

**Concepts of Emperorship from
the Ancient Near East to Medieval Bulgaria**

by

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List of Abbreviations

- ADG = Miklosich, F. and J. Müller (eds.) *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*. 6 vols. Wien, 1860–1890.
- ÄHK 1 = Edel, E. (ed. and tr.) *Die ägyptisch-bethitische Korrespondenz* 1. Düsseldorf, 1994.
- ANEHST = Chavalas, M.W. (tr.) *The Ancient Near East: historical sources in translation*. Oxford, 2006.
- ANET = Pritchard, J.B. (tr.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton, 1969 (3rd ed.).
- ANRW = H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römische Welt*. II. *Prinzipat*. 37 vols. Berlin, 1974-1997. (vol. 7, 1980; 8, 1978; 9, 1976)
- ARAB = Luckenbill, D.D. (tr.) *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. 2 vols. Chicago, 1927.
- ARE = Breasted, J.H. (tr.) *Ancient Records of Egypt*. 5 vols. Chicago, 1906.
- AVIU = D'jakonov, I.M. (tr.) *Assiro-vavilonskie istočniki po istorii Urartu*. In *Vestnik drevnej istorii* (1951).
- BSM = Ivanov, J. (ed.) *Bälgarski starini iz Makedonija*. Sofia, 1931 (2nd ed.).
- EA = El Amarna = Moran, W.L. (tr.) *The Amarna Letters*. Baltimore, 1992.
- EHI = Davies, B.G. (ed. and tr.) *Egyptian Historical Inscriptions of the Nineteenth Dynasty*. Jonsered, 1997.
- GBC = Daskalova, A. and M. Rajkova (eds.) *Gramoti na bälgarskite care*. Sofia, 2005, superseding Il'inskij, G.A. (ed.) *Gramoty bolgarskih carej*. Moscow, 1911.
- GIBI = *Gräcki izvori za bälgarskata istorija*. Sofia.
- HDT = Beckman, G. (tr.), *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*. Atlanta, 1996.
- HEK = Beckerath, J. von, *Handbuch der ägyptischen Königsnamen*. Mainz, 1999.

- IS = Farlati, D. et al. (ed.) *Illyricum sacrum*. 8 vols. Venice, 1751–1769.
- KIA = Weissbach, F.H. (ed. and tr.) *Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden*. Leipzig, 1911.
- KRIT₂ = Kitchen, K.A. (tr.) *Ramesside Royal Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated: Translations*. Vol. 2. Oxford, 1996.
- LHK = H.A. Hoffner (ed. and tr.) *Letters from the Hittite Kingdom*. Atlanta, 2009.
- LIBI = *Latinski izvori za bälgarskata istorija*. Sofia.
- LKM = W. Heimpel (tr.) *Letters to the King of Mari*. Winona Lake, IN, 2003.
- LQV = A.C. Benson and Viscount Esher (eds.) (1908) *The Letters of Queen Victoria*. 3 vols. London.
- MGH = *Monumenta Germaniae historica*.
- MS = Miklosich, F. (ed.) *Monumenta serbica spectantia historiaem Serbiae Bosnae Ragusii*. Wien, 1858.
- NBKS = Langdon, S. (ed. and tr.) *Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*. Leipzig, 1912.
- PCE = Luukko, M. and G. Van Buylaere (ed. and tr.) *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*. Helsinki, 2002.
- PG = Migne, J.-P. (ed.) *Patrologia Graeca*. 166 vols. Paris, 1857–1866.
- PL = Migne, J.-P. (ed.) *Patrologia Latina*. 221 vols. Paris, 1844–1865.
- RIMA₁ = Grayson, A.K. (ed. and tr.) *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods: Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC (to 1115 BC)*. Toronto, 1987.
- RIMA₂ = Grayson, A.K. (ed. and tr.) *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods: Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC (1114–859 BC)*. Toronto, 1991.
- RIME₁ = Frayne, D.R. (ed. and tr.) *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods: Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC)*. Toronto, 2008.
- RIME₂ = Frayne, D.R. (ed. and tr.) *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods: Sargonic and Gutian Periods (2334–2113 BC)*. Toronto, 1993.
- RIME_{3/1} = Edzard, D.O. (ed. and tr.) *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods: Gudea and His Dynasty*. Toronto, 1997.

RIME 3/2 = Frayne, D.R. (ed. and tr.) *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods: Ur III Period (2112–2004 BC)*. Toronto, 1997.

RIME 4 = Frayne, D.R. (ed. and tr.) *The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)*. Toronto, 1990.

SBK 1 = Dujčev, I. (ed. and tr.) *Iz starata bālgarska knižnina*. Vol. 1. Sofia, 1943 (2nd ed.).

SBK 2 = Dujčev, I. (ed. and tr.) *Iz starata bālgarska knižnina*. Vol. 2. Sofia, 1944.

TDGR 3 = Burstein, S.M. (ed. and tr.) *Translated Documents of Greece & Rome 3: The Hellenistic Age from the battle of Ipsos to the death of Kleopatra VII*. Cambridge, 1985.

TDGR 4 = Sherk, R.K. (ed. and tr.) *Translated Documents of Greece & Rome 4: Rome and the Greek East to the death of Augustus*. Cambridge, 1984.

UKN = Melikašvili, G.A. (ed. and tr.) *Urartskie klinoobraznye nadpisi*. In *Vestnik drevnej istorii* (1953).

VMB = Petkov, K. (tr.) *The Voices of Medieval Bulgaria, Seventh-Fifteenth Century*. Leiden, 2008.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the history of two intertwined concepts, observed from their original appearance until their interplay in the diplomatic experience of Medieval Bulgaria. The first of these concepts is the idea of a fully sovereign type of kingship that is not beholden to any other power besides the divine, which, in fact, is used to legitimize it. An implication of this ultimate sovereignty is monarchy occupying the highest standing wherever it enters into a power relationship with others: a model of hierarchically differentiated kingship. The other central concept is the enduring or recurrent use of the language of symbolic kinship to define or reinforce the relative status of monarchs who claim supreme standing. In patriarchal societies the model never required a self-aware definition as a “Family of Rulers,” and proved surprisingly resilient, continuously reappearing after real or apparent dormancy in the source evidence. It essentially reflected the power relationships between monarchs by translating them into kinship terms: “brothers” for monarchs of equal status; “fathers” and “sons” for monarchs of different status.

Chapter 1 introduces the topic. Chapter 2 explores the origins of hierarchically defined kingship, including concepts of divine or divinely instituted monarchy, and the associated vocabulary of symbolic kinship in the Ancient Near East, reflected most clearly in the club of “great kings” in the Late Bronze Age (c.1500–1200 BC). Chapter 3 traces the changing meaning of the Greek term *basileus* from its humble origins the Bronze Age to the divine kingship of the Hellenistic Period (c.330–30 BC), and its interplay with the models of kingship and symbolic kinship discussed in

Chapter 2. Chapter 4 explores the development of Roman leadership from an Iron Age monarchy to an oligarchic republic (c.500–30 BC), to a new monarchy under the emperors, supreme monarchs by another name. It also demonstrates the gradual adoption or adaptation of Hellenistic royal practices and precedents by Roman leaders and eventually emperors, culminating in the conceptual merger, first informal, then formal, of emperor and *basileus*. Chapter 5 focuses on the altered world of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages (from the fifth century), in which the surviving, now Christian Roman emperor interacted with non-Roman kings within the basic framework of hierarchically differentiated monarchy and corresponding symbolic language of kinship. After initial acquiescence in these models, as they became more integrated into the Roman tradition, the Franks and then the Bulgarians challenged the position of the Roman emperor, seeking parity in both titles and symbolic kinship. The surviving Roman Empire at Constantinople met these challenges in different ways, resulting in different outcomes. Given the Roman Empire's geopolitical realities, however, this did not result in invariably hostile relations with the Franks and invariably friendly relations with the Bulgarians, both of whom ably redefined the nature of their emperorship again.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores the conditions that led to Simeon I of Bulgaria (893–927) claiming the imperial title of *basileus*. It further reconstructs the efforts of Simeon and subsequent Bulgarian monarchs to secure continued diplomatic recognition of their imperial title and status. But it also explores the Eastern Roman reaction in first opposing and then accommodating and partly neutralizing such very unwelcome aspirations, first by Franks, then by Bulgarians. It is in this setting that we witness the empire’s ingenious recourse to the language of diplomacy, which allowed it to mollify the negative effects of the disturbing concessions. Terminology being so central in imagining the institutions in question, this study also explores the long history and sometimes evolving meaning of the key imperial titles involved, Greek *basileus* and Slavic *česar’/car’* (“tsar”).

And since there is nothing new under the monarchical sun,¹ this work shows that the wealth of preserved diplomatic exchanges between equal and unequal potentates from the Ancient Near East — unparalleled in size before the ninth century — reveals key elements that remained relevant to kings and emperors in the Mediterranean world for millennia. For as we will discover, late first millennium Eastern Roman, Germanic, and Bulgarian rulers deployed many of the concepts developed in the Fertile Crescent during the Bronze and Iron Ages. In particular, the diplomatic use of kinship rhetoric was integral to early medieval interaction and ranking among monarchs. Even when it is not possible or necessary to establish a clear continuity between Near Eastern and medieval

¹ Cf. Ecclesiastes 1.9.

institutions, the Near Eastern developments in the definition of monarchy, hierarchy, and diplomatic relations provide a revealing and edifying comparison for the subject of this study.

This study does not attempt to provide a detailed and consistent historical narrative, although it traces the development of monarchical titulature and ranking over time. It also does not aim to discuss or analyze the full range of theoretical, philosophical, or theological implications that stood behind or were retrospectively attributed to the titles involved. It traces the development of a model of effective and fully sovereign monarchy legitimized in various ways by its relationship to the divine from the Ancient Near East through to the Roman Empire. The study then explores and analyzes the rhetorical and diplomatic repercussions of the adoption and assertion of this model, in the form of the (explicitly or implicitly Roman) emperorship, by non-Roman monarchs in the Germanic west and the Slavic east, with a special focus on Bulgaria. While the experience of the Frankish (and eventually Holy Roman) Empire in its relations to the surviving Roman Empire in the east serves as a natural point of comparison or contrast to that of Bulgaria, the fleeting assertions of local emperorship in Britain and the Iberian Peninsula did not seem sufficiently comparable for inclusion, because they did not work in direct confrontation with the continuing Roman imperial tradition at Constantinople. The principal emphasis of the study is on the forms and ways in which the monarch's title and rank were asserted in official formulations and in "international" relations.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."² If Saint John opened his Gospel with this declaration that the Word (*Logos*) is God, then obviously some words, at least, could be conceived as carrying inordinate importance. A century later, in July

² John 1.1.

180, a dozen Christians from Scillium in north Africa were asked to renounce their faith at a trial conducted by the Roman proconsul Saturninus at the provincial capital, Carthage. The proconsul invited the Christians to demonstrate their loyalty to the Roman Empire by acting as proper Romans and swearing by the “genius of their lord the Emperor” and praying for his welfare.³ Speratus, who spoke on behalf of his fellow prisoners, replied that they had committed no crime, but were in fact law-abiding taxpayers, all the more so because they followed the teachings of their “Lord, the King of Kings and Emperor of all nations.”⁴ Although it is difficult to imagine that neither the proconsul nor the Christians understood that they were talking past each other, and although each side made limited attempts at using words in a shared language,⁵ in the end neither gave in. The Roman governor could not allow such seeming contempt for the emperor to go unpunished in his province, especially given the accused’s professed allegiance to a part-human, part-divine monarch whose title sounded suspiciously close to that of Rome’s eastern archenemy, the Arsakid king of Parthia; these heroic Christians apparently preferred martyrdom to compromising their beliefs by sharing, even nominally, their god’s sacredness and monarchical terminology with their worldly ruler. In what was neither the first nor the last instance of its kind, the Roman governor ordered the prisoners executed, by which act they “were crowned with martyrdom,” and, according to the *Passio Sanctorum Scilitanorum*, went on to reign with God forever.⁶ Although they had thus earned a heavenly reward, their earthly fate seemed singularly unpromising. The dichotomy between earthly and heavenly fates

³ *Passio Sanctorum Scilitanorum*: 78-79: per genium domini nostri imperatoris, et pro salute eius supplicamus, quod et vos quoque facere debetis.

⁴ *Passio Sanctorum Scilitanorum*: 80-81: cognosco dominum meum, regem regum et imperatorem omnium gentium.

⁵ The proconsul, having failed to persuade them to give up their Christian “persuasion” (*esse persuasionis*), offered them a month to think it over; one of the Christians, Donata, admitted that they honored Caesar as Caesar, but it was God they feared: *Honorem Caesari quasi Caesari; timorem autem Deo.*

⁶ *Passio Sanctorum Scilitanorum*: 82-83: Et ita omnes simul martyrio coronati sunt, et regnant cum Patre et Filio et Spiritu Sancto per omnia secula seculorum.

is not central to this study, but the value of words and disputes about their meaning such as that preserved in the *Passio* is. Certain terms were deemed important enough to dispute with words and weapons alike.

Words did not have to be God or to describe God to become fatal to those swept up, willingly or not, in disputing them. In the end the Roman Empire did embrace Christianity, and Christ and emperor reigned side by side in seemingly perfect harmony. But the very notion of the emperorship also became a central and jealously guarded aspect of the definition of the Empire. Long convinced of its uniqueness and superiority over the outside — barbarian — world, the Empire held on to these notions of exclusivity even as its sway diminished dramatically in Late Antiquity. Wars were fought, naturally enough, over lands, cities, revenues, and religion. But the new polities emerging in Early Medieval Europe also laid claims to the Roman past: implicitly and explicitly, territorially, culturally, and religiously. It is not surprising that by the ninth and tenth centuries some of them also claimed the Roman emperorship itself. Perceived as a challenge both symbolically and territorially, this led to an understandably negative reaction by the Greek-speaking Roman emperor, now ensconced at New Rome, Constantinople, and called by the Greek monarchical term *basileus*. But the intensity of this reaction, sometimes manifested on the battlefield, but more often in the field of diplomacy, demonstrates the precious quality that the Roman emperorship, or to put it in Medieval Greek, *basileia*, had assumed in the battered but surviving Eastern Roman Empire. As one scholar put it, “matters of phrase and title are never unimportant, least of all in an age ignorant and superstitiously antiquarian.”⁷ The remark itself is antiquarian and biased, and the author was actually describing the renewed *western* manifestation of the Roman imperial tradition in the High Middle

⁷ Bryce 1873: 196.

Ages. But while ignorance and, to a lesser extent, superstition may have been in relatively short supply at the imperial court in Constantinople, noting the antiquarian quality of imperial political thought is surely accurate enough.

Exactly what were these Eastern Romans, whom we now usually call “Byzantines,” in the ninth or tenth centuries? For our purposes, we may generalize. They were largely, though not entirely, Greek-speaking, but most of them were Greek neither in geography nor in religion⁸; they were mostly Christian, but then again so were many of their neighbors; and they inhabited lands that had retained their ancient geographic names but had little memory of their pre-imperial existence as viable political and socio-economic units on anything other than the most local of levels. They might not be Persian or Arab or Lombard or Frankish or Bulgar or Khazar or Rus', but that did not really indicate what they actually *were*. This left the Roman identity as the one viable option for identification on what we might call a national level.⁹ This identity, moreover, had been acquired — often willingly enough — a long time ago, and it was more difficult to discard than to obtain. It should not be surprising, then, that our “Byzantines” would insist on their “Romanness.”

The emperor and his court, well-versed in the examples of a greater past, a golden age of sorts, would have been even more attached to antiquarian tradition no matter how realistic they were about the altered world around them. Since tradition and legitimacy were so inextricably linked, they would have been all the more committed to maintaining them, especially when it came to form and formula.¹⁰ This is strikingly conveyed in the tenth-century treatise on court ceremonial ascribed to

⁸ By this period the Greek self-identifier “Hellene” (*Hellēn*) had undergone a transformation in meaning and was mostly applied to pagans: Kaldellis 2007, e.g., 111-119 and 184-185.

⁹ Cf. Kaldellis 2007: 74-82.

¹⁰ Consider Augustus, who clothed his Roman revolution in terms of maintaining or restoring ancient tradition, in *Res Gestae* 6.1: “I would not accept any office inconsistent with the custom of our ancestors” (*nullum magistratum contra*

the emperor Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos (913–959) himself, now known by the conventional Latin title *De Caerimoniis*. Among the many ceremonial addresses and formulas recorded by this author, there are many Latin ones, albeit in fossilized, butchered, and no longer actively understood form. This was matched by the continued use of Latin titles for many court officials, and by the minting of coins in which the otherwise Greek inscriptions still sported the occasional Latin letter forms.¹¹

The *basileia* of the Romans and its special properties were naturally central and essential components of this very traditional institutional system.¹² The centrality of the emperor had emerged from the very beginning of the imperial system. As we have seen in the case of the Scillitan Martyrs, it was deemed important enough to have fatal consequences even on those whose rhetoric alone was deemed incompatible with the emperor’s monopoly on authority. But Old Rome had a venerable political and institutional tradition in which the emperor was a relatively recent and somewhat artificial addition that shared the limelight with the relics of the pre-imperial, republican system, most notably the senate. At New Rome, which owed its existence, its status, and even its own senate to imperial *fiat*, the centrality of the emperor could only be greater still. Equally naturally, possession of this Roman *basileia* would be jealously defended whenever new peoples came to partake in the Roman legacy, not only taking over Roman lands and cultural traditions, but eventually aspiring to the Roman *basileia* itself; this last presumption manifested itself when Pope Leo III (795–816)

morem maiorum delatum recepi), and 8.5: “By new laws passed on my proposal I brought back into use many exemplary practices of our ancestors which were disappearing in our times” (legibus novis me auctore latis multa exempla maiorum exolescentia iam ex nostro saeculo reduxi); contrast Procopius, *Secret History* 6.21, who attacks Justinian as “the greatest destroyer of good institutions” (μέγιστος δὴ οὗτος διαφθορεὺς τῶν εὐ καθεστώτων) five hundred years later.

¹¹ See the discussion and examples in Toynbee 1973: 565–574.

¹² Cf. Page 2008: 46–47.

crowned the Frankish king Charles I (Charlemagne, 768–814) as Roman emperor in Saint Peter’s Basilica at Rome on Christmas Day 800.

The reaction of Constantinople was negative in every such case. But while the distant Franks and their Germanic successors could be ignored to some degree, the presence of the Bulgarians on the very footsteps of Constantinople resulted in more intensive friction that peaked in the tenth century and was catalyzed by what the Eastern Roman court had considered a very positive development: the conversion of Bulgaria to Christianity and the fuller adoption of many aspects of Eastern Roman culture — albeit in Slavic translation — under Boris I (852–889). But the integration of a new people into the Roman cultural legacy produced the natural, if naïve, expectation that the language of symbolic kinship based on the rulers’ confraternity in Christ in a spiritual sense, would result in political parity. In Boris’ time, this expectation helped precipitate a conflict between the churches of Rome and Constantinople that, imperfectly mended, would return centuries later to divide Christendom and Europe alike.¹³ Boris’ son Simeon I (893–927), perhaps “the most colorful ruler in Bulgarian, if not medieval Balkan history,”¹⁴ having become familiar with the superior and exclusive attitude of the Byzantine government, pressed the quest for parity to its fullest extent: recognition as a Roman *basileus*. As we shall see in greater detail, his success was incomplete: he did secure a makeshift imperial coronation at the hands of the patriarch of Constantinople, Nikolaos I Mystikos, in 913, and was grudgingly recognized as a “brother” and “emperor” — though not of the Romans — by the Eastern Roman emperor Rōmanos I Lakapēnos (920–944) a decade later.

The military and diplomatic conflict that followed Simeon’s claim to the *basileia* had ended with a compromise that echoed the settlement with the Franks in the ninth century: if the Eastern

¹³ For a detailed treatment of the Photian Schism, see Dvornik 1948; Fine 1983: 117-126.

¹⁴ Fine 1983: 132.

Romans could admit the existence of another emperor (*basileus*), then he could not be a Roman one. The limited concessions made by the Eastern Roman court in recognizing an “emperor of the Franks” or an “emperor of the Bulgarians” essentially proclaimed “Can’t beat the real thing,” to borrow the wording of a modern advertising slogan¹⁵ — the true emperor was Roman and theoretically universal, not a self-aggrandizing monarch of some other people. Like the Franks before them, the Bulgarians had little appreciation for the partial but painful concession made by the Eastern Roman government and felt short-changed; this led to war with pens and swords,¹⁶ which produced some of the livelier exchanges in medieval diplomacy. More generally, the stressful integration of Bulgaria into the Eastern Roman cultural sphere altered not only the relationship between these states and the cultural development of Bulgaria, but it also contributed to the developing cultural differentiation in medieval Europe. But although it was likely not fully aware of it, the Bulgarian monarchy was responding to a model of potent and sovereign monarchy that recognized no superiors, that was developed many centuries earlier in the Ancient Near East.

¹⁵ Coca Cola (1990).

¹⁶ As dubbed by Sergheraert 1960: 117.

Chapter 2: The Near Eastern Origins of Hierarchically Ranked Monarchies

Mesopotamia and the model of divinely granted kingship

Literate civilization began in Sumer, located in southern Mesopotamia and inhabited by two intermingling linguistic groups, the Sumerians and the East-Semitic-speaking Akkadians. It is here that we first obtain a glimpse of monarchy.¹⁷ The *Sumerian King List*, inscribed on baked clay tablets with cuneiform script centuries later, purported to reach all the way back to the beginning of the institution.¹⁸ It declares that “the kingship was lowered from heaven” twice, once before and once after the Flood, first at Eridu, then at Kiš.¹⁹ The same development is described in more detail in a later work called the *Eridu Genesis*. In it, we are told that kingship was a benefaction of the gods, that “the august crown and the royal throne” had come down from heaven, as had the “royal scepter,” and that the king “regularly performed to perfection the august divine services and offices.”²⁰

But this neat explanation, which assumes that a unitary monarchy had existed from the start and had passed from one city to another, is the product of later rationalization. Apart from the questionable significance of divine agency and the Flood, the formulaic language of the historical narrative attempted to disguise the co-existence and intensive competition between rival city-states.²¹

¹⁷ For Mesopotamian kingship in general, see Seux 1981, Postgate 1995, and Hallo 1996: 188-211. A good recent survey of Ancient Near Eastern history is provided by Van De Mieroop 2004.

¹⁸ It is assumed that the first attempt at compilation dates back to c.2300 BC, the second to c.2100 BC, and the earliest surviving copies to c.1820 BC: Glassner 2004: 118; Jacobsen 1939: 138-141 dated the composition c.2100 BC.

