 107, 117; Stadter 2015, pp. 161-175.

⁹ It is hard to say how much of Aratus' exact words Polybius and Plutarch would have preserved, especially as they were both more careful and deliberate about structure and word choice, as well as, it seems, better trained in rhetoric. Given Plutarch's intention to celebrate Aratus' successes, it would not be surprising if he had embellished these episodes.

and decision-making. The first was Aratus' claim that he was only minimally involved in a failed attempt on the Macedonian-held Peiraeus and that this was instead the work of a man called Erginus. Plutarch argues that only Aratus could have ordered the attack and obtained the necessary Achaean forces since Erginus was a Syrian, and Aratus had a habit of attacking the Piraeus and, like a lover, refused to desist despite his failures (Plut. *Arat.* 33.3-4)¹⁰. Plutarch was also unconvinced by Aratus' claim that he refused to run for office in 224 BC because of the anger between himself and the Achaean people after his reluctance to join the battle resulted in the death of Lydiadas of Megalopolis. Plutarch instead believed that Aratus refused office because of the declining prospects of the Achaeans in the Cleomenean war (Plut. *Arat.* 38.2, *Cleom.* 15.1). As noted above, Polybius also acknowledged that Aratus left certain things unsaid, although insists that this was not an indication of the untruthfulness of the *Memoirs*, but rather the sensitivity of certain political information (Polyb. 2.47.10-11)¹¹. Aratus, it seems, censored material and offered dubious explanations for certain areas of his political career.

The *Memoirs'* existence, extensive length, and combative nature suggest (and Polybius' and Plutarch's works confirm) that Aratus' leadership was not always viewed so positively. Plutarch indicates that there were at least two attempts on Aratus' life (Plut. *Arat.* 25, 40), and slanderous stories circulated about him, particularly concerning his physical reactions to battle (Plut. *Arat.* 29-31; see more below). Aratus' refusal to admit Aristomachus and Argos into the League because Aristomachus entrusted matters to Lydiadas rather than himself was also motivated by political rivalry (Plut. *Arat.* 35)¹². Lydiadas was elected *strategos* three times, alternating with Aratus for six years (in 234/3, 232/1, and 230/29 BC; Plut. *Arat.* 30.3-4) and he was a popular leader for those in the League who preferred a stronger anti-Spartan approach. He was also openly hostile to Aratus in front of the Achaeans on multiple occasions and scornful of his reluctance to join battle (Plut. *Arat.* 30.4; 35.2, 5; 37.1). As indicated above, the League blamed and penalised Aratus for refusing to defend Megalopolis against Cleomenes, bringing about Lydiadas' death (*Arat.* 37; *Cleom.* 6)¹³, and for refusing public office like 'a helmsman who abandons the helm and leaves it to another' (Plut. *Arat.* 38.4: ὥσπερ κυβερνήτην ἀφέντα καὶ προέμενον ἕτέρῳ τοὺς οἰκάκας) in a time when Cleomenes was

¹⁰ Cf. Stadter 2015, p. 164. For scholarly doubts about Aratus' *Memoirs* and its truthfulness, see Engels 1993, pp. 32-33; Haegemans and Kosmetatou 2005, pp. 123-40; and Schepens 2005, pp. 141-164.

¹¹ Polybius is likely referring to Aratus' relationship with the Macedonian kings, which is highlighted by Plutarch as a particularly contentious issue (*Arat.* 38; *Cleom.* 16). For Aratus and the alliance with Macedon, see Gruen 1972, pp. 609-625.

¹² For Aristomachus II of Argos, his incorporation of Argos into the Achaean League, Argos' defection to Cleomenes in 225, and the subsequent treatment of Aristomachus by the Achaean League upon the city's capture, see Larsen 1968, pp. 311-15, 321; Paschidis 2008, pp. 209-24 and Kralli 2017, pp. 169-77, 225-236.

¹³ For Lydiadas of Megalopolis and the incorporation of Megalopolis into the Achaean League, see Porter 1937, p. xix, Pédech 1964, p. 156, Larsen 1968, p. 315-16, Gruen 1972, 614, Nicholson 2017, and Kralli 2017, pp. 176-8, 221-223.

pressing the Achaeans hard. He was also heavily criticised, both at the time and later, for ‘rebarbarizing’ the Peloponnese by bringing in a Macedonian garrison (Plut. *Arat.* 38.4: καὶ μὴ πάλιν τὴν Πελοπόννησον ἐκβαρβαρῶσαι φρουραῖς Μακεδόνων; also *Cleom.* 16). His torture and execution of Aristomachus was condemned because it was thought that he had allowed a man, who had cooperated with him and at his instigation renounced his power and attached his city to the League, to be unlawfully put to death (Plut. *Arat.* 44: παρανόμως; cf. Polyb. 2.60.2, claiming that it was not παρανομίαν). Finally, the harsh treatment of the Mantineans following recapture when Aratus was *strategos* was thought by some to be cruel (Polyb. 2.56.6: τὴν ὀμότητα τὴν Ἀντιγόνου καὶ Μακεδόνων, ἅμα δὲ τούτοις τὴν Ἀράτου καὶ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν), and un-Greek and inexcusable as either fair or necessary by Plutarch (Plut. *Arat.* 45.4-5: ἐδόκει δὲ καὶ τὰ περὶ Μαντίνειαν οὐχ Ἑλληνικῶς διωκῆσθαι τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς... τὰ δὲ μετὰ ταῦτα πραχθέντα περὶ τὴν πόλιν οὔτ’ εἰς καλὴν οὔτ’ εἰς ἀναγκαίαν ἐστὶ θέσθαι τῷ Ἀράτῳ πρόφασιν)¹⁴.

Such criticism suggests that Aratus was not necessarily seen as democratic, fair, egalitarian, and just in his decision-making as he would have wanted, but rather cruel and power hungry in his domination of Achaean politics, his coercion of cities and individuals into joining the League (Polyb. 2.44.3), and in his treatment of defectors. His *Memoirs* was written to counter such criticism, therefore, and was created as an instrument of Aratus’ political power, white-washing his conduct and presenting a just and vindicated leader. As indicated by Plutarch’s statement about its style, Aratus probably never intended it to be beautifully crafted, or for it to enchant its readers with clever or pleasant words and phrasing; it was meant to be a sharp and quick rebuke of accusations against his character and leadership. The *Memoirs’* persuasive strength may have been reduced by this slapdash quality, however its power would have lain with Aratus’ authoritative position and reputation rather than its words. Unfortunately, it was also compromised by its obvious omissions which would have suggested that Aratus was hiding certain information, as well as the fact that Phylarchus took against him and revealed some of the controversial aspects of his leadership.

Phylarchus: Aratus, the War Criminal

It is probable that Phylarchus’ *Histories* was produced shortly after Aratus’ *Memoirs*. While Polybius states that Phylarchus was one of the writers contemporaneous with Aratus who was on many points at variance and in contradiction with him (Polyb. 2.56.1: ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς καιροῦς

¹⁴ The Mantineans were treated leniently when the city first fell into Achaean hands in 227 BC, yet they soon betrayed this trust by making overtures to Cleomenes and massacring the Achaean garrison. When Mantinea was retaken by the Achaean League in 223, some of the Mantinean leaders were executed and others sold into slavery along with their women and children (Polyb. 2.57-8; Plut. *Arat.* 45.4). The city was then resettled by Achaeans and renamed Antigoneia in honour of Antigonus Doson, with Aratus as its official founder (Plut. *Arat.* 45.8). For the Achaean relationship with the Mantineans, see Walbank *HCP* I pp. 260-261; Kralli 2017, pp. 245-247.

