

PAPERS AND MONOGRAPHS OF THE FINNISH INSTITUTE AT ATHENS VOL. XIII

THE PROVINCE STRIKES BACK  
IMPERIAL DYNAMICS  
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

edited by  
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HELSINKI 2008

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Helsinki 2008

ISSN 1237-2684  
ISBN 978-951-98806-8-6

Printed in Finland by Ekenäs Tryckeri.

Cover: James Skene, *The Parthenon from the southeast*, 1838. Watercolour on paper  
(Museum of the City of Athens, Vouros – Eutaxias).

Layout: Vesa Vahtikari

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# Provincial Challenges to the Imperial Centre in Achaemenid and Seleucid Asia Minor

Vincent Gabrielsen

## *I. Introduction: counting empires*

The period of time treated in this chapter stretches from 550 to around 63 BC. The core geographical area is Asia Minor (or Anatolia), from its Mediterranean seaboard in the west to its inland fringes at Mesopotamia in the east. Within this area and this 500-year time-span, no less than five major empires left their heavy imprint on the historical record.<sup>1</sup>

Three of them followed each other in direct succession. They are the Achaemenid (or Persian) Empire (550-330), Alexander's Empire (330-323 plus the 'acephalous' years until ca. 306) and the Seleucid Empire (from 312 [Babylonian era] or 281 [Macedonian era] to 63). From an Anatolian perspective, our fourth entity was an off-shore empire: the Athenian Empire (478-404), both a contemporary *and* a rival of the Achaemenid Empire, and the only Mediterranean-based power in our ensemble. The regions that it had brought under its sway as tribute-paying subjects included parts of the westernmost Persian realm (in Anatolia). Occasionally, the Athenian Empire tried to grab more such parts, while invariably making Persian rule over Egypt difficult. Finally, sandwiched between the final stages of the Seleucid Empire and the ultimate Roman takeover in the East was the short-lived Empire of Mithradates VI of Pontus (ca. 110-62). Even though this is usually not counted among the Ivy League of empires, it nevertheless was one of the few powers to challenge seriously Roman rule in Asia Minor.<sup>2</sup> Given its characteristic blending of Iranian and Hellenistic modes of rule, we may let this empire here be represented by the other grand empires on Asiatic soil; especially since it shared some of their main structural features.

This being the larger historical framework for the present chapter, it might be useful, before proceeding to treat the theme of *provincial challenges to the imperial centre*, to make explicit some of the analytical challenges facing my own attempt to deal with this matter. One is – within such a short space and in a way that neither deters the non-specialist in this period nor entails an excessive narrowing down in scope – to achieve a fair and meaningful coverage of 'provincial challenges' in empires which were vast, which exhibit many differences when investigated at ground-level, and whose study, traditionally pursued by separate groups of specialists, has produced distinct historiographies, each of them as idiosyncratic and controversy-ridden as it is voluminous.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I do not try to prove a particular case, or to argue in detail all the points that appear in the course of my discussion. Rather, taking a broad view of the empires in question, I attempt to point out some important similarities and differences between them, which might have impinged directly on their history and thus can be regarded as amongst their defining characteristics. Therefore, my references to modern scholarship are necessarily selective, guiding the reader to more specialized works. Otherwise, I document the main points made in the text with reference to the ancient sources. I am indebted to Kurt A. Raaflaub, who allowed me to read an early draft of his forthcoming chapter 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Athens and Persia after the Persian Wars'. Unless otherwise stated, all dates are BC.

<sup>2</sup> See McGing 1986; Hind 1994.

Our most immediate challenge is, however, to provide satisfactory answers to the following two questions. (1) In which sense can the term *province* form the common ground for a comparison of all our empires? (2) Given that the imperial centre was facing various kinds of challenges, which stands out as having an appreciably greater impact on the history of these empires? Accordingly, in Section II our comparison chiefly pursues a conceptualizing aim, as it is mostly directed towards establishing the sense in which the term ‘province’ is best used here. Section III, in turn, focuses on ‘revolt’, the kind of challenge I single out for its profound effect on the relationship between imperial centre and ‘provinces’, an effect that was not necessarily negative. Revolt, it will be argued, generated both integrative and disintegrative forces. Section IV looks briefly at how these forces became articulated through the ‘family metaphor’, one of the means which the imperial centre and its ‘provinces’ used to balance their relationship. In sections II-IV, more is said about some central structural features of imperial rule in Anatolia than about the specific policies and concrete modes of governance or administration which each of these empires applied in Anatolia. In terms of chronological and thematic coverage, the task on which this chapter embarks is admittedly a formidable one. Recourse to three commonly avoided vices – *generalization*, *oversimplification* and at times excessive *limitation* – is therefore imperative.

## *II. Three similar empires and a deviant one*

It seems best to start by defining the place of Alexander’s Empire in our comparative endeavour. Two aspects are relevant to consider. In the first place, we should not be pernickety about the incontrovertibly double character of Alexander’s Empire: that is, simultaneously a continuation of Achaemenid rule *and* a new power-entity generating its own imperial dynamic. With the defeat (and death) of Darius III in 330, the *ethnic* continuity distinguishing the dynastic base of Persian imperial rule was indeed broken, as managerial responsibility for the whole realm now passed into the hands of an outsider from the Balkans and his retinue. Yet in several other respects Alexander can rightly be regarded, and in fact is regarded by some scholars,<sup>4</sup> as Darius’ successor and the last ‘Achaemenid’ king of the *unified* Empire; incidentally, the only king to succeed where all other Achaemenid kings had singularly failed, namely, in attaching what still was (even if nominally) his Imperial Motherland, Macedon, and Greece firmly to the empire. So, as long as the error of reducing it to just a ‘transitional phase’ is avoided, Alexander’s brief rule can be said to carry, if not the main responsibility, then a good deal of responsibility for the institutional and other continuities which we can observe from Achaemenid rule to Hellenistic rule – and well beyond. The phenomenon known as *imitatio Alexandri*

<sup>3</sup> Several studies treat (aspects or states of) Classical Greece and the Persian Empire: e.g. Lewis 1977; Walser 1984; Wallinga 1989; Miller 1997; Raaflaub forthcoming. Similarly, some studies treat the Achaemenid and the Seleucid empires together: e.g. Bickerman 1966; Briant 1990; Briant 1994; Kuhrt and Sherwin-White 1987; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993. But I know of no scholarly work that compares all four of the empires discussed in the present chapter. I only refer to a few of the standard works that exist on each of our empires; they are all rich in further bibliographical references. Achaemenid Empire: Briant 1982, 2002; Sancisi-Weerdenburg *et al.* 1987-1994; Wiesehöfer 1993. Alexander’s Empire: Bosworth 1988. Seleucid Empire: Bickerman 1938; Ma 2000; Capdetrey 2007; and the short but lucid introduction of Austin 2005. Athenian Empire: Meiggs 1972; Schuller 1974; Hornblower and Greenstock 1986.

<sup>4</sup> Briant 1982, 318-330; Briant 2002, 876.

played a key role in the continuation, by Hellenistic kings and even Roman emperors, of a particular style of royal conduct and self-representation.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is just as indisputable that the year 330 did also mark a clear break with several traditions, the most venerable among which was the *Empire-as-integration* tradition that had been founded by Cyrus the Great some 220 years earlier, in 550. In building the Persian Empire, Cyrus and his immediate successors created the first territorial empire which for more than two centuries brought political unification into an immense area and number of peoples.<sup>6</sup> It can be described as Vast, Stable and Catholic (I use capitals to indicate the emblematic nature of these qualities, which are explained below); though it suffered the fate of having its history written by subjects and outsiders, mainly Greeks. This whole entity was taken over by Alexander, who held it for less than ten years. But after Alexander, though partly because of systemic failures created already during his reign (most importantly, the issue of dynastic succession), the tradition which was to become the dominant one for the next 250 years or so changes track, as it becomes the *Empire-as-disintegration* tradition; incidentally, Bactrian and Parthian vassal rulers within the empire can be credited for recognizing that fact much sooner (during the reign of Seleucus II in mid-third century) than the Romans themselves.<sup>7</sup>

From Alexander's death in 323 and for the next forty-odd years, the king's marshals, the Successors, and their own successors fought bitterly between them over who should inherit the whole Empire,<sup>8</sup> and as none of them proved able to prevail, they ended up splitting it into three parts, each with its own dynasty (the first major *disintegrative* step): in Macedon and mainland Greece, the Antigonids; in Egypt the Ptolemies; and in Asia the Seleucids, who thus claimed recognition as overlords of Anatolia.<sup>9</sup> The subsequent story of each of these *Hellenistic* empires is essentially one of gradual disintegration, a process greatly assisted by Rome, the power to benefit immensely from the incessant Hellenistic in-fighting. Her direct involvement in these conflicts after ca. 200 made her look all the more like a Successor herself – indeed, the first Roman province in the area, the province *Asia*, was created after king Attalus III had bequeathed the kingdom of Pergamon to the Roman people in 133 (OGIS 435; transl. Austin 2006, no. 251). It was nonetheless the Romans, who, emerging as the sole victors over the Hellenistic kings in 31, brought the *Empire-as-integration* tradition back in. As they were consolidating their *imperium*, the Romans succeeded in re-establishing the grand imperial legacy of 'Vast, Stable and Catholic' rule that had been created by the Achaemenids and then broken after the death of Alexander.

The substantive features just mentioned recommend a particular procedure as more interesting and fruitful than possible alternatives: namely, to look at *provincial challenges to the imperial centre* – i.e. the forms in which they manifested themselves, the ways in which they were dealt with and the results they produced – by turning the spotlight onto the two empires that had divided equally between them the period treated here (550-63), the Persian Empire and the Seleucid Empire; giving lesser space to the Athenian Empire

<sup>5</sup> Stewart 1993, esp. 229-240.

<sup>6</sup> See Cook 1985; Stronach 1978, 285-295.

<sup>7</sup> Just. 41.1-5; Strabo 11.9.2-3 [515C]; *FGrH* 156: Arrian F 31-32; App. *Syr.* 65. Cf. Will 1979, 281-290; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 84-90; Holt 1999; Lerner 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Will 1984; Bosworth 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Braund 2005, esp. 29.

is not the same as regarding it an unimportant entity in our comparison. Alexander's reign, finally, will serve as our analytical middle-ground; being chronologically flanked by the other empires, it is endowed with the potential of providing us with the kind of questions and interpretative tools that we need in an inquiry into what came before – the *Empire-as-integration* – and what came after Alexander – the *Empire-as-disintegration*.