¹⁹ In Jacobsen 1939: 70-71, 76-77. On the *Sumerian King List* see also Michalowski 1983 and Glassner 2004: 55-70 and 117-155.

²⁰ In Jacobsen 1981: 517-518.

²¹ E.g., Jacobsen 1939: 158-164.

Moreover, where kingship (*NAM-LUGAL*) was concerned, the narrative is seemingly unaware of the varied and changing character of the institution over time. In fact, the contemporary sources reveal that at least three different forms of monarchy emerged in ancient Mesopotamia. Comparative analysis suggests that, broadly speaking, political leadership in early Mesopotamian city-states was first vested in a ruler designated *EN* (“lord”), whose authority was apparently closely associated with and perhaps even based upon the temple of each city-state’s patron deity. Somewhat later a new type of leader called *LUGAL* (“great man”) emerged, apparently more secular and perhaps even military in character. A third title, *ENSI*, might have been related to that of *EN*, and may have been assumed by *ENs* who had transformed their “theocratic” power into a more secular type of control, but that remains uncertain.²²

The differentiation in titles may have been due not only to the character of leadership inherent in them, but also to the location in question. It appears that the rulers of Uruk used the title *EN*, while those of Kiš and Ur used the title *LUGAL*. Thus, when Lugal-kišine-dudu, ruler of both Uruk and Ur, asserted his control over Kiš in c.2400 BC, he reigned simultaneously as *EN* of Uruk, *LUGAL* of Ur, and *LUGAL* of Kiš.²³ The most plentiful textual evidence tends to come from Lagaš, where the picture becomes more muddled still. Here a local *ENSI* had apparently benefited from the adjudication of Me-silim, the *LUGAL* of Kiš, in a dispute against the neighboring polity of Umma, and the same Me-silim had made donations to the cult of the patron gods at both Lagaš’s

²² See Jacobsen 1970, and the succinct summaries by Bailkey 1967: 1218-1220, Webster 1976: 822-823, and Glassner 2004: 96 and 99, n. 5; on the *EN*, see also Postgate 1995: 398. Jacobsen 1970: 107, n. 32, makes a further observation, that apparently in those city-states where the patron deity was female, the *EN* was male (e.g., Uruk), and could assume not only religious, but also civil and military authority, whereas in those city-states where the patron deity was male, the *EN* was female (e.g., at Ur), and she could only wield religious authority, civil and military power devolving upon a *LUGAL*. On the secular lordship inherent in the title *LUGAL*, see Hallo 1996: 190-191.

²³ E.g., *RIMA* 1: 14.14.2. Cf. Glassner 2004: 96. The kings of Ur and Kiš are always called *LUGAL* (e.g., 14.13.1 for Ur and 14.7.22 for Kiš), but the few rulers of Uruk attested on the monuments also seem to have preferred the title *LUGAL* (e.g., 14.15.4), though that may be influenced by the fact that they were also *LUGALS* of other polities (e.g., 14.15.1).

dependency Girsu and at Adab.²⁴ This has been interpreted as early evidence for the dependence of local *ENSIs* on a higher-ranking *LUGAL* (or more specifically to the *LUGAL* of Kiš, who seems to have enjoyed at least symbolic preeminence among the rulers of the Sumerian city-states).²⁵ But we cannot be completely certain this was case: the *LUGAL* of Kiš may have been invited to broker a settlement between the contending parties, and he may have chosen to perform acts of piety beyond the limits of his political control.

Some time later, c.2490 BC, Ur-Nanše founded a new dynasty at Lagaš and employed the title *LUGAL*.²⁶ His successors, however, reverted to using *ENSI*.²⁷ This usage was briefly suspended first by E-anatum (who appears to have claimed the kingship of Kiš c.2450 BC),²⁸ and then again by the reformer *URU-KA-gina*²⁹ (c. 2350 BC), who both abandoned the title of *ENSI* for that of *LUGAL*.³⁰ At this point, the titles of *LUGAL* and *ENSI* were obviously somewhat different in meaning, but there is still no clear implication that one of them was institutionally inferior to the other and implied something less than sovereignty.³¹ We should perhaps seek the differentiation in conformance to tradition and a choice in conceptualizing authority in relation to the state or its patron god.

²⁴ *RIME* 1: 8.1.1 and 8.1.2. See also Jacobsen 1939: 149.

²⁵ Cf. Jacobsen 1970: 129-135, and Postgate 1995: 398 and 400.

²⁶ E.g., *RIME* 1: 9.1.1, etc. He is also called *LUGAL* even in inscriptions of descendants who used the title *ENSI*, e.g., 9.2.1 (of his son A-kurgal) and 9.5.12 (of his great-grandson En-metena); and apparent exception is 9.3.5, where E-anatum calls his grandfather Ur-Nanše *ENSI* of Lagaš.

²⁷ E.g., *RIME* 1: 9.2.1, 9.4.1, 9.5.1, 9.6.1; an apparent exception is 9.3.1, where E-anatum calls his father A-kurgal *LUGAL* of Lagaš.

²⁸ *RIME* 1: 9.3.1 and 9.3.12 have E-anatum as *LUGAL* of Lagaš, although most other inscriptions have him as *ENSI* instead, e.g., 9.3.4-10.

²⁹ The reading of the name is uncertain.

³⁰ E.g., *RIME* 1: 9.9.1. For the rulers of Lagaš and their titles see also Bailkey 1967: 1220-1223; cf. Van De Mieroop (2004): 43.

³¹ On the independent status of early *ENSIs*, see Hallo 1957.

While it is clear that these titles coexisted for a long period of time, the relationship between them did change. This is clearly exemplified in the inscriptions of Mesopotamia's first great "empire"-builder, Sargon (Šarru-kīn) of Akkad (c.2300 BC). According to tradition, Sargon progressed from a gardener's foundling fetched out of the water,³² to cupbearer of the king of Kiš, to king of a new polity, Akkad, and finally to "king of the world." In the process he had won the favor of the gods (and especially that of the goddess Ištar), and survived a nefarious plot to be put to death by order of the very message he was delivering, much like the legendary Greek hero Bellerophontēs.³³ In describing his victory over his rival Lugal-zage-si of Uruk, Sargon boasts of having conquered fifty *ENSIs*; farther in the same text he declares that it was citizens of Akkad, who now ruled as *ENSIs* throughout the land.³⁴ The text names both Sargon and Lugal-zage-si as *LUGALS*; the *ENSIs* in both cases are clearly their respective subordinates.³⁵ It is thus possible to identify the *LUGAL* as "king" and the *ENSI* as "governor," and to posit the subordination of the latter to the former.³⁶ It should be stressed that this process was probably situational. A city-state's defeated *LUGAL* (or *EN*) could remain in charge as *ENSI* for his conqueror.³⁷ Since the *Sumerian King List* was composed after the establishment of the *LUGAL* as the sovereign monarch, it could fuse or ignore these varying types of monarchy under the triumphant model of kingship (*NAM-LUGAL*) and ascribe its origins to the pristine story of divine grace.

³² The obvious parallel is the story of Moses in the Old Testament, Exodus 2.3-10.

³³ In Cooper and Heimpel 1983: 68, 77. For Bellerophontēs see *Iliad* 6.155-202 and Apollodōros 2.3. Cf. West 1997: 366.

³⁴ *RIME* 2: 1.1.2 82-91.

³⁵ In another inscription, *RIME* 2: 1.1.6, Lugal-zage-si is called "EN of Uruk and *LUGAL* of Ur," but that does not alter his sovereign status. Lugal-zage-si's own inscriptions have "*LUGAL* of Uruk," e.g. *RIME* 1: 14.20.1.

³⁶ Van De Mieroop 2004: 60.

³⁷ Thus *URU-KA-gina*'s successors at Lagaš, including the famous Gudea, reverted to the title *ENSI* as vassals of the subsequent dynasties of Akkad, Gutium, Uruk, and Ur.

Although by this point Sumerian *LUGAL* (Akkadian *šarru*) had come to designate what we would generally call “king,” and Sumerian *ENSI* (Akkadian *išši’akku*) denoted dependent princely governors,³⁸ the development of the royal titles did not end with this differentiation between sovereign and subordinate rulers. Not all kings were created equal, and Sargon was determined to signal his greater kingship with a more elaborate titulary. Apart from epithets specifying divine favor and legitimizing Sargon as a proper ruler appointed by the gods,³⁹ he now called himself not only “king of Akkad,” but also “king of the world” and “king of the land.”⁴⁰ Sargon’s sons preferred “king of the world,”⁴¹ but his grandson Narām-Sîn (c.2250 BC) introduced a new title also conveying universal dominion: “king of the four quarters.”⁴²

All of these new titles would continue in at least intermittent use for some twenty centuries after the final collapse of the Akkadian Dynasty in obscure circumstances c.2130 BC. In good Sargonic fashion Utu-ḫeḡal of Uruk (c.2113 BC), who replaced the short-lived Gutian hegemony over Mesopotamia with his own, called himself not only “king of Uruk,” but also “king of the four quarters.”⁴³ When Ur-Nammu (2113–2095 BC),⁴⁴ founder of the Third Dynasty of Ur, built up the

³⁸ Cf. Hallo 1957: 45. This seems to have been generally the case, with the notable exception of Ebla in north Syria, where the king was called *EN* (standing for West Semitic *mlk*), while the title *LUGAL* was employed for his subordinates: see Archi 1987, Astour 1992, Hallo 1992, and Stieglitz 2002.

³⁹ Sargon (*Šarru-kīn*, which means “rightful king”) interspersed his royal title with references to his relationship to major gods, e.g., “bailiff of the goddess Ištar,” “anointed priest of the god Anu,” “governor (*ENSI*) of the god Enlil”; it was the latter, the king of the gods, who “gave” Sargon “no rival” and control from the Upper Sea (the Mediterranean) to the Lower Sea (the Persian Gulf): *RIME* 2: 1.1.2 71-76.

⁴⁰ E.g., *RIME* 2: 1.1.2: Sum. *LUGAL AG-GA-DE.KI*, Akk. *šar Akkadī* (king of Akkad); Sum. *LUGAL KIŠ*, Akk. *šar kiššati* (king of the world); Sum. *LUGAL KALAM-MA*, Akk. *šar māti* (king of the land). This last title is also attested for Sargon’s rival and predecessor Lugal-zage-si of Uruk, e.g. *RIME* 1: 14.20.1; cf. Postgate 1995: 400.

⁴¹ *RIME* 2: 1.2.1-20 (for Rīmuš) and 1.3.1-7 and 1.3.2001-2002 (for Man-ištūšu).

⁴² E.g., *RIME* 2: 1.4.1: *šar kibratim arba'im*.

⁴³ *RIME* 2: 13.6.1-6, 13.6.2001 and 13.6.2002. In fact, whereas all of Utu-ḫeḡal’s inscriptions use the title “king of the four quarters,” only some use “king of Uruk.” Note also the disappearance of the traditional Urukian title *EN* from the royal titles of this king and his predecessors: *LUGAL-UNU.KI-GA* (also *RIME* 2: 13.1.1 and 13.2.2001).

next significant “empire” in the Near East, he signaled his control of Akkad in the north by adding a new title, “king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad,”⁴⁵ to his own title “king of Ur.” His son and heir Šulgi (2095–2047 BC) continued this usage, but sometimes substituted “king of the four quarters” for it.⁴⁶ Šulgi’s successors actually preferred this last title, all but abandoning the more modest “king of Sumer and Akkad.”⁴⁷

While all this suggests a certain gradual evolution in usage, we should not underestimate the effect of personal choice on the part of the monarch or his administrators and scribes. Evidence to this effect can be discerned in the vacillations found in the royal titulary of the rulers of succeeding dynasties. After the collapse of the Third Dynasty of Ur under the simultaneous pressure of Amorite settlement from the west and Elamite attack from the east in 2004 BC, the main claimants to its legacy were the First Dynasty of Isin (2018–1794 BC) and then the Amorite rulers of Larsa (2026–1763 BC). Both lines of monarchs built upon the titulary of their predecessors at Ur.

The basic title of the kings of Larsa (“provider/farmer of Ur, king of Larsa, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad”) had become established by 1850 BC. However, a significant variation, the formula “provider of Nippur, *ENSI* of Ur, Larsa, Lagaš, and the land of Kutalla,” attested in the reign of Warad-Sîn (1835–1823 BC) is edifying in explaining the seemingly inconsistent use of both *LUGAL*

⁴⁴ These dates are based on the so-called Mesopotamian “Middle Chronology,” which is generally employed as the standard in Assyriological publications. A more accurate estimate is probably that of de Jong and Foertmeyer 2010, which would place the reign of Hammu-rāpi of Babylon, for example, in 1785–1742 BC, 8 years later than the “Middle Chronology” (1793–1750 BC). The internal chronology of the Third Dynasty of Ur, the First Dynasty of Isin, the Dynasty of Larsa, and the First Dynasty of Babylon is otherwise practically secure.

⁴⁵ E.g., *RIME* 3/2: 1.1.12: Sum. *LUGAL-KI.EN.GI-KI-URI.KE*, Akk. *šar māt Šumeri u Akkadī*. This inscription is unusual in also giving him the obsolete title “*EN* of Uruk.”

⁴⁶ E.g., *RIME* 3/2: 1.2.23.

⁴⁷ E.g., *RIME* 3/2: 1.3.1 (for Amar-Sîn), 1.4.1 (for Šū-Sîn), and 1.5.1 (for Ibbi-Sîn); for a rare addition of “king of the land of Sumer and Akkad,” see 1.4.33 (for Šū-Sîn).

and *ENSI* for the same monarch.⁴⁸ Elsewhere Warad-Sîn used perfectly conventional titles for a ruler of Larsa in his times.⁴⁹ Since the attestations of this formula come from Ur and are all found in the context of dedication to local gods (Nanna, Ningal, and Ninisina), it is possible to conclude that the choice of the title *ENSI* here reflects the ruler’s authority on behalf of the god in question. Such a conclusion is supported by another inscription of Warad-Sîn, in which the king appears as “*ENSI* of the god Utu,” without any other titles.⁵⁰ This matches contemporary practice in Assyria, where the monarch was called *išši’ak Aššur*, which is Akkadian for “*ENSI* of the god Aššur.”⁵¹ Some early Assyrian inscriptions clarify the matter even further, as they emphatically proclaim that while “Aššur is king, [X] is the *išši’akku* of Aššur.”⁵² In other words, just as the monarch of Assyria described himself as the “governor” (or “vice-regent”) on behalf of the local patron god Aššur, Warad-Sîn was describing himself as the “governor” on behalf of Larsa’s patron god Utu at Larsa, and of patron deities of Ur at Ur.

If this analysis may be applied retrospectively, it would go a long way in explaining the vacillation between *LUGAL* and *ENSI* in pre-Sargonic Lagaš, the independent status of *ENSIs* prior to their Sargonic demotion to the position of governors, and the continued use of the title *ENSI* in specific contexts by even sovereign monarchs later on. The apparent inconsistency was conditioned by place and purpose, and in no way negated the basic differentiation between fully-sovereign (and even suzerain) kings and subordinate governors that had been achieved by the time of Sargon. From its murky plural origins Mesopotamian kingship had achieved a degree of coherence in the Sargonic

⁴⁸ E.g., *RIME* 4: 2.13.1; similarly in 2.12.1 for his predecessor Šilli-Adad (1836–1835 BC).

⁴⁹ E.g., *RIME* 4: 2.13.14, 2.13.18–2.13.20.

⁵⁰ *RIME* 4: 2.13.30.

⁵¹ E.g., *RIMA* 1: a.o.33.1 (*i-ri-šu-um i-ši-a-ak d a-šūr*); in fact, the title was usually spelled with the Sumerian logogram *ENSI*: cf. a.o.33.2 (*i-ri-šum ÉNSI d a-šūr*).

⁵² E.g., *RIMA* 1: a.o.27.1 (*a-šūr.KI LUGAL ši-lu-lu ÉNSI a-šūr.KI*), and a.o.33.1 (*d a-šūr LUGAL i-ri-šu-um PA a-šūr*).

period, which provided a basic model of inspiration for successful or ambitious subsequent dynasties. This can be seen not only in the continued use of Sargonic administrative and titular innovations, but even new formulations (like “king of the land of Sumer and Akkad”) were largely coined in relation to the pattern that had been set before. If the claims of kingship could still be expressed through a number of varying formulae, these were usually conditioned by choice and context rather than by the further evolution of monarchical power. The stated purpose of kingship had not changed either, even if the primarily militaristic prose of Sargonic inscriptions⁵³ clashes with the more pacific tone of the following millennium.⁵⁴ The king had to maintain law and order for the god’s city and its citizens by pious works, infrastructure, legislation, or war.

Egypt and the model of divine kingship

If the concept of hierarchically-ranked monarchy with distinct titles connotating sovereign or subordinate power had originated among the fiercely competitive city states of Ancient Mesopotamia, another important concept that contributed to the notion of sovereignty, divine kingship, can be traced to Ancient Egypt.⁵⁵ The first surviving sources from Egypt present the country and its monarchy as established, unitary, and complete, much like the fully-armed Athena sprung from the head of Zeus.⁵⁶ If the country had been divided into its two traditional components (Upper and Lower Egypt) at the beginning, the details of any such initial state of disunity are now practically lost

⁵³ E.g., *RIME* 2: 1.1.15 24-29: “the god Enlil instructed him and he (Šarru-kīn) showed mercy to no one.”

⁵⁴ E.g., *RIME* 4: 1.4.5: “Išme-Dagān ... cancelled the tribute of Nippur, the city beloved of the god Enlil, (and) relieved its men from military service.”

⁵⁵ In general, on divin and sacred kingship, see Dux 2005.

⁵⁶ Apollodōros 1.3.6. Gardiner 1961 is still an excellent introduction to ancient Egyptian history, as is Baines and Málek 2000. On Egyptian kingship see also Leprohon 1995.

to the sands of time.⁵⁷ Because of this, and because of Egypt’s long period of relative isolation from direct contact with other strong independent polities, Egyptian royal titles show little evidence of evolution to accommodate changes in the environment of power. In its final form, the royal titulary came to be composed of five conventional elements.⁵⁸ Consider the titles of Dḥutmose I (1494–1482 BC) below:

1. *Horus*: Mighty bull beloved of Māʿat⁵⁹
2. *(He of the) Two Ladies*: Shining with the serpent diadem, great in strength⁶⁰
3. *Golden Falcon*: Beautiful in years, who makes hearts live⁶¹
4. *(He of the) Sedge and the Bee*: ʿAḥeperkarēʿ, chosen of Amūn⁶²
5. *Son of Rēʿ of His Body*: Dḥutmose, rising beautifully⁶³

The first of these elements, identifying the ruler as the incarnation or manifestation of the god Horus (*ḥrw*), was the earliest to be adopted as an official name, already attested in the first surviving records from c.2900 BC. The second element, which evokes the monarch’s control over both components of Egypt, appears to have been almost as old, perhaps as old as the conceptual

⁵⁷ An impressive piece of royal propaganda, the so-called “palette” of the early king Naʿrmer (c.2900 BC), does seem to depict the southern king’s conquest of foreign (?) populations in the north, and the completion or the commemoration of Egypt’s unification. See the illustration and discussion in Gardiner 1961: 403-404 and plates 21 and 22.

⁵⁸ For a more detailed treatment of the fivefold titulary, see *HEK*: 1-33; see also Gardiner 1961: 50-52, Baines and Málek 2000: 36, and Allen 2000: 64-66.

⁵⁹ *ḥrw k3-nḥt-mrj-m3ʿt*: see *ARE*: no. 87 and 88 and *HEK*: 132-133. The god Horus, a divine paragon of kingship, succeeded and avenged his father Osiris; the goddess Māʿat is the personification of truth, justice, and order.

⁶⁰ *nbtj ḥʿ-m-nsrt ʿ3-phḥtj*: see *ARE*: no. 87 and *HEK*: 132-133. The Two Ladies are the vulture (*nḥbjt*) and cobra (*w3dt*) patron goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt.

⁶¹ *bjk-nbw nfr-rmpwt sʿnḥ-jbw*: see *ARE*: no. 87 and *HEK*: 134-135. The Golden Falcon (or Horus) refers to the solar aspect of the god.

⁶² *nj-swt-bjt ʿ3-ḥpr-k3-rʿ stp-n-jmn*: see *ARE*: no. 88 and *HEK*: 134-135. The sedge and the bee symbolize Upper and Lower Egypt, and the import of the title is usually rendered as “King of Upper and Lower Egypt.” The element *nj-swt* (or *nswt*) by itself became a simpler designation for the Egyptian monarch. The throne name ʿAḥeperkarēʿ translates as “Great is the manifestation of the spirit (*k3*) of Rēʿ.” By this period the god Amūn had been associated with Rēʿ and assumed the leading place among the gods.

⁶³ *s3 rʿ n ḥt.f dḥwtj-msj ḥʿ-mj-rʿ*: see *ARE*: no. 87 and *HEK*: 134-135. The god Rēʿ is the basic personification of the sun and was considered the chief god (alongside others associated with him) since the Fourth Dynasty. The personal name Dḥutmose (usually Latinized as “Thutmose” or the like) translates as “Born of Thōth.” The moon-god Thōth seems to have been a favorite patron for the early Eighteenth Dynasty. The epithet “rising beautifully” is a further allusion to the identification of the king with the sun-god (the Golden Horus and Rēʿ).

duality of the kingship. It is sporadically attested in the first three dynasties, becoming a regular feature by the Fourth Dynasty (c.2500 BC). The same can be said of the third element, which seems to assert the king's connection with the sun-god.⁶⁴

The fourth element, also called the throne name or *praenomen*, explained the relationship between the king and the sun-god Rē^c, with whose name the *praenomen* was almost invariably compounded. This title emerged as such in the Fifth Dynasty (c.2400 BC), shortly after the advance of Rē^c to a place of primacy among the gods.⁶⁵ The pre-existing title “(He of the) Sedge and the Bee” (*nj-swt-bjt*) became the standard heading for the *praenomen*, asserting that the monarch governed both Upper and Lower Egypt. The fifth and last element, the personal name or *nomen*, had of course always existed. However, it was only from c.2100 BC that the phrase “son of Rē^c” (*s3 r^c*) was consistently prefixed to the *nomen*, once again emphasizing the king's relationship to the sun-god.⁶⁶ After c.1500 BC permanent or variable epithets like “chosen of Rē^c” (*stp-n-r^c*) and “beloved of Amūn” (*mrj-jmn*) were appended to both the *praenomen* and the *nomen*.