Ἀράτω γεγραφότων παρ' ἐνίοις ἀποδοχῆς ἀξιούται Φύλαρχος, ἐν πολλοῖς ἀντιδοξῶν καὶ τάναντία γράφων αὐτῶ...), neither Polybius nor Plutarch indicate that Aratus' *Memoirs* responded to Phylarchus' criticisms. Polybius' lengthy polemic against Phylarchus at 2.56-63 (see below) not only makes no mention of an exchange between the two but may also be the first refutation of Phylarchus' hostile portrait of Aratus as it mentions no other attempts to do so. On the other hand, Aratus may not have named his critics or read Phylarchus' account, and therefore been responding to other complaints about his leadership.

Regardless, Phylarchus' history disrupted Aratus' self-presentation in his *Memoirs* as a powerful, but just and fair leader, and particularly as this history, as Polybius notes, was received by some with favour (Polyb. 2.56.1: παρ' ἐνίοις ἀποδοχῆς ἀξιούται Φύλαρχος)¹⁵. Aratus' *Memoirs* was not received well by all, therefore just like some of his political decisions. Unfortunately, we only have 60 fragments of Phylarchus' work, although the *Suda* notes that it was a history of 28 books recording events from Pyrrhus' Peloponnesian expedition in 272 BC to Cleomenes III's death in 220/19 BC¹⁶. Covering 52 years, therefore, it would have been relatively detailed and was a source for Polybius, Plutarch's *Agis and Cleomenes*, *Pyrrhus* and *Aratus*, as well as for others such as Pompeius Trogus¹⁷.

While historiography and not *apologia* or autobiography, Phylarchus' work was still politically inclined and one-sided, and came down heavily against Aratus, as well as the Achaean League and Macedon. Plutarch observed that "whenever he [Phylarchus] mentioned Cleomenes, he would do so ecstatically because of his partiality and he would continuously oppose Aratus and advocate for Cleomenes in his history, just as if in a court of law" (Plut. *Arat.* 38.8)¹⁸. He proclaimed Aratus' conduct (alongside that of Antigonos Doseon, the Macedonians, and the Achaean League) cruel for the excessive treatment of the Mantineans (Polyb. 2.56.6: τὴν ὀμότητα τὴν Ἀντιγόνου καὶ Μακεδόνων, ἅμα δὲ τούτοις τὴν Ἀράτου καὶ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν), and extremely unjust and terrible in the capture, torture and execution of Aristomachus of Argos (cf. Polyb. 2.59.1: ἀδικώτατα καὶ δεινότατα παθόντα πάντων ἀνθρώπων). He therefore accused the Macedonians, the Achaeans, and Aratus of war crimes¹⁹. In the *Agis and Cleomenes*, Plutarch followed Phylarchus' text much more closely

¹⁵ See Kurpios 2020, p. 619 who notes that Phylarchus' 28-book work was probably circulating in the Greek world when Polybius was writing and was clearly still well-known later when Plutarch and Athenaeus were writing.

¹⁶ *FGrHist* 81 F 53-6, 58; *BNP* coll. 954-5; only 60 fragments survive through intermediate authors, primarily via Athenaeus, Polybius and Plutarch. See *Suda* vs. "Phylarchos". For scholarship, see Walbank *HCP* I, p. 259; Africa 1961; Pédech 1989, pp. 394-493; and Landucci 2018, pp. 557-569.

¹⁷ For the accuracy of Polybius' Phylarchus quotations and his impact on our reading of the fragments, see Landucci 2018, pp. 557-569, Schepens 2005, pp. 141-64; and Kurpios 2020, pp. 594-620.

¹⁸ Plut. *Arat.* 38.8: ἐνθουσιᾷ γὰρ ὅταν ἄψηται τοῦ Κλεομένους, ὑπ' εὐνοίας, καὶ καθάπερ ἐν δίκῃ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τῶ μὲν ἀντιδικῶν διατελεῖ, τῶ δὲ συναγορεύων.

¹⁹ Thornton 2020, p. 52.

than any other. The negative tone of Aratus' depiction, therefore, likely comes from Phylarchus. In the passages where Aratus appears (Plut. *Ag.* 13.15, *Cleom.* 3-6, 12, 14-17, 19-20, 25), he is often being criticised by the Achaeans for his cowardice, for defeat in battle, for abandoning other leaders and the state, and for his stubbornness and refusal to come to terms with the Spartan king. He is shown up by Cleomenes politically and militarily (*Cleom.* 14-15), is said to be fearful and jealous of Cleomenes' sudden success, and worried that the young man might destroy his glory and power and inherit dominion over a state which he had raised to greatness for 33 years (16). It is explicitly stated that Aratus had absolute power in the Achaean League even when others held the office of *strategos* (14.1: τοῦ δὲ Ἀράτου τὸ πᾶν ἦν κράτος ἐν τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς), perhaps suggesting a form of leadership verging on tyranny.

Yet, Phylarchus' historical prose is also known to have had tragic and dramatic tendencies and included sensational elements (cf. Polyb. 2.56.7), tales of miraculous events (F 10, 17, 35), strange animals (F 4.26-28. 38. 61), multifarious anecdotes (F 12, 31, 40, 41, 75), and love affairs (F 21, 24, 30, 32, 70, 71, 81). He was strongly censured by Polybius for writing history for the purpose of emotional impact rather than truth, and for distorting facts and neglecting causation (Polyb. 2.56). While Polybius' criticisms may be exaggerated and Polybius himself is not immune from tragic inflections, Plutarch too doubted Phylarchus' historical accuracy and said that he made many things up (*Arat.* 38.8; cf. *Cleom.* 30; and *Them.* 32.3)²⁰. Phylarchus' negative depiction of Aratus was no doubt deliberately exaggerated for dramatic effect, therefore, and may not have been entirely accurate.

Regardless of its veracity, however, Phylarchus' text had a powerful effect on the memory and reputation of Aratus' leadership and career, as well as that of the Achaean League. Its power lay in its popular and emotional appeal and easy reading, and unlike Aratus' *Memoirs* was seemingly more careful and deliberate in its construction. Phylarchus never intended it to be an objective and well-reasoned history (which of course drew Polybius' ire), but purposefully composed it at this point to ignite anger against Aratus and the Achaean League and pity and sympathy for those brutalised by Achaean and Macedonian actions. Moreover, in his account of the Cleomenean War, Phylarchus was writing from the perspective of not only those Greeks who sided with Sparta and lost or who were negatively affected by the Achaean-Macedonian victory, but also for a wider group of Greeks (including certain figures in the Achaean League) who disapproved of and disagreed with Aratus' decision to bring Macedon back into Peloponnesian affairs. The latter decision bolstered and secured Aratus' career and policies in the Achaean League and, to an extent, the power of the League more broadly, but it also came at the expense of Greek