Limitation has thus left us with only three empires, two of which share a number of institutional, constitutional, ideological, military, territorial and power-logistical characteristics, while the third one seems, in several respects, to stand all by its own. Enter the Athenian Empire of the fifth century, an acknowledged deviant case, and on more counts than simply being ethnically and culturally homogeneous (i.e. almost entirely Hellenic), or being based at a distance from the Asiatic heartland.

As wielders of authority, or domination, the Achaemenid and the Seleucid empires, like that of Mithradates VI of Pontus, were driven forth by a grand vision of universal rule personified by a valiant, just, caring and godlike monarch. Provided it can be conceived with a neutral value, 'despotism' was their common form of government and territorial expansion their political creed. From the very day of its creation, in contrast, the Athenian Empire justified its existence, not with reference to a grand imperial ideology that was informed by the wish for universal dominion, or even to the blessings of territorial expansion as such; but simply with reference to the imminent threat posed by the huge neighbour in the East (the Persian Empire) and the fear caused by that threat amongst a wider circle of polities (Thuc. 1.96). Thus in its earlier career, at least, it presented itself as a defender and a protector rather than as a ruthless conqueror. Only when it started coming of age did this empire explicitly link its claim to an uncontested right to rule to an ideology of power (see e.g. Thuc. 3.37-40). But even then it did not underrate the propensity of fear to secure internal and external support, to create unity around a common purpose and under one hegemonic authority (*arche*).

Deviation is also detectable at the imperial metropolis itself, Athens, the heart and soul of *this* empire. Constitutionally, a direct democracy; territorially, an insignificant entity; militarily a mediocre land-power, but a superb naval power; a city-state (*polis*), in terms of political organization, and the leader of a tribute-fed empire, in terms of geopolitical description, certainly.<sup>10</sup> Yet – and here comes the greatest difference of all – mistress over an empire with no territorial extension as such (cleruchies on which colonists were planted are quite another matter);<sup>11</sup> no continuous or discontinuous expanse which had been won through the conquest of foreign lands and which had been incorporated into the realm after 'planting the flag' on these lands. And, consequently, no provinces, as we know them, to be defended, pleased or punished; only a large number of subject polities (at its apogee well over 400), by far the majority of which were city-states. Formally, their status was that of tribute-paying 'allies' (Greek: *symmachoi*, literally, 'co-fighters': e.g. *IG I<sup>3</sup> 55*, line 5); all were situated by the sea, or easily reached by sea, a characteristic intimately related to the imperial polity's status as a consummate naval power.

Whereas the Achaemenid and Seleucid empires were land-based empires, this one was in every sense a 'seaborne empire'. As a power-wielder, it stood (and stands) out for its special, rather modern-looking features. Its modes of action, tactical or

<sup>10</sup> On the Classical Greek city-state: Hansen 2006. Tribute-payments to Athens: Meritt, Wade-Gery and McGregor 1939-1953.

<sup>11</sup> Athenian cleruchies: Meiggs 1972, 124; Erxleben 1975; Brunt 1966.

strategic concepts, organization – and perhaps its ideological preferences, too – were to be mimicked ages later by a newer type, the ‘airborne empire’. For one, each of them requires the services of a first-rate military establishment that runs eminently costly, high-tech *offensive* weaponry.<sup>12</sup> For another, their speciality consists of tactical capability to effectuate lightning, long-distance strikes, or landings, and so be present in ‘hot-spots’ much faster than any of their land-based competitors, past or present, has ever been able to do; the Athenian historian and seasoned general Xenophon made the following comment on the Persian Empire’s principal weakness on account of being Vast: “While the King’s empire was strong in its extent of territory and number of inhabitants, it was weak by reason of the greatness of the distances and the scattered condition of its forces, in case one should be swift in making an attack upon it” (Xen. *Anab.* 1.5.9).<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, since the limit of their striking-range went as far and wide as the location of logistical bases under their control, building the widest possible web of such bases – on subjects, dependencies or allies – ranked high amongst their aims: in 1942, Franklin Roosevelt defined his country’s military doctrine at the time with the formula ‘fly high and strike hard’ from secure perches in the United States and beyond;<sup>14</sup> the corresponding tactical formula of Classical Athens – whose navy consisted of state-of-the-art war-craft – seems to have been ‘sail fast and strike hard’ from secure naval bases in the Aegean and beyond. In short, the Athenian Empire does indeed represent the quite rare species of ‘province-less’ – and for that matter, emperor-less – empire. Nevertheless, it had plenty of off-shore subjects which provided part of their wealth as tribute, their manpower as levies for campaigns and their ports as bases for the imperial fleet. All this, and much more besides, offered sufficient scope for challenges to the imperial centre.

As may have become apparent, by far the greatest analytical challenge facing us is posed by the concept of ‘province’ itself, properly a Roman coinage (*provincia*) that chiefly refers to a Roman-Empire situation. What are, in our case, the ‘provinces’ from which challenges might issue? That one of our empires did not have provinces constitutes but one of our difficulties in answering that question. Further difficulties are encountered with our two land empires; for in our case, our selection of the appropriate imperial component cannot be solely based on the fact that it fits the description ‘province’; it must also constitute a satisfactorily analytical category. It is precisely at this point that (a healthy measure of) *oversimplification* might prove helpful in our comparative endeavour.

The ‘satrapy’ is commonly accepted to be the principal administrative unit in both the Achaemenid and Seleucid empires. Consequently, it might initially be singled out as *the* ‘province’ in our period and region. In a formal sense, this is true.<sup>15</sup> But one-sided focus on formal administrative structures can be misleading. The satrapies of the Achaemenid Empire can indeed be considered as amongst the principal units generating ‘provincial’ challenges to the Great King. In the Seleucid Empire, however, ‘satrapy’ is not a sufficiently fine-meshed analytical category, such us to allow us to pick out the provincial challenges that really mattered. First of all, as a territorially-based mechanism of rule, the satrapal

<sup>12</sup> Cost of the Athenian navy: Gabrielsen 1994.

<sup>13</sup> On the ‘failings’ of the empire: Tuplin 1993.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Reynolds 1992, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Achaemenid Empire: satrapies in the Behistun inscription: *DB (OPers.)* § 10-19 (Satrap of Bactria), § 54-64 (Satrap of Arachosia); Hdt. 3.89: Darius “divided his dominions into twenty governorships called satrapies”. See Petit 1990; Jacobs 1994; Briant 2002, 63-67, 389-393, 693-768.

system of the Seleucids seems to have fluctuated greatly in size and composition, a feature it also shared with its Achaemenid counterpart. Second, there are considerable gaps in our knowledge regarding the distribution of powers and administrative responsibilities within each satrapy, while the entire system as such is still very poorly documented.<sup>16</sup> Third, and perhaps more importantly, within either empire, but especially in the Seleucid Empire, there existed other administrative units with at least as important roles in the day-to-day implementation of the king's decisions and the crucial task of ensuring the unity and safety of the empire. Some of these were *above*, others *below* satrapy-level. Examples of the first kind include the command over western Asia Minor given to Cyrus the Younger (appointed by his father as *karanos* ('lord'): Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.3),<sup>17</sup> the 'overall command' over Asia Minor (*ho epi ton pragmaton*), a kind of 'viceroy' that is best documented during the rule of the Seleucid king Antiochus III;<sup>18</sup> and the command over the Upper Satrapies (or upper regions, i.e. the eastern parts of the Seleucid realm), a post normally reserved for the heir to the Seleucid throne.<sup>19</sup> As examples of the second kind we can mention the numerous governors and garrison commanders, particularly those posted in capital cities (such as Sardeis, Babylon and Antioch), or in strategically important areas.<sup>20</sup> All these are to be included in the challenge-generating entities within the empire.

Fourthly, we must also include a number of less formal, local (and in some cases intra-satrapy) powerbase units along the breadth and length of the empire, Achaemenid or Seleucid. They consist of five, sometimes overlapping types: (1) *vassal kings* (e.g. king Euagoras of Cyprus under the Achaemenids);<sup>21</sup> (2) *dynasts* (e.g. Olympichos in Anatolian Karia under the Antigonids and the Seleucids; Moagetes in the Kibyratis); (3) *cities*, Phoenician, Babylonian or Greek, old ones as well as new foundations; (4) '*temple-states*' ruled by a High Priest (e.g. at Pessinus and Hierapolis, the cult centres of respectively Cybele and Atartagis); and finally, (5) *peoples* (*ethne*), who, to the extent they were under religious leadership – as, for instance, was the case with the Jews – fulfilled the description of a '*temple-state*'. Almost all entities in this list were recognized by the Seleucids as typifying the main constituents of their empire (see *OGIS* 229, line 11).

All these powerbases exhibit at least two interesting features. One is their generally 'free-floating' status vis-à-vis the imperial centre; that is, depending on the nature and quantity of the resources they commanded, including their success rate in mobilizing local support, some of them (and not only those with a logically crucial location at the fringes of the empire) enjoyed greater independence and more privileges than others. Ability to provide military resources ranked of course high amongst the qualifiers to better status within the empire. Because of its reliance on the Phoenician fleet, the fifth-century Persian Empire had to allow more leeway to the Phoenician city-states (Hdt. 8.67); and naval resources constituted a weighty factor behind Persian indulgence of Greek tyrants in the western fringes of the empire (e.g. Histiaios of Miletos).<sup>22</sup> It was said of Cyrus the Great that he "had never sent a Persian as a satrap to govern either the Cilicians or the

<sup>16</sup> Musti 1984, 184-189; Ma 2000, 123-125, revising the views of Bengtson 1944.

<sup>17</sup> Briant 2002, 600.

<sup>18</sup> SEG XXXVI 973, lines 3-5; Polyb. 5.41.1 (Hermeias). Bengtson 1944, 109-110; cf. Schmitt 1964, 150-158.

<sup>19</sup> Bengtson 1944, 78-79; Schmitt 1964, 15-18; Ma 2000, 125.

<sup>20</sup> A lucid account of the Achaemenid satrapies and their subunits (phylarchies, etc.) is given by Cook 1983, ch. 16.

<sup>21</sup> Wiesehöfer 1990.