In the earliest times the Horus name was the chief title of the king, and it was set apart from the others by being inscribed within an elaborate rectangular enclosure (*srh*), patterned to resemble a

⁶⁴ Perhaps more specifically Horus as a sun-god, but this is uncertain. The multiple sources of Egyptian religion created an elaborate and imperfect syncretism that bewildered later Greek observers. A version of Horus had been associated with the sun from early on, as “Horus of the Horizon” (*hrw-3htj*) or “Horus in the Horizon” (*hrw-m-3ht*). Later it was Rē^c that became the basic sun-god, and gradually the chief god of Egypt; in the process he partly displaced and partly fused with Horus, leading to such compound forms as “Rē^c-Horus of the Horizon” (*r^c-hrw-3htj*). After c.1500 BC, when the more abstract and transcendental Theban creator god Amūn became the chief god, he similarly partly displaced and partly fused with Rē^c, leading to such compound forms as “Amūn-Rē^c, king of the gods” (*jmn-r^c nsu-ntrw*). Nor were these the only forms of the solar deity: there were also the scarab god of the rising sun Ḥepri (*hprj*), the kingly creator god of the setting sun Atum (*tmw*), as well as the more abstract solar disk, the Aten (*tn*), who was briefly the focus of the first recorded experiment with monotheism during the reign of Aḥenaten (1351–1335 BC). On these deities, see the convenient discussions in Allen 2000: 43-45, 143-145, 181-183, and 195-198.

⁶⁵ Rē^c partly displaced Horus in importance as reflected in royal names starting in the Fourth Dynasty, including those of Ḥa'frē^c (Khephrēn in Greek) and Menkaurē^c (Mykerinos in Greek).

⁶⁶ Occasional attestations of “son of Rē^c” can be found in the Fourth and Sixth Dynasties, but not yet as an established title. Moreover, Egyptian kings could, and did, claim any appropriate deity as their parent in various contexts.

stylized architectural element of palace architecture. Later the *praenomen* and *nomen* became the most important elements and were each singled out by being inscribed within stylized rings of rope called “cartouches.” Alongside these elements of the formal titulary, additional titles were sometimes used, perhaps in part for stylistic variation. These further titles included: “lord of the two lands” (*nb t3wy*), asserting rule over Upper and Lower Egypt; “lord of risings” (*nb h'w*), identifying the king as the sun; “sovereign” (*jtj*), perhaps stressing a paternalistic aspect of kingship; “ruler” (*h'q3*), possibly as shepherd of the people; and finally “pharaoh” (*pr 3*), which, meaning “great house,” originally designated the palace, then by allusion the government, and finally the king himself.⁶⁷

While the features described above developed over time, none of them betray the readjustment and competitive innovation found in Mesopotamia. What sets Egyptian kingship even farther apart, is the conceptualization of the king not only as the appointee and servant of the gods, but also as a god himself.⁶⁸ To be sure, he was expected to maintain Mā'at (*m3't*), the gods' justice and order, much like his Mesopotamian counterparts, but here a living king was a manifestation of the god Horus; once dead, he became Horus' father and predecessor Osiris, who reigned over the dead. A living king was also the son and heir of the sun-god Rē'; once dead, he merged into the solar disk (the Aten).⁶⁹ Indeed, this way the Egyptian monarch was not only once and future king but also once and future god. One way of looking at the short-lived introduction of a monotheistic worship of the Aten under Aḥenaten (1351–1335 BC) is that this not only allowed the monarch to

⁶⁷ For these additional titles, see *HEK*: 30-32, and Allen 2000: 66.

⁶⁸ Cf. McEwen 1934: 6-7.

⁶⁹ Cf. the *Story of Sinuhe*, in which the spirit of the deceased king Amenemḥet I (c.1940–1910 BC) flies up to heaven and fuses with the Aten (*jtj*): “He flew to heaven and was united with the sun's disk; the flesh of the god was merged in him who made him.” In Gardiner 1916: 168.

monopolize cultic authority, but it also allowed him to re-focus all worship to his father(s) and to his own future self in the Aten.⁷⁰

Far from being merely a manifestation and potential ingredient of other gods, the monarch was deemed a god in and of himself — indeed even a “great god” (*ntr ʿ3*) and a “good/perfect god” (*ntr nfr*).⁷¹ There is of course no shortage of royal propaganda as to the divinity of the Egyptian king. The praises for Raʿmeses II (1279–1213 BC), for example, declare that “there is no god like him,” and call the king a “great god amongst the gods,”⁷² while those for his son Merneptah (1213–1204 BC) refer to “the divine king,” and muse about “how exalted is the king amongst the gods.”⁷³ The all-too-apparent mortality of the king seems to have made little difference to the notion that he was divine; after all, had not Osiris perished, to be avenged and replaced by Horus, before rising again to judge the spirits of the dead?

Temple scenes depict pious kings making offerings not only to the gods, but also to selective lists of worthy predecessors — primarily legitimate monarchs who had ruled all Egypt and provided a suitable model and precedent — in an ostentatious display of ancestor-worship.⁷⁴ But here too Egyptian royalty went beyond a simple reverence for the royal deceased: mummified kings were buried in ostentatious tombs (mastabas, then pyramids, then underground chambers hewn into the living rock) serviced by mortuary temples under the management of generations of priests and

⁷⁰ For these and other implications of the cult of the Aten, see Baines 2001, especially at 292-295.

⁷¹ *HEK*: 29-30. The epithet “perfect god” was frequently used as a substitute for “son of Re” within the royal titulary in some texts, and similarly “lord of risings” could replace “(He of the) Sedge and the Bee.”

⁷² *EHI*: 120-121, 126-127.

⁷³ *EHI*: 180-181, 184-185.

⁷⁴ See for example the so-called Abydos King List, where the names of over seventy deceased kings receive offerings from Sety I (1292–1279 BC) and the future Raʿmeses II: Gardiner 1961: 48-50. The king list excludes kings who ruled only part of Egypt during times of division (the First and Second Intermediate Periods) and, especially the vilified foreign intruders, the Hyksōs.

supported by dependent settlements to house the staff; later royal tombs were hidden away to provide better security for the royal mummies and their treasures,⁷⁵ and the mortuary cult of the kings was re-focused on the now even more impressive mortuary temples, amply endowed with estates dispersed throughout the land.⁷⁶

Mesopotamian monarchs also received sumptuous burials testifying to a belief in an afterlife and providing for the deceased's needs.⁷⁷ Since the bones of their ancestors were revered enough to be carried to safety in the face of enemy invasion on occasion,⁷⁸ the contrast between Mesopotamian and Egyptian kingship is not complete. Yet, if divine kingship became a well-established tradition in Egypt, in Mesopotamia it was at best a rare and passing phenomenon.⁷⁹ Apart from the appearance of several kings imagined as divine by posterity in the *Sumerian King List*, the earliest Mesopotamian monarch to actually claim divine status was Narām-Sîn of Akkad (c.2250 BC).⁸⁰ After suppressing a serious revolt of vassal rulers, he prefixed the determinative designating a god⁸¹ to his own name.⁸² One of his inscription asserts that his subjects had requested this of their patron deities in

⁷⁵ For example, the “Valley of the Kings” and the “Valley of the Queens” in the hills west of Thebes, used for royal and high-priestly burials c.1600–900 BC.

⁷⁶ For example, the mortuary temples of Amenhotpe III (1388–1351 BC), of which today only the “Colossi of Memnon” survive, Raʿmeses II’s “Ramesseum,” and, best preserved of all, its slightly enlarged copy built down the road by Raʿmeses III (1186–1155 BC), all in western Thebes.

⁷⁷ Best known from the tombs of the earliest rulers of Ur, excavated by Sir Leonard Woolley in the 1920s, though few later ones survive, and lack the same ostentation or the macabre provision of companions for the afterlife. On the sacred aspects of Mesopotamian kingship, see Sallaberger 2002 and Dux 2005.

⁷⁸ According to an inscription of the Assyrian king Sin-aḫḫē-erība (Sennacherib, 705–681 BC), his fleeing rival Marduk-apla-iddina II (Merodach-baladan) of Babylon took with him “the gods of his whole land, with the bones of his fathers, (who lived) before (him), (which) he gathered from their coffins” in 703 BC: *ARAB* 2 §345.

⁷⁹ On the relationship between kingship and the divine in the Near East, see McEwen 1934: 7–17, and Hallo 1996: 208.

⁸⁰ See Michalowski 2008: 34.

⁸¹ Read *DINGIR* in Sumerian, *ilu* in Akkadian, the determinative served to clarify the divine nature of its noun.

⁸² E.g., *RIME* 2: 1.4.13.

thanksgiving for the king's defense of his realm.⁸³ Several texts explicitly substitute the designation "god of Akkad" for the king's traditional royal titles.⁸⁴ The same point is conveyed pictorially on the king's "Victory Stele," now on display in the Louvre. Here Narām-Sîn towers over his own troops and slain enemies alike by virtue of both spatial position and size, sports a horned "Viking" helmet (horned headgear was a traditional attribute of the gods in numerous cultures), and is surmounted by a star (the ideogram for a deity).⁸⁵

Narām-Sîn's legacy proved a mixed success. Although his son and heir Šar-kali-šarri (c.2200 BC) was also designated a god in at least some of his inscriptions,⁸⁶ and although he too claimed victories in the face of adversity, the far-flung Akkadian "empire" unraveled quickly. The next Mesopotamian monarch to claim divine honors in his own lifetime was Šulgi (2095–2047 BC), the second king of the Third Dynasty of Ur, in c.2074 BC.⁸⁷ This time the claim to divine status — at least as indicated by the use of the divine determinative prefixed to the king's name — was maintained by the remaining three kings of the dynasty (2047–2004 BC),⁸⁸ and was then taken up by their principal successors, the rulers of the First Dynasty of Isin (2018–1794 BC).⁸⁹ The practice was not confined to the rulers of Isin, but was enthusiastically followed by some rival monarchs as well.⁹⁰

⁸³ *RIME* 2: 1.4.10 20-57.

⁸⁴ *DINGIR a-kà-dè-KI*: e.g., *RIME* 2: 1.4.2007.

⁸⁵ For a convenient and annotated representation of the stele, see Ascalone 2007: 108.

⁸⁶ E.g., *RIME* 2: 1.5.2 and 1.5.2012 (where he is also called "god of Akkad"); see Michalowski 2008: 35.

⁸⁷ E.g., *RIME* 3/2: 1.2.7; see Michalowski 2008: 35-39 for the circumstances of the innovation. A more modest claim to divinity may have been attempted by Gudea, the famous *ENSI* of Lagaš (c.2150 BC), who is called on at least one contemporary monument "the *ENSI*, the god of his city": *RIME* 3/1: 1.7. CylB i 15.

⁸⁸ The divine status of the king is sometimes more explicit, e.g., in *RIME* 3/2: 1.4.12: "Šū-Sîn... his beloved god," and 1.5.2016: "Ibbi-Sîn, god [of his] la[nd]."

⁸⁹ E.g., *RIME* 4: 1.1.2009: "Išbi-Erra, god of his nation." Cf. Michalowski 2008: 34, n. 3. See also Michalowski's commentary on Iddin-Dagān of Isin's role in a ceremony described in a hymn to the goddess Inanna, at 40-41.

⁹⁰ For a convenient list of the Mesopotamian kings who claimed divine status, see Ascalone 2007: 107. For non-Mesopotamian kings who followed this practice, see Michalowski 2008: 39-40.

Among other Mesopotamian monarchs of this period to affix the divine determinative to their names, we should list a king of Assyria,⁹¹ at least four kings of Ešnunna,⁹² and at least two kings of Larsa.⁹³ The last of these, the very long-reigning Rīm-Sîn I (1823–1763 BC), apparently prefixed his name with the divine determinative to celebrate his victory over the rival kingdom of Uruk.⁹⁴

When the famed lawgiver Ḫammu-rāpi, Amorite king of Babylon (1793–1750 BC), conquered all of these kingdoms, allusions to divinity and the determinative for god were attached to his name, too.⁹⁵ However, the rarity of such occurrences suggests that in Ḫammu-rāpi’s case we are dealing with panegyric flourishes rather than consistent royal propaganda. This is probably how we should understand expressions such as “god among kings” (*ilu šarrī*), found in this monarch’s famous law code.⁹⁶ The Mesopotamian experiment with divine kingship had ended, and kings had to be content with being the chosen favorites and chief servants of the gods. Like most of his predecessors, Ḫammu-rāpi advertised the gods’ endorsement of his rule, calling himself, for example:

the one called by the god Anu, who listens to the god Enlil, favorite of the god Šamaš, shepherd beloved by the god Marduk, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the land of

⁹¹ Šarru-kīn I (c.1900 BC): *RIMA* 1: a.o.35.1 and a.o.35.2001.

⁹² Šū-iliya (c.2026 BC): *RIME* 3/2: 3.1.2002 and 3.1.2003. (In an earlier inscription Šū-iliya was still a mere *ENSI* and the title of king was ascribed to Ešnunna’s patron god Tišpak: *RIME* 3/2: 3.1.1.) Šū-iliya’s successors abstained from claiming either the kingship or divine status until the reign of Ipiq-Adad II (c.1850 BC), who once again took up the royal title (even as “king of the world”) and divine status: *RIME* 4: 5.14.2 and 5.14.4. His sons Narām-Sîn (*RIME* 4: 5.15.1) and Dāduša (*RIME* 4: 5.19.2) followed suit, but then the practice lapsed.

⁹³ The first of these was Sūmû-El (1895–1866 BC): *RIME* 4: 2.7.1 and 2.7.2.

⁹⁴ E.g., *RIME* 4: 2.14.10 and 2.14.12. Having already assumed divine status, Rīm-Sîn could not celebrate his even more important victory over Isin in 1794 BC except by naming each of his remaining thirty years on the throne as “Year [x] (after) he seized Isin.”

⁹⁵ E.g., *RIME* 4: 3.6.10: “Ḫammu-rāpi, god of [his] nation.” Klengel 1976: 156, n. 4, cites a reference to Ḫammu-rāpi from 1755 BC, in which his name is preceded by the determinative for “god.” For two possible cases from the reign of Ḫammu-rāpi’s son Samsu-ilūna (1750–1712 BC) see Seux (1981): 171.

⁹⁶ *ANET*: 165. I see this as comparison rather than a real title, like “chief of kings” and “the sun of Babylon.” Cf. Beckman 2002: 40 on another passage, in which Ḫammu-rāpi is explicitly *likened* to the sun-god Šamaš.

Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters... the god Šamaš gave him the land of Sumer and Akkad to rule (and) entrusted their nose-rope in his hands.⁹⁷

Although on the face of it Mesopotamian kingship thus failed to develop a permanent notion that the king was divine, its monarchs did not imagine themselves as basking any less in the favor of the gods than their “divine” Egyptian counterparts. As we have seen above, there is some evidence for the posthumous veneration of Mesopotamian royalty, and indeed several nearby societies that were heavily influenced by Mesopotamian culture exhibited this more explicitly: at Ebla, Ugarit, and in Ḫatti (the kingdom of the Hittites), we find listings of offerings to deceased kings and other royals.⁹⁸ Indeed, the phrase “to become a god” was used as a standard euphemism to designate the death of a king or queen in Ḫatti.⁹⁹ Also among the Hittites, the term conveying the sense of the king’s majesty was nothing less than a Sumero-Akkadian combination standing for “my Sun” (^dUTU-ši, i.e., Šamši).¹⁰⁰

What, then, are we to make of divine kingship? Clearly Egyptian monarchs were more explicit and consistent in claiming to be gods than their Mesopotamian counterparts. Among the latter, only a few very successful kings dared revel in their assumption of divine status, while the remainder do not seem to have gone much beyond affixing the determinative for a god to their names. And even so they constitute a small percentage of all Mesopotamian monarchs, most of whom never presented themselves as gods. However, it is possible that this modular polarity is exaggerated by the perceptions imposed by our own cultural background, in which the divide between

⁹⁷ E.g., *RIME* 4: 3.6.14; the title varied from text to text: for example, in 3.6.3 we read instead “prince, favorite of the god Enlil, shepherd beloved of the goddess Ninlil, reverent one, who heeds the god Šamaš, who pleases the god Marduk, mighty king, king of Babylon.”

⁹⁸ For Ebla see Stieglitz 2002; for Ugarit see Levine and Tarragon 1984; for Ḫatti see Otten 1951, Haas 1995: 2027-2029, and the synoptic tabulation in Kitchen 1962: 52-55; more generally see Hallo 1996: 207-211.

⁹⁹ Haas 1995: 2028, Hallo 1996: 190, 207.

¹⁰⁰ See Beckman 2002, Haas 1995: 2028, and Hallo 1996: 189-190. Beckman lists several Mesopotamian examples of similar usage (including Rim-Sin I of Larsa, Zimri-Lim of Mari, and Ḫammu-rāpi of Babylon) at 38-39. Another possibly divine epithet might be “my star,” e.g., in a letter from Inibšina to her cousin (?) Zimri-Lim: *ANEHST*: no. 71.

human and divine (whether perceived as real or imagined) is perceived as definite. When kings dared to call themselves gods, they must have been reaching for an objective that could not have been as obviously impossible as it seems to us today; likewise, the gods of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and even Greece were in a sense less super-human than the more abstract deity of our Judeo-Christian precedents, although a comparison with the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus would be edifying. Consider, for example, the all-too-human frailty of Osiris, Seth, and Horus in Egyptian myths, of Ištar and Dumuzi in Mesopotamian legends, and of Arēs and Aphroditē in the *Iliad*.¹⁰¹

Nor were the divine kings of Egypt any less the servants of the gods than their Mesopotamian colleagues. Indeed, in the eyes of later Greeks at least, Egyptian monarchs were completely bound by the force of religion, custom, and law.¹⁰² Although we should not consider divine grace alone as indicative of divine kingship, it is clear that the two models suggested above are not, in fact, so dissimilar. Whether a king called himself a god or merely asserted divine favor as the legitimation for his authority, the result was essentially the same: in both cases the monarchy was rendered sacred because the gods endowed it with legitimacy and purpose alike. Moreover, in any given society, a divine monarch or a monarch by divine grace alike made a strong implicit or explicit case for supreme power within and sovereignty without.

Kings and Diplomacy in the Ancient Near East

In the discussion above we have witnessed the evolution of royal titles through internal development (as in Egypt) or in relation to the ebb and flow of a state's power among other polities (as in Mesopotamia). But in neither case have we encountered a direct account of interaction

¹⁰¹ For the latter pair, see *Iliad* 5.330-415.

¹⁰² Diodōros 1.70-71, who explains the Egyptians' devotion to their monarchs with the latter's resignation to acting in accordance with these expectations.

between independent polities that would at least potentially compete for status with each other without a rapid and decisive outcome. This type of evidence becomes available on three general occasions in Ancient Near Eastern history, as reflected in the accumulation of diplomatic texts most notably at Mari¹⁰³ on the middle Euphrates (from c.1800–1760 BC), at Amarna¹⁰⁴ in Egypt (from c.1355–1335 BC), and at Boğazköy¹⁰⁵ in Anatolia (from c.1350–1200 BC). In these documents we discover the existence of a system of states participating in complex international relations. In the 1700s BC this system (as documented at Mari) is confined to the Fertile Crescent, extending from Elam in the east to northern Syria in the west. In the 1300s and 1200s BC, the system (as documented at Amarna and Boğazköy) has expanded to include not only the Fertile Crescent, but also Egypt, Anatolia, and the petty polities of Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine in between.

It is in these texts that we first find clear responses to external assertions of royal power. Let us consider first the documents from the 1700s BC. As we have seen above, after the fall of Ur in 2004 BC, Mesopotamia was divided among several competing regional states. These included Ur's self-declared heir Isin, but also the ambitious Amorite kingdoms of Larsa in the south, Babylon in Akkad, and Ešnunna in the east, Mari on the middle Euphrates, as well as Assyria on the middle Tigris. Beyond Mesopotamia proper lay the north-Syrian states of Karkamiš, Yamḥad (Aleppo) and Qaṭna in the west, and the Elamite kingdom in the east. In a letter to his master Zimrī-Līm of Mari (c.1776–1761 BC), a diplomatic agent states:

No king is truly powerful on his own. Ten to fifteen kings follow Ḫammu-rāpi of Babylon, Rīm-Sîn of Larsa, Ibāl-pî-El of Ešnunna, or Amut-pî-El of Qaṭna, and twenty kings follow Yarīm-Līm of Yamḥad.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Modern Tall al-Ḥarīrī in Syria.

¹⁰⁴ Al-ʿAmārnah, ancient Aḫetaten (“horizon of the Aten”), briefly the capital of Egypt in c.1345–1335 BC.

¹⁰⁵ Modern Boğazkale in Turkey, the ancient Hittite capital Ḫattuša.

¹⁰⁶ Adapted from Van De Mieroop 2005: 10. Cf. *ANET*: 628.

This state of affairs was constantly changing with the Protean policies of ambitious kings and power-hungry adventurers. In the period illuminated by the Mari archive, an Amorite chief who had taken over Assyria, Šamši-Adad I (c.1814–1781 BC), subjugated northern Mesopotamia and installed his sons as vassal kings in Ekallatum on the Tigris and Mari on the Euphrates. On his death, his sons were unable to hold his “kingdom of Upper Mesopotamia” together, and indeed the aforementioned Zimrī-Līm, a member of Mari’s traditional dynasty, recovered his patrimony. But this is not to say that any measure of stability returned to Mesopotamian international relations. We need only summarize the developments: Mari and Elam allied against Ešnunna (1766 BC); Elam tried to play off Babylon and Larsa (which had swallowed up Uruk and Isin) against each other without success; Elam took Ešnunna, only to be dislodged from it by an alliance of Babylon and Mari (1764 BC); the latter pair turned on Larsa, which had remained friendly but neutral during their war against Elam; Babylon conquered Larsa (1763 BC); when Mari and Ešnunna allied against Babylon, it conquered Ešnunna (1762 BC) and then Mari (1761 BC), with which the archives come to an end.¹⁰⁷

The developments summarized above left Ḫammu-rāpi of Babylon (1793–1745 BC) as the most powerful monarch of the area and established the pattern of Babylon dominating southern and central Mesopotamia (Sumer and Akkad). In typical fashion, the victor advertised his success by taking on grandiloquent titles such as “king of Babylon, king of all the Amorite land, king of the land of Sumer and Akkad, who makes the four quarters be at peace,”¹⁰⁸ and asserted that it was the

¹⁰⁷ This summary of events is based on Van De Mieroop 2005: 15-78.