²⁰ For the claim that Phylarchus made things up, see in particular Plut. *Them.* 32.3: ὁ τε Φύλαρχος, ὡσπερ ἐν τραγωδίᾳ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ μονοῦ μηχανὴν ἄρας καὶ προαγαγῶν Νεοκλέα τινὰ καὶ Δημοπόλειον, υἱοῦς Θεμιστοκλέους, ἀγῶνα βούλεται κινεῖν καὶ πάθος, ὁ οὐδ' ἂν ὁ τυχῶν ἀγνοήσειεν ὅτι πέπλασται. For Polybius' use of tragic elements in his work, see, for instance, Walbank 1938, pp. 55-68 = 1985, pp. 210-23, 1972, pp. 39-40; Farrington 2016, pp. 159-82; Nicholson 2023, pp. 228-266.

liberty and resulted in the cruel treatment of fellow Greeks. As Aratus refused to come to terms with Cleomenes, despite there being opportunities to do so (Plut. *Arat.* 39-42, *Cleom.* 15.1-2, 17.1-5, 19.1-4; see details below), some Greeks may have interpreted Aratus' actions as self-serving and undertaken more for his own power and standing than for the wellbeing of the Achaean League and wider Greek community. The bitterness felt at Aratus' actions, implied by the very existence of the *Memoirs* and stated explicitly by Plutarch (*Arat.* 38.4), would have encouraged the popularity of Phylarchus' text, and particularly since it was produced soon after the events when emotions were still running high. Phylarchus was the voice of contemporary opinion²¹, and while Polybius tries to justify Aratus' and the League's actions (Polyb. 2.56-61) the fact remains that these events were still remembered and viewed as excessive by many, even by Plutarch centuries later. As its messages were easily read and spread, and as it is easier to drive anger and pity than to appease them, Phylarchus' history successfully challenged Aratus' narrative and condemned his leadership and character.

The Surviving Tradition

Polybius: Aratus, The Hero

With Polybius, we stand on firmer ground in determining his portrait of Aratus since almost all of his account of the Sicyonian survives complete – books 2, 4, and 5 of the *Histories* remain fully extant and only books 7 and 8 are fragmentary²².

As noted above, Phylarchus' work seems to have been held with some esteem (2.56.1) and to have held greater power over the Sicyonian's reputation than Aratus' *Memoirs*. Polybius, as an Achaean statesman and partisan of Aratus, could not let the damage caused by Phylarchus' text stand without opposition, however²³. He announced in Book 2, therefore, that he was adhering to Aratus' account for the period covering 250-220 BC (Polyb. 2.56.2: χρήσιμον ἂν εἶη, μᾶλλον δ' ἀναγκαῖον ἡμῖν, Ἀράτῳ προσηρημένοις κατακολουθεῖν περὶ τῶν Κλεομενικῶν), because Aratus, unlike Phylarchus, left "a very truthful and clear" account of his own leadership (Polyb. 2.40.4: καὶ λίαν ἀληθινούς καὶ σαφείς). As indicated earlier, this statement is somewhat exaggerated. Yet, to support his claim, Polybius determined to repel Phylarchus' narrative of Achaean criminality by destroying the latter's credibility in a long digression criticising Phylarchus' work for its sensationalism, inaccuracy, and lack of concern for cause and effect (Polyb. 2.56-63)²⁴. In this polemical episode,

²¹ Walbank *HCP* I, p. 260, *ad* 2.56.6; Rostovtzeff 1998 [1941], p. 194.

²² Aratus did not appear in book 3 which was assigned to Roman and Carthaginian affairs and is unlikely to have had a significant presence, if one at all, in Book 6 which discussed political constitutions.

²³ For Polybius' Achaean background and bias towards Aratus and his *Memoirs*, see Haegemans and Kosmetatou 2005, pp. 123-140 and Meadows 2013, pp. 91-116.

²⁴ For Polybius' disagreements with Phylarchus, see Walbank *HCP* I, pp. 259-70; Schepens 2005, pp. 141-64; Walbank 2005, pp. 1-18; Moreno Leoni 2010, pp. 181-214; Eckstein 2013, pp.

Polybius focused heavily on Phylarchus' dramatic and emotional retelling of the harsh treatment of the Mantineans and Aristomachus by the Macedonians, Aratus, and Achaeans (Polyb. 2.56-60). While Polybius convincingly discredited Phylarchus' credibility as a historian here, and perhaps the claim that the leading Mantinean citizens were executed²⁵, he does not dispute the fact that the population was enslaved, or that Aristomachus was tortured and executed. Instead, he defends these actions by reference to righteous retaliation, the "laws of war", and anti-tyrant rhetoric²⁶. Rather than being cruel, excessive, and unjust, as Phylarchus claims and others clearly thought (Plut. *Arat.* 44.4, 45.4-6; cf. Polyb. 2.58.9, 12), they are reframed as justified, fair, and even lenient because the Mantineans had betrayed the Achaeans (Polyb. 2.58.10-11) and Aristomachus was an ex-tyrant, had executed leading Argives, and then defected to Sparta when the Achaeans were struggling in the war (Polyb. 2.59.4-10). Polybius thus argues that Phylarchus guided the reader to judge the actions of Aratus, the Macedonians and Achaeans wrongly and therefore erroneously roused anger against Aratus and pity for the Mantineans²⁷. These actions, while violent, are instead argued to be fair and just.

Polybius' defence is not entirely convincing since he applies different definitions of just, fair, and correct behaviour in non-Achaean contexts in other parts of the *Histories* (e.g., Polyb. 5.9). He also conveniently makes no mention of Aratus' decision to rename Mantinea Antigoneia in Antigonos Doson's honour, or that Aratus was given founder status of this renamed city (Plut. *Arat.* 45.8; *IG II 299/SEG 11.1089*)²⁸. Such details would have compromised Polybius' argument that Aratus' leadership was just and fair. Yet Polybius' main purpose here was firstly to fight against the rising tide of hostility towards Aratean and Achaean leadership, of which Phylarchus was a key promoter,

314-16 for a thorough discussion of the divisive scholarly debate about whether we should accept Polybius' criticisms or not; Farrington 2016, pp. 159-82 for Polybius' traditional conception of tragedy in this episode and his view of the differences between history and tragedy; and Thornton 2020, pp. 52-63 for the rhetorical nature of Polybius' attempt to refute Phylarchus' narrative.

²⁵ Polybius does not explicitly state that the leading Mantinean citizens were executed, although suggests not at 2.58.11-12; Plutarch (*Arat.* 4), however, seems to believe Phylarchus here and that the Achaeans executed the leading Mantinean citizens. Eckstein 2013, p. 319 claims that Phylarchus lied about the execution of the Mantinean leaders, and Walbank 1933, pp. 106-7 proposed that anything more than mass enslavement was only a possibility.

²⁶ For Polybius' use of the laws of war in his *Histories*, see Nicholson 2018, pp. 434-453; for Polybius and tyranny, see Nicholson 2023, pp. 179-181, 190-3, 287-289.

²⁷ See Farrington 2016, pp. 159-182 and Loehr 2024, especially pp. 2-8 and 213, for Polybius and emotions in historiography, and this episode.