<sup>22</sup> Graf 1985; Austin 1990; Briant 2002, 496-497.

Cypriotes, but was always satisfied with their native rulers" (Xen. *Cyr.* 7.4.2). Greek and Phoenician city-states retained their own (forms of) government and political institutions. Similarly, the Seleucids indulged entities from the west to the east end of their realm.

An empire-wide hierarchy of relationships between power-bases and imperial centre thus resulted that ran parallel to the *formal*-administrative structures. It was mostly distinguished by its versatility, indeed its fluidity, since relationships and status were wont to change with some frequency. The sum of these relationships defined our empires, not only geographically, but also constitutionally as forms of state. Fluidity, dynamism and change was the order of the day, as privileged imperial favourites that had turned unruly became demoted by the centre while others, as a reward, were being promoted to take their place.<sup>23</sup> Even our seaborne empire cultivated a few selected favourites, whom it regarded as more privileged 'friends and allies' than the rest. That was, for instance, the status enjoyed by the naval islands of Samos, Chios and Lesbos, all of which eventually were to forfeit their privileged status after seditious action.<sup>24</sup>

What endowed our two major empires with one of their chief characteristics, i.e. their being pulsating, dynamic entities, seems to have been the unceasing acting or reacting of their free-floating powerbases in their attempts to improve their location within a concentrically patterned imperial world; in short, their challenges to the imperial centre, whether of a positive or a negative character. In Anatolia, this whole process moved into a higher gear in the period after Alexander, as a particular type of powerbase – the Greek or Hellenized city-state (the old Lydian capital of Sardis being one) – grew in both numbers and vigour. Seleucid kings, committed to monarchic ideology and demanding submission to their imperial rule, faced now the challenge of having to accommodate within their concentric system of rule a political entity whose lifeline consisted of the notions of autonomy, freedom and democracy. This we can call a challenge of the first order.

Within such a concentric imperial system, 'free-floating' status also meant that the powerbase in question might, on its own accord, move in the opposite direction, away from the centre or even out of the imperial fold; that, precisely because of its resourcefulness and manifest capabilities, it might be allured by the promises and stronger attraction of an expanding outsider (or an ambitious insider) on the look-out for a base of action from which to try to erode the imperial strength and unity from within, or to usurp the imperial seat of power – the possibility of collusion between locally stationed imperial commanders and the powerbases placed under their charge was therefore a perennial anxiety. One example of this situation, which concerns an outsider and presages both the so-called Great Satraps' Revolt of the 360s (cf. below) and the grand usurpation affected by Alexander in 330, may suffice here. It is the expedition into the interior of Asia Minor, and so right to the Achaemenid heartland, carried out in 396-394 by the Spartan king Agesilaus with a large army.<sup>25</sup> Advertised beforehand as a liberation trek, that expedition, if anything, had the effect of putting on display, for the benefit of potential rebels against the Great King, a ready-drilled foreign army; a touring force signalling to scheming subjects along its route (Spithridates and certain Paphlagonian chiefs, among others) that, if they had the will, the Spartan Agesilaus had indeed the means (Xen. *Hell.* 3-4, esp. 4.1.2; 4.1.35; Diod. 14.80.5 *et passim*). Though far greater in scale, Alexander's campaign train was

<sup>23</sup> Achaemenid Empire: Briant 2002, 302-353, 842-852. Seleucid Empire: Bikerman 1938, 40-46; Musti 1984.

<sup>24</sup> Thuc. 1.19, with Hornblower 1991, 55-56; cf. Quinn 1981.

<sup>25</sup> Cartledge 1987, 180-218; Briant 2002, 637-645.

transmitting precisely the same kind of message to city-governments and Achaemenid satraps alike; and, as is known, while some of the Achaemenid powerbases in coastal Asia Minor yielded to Alexander's promises of liberty, others, remaining loyal to their master, resisted him firmly.

The other feature of the powerbases in question, issuing directly from the first, is that their interacting with the imperial centre inevitably endowed them with many of the characteristics common to provinces. To an appreciable degree, they had become functionally 'province-ized'.<sup>26</sup> Even though most of them did not belong to the group of formal units (e.g. satrapies, toparchies and the like), they all were parts of a concentric web of power-relationships that linked together the ruler and all the power-wielding entities/persons of his realm, including the group of royally appointed caretakers. In fact, parts of a larger system of interaction through which the distribution of power, status and privilege by the centre was being returned, or was expected to be returned, with those chief prerequisites of imperial cohesion: acceptance of rule, goodwill, loyalty and unfailing co-operation. The system's prime aim was to neutralize or forestall those 'provincial challenges' that might threaten the *unifying* structures of the realm – its Stability; or the *territorial extent* it had achieved – its Vastness; or, again, the *almightiness* which ideology and tradition vested in the authority of the imperial ruler – a theoretically undisputed power-monopoly that branded the empire as Catholic. Ensuring the working of the whole system was a complementary pair of devices that stemmed from a very old doctrine of conquest and rule: (a) persuasion and (b) physical force; that is, recurring negotiations, at which exchanges of gifts, favours and vows of loyalty regulated the relationship between ruler and powerbase; and the use of violence, a duly issued corrective to all those who mistook for reality the mere illusion of equality such negotiations were wont to create. Urging Philip II of Macedon to lead a pan-Hellenic invasion of the Persian Empire, an influential teacher of rhetoric from Athens, Isocrates, advised the king that "it is advantageous to employ persuasion with the Greeks and a useful thing to use force against the barbarians. That is more or less the essence of the whole matter" (Isocrates, *Philip*. 10).

Seen in this light, our 'province-less' empire, too, can be said to have encompassed entities (i.e. the allies), which – given their obligation to pay tribute, provide troops, receive imperial 'governors' (*archontes*) and garrison commanders (*phrourarchoi*), etc.<sup>27</sup> – to some degree had become functionally 'province-ized'; one might almost say 'satrapized'. Each of these entities was capable of generating any one of the challenges that are situated between unconditional loyalty and violent rebellion. Indeed, in this and other regards, the Athenian Empire may after all not be as deviant as we tended to depict it above. One other pointer in the same direction is its ideologically split mindset: anti-monarchic to the bone and a sworn champion of the notions of 'freedom', 'autonomy', 'equality', 'the will of the people' and so forth, when it came to domestic affairs; *but* a warm supporter of the complete opposite notions and a fearsome autocrat prone to use iron-fisted 'rule' (*arche*), when it came to external affairs: "a democracy cannot manage an empire", was the view of a leading imperial hardliner in 427 (Thuc. 3.37.1). Still another pointer is this:

<sup>26</sup> When referring to Greek *poleis*, 'province-ized' here carries a different meaning than 'provincial cities', 'villes provinciales' and 'provincialization of the *polis*' (i.e. "the conversion from free state to community dependent on grants and privileges") in Ma 2000, 158-159, 173.

<sup>27</sup> Leppin 1992, 257-271; Balcer 1976.

even though in most other matters it was dwarfed by the huge and eminently polyethnic Achaemenid and Seleucid empires, as regards warlike aggressiveness the Athenian Empire definitely proved to be a match for both of them, and indeed any one of its historical peers. Lastly, though ‘expansion of rule’ was an article of faith absent from its official ideology, it certainly was a cardinal goal of its actual policies. In effect, the closer we look at the matter, the clearer it becomes that our deviating, ‘seaborne empire’ shared a number of structural features with our two land empires.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, the picture emerging from all this is a much less tidy and far more complex (though no less interesting) one than that produced by the vision of a homogeneous, unifying gridiron-like pattern of ‘provinces’, the hallmark of the neatly-ordered, uniformly governed and clearly delineated land empire. Complexity is pretty much due to the circumstance that, in our particular case, the very category that seems to provide a reasonably adequate historical coverage in all three empires, because it is fine-meshed enough to capture a greater variety of challenges to the imperial centre, is the ‘provincIALIZED’ powerbase. It is represented on the ground by a variety of free-floating, power-holding components of the empire, each with its own type of local leadership; they existed together with the formalized units of governance or command, and, like the latter, possessed the potential to generate a whole range of challenges. So much by way of *oversimplification*. I now turn to *generalization* by asking: what is the most important kind of challenge to the imperial centre, one that can reveal the main integrative and disintegrative forces at work in *all* of our three empires?

### *III. Revolt*

The completion of conquest – this charged moment of ‘creation’ of the empire – provided the ultimate and tangible proof of the ruler’s unchallenged might. Such grandiose, power-enhancing and spectacular successes, however, could hardly be a daily occurrence in either the Achaemenid or the Seleucid empires. This being so, what else could offer to rulers the opportunity to keep the superb advantages of such climactic moments alive and active? An answer with a universally special appeal seems to have been: the perpetuation of ‘creation’ of the empire by means of its recurrent ‘recreation’; the quasi-ritualized re-enactment of conquest by means of separate acts of re-conquest of imperial components. Almost unexceptionally, such a regularly occurring re-enactment was set in motion by the ‘provincial’ challenge *par excellence*: revolt.

Accordingly, the principal generalization to be made here is the following. While ideology condemned revolt as a destructive and disintegrative force, imperial practice tended to be fond of it on account of its distinctly power-consolidating and integrative qualities. Rather than being a malign factor or a socio-political abnormality *tout court*, revolt often constituted an energizing force, a structural necessity of empire – arguably, the more so in those instances in which ‘Catholic’ had become synonymous with absence of noteworthy rivals. Revolt could work as a system of political control and readjustment over the very units that produced it.

This generalization takes four things for granted. (1) Revolt constituted a dominant feature in the history of each of our empires from beginning to end. (2) As such, it regularly triggered counter-responses that were functionally indistinguishable from campaigns of

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<sup>28</sup> See also Raaflaub forthcoming.

conquest – in fact, any time a part of the empire revolted, the scene was set for a re-enactment of conquest. (3) Depending on the goal pursued, revolt came in two main varieties: (a) dynastic revolt, through which a usurper aimed only at replacing the current ruler; and (b) rebellion (or war) of independence, through which a component of the realm tried to exit the concentric system of imperial organization, or even to co-operate with outsiders towards its destruction; sometimes, the two varieties merged into one. Finally, (4) revolt can be viewed (a) as an event and (b) as a structure.