¹⁰⁸ E.g., *RIME* 4: 3.6.9, with some variations in other inscriptions, including the more traditional “king of the four quarters” (e.g., *RIME* 4: 3.6.12).

supreme gods who had given him control over his far-flung kingdom.¹⁰⁹ But Ḥammu-rāpi did not navigate the shark-infested waters of Mesopotamian power politics merely with a throwing-spear and rudder provided by the gods; he actively engaged in a complicated diplomatic game that allowed the advantageous shifts of alliances and gave him the opportunity to pick off his enemies one at a time. It is in this context that we encounter abundant indicators for the ranking of kings.

The most telling indicator for ranking kings in the international relations of this period is the use of kinship terms to describe the political relationship between them.¹¹⁰ Some of these are attested in direct address within royal letters, while others are referenced in the reports of diplomats. Before Ešnunna's collapse, its king had hoped to reassert some alleged overlordship over Mari, calling himself Zimrī-Līm's "father" and promising support.¹¹¹ Another monarch who considered Zimrī-Līm his "son" was his actual father-in-law, Yarīm-Līm, the king of Yamḥad.¹¹² Zimrī-Līm himself was recognized as "father" by assemblies of pettier rulers, who declared that for them there was no other king.¹¹³ On the other end of the Fertile Crescent, the ruler (*sukkal*) of Elam had claimed some sort of greater authority over his real or potential Mesopotamian allies before his defeat by Babylon and Mari: for the time being they referred to him as a "great king" and addressed him as "father."¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ The gods Anu and Enlil, in *RIME* 4: 3.6.7. While royal humility in crediting the gods for his successes is a recurrent theme, the selection of gods to credit was based on the context. Elsewhere we find credit given to just Enlil, the king of the gods (*RIME* 4: 3.6.3), or to the sun-god Šamaš (*RIME* 4: 3.6.14), or even to the love-goddess Ištar (*RIME* 4: 3.6.16) in inscriptions commemorating royal dedications to their respective cults.

¹¹⁰ In general, see Beckman 2003 and Podany 2010.

¹¹¹ The letter opens with "To Zimrī-Līm say, thus speaks your father Ibāl-pî-El." In Van De Mieroop 2005: 43.

¹¹² *LKM* 26 22, where Yarīm-Līm asks an official of Zimrī-Līm "are the servants of my son not my servants?"

¹¹³ *LKM* 26 347 and 26 404. In 27 162 an official reported to Zimrī-Līm that the same Atamrum who referred to Zimrī-Līm as father in 26 404, was confused whether to address him as "Your servant Atamrum" or "Your son Atamrum." On the variable definition of a king in relation to his superiors, equals, and inferiors, cf. Podany 2010: 70.

¹¹⁴ Van De Mieroop 2004: 95; cf. the promise of Zimrī-Līm's agent at Babylon to approach the representatives of the ruler of Elam and to assure them that his lord "has given a complete report to the *sukkal* of Elam, his father, and he has spoken frankly with the *sukkal* of Elam, his father": in Van De Mieroop 2005: 19. For this, and for the somewhat unusual

If the father/son rhetorical device implied a power relationship of superior and inferior, as natural in a patriarchal society, equality was expressed through the paradigm of brotherhood.¹¹⁵ Thus, the petty kings who had declared Zimrī-Līm their “lord, father, and elder brother,” swore mutual cooperation with each other in an elaborate ceremonial, where, among other things, “brother made brother declare a sacred oath,” and “brother brought a gift to brother.”¹¹⁶ At this point in time even Ḥammu-rāpi recognized some of “the kings, our brothers” as his equals,¹¹⁷ and the officials of Zimrī-Līm referred to Ḥammu-rāpi as their master’s “brother.”¹¹⁸ Zimrī-Līm addressed the king of Qaṭna as brother, and was himself addressed as “brother” by the king of Andarig.¹¹⁹ Some years earlier, the previous king of Qaṭna had similarly addressed the king of Assyria as his “brother.”¹²⁰

But while the spirit of brotherhood evoked mutual recognition, peaceful intentions, and equality, it was at times a very contentious issue. Ḥammu-rāpi expected his “sons,” underling kings, to treat his “brothers,” equal kings, as their “fathers.” When Išme-Dagān I of Assyria protested against writing to Zimrī-Līm of Mari as the latter’s “son,” Ḥammu-rāpi was provoked into a public outburst in which he declared to Išme-Dagān’s envoys: “To the kings who write to me as sons, you have to write as brothers. To Zimrī-Līm, who writes to me as a brother, you have to write as his

adaptation of the Mesopotamian titles *sukkalmaḥ* and *sukkal* to designate members of the ruling triumvirate in Elam, see Potts 1999: 160-163, 166-171.

¹¹⁵ This concept is attested earlier than actual specific cases of monarchs calling each other brothers. For example see the “brotherhood” (*NAM-ŠEŠ*) cited in a treaty between Lugal-kiḡine-dudu of Uruk and En-metena of Lagaš, *RIME* 1: 9.5.3, and Podany 2010: 33.

¹¹⁶ *LKM* 26 404. In this text Atamrum of Allaḥad and Andarig declares that “besides Zimrī-Līm, our father, our elder brother, and our guide, there is no other king,” while another ruler prefaces the clause for mutual cooperation with “until our father Zimrī-Līm comes up.”

¹¹⁷ *LKM* 26 468.

¹¹⁸ *LKM* 26 40 and other letters in Van De Mieroop 2005: 73.

¹¹⁹ *LKM* 26 25 (for Amut-pî-El of Qaṭna); *ANEHST*: no. 69 (for Qarnī-Lim of Andarig).

¹²⁰ *ANET*: 628 (from Išḫi-Addu of Qaṭna to Išme-Dagān I of Assyria).

son.”¹²¹ Nor were the symbolic family relations considered irrevocable. Zimrī-Līm’s agent at Babylon wrote back to his master, analyzing Išme-Dagān’s subservience to Ḫammu-rāpi, and recalling how, many years earlier, Išme-Dagān’s father Šamši-Adad had started out as a “servant” of the king of Ešnunna, but later claimed equal status and the rank of “brother.”¹²²

The mutable nature of these kinship terms is revealed even more clearly by the relationship between Zimrī-Līm and the kings of Yamḥad. As we have seen, he called his father-in-law and protector, Yarīm-Līm, “father.” But when Yarīm-Līm died, his son and successor in Yamḥad addressed his brother-in-law Zimrī-Līm as “father.”¹²³ This development suggests that, whatever the reason for Zimrī-Līm’s inferiority vis-à-vis Yarīm-Līm in the past, now Yarīm-Līm’s son was in some sense an inferior of Zimrī-Līm. If the kinship terminology was predicated on Mari being a dependency of Yamḥad, we should expect Zimrī-Līm to be the “son” of Yamḥad’s new king; if, on the other hand, the terminology was based on the passage of generations, then the new king of Yamḥad (Yarīm-Līm’s real son) should have addressed Zimrī-Līm (Yarīm-Līm’s titular son) as “brother.” But since neither of these is the case, we are left to conclude that in this case the kinship terminology had to do with seniority in kingship: Yarīm-Līm had become king of Yamḥad before Zimrī-Līm became king of Mari, and Yarīm-Līm’s son had succeeded to Yamḥad only later.¹²⁴

A similar flexibility in the kinship metaphors for power relations in this period can be discerned in Zimrī-Līm’s dealings with Ḫammu-rāpi of Babylon. As we have seen, they normally

¹²¹ In Van De Mieroop 2005: 59-60.

¹²² In Van De Mieroop 2005: 42.

¹²³ Sasson 1998: 462.

¹²⁴ This leads Podany 2010: 70 to generalize that the variant kingship designators used in diplomacy were predicated in seniority in kingship, but the evidence seems too limited to be certain of the universal application of this conclusion. Perhaps a safer assumption would be to note that a king’s son would normally address a foreign king as his “father” (as attested in numerous later diplomatic texts), and that this unupdated usage may reflect the new king of Yamḥad’s address to Zimrī-Līm.

addressed each other as “brother.” However, there is evidence that on at least one occasion Zimrī-Līm was advised by his subordinates to address his “brother” Ḫammu-rāpi as “father” instead, in order to gain his urgently needed support. We are told that he did so, but that he later resumed writing to the king of Babylon as a “brother.”¹²⁵ Here the basic paradigm was altered — temporarily — to meet a particular emergency. Like the previous example, it is probably safe to regard such cases as aberrations in the general pattern of kinship terms used to express power relations.

Indeed, brotherhood alone was no guarantee of peace or equality. We find an earlier reflection of the kinship terminology for power relationships in the Sumerian epics *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta* and *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana*. These texts treat the same subject, namely the assertion of the power of Enmerkar, king of Uruk, against Ensuḫgirana, the ruler of distant Aratta. Whether Enmerkar, his rival, and Aratta are mythical or historical need not detain us here.¹²⁶ But part of the diplomatic exchange accompanying this confrontation seems plausible enough. In his missives to Ensuḫgirana, Enmerkar calls himself Ensuḫgirana’s “father.”¹²⁷ In the end Ensuḫgirana was forced to admit that Enmerkar was “the great lord” (*EN GAL-BI*), that he himself ranked second to him, and that between the two of them, Enmerkar was “the older brother” (*ŠEŠ-GAL*).¹²⁸ The resolution reads like a concession or compromise, but not without a certain air of defiance. After all, the lord of Aratta did not address Enmerkar as “father” and “master” as the other had hoped.

The pressure inherent in maintaining or upgrading power relations expressed in kinship terms transferred over to other aspects of diplomatic exchange. A constant concern of the rulers engaged in

¹²⁵ Sasson 1998: 462.

¹²⁶ If Enmerkar is indeed historical, he would have reigned c.2700 BC.

¹²⁷ *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*: lines 378-379 and 515-517.

¹²⁸ *Enmerkar and Ensuḫgirana*: lines 277-279.

diplomacy was the ceremonial exchange of appropriate gifts. In the aforementioned letter of the king of Qaṭna to the king of Assyria, we find the former complaining that the twenty minas of tin that he received from the latter after sending him two fine horses were an unfitting and unequal gift.¹²⁹ Such gifts were not only difficult to estimate and repay appropriately, but sometimes proved exceedingly onerous. In one touching example, we find a vassal of Zimrī-Līm of Mari asking his overlord to send him no further presents as he did not have the means of reciprocating with appropriate gifts. Indeed, his last attempt at sending whatever silver he could spare to Mari had been refused by Zimrī-Līm's officials as being too little.¹³⁰

Another sensitive point in diplomacy was the very reception of envoys. On the whole, it was favorable, and envoys were treated well. But sometimes they were placed in difficult situations, caught as they were between the interests of their master and the reaction of their host — as when they provoked the public outburst of Ḥammu-rāpi at Iṣme-Dagān of Assyria mentioned above. Another scene at Ḥammu-rāpi's palace, this time involving the envoys of Zimrī-Līm of Mari, deserves our attention as it is suggestively similar to a diplomatic scuffle at Constantinople some 2,700 years later.¹³¹ On one occasion an embassy from Mari had to share Ḥammu-rāpi's court with an embassy from Yamḥad. At this point all three kingdoms involved were allied to each other, and the emissaries were received cordially. However, whereas all the emissaries from Yamḥad received ceremonial robes from Ḥammu-rāpi, this mark of honor was extended only to the top three diplomats from Mari to the great annoyance of the remainder. The insulted envoys protested that they were being treated as criminals and not as loyal servants of their master and stormed out of the palace in a huff. Although

¹²⁹ *ANET*: 628. Cf. Podany 2010: 76-79.

¹³⁰ Podany 2010: 76.

¹³¹ Liutprand, *Legatio* § 19-20.

Ḫammu-rāpi eventually sent them the robes that had provoked this diplomatic scuffle, he also expressed his annoyance with their demand and warned that he would not be placed in the same situation again.¹³²

Changing kings, enduring patterns

The wealth of diplomatic texts from the 1700s BC reveals a general pattern of international diplomatic relations, in which power relationships were explicitly defined with language mimicking the ties of kinship within a biological family. The father-son bond, in particular, came to represent authority, obligation, and subordination reflecting those in a patriarchal family unit. In turn, brotherhood represented effective equality between the two parties involved. This language of power was to be taken seriously and meticulously followed, as were the dynamics of interaction between each ruler and the envoys of his counterparts. To be sure, this set of symbolic relationships experienced recurrent modifications, just as actual diplomatic relations altered in the mercurial political landscape. However, much like Mesopotamian culture itself, the basic paradigm would remain substantially unaltered for centuries, indeed millennia to come. Ḫammu-rāpi had defeated his rivals, placed Babylon on the map, and united southern and central Mesopotamia (i.e., Sumer and Akkad) into a single monarchy which we may now call Babylonia. But this achievement was ephemeral. Despite the valiant efforts of Ḫammu-rāpi's son and grandson, the Amorite kingdom of Babylon lost its northern and southern peripheries and was reduced to Akkad. In 1595 BC, seemingly

¹³² Sasson 1984: 116-117. Cf. Podany 2010: 73.

like a thunderbolt fallen from the clear sky, the Hittite king Muršili I sacked Babylon and carried off into captivity the statues of its patron gods.¹³³

When the mist enveloping Mesopotamian history after the fall of Babylon begins to lift with the Amarna and Boğazköy diplomatic archives of the 1300s and 1200s BC, we find an altered world, dominated by a new state system. In Babylon itself we find ensconced the long-lived Kassite dynasty, some of whose kings sported outlandish names compounded with those of eastern gods, but otherwise behaved as pious Mesopotamian rulers, repatriating the exiled gods, refurbishing their sanctuaries, and reassembling the fragments of Ḫammu-rāpi's long-dismembered monarchy. In northern Mesopotamia and Syria thrived the hegemonic Mittanian "empire," whose vassals included the weaker successors of Zimrī-Līm's contemporaries in Syria to the west and also their counterparts in Assyria to the east. Farther east lurked Elam, Mesopotamia's traditional rival, still avidly absorbing Mesopotamian culture and awaiting opportunities for intervention. But although Elam formed part of the international system, it was too far away from Egyptian Amarna and Hittite Boğazköy to be reflected in these sources.

Egypt and the Hittite kingdom (Ḫatti) were the new additions to the international system.¹³⁴ In Anatolia the Hittite kingdom was recovering from a long crisis that had begun soon after Muršili I's return from Babylon and gathering strength to assert itself westward towards the Aegean and eastward into Syria and Mesopotamia. Farther west still, we find the more nebulous powers of Arzawa and "Mycenaean" Greece (Aḫḫiyawa), whose marginal location partly limited their participation in the system. Egypt had survived a period of disunity to engage in imperialistic

¹³³ The evidence putting together the Hittite attack on the last Amorite king of Babylon and the end of the dynasty is circumstantial but likely. The date cited here follows the conventional "Middle Chronology" but might be more accurately placed in 1587 BC, for which see de Jong and Foertmeyer 2010.

¹³⁴ Liverani 2001, especially 135-138 for the language of brotherhood.

expansion into Nubia (Kush) in the south but also into Palestine, Phoenicia, and Syria in the north, in both cases on an unprecedented scale. This new system, more international than its predecessor in its greater extent and diversity of cultures, was fraught with as many frictions and animosities, as that of the 1700s BC.

In many ways the new international system functioned much like its predecessor. Here too there were a few major monarchs, addressing each other as “brother,” while lording over numerous subordinate rulers. Let us briefly consider the Amarna correspondence. When Aḫenaten (1351–1335 BC) espoused the monotheistic worship of the sun-disk (Aten) and transferred the seat of the Egyptian government to Amarna (Aḫetaten, the “Horizon of the Aten”), he not only stored his own foreign correspondence there, but he also brought over a number of letters from the reign of his father, Amenḥotpe III (1388–1351 BC). The letters are all inscribed in cuneiform on clay tablets, the vast majority written in Akkadian.

Here we find that the king of Egypt treated as “brother” with the kings of Babylon (Karduniaš), Mittani, Ḫatti, Arzawa, Cyprus (Alašiya), and Assyria.¹³⁵ This conforms to the pre-established paradigm of “brotherhood” as indicating equality among monarchs. However, the father/son paradigm is now virtually absent, although a Hittite prince did address a letter to the king of Egypt as the latter’s “son.”¹³⁶ The dynamic between sovereign kings and their subordinates is now expressed by the less familial (or familiar) master/servant relationship instead, implying greater

¹³⁵ E.g., *EA* 1 and 2 (from Amenḥotpe III of Egypt to Kadašman-Enlil I of Babylon, and vice-versa); *EA* 17 (from Tušratta of Mittani to Amenḥotpe III of Egypt); *EA* 41 (from Šuppiluliuma I of Ḫatti to a king of Egypt); *EA* 31 (from Amenḥotpe III of Egypt to Tarḫundaradu of Arzawa); *EA* 33 (from an unnamed king of Alašiya to an unnamed king of Egypt); *EA* 16 (from Aššur-uballiṭ I of Assyria to an Egyptian king whose name is broken).

¹³⁶ *EA* 44: “Say to the lord, the king of Egypt, my father: Thus Zi[t]a, the king’s son, your son.” There was, however, one unrelated subordinate of the Egyptian king, who was called the king’s “son” consistently, and that was the viceroy of Nubia, who bore the title “king’s son of Kush” (*s3 nsw n k3š*).

distance in both rank and intimacy, and thus a greater degree of subservience on the part of the inferior party.¹³⁷ Thus, vassal princes write to the king of Egypt as “to the Sun, the king, my lord,” and express their loyalty by professing to “fall at the feet of the king, my lord, seven times and seven times, here and now, both on the stomach and on the back.”¹³⁸

Such language, which conjures up the image of a loyal hound rolling over, stands in stark contrast to the correspondence between equals or even symbolic kinsmen of unequal rank. One possible explanation for the excessive humility in such missives may be an attempt to extol the status of the Egyptian king, who was after all relatively unused to sharing his royal designation with others, much less with his own vassals, who were invariably termed “king” (*šarru*) in the Akkadian diplomatic terminology of the time.¹³⁹ Consider the protests of loyalty by Akizzi of Qatna, which may not have been received with unmixed pleasure at the Egyptian court, given that pharaoh, albeit loved, honored, and obeyed, was still one king among many kings (*šarrāni*):

My lord, just as I love the king, my lord, so too the king of Nuḥašše, the king of Nii, the king of Zinzar, and the king of Tunanab; all of these kings are my lord’s servants.¹⁴⁰

To remedy this potential confusion or irritation, the sovereign kings of this period began to employ the title “great king” (*šarru rabû*) in an increasingly consistent manner. The title was not new, but it does not seem to have been used systematically in the past. Something conceptually similar to it was attested for Sargon’s predecessor Lugal-zage-si of Uruk in the 2300s BC, but subsequently seems to have lost ground to “king of the world” and “king of the four quarters,” titles

¹³⁷ Consider *EA* 30, Tušratta of Mittani’s letter “to the kings of Canaan, servants of my brother... the king of Egypt, my brother.”

¹³⁸ *EA* 51 (from Addu-nirāri of Nuḥašše, for the former) and *EA* 64 (from ‘Abdi-Ašarti of Qiltu, for the latter).

¹³⁹ Cf. the observations of Meier 2000: 166-167.

¹⁴⁰ *EA* 53.

conveying similar or even greater notions of superior dominion.¹⁴¹ In the Mari archives from the 1700s BC, the title “great king” had been employed to designate Šamši-Adad I, apparently to distinguish him from his sons, who ruled as vassal kings at Mari and Ekallatum.¹⁴² The systematic use of “great king” seems to have developed in Hittite Anatolia and north Syria in the 1600s BC, sometime before the reappearance of the significant diplomatic archives.¹⁴³ In the Amarna letters this usage is already an established fact, although it is sometimes omitted, perhaps through oversight.¹⁴⁴ Sometimes, especially in letters sent by vassal rulers, the title is amplified. Consider, for example, a letter from Rib-Ḥadda, the ruler of Byblos, to his overlord, “the king of all countries, great king, king of battle,” Aḥenaten.¹⁴⁵ Here at last, was a title perhaps sufficiently grandiloquent — though by no means apt — for the king of Egypt.

While the title “great king” may have helped define the sovereign monarchs making up the club of Great Powers in their age vis-à-vis subordinate rulers, it should come as no surprise that the king of Egypt wanted to assert the unique and supreme status he expected. Egypt’s involvement in the Near East provides clues to this gradual process. Egyptian armies first overran Syria and reached the Euphrates in the reign of Dḥutmose I (1494–1482 BC). After a lull in Egyptian military involvement in the region, Dḥutmose III (1479–1454 BC) launched a rapid succession of seventeen

¹⁴¹ See Artzi and Malamat 1993: 28 for the earliest attestations of a close equivalent to “great king,” namely “great *ENSI* of Enlil” (*ÉNSI.GAL* ⁴*ENLIL*) by two pre-Sargonic kings of Mari (e.g., *RIME* 1: 10.7.1 and 10.17.1) and Lugal-zage-si (*RIME* 1: 14.20.1).

¹⁴² For the possibility of a somewhat more extensive use of the term “great king” in this period, see Artzi and Malamat 1993: 29–30.

¹⁴³ Artzi and Malamat 1993: 30–31.

¹⁴⁴ E.g., *EA* 1 (where Amenḥotpe III is called “great king,” but Kadašman-Enlil I is simply “king”), *EA* 8-11 (where both Aḥenaten and Burna-Buriaš II of Babylon are called simply “king”; but in *EA* 7 and 14 they are both “great king”), and *EA* 28 (where both Aḥenaten of Egypt and Tušratta of Mittani are called simply “king”; but in *EA* 27 and 29 Tušratta is “great king”).

¹⁴⁵ *EA* 76.

campaigns in twenty years, starting in 1457 BC. By the time of his second campaign, in 1456 BC, Dḥutmose III was intimidating enough to secure diplomatic gifts — which he portrayed as “tribute” — from the rulers of Babylonia and Assyria.¹⁴⁶ During the course of the eighth campaign, in 1446 BC, Dḥutmose III apparently reached the Euphrates like his grandfather, having inflicted a defeat on his main competitor for control of Syria, Mittani.¹⁴⁷ This time he received “tribute” from Mittani, Babylon, and Ḫatti, before heading home.¹⁴⁸

Considering that he undertook a further nine campaigns in territory he had already overrun, Dḥutmose III must have exhausted any further potential for expansion at the expense of his Near Eastern rivals and his chariot-wheels were spinning in the mud. So far it was possible to see the Egyptian monarch as the unique and supreme being he was supposed to be in the propaganda associated with all aspects of Egyptian kingship. Pharaoh’s only peers were the gods, and Egyptian royal ideology conveniently overlooked the periodic division of the country into multiple rival kingdoms and the occasional association of two kings on the throne — in fact, Dḥutmose III had spent the first two decades of his reign in the shadow of just such an associate “king,” his aunt and stepmother Ḫatšepsut (1479–1458 BC), and would possibly spend his last three years in association with his son Amenḥotpe II (1428–1398 BC). But if Dḥutmose would tolerate no challengers for his hegemony in Syria, his successors were either more realistic or less inclined to interminable campaigning.