²⁸ See Walbank *HCP I*, pp. 260-261, *ad* 2.56.6. Alongside the (re)occupation of the Acrocorinth (Polyb. 2.54.1), Orchomenus (Polyb. 2.54.10; Plut. *Cleom.* 23.1, *Arat.* 45.1) and Heraea (Polyb. 2.54.12; Livy 28.8.6), other honours bestowed on Antigonos Doson included 'Antigoneia' festivals at Sicyon and Histiaea/Oreus in Euboea (*SIG* 493 I.22), an altar at Epidaurus (*ISE* 1.46), honours at Geronthrae in Laconia (*IG I* 1122), a group statue with Doson and Philip being crowned by Hellas (Paus. 6.16.3), and deference before any other Hellenistic ruler (Plut. *Arat.* 45.2).

and secondly to take control of the narrative of Achaean history²⁹. The length and vehemency of his invective suggests that Phylarchus' account was particularly effective at tarnishing the memory of Aratus and the Achaean League. Yet, through his appeal to reason and truth, Polybius (and the ravages of textual transmission and survival) for the most part turned the course of this fight. Phylarchus' reputation and picture of Aratus and the Achaean League have since been compromised by Polybius' rebuttal.

Polybius used his *Histories*, therefore, to defend Aratus' reputation, justifying, promoting, and celebrating Achaean leadership and policy against other hostile narratives. He strengthens the Achaean perspective above Phylarchus' anti-Achaean one, as well as the power narrative produced by Aratus in his *Memoirs*. Yet, Polybius also rewrites Aratus' account and constructs his own image of this leader and the Achaean League. In doing so, we see in more concrete terms a shift in the textual transmission from Aratus as a historical persona to a symbol of Achaean and Peloponnesian heroism, a shift which reflects the symbolification of Aratus "as saviour and founder" in his cult at Sicyon, established shortly after his death in 213 BC (Plut. *Arat.* 53). The festival connected with this cult, the Arateion, which commemorated the day Aratus liberated Sicyon from tyranny, may well have continued to be celebrated into the first few decades of the second century BC when Polybius was growing up, and therefore influenced his heroic conception of Aratus³⁰.

While Polybius' approach to history was very different to Phylarchus', demanding a plainer, more objective and truthful narration of events with consideration of cause and effect, it was still just as impacted by political bias³¹. He even concedes later in the *Histories* that "historical writers should give the casting vote to their own fatherlands, although...they should not make statements about them contrary to the facts" (Polyb. 16.14.6; cf. 16.17.8)³². He also engaged in patriotic writing himself: his introductory chapters detailing the Achaean League's history (Polyb. 2.37-60) are notorious for their unfiltered praise of its and Aratus' allegedly unwavering policies promoting unity,

²⁹ Writing after the Roman defeat of Macedon (168 BC) and the Achaean War (146 BC), Polybius sought to celebrate and justify the League's past and previous actions, to legitimise its past friendship with Macedon, and to defend his own person and connection with the League while interned at Rome. He therefore tried to take control of the memory of Achaean politics and power through his own literary choices and strategies. See Moreno Leoni 2010, pp. 181-214 for Polybius' intention to control the narrative of Achaean-Mantinean relations and guide the reader towards his own version of the truth in this episode, and see 2017, pp. 92-130 for Polybius' construction of Achaean memory and identity. See also Thornton 2013, pp. 213-229 and 2020, pp. 47-71 for Polybius' creation of an official transcript of Achaean history.

³⁰ See Hughes 2019, pp. 119-150 for Aratus' cult and festival.

³¹ For Polybius' political bias, see, for instance, Walbank *HCP* I, p. 264; Gabba 1957, pp. 21-22; Africa 1961, pp. 31, 33; Meister 1975, pp. 97, 102-103, 105, 107; Haegemans and Kosmetatou 2005, pp. 123-40; Schepens 2005, pp. 141-64; McGing 2010, pp. 74-5; 2020, pp. 57-63; and Nicholson 2023, pp. 39-42.

³² Polyb. 16.14.6: ἐγὼ δὲ διότι μὲν δεῖ ὅσπας δίδοναι ταῖς αὐτῶν πατρίσι τοὺς συγγραφέας, συγχωρησαμὶ ἄν, οὐ μὴν τὰς ἐναντίας τοῖς συμβεβηκόσιν ἀποφάσεις ποιεῖσθαι περὶ αὐτῶν.

equality, democratic government, and freedom. This account of Achaean history falls in the introduction to his main narrative and may be forgiven somewhat for its brevity, although it is still conspicuously one-sided and unusually so for Polybius. Much is omitted and obscured in Aratus' career and the political movements of the Achaean League, creating an impression that Aratus was acting almost alone in Achaean politics and was completely fair and just in his use and display of power. This brevity conveniently allows Polybius to avoid detailed discussions of his behaviour in developing the League, his relations with others inside and outside of it, as well as the League's conduct during the Cleomenean War (Polyb. 2.56-63) and its association with Macedon (Polyb. 2.47-52, 54). All of these instances would have appeared more questionable if presented in a longer and more balanced account.

The image of Aratus in the *Histories*, while occasionally tempered by mention of failings (Polyb. 4.8), is almost entirely positive and heroic. He is the initiator (ἀρχηγός) and conceiver (καθηγεμύων) of the plan to unify the Peloponnese (Polyb. 2.40.2), an avid fighter against tyranny, and the hero who recaptures the Acrocorinth from the Macedonians (Polyb. 2.43.3-4). He persuades Peloponnesian cities to join the federation and is dedicated to its benevolent and beneficial governance (Polyb. 2.43.4-9). Even when he has reversed his anti-Macedonian policy, Aratus is credited with extraordinary foresight and nobility in conducting the negotiations with Doso in 227 (Polyb. 2.47.4-5, 50.1-5), and later in counselling Philip V (e.g. Polyb. 5.12.5-8; 7.12.1-14.4)³³. The harsh treatment of Mantinea and Aristomachus is justified (Polyb. 2.56-61). There is a brief mention of Aratus' coercive and threatening behaviour towards Peloponnesian cities when trying to get them to join the League at 2.44.3, however this is immediately softened by Polybius' implication that these cities ultimately benefitted from being part of this federation.

Aratus also stands almost completely alone as leader of the Achaean League in the *Histories* since the presence and activity of other Achaean leaders is rarely mentioned: Margos of Caryneia, Aratus' predecessor, is given two lines (Polyb. 2.41.14, 2.43.2-3); Timoxenus, strategos in 224 BC, is mentioned for his capture of Argos and described as Aratus' chosen candidate against the Macedonian-backed Eperatus in 218 BC (Polyb. 2.53.2, 4.82.8); Lydiadas of Megalopolis, who was *strategos* of the League for three terms and a rival of Aratus, is given two short sentences (Polyb. 2.44.5, 2.51.3); Aristomachus of Argos, besides appearing in Polybius' tirade against Phylarchus (Polyb. 2.59-60), is mentioned when he joins Argos to the League (Polyb. 2.44.6) and his term as *strategos* is only admitted in pursuit of the argument that the League treated him well (Polyb. 2.60.5); and finally Eperatus, the Macedonian-backed *strategos* in 218 BC, is only named at 4.82.8, 5.1, and 5.5, and described as incompetent at 5.30 and 5.91. By the use of brevity, one-sidedness, and isolation in his narrative, therefore, Polybius shifts the impression of power and

³³ For the relationship between Aratus and Philip V and Polybius' presentation of it, see D'Agostini 2019, pp. 29-38, 80-119 and 2021, pp. 59-74; and Nicholson 2023, pp. 27, 48, 59-100, 114-16, 186-90, 194-96.

prominence more squarely onto Aratus, presenting him as the primary mover of politics in the Achaean League and a benevolent father of his country, fighting for the collective good, justice, equality, and freedom.