Even though eminently important, treatment of revolt *as an event* belongs to a different kind of study. The few examples mentioned briefly here simply go to illustrate its tenacity and ubiquity in all three of our empires. The history of the Athenian Empire-cum-anti-Persian-alliance almost begins with a revolt, that of Naxos (ca. 472), which soon was to be followed by that of Thasos (ca. 460) and other resourceful allies (Thuc. 1.98.4; 1.101.3). One specific circumstance suffices to show that revolt had become endemic. By entering the great war against Sparta's Peloponnesian League in 431 (the Peloponnesian War, 431-404), imperial Athens actually acquired a second major war front, the one already at hand consisting of her continually discontented and seditious allies. Indeed, it was pretty much the fact that actual revolt, or the eventuality of revolt, was an ever-present factor that made this empire one governed by fear. In 428/7, ambassadors from Mytilene, one of the 'privileged' allies that had just revolted against Athens, explained to the Spartans and their allies who had assembled at Olympia that

So long as the Athenians in their leadership respected our independence we followed them with enthusiasm. But when we saw they were becoming less and less antagonistic to Persia and more and more interested in enslaving their own allies, then we became frightened ... And in an alliance the only safe guarantee is an equality of mutual fear; for then the party that wants to break faith is deterred by the thought that the odds will not be on his side ... In wartime they [the Athenians] did their best to be in good terms with us because they were frightened of us; we, for the same reason, tried to keep on good terms with them in peace-time. In most cases, goodwill is the basis of loyalty, but in our case, fear was the bond, and it was more through terror than through friendship that we were held together in alliance (Thuc. 3.11-12).

Later, the Hellenistic historian Polybius was to remark that "It is indeed the part of a tyrant to do evil that he may make himself the master of men by fear against their will ... but it is that of a king to do good to all and thus rule and protect a people, earning their love by his beneficence and humanity" (Polyb. 5.11.6).

From the very beginning of its existence the Achaemenid Empire, which itself was created from the revolt of its founding-father Cyrus the Great against the Medians (Hdt. 1.127), constantly had to fight and quash violent uprising by imperial officers, vassal kings and subject peoples (the Ionian Greeks and the Jews included). In one of the earliest and most momentous on record, that of 522-518, Darius waged a series of fierce wars against a number of rebel kings, who tried to break loose from the still young empire. Later, in 404-401, Cyrus the Younger, with considerable military help from outside, made a large-scale attempt to usurp the throne from his brother, King Artaxerxes II, thus in a sense presaging Alexander's takeover in 330.<sup>29</sup> Under the same Artaxerxes, but now during

<sup>29</sup> A principal source is Xenophon's *Anabasis* (esp. 1.2.3-4; 1.7.10, where the 12,900 Greek troops mobilized by Cyrus are mentioned). On the historiographical issues: Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987 (Greek sources) and Stolper 1994, 238-239 (Achaemenid sources). Critical analysis of both: Briant 2002, 615-630.

the years 361-358, the governors of several satrapies in Asia Minor, joined by the king of Egypt, took up arms allegedly in order to fight for independence in what was to be known as the Great Satraps' Revolt;<sup>30</sup> the previous liberation trek of the Spartan Agesilaus in Asia Minor has been mentioned above. In 331-330, finally, the momentous attack on the imperial centre from outside – i.e. Alexander's campaign of conquest – inevitably became tangled up with defection of royal subordinates from within.

Nevertheless, none of these, nor any of the numerous other instances of sedition and armed rebellion, ever had a lasting effect on the unity of the empire, its structures of rule or its strength. If anything, further consolidation or stronger integration was the outcome each time.<sup>31</sup> Most of the challenges themselves, on the other hand, disintegrated from within. In 358, the famous Satraps' Revolt was fouled up by a chain of betrayals amongst the rebels: for instance by Orontes (Diod. 15.91.1-2) and then Rheomithres, who, arriving at Leucae, “summoned many leaders of the insurgents. These he arrested and sent in irons to Artaxerxes, and though he himself had been an insurgent, by the favours that he conferred through his betrayal, he made his peace with the King” (Diod. 15.92.1, cf. *OGIS* 264, lines 4-9).

All this adds to the evidence showing Persian Satraps at each others' throats, often in their attempts to accomplish their traditional mission to enlarge the royal territories (Hdt. 3.120). Slightly earlier, Datames had been exposed to a series of betrayals by his first-born son, his father-in-law, many of his companions, and by Mithradates, who feigned rebel (see below).<sup>32</sup> In 401, after his victory over his rebel-brother Cyrus at Cunaxa, Artaxerxes II not only had his legitimacy and strength re-affirmed, but he even gained more loyalty by pardoning those of the rebels who paid homage to him. One of them, Ariaeus was made satrap of Phrygia (Diod. 14.80.8; Polyaen. 7.11.6), and later (395) he was posted to Sardeis, where he put his experience to good use: rebels wishing to be pardoned by the King used him as a mediator “because he, too, had revolted from the King and made war upon him” (Xen. *Hell.* 4.1.27). The history of the empire is replete with examples of disintegrative endeavours being turned to serve integration.

In many respects, the historical record of the Seleucids offers a similar picture. It includes the familiar mixture of challenges to the imperial centre. (1) Dynastic struggles: for instance, the bitter rivalry between the two brothers Seleucus II and Antiochus Hierax (the ‘Hawk’) in 240/39-228, as a result of which Hierax carved out his own, short-lived kingdom.<sup>33</sup> (2) Uprisings by peoples with a strong feeling of religious or ethnic identity (e.g. the Maccabean uprising against Antiochus IV in Judaea in 166-164),<sup>34</sup> or a strong ideological commitment to ‘freedom’ and ‘autonomy’ (the city-states within the realm). (3)

<sup>30</sup> Only Greek sources report these revolts, esp. Diod.15.90-93: “the inhabitants of the Asiatic coast revolted from Persia, and some of the satraps and generals rising in insurrection made war on Artaxerxes”. The leading rebels included Ariobarzanes, satrap of Phrygia, Mausolus ruler of Caria, Orontes satrap of Mysia and Autophradates satrap of Lydia. Tachos, the king of Egypt, joined them. Moreover, besides the Ionians, there were the Lycians, Pisidians, Pamphylians, Cilicians, Syrians, Phoenicians and other *ethne*. Diodorus (15.90) claims that “half the revenues of the King were cut off and what remained were insufficient for the expenses of war”. The ‘minimalist’ view – that this was not a general, coordinated conflagration in Asia Minor in 361, but rather a series of limited local revolts over the course of a decade – is favoured by Briant 2002, 674-675. In north-western Asia Minor, for example, the unrest may belong in the context of the long history of conflict between Sardeis and Dascylium.

<sup>31</sup> Briant 2002, 674-675, 875.

<sup>32</sup> Briant 2002, 674.

<sup>33</sup> Just. 27.2, 10-12; Athen. 13.593e; [Plut.] *Mor.* 184a, 489a-b.

The bid for ‘big’ power by several usurpers: famous examples of this include the revolt of Molon, satrap in Media and other eastern provinces, who declared himself king (222-220: Polyb. 5.40-44); the revolt of Achaios, the super-governor over cis-Tauric Asia Minor under Antiochus III and the king’s cousin, who from 220 to 213 ruled independently over his own Anatolian kingdom and aspired to become the new Seleucid king (Polyb. 4.48, 5.57.3-8); and the revolt instigated by Diodotos Tryphon in Syria in 145-138. Lastly, (4) the events (not all of them rebellions) which resulted in the great territorial losses: the creation of the kingdom of Pergamon under the Attalids in the 260s; the loss of Asia Minor after defeat by the Romans in 189; the irrecoverable loss of the eastern provinces with the defeat (and death) of Antiochus VII to the Parthians in 130-129; the subsequent but equally definitive loss of Babylonia and western Iran; and, shortly before the final Roman takeover in 63, the replacement – from 83 to 69 – of Seleucid rule by Tigranes of Armenia.<sup>35</sup>

Yet, even though the Seleucid historical record has ‘disintegration’ written all over it, we should be wary of naming revolt *as such* the principal cause of the collapse. The relative failure of this empire to become ‘Catholic’ for real, and for a longer period of time, seems to be a much deeper cause.<sup>36</sup> In this respect, a marked difference is detectable from our other two empires. In the case of the Achaemenid Empire, ‘Catholic’ mostly signified the absence, for a very long time, of serious external rivals, who not only might pose a real threat to the unity of the realm but might also prove capable of receiving defecting powerbases into their own concentric system of rule – this was precisely what the Seleucids’ main rivals (including the Romans) almost constantly did. In the case of the Athenian Empire, ‘Catholic’ possessed a different, more complex sense of power monopoly. It simultaneously meant several things: (a) arming Athens to the teeth by disarming her imperial components; (b) centralizing the empire’s military and monetary potential by bringing it (as tribute, war indemnities, punitive fines or confiscations after revolt) wholesale to the imperial metropolis; (c) attaining military expertise and edge in the use of so enormously expensive weaponry (the navy) that the military doctrine of the day became “War is not a matter of weapons, but of money which gives weapons their usefulness” (Thuc. 1.83.2-3) – pronounced at a time when ‘big’ money was concentrated in the Athenian coffers, in a few major temples (untouchable) and in Persian treasuries (unreachable); in short, (d) sucking so much strength out of its constituent powerbases that when these “revolted they found themselves inadequately armed and inexperienced in war” (Thuc. 1.99.3).<sup>37</sup>

To sum up: Achaemenid powerbases prone to revolt (and their leaders) possessed the financial and military potential to make their move, but had nowhere to go – with the result that revolt quite often ended in the perpetrator’s voluntary, (dis)graceful return to the imperial fold. Athenian powerbases (and their leaders), on the other hand, had several places to go, but were inadequately equipped to move – with the result that revolt usually ended in the humiliation of the perpetrator, who was whipped back into line. In contrast to both of these, the Seleucid powerbases (insignificant entities excluded) not only had

<sup>34</sup> But see also Jos. *AJ* 12.142, with Bickerman 1980, 40-48, regarding a letter of Antiochus III to the governor of Syria and Phoenicia, which specified the privileges of Jerusalem and permitted the Jews to live in accordance with their laws.

<sup>35</sup> Musti 1984, 210-216.

<sup>36</sup> See also the balanced judgement of Austin 2005, 132.