¹⁴⁶ *ARE* 2: § 446 and 449.

¹⁴⁷ *ARE* 2: § 479.

¹⁴⁸ *ARE* 2: § 482 (for Mittani), 484 (for Babylon), and 485 (for Ḫatti).

Although he made a show of force in Syria,¹⁴⁹ Amenhotpe II may have found reason to prefer more peaceful diplomatic exchanges with his northern neighbors.¹⁵⁰ By the reign of his son Dḥutmose IV (1398–1388 BC), the improvement in relations between Egypt and its principal rival, Mittani, had reached the point of a marriage alliance: a Mittanian princess was sent to join Dḥutmose IV's harem.¹⁵¹ It is precisely during this gradual reversal of Egypt's foreign policy, that we first encounter a new title for Amenhotpe II: “king of kings, ruler of rulers” (*nswt-nsyw ḥqꜣ-ḥqꜣw*).¹⁵² Since the title is specifically attested in the context of the Mittanians asking for peace, it is not unlikely that the new title is connected to this development. The pharaoh depicted the Mittanians as a defeated party beseeching the “good god” for mercy, and it is possible to see the title as an assertion of his imagined lordship over them. But on a more basic level, the new formulation may be considered a response to the pharaoh's recognition of foreign kings in diplomatic relations. In this context, “king of kings, ruler of rulers,” was a belated attempt to mask the obvious inference that the king of Egypt had found his equals among his Near Eastern counterparts.

We do not know to what extent the new formulation was used in Egypt or in international correspondence. If pharaoh's officials had any tact, they may have omitted it. It did not become a standard appellation of Egyptian kings, but it is encountered in the inscriptions of several more Egyptian monarchs. One of the “Colossi of Memnon” in the mortuary temple of Amenhotpe III (1388–1351 BC) bears an inscription where this king's Horus name reads “mighty bull, ruler of

¹⁴⁹ *ARE* 2: § 781-790.

¹⁵⁰ See the inferences of Podany 2010: 183.

¹⁵¹ *EA* 29 from Tušratta of Mittani to Aḥenaten makes reference to the princess sent by Tušratta's grandfather Artatama I to Aḥenaten's grandfather Dḥutmose IV.

¹⁵² *ARE* 2: § 792 and 804. On this title, see also O'Connor and Silverman 1995: 169-171. For a slightly different interpretation of the title, see Lorton 1974: 33-35.

rulers” (*k3-nḥt ḥq3-ḥq3w*),¹⁵³ and indeed the Colossi were originally named “Nebmā’atrē is the ruler of rulers.”¹⁵⁴ It is unclear if Amenḥotpe III was merely emulating his grandfather or advertising himself, but here too international relations may have played a part: he married several foreign princesses, including at least one from Babylon and two from Mittani. Ra’meses II (1279–1213 BC), an even more prolific builder also interested in foreign wars, diplomacy, and brides, has left us even more attestations of the title. We find him honored variously as “ruler of rulers,” “king of the gods, ruler of rulers,” and “ruler of rulers in all lands.”¹⁵⁵ Diodōros’ inclusion of this relatively atypical pharaonic title in quoting the inscription on one of Ra’meses’ colossi as “King of Kings am I, Osymandyas” is thus quite plausible,¹⁵⁶ and so its derivative, P.B. Shelley’s verses

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!

happen to be no mere flourish of Georgian romanticism, but a surprisingly accurate representation of an ancient title echoing across the divide of three millennia.

As far as we can tell, this titular innovation, which reinforced the unique status of the Egyptian monarch, was employed domestically. But pharaoh’s special status does show through in international diplomacy through the one-sided flow of royal women in the international marriage alliances. Mittanian, Babylonian, and later Hittite princesses joined the harem of the king of Egypt,

¹⁵³ *HEK*: 140-141.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Baines 2001: 294. Nebmā’atrē is the throne name (*praenomen*) of Amenḥotpe III.

¹⁵⁵ *KRIT* 2: nos. 96, 163 v, and 228 b 2a (for “ruler of rulers”), no. 136d (for “king of gods, ruler of rulers”), no. 218 (for “ruler of rulers in all lands”).

¹⁵⁶ Diodōros 1.47.4: Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων Ὀσυμανδύας εἰμί. Osymandyas is a transcription of Ra’meses II’s throne name, Woserma’atrē (*wsr-m3’t-r*, “powerful is the justice of Rē,” rendered in Akkadian as *Wašmuaria*). Elsewhere (1.55.7-8) Diodōros records the erection of stelae by an Egyptian king named Sesōōsis in conquered lands, bearing the inscription “This land the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Sesōōsis, subdued by himself” (Τήνδε τήν χώραν ὅπλοισι κατεστρέψατο τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ δεσπότης δεσποτῶν Σεσόωσις). This Sesōōsis is another reminiscence of Ra’meses II, but none of the surviving Levantine stelae of this king have preserved the Egyptian version of these titles (*KRIT* 2: nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, 61, 62, and 63).

but no Egyptian princess appears to have married out.¹⁵⁷ The Babylonian king Kadašman-Enlil I (died c.1356 BC), whose sister was already married to Amenhotpe III, got it into his head that he was entitled to marry an Egyptian princess himself c.1360 BC.¹⁵⁸ But Amenhotpe III responded dismissively to the request: “From time immemorial no daughter of the king of Egypt is given to anyone.” After an attempt at reverse psychology (“Why not? You are a king; you do as you please”), Kadašman-Enlil I proposed what he considered a compromise: “Send me a beautiful woman as if she were your daughter. Who is going to say, ‘She is no daughter of the king!’?” But Amenhotpe III did not budge. Still missing the point, the Babylonian king expressed his disappointment at his Egyptian counterpart’s continued intransigence, and ended his letter showing himself the bigger man — at least from a modern point of view — by allowing the proposed marriage between Amenhotpe III and a Babylonian princess.¹⁵⁹

If pharaoh thought that his refusal to send Egyptian princesses to the harems of other great kings set him apart as their superior, he was mistaken. Egypt had already made concessions to the general culture of the Near East by engaging in its mode of diplomacy, using its *lingua franca* (Akkadian), writing to foreign great kings as pharaoh’s equals, and employing the same royal terminology. But by refusing to export Egyptian princesses to foreign kings, pharaoh not only failed to participate fully in the system of international diplomatic relations, but he also failed to exploit a potentially advantageous status in Near Eastern society, where the father-in-law (*ēmu*) was generally

¹⁵⁷ Except for the problematic much later traditions about a pharaoh’s daughter marrying the Jewish king Solomon (in 1 Kings 3.1, 9.24, 11.1), and about a daughter of Wahibrē^c (Apriēs, 589–570 BC) given by his supplanter ‘Ahmose III (Amasis, 570–526 BC) to the Persian king Cyrus II (in Hērōdotos 3.1-3). On marriages, see in general the observations of Liverani 2001: 189-195.

¹⁵⁸ EA 1 (for the sister), EA 2-3 (for the daughter).

¹⁵⁹ EA 4. Cf. Avruch 2000: 163-164.

considered the superior of his son-in-law (*ḥatānu*).¹⁶⁰ At least Tušratta of Mittani attempted to exploit the marital relationships, reminding his Egyptian counterparts Amenḥotpe III and Aḥenaten that he was not only their “brother,” but also their father-in-law, while omitting reference to the equally justified but less advantageous status of brother-in-law in the reign of Amenḥotpe III.¹⁶¹

Brotherhood, real or symbolic, did not come naturally to Egypt’s pharaohs. Within the confines of Egyptian texts, pharaoh appears brotherless: alongside the “king’s mother,” “king’s sister,” “king’s son,” and “king’s daughter,” there is no “king’s brother” (*sn nsw*) until a single exception at the end of Ancient Egypt’s independent native statehood, c.360 BC.¹⁶² The consistency of this absence strongly suggests that the implications of equality – and, more negatively, potential rivalry – among brothers were deemed too inappropriate for such usage.¹⁶³ This is borne out by the designation of kings’ brothers as “king’s son” even when their father had never been king, like the future kings Siḥathōr and Sebekḥotpe IV during the reign of their elder brother Nefertḥotpe I (c.1720 BC).¹⁶⁴ Dḥutmose III’s brother, Nebnefer (retrospectively attested as a “king’s son”), whose father had been king, described himself during his brother’s reign somewhat awkwardly as “born by ... the king’s mother”.¹⁶⁵ Yet, by the time of Dḥutmose III’s grandson and great-grandson, Near Eastern monarchs were addressing pharaoh as their “brother” repeatedly in their letters. One may be justified in suspecting that the vast majority of pharaoh’s subjects were not made aware of such egalitarian familiarity.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Meier 2000: 168-173.

¹⁶¹ E.g., *EA* 19-21 (to Amenḥotpe III), *EA* 28 (to Aḥenaten). Cf. Avruch 2000: 162-163.

¹⁶² Dodson and Hilton 2004: 25, 35; Metawi 2013: 105-106. The exception is the “king’s brother and father” Tāḥapimu, father of the last native Egyptian pharaoh, Nektanebōs (Naḥṥhareḥbyt, 360–342 BC).

¹⁶³ Cf. Reves 2003: 130-131.

¹⁶⁴ Dodson and Hilton 2004: 25, 111-112; Siesse 2019: 135-143.

¹⁶⁵ Metawi 2013: 105-106, 115-116.

Another way in which the Amarna correspondence illustrates both continuity and change from the archives at Mari is the matter of diplomatic gifts. These came in at least two varieties, “greeting/beautiful gifts” and dowries, but seem to have functioned much the same in the grand scheme of things. There was always a question of reciprocity, whereby the gifts of one king to the other would be matched by equally welcome gifts worth at least as much as the ones given.¹⁶⁶ To have expected the same gifts would have been ineffective, so we witness a level of specialization based on the resources available in greater quantity or better quality in each respective kingdom:

Mesopotamian polities sent chariots, horses, and lapis lazuli to Egypt, expecting mostly gold in return.¹⁶⁷ It was gold that allowed the Egyptian monarch to get away with some of his notions of superiority, having easy access to vast quantities of the precious metal so desired by his Near Eastern counterparts. They, in turn, were under the impression that in Egypt “gold is as plentiful as dirt,” and relentlessly pressured pharaoh to send them more of it.¹⁶⁸ Nor were they above looking a gift horse in the mouth, or melting down precious items to determine how much gold was actually being sent.¹⁶⁹ Sometimes they offered putative causes for the urgency of requests: one was completing a palace, another a temple, while yet another was building a mausoleum (*karāšku*) for his grandfather.¹⁷⁰

The nonchalant flow of the requests betrays an expectation of both reciprocity and professional loyalty: as a great king himself, pharaoh should comprehend, commiserate, and cooperate. Amid the

¹⁶⁶ On the process in general see Zaccagnini 2000.

¹⁶⁷ E.g., *EA* 2-4 (from Kadašman-Enlil I of Babylon), *EA* 8-11 (from Burna-Buriaš II of Babylon), *EA* 17, 19, and 21 (from Tušratta of Mittani), *EA* 41 (from Šuppiluliuma I of Hatti), and *EA* 15 (from Aššur-uballiṭ I of Assyria).

¹⁶⁸ E.g., *EA* 19 and 26 (from Tušratta of Mittani to Amenhotpe III and to Aḥenaten’s mother Teye, respectively), *EA* 16 (from Aššur-uballiṭ I to Aḥenaten).

¹⁶⁹ E.g., Tušratta’s complaint that the expected statues of solid gold were in fact made of gold-plated wood (*EA* 26), or Kadašman-Enlil I complaining that the gold sent to him “looked like silver” (*EA* 3), or Burna-Buriaš II’s discovery that the supposed 20 minas of gold turned out to be less than one quarter of its value when melted down (*EA* 10).

¹⁷⁰ *EA* 3 and 4 (from Kadašman-Enlil I completing his palace), *EA* 9 (from Burna-Buriaš II building a temple), and *EA* 19 (from Tušratta building a mausoleum).

frenzied quest for gold, the pressure was sometimes expressed in a negative language of reciprocity: “send me much gold so that I, too, send you a large greeting-gift.”¹⁷¹ At least on special occasions, however, royal generosity knew no bounds and its inventory took up dozens to hundreds of tightly packed lines of cuneiform.¹⁷²

As in the time of Ḫammu-rāpi, the treatment of envoys continued to be of great importance, although we are not treated to embarrassing public scenes in the surviving letters from the Amarna archive. Nonetheless, foreign monarchs had plenty of complaints. A common concern was the long detention of messengers, although it is unclear whether this shows more concern over the envoys or simply lack of patience about the success of the diplomatic mission and the receipt of gifts.¹⁷³ One king thought it necessary to inform pharaoh that making his envoys wait outside in the sun for too long is detrimental for their health,¹⁷⁴ much as Liutprand of Cremona would complain of his Constantinopolitan residence not keeping out the elements 2,300 years later.¹⁷⁵ Another monarch complained that the escort brought by the Egyptian envoys to convey pharaoh’s intended bride to their master consisted of only five chariots, which was apparently both unsafe and unbecoming; after all, the previous pharaoh had brought his foreign bride home with an escort of 3,000 troops.¹⁷⁶ Clearly the envoys also functioned as intelligence agents, since monarchs kept looking over their

¹⁷¹ *EA* 11 (from Burna-Buriaš II to Aḫenaten).

¹⁷² E.g., *EA* 14 (from Aḫenaten to Burna-Buriaš II), *EA* 19, 22, and 25 (from Tušratta).

¹⁷³ E.g., *EA* 3 (from Kadašman-Enlil I), *EA* 10 (from Burna-Buriaš II), *EA* 15 (from Aššur-uballiṭ I).

¹⁷⁴ *EA* 16 (from Aššur-uballiṭ I). Less negatively, in *EA* 19, Tušratta of Mittani informs Amenḫotpe III that “I herewith send my messenger, Keliya, to my brother, and may my brother not detain him. May he let him go promptly so that he may be on his way and I hear my brother’s greeting and rejoice exceedingly.”

¹⁷⁵ Liutprand, *Legatio* § 1.

¹⁷⁶ *EA* 11 (from Burna-Buriaš II).

shoulder and demanding the same favorable treatment meted out to neighbors or predecessors.¹⁷⁷

While this sounds reasonable enough, at times the amusing bounds on the ridiculous, as when the king of Babylon complained that his Egyptian counterpart had not invited him to his jubilee celebrations: it is not as if he would have traveled to Egypt and back over the course of months, but it would have been nice to be asked.¹⁷⁸ The historian Procopius compared the Roman Empire of his time, the mid-sixth century AD, to a “kingdom of children at play”¹⁷⁹; this description seems to fit the state of international diplomacy in the Ancient Near East just as well.

By the end of the Amarna correspondence in c.1335 BC, international relations in the Ancient Near East become illuminated by another set of diplomatic texts preserved at the Hittite capital Ḫattuša (Boğazköy). Among the documents preserved there is the Egypto-Hittite peace treaty concluded in 1259 BC between Raʿmeses II of Egypt (1279–1213 BC) and Ḫattušili III¹⁸⁰ of Ḫatti (c.1264–1241 BC).¹⁸¹ This treaty is the first document of its kind that is preserved in records belonging to both parties, since in addition to the cuneiform tablets at Ḫattuša, it is also found inscribed in Egyptian on the walls of the great temple of Amūn at Karnak and also on the walls of Raʿmeses’ mortuary temple (the “Ramesseum”) in western Thebes. The document established a permanent peace settlement between recent belligerents, providing for eternal non-aggression, a

¹⁷⁷ E.g., *EA* 16 from Aššur-uballiṭ I, who pointed out two precedents of pharaonic generosity as the benchmark for his expectations: one was a predecessor; the other was the king of Mittani, whom Aššur-uballiṭ considered his equal. On hearing that Egypt was receiving Assyrian envoys, Burna-Buriaš II of Babylon protested that these were his vassals (on what grounds we know not), and that they had acted without his approval: *EA* 9.

¹⁷⁸ *EA* 3 (from Kadašman-Enlil I, apparently referring to the Sed festival celebrated by Amenḥotpe III on the thirtieth anniversary of his accession, in c.1358 BC).

¹⁷⁹ Prokopios, *Secret History* 14.14: ἐὼκει τε ἡ πολιτεία βασιλίδι παιζόντων παιδίων. As Kaldellis has pointed out in his translation (xxxvii and 67), this is itself an allusion to Hērodotos 1.114, which describes the future Persian king Cyrus II playing at king with other children.

¹⁸⁰ I follow the traditional numbering, while realizing that the evidence for another Ḫattušili (II) reigning since Ḫattušili I in the late 17th century BC is very tenuous: cf. Beckman 2007: 179; Freu and Mazoyer 2007: 46-74.

¹⁸¹ For convenient English translations see *HDT*: no. 15 (Akkadian text) and *EHS*: 99-115 (Egyptian text). For the background to the treaty and its conclusion, see Bell 2007.

defensive alliance and cooperation against other countries, assistance in maintaining the (Hittite) monarch and his heirs on his throne, and the extradition of fugitives from the other kingdom.¹⁸² In the comparable (though not exactly identical) Akkadian and Egyptian versions of the text, the Egyptian and Hittite monarchs are each described as great king,¹⁸³ hero,¹⁸⁴ and as each other's "brother."¹⁸⁵ This is amply reflected in the subsequent letters exchanged between the Egyptian and Hittite courts, in which the two monarchs are called great kings and "brothers,"¹⁸⁶ and their spouses call each other great queens and "sisters."¹⁸⁷ The language of kinship was extended accordingly: the king of one country and the queen of the other would address each other as "brother" and "sister,"¹⁸⁸ and similarly the king of one country and the king's sons of the other would address each other as "father" and "son."¹⁸⁹ Outside of the great kings' royal families the usage of the father/son paradigm we had witnessed in the Mari archives is still rare, but not completely absent.¹⁹⁰ Great kings were "brothers" by definition, even as a younger generation replaced an older one in one of two interacting kingdoms. Thus, Ḫattušili III of Ḫatti wrote to Kadašman-Enlil III (c.1262–1254 BC) of Babylon as

¹⁸² *HDT*: no. 15 § 6-19.

¹⁸³ The Akkadian text gives *šarru rabû* for both monarchs and their respective fathers and grandfathers (§1); the Egyptian text distinguishes them as *p3 wr 3 n ḫt3* ("the great chief of Ḫatti") and the *p3 ḫq3 3 n kmr* ("the great ruler of Egypt"), respectively, although in spite of customary pharaonic arrogance, the distinction may have more to do with the traditional usage of *ḫq3* as one of several titles for Egyptian rulers than with a concerted attempt to imply an inferior status for the monarch of Ḫatti. For the opposite view, see e.g., Lorton 1974: 62-63, and Meier 2000: 167. It should be noted that translating *wr* as "chief" and *ḫq3* as "ruler" is largely conventional.

¹⁸⁴ The Akkadian text calls both monarchs *qarrādu* (§1.4, 1.6); the Egyptian text calls both *tmr* (§1.6). Beckman 2002: 20 points out that this use of "hero" seems to be unique for Egypt in the archives.

¹⁸⁵ Both texts talk about "good brotherhood." Akkadian *ahḫuta damiqta* (§1.8), Egyptian *nfr snsn* (§1.7).

¹⁸⁶ E.g., *ÄHK* 1: no. 20, from Ra'meses to Ḫattušili (§1).

¹⁸⁷ E.g., *ÄHK* 1: no. 12, from Ra'meses' wife Naptera (i.e., Nefertari) to Ḫattušili's wife Puduḫepa (§1-2).

¹⁸⁸ E.g., *ÄHK* 1: no. 43, from Ra'meses to Puduḫepa (§2-3), and *ÄHK* 1 no. 105, from Puduḫepa to Ra'meses (§2-3).

Strangely enough Ra'meses' mother Tuya also addressed Ḫattušili as his sister, perhaps because of her rank as widowed queen: *ÄHK* 1: no. 11 (§ 5).

¹⁸⁹ E.g., *ÄHK* 1: no. 9, from the Egyptian prince Šutaḫpašap (i.e., Sethirḫopšef) to Ḫattušili (§2-3), *ÄHK* 1: no. 17, from Ra'meses to the Hittite prince Tašmi-Šarrumma (§2-3), and *ÄHK* 1: no. 14, from Ra'meses to the Hittite prince Kannuta (§1).

¹⁹⁰ E.g., *LHK*: no. 102 (= *HDT*: no. 23a), *HDT*: no. 6a and 25.

“my brother,” proceeding to reference the time “when your father and I established friendly relations and became affectionate brothers.”¹⁹¹ Here there was no attempt to exploit seniority in age or kingship to assert a difference in relative status.

The kinship terms employed in diplomacy were of greater significance than merely denoting friendship and equality; they also created an exclusive club of interrelated and usually allied royal courts that ranked themselves above or beyond pettier subject or hostile polities.¹⁹² In a somewhat obscure passage, the Hittite queen Puduḫepa demonstrates the *esprit de corps* of the system by standing up for the king of Babylon to Raʿmeses: “If you say ‘the king of Babylon is no great king,’ then my brother does not know the status of the land of Babylon.”¹⁹³ Moreover, it may have proved embarrassing if a monarch recognized as “brother” by the Hittite king¹⁹⁴ was considered of inferior rank by the Hittite’s other “brother,” the king of Egypt. But rank could change. Consider, for example, the case of Mittani. It had been one of the great powers of the Amarna Age, spreading its hegemony from coastal Syria to the foothills of the Zagros Mountains in the east. But with the loss of Syria to the Hittites and of its eastern provinces to now-independent Assyria, what was left of Mittani (now increasingly called Ḫanigalbat) had to walk a tight line between its powerful Hittite

¹⁹¹ *HDT*: no. 23 (§1 and 4). On the renumbering of Kadašman-Enlil III subsequent to the confirmation of the existence of a distinct Kadašman-Enlil II, see Boese 2009.

¹⁹² See for example Liverani 2000.

¹⁹³ *ÄHK* 1: no. 105 §10 = *HDT*: no. 22e §10. In the same letter, §13, Puduḫepa echoed Aššur-uballiṭ of Assyria’s concern that messengers “were left standing outside” at the Egyptian court, in this instance based on the treatment of the Babylonian king’s envoys to his daughter, who had married Raʿmeses II.