Polybius' own agenda (and perhaps also because Aratus' slapdash *Memoirs* could not hold up against Phylarchus' text) meant that he carefully chose to add, alter, and omit certain episodes from the *Memoirs* to create a more curated and positive image of Aratus' leadership. Two episodes in the *Histories* reveal this to be the case; a third will be explored later when discussing Plutarch's *Aratus*. The first is Polybius' account of Aratus' secret diplomatic manoeuvres with Antigonos Doson in 227 BC (Polyb. 2.47.3-51), which Polybius and Plutarch both indicate did not appear in the *Memoirs* (Polyb. 2.47.10-11; Plut. *Arat.* 38.7). Polybius outlines how Aratus, seeing the growing threat of Cleomenes III and Sparta, decided to approach the Macedonian king about an alliance, but did so covertly, as he did not want to give Cleomenes a chance to outbid him or to arouse the disapproval of the Achaeans for reversing his long-term anti-Macedonian policy. He therefore picked two Megalopolitans who were friends of his family, Nicophanes and Cercidas, to make the first move (Polyb. 2.48.1-5)³⁴. Through these two, Megalopolis, which had been on good terms with the Macedonians since Philip II, was inspired to ask the Achaean League for permission to appeal to Doson for aid. The League agreed and the Megalopolitan embassy met with Doson, allegedly assuring him that Aratus would find satisfactory terms for both parties and determine when this aid would be required (Polyb. 2.49.10). Doson confirmed his willingness to help in a letter to the Megalopolitans and Aratus received private confirmation of the king's goodwill towards the League and himself (Polyb. 2.50.1-5). Polybius states that Aratus saw it as a great advantage that the Megalopolitans had approached Doson after gaining permission from the Achaeans, because the appeal would therefore come legally from both him and the League. Without this permission, Aratus feared he would be blamed for any unwelcome moves made by the king. Aratus then appeared before the General Council of the League in 226, showing them Doson's letter and urging the Achaeans to accept his intervention. After seeing their enthusiasm to do so, however, Aratus cautioned the League not to accept Macedonian aid until necessary (Polyb. 2.50.6-11). This was agreed upon, but the Achaean war effort quickly deteriorated, and an alliance was negotiated in 224 BC with the return of the Acrocorinth to Macedonian control.

The historicity of these negotiations in 227 BC has been hotly debated since Polybius implies that Aratus made no mention of them in his *Memoirs*, Plutarch explicitly states that Aratus only highlighted the necessity placed upon him in this situation, and only Polybius and Phylarchus indicate that they actually occurred (Plut. *Arat.* 38.7-8)³⁵. Current scholarly opinion believes

³⁴ For Nicophanes and Cercidas and their intermediary role, see Paschidis 2008, pp. 237, 276-6 and Kralli 2017, pp. 223-6.

³⁵ For the historicity of the secret negotiations between Aratus and Doson, and Polybius' sources for them, see Gruen 1972, pp. 610-615 and Paschidis 2008, pp.241-4, but also Walbank 1933, pp. 70-88; Porter 1937, p. xix; Walbank 1940, p. 14; Walbank *HCP* I, p. 246;

that they were historical, although not entirely in the way that Polybius states. It is instead postulated that the Megalopolitans, and not Aratus, were the originators of the plan to approach Antigonus Doso in 227, since they would have been more receptive to Macedonian intervention than Aratus and more directly threatened by Sparta to the South (Plut. *Arat.* 38.7)³⁶. Plutarch also indicates that “it was widely believed that Antigonus had been called in by the Achaeans largely at the Megalopolitans’ insistence” (Plut. *Cleom.* 23.2). Moreover, even after Doso had shown a willingness to help the League Aratus was reluctant to call upon Macedonian aid (Polyb. 2.50.11). Some doubt, therefore, the initiative with which Aratus is depicted in approaching Macedon in Polybius’ *Histories* and suggest that Aratus may have decided to reverse his anti-Macedonian policy only once the Megalopolitans had insisted that Doso be approached, or even once they had already approached the king and the League had shown eagerness to accept Macedonian aid, so as not be sidelined in League decision-making. It is now believed that he reversed his policy, therefore, to stay at the forefront of League politics, suggesting that Aratus was more interested in power than a specific line of policy and principle. Regardless of the historicity of these negotiations, by including them when Aratus did not Polybius both defends Aratus for this omission in his *Memoirs* and shows him to be at the forefront of League decision-making, astute and forward thinking, and willing to make hard decisions in times of war.

The second episode where Polybius deviated from the *Memoirs* is in his omission of Aratus’ series of failed negotiations with Cleomenes between 226 and 224 BC. The record of these meetings only survives in Plutarch’s *Aratus* (39-42) and *Cleomenes* (15.1-2, 17.1-5, 19.1-4) and Plutarch indicates that he got his information from Aratus’ *Memoirs* and Phylarchus (*Cleom.* 15-16.5, 17.2, 19.4; cf. *Arat.* 39.1-3). Plutarch states that in the *Memoirs* it was claimed that Cleomenes was jointly responsible for the failure to find reconciliation in these exchanges; in Phylarchus’ text the blame is placed squarely on Aratus and his refusal to accept Cleomenes’ terms. These negotiations would have been included in Aratus’ *Memoirs* as they would have allowed Aratus to deflect responsibility for the failed reconciliation onto Cleomenes and allow him to argue that he only allied with Macedon because of the necessity that Cleomenes’ stubbornness caused. Their inclusion would also have suited Phylarchus’ intention to malign Aratus. Neither version suited Polybius, however, since one turned Aratus into the villain, the other explained his reversal of policy towards Macedon as the result of begrudging and involuntary acceptance of necessity caused by his own failure to find agreement and his reluctance to give up his own powerful position. Neither fit into Polybius’ image of the Achaean leader as the careful and perceptive engineer of an alliance that would save Greece from a Spartan tyrant. Polybius therefore ignores these meetings entirely, avoiding the argument that Aratus was wilfully against an agreement

Ehrhardt 1975, pp. 252-3; Le Bohec 1993, pp. 364-367; Champion 2004, p. 122; Kralli 2017, p. 225; Shipley 2018, p. 68; and Nicholson 2023, pp. 34-38, 51-53.

³⁶ Pédech 1964, pp. 156-157; Hammond and Walbank 1988, p. 346; and Kralli 2017, p. 225.

with a fellow Greek and that it was not actually necessary to bring Macedon back into Peloponnesian affairs.