<sup>37</sup> Gabrielsen 2007.

the potential to move, but could even almost freely choose between several concentric systems of rule that readily offered themselves as an imperial home. It was exactly this situation that could transform revolt from an energizing and integrative force (witness the case with the Achaemenid Empire) into a serious disintegrative one. In the face of such a major shortcoming, that is, of not being Catholic in any real sense, the remarkable thing is therefore that the Seleucid Empire lasted even that long.

With this we have already commenced treatment of revolt as a structure, a main concern here. In this area, too, it is to Alexander's Empire – our analytical 'middle ground' – that we must turn for selecting those issues which will best demonstrate that revolt qua 'provincial challenge' was an indispensable component of imperial rule. An attending question is the following: what were the mechanisms that permitted such a potentially dangerous and destructive factor to be a structural necessity of empire? One specific episode is especially instructive.

One of the truly 'disintegrative' moments in Alexander's reign is the mutiny of his army at Opis in 324 (Arrian 7.8-11). Rebellion by the troops, led by some thirteen ringleaders, threatened to nullify the hard-won achievements of the entire conquest.<sup>38</sup> Yet on that occasion the King proved his mastery of the 'integrative' methods. The grievances of the rebellious troops – recurring annoyance with Alexander's Persian dress, the training of the barbarian 'Successors' in the Macedonian style of warfare and the introduction of foreign cavalry into the squadrons of the Companions (*hetairoi*) – were all summed up by Callines, one of the Companion cavalry, who facing Alexander said the following: "O King, what grieves the Macedonians is that you have already made some Persians your 'kinsmen' (*syggeneis*), and the Persians are called 'kinsmen' of Alexander and are allowed to kiss you, while not one of the Macedonians has been granted this honour".

At once, Alexander interrupted Callines and proclaimed: "I make you all my 'kinsmen' (*syggeneis*) and henceforward that shall be your title". At this Callines stepped forward and kissed the King and so did everyone else who wished. Then, the men picked up their arms again with shouts and songs of triumph. The rebellion was over, and the reconciliation of king and his men was celebrated with Alexander offering a grand sacrifice and a public banquet, at which the entire camp was arranged into three concentric circles: the innermost circle consisting of Alexander and his newly-made kinsmen, the Macedonians; the middle circle of the Persians, the newly-demoted kinsmen, who however, continued to dominate in terms of numbers;<sup>39</sup> and, finally, the outer circle of the remaining peoples (Arrian 7.11.1-4). Reporting the same event, Plutarch, knitting into the story ideas held by Stoic philosophers, has Alexander urge the Macedonian and Persian leaders at the banquet to regard the inhabited earth as their fatherland and good men as their kindred, he himself being merely a mediator in the world, sent by the gods (Plut. *Alex.* 33.1; [Plut.] *Mor.* 329c).

The disintegrative moment – one caused by revolt – was thus craftily turned into an integrative one, as Alexander by means of a considered act that we may liken to a collective baptism promoted all the Macedonians into members of his huge extended family. By awarding the gift of 'kinship' he succeeded in re-establishing the traditional, close correspondence between acknowledged ethnic core and putative imperial kindred.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Bosworth 1988, 159-161.

<sup>39</sup> Bosworth 1980; Bosworth 1988, 161.

<sup>40</sup> On the fictional kinship between Greek cities: Curty 1995.

This is among the clearest illustrations we can get of the powers residing in the family metaphor as a means of creating yet another sense of ‘Catholic’: namely, long before the emergence of the modern nation-state, the cradle of long-range nationalism, to create and maintain short-range or middle-range nationalisms. This, too, in answer to the question raised above, stands foremost among the mechanisms that allowed such a potentially destructive factor to be a structural necessity of empire.

As to the concentric circles, they reflected the dominant vision of empire, indicating the distance between its centre and the periphery. In the vision, just as in the banquet gathering, the circles marked the various limits to be crossed for reaching into the heart of imperial rule – or, conversely, for exiting the ‘family’. At the same time, they offered a notional master-grid to be used any time it was deemed necessary – typically after a major power-restructuring prompted by revolt – to provide visible proof of the prevailing order of relationships within the Empire. The same arrangement had been observed earlier in Susa (*FGrH* 81: *Phylarchus* F 41).<sup>41</sup> Later (in 317), Peukestas, governor of Persepolis, replicated it, though using four circles, “each at sufficient distance from the next so that nothing would annoy the banqueters and that all the provisions should be near at hand” (*Diod.* 19.22.2-3).

The mutiny at Opis offered Alexander the opportunity (which he used) to ‘re-conquer’ his own army. For most of the time, however, revolt instanced the re-enactment of conquest of the empire itself, or parts thereof. A Seleucid example illustrates the point. “Such was the final result of Antiochus’ expedition into the interior, an expedition by which he not only made the upper satraps subject to his own rule, but also the cities by the sea and the dynasts this side of the Taurus, and, in short, he secured the kingdom, having intimidated all his subject by his daring and industry. It was this expedition, in fact, which made him appear worthy of the kingship not only to the inhabitants of Asia, but also to those of Europe” (*Polyb.* 11.34.14-16).

Thus reads Polybius’ judgement of the effect of Antiochus III’s campaign in the Upper Regions from 212 to 204.<sup>42</sup> A triumph, nothing less. The seditious subjects, the ‘challengers’ whom the king successfully appeased one after another (though more by means of separate settlements than by the direct use of military violence), counted several vassal kings: Xerxes king of Southern Armenia, Arsakes II king of the Parthians, Eutymenos king of Bactria, and Sophagasesos king of the Indians. On his homeward march, Antiochus passed through southern Iran and Persis before dealing with the Gerrhaians in Arabia. Thence he reached Babylon where, as an extant document from the spring of 204 attests, the victorious Seleucid king made a thank-offering sacrifice at Esagila.<sup>43</sup> In the passage just quoted, Polybius places the stress on the immense value which this carefully prepared, large-scale ‘re-conquest’ – Antiochus’ *anabasis*, as it were – had for the future of the empire and its ruler. Much like Alexander, Antiochus III effectively used the revolts to turn disintegration into integration. Not that the uprisings in the Upper Regions were of negligible importance or unreal; far from it. But it was the forward-looking aspects of the king’s successful re-conquest that came to dominate. Especially, the clear and loud announcement which the whole event made, within as well as outside the Empire, that

<sup>41</sup> Bosworth 1980.

<sup>42</sup> Will 1962; Ma 2000, 63-65.

<sup>43</sup> Sachs and Hunger 1988, no. -204 C, rev. lines 14-18. Del Monte 1997, 61-63 attributes the document to the spring of 205.

the climactic moment of ‘creation’ had just been relived; and that the one responsible for such a feat was King Antiochus. Indeed, it was after this campaign that the king (again, Alexander-style) obtained the title ‘the Great’ (App. Syr. 1).

Clear and loud, too, is the lengthy announcement which King Darius put up in writing on the high plateau of Behistun, near Ecbatana. For there is definitely much that is forward-looking in this inscription (and the accompanying relief),<sup>44</sup> copies of which were to be posted in every country of the Empire.<sup>45</sup> Darius drew up a fairly detailed register of all the great victories he had scored during his suppression of revolts in 522-518. At the same time, alluding to his ability to use both persuasion and force, he also advised the reader, for his own good, (a) to be persuaded by the King’s glorious exploits, (b) to make them widely known and, as a slightly concealed warning, (c) to refrain from challenging the King’s rule, if he wished to live long. In his own words “Now let that which has been done by me [sc. the suppression of revolts] convince thee; thus to the people impart, do not conceal it: if this record thou shalt not conceal (but) tell it to the people, may Ahuramazda be a friend unto thee, and may family be unto thee in abundance, and may thou live long” (*DB (OPers.)* § 60; Briant 2002, 123).

The discrete challenges – which in one year alone (522) came from Persia, Elam, Media, Assyria, Egypt, Parthia, Margiana, Sattagydia and the Saka of Central Asia (*DB (OPers.)* § 22) – set the scene for what royal monumental historiography afterwards presented as *one* challenge and *one* grand project of re-conquest. As the guardian of Truth and Justice on earth, the Great King had personally restored order and hindered his challengers – the Liar-kings, as Darius calls them – from destroying the unity of the empire; the widely-publicized exploits testify to his turning of disintegrative forces into integrative ones. In this instance, too, the challenges represented a form of interaction that was both vital to the maintenance of the imperial power-structure *and* a product of that structure. Some times, though, revolt had to be provoked. Around the year 360, the satrap Mithradates, feigning himself a conspirator, allured Datames to join him. However, no sooner had Datames turned rebel than he was defeated and punished by no other than the Great King’s loyal officer, Mithradates; this episode belongs to the series of upheavals in Asia Minor that we have just described as the Great Satraps’ Revolt (see above). Datames’ betrayal was a pre-arranged act of demotion and power-restructuring, since Mithradates’ rebellion was done on instructions from Artaxerxes himself (*Nepos, Dat.* 10.2-3; *Polyaen.* 7.29.1).

In 522-518, the ensuing, empire-wide power-restructuring offered the occasion for promotion and demotion, reward and punishment. These were observed punctiliously and in full accordance with a simple but strictly adhered to formula that is clearly expressed in Darius’ brief statement: “These are the countries [23 subject countries in all] which came unto me; by the favour of Ahuramazda they were my subjects (*bandaka*). They bore tribute (*bāji*) to me; what was said unto them by me either by night or by day, that was done. Saith Darius the King: Within these countries, the man who was loyal, him I rewarded well; (him) who was evil, him I punished well” (*DB (OPers.)* §§ 7-8; Briant 2002, 125).

So said, so done; merciless punishment was meted out instantly. None of the chief rebels – the Liar-kings – came to ‘live long’. Some were impaled and put on display.

<sup>44</sup> On which see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1982, 198.

<sup>45</sup> For the different versions (Elamite, Babylonian, Persian and Aramaic) and modern editions, see Briant 2002, 899-901, with further references. Discussion of the revolts of 522-518: Briant 2002, 114-128.