¹⁹⁴ As we have seen above, Ḫattušili III had recognized both Kadašman-Enlil III and his father and predecessor Kadašman-Turgu as his “brothers” in *HDT*: no. 23.

ally and its encroaching Assyrian enemy. Thus, we find the (mere) king of Ḫanigalbat meekly writing to his “father,” the great king of Ḫatti, in the hope of shoring up continued support.¹⁹⁵

The exclusivity of the “club” was also characteristic. When Tudḫaliya IV of Ḫatti (c.1241–1212 BC) concluded a treaty with his Syrian vassal Šaušga-muwa of Amurru, the latter was explicitly informed what kings ranked as the Hittite monarch’s equals: “And the kings who are my equals in rank are the king of Egypt, the king of Babylon, the king of Assyria, ~~and the king of Aḫḫiyawa.~~”¹⁹⁶

Whether crossing out the mention of the Mycenaean (Aḫḫiyawa) ruler was the correction of an innocent mistake or the intentional indication of non-inclusion, the message of exclusivity is clear.

This is made even more emphatic by the fact that Tudḫaliya’s father and predecessor, Ḫattušili III, had actually written to the Mycenaean ruler as “brother” on at least one occasion in the past.¹⁹⁷

Sometime earlier in the thirteenth century BC a Hittite monarch had refused to extend such courtesy to the king of Assyria,¹⁹⁸ which, as we have seen, was a relative newcomer to the club of great powers.

After admitting that the Assyrian may have “become a great king” by virtue of the military prowess he had shown in defeating Ḫanigalbat, the Hittite king scoffs at any notion of equality between them:

On what account should I write to you about brotherhood? Were you and I born from one mother? As [my grandfather] and my father did not write to the king of Assyria [about

¹⁹⁵ *HDT*: no. 25. It is interesting to note that earlier Šuppiliuma I of Ḫatti had taken Šattiwaza of Mittani under his protection as “son” (*HDT*: no. 6b §3) and decreed that he will be the “brother” and equal of Šuppiliuma’s sons (*HDT*: no. 6a §7). While this makes sense, it leaves unclear the future status of Šattiwaza vis-à-vis the next great king of Ḫatti: “son” or “brother.” On these events, see also Podany 2010: 291-301.

¹⁹⁶ *HDT*: no. 17 §11.

¹⁹⁷ In the so-called “Tawagalawa Letter,” *LHK*: no. 101, e.g.: “now my brother, a great king, my equal, has written to me” (§6). For this letter and its attribution to Ḫattušili III, see also Bryce 2005: 290-293. The king of Aḫḫiyawa described himself as a great king and “brother” of his Hittite counterpart: *LHK*: no. 99.

¹⁹⁸ *HDT*: no. 24a. The Assyrian addressee is almost certainly Adad-nērārī I (1295–1263 BC), who boasts of defeating the same Ḫanigalbatian king Wasašatta, who is named as the victim of Assyrian aggression in the letter: *RIMA* 1: A.o.76.3. The identity of the Hittite sender is uncertain: chronologically this could have been Muwattalli II (c.1298–1271 BC), Muršili III (Urḫi-Tešub, c.1271–1264 BC), or Ḫattušili III.

brotherhood], you shall not keep writing me [about brotherhood] and great kingship. [It is not my] wish.¹⁹⁹

Surely the Assyrian was not amused, and eventually the Hittite court may have come to regret such snide remarks, as it was Assyria that emerged as the leading power in the Fertile Crescent in the late 1200s BC, foreshadowing Assyria's more substantial greatness yet to come.

As we have seen, Aššur-uballiṭ I (1355–1319 BC),²⁰⁰ who had asserted Assyria's independence from Mittani, began to add more impressive royal titles to the traditional humble style “*ENSI* of the god Aššur,”²⁰¹ declaring himself a “great king” and doing what all other “great kings” did, that is to write to the king of Egypt as “brother” and demand gold.²⁰² His heirs continued to amplify their royal style by gradually resurrecting or customizing the titles adopted by earlier Mesopotamian monarchs.²⁰³

Tukultī-Ninurta I (1235–1198 BC), who defeated both Babylonians and Hittites, briefly dominating all of Mesopotamia, was the first Mesopotamian monarch to call himself “king of kings, lord of lords, ruler of rulers” possibly inspired by the relatively rare usage we have observed in Egypt.²⁰⁴ This title, in its simpler form “king of kings” (*šar šarrāni*),²⁰⁵ would capture the imagination

¹⁹⁹ *HDT*: no. 24a.

²⁰⁰ These and subsequent Assyrian dates are based on the evidence of the Assyrian King Lists B and C, excluding the apparently erroneous testimony of King List A; thus Ninurta-apil-Ekur for 3 (not 13) years, and Aššur-nādin-apli for 3 (not 4) years. Cf. the preference of Glassner 2004: 143. Baker 2010 demonstrated that the two *tuppišu* reign-lengths are to be reckoned at 1 year each. The resulting chronology is very close to that reached by Boese and Wilhelm 1979, who instead postulated that Aššur-dān I reigned for 36 rather than 46 years on the basis of a *possible* restoration in the damaged text of King List A. For a synoptic treatment of the King Lists, see Grayson 1981: 101–115.

²⁰¹ This had been employed by all earlier rulers of Assyria, regardless of strength or weakness. The only known exceptions are the foreign interlopers Šamši-Adad I and his son Išme-Dagān I, who added the Akkadian titles “king of the world” (a.o.39.2, a.o.40.1) and “king of Akkad” (a.o.39.6).

²⁰² Most of his inscriptions still use the old title, e.g., *RIMA* 1: a.o.73.3, but at least one calls him a king (*LUGAL*): a.o.73.6. In *EA* 16 he calls himself a “great king” and “brother” of pharaoh.

²⁰³ E.g., *RIMA* 1: a.o.76.3 (“king of the world”), a.o.77.4 (“king of all people”), a.o.78.2 (“king of the four quarters”), a.o.78.5 (“king of Sumer and Akkad, sun of all the people”), *RIMA* 2: a.o.89.4 (“great king”).

²⁰⁴ E.g., *RIMA* 1: a.o.78.14 and a.o.78.16.

of monarchs and people alike, to be adopted by rulers of several different polities and to be attributed to Christ, together with another common Assyrian royal epithet, “shepherd” (*rēʾû*).²⁰⁶

The beginning of the twelfth century BC, however, witnessed what has been described as a systems collapse.²⁰⁷ Some of the polities, great or small, that had made up the international system of the Late Bronze Age perished (e.g., Hatti, Ugarit, the Mycenaean palace-based societies), while the remainder experienced gradual but prolonged decline. The last of the great palace archives to illuminate international diplomacy with an ample set of documents was buried in the ruins of the Hittite capital in the twelfth century BC. Although archaeologists have unearthed a veritable cornucopia of later economic and administrative texts, especially in Assyria and Babylonia, they do not provide the same kind of information. Indeed, Assyria survived the collapse and after a long hiatus launched a new period of imperial expansion; at the height of its power in the seventh century BC it governed, directly or hegemonically, the entire area comprised by southeastern Anatolia, the western fringes of the Iranian plateau, the northern reaches of the Syrian desert, and most of Egypt.

While we are offered few glimpses of how Iron-Age Assyrian monarchs treated with foreign rulers of equal or subordinate status,²⁰⁸ we have every reason to believe that in each case the diplomatic framework established during the Late Bronze Age remained in place. When Esarhaddon (Aššur-aḥa-iddina, 681–669 BC) wrote to the friendly and undefeated king of Elam, he addressed him as “brother” and spoke of the gods having brought their “friendship to its peak,” in a letter that might

²⁰⁵ See further in McEwen 1934: 32-34.

²⁰⁶ E.g., *RIMA* 1: a.o.77.1, often “faithful shepherd” (*rēʾû kīnu*), e.g., a.o.78.14. For this epithet see Seux 1981: 162-163, and Beckman 2002: 42, who points out its frequent use by the Kassite kings of Babylon.

²⁰⁷ For this period, see for example Drews 1993 and Van De Mieroop 2004: 179-194.

²⁰⁸ Consider the carved throne base depicting Shalmaneser III (Salmānu-ašarēd, 859–824 BC) and his Babylonian counterpart in distinctive royal dress but of equal stature, each attended by one courtier, and shown in the midst of what may be the earliest portrayed handshake in history. For an annotated image of the monument, see Ascalone 2007: 56-57.

as well have been discovered at Amarna or Boğazköy instead of Nineveh.²⁰⁹ When the same Assyrian king conquered Egypt, he contented himself with hegemonic control over that distant and culturally distinct country, calling himself “king of the kings of Egypt, the Thebaïs, and Kush.”²¹⁰ Presumably the other “kings” in Egypt assumed the status of “sons” and “servants” of their new overlord.²¹¹ His son and successor Aššur-bāni-apli (669–627 BC) noted with much self-satisfaction that

the king of Urartu, whose royal fathers had addressed (messages of) brotherhood to my fathers ... (now), as a son sends (messengers recognizing) the authority of his father, so he, in this manner, sent to me, saying: “Greetings to the king, my lord.”²¹²

Clearly, royal rhetoric had changed little in eleven centuries. Assyria did maintain itself as a greater power than any of its neighbors for a longer period than earlier great powers had, but in the end it, too, went the way of all things.²¹³ A new international state system comes into view in the post-Assyrian period. In the sixth century BC, the greater Near East was effectively divided among four sovereign monarchies: Babylon, Media, Lydia, and Egypt. These clearly engaged in diplomatic exchanges not dissimilar to what we have witnessed before, as they conducted wars, sought diplomatic interventions, concluded peace treaties and marital alliances. Unfortunately, most of the evidence is preserved only in the later Greco-Roman sources.²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ *PCE*: 1.1 (K 1542).

²¹⁰ *Šar šarrāni mā Mušur mā Paturisi mā Kusi*: *ARAB* 2: § 575 and 583, and *ANET*: 290.

²¹¹ As indicated by Aššur-bāni-apli’s listing of some twenty “kings” of Egypt in the so-called Rassam Cylinder, the Akkadian term *šarru* was applied rather indiscriminately to local potentates, including princes, governors, and even mayors: *ARAB* 2: § 771, and *ANET*: 294; of the twenty “kings” listed there, only four are known or likely to have actually borne pharaonic titulary.

²¹² *ARAB* 2: § 834, *AVIUI* § 72. Urartu was Assyria’s northern neighbor and long-time rival, and now Aššur-bāni-apli was able to claim superiority, writing to his Urartian contemporary Sarduri IV (c.650–630 BC) as “father” to “son”: *AVIUI* § 79. Urartian kings sported grandiloquent titles, occasionally as elaborate as that of Sarduri II (c.750–730 BC): “mighty king, great king, omnipotent king, king of the world, king of the land Biainili (i.e., Urartu), king of kings, ruler of the city Tušpa.” *UKN* § 155g.

²¹³ The demise of Assyria is celebrated in the Book of Nahum.

²¹⁴ E.g., Hērodotos 1.16 and 1.73-74 on the war between Alyattēs of Lydia and Kyaxarēs of Media in 585 BC, the subsequent peace brokered by Syennesis of Cilicia and Labynētos (Nabû-nā’id) of Babylon, and the marriage between

From great king to universal monarch

When this new international system was swallowed up by the expanding Persian Achaemenid Empire of Cyrus (Kyros/Kuruš II, 559–530 BC) and his son Cambyses (Kambysēs/Kambūjiya II, 530–522 BC), the entire Near East — and more — was unified under the rule of a single monarch, who had no equals; local dynasts, wherever they existed,²¹⁵ were at best seen as near equivalents of the kings' governors. Despite this unprecedented singularity, the Persian monarchs made little innovation in the field of royal titulature or diplomacy. In places where a long and distinct political tradition had become strongly established, the Persian kings simply slipped into the shoes of their native predecessors, trying to appease any potential native reaction. In Egypt, the Persian king portrayed himself as a traditional pharaoh, even assuming an Egyptian Horus name and *praenomen* at the beginning of his rule.²¹⁶ In Babylon, Cyrus' royal titles were modeled on those of earlier Mesopotamian monarchs, and the king took special care to indicate that he was chosen as champion by the native patron god Marduk and that his piety exceeded that of his local predecessor.²¹⁷ Just as

Alyattēs' daughter Aryēnis and the future king of Media Astyagēs; cf. Geōrgios the Synkellos: 249 (following Eusebius, *Chronicon*: 44) on the alliance between Medes and Babylonians and the marriage of the future Babylonian king Naboukhodonosōr (Nabû-kudurri-ušur II, 605–562 BC) to Astyagēs' daughter Amyitē.

²¹⁵ For example, the Hekatomnids of Caria, on whom see Ruzicka 1992.

²¹⁶ Cambyses II used the Horus name Sematawy and the praenomen Mestiurē; Darius I used the Horus name Menehib and the praenomen Setutrē; *HĀK*: 220-221.

²¹⁷ In the so-called Cyrus Cylinder: *KIA*: 4-5 (*ANEHST*: no. 157). Cyrus' title there is: "king of the world, great king, mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad, king of the four quarters." Compare his Babylonian predecessors Nabû-nā'id (556–539 BC): "great king, mighty king, king of the world, king of Babylon, king of the four quarters": *NBKS*: 218-219, and Nabû-apla-ušur (621–605 BC): "mighty king, king of Babylon, king of the lands of Sumer and Akkad": *NBKS*: 64-65. It should be pointed out, however, that the Babylonian royal title in the sixth century was generally the much simpler "king of Babylon, faithful shepherd." For that matter, the simpler title of the Persian kings of Babylon was "king of Babylon, king of the lands."

the latter had casually evoked Kassite, Amorite, and even Akkadian kings as his precursors in several inscriptions,²¹⁸ Cyrus was following a tradition that went back some two thousand years.

Starting in the reign of Darius I (Dareios/Dārayavauš, 522–486 BC), the Persians invented a new, radically simpler, system of writing inspired by cuneiform for monumental royal inscriptions especially in and around their new ceremonial capital, Persepolis. The royal titles in these inscriptions naturally have little to do with the local traditions of distant provinces like Babylonia and Egypt and adopt a more universal concept of royal authority. The main inscription above Darius' rock-cut tomb at Nāqš-i Rostām calls the monarch: “great king, king of kings, king of the lands of all races, king of this great wide earth.”²¹⁹ All of these titles, albeit sometimes in less elaborate forms, can be traced to the precedents set in Mesopotamia. But they exhibit notable differences in the conceptualization of kingship. The most striking distinction is the lack of any specifically local definition of kingship, although all Persian kings duly attributed their rule to the “favor of Ahura-Mazda” (*vašnā Auramazdāha*), and to their legitimate royal descent, something that surely satisfied local tradition.²²⁰ It was the first of the imperial titles, “great king” (*xšāyat'īya vazar̄ka*), that captivated the attention of the Greeks and became for them one of the most common ways of describing the Persian ruler, the

²¹⁸ E.g., *NBKS*: 228-229 (for the Kassite Šagarakti-Šuriaš), 238-239 (for the Kassite Burna-Buriaš), 246-247 (for the Kassite Kuri-galzu), 238-241 (for the Amorite Ḥammu-rāpi), 226-227, 230-231, 246-247 (for “the earlier king” Narām-Sin), 246-247 (for Sargon, “the king of Babylon”).

²¹⁹ *KLA*: 86-87 (DNa §2): *xšāyat'īya vazar̄ka, xšāyat'īya xšāyat'iyānām, xšāyat'īya dahyūnām vispazanānām, xšāyat'īya ahyāyā būmīyā vazar̄kāyā dūraiṯ apīy*. On these titles, see also Wiesehöfer 1996: 29-30 and 56, who notes that here “king of kings” did not necessarily describe the relationship between the great king and vassal kings, but rather a relationship to the conquered preceding rulers. Nevertheless, the Achaemenids did allow some local dynasts to retain their traditional authority (e.g., in Caria, Cilicia, Tyre, and Cyrene).

²²⁰ The earlier inscription of Darius I at Bisutūn does actually call him “great king, king of kings, king of Persia, king of the lands”: *KLA*: 8-9 (DB §1), but the absence of such specificity in most inscriptions is telling. Some of the inscriptions do specify that the king was not only an Achaemenid (*Haxāmanišīya*), but also “a Persian, son of a Persian, an Aryan, of Aryan descent,” e.g., *KLA*: 86-87 (DNa §2).

megas basileus.²²¹ In the east, however, it was the second title, “king of kings” (*xšāyat’iya xšāyat’iyānām*), that was preferred and perpetuated by later Arsakid and Sāsānid monarchs as *basileus basileōn* in Greek and *šāhan šāh* in Middle Persian.²²² In Egypt, at least, some inscriptions attempted to reproduce both of these characteristic royal titles, although the native pharaonic titulary was generally preferred.²²³

The Persian conceptualization of monarchical power represents the natural extension of the greater Near Eastern evolution of such concepts, which we have traced over the course of two and a half millennia. Following the consolidation of the basic vocabulary used to express monarchical notions, this terminology had been modified to express the sovereignty and superior status of more ambitious or successful monarchs, now great kings, and kings of kings.²²⁴ Unlike their Mesopotamian predecessors, however, the early Achaemenids did succeed in establishing themselves as peerless kings for some two centuries, vindicating an ambition that goes back at least to Sargon of Akkad. This helped them advertise the legitimacy of their rule as the restorers and upholders of internal peace and

²²¹ E.g., Xenophōn, *Anabasis* 1.2.8 (μεγάλου βασιλέως) and 1.4.11 (πρὸς βασιλέα μέγαν).

²²² On the Arsakid and Sāsānid royal titles, see Wiesehöfer 1996: 130 and 165. In Greek the title “king of kings” is seldom attested for the Achaemenids in contemporary sources, though it is found in the letters included in the Hippocratic Corpus. E.g., *Epistle* 1: “The King of Kings, Great Artaxerxēs” (Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων μέγας Ἀρταξέρξης) and *Epistle* 7: “To the King of Kings, my Great Lord Artaxerxēs” (Βασιλεῖ βασιλέων τῷ ἐμῷ μεγάλῳ δεσπότη Ἀρταξέρξει).

²²³ As in the inscription of Uḏaḥorresnet, who takes credit for coining Cambyses II’s official royal style as the “king of Upper and Lower Egypt Mesutirē” (*nj-swt-bjt mswtj-r**), but also refers to the Persian king as “the great ruler of Egypt” (*hq3 ʿ3 n kmt*), and “the great chief of every foreign land” (*wr ʿ3 n ḥ3st nbt*); cf. Lloyd 1982: 169-174 and Gardiner 1961: 366. For another Egyptian rendering of the Persian royal title (*p3 ʿ3 p3 wr n n3 wrw*), see Vittmann 2003: 138 and n. 81, 270. In less cooperative times, Egyptian sources dismissively call the Persian monarchs “ruler of foreigners” (*hq3-ḥ3swt*), recalling the hated Hyksōs interlude from the Second Intermediate Period in Egypt (c.1650–1540 BC), or “ruler of Asia” (*hq3 n stt*): Lloyd 1982: 177-179. For the Persians in Egypt in general, see Vittmann 2003: 120-154.

²²⁴ An analogous development can be traced in India, where the original title “king” (*rāja*), used even by the powerful Maurya ruler Aśoka (c.250 BC), was expanded to “great king” (*mahārāja*) by the so-called “Indo-Greek” monarchs (after c.185 BC), and later yet to “great king of kings” (*mahārāja rājārāja mahata / mahārāja rājātirāja*) by the Śaka and Kuṣāṇa rulers (after c.100 BC). The latter title was finally rephrased as *mahārājādhirāja* in the Gupta period (c. AD 300) and remained the standard style of Indian monarchs claiming supreme power for centuries. These developments were influenced by Persian and Hellenistic models, for which see the discussion in Ganguly 1979: 7-29.

order (*arta*), a concept far from new — comparable to Egyptian Mā'at — but now advertised with renewed vigor in royal propaganda.²²⁵

The extensive discussion above has established a general picture of the way in which royal power had become conceptualized, especially with reference to subordinate or independent and rival polities. We have seen the evolution and importance of titles, paralleled by the evolution and importance of proper diplomatic protocol, including a formalized but also flexible language that attempted to fix and cement power relationships in evocative and definitive, yet flattering terms of kinship. The concepts, practices, and even some of the very situations encountered in the foregoing discussion, will be found millennia later in the diplomatic relations between the Eastern Roman Empire and its neighbors. The multiplicity of polities in Mesopotamia eventually led to the differentiation in their relative status being reflected in the titles of their rulers and the language of diplomacy and symbolism they employed in communicating with each other. Titles and status, became things to be noted, defended, and asserted. Developed in isolation, Egypt joined the system of great kingdoms effectively enough, though not without awkwardness and friction. In the end, having conquered all monarchies of great power and wealth in their vicinity, the Persians were left the only great monarchy within their horizon.

²²⁵ Persian *arta* carries the combined meaning of truth, justice, and order, so conceptually similar to Egyptian Mā'at (*mꜣꜥt*); in Mesopotamia Assyrian militarism had partly obscured this aspect of kingship. On the importance of peace in Achaemenid kingship, see Wiesehöfer 2007: 124-127.

Chapter 3: Greek and Hellenistic *Basileia*

Basileus, or the adventures of a title

The basic term *basileus* had appeared and already undergone some change in meaning long before the most powerful of earthly monarchs in their time could be honored as *meḡas basileus* or *basileus basileōn* by their Greek subjects. It can be traced back to the Late Bronze Age, when the Aegean was dominated by the cultures we designate “Minoan” and “Mycenaean.” Archeological finds reveal that these societies did not develop in isolation, but interacted commercially and culturally with Egypt and the Near East.²²⁶ The palaces of Minoan Crete, sprawling flat-roofed structures in one or two stories clustering around large open-air courts, are not dissimilar to those of Mesopotamia and Syria, including that at Mari; Minoan art imitated Egyptian convention by using the same different skin tones to distinguish the sexes; the Cyclopean masonry of Mycenaean citadels is not dissimilar from some of the defenses built in stone-rich Anatolia; and palace frescoes and Linear B tablets alike confirm that, like its Egyptian and Near Eastern counterparts, the Mycenaean war machine reveled in chariotry, despite the unsuitable terrain of Greece. It should not be surprising that other Near Eastern societies would not have seen Mycenaean Greece as completely alien or incompatible. Indeed, we have already noted that, at least on occasion, the great king of the Hittites treated a Mycenaean counterpart, the ruler of Ahḫiyawa, as his equal.

²²⁶ See, for example, Vermeule 1964: 106-110, 147-155, 271-274, Chadwick 1976: 156-158, Mee 1998, Watrous 1998, and Cline 2001.