Both episodes demonstrate how Polybius adapted the information in the *Memoirs* to defend and redefine Aratus' actions, character, and importance to Achaean policy³⁷. Given Polybius' careful and deliberate construction of his *Histories* – revealed only in a small part here – the narrative was likely constructed more thoughtfully than Aratus' *Memoirs* and put forth arguments more persuasively. The explicit importance Polybius assigned to truth, education, reason, and cause and effect would also have given his version of Aratus greater weight and credibility – truthfulness and reason were his powerbase. His attack on Phylarchus for his sensationalism, lack of concern for cause and effect, and inaccuracy, moreover, produced a narrative weapon strong enough to damage Phylarchus' reputation and forever compromise his negative presentation of Aratus and the Achaean League. Polybius also utilised the briefer nature of this opening portion of his *Histories* to omit some of the more problematic episodes of Aratus' career and present him as the primary mover and advancer in Achaean politics. Polybius' curation of Aratus' leadership in such a way shifts Aratus from a complex historical persona into a more static and less rounded heroic symbol of Achaean leadership. As we will see below, a couple of centuries later Plutarch both enhances and compromises this heroic image.

Plutarch: Aratus, A More Complex Exemplar

Aratus appears in three of Plutarch's lives: the *Aratus*, *Cleomenes*, and *Philopoemen*. We have already touched on the *Cleomenes*, which depicts Aratus in more negative terms, partly the result of Plutarch's tendency to take on the perspective of his subject, but also because his main source for this life was Phylarchus' history³⁸. In the *Philopoemen*, written in-between the *Aratus* and *Cleomenes*³⁹, he only appears in one chapter (*Philop.* 8; clearly based off Polybius; cf. 2.43.3-10), where he is praised as the first to raise the Achaean League to a position of respect and power by instituting a truly Greek and humane form of government, absorbing and attracting many surrounding Greek cities into it, freeing them from tyranny, and offering them political concord and citizenship. The intention was to form the Peloponnese into a single body and power (cf. *Cleom.* 3.4). There is also recognition that while Aratus was alive the Achaeans were usually dependent on Macedonian military support, and that Aratus, although brilliant socially and diplomatically, was rather *laissez-faire* towards battle. It is in Plutarch's first portrait of the Sicyonian in the *Aratus*

³⁷ For Polybius' construction of character, and specifically Aratus' character, see Pelling 1988, pp. 264-7 and Nicholson 2023, pp. 277-228, 286.

³⁸ Waterfield 2016, p. 302.

³⁹ As Stadter 2015, p. 162 fn. 1 notes, the *Aratus* preceded most, if not all, the *Lives*, since it is said to be already written in the *Philopoemen* (8.6) which was an early Life. The *Philopoemen* is then mentioned at 24.5 of the *Cleomenes*, making the latter the last of three to touch on Aratus.

that we get a much fuller and more original picture of the leader⁴⁰. Here we find that Plutarch both combines and compromises all three of the presentations of power and leadership developed in Aratus', Phylarchus', and Polybius' works. He presents a new exemplar fit for celebration and emulation, but also one recognising the complexity of the man and difficulties of leadership.

We must assume that Plutarch recast much of the *Memoirs*, particularly since the *Memoirs* was a much longer work and Plutarch did not think highly of Aratus' slapdash style⁴¹. His work was also biographical and didactic in nature rather than autobiographical and apologetic, and therefore aimed at presenting Aratus as a coherent but also integrated and complex character rather than a vindicated leader⁴². He focused primarily, therefore, on character-defining episodes and anecdotes rather than chronological strictness and comprehensiveness⁴³. As noted above, Plutarch also pointed out moments where he did not believe Aratus' account (Plut. *Arat.* 33.3-4, 38.4), disrupting Aratus' self-presentation. Plutarch compensated for the apologetic and biased nature of the *Memoirs*, therefore, by using his own judgement and the works of others to delve into character and unravel possible untruths in Aratus' political statements⁴⁴.

While Plutarch heavily criticised Aratus for his decision to ally with the Macedonians (Plut. *Arat.* 38.4 and *Cleom.* 16), and also utilised Phylarchus' history, he equally viewed Phylarchus' account with suspicion, acknowledging that some of it was fabricated (*Arat.* 38.8; cf. *Cleom.* 30; and *Them.* 32.3). In the *Aratus*, moreover, Plutarch was writing a piece to celebrate the life of Aratus and to hold him up as an exemplar for younger generations (and particularly Aratus' ancestors, the sons of Polycrates of Sicyon; Plut. *Arat.* 1); he was unlikely, therefore, to have taken on too much of Phylarchus' hostility and filtered out his fabrications⁴⁵. In contrast to Polybius, and perhaps surprisingly, Plutarch's *Aratus* (alongside certain episodes in the *Cleomenes*) offers a fuller and more balanced picture of Aratus' career and leadership. This is again partly the result of Plutarch's biographical approach, which requires the recognition of both positive and negative attributes and conduct to enable assessment

⁴⁰ For Plutarch's *Aratus*, see Porter 1937; Almagor 2014, pp. 278–291; Stadter 2015, pp. 161–75; and Waterfield 2016, pp. 254–257. For Plutarch's characterisation of Aratus, see Pelling 1988, pp. 264–7.

⁴¹ Stadter 2015, pp. 163–164.

⁴² For the concept of 'integrated' characterization in Plutarch, see Pelling 1988, pp. 262–74 and 1990, pp. 225–40.

⁴³ Cf. Plut. *Alex.* 1.1–2; Pelling 2002, pp. 92–96, 152–153 and Hägg 2012, pp. 268–269.

⁴⁴ Alongside Polybius and Phylarchus, Plutarch also cites Myrsilus of Mytilene (*Arat.* 3.5; *FGrHist* IIB, 477 F 13), Deinias' *Argolica* (*Arat.* 29.5; *FGrHist* IIB, 306 F 5), and Polemon "the Periegete" (*Arat.* 13.2–5; fr. 17 Preller 1838. Cf. Hughes 2019, p. 12).

⁴⁵ See Stadter 2015, pp. 161–3 for Plutarch's dedication of the *Aratus* to his ancestor Polycrates of Sicyon and his two sons Polycrates junior and Pythocles. Plutarch focused more on historical narrative than anecdotes or other means of characterization in his *Parallel Lives* (Wardman 1974, pp. 1–10, 154–61 cf. Hägg 2012, pp. 269–70) and tended not to fabricate material although often pushed his interpretations as far as possible to fit his design (Pelling 2002, pp. 147–153).

of a person's life and leadership qualities. It is also the result of Plutarch's chronological distance from Aratus, the Achaean League, and the political situation in the third and second centuries BC, which meant his account was less politically driven than the three prior accounts and less intent on defamation or defence⁴⁶. It was likely also impacted by Aratus' cult status in the second century BC (Plut. *Arat.* 53), even if cultic activity had been discontinued by 148 BC when Rome defeated the Achaean League⁴⁷.

Plutarch, therefore, rewrites Aratus' power and career once again – and in this we see Aratus become a more integrated character-type, deliberately constructed to be assessed and used to draw out exemplary morals. This process fed further into Aratus' transformation into a symbol of pride not only for the Peloponnese but also for the Greeks after Roman conquest. Plutarch's portrait of Aratus is ultimately positive emphasising his heroism, hatred of all tyrants and particularly the tyranny of Macedon, consistent pursuit of freedom and unity, keen focus on politics and unification of the Peloponnese, and love of noble action and integrity through set pieces (the liberation of Sicyon (2-14), the capture of the Acrocorinth (16-25)), character studies, discussion of strengths and weaknesses, and anecdotes (10-11, 14-15, 25, 29-30). Plutarch also notes that while Philopoemen is known as the 'last of the Greeks', in his opinion Aratus' capture of the Acrocorinth should be classed as the last significant Greek achievement. Aratus was constructed as a brilliant leader, therefore, worthy of memory and emulation, and a symbol of Greek freedom and the fight against tyranny.