Others, like the Sagartian rebel Ciçantakhma, met a more gruesome death: “I cut off both his nose and ears, and put out one eye; he was kept bound at my palace entrance; all the people saw him. Afterwards I impaled him at Arbela” (*DB (OPers.)* § 33). The manual of imperial punishment of ‘challengers’, it would seem, had changed little over time. Having been captured by his king in 220, the Seleucid rebel-satrap Molon was impaled “at the most conspicuous place in Media” (*Polyb.* 5.54.6). Again, when Achaios the rebellious Seleucid super-governor was captured while trying to sneak out of the citadel of Sardeis in 213, “it was resolved first to cut off in the first place the unfortunate man’s extremities, and then, after cutting off his head and sewing it up in an ass’s skin, to impale his body” (*Polyb.* 8.21.2-3) – it was the next year (212) that Antiochus III would embark on his grand campaign of re-conquest in the Upper Satrapies (see above). Imperial Athens stayed faithful to tradition. The city-state of Mytilene, which, as we saw earlier, had revolted from the Athenian Empire (in 428/7), was by a resolution of the Athenian people to be punished by putting all adult males to death and reducing all women and children to slavery (*Thuc.* 3.36.2). That they were actually spared at the last moment was due to a sudden and radical change of imperial mood (in the citizens’ Assembly of Athens), as the view that won the day was the one advocating a method of rule “by which, employing moderation in our punishments, we [the Athenians] can in future secure for ourselves the full use of those cities which bring us important contributions” (*Thuc.* 3.46.6).

Here, ‘persuasion’ was certainly seen as more recommendable, a line of thinking not without precedents. Even though in the statement of Darius we have just quoted the two means of rule are given equal weight, ‘reward’ (i.e. ruling through persuasion) seems always to have been preferable to ‘punishment’ (i.e. ruling by sheer force), and it became even more preferable in the course of time. Simply put, rulers were becoming increasingly appreciative of the former’s ability to produce more lasting integrative and co-operative results. Indeed, a piece of Persian royal wisdom, transmitted by Herodotus, held that “Force has no place where cunning is needful” (*Hdt.* 3.127). Cunning is usually associated with the Greek gift-bearing Odysseus rather than the Persian Great King. Yet, it is hardly accidental that the Persian Empire stands out as the historical exemplar of gift-giving (see n. 76).

Interestingly, the ‘persuasion rather than force’ line of thinking appears to have been especially prevalent whenever the challenges issued from a particular type of Anatolian powerbase, the Greek city-state, the *polis*. Even though common to all three of our empires, the Greek (or Hellenized) *polis* attains a special historical significance in the context of the Seleucid Empire. Very much so, because from 323 onwards a much larger number of such polities – many of them founded by the Seleucids themselves – came to fill precisely the political space in Asia Minor which the Seleucid kings claimed as their rightful possession, and for which they fought bitterly against their Hellenistic rivals.<sup>46</sup>

The peculiarities of the *polis*, especially its peculiar relationship with the Hellenistic monarchs, cannot be treated at length here.<sup>47</sup> Suffice it to note the simultaneous presence of two complementary trends. On the one hand, there is a pronounced degree of co-operation which is predominantly based on Greek communicative traditions. A handful of documents from Sardeis, originally the capital of Lydia, typifies a larger body of

<sup>46</sup> Cohen 1978 and Cohen 1995.

<sup>47</sup> Relations between Hellenistic kings and Greek cities: Jones 1940; Heuss 1937; Bikerman 1939. Particularly under the Seleucids: Orth 1977; Ma 2000, chs. 3 and 4.

evidence that shows not only how widespread (or globalized) Hellenic political culture and institutions had become in Asia Minor, but also how two different ideologies – city-state and monarchic – had grown accustomed to using a common political language. The documents in question (from the year 213) consist of a decree issued by the city-state of Sardeis and letters to the city by queen Laodike and her husband Antiochus III; what they chiefly record is the city's award of honours in return for privileges (*SEG XXXIX* 1283-1285).<sup>48</sup>

But on the other hand, the city-state's twin ideological strongholds, 'freedom' and 'autonomy' – often accompanied by a third, 'democracy' – not only tended to be at loggerheads with monarchic ideology; frequently, they also stood in the way of such vital and practical imperial requirements as (a) unconditional political submission (visible in the posting of garrisons, billeting of troops, etc.), and (b) high-handed economic exploitation (imposition of tribute, various kinds of taxes, etc.). The struggle looks hopelessly unequal if we set the city-state up against Hellenistic monarchy (or all the Hellenistic monarchies) *tout court*. That however, would be incorrect. In the real world, in which a given city-state faced *one* major monarchy at a time, commitment to 'freedom' and 'autonomy' could (and often did) prove a powerful asset.<sup>49</sup> For one, it amounted to a standing – albeit tacit – invitation to any willing liberator from outside the empire to come to the city's rescue. For another, it was a constant reminder to that city's imperial master that failure to grant privileges in the quantity and kind mostly needed (e.g. a larger degree of freedom and autonomy, exemptions from tribute or taxes),<sup>50</sup> entailed the risk of being decried as a despotic oppressor – hardly the ideal image for monarchs ever anxious to have the legitimacy of their rule widely recognized. Granted, not all city-states possessed that potential;<sup>51</sup> but a good many did.

With these powerbases – and chiefly because of the constant rivalry amongst the major Hellenistic empires over Asia Minor – revolt was enriched with a new variety. It mostly manifested itself, not as a regular armed uprising set in motion in and by the powerbase in question, but as a shift of allegiance to another imperial ruler and his organization, thus causing a kind of disintegration that was best countered by persuasion rather than force. As a result, Hellenistic cities and rulers were enmeshed in a nearly continual act of 're-conquest'-cum-'liberation', with the outgoing ruler always cast as a tyrannical oppressor and the incoming one as a magnanimous peace-bringer, saviour and liberator. If there ever was an imperial powerbase that tended to float more freely than the rest, this is it. Consequently, each of the great imperial powers – the Antigonids, Ptolemies, Seleucids, Attalids, and eventually the Romans, too – often had to face a kind of challenge for which re-conquest, simultaneously construed as loss of freedom and liberation, was the proper response. An event during Antiochus III's campaign of re-conquest in Asia Minor in 197/6 can be cited to illustrate the point; in addition, it brings once more to the fore the attention rulers paid to the appropriate mixture of 'persuasion' and 'force'.<sup>52</sup> The Roman historian Livius, following Polybius, writes:

<sup>48</sup> Ma 2000, 284-288.

<sup>49</sup> Ma 2000, ch. 4, and pp. 243-253.

<sup>50</sup> To explain the interaction between king and *polis* Bickerman developed the model of 'surrender and grant': Bickerman 1938, 133-141, cf. Ma 2000, 111-112, 152-153.

<sup>51</sup> In 190, Notion and Kolophon were besieged by Antiochus III for rallying to the Romans (Livius 37.26.5-9).

<sup>52</sup> See also Polyb. 5.62.5.

In the same year (197/6) ... King Antiochus ... sought to bring all the cities of Asia back to their former status within the empire. He could see that the remainder would submit to his rule without difficulty ... but Smyrna and Lampsacus were asserting their freedom and there was a danger that if they were granted what they sought, other cities might follow the example of Smyrna in Ionia and Aeolis and Lampsacus in the Hellespont. And so he (Antiochus) himself sent an army ... to besiege Smyrna and ordered the troops stationed at Abydus to proceed to the siege of Lampsacus ... In fact he was not relying so much on the fear inspired by force, but through envoys he would send them conciliatory messages and reproach them for their rashness and obstinacy; he sought in this way to raise the hope that they would soon have what they were seeking, but only when it was sufficiently clear to themselves and to all others that it was from the king that they had obtained their freedom and that they had not seized it in favourable circumstances (Livius 33.38.1-7; transl. Austin 2006, no. 195).

Both Smyrna and Lampsacus stubbornly denied Antiochus the privilege of being their benefactor and granter of their freedom. Even though both cities had previously been under Seleucid authority, they now categorically refused to be re-incorporated into the Seleucid Empire, responding to the king that he “should be neither surprised nor angry that they should not lightly accept seeing their hopes of freedom being put off” (*ibid.*).

But what gave each city the strength to challenge this mighty king’s will? Given their microscopically small military strength, where did they base their “hopes of freedom”? An answer is suggested by an honorary decree passed by Lampsacus in the following year (196/5).<sup>53</sup> It records the itinerary of, and diplomatic results achieved by, an embassy headed by one Hegesias. Starting from Lampsacus, the embassy crossed over to Greece, where it met with the Roman general in command of the naval forces and the questor of the fleet. Then, arriving at Massalia, the embassy appeared before the city Council; from there it made the journey to Rome, where it obtained a hearing before the Senate. On its way back to Lampsacus, the embassy stopped at Corinth in Greece, where it met again with the admiral of the Roman fleet and the ten Roman commissioners. The mission of this embassy, and the results it achieved after such a cumbersome journey, need to be laid out in some detail. At their first meeting with admiral Lucius Quintius Flamininus, the ambassadors – the decree reports –

discussed at length to him to the effect that the people (of Lampsacus), [who was related (*syggenes*) and] friendly to the Roman people ... urged and [beseeched] them since we are kinsmen (*syggeneis*) of the [Romans, to take thought] for our city so as to bring about [whatever seemed] advantageous to the people (of Lampsacus), for it was incumbent on [them (sc. the Romans) to] champion the interests of the city because of the kinship (*syggeneia*) [which exists] between them and us, which [they] too [recognised] and because the Massaliotes are our brothers [and are friends] and allies of the Roman people.

Flamininus’ reply is reported as follows:

(Flamininus) declares that he recognises the [close kinship] which exists between us (sc. the city of Lampsacus) and the [Romans, and he promised] that if he should conclude friendship or an alliance with anyone, he would include [in them] our city, and would protect [the democracy], autonomy and peace

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<sup>53</sup> *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 591; *ILampsakos* 4; transl. Austin 2006, no. 197, extracts from which are in the text above. See also Bickermann 1932, 277-299.

(of the city) [and that he would do anything in his] power to favour us, and that if anyone [tried to harass us] he would not allow this but would prevent it.

Further assurances to the same effect – all grounded on the mutual ties of ‘kinship’ – were provided by the Massaliote Council and the Roman Senate. Particularly the Senate responded positively to the Lampsacene request “to [show concern] for the [security] of their ... close friends [and] to take care of our city, [because of our kinship and] because of the [friendliness] which exists between them and us”. Finally, when they met again Flamininus and the ten Roman commissioners in Corinth, the ambassadors urged them “to take thought [for us and to help] in preserving [the autonomy] and democracy of [our] city”.