That the Ahhiyawa were the people we conventionally label “Mycenaeans,” and who were referred to as Akhaians (*Akhaioi*) by Homer is now generally accepted.²²⁷ Thanks to the decipherment of the Linear B syllabary by Michael Ventris in the early 1950s, we now know that they spoke an archaic form of Greek, and they had settled in Greece by 1600 BC, apparently displacing or subjugating their “Pelagian” and “Minoan” predecessors.²²⁸ The Linear B tablets, although sometimes found in large quantities, as in the palace at Pylos, tend to be short listings of items — provisions or armament stored in the palace, gifts offered to gods, or records of the production of landed estates. Despite this limited scope, they have allowed for a reasonably secure reconstruction of Mycenaean society.

Comparison of the production capacity of landholdings at Pylos has led to the conclusion that Mycenaean society was headed by the *wanax* (*wa-na-ka*), who towered in wealth — and apparently power — over other important officials like the *lawagetas* (*ra-wa-ke-ta*).²²⁹ In addition to various royally-appointed officials, the Linear B tablets reveal the existence of notables titled *guasileus* (*qa-si-re-u*), clearly an early form of later Greek *basileus*. This type of official ranked surprisingly low in Mycenaean hierarchy, and seems to have constituted a village chieftain, who functioned alongside a council of elders called *geronsia* (*ke-ro-si-ja*) — like the later Spartan *gerousia* — and at least sometimes acted as overseer of worker collectives or industrial groups.²³⁰ Other officials, like the *damokoros* (*da-mo-ko-ro*), appear to have been appointed by the *wanax*, but the precise dynamics of

²²⁷ Cf. Vermeule 1964: 272-273, Drews 1993: 216-217, n. 12, Mountjoy 1998, Latacz 2004: 120-128, Bryce 2005: 257-260.

²²⁸ On the arrival of the Greeks, see Drews 1988.

²²⁹ Pylos tablet Er 312; cf. Vermeule 1964: 261, Chadwick 1976: 70-71, Hall 2007: 43. Specifically on the *wanax* see Palaima 1995 and 2006.

²³⁰ Chadwick 1976: 70. For more detailed discussions of the various Mycenaean officials and their interrelations, see Kazanskiene 1995, Thomas 1995, Hildebrandt 2005. More specifically on the *guasileus*, see Carlier 1995, Iacovou 2006: 327, Palaima 1995: 124, Hildebrandt 2005: 106-116.

the subordination of each *guasileus* to the *wanax* remain unclear.²³¹ It is also unclear how many polities in what we now call Mycenaean Greece were governed by a *wanax*. The Pylos tablets seem to imply a regional *wanax* there, which would tally well with the image of a politically fragmented Greece evoked by Homeric myth and later historical patterns alike. On the other hand, the possibility that, at least at some point, one *wanax* asserted some sort of hegemony over his counterparts is not completely implausible: it may be reflected by the Hittite monarch's treatment of the ruler of Ahḫiyawa as a brother great king, and by Homer's depiction of the Mycenaean king Agamemnōn as the leader of the united expedition against Troy.²³²

When the Mycenaean citadels were sacked amidst the systems collapse at the end of the Bronze Age, most of the palace-based administration disappeared, including the *wanax*, *lawagetās*, and *damokoros*. The scribes who produced Linear B tablets also seem to have disappeared, together with their now superfluous literacy. In a rare passage recalling the use of some form of writing in the Bronze Age, Homer could do no better than refer to certain “murderous symbols ... inscribed on a folding tablet,” carried by the aforementioned hero Bellerophontēs to his would-be executioner in Lycia.²³³ In such circumstances, a change in the power structure of Greek society would not be surprising. It seems that the destruction of the Mycenaean palace system left the local community chieftains, each called *guasileus*, in their pre-existing position of authority, but now deprived of the overarching authority of the former palace-based administration that had been headed by the defunct

²³¹ On the *damokoros*, see Pylos tablet TA 711; cf. Chadwick 1976: 70; Hildebrandt 2005: 124-126.

²³² This is complicated by uncertainty whether the Hittites designated all Mycenaean Greece as Ahḫiyawa and, if not, which particular polity; Blegen 1975 and Mountjoy 1998 think it was a Mycenaean kingdom on Rhodes. For attempted historical interpretations of the Trojan War, see for example Stubbings 1975: 342-350, Latacz 2004, and Bryce 2005: 357-364. The apparent *ad hoc* quality of the Greeks' union under Agamemnōn in the Homeric tradition, however plausible, may well reflect conditions in Homer's own time like so much else in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

²³³ Homer, *Iliad* 6.168-170: πόρεν δ' ὃ γε σήματα λυγρὰ γράψας ἐν πίνακι πτυκτῶ θυμοφθόρα πολλά, δείξαι δ' ἠνώγειν ᾧ πενθερῶ ὄφρ' ἀπόλοιτο.

wanax. Thus, the *guasileus* became the ultimate political authority by default, perhaps assuming some — but not necessarily all — of the political and ideological features of the *wanax*.²³⁴

Although the development described above could lead us to conclude that the *basileus* — to use the classical form of the word — had become the sovereign monarch, or king, in Greek society, this conclusion is complicated by the seemingly contradictory evidence of the sources. Any reconstruction of Dark Age Greek society has to turn to Homer and Hesiod, each of whom wrote for an audience in the know. In both authors, writing in the late eighth or early seventh century BC, the *basileis* (plural of *basileus*) were clearly at the helm of society. Thus, Hesiod called Zeus “*basileus* of the gods” or “*basileus* of immortals,” and warned mortal *basileis* to avoid crooked judgments and succumbing to bribery.²³⁵ Hesiod also used the term *anax* (the classical form of *wanax*), but he seems to have reserved this title for gods.²³⁶

Homer had also used both terms, preferring to use *anax* when referring to gods.²³⁷ In references to mortal heroes, we find many references to plural *basileis*, also “sceptered *basileis*,”

²³⁴ See for example Palaima 2006: 69. Thucydides 1.13.1, however, indicates that the prerogatives of archaic hereditary kingship were limited (πρότερον δὲ ἦσαν ἐπὶ ῥητοῖς γέρασι πατρικαὶ βασιλείαι), which may indicate that the *guasileis/basileis* did not fully replace the defunct *wanax*. Aristotle, *Politics* 1285b (3.14.11-13), also seems to preserve some memory of a difference between Bronze Age kingship and later types of monarchy: “A fourth type of royal monarchy — in the Heroic Age — was over willing subjects and hereditary and legal ... But, later on, the kings relinquished some of their powers and others were taken away by the multitude, and in some *poleis* only sacrifices were left to the *basileis*” (τέταρτον δ’ εἶδος μοναρχίας βασιλικῆς αἰ κατὰ τοὺς ἥρωικούς χρόνους ἐκούσiai τε καὶ πάτριαι γιγνόμεναι κατὰ νόμον ... ὕστερον δὲ τὰ μὲν αὐτῶν παριέντων τῶν βασιλέων, τὰ δὲ τῶν ὄχλων παραιρουμένων, ἐν μὲν ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσιν αἰ θυσίαι κατελείφθησαν τοῖς βασιλεῦσι μόνον).

²³⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony* ln. 886: Ζεὺς δὲ θεῶν βασιλεὺς, and *Works and Days* ln. 668: Ζεὺς ἀθανάτων βασιλεὺς, and ln. 263-264: ταῦτα φυλασσόμενοι, βασιλῆς, ἰθύνετε μύθους, δωροφάγοι, σκολιέων δὲ δικέων ἐπὶ πάγχυ λάθεσθε. The use of *anax* for the gods may harken back to the Bronze Age, when *wanax* may sometimes have been applied to gods, e.g., Chadwick 1976: 70. The opposite conclusion is reached by Palaima 2006: 67, who holds that *wanax* and its feminine counterpart *wanassa* were always titles applied to human rulers.

²³⁶ Hesiod, *Theogony* ln. 347: Ἀπόλλωνι ἄνακτι; ln. 486: Οὐρανίδῃ μὲγ’ ἄνακτι, θεῶν προτέρων βασιλῆι; ln. 660: Κρόνου υἱὲ ἄναξ.

²³⁷ On Homeric kingship and its origins, see Thomas 1966 and on Homeric usage Hildebrandt 2005: 185-189.

“*basileis* of the Akhaians,” and “*basileis* of the Argives.”²³⁸ Agamemnon, the leader of the whole enterprise against Troy, is singled out as the “*basileus* of gold-rich Mycenae,” which is unusual in that such geographic specification tended to be applied only to non-Greek monarchs.²³⁹ But even among these a degree of ambiguity regarding the precise meaning of the term perseveres: while Priam (Priamos) was the “*basileus* of Troy, cherished by Zeus,” we also read of Troy’s plural *basileis*, who apparently included his son Alexandros (Paris).²⁴⁰ The plurality of *basileis* in Homer sometimes required (or reflected) a further distinction, in which the term appears to be relative rather than absolute.²⁴¹ Thus Agamemnon is described as “the most *basileus*” (*basileutatos*) and also as “more of a *basileus*” (*basileuteros*) than Achilles (Akhilleus).²⁴² The latter, despite his seemingly boundless pride, acknowledges himself less of a *basileus* than others, when he suggested that Agamemnon should marry his daughter to “another of the Akhaians, one who is more like him and more of a *basileus* than I am.”²⁴³

Agamemnon’s special status was also betrayed in the speech of Odysseus to the assembled Greeks. Here, while approaching the various *basileis* of the host, Odysseus declared somewhat undiplomatically: “Let there be one ruler, one *basileus*, to whom the son of devious-devising Kronos

²³⁸ Homer, *Iliad* 1.279: σκηπτούχος βασιλεύς, for Agamemnon, but σκηπτούχοι βασιλῆες (2.86), clearly includes other leaders; 7.106, 23.36, 24.404: βασιλῆες Ἀχαιῶν; 9.59: Ἀργείων βασιλῆας, 10.95: Ἀργείων βασιλῆες.

²³⁹ Homer, *Iliad* 7.180, 11.46: βασιλῆα πολυχρῦσοιο Μυκῆνης. On usually specifying the populations ruled by non-Greek *basileis* see the comments of Hall 2007: 121.

²⁴⁰ Homer, *Iliad* 5.464, 24.803: Πριάμοιο διοτρεφέος βασιλῆος; 20.84: Τρώων βασιλεύσιν; 4.96: Ἀλεξάνδρω βασιλῆϊ.

²⁴¹ Cf. Hall 2007: 122.

²⁴² Homer, *Iliad* 9.69 (Nestor to Agamemnon): σὺ γὰρ βασιλεύτατός ἐσσι; 9.160 (Agamemnon to Nestor): βασιλεύτερός εἰμι.

²⁴³ Homer, *Iliad* 9.392 (Akhilleus to Odysseus as Agamemnon’s emissary): ὁ δ’ Ἀχαιῶν ἄλλον ἐλέσθω, ὅς τις οἱ τ’ ἐπέοικε καὶ ὅς βασιλεύτερός ἐστιν.

gives the scepter and right of judgment, to watch his people.”²⁴⁴ While it is unlikely that Homer or his audience imagined that Odysseus was suggesting that he and his fellow *basileis* cease to enjoy their status as such, it is clear that not all *basileis* were expected to wield supreme power. Another Homeric indication for Agamemnōn’s superiority over other *basileis* is the frequent use of the term “*anax* of men” in relation to him.²⁴⁵ Were it not for the fact that Homer sometimes used *anax* as an alternative title for other leaders too, we might have concluded that he preserved the Bronze Age distinction between *wanax* and *guasileus*.²⁴⁶ Indeed, given that he called gods *anaktes* rather than *basileis*, we might think that he still considered the *anax* superior to the *basileus* among mortals. But the frequency of also calling all sorts of mortal leaders *anaktes* — whether for social reasons, stylistic variation, or the requirements of meter — does not allow us such a conclusion.²⁴⁷ It may still be noted that, although other *basileis* are sometimes called *anax*, only Agamemnōn is regularly called the “*anax* of men” in the *Iliad*.²⁴⁸ Agamemnōn’s virtual monopoly on this epithet — which cannot be

²⁴⁴ *Iliad* 2.204-206: εἷς κοίρανος ἔστω, εἷς βασιλεύς, ᾧ δῶκε Κρόνου πάϊς ἀγκυλομήτεω σκῆπτρόν τ’ ἠδὲ θέμιστας, ἵνα σφισι βουλεύῃσι. Note that “to watch his people” evokes the image of the ruler as shepherd, which we have seen in Near Eastern conceptualizations of kingship, and which is found even more explicitly elsewhere in the *Iliad*, e.g., 2.105 (of Atreus): Ἀτρεΐ ποιμένι λαῶν, and 2.772-773 (of Agamemnōn Atreidēs): Ἀγαμέμνονι ποιμένι λαῶν Ἀτρεΐδῃ.

²⁴⁵ E.g., *Iliad* 1.172, 1.442, 1.506, etc.: ἀναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγαμέμνων.

²⁴⁶ E.g., *Iliad* 2.77 (of Nestōr); 2.373, 4.18, 4.290, etc. (of Priamos); 2.404, 10.112 (of Idomeneus); 2.565 (of Mēkisteus); 2.624 (of Agasthenēs); 2.672 (of Kharops); 2.679 (of Hēraklēs); 2.693 (of Euēnos); 2.725 (of Philoktētēs); 5.794 (of Diomēdēs); 6.166 (of Proitos); 7.8, 7.137 (of Arēithoos); 9.164, 24.449 (of Akhilleus); 10.559 (of Rēsos); 13.582, 758, 770, 781 (of Helenos); 14.489 (of Pēneleōs); 15.453-454 (of Poulydamas); 15.639 (of Eurystheus); 16.464 (of Sarpēdōn); 17.443 (of Pēleus); 20.230 (of Trōs); 23.588 (of Menelaos).

²⁴⁷ Cf. Hall 2007: 122.

²⁴⁸ E.g., *Iliad* 5.268 (of Ankhisēs); 5.311 (of Aineias); 5.546 (of Ortilokhos: Ὀρτιλοχον πολέεσσ’ ἀνδρεσσιν ἀνακτα); 11.701 (of Augeias); 13.452-453 (of Idomeneus: πολέεσσ’ ἀνδρεσσιν ἀνακτα Κρήτη ἐν εὐρείῃ); 15.532 (of Euphētēs); 23.288 (of Eumēlos). But among these, the title is only used more than once for Aineias, which still contrasts starkly with 56 times for Agamemnōn. Eurystheus, for one, is a predecessor of Agamemnōn in the same supreme sort of kingship, in 19.122-123: ἤδη ἀνὴρ γέγον’ ἐσθλὸς δς Ἀργείοισιν ἀνάξει Εὐρυσθεὺς Σθενέλοιο πάϊς Περσηϊάδαο σὸν γένος· οὐ οἱ ἀεικὲς ἀνασσέμεν Ἀργείοισιν.

attributed merely to the necessities of meter — implies that he was ruler of men in the same sense that Zeus was the ruler of all gods and all men.²⁴⁹

The foregoing considerations indicate that the evidence supplied by Homer cannot be turned into a clear image of Greek Dark Age kingship. His poems assume the primacy of *basileis*, some (but not all) of whom were what we would call “kings.” Several of these were indeed called *anaktes* too, but not in a systematic enough manner to infer any clear reflection of Bronze Age precedent. Modern translators are sensible to translate the term *anax* in the Homeric and post-Homeric context mostly as “lord,” which can conceptually fit gods, aristocrats, and everyone in-between.²⁵⁰ An interesting development that either coincides with or partly explains Homer’s confusion is the unusual use of these titles in Archaic Cyprus, where *basileus* designated the ruling monarch, whereas *anax* referred to other members of the royal house.²⁵¹ But we should not lose sight of the fact that, while Homer’s poetry was surely influenced by the world he lived in, it was also recalling the long bygone Heroic Age and might well contain some memory of its features, however refracted and diluted by the passage of five centuries. From this perspective, it would be most surprising if Homer’s world reflects *any* specific stage in the history of the Aegean region with absolute precision.

What, then, can be said about *basileis* in the Dark and Archaic Ages of Greek history? That for some time they held a primacy in society seems clear enough. That they did so by surviving the defunct grades of Mycenaean bureaucracy that once overshadowed them is also reasonably clear. It is

²⁴⁹ For the latter, e.g., *Iliad* 14.233: ἀναξ πάντων τε θεῶν πάντων τ’ ἀνθρώπων; for Zeus simply as *anax*, see 1.502: Δία Κρονίωνα ἀνακτα; 2.102, 7.194, 18.118: Διὶ Κρονίῳνι ἀνακτι. The term *anax* was, of course, also used for other gods, like Apollōn (1.36, 20.103), Poseidōn (15.8, 20.67), Hēphaistos (15.214, 18.137), and Haidēs (20.61).

²⁵⁰ E.g., Lattimore’s translation of the *Iliad* (1951) and Carlier 2006: 101. If so, “*anax* of men” for Agamemnōn would be a happy coincidence rather than an actual memory of his status as Bronze-Age *wanax*.

²⁵¹ On the titles *anax* and *basileus* in Cyprus, see Iacovou 2006, esp.: 329-335. This development is similar to the inversion of the Mesopotamian titles *EN* and *LUGAL* at Ebla in third-millennium Syria.

less clear to what extent Dark Age *basileis* took over the additional trappings — whatever they were — of the Bronze Age *wanax*, and whether we can therefore safely call them “kings.” It may well have been so, but by the time of Homer and Hesiod *basileis* seem to have abounded in number even within the same polity.²⁵² Exactly how this happened is difficult to say. One possibility is that these are simply the descendants of the pre-existing local chieftains who had survived the collapse of the higher tiers of Mycenaean administration and retained their status in the surviving or reconstituted larger regional polities. Another possibility is that the plurality of *basileis* reflects the growing importance of members of the elite serving in the pre-existing councils of local elders, so ubiquitous in Greek society; on the basis of the Homeric evidence, it has been proposed that these advisors came to be included in an expanded class of *basileis*.²⁵³ A further possibility is that the plurality of *basileis* attested in the time of Homer and Hesiod reflects the enlargement of Greek polities starting in the eighth century BC through the political coalescence (*synoikismos*) of previously separate communities and their ruling lines.²⁵⁴

Whatever the precise nature of the evolution of the authority of *basileis*, the resulting system was probably less than uniform, as are its interpretations.²⁵⁵ In city states (*poleis*) the authority of the *basileus* (insofar as there was only one) was gradually replaced by the power of an oligarchy, perhaps in part because of the inclusion of new communities and their *basileis* through the process of

²⁵² Cf. Homer, *Odyssey* 1.394-395, where Antinoos declares that “there are many other *basileis* of the Akhaians in seagirt Ithaca, young as well as old” (ἀλλ’ ἢ τοι βασιλῆες Ἀχαιῶν εἰσὶ καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ ἐν ἀμφιάλῳ Ἰθάκῃ, νέοι ἠδὲ παλαιοί) and 8.390-391, where Alkinoos states that the Phaiakians had “twelve illustrious *basileis* who bear sway as rulers in our land, and I myself am the thirteenth” (δώδεκα γὰρ κατὰ δῆμον ἀριπρεπέες βασιλῆες ἀρχοὶ κραίνουσι, τρεῖσκαιδέκατος δ’ ἐγὼ αὐτός). Even if Homer were describing Bronze Age conditions, Hesiod was surely referring to contemporary plural *basileis*.

²⁵³ Carlier 2006: 105-107.

²⁵⁴ Hall 2007: 128-129.

²⁵⁵ On Dark Age and Archaic Greek “kingship,” see Drews 1983, Carlier 1984, Hildebrandt 2005, and Hall 2007: 119-154.

synoikismos. In at least one such case, at Athens, the *basileus* was reduced to the status of a high-ranking official who had to share power with other magistrates, including one that eclipsed him in political importance.²⁵⁶ If later Athenian tradition can be relied upon, this new type of ruler (*arkhōn*) had to give up hereditary succession and lifelong power for a fixed term of ten years, before settling for an annual magistracy shared with several colleagues.²⁵⁷ A similar replacement of the hereditary lifelong ruler by an annual magistrate can be discerned at Corinth, where the Bakchiad oligarchy elected one of its members as an annual official (*prytanis*) to head the government.²⁵⁸ In Classical Athens the less important official still titled *basileus* had also become an annual magistrate presiding over religious and ancestral rites, and in title and ceremonial function he closely corresponded to the *rex sacrorum* in republican Rome.²⁵⁹

In Greek societies that were either slower in developing into *poleis* or focused on a larger “tribal” identity, *basileis* may have retained something a lot closer to monarchy for a longer period of time. Thus, the *basileis* of the Messenians and the Arkadians survived until the mid-seventh century BC, while those of the Macedonians and Molossians (Epirotes) survived longer still. Sparta, although a *polis*, also did not reduce its monarch to an annual magistrate as had the Athenians and Corinthians. But here we find two *basileis* or *arkhagetai* sharing power in two contemporary lines of

²⁵⁶ Drews 1983: 129-131 goes as far as to conclude that after the end of the Bronze Age *poleis* were never governed by true kings, while weakened monarchies did survive in more “tribal” societies (*ethnē*).

²⁵⁷ The *Constitution of the Athenians* recognized that the *basileus* was the oldest office in the government (3.2: τούτων δὲ πρώτη μὲν ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως, αὕτη γὰρ ἦν πάτριος), although it had been supplanted by the eponymous *arkhōn* as the leading member of the magistracy. For the change from lifelong to decennial to annual terms of office, see 3.1 (ἤρχον δὲ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον διὰ βίου, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα δεκαέτειαν) and 3.4 (ἤδη κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν αἰρουμένων τὰς ἀρχάς). Cf. Geōrgios the Synkellos: 251 (Ἐπὶ τούτου Ἀθήνησιν ἡ διὰ βίου κατελύθη ἀρχή. μετὰ Ἀλκμαίωνα τὸν λ’ βασιλέα Ἀθηναίων κατεστάθησαν ἄρχοντες δεκαετείς ζ’ ... ἡ δὲ τῶν ἐνιαυσιαίων ἤρχθη τῷ δωδ’ ἔτει τοῦ κόσμου, Κρέοντος πρώτου ἄρχοντος ἡγησαμένου ἐπὶ τῆς 1ῆς Ὀλυμπιάδος, οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ κε’). On Athens, see also Drews 1983: 86-94.

²⁵⁸ Diodōros 7.9.6 (ἐξ αὐτῶν δὲ ἓνα κατ’ ἐνιαυτὸν ἤρουντο πρύτανιν, ὃς τὴν τοῦ βασιλέως εἶχε τάξιν, ἐπὶ ἔτη 9’ μέχρι τῆς Κυψέλου τυραννίδος); cf. Pausanias 2.4.4 (βασιλεὺς δὲ οὐδεὶς ἔτι ἐγένετο, πρυτάνεις δὲ ἐκ Βακχιδῶν ἐνιαυτὸν ἄρχοντες). On Corinth, see also Drews 1983: 44-56.