Because of its biographical and educational purpose, Plutarch also outlines moments when the Achaean leader was not perceived so well and points out traits that were not so heroic or good for his political community. As noted above, Plutarch observes how Aratus was reproached for his treatment of the Mantineans and Aristomachus (Plut. *Arat.* 44.14). He also reported that Aratus was condemned for his lack of skill in open combat (Plut. *Arat.* 2-4; cf. Polyb. 4.8), was 'accused of abandoning the struggle and throwing away the victory' after a battle at the river Chares and violating the period of asylum during the games at Argos (Plut. *Arat.* 28), and was rumoured to be constitutionally unsuited for battle, suffering from stomach cramps before a fight, dizziness whenever the trumpeter signalled, and often withdrawing to await the outcome from a distance (Plut. *Arat.* 29.5). He was criticised for preventing Aristomachus from joining battle with Cleomenes at Pallantium in 228 (Plut. *Arat.* 35.4-5), for not aiding Lydiadas in the battle against Cleomenes near Megalopolis which cost Lydiadas his life (Plut. *Arat.* 37), and for refusing to take office in 224 BC, an act perceived by some as a betrayal of the League (Plut. *Arat.* 38.2-4). He received censure for his harsh treatment of the Sicyonian and Corinthian leaders who had sided with Cleomenes (Plut. 40.1-3), for his transfer of Corinth and Orchomenos to the Macedonians, for his provision

⁴⁶ For the differences in Polybius' and Plutarch' characterization of Aratus, see Pelling 1988, pp. 264-7 and Nicholson 2023, pp. 277.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hughes 2019, pp. 119-150.

of food and pay to the Macedonian army, and for the games that he celebrated in Dosoń's honour (Plut. 45.1-3). These instances demonstrate that while Aratus had many good qualities he was also viewed less favourably within his own institution at various points in his career. He did, in fact, make things very difficult for the League because of his military incompetence and competitive, uncooperative behaviour.

It is also acknowledged that Aratus was the *de facto* permanent head of state in both the *Aratus* and the *Cleomenes* despite not officially being able to hold the top position every year (*Arat.* 24.4: ἔργω δὲ καὶ γνώμῃ διὰ παντός ἄρχειν; *Cleom.* 14.1: τοῦ δὲ Ἀράτου τὸ πᾶν ἦν κράτος ἐν τοῖς Ἀχαιοῖς). Through Plutarch, however, we also get to hear more about other contemporary leaders of the Achaean League, and particularly Lydiadas, the ex-tyrant of Megalopolis and rival of Aratus, who appears in a much fuller role in the *Aratus*⁴⁸. As outlined above, in Polybius' *Histories* Lydiadas only receives two short passages, the first describing Lydiadas as pragmatic and sensible in laying down his tyranny, the second at his death depicting him far more neutrally⁴⁹. In Plutarch's *Aratus*, in contrast, Lydiadas gets three chapters (30, 35, 37) and one in the *Cleomenes* (6). While both accounts are generally negative and suggest that Plutarch was using Aratus' *Memoirs* as a source, they are still valuable for reconstructing the movements of the ex-tyrant within the League. Lydiadas first appears in the *Aratus* at chapter 30 as a tyrant who resigned from his position, joined his city to the League, and was then chosen as *strategos* in 234 BC. He was allegedly ambitious to surpass the reputation of Aratus, doing many 'unnecessary' things, and even initiating a campaign against Sparta. Aratus unsuccessfully tried to oppose Lydiadas, seemingly out of jealousy, in his second campaign for the office of *strategos* (232 BC) but Lydiadas was held in favour until his third term of office in 230 BC, after which he fell from favour while denouncing Aratus and allegedly revealing an insincere character (πεπλασμένω ἦθει). Aratus' faction and influence in the League had clearly come out on top, a result also revealed in passage 35, when Aristomachus, trying to join Argos to the League, is initially sent away from the Achaean council because he had been persuaded to put matters into Lydiadas' hands instead of Aratus'. The final passage, the end of 37 (cf. Plut. *Cleom.* 6), also shows Lydiadas' distress at Aratus' military inactivity when Cleomenes was

⁴⁸ For Lydiadas in Polybius and Plutarch, see Nicholson 2023, pp. 45-48.

⁴⁹ Λυδιάδας μὲν οὖν ὁ Μεγαλοπολίτης ἔτι ζώντος Δημητρίου, κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ προαίρεσιν, πάνυ πραγματικῶς καὶ φρονίμως προοιδόμενος τὸ μέλλον ἀπετέθειτο τὴν τυραννίδα καὶ μετεσχῆκει τῆς ἐθνικῆς συμπολιτείας. (2.44.5) Lydiadas of Megalopolis in the lifetime of [King] Demetrius, by his own choice, foreseeing what would happen with great pragmatism and good sense, laid down his tyranny and took a share in the ethnic confederation. οἱ δ' Ἀχαιοὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ἠλαττώθησαν περὶ τὸ Λύκαιον, συμπλακέντες κατὰ πορείαν τῷ Κλεομένει, τὸ δὲ δευτέρον ἐκ παρατάξεως ἠττήθησαν ἐν τοῖς Λαδοκειῖσι καλουμένοις τῆς Μεγαλοπολίτιδος, ὅτε καὶ Λυδιάδας ἔπεσε... (2.51.3) The first time the Achaeans were worsted near Lycaea, engaging with Cleomenes while on the march, and the second they were defeated in pitched battle at a place in the territory of Megalopolis called Ladoceia, when Lydiadas also fell...

set out in military formation in front of Megalopolis. Lydiadas decided to advance alone, throwing reproaches at the Sicyonian, and was killed in action.

Lydiadas' career in the Achaean League seems to be far more substantial than Polybius describes, and the rivalry between the two statesmen and their unwillingness to cooperate far more pronounced. While Plutarch's account is brief, it also reveals Aratus' jealousy of Lydiadas – not a particularly positive or encouraging trait for a leader – and indicates that Aratus was at least worried that Lydiadas might eclipse him in power and was intent on keeping himself at the top⁵⁰. Similar jealousy and fearfulness is also seen, as mentioned earlier, in Aratus' relationship with Cleomenes (*Cleom.* 16.1). This was a third area, therefore, where Polybius deviated from Aratus' *Memoirs*, since, according to Plutarch, Aratus discussed his relationship with Lydiadas in some length (*Plut. Arat.* 38.2). The reason for this omission is clear, however, since such information would disrupt Polybius' presentation of an honourable and powerful Aratus and a united and benevolent federation⁵¹. For Plutarch, however, information about this relationship was vital for the purpose of his biographic work, for showing the good and bad parts of a person's character.