Thus, in 197/6, Lampsacus refused to be re-conquered by Antiochus III because it had already started negotiating its entry into another concentric system of imperial rule, one whose power was rising steadily. Though this was the kind of a ‘quiet revolt’, it nonetheless posed a serious challenge to the unity of the empire and the ruler’s power, since it exposed, more than did anything else, the signal failure of this empire to become truly Catholic. As may have been noticed, in the diplomatic encounter through which Lampsacus seeks to become integrated into a new empire, the family metaphor – expressed by the term ‘kinship’ (*syggeneia*) – plays a key role. What it really signifies has been briefly noted in connection with the mutiny of Alexander’s troops at Opis. It is now time to revisit it in order to look briefly at some of its integrative and disintegrative qualities.

#### *IV. Ruling relatives*

Relatives can be lethal. According to one tradition concerning Mithradates VI of Pontus, Pharnakes, the king’s son and heir to the throne, not only betrayed his father to the Romans but also had him assassinated (Dio Cass. 37.13.3); early in his life, Mithradates himself had his own brother, namesake and rival to the throne killed.<sup>54</sup> Right after Alexander’s death, the king’s staff hurried to kill a rumour to the effect that Alexander had been poisoned by his own generals (the sons of Antipater).<sup>55</sup> In 281, Seleucus I (the founder of the Seleucid dynasty) was assassinated by the very recipient of his benefactions, Ptolemy Ceraunus – two of his successors (Seleucus III and Seleucus IV) were assassinated during conspiracies instigated by their own men, while a third (Antiochus III the Great) is said to have been on a permanent prescription of antidote against all poisonous creatures except the asp.<sup>56</sup> The Persian king Darius III was murdered by the satraps Nabarzanes and Barsaentes, two of the threesome of conspirators whose leader was Bessus, the rebellious satrap of Bactria and the King’s own relative.<sup>57</sup> Other high-standing political figures met a similar fate, some of them seemingly in a more systematic way. It has been calculated that in the period 432-355, at least one-fifth of all Athenian generals (*strategoi*) – who together with the *rhetores* are regarded as the ancient equivalents of our ‘politicians’ – were politically prosecuted by their co-citizens, and most of those who were prosecuted were sentenced to death, by means of a legal procedure called *eisangelia*.<sup>58</sup> In all cases, a general had been denounced by a fellow-citizen, and in most cases, the main charge was treason.

<sup>54</sup> McGing 1986, 165-166 (Pharnakes), 44 (Mithradates Chrestus).

<sup>55</sup> Bosworth 1988, 171-172, citing the relevant sources.

<sup>56</sup> Antiochus III: Pliny *HN* 20.264.

<sup>57</sup> Briant 2002, 866.

<sup>58</sup> Hansen 1991, 216-217.

These are quite dismal statistics. What is striking about them is less the fact that they relate to ruling personalities, but more the fact that sedition, death and destruction came from the hand of one's own circle – one's brethren, trusted officers, friends and relatives. It is striking because 'friends' and 'kinsmen', also whenever these terms refer to imagined but institutionalized kinship groups or fraternities, occupied so central a place in the endeavours to integrate into a unitary ideology of rule all the crucial components of the empire; that is, to graft sameness and common-ness onto a stupendous variety of differences without eradicating these differences. These are the short- and middle-range nationalisms we have had occasion to note earlier. Yet, as even our rudimentary statistics imply, 'friendships' and 'kinships', alongside their integrative properties, did harbour fiercely disintegrative properties as well. A prominent feature of the family metaphor is, in short, its ambiguity.

One aspect of its integrative qualities is revealed by an Aramaic papyrus of 419. It is a letter of king Darius II which, via the satrap of Egypt, reached Elephantine (or Edfu), a frontier province with a large Jewish population segment, and with a garrison (at Syene-Elephantine) manned by Iranian commanders and mostly Jewish troops. The letter regulated the celebration of the Passover in such detail that it stipulated the dates of unleavened bread and instructed abstinence from beer and work.<sup>59</sup> Even though the initiative might have been a concrete response to a general petition for religious patronage (e.g. by the Jewish segment of the Empire), the instructions were officially sent by the king himself. It therefore demonstrates both the imperial centre's willingness to respect and preserve religious (as also ethnic and linguistic) diversity; *and* the kind of means it deemed effective – here, that of 'portable religion' – in the attempts to create a sense of imperial unity, a unity achieved not through homogenization, but through formal, almost ritualistic indication of nearness to the imperial core. Similar aims and techniques are recognizable in the attempts of the Seleucid house to streamline cultic activity over a larger region through the establishment of the office of 'High Priest over all the shrines in Asia Minor';<sup>60</sup> or through its establishment empire-wide of royal cult, including the queen-sister cult (e.g. that of Queen Laodike).<sup>61</sup> Such steps towards unification and integration were imposed from above. In contrast, when city-states within the empire themselves voted to honour their living ruler with a cult (and regularly awarded him the appropriate divine honours), integration as increased nearness to the imperial core came from below.<sup>62</sup>

At the same time, Darius' letter belongs to countless similar manifestations of the fact that the ruler's fatherly thoughts and feelings were constantly with his people, especially those at the outposts of the empire. He was a solicitous and omnipresent king, whose Eyes and Ears were simultaneously everywhere within the realm; a king sensitive and responsive to the particular needs of his multifarious subjects. When Seleucid kings took such official nicknames as *Eupator* ('the Fatherly One'), or *Philopator* ('Father-loving'), they basically communicated the same kind of image about their relation to their subjects.

<sup>59</sup> Cowley 1923, no. 21 (419 BC).

<sup>60</sup> SEG XXXVII 1010, lines 29-41. Cf. Ma 2000, 26.

<sup>61</sup> Robert 1949, 5-22; transl. Austin 2006, no. 200; cf. Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 203-210; Ma 2000, 147-150.

<sup>62</sup> Habicht 1970; Chaniotis 2005a.

These are distinct illustrations of the *patrimonial* character of rule. Like Alexander's performance at Opis, they show how adept exploitation of the family metaphor could make its integrative qualities encompass large segments of the empire and thus create 'middle-range' nationalisms. In this area, the Athenian Empire (again) parts company from the rest. At no time did its particular relationship to its subjects/allies permit the notion of *patrimonial* to invade the prevailing term *hegemonic*; as we have seen above, not invented kinship but fear was the 'glue' that kept this empire together, a circumstance that turned revolt into a much more dramatic *provincial challenge* than was the case elsewhere. By contrast, a very modern-looking nationalism – of the intensive and fiercely exclusive variety – pertained in the imperial metropolis itself. Its citizenry perceived themselves not only as equal shareholders in the democracy, but also as a blood-related fraternity united under *patrimonial* rule, children of an abstractly conceived Fatherland (*patris*). One of the ways in which the family metaphor manifested itself there is particularly telling: monetary payments to the citizenry in lieu of their participation in administration and politics were often expressed with the verb 'to feed' (*trephein*) and the noun 'sustenance' (*trophe*).

However, the vision of Empire-as-a Family cannot be reduced to the bipolar and straightforwardly vertical affair that is implied by the term *patrimonial*. In short, kissing Alexander, or any other of our kings for that matter, signified a much more complex and elastic kind of 'kinship' (*syggeneia*). A main characteristic was its possession of a number of grades, each of which indicated the degree of one's remoteness from, or closeness to, the ruler himself – the exact equivalent of the concentric circles used during ceremonial feasting. And, as is known, neither the kissing of, nor the kinship with, Alexander outlasted its rhetorical purposes, i.e. quelling the revolt through persuasion rather than force. Even though it sometimes stretched out to include the many and lowly, the family metaphor stayed securely the preserve of the ruling nobility.

'Friends' – in the expression "the King, his Friends and his Armed forces" (OGIS 219, line 15) – bespeaks the central position occupied by the royal 'extended family' in this typically Hellenistic, triadic presentation of the Empire as power-wielder. "His Friends all around him, and he in their midst, as though they were the stars and he the sun", is how a Macedonian king, Demetrius I Poliorcetes, and his courtiers are depicted in a hymn sung in his honour: the image of the Sun-King as the centre of Universe.<sup>63</sup> In the Achaemenid Empire, too, the language of friendship and kinship permeates most descriptions (nearly all of them in Greek) of the relationship between the king and his imperial caretakers.<sup>64</sup> Sometimes it is the narrow group of courtiers; at other times it is all those who, as holders of key imperial positions, were linked to him with bonds of loyalty and familiarity (e.g. Plut. *Them.* 29.5: *peri ten aulen kai tous philous* [under Artaxerxes I]; cf. Plut. *Art.* 11.2; Xen. *Anab.* 4.4.4). As we saw with Alexander, the family metaphor enabled the King (a) to establish a correspondence between ruling class and the dominant ethno-class (Persians in the Achaemenid Empire;<sup>65</sup> Greeks-Macedonians, in the Seleucid Empire);<sup>66</sup> and (b) to let the unifying dynamics contained in that metaphor continuously confirm the existence of a distinct identity of interest between ruler and his men – what

<sup>63</sup> Athen. 6.253B-F; transl. Austin 2006, no. 43.

<sup>64</sup> Wiesehöfer 1980; Briant 2002, 129, 131, 187, 308-311, 321-322, 623-624, 781-783.

<sup>65</sup> Briant 2002, 867-871.

<sup>66</sup> Habicht 1958, 1-16, esp. 5; *contra*: Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993.

has been called ‘the dynastic pact’.<sup>67</sup> Or, again, if circumstances recommended it as wise policy, (c) to achieve a higher degree of incorporation of the *indigenous* ruling class (Babylonian, Iranian, Egyptian, Syrian, or other) into the *imperial* ruling class (a fourth-century Achaemenid accomplishment; Alexander’s attempt) – even if this line of action might provoke such complaints as ‘our king is being kissed by strangers’. Finally, (d) the family metaphor, being part and parcel of the system of promotion to and demotion from positions of power, assisted the ruler in the task of keeping his gigantic machinery of rule in balance. All these, in short, constituted challenges and counter-challenges of the first order; together they solidified the integrative sinews of the empire.

In 349/8, in return for great services performed in the war against the unruly Egyptians, king Artaxerxes III advanced Mentor to “over and above his other friends”, giving him besides a hundred talents of silver, the best of expensive decorations, the post of “satrap of the Asiatic coast”, and designating him general with plenipotentiary powers (Diod. 16.52.1). Such a promotion within the group of Friends suggests the existence of a formalized hierarchy. In the Ptolemaic and Seleucid courts (especially from the second century on), we encounter a large, stratified and hierachal administrative class of Friends – in ascending order: Friends (*philoī*), First Friends (*protoi philoi*), Honoured Friends (*timomenoi philoi*), Most Honoured Friends (*protimomenoi philoi*), First and Most Honoured Friends (*protoi kai protimomenoi philoi*), over and above whom stood the group of titular Kinsmen (*syggeneis*).<sup>68</sup> In describing a procession of Darius III, a writer of the Roman imperial period mentions as many as 15,000 relatives (*cognati*) and 200 ‘near relatives’ (*propinqui*), presumably titular Kinsmen and real kinsmen (including in-laws), respectively.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, in his account of the grand pageant staged by the Seleucid king Antiochus IV at Daphne (in Antioch, 166 BC), the Greek historian Polybius, using military terminology, mentions ‘the contingent of Friends’ (*to syntagma ton philon*: Polyb. 30.25.7, cf. 5.50.9, 8.21). Also at the time of Darius III, the title of Royal Kinsmen (*syggeneis*) is seen to have been borne by a corps of 10,000 élite horsemen, chosen for their ‘virtue’ (*arete*) and ‘loyalty’ (*eunoia*: Diod. 17.59.2).

These and further instances reflect the propensity of the time-honoured and predominantly aristocratic tradition of ‘friendship’ to create sometimes large, concentrically patterned networks of extended families. It is important here that we avoid the fallacy of expecting to find clear-cut distinctions between ‘friendship’ and ‘kinship’; or the existence, within this class itself, of neatly differentiated ranks with lasting validity and meaning. Besides blurring the line between Friend and Kinsman, the relationships to which these terms refer valued the qualities of ‘trust’ and ‘loyalty’ much higher than any distinction between ‘real’ versus ‘fictional’ relatives. Speaking of the Persian court under Artaxerxes II, an ancient author refers to ‘the breakfast of the family’ (*syggenikon ariston*: Athen. 2.48f); one wonders whether the king, in contrast to modern scholars, would have bothered at all to clarify whether *syggenikon*, at his breakfast table, meant ‘real’ or ‘fictional’ family. Nor does it seem appropriate to define too rigidly the kind and number of people covered by the titles of Friend/Kinsman, since ‘entries’ and ‘exits’ would have caused the system to fluctuate considerably. Acknowledging the fact that “the

<sup>67</sup> Briant 2002, 869-870.

<sup>68</sup> Bikerman 1938, 31-50; Habicht 1958; Herman 1981; Savalli-Lestrade 1998, esp. 374-387. Ptolemaic kingdom: Mooren 1977.

<sup>69</sup> Quintus Curtius 3.3.14-21; Briant 2002, 310.

most precious among possessions is a wise and loyal friend”, Darius I invited Histiaios of Miletos (later proven to be a “shrewd and cunning Greek”) to come with the Great King to Susa and become his Tablemate (*syssitos*) and advisor (*symboulos*: Hdt. 5.24). Thereby the king, in addition to recompensing a Greek for useful services rendered, took into his Empire-cum-Family the leader of a free-floating and resourceful powerbase situated at the Empire’s western periphery. New entries occurred with some frequency. The reverse process, i.e. expulsion from the Family, is illustrated by Artaxerxes II’s punishment of Orontes with exclusion from the company of his friends (Plut. *Art.* 24.9); the farther one was removed from the ‘inner family circle’ of the empire, the greater the political demotion and disgrace.

A mere glance at the Athenian Empire suffices to convince of its failure, or rather unwillingness, to absorb those mechanisms that would have made the family metaphor an instrument of empire. The only attempt worth speaking of – the Athenians’ claims of heading the larger Ionian family, i.e. one of the four main ‘tribes’ into which all the Hellenes were divided – was an overly conspicuous piece of propaganda, activated only whenever mobilization of support among the ‘allies’ was urgently needed; and a clumsy one at that, since some of the allies by tradition were Aeolians, not Ionians.<sup>70</sup> By contrast, inside the imperial metropolis, the narrow group of citizens did perceive itself as a self-contained, highly privileged fraternity. The same group of citizens often put on display its intolerance towards the use of the family metaphor by its leading political figures in order to describe their personal relationships, some of which did straddle several cultural and political borders: the charge of ‘treason’ was constantly in the air. Finally, the same group stubbornly rejected the idea of sharing their ‘citizenship’ with their allies or with any other. In fact, the operational logic of this empire remained that of “more tribute, less military or political partnership”.<sup>71</sup>

Where it *did* play a prominent role, the family metaphor exposed its own ambiguity (creator of both integrative and disintegrative forces) as well as that characterizing the relationship between ruler and ruling class, imperial centre and province-ized powerbases.<sup>72</sup> Since ambiguity, too, offered itself as an instrument of rule, the kings made use of it in order to maintain discipline and check overly ambitious Kinsmen. Having told the story of a very ambitious commander who had been expelled from the ‘inner family circle’ by his own king (Philip V of Macedon), Polybius remarked: “So brief a space of time suffices to exalt and abase men all over the world and especially those in the courts of kings; for these are in truth exactly as counters on a counting-board. For at the will of the reckoner, they are now worth a copper and now worth a talent, and courtiers at the nod of the king are at one moment universally envied and at the next universally pitied” (Polyb. 5.26, esp. 26.3-13).

Again, describing Artaxerxes’ disgracing of Orontes, his own son-in-law, Plutarch adds: “it was the same with the Friends of [Hellenistic] kings: at one time they are omnipotent at another time almost impotent” ([Plut.] *Mor.* 174b). In the face of such ambiguity, neither the imperial Friends/Kinsmen, nor their own subordinates, nor, for

<sup>70</sup> Smarczyk 1990, 464-472; Hornblower 1991, 520-525. Aeolians: D.M. Lewis apud Hornblower 1991, 190.

<sup>71</sup> The point is made by Momigliano in his comparison between the Roman and Athenian empires: Momigliano 1975, 45.

<sup>72</sup> See Austin 1986, 462.

that matter, city-states could feel secure. Anyone who tried to challenge the imperial centre had to reckon with the centripetal forces surrounding it. How strong these could be, preserving the Empire-as-a-Family when its unity was at risk, is thus the last aspect to be considered here.

Some Hellenistic kings were prone to measure their invincibility and martial strength in terms of weaponry: “How many warships is my presence worth?”, asked the Macedonian king Antigonus Gonatas on hearing that the Ptolemaic fleet outnumbered his own ([Plut.] *Apophtheg.* 183c). In 220, the Seleucid rebel-satrap Molon decided to offer battle against his king at night, “reflecting that it is difficult for rebels to risk attacking kings in daylight and face to face” (Polyb. 5.52.8-9). Shortly afterwards the crack troops of another Seleucid rebel and usurper, Achaios, mutinied when they heard that they were campaigning “against their natural and original king” (Polyb. 5.57.6). The king’s presence had a paralyzing effect.

However, even though effective, pure personal charisma was not a sufficient generator of centripetal forces. What counted for more is alluded to by the following story told by Aelian. Having discovered that Aribazus the Hyrcanian and the other Persian notables who were accompanying him in his hunting party had plotted to assassinate him, Darius looked them straight in the eye and said: “Why don’t you do what you are set to do?” Seeing his unflinching gaze – continues Aelian – “they abandoned their plan; fear gripped them to such an extent that they dropped their spears, jumped off their horses and knelt before Darius, surrendering unconditionally. He despatched them in various directions, sending some to the Indian frontier, others to the Scythian. They remained loyal (*pistoi*) to him, remembering his beneficence (Greek: *euergesia*)” (Aelian *VH* 6.14).

The operative word here is not ‘fear’, but ‘beneficence’ (*euergesia*), one among the finest instruments of royal persuasion. Above all else, it represented the massive transference, via gift-giving, of material wealth from the king to the various caretakers of his imperial powerbases. And ‘massive’ here ought to be understood in the strongest possible sense, since the prime purpose of this royal gift-giving was to pour so much wealth onto loyal officers that a wealth-hungry imperial governor became a contradiction in terms.<sup>73</sup> Alexander adhered firmly to this practice. Learning that his general and honoured friend Phocion was leading a humble life in Athens, Alexander offered him a present of 100 talents. When Phocion refused the present, the king informed him that “he did not consider those who refused to accept anything from him to be his friends” (Plut. *Phoc.* 18).<sup>74</sup> Hellenistic kings, the Seleucids no less than others, followed suit. Benefaction (*euergesia*) was a cardinal element of monarchic ideology and practical rule, and some kings attained the epithet Benefactor, *Euergetes*.<sup>75</sup> Yet, in this regard, the Achaemenid rulers virtually outbid all others.<sup>76</sup> The examples illustrating this are countless. Here, however, I cite one which shows the centripetal forces in the making, as a famous rebel details the rewards awaiting those assisting him in his grand project of usurpation; a would-be king’s covenant with those about to become prime members of his empire-wide family. Prior to the decisive battle against his brother King Artaxerxes at

<sup>73</sup> Austin 1986; Chaniotis 2005b, ch. 7.

<sup>74</sup> Berve 1926, no. 816; Austin 1986, 462.

<sup>75</sup> The evidence is collected in Bringmann and von Steuben 1995. Brief discussion: Bringmann 1993. Monarchic ideology: Walbank 1984.

<sup>76</sup> Lewis 1977, 4-5, 122; cf. Briant 2002, esp. 174-178.

Cunaxa (401 BC), Cyrus the Younger spoke to his assembled officers as follows: “Well, men, my father’s realm extends towards the south to a region where men cannot dwell by reason of the heat, and to the north to a region where they cannot dwell by reason of the cold; and all that lies between these limits my brother’s friends (*phili*) rule as satraps. Now, if we win the victory, we must put our *phili* in control of these provinces. I fear, therefore, not that I shall not have enough to give to each of my *phili*, if success attends us, but I shall not have enough *phili* to give to” (Xen. *Anab.* 1.7.7).

Cyrus counted on heaps of wealth to keep the Family together, while Alexander, we have seen, could sometimes manage with just a kiss. It was at a ruler’s discretion to decide which one of a whole range of persuasive devices seemed most suitable to the occasion.

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