Overall, Aratus is celebrated by Plutarch as a great statesman, a hater of tyrants and Macedon interference, a lover of freedom and unity. Yet, he is also remembered and criticised for what was perceived by many as a great mistake: his decision to ally with Antigonos Doseon in 224 BC and thereby bring Macedonian power back into Peloponnesian and Greek affairs (*Arat.* 38.8; cf. *Cleom.* 16). Plutarch is highly critical of Aratus in both the *Aratus* and the *Cleomenes* for this decision. Instead of submitting to a Spartan ruler who, even if lawless and tyrannical, was an ancestor of Heracles and should have been preferred for his Hellenic bloodline, Aratus brought back a barbaric garrison (*Arat.* 38.5-12; *Cleom.* 16.4-5). In the *Cleomenes* Plutarch is even harsher, stating that this alliance ruined Greece (16.1: τοῦτο διελυμήνατο τὰ πράγματα τῆς Ἑλλάδος) and Aratus did something that would have been wrong for any Greek, but especially so for himself, since it was a betrayal of all that he had achieved and his earlier policies (16.3: τρέπεται πρὸς ἔργον οὐδενὶ μὲν τῶν Ἑλλήνων προσῆκον, αἰσχιστον δ' ἐκείνῳ καὶ τῶν πεπραγμένων ὑπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ πεπολιτευμένων ἀναξιώτατον). Unlike Phylarchus, however, Plutarch recognised the desperation of Aratus in this situation and the few choices available to him (*Arat.* 38.7, 41.7)⁵². Even in the *Cleomenes* he laments how leaders must bow to necessity and explains that he writes about Aratus' error,

⁵⁰ Pédech 1964, p. 157.

⁵¹ While the adhesion of Megalopolis to the League increased its power, it also triggered internal disputes (Pédech 1964, pp. 156-7). Lydiadas had hoped to use Achaean resources and power to strike at Megalopolis' traditional enemy, Sparta, but was obstructed by Aratus who was more concerned about focusing the League's energies on the removal of Macedonian influence from the Peloponnese and increasing the League's political strength and independence (*Plut. Arat.* 33-34; Gruen 1972, p. 613). Both leaders had enjoyed a strong following and alternated as strategos for six years, so the League's direction would have been divided during its crucial formative years (Gruen 1984, p. 496). See Kralli 2017, pp. 178, 221 for the lack of Achaean unity in these years.

⁵² Stadter 2015, pp. 170-171.

“not so much to condemn Aratus, who was in many respects a true Greek and a great man, as to acknowledge with sadness whatever flaw it is in human nature that makes it impossible even for people with remarkable and exceptional aptitude for virtue to achieve anything noble that is not tainted by imperfection”⁵³.

Plutarch also highlights in more detail the negative consequences of the Macedonian alliance, particularly the power loss and imbalance this alliance caused the Achaean League and Aratus (*Arat.* 45). While Aratus himself was bolstered in his position by this association, he was also now greatly constrained in action and speech (*Plut. Arat.* 45.2). Many, no doubt, would have interpreted his decision to ally with Macedon as a means to maintain and increase his own power. Although Plutarch agrees with Phylarchus that the Achaean actions against the Mantineans and Aristomachus were excessive and un-Greek, he does, however, also put a limit on the extent to which Aratus might be associated with the cruel and tyrannical nature of Macedonian power. Not only does he show Aratus’ anti-tyrannical stance throughout the whole life, but he also highlights Aratus’ distress at Macedonian actions (45.3) and contrasts the tyrannical behaviour of Philip V with that of Aratus in the final chapters (46-52, 54).⁵⁴ It is possible that Plutarch was countering accusations of autocratic or even tyrannical leadership by Aratus, as a consequence of his monopoly over and jealous grip on Achaean policy but also because, despite first ridding the Peloponnese of Macedonian-backed tyrants, he then became a Macedonian-backed statesman himself.

Plutarch’s *Aratus* redefined Aratus’ leadership and career once again, therefore, offering a new version of the Sicyonian for political and moral edification two-to-three centuries after Aratus’, Phylarchus’ and Polybius’ works. Its purpose was very different to the other three: less political, less apologetic and less accusatory. Plutarch’s use and assessment of various sources, as well as his position as a recognised scholar and teacher, would have made his portrait of Aratus more credible, especially as he constructed a fuller and more ‘integrated’ character with recognition of the Sicyonian’s strengths and weaknesses. Plutarch’s text was also stylistically more enjoyable than Polybius’ text, which was not considered easy or pleasant to read (*Dion. Hali. De comp. verb. iv.*), and thus lent the *Aratus* more persuasive power.

Conclusion

Aratus of Sicyon, like all powerful and influential politicians, was a controversial figure and there were different and changing views of his leadership

⁵³ *Plut. Cleom.* 16.6: ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν οὐκ Ἀράτου βουλόμενοι κατηγορεῖν γράφομεν ἐν πολλοῖς γὰρ ὁ ἀνὴρ οὗτος Ἑλληνικὸς γέγονε καὶ μέγας, οὐκτεῖροντες δὲ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως τὴν ἀσθένειαν, εἰ μὴδὲ ἐν ἤθεσιν οὕτως ἀξιολόγοις καὶ διαφόροις πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἐκφέρειν δύναται τὸ καλὸν ἀνεμέστητον.

⁵⁴ Stadter 2015, pp. 171-172.

during his lifetime and after it. This article has charted some of these different views by exploring the changing picture of Aratus in the extant literature and considering how these texts were used as instruments of power to shape and redefine the memory and reputation of a leader for their own purposes.

The texts discussed above each produced their own version of Aratus' career and leadership. While completely lost to us, we know that Aratus' *Memoirs* offered an apologetic if hastily crafted picture of a righteous and vindicated democrat, while Phylarchus' more emotionally appealing and widely circulated history depicted Aratus as a cruel, jealous, and stubborn near-absolute ruler. Both images no doubt had their followers. The surviving depictions of Aratus are more positive, however. Polybius' sound rebuttal of Phylarchus' hostile portrait has helped to turn the course of Aratus' reputation and his selective presentation of Aratus in the *Histories* has turned the Achaean leader into a symbol of heroism and just, democratic, forward-thinking leadership, a father of his country and the creator of an egalitarian and united political entity. Plutarch combined and adapted all three portraits to commemorate Aratus as a great leader and hold him up as an exemplar who worked hard to preserve harmony and liberty and rid the Greek mainland of tyranny, but who was also still human and plagued by jealousy, resulting in a disastrous reversal of policy towards Macedon. This article has also suggested that Aratus was gradually transformed through textual choices – manipulation of episodes, selectivity and omission of information, falsehoods, and simplification – from a historical persona into a symbol of political power and heroism for the Achaean League and Peloponnese, even perhaps from as early on as Aratus' own life and *Memoirs*.

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Abstract

The third century BC Achaean leader, Aratus of Sicyon, was a powerful and controversial figure and there were varying views about him and his leadership during and after his lifetime. This article charts some of these different perspectives by exploring the presentation of Aratus in six texts: Aratus' own *Memoirs*, Phylarchus' *Histories*, Polybius' *Histories*, and Plutarch's *Aratus*, *Cleomenes*, and *Philopoemen*. It considers how these authors and texts defined and redefined Aratus' leadership and engaged with each other through their textual choices to shape the memory and reputation of this leader and the Achaean League for their own purposes. It also investigates how these literary reconfigurations contributed to the transformation of the historical Aratus into a symbol of heroism, brilliant leadership, and pride for the Achaean League and Peloponnese in the centuries after his death.

Keywords: Aratus of Sicyon, Phylarchus, Polybius, Plutarch, narrative, autobiography, historiography, biography, ancient history, memory.

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