²⁵⁹ The functions of the (*arkhōn*) *basileus* at Athens are described in the *Constitution of the Athenians* 57.1-4.

kings — allegedly issuing from twins descended from Hēraklēs — each practicing hereditary succession and lifelong term of office. The origin of this “dyarchy” seems to lie in the *synoikismos* of communities into the *polis* of Sparta.²⁶⁰ But, more importantly, while Spartan *basileis* or *arkhagetai* enjoyed social privileges, leadership in war, and pride of place in certain religious duties, they too were partly circumscribed in their authority by the eventual appearance of the ephors (*ephoroi*), a board of five annually elected magistrates.²⁶¹

All this means that in Dark Age and Archaic Greece *basileus* could designate a variety of high-ranking officials ranging in power from elected annual magistrates to “tribal” monarchs who enjoyed supreme authority, hereditary succession, and lifelong tenure on the throne, but ruled alongside “lesser” officials and elders. To express the notion of a more autocratic ruler, who inevitably exceeded and sometimes dismantled the bounds of tradition, Greek writers adopted the word *tyrannos*.²⁶² This term was apparently a borrowing from western Anatolia, possibly derived from the Luwian term *tarwanis*.²⁶³ When some of the traditional *basileis*, like Pheidōn of Argos, grasped at greater power than allowed by tradition, they too were labeled *tyrannoi*.²⁶⁴ But since *tyrannos* was not a title in formal usage, some *tyrannoi* were also called *basileis*.²⁶⁵ It was not until the consolidation and expansion of Macedon in the mid-fourth century BC, that Greek *basileis* really stood out as monarchs

²⁶⁰ E.g., Hall 2007: 129.

²⁶¹ Cf. Dvornik 1966: 155. These innovations, like all early reforms in Sparta, were often ascribed to the lawgiver Lykourgos. For an account of his putative activities and early Spartan society both before and after the reforms, see Plutarch’s *Lykourgos*, esp. 5.6-7.3 for royal authority.

²⁶² This term did not always or necessarily carry the negative connotation of modern English “tyrant.”

²⁶³ Giusfredi 2009.

²⁶⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* 1310b (5.10.6): “Pheidōn in Argos and others became *tyrannoi* after already holding the *basileia*” (οἷον Φειδῶν μὲν περὶ Ἄργος καὶ ἕτεροι τύραννοι κατέστησαν βασιλείας ὑπαρχούσης). See also Drews (1983): 60-71, and Hall 2007: 145-154.

²⁶⁵ E.g., Hērōdotos 7.161.3 (in an address to the Syracusan tyrant Gelōn: βασιλεῦ Συρηκοσίων); cf. 8.137.9-11, where the author seems to equate the two terms: “The wife of the *basileus* used to prepare their food, for in the old days even the *tyrannoi* of the people, not just the commoners, were of slender means” (Ἡ δὲ γυνὴ τοῦ βασιλέως ἦσαν γὰρ τὸ πάλαι καὶ αἱ τυραννίδες τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀσθενέες χρήμασι, οὐ μόνον ὁ δῆμος) αὐτὴ τὰ σιτία σφί ἔπεσσε).

— at first based on personal ability, later upon some inherited and gradually institutionalized royal charisma.

The potential meaning of *basileus* as a sovereign ruler came to be more fully realized when Greeks employed this term to describe the more powerful and autocratic kings of the outside world, like the rulers of Lydia and Egypt.²⁶⁶ We have seen that the term was also used in rendering the Persian royal titles “great king” (*megas basileus*) and “king of kings” (*basileus basileōn*). Less formally and more simply, the same Persian kings were also referred to as plain *basileis*, to the point that taken by itself the term could almost always be expected to designate the Persian monarch.²⁶⁷ This is demonstrated by concepts like the “King’s Peace,” concluded between the warring Greek states in 387 BC, with the Persian king Artaxerxēs II (404–358 BC) acting as broker.²⁶⁸ However, it should be noted that Greek authors perceived a palpable difference between Near Eastern kingship and their own *basileia* — whatever that entailed. In the fifth century BC, Hērodotos occasionally employed the concept of *tyrannis* to convey the more absolute or autocratic character of foreign monarchy.²⁶⁹ A century later, Aristotle mused on the differences between different types of monarchy, noting that

²⁶⁶ E.g., Hērodotos 1.47.5-6 (ὁ Λυδῶν βασιλεὺς Κροῖσος) and 1.77.7 (Ἄμασιν βασιλεύοντα Αἰγύπτου). An earlier attestation is found in a graffito from 593 BC, left by Greek mercenaries in Egyptian service at Abu Simbel, referring to Psametik II: βασιλέος ... Ψαματίχο; see Vittmann 2003: 200.

²⁶⁷ E.g., Hērodotos 3.63.8 (βασιλεὺς Καμβύσης); 3.128.16 (βασιλεὺς Δαρείος); 7.35.9 (βασιλεὺς μὲν Ξέρξης); Thucydides 1.13.6 (Κύρου Περσῶν πρώτου βασιλεύοντος). Aeschylus, *Persians*, sometimes uses *anax* for the Persian king: ἄναξ Ξέρξης βασιλεὺς (ln. 5) and ἄναξ Δαρείε (ln. 787).

²⁶⁸ Xenophōn, *Hellenica* 5.1.30-31, cites the main provisions of “the peace set down by the king” (ἦν βασιλεὺς εἰρήνην καταπέμποι) in the name of Ἀρταξέρξης βασιλεὺς.

²⁶⁹ E.g., Hērodotos 1.6.1-2: “Croisos was of Lydian birth, the son of Alyattēs, *tyrannos* of the peoples this side of the river Halys” (Κροῖσος ἦν Λυδὸς μὲν γένος, παῖς δὲ Ἀλυάττω, τύραννος δὲ ἐθνῶν τῶν ἐντὸς Ἄλως ποταμοῦ); 1.96.4-5: “This Dēiokēs was always seeking to acquire the *tyrannis*” (Οὗτος ὁ Δηϊόκης ἐρασθεὶς τυραννίδος ἐποίηε τοιαύδε).

non-Greek (i.e., “barbarian”) kingship was similar to Greek *tyrannis* in the sense that in it the people were reduced to being slaves or servants (*douloi*) of an autocratic monarch.²⁷⁰

Basileia in the Hellenistic Age

Macedon, a “tribal” society on the margins of the Greek world, had preserved its kingship from time immemorial into the Classical Period.²⁷¹ Macedon’s early kings were not particularly impressive, and neither was the extent of their kingdom. However, Macedon’s *basileis* were apparently powerful in comparison with most Greek officials bearing the same title, since Hērodotos employs the term *tyrannis* to describe their authority.²⁷² This power was augmented in the reign of Philip (Philippos II, 359–336 BC), who overcame internal and external threats to royal authority and, using war and diplomacy alike, picked off Macedon’s neighbors one by one (including Thessaly, Thrace, and a multitude of Greek colonies along the Aegean coast).²⁷³ Having enlarged his territory and amassed resources of all kinds exceeding those of other Greek states, Philip defeated Athens, Thebes, and their allies, and imposed a new common peace on Greece in 338 BC. This resulted in the formation of the League of Corinth, which was aimed against the common enemy of the Greeks,

²⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Politics* 1285a (3.14.6): “But alongside this there is another type of monarchy, examples of which are some of the kingships among the barbarians. They all have a power much like tyrannies, although it is both lawful and hereditary. For the barbarians are more servile by nature than the Greeks, and the Asiatics than the Europeans, so they endure despotic rule without resentment” (παρὰ ταύτην δ’ ἄλλο μοναρχίας εἶδος, οἷαι παρ’ ἐνίοις εἰσι βασιλείαι τῶν βαρβάρων. ἔχουσι δ’ αὐταὶ τὴν δύναμιν πᾶσαι παραπλησίαν τυραννίσιν, εἰσὶ δὲ κατὰ νόμον καὶ πάτριαι· διὰ γὰρ τὸ δουλικώτεροι εἶναι τὰ ἦθη φύσει οἱ μὲν βάρβαροι τῶν Ἑλλήνων, οἱ δὲ περὶ τὴν Ἀσίαν τῶν περὶ τὴν Εὐρώπην, ὑπομένουσι τὴν δεσποτικὴν ἀρχὴν οὐδὲν δυσχεραίνοντες).

²⁷¹ On kingship and other institutions in Macedon, see Hammond and Griffith 1979: 152-165, 383-389.

²⁷² Hērodotos 8.137.1-3: “It was this Alexandros’ seventh ancestor Perdikkas, who had founded the *tyrannis* of the Makedones in this way” (Τοῦ δὲ Ἀλεξάνδρου τούτου ἑβδομος γενέτωρ Περδίκκης ἐστὶ ὁ κτησάμενος τῶν Μακεδόνων τὴν τυραννίδα τρόπον τοιῶδε).

²⁷³ For the reign of Philip, see Hammond and Griffith 1979: 203-698.

Persia, and was led by the king of Macedon as commander-in-chief (*stratēgos autokratōr*).²⁷⁴ Although this was theoretically an *ad hoc* honor and did not make the king of Macedon the monarch of Greece, it did establish a pattern in which the Greek city states, albeit autonomous, were pressed to accept a powerful king as their overlord.²⁷⁵ But even Philip placed surprisingly little emphasis on the actual title that described his authority — at home or abroad — preferring to allow his name to carry its own weight.²⁷⁶

Although Philip was struck down by an assassin before he could carry out his designs, his plans were completed by his even more ambitious and successful son Alexander the Great (Alexandros III, 336–323 BC).²⁷⁷ The new monarch declared that “the king has changed only in name,”²⁷⁸ but whereas his father had tempered his own ambition with shrewd pragmatism, Alexander seems to have modeled himself after the greatest of Greek heroes — his paternal ancestor Hēraklēs and his maternal ancestor Achilles.²⁷⁹ Alexander rapidly crushed opposition at home and in the northern peripheries of Macedon within the first year of his reign. He then advanced on Thebes, which had tried to incite the other Greek states to ally with the great king of Persia to free the Greeks from the “tyrant of Greece.” Annoyed by the opposition and stung by this inversion of his own propaganda,²⁸⁰ Alexander made an example of Thebes by razing it to the ground. Having reconstituted his father’s League of Corinth, he commenced his invasion of the Persian Empire in

²⁷⁴ Diodōros 16.89.2-3, on Philip making war on the Persians on behalf of the Greeks (πρὸς Πέρσας ὑπὲρ τῶν Ἑλλήνων πόλεμον ἄρασθαι) and the Greeks electing him commander-in-chief (literally, “general plenipotentiary”) of Greece (τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐλομένων αὐτὸν στρατηγὸν αὐτοκράτορα τῆς Ἑλλάδος).

²⁷⁵ Diodōros 16.89.1, on Philip’s ambition to become the “leader of all Greece” (πάσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἡγεμῶν).

²⁷⁶ On this “understatement” see Errington 1974: 20-37, and Hammond and Griffith 1979: 387-389.

²⁷⁷ On Alexander the Great’s reign, especially in Macedon and Europe, see Hammond and Walbank 1988: 3-94. On this and his eastern conquests, see for example Bosworth 1988.

²⁷⁸ Diodōros 17.2.2.

²⁷⁹ Plutarch, *Alexander* 2.1; cf. Diodōros 17.1.1.

²⁸⁰ Diodōros 17.9.5-6.

334 BC by landing at Troy and sacrificing to the shade of Achilles as both ancestor and precursor.²⁸¹

By 327 BC, the conquest of Persia was complete, and Alexander headed on to India intent on further conquests to match the god Dionysos and to outmatch Hēraklēs.²⁸² When his troops refused to share his boundless ambition and go any farther by crossing yet another river in India, Alexander finally gave in after some furious sulking worthy of Achilles, and headed back west.²⁸³ Although the end came unexpectedly soon, in 323 BC at Babylon, in a mere decade Alexander had surpassed any conqueror before his time. And he had also transformed, perhaps unconsciously, the meaning of the term *basileus*.

While Alexander had begun his career as *basileus* of Macedon (both the title and the qualifier remained understated as in the past) and as leader (*hēgēmōn*) or commander-in-chief (*stratēgos autokratōr*) of Greece, his conquests, court practices, and personal mentality altered both the standing and the concept of a *basileus*. One source of this transformation was the “orientalization” of the conqueror. Although he had waged the war to avenge the Persian injuries to Greece,²⁸⁴ Alexander gradually assumed the additional guise of a foreign monarch. This transformation is foreshadowed by Alexander’s favorable treatment and virtual adoption of the family of his fugitive Persian opponent, Darius III (336–330 BC), and becomes clearer still when he was welcomed in Egypt as a liberator and legitimate pharaoh.²⁸⁵ After further victories over the enemy, Alexander began to call himself the

²⁸¹ Arrian 1.12.1; Diodōros 17.17.3; Plutarch, *Alexander* 15.4. That the Trojan War was seen as an early stage of the longer and ongoing conflict between the Greeks and their Asiatic neighbors is evident from Hērodotos 1.3-5.

²⁸² Arrian 5.26.5.

²⁸³ Arrian 5.28.

²⁸⁴ Diodōros 17.4.9, on Alexander being appointed the commander-in-chief of Greece (στρατηγὸν αὐτοκράτορα τῆς Ἑλλάδος) and leading the joint expedition against the Persians over their offenses against the Greeks (ἐπὶ τοὺς Πέρσας ὑπὲρ ὧν εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἐξήμαρτον).

²⁸⁵ On the considerate treatment of Darius’ family, see Diodōros 17.35.1-38.2; Arrian 2.11-12 and 3.22.6; Plutarch, *Alexander* 21.1-4; on Alexander in Egypt, see Diodōros 17.48-49 and Arrian 3.1. Cf. Bosworth 1988: 70-74.

“*basileus* of Asia.”²⁸⁶ This novel title may have been a sop to the sensibilities of the Greeks — which might have balked at their leader becoming “*basileus* of Persia” — as well as a claim to wider dominion than that of the Persian monarchs.²⁸⁷ After Darius’ murder in 330 BC, Alexander, who had already avenged Greece by torching Persepolis,²⁸⁸ assumed the role of avenger of his former rival. He surrendered Darius’ corpse to his kinsmen for a traditional royal burial, and later tried and executed in a particularly gruesome fashion the usurping king Bēssos (who had claimed the Persian throne under the name Artaxerxēs V) as a regicide.²⁸⁹ Alexander’s propaganda as Darius’ avenger and rightful heir carried so much conviction — he had already avenged his own murdered father — that at least one of his historians alleged that Darius himself had endorsed Alexander as his successor while still alive:

O King Zeus, to whom it is ordained to regulate the affairs of kings among men, I ask you to protect first and foremost my empire of the Persians and Medes, as you gave it to me; but if by your will I am no longer to be king of Asia, then hand over power to none but Alexander.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁶ Arrian 2.14.8, where Alexander demands to be called “lord of all Asia” (ὡς οὖν ἐμοῦ τῆς Ἀσίας ἀπάσης κυρίου ὄντος ἦκε πρὸς ἐμέ), and 2.14.9, where he claims the title “king of Asia” (βασιλέα τῆς Ἀσίας). In Plutarch, *Alexander* 34.1, Alexander was proclaimed “king of Asia” (βασιλεὺς δὲ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἀλέξανδρος ἀνηγορευμένος) after his victory at Gaugamēla, as the Persian Empire seemed defeated. In Diodōros 17.36.5, however, the rule of Asia (τὴν ὅλην τῆς Ἀσίας ἡγεμονίαν) seems still inextricably connected with that of the Persians, which is confirmed in 17.77.4, where Alexander is said to have “imitated Persian luxury and the extravagance of the kings of the Asiatics” (ἤρξατο ζηλοῦν τὴν Περσικὴν τρυφὴν καὶ τὴν πολυτέλειαν τῶν Ἀσιανῶν βασιλέων).

²⁸⁷ According to Arrian 2.14.9, Alexander saw “king of Asia” as a higher status than “king of Persia” in his instructions to Darius: “send to me as to the king of Asia, and not as to an equal” (ὡς πρὸς βασιλέα τῆς Ἀσίας πέμπε, μηδὲ ἅ ἐξ ἴσου ἐπίστελλε). For the title “king of Asia,” see especially Fredericksmeyer 2000.

²⁸⁸ Diodōros 17.72.5, where the burning of Persepolis is interpreted as retribution for the Persian burning of Athens in 480 BC.

²⁸⁹ On the end of Darius, see Diodōros 17.73.1-4, Arrian 3.21.10-3.22, and Plutarch, *Alexander* 43; on the trial and execution of Bēssos, see Diodōros 17.83.9, Arrian 3.30.3-5 and 4.7.3, and Plutarch, *Alexander* 43.3.

²⁹⁰ Arrian 4.20.3: ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ, ὅτω ἐπιτέτραπται νέμειν τὰ βασιλέων πράγματα ἐν ἀνθρώποις, σὺ νῦν μάλιστα μὲν ἐμοὶ φύλαξον Περσῶν τε καὶ Μήδων τὴν ἀρχήν, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ ἔδωκας· εἰ δὲ δὴ ἐγὼ οὐκέτι σοὶ βασιλεὺς τῆς Ἀσίας, σὺ δὲ μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ ὅτι μὴ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ παραδοῦναι τὸ ἐμὸν κράτος.

When Alexander assumed the role of avenger and legitimate successor of Darius III, he also began to transform the image of the ruler. While even the strongest of Greek *basileis* had enjoyed relatively limited power and wealth, Alexander now commanded these to an unprecedented degree. Moreover, he presided over an increasingly hybrid court in which numerous members of the native — mostly Persian and Median — nobility represented a degree of continuity with the non-Greek past. In that sense Alexander had taken over the Achaemenid Empire, rather than destroyed it. He had seated himself on Darius' throne both physically and metaphorically, albeit a little awkwardly in both cases.²⁹¹ This awkwardness is illustrated by an early incident at Susa, where Alexander mounted the Persian king's throne only to find his feet dangling in the air. To remedy this embarrassing predicament — which may have implied that the conqueror was not fit to sit on the throne of Persia after all — a table had to be placed on top of the throne's footstool. This provoked some tears from a sentimental palace eunuch and resulted in some uncharacteristic hesitation on the part of Alexander, who was caught between trying to win over the Persians with consideration and respect and satisfying his retinue's desire to behave like a conqueror among the conquered.²⁹²

In the end, Alexander surrounded himself with luxury suitable for his new status but provoked critical comment from many Greek observers and authors. He assumed many elements of the traditional Persian and Median royal costume, which insulted Greek sentiment, since it showed a concession to a foreign (“barbarian”) culture. Alexander also allowed and evidently encouraged the Near Eastern practice of performing obeisance (*proskynēsis*) in front of the king, a practice which — when adopted by some but not all of his Greco-Macedonian retinue — caused virulent contention at

²⁹¹ E.g., Plutarch, *Alexander* 56.2: Ἀλέξανδρον ἐν τῷ Δαρείου θρόνῳ καθήμενον.

²⁹² Diodōros 17.66.3-6.

court.²⁹³ While Alexander was sensitive enough to attempt a compromise between his various options — for example he absolutely refused to wear trousers and did not *require* obeisance from his fellow Greeks — his was clearly a different kingship from that of his ancestors.²⁹⁴ Some of Alexander's measures to bridge the gap between his two sets of subjects, like the marriages at Susa in 324 BC, proved very popular²⁹⁵; his new style of kingship, however, proved dramatically divisive.

As we have seen, the Greeks imagined Persian kingship as something more autocratic than their own notions of *basileia*, which is why it was occasionally described as a *tyrannis*, and Greek writers liked distinguishing between the freedom of the Greek citizen and the servility or slavery of the Persian subject. But another notion that comes into play is their impression that Persian kings were deemed divine. This notion was, of course, mistaken, and even the greatest of Persian monarchs, his ponderous royal titulary notwithstanding, claimed to be no more than the appointee of Ahuramazdā and to govern with divinely bestowed royal charisma or glory (*farnah*).²⁹⁶ But that is not something that the Greeks understood in the same terms. To them the power and opulence of, and especially the respect accorded to the Persian monarch were treatment otherwise reserved only for gods. One of the obvious examples of this was the practice of *proskynēsis*, which featured various gestures of reverence including anything from blowing a kiss to actual prostration and kissing the ground before the monarch.²⁹⁷ Much the same acts were practiced in Greek society, but there only in front of statues of gods. Faced by this eastern practice, most Greeks would have seen little or no

²⁹³ Consider the case with Kallisthenēs: Arrian 4.10-12 and Plutarch, *Alexander* 52-55.

²⁹⁴ Diodōros 17.77.4-7; Arrian 4.7.4-5, 4.9.9, and 7.29.4; Plutarch, *Alexander* 45.1-2.

²⁹⁵ Arrian 7.4.7, writes that the marriages at Susa and Alexander's largesse at that occasion were the most popular of all his actions (καὶ τοῦτο, εἴπερ τι ἄλλο, ἔδοξε δημοτικόν τε καὶ φιλέταιρον πράξει Ἀλέξανδρον).

²⁹⁶ On the somewhat ill-defined concept of *farnah* (earlier Avestan *xvaranah*), see Gnoli 1999, also Briant 2002: 248, Wiesehöfer 1996: 30, Pourshariati 2009: 48 and 354, McEwan 1934: 18-21. Cf. Taylor 1931: 3-4, 250-255.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Taylor 1931: 247-249. On *proskynēsis* and Alexander, see especially Balsdon 1950: 371-382.

difference between the treatment of king and god. This is not to say that the Greeks necessarily and explicitly dismissed this imagined divine kingship of the Persian monarch. When describing the crossing of the Persian king Xerxēs I (Xšayaršā, 486–465 BC) into Europe en route to Greece, Hērodotos has a local Greek exclaim:

O Zeus, why have you assumed the likeness of a Persian man and changed your name from Dios to Xerxēs, leading all people with you to remove Hellas from its place?²⁹⁸

If Hērodotos' observer saw the Persian king as Zeus in disguise, another Greek who wrote on Xerxēs' (mis)adventures in Greece, Aeschylus, made the characters of his tragedy *The Persians* greet the Persian queen Atossa as follows:

O Queen, most exalted of deep-girdled Persian ladies, venerable mother of Xerxēs, wife of Dareios, hail! You were the consort of the Persians' god and are also the mother of a god.²⁹⁹

Apart from describing Persian kings as gods, Aeschylus' characters also invoked the spirit (*daimōn*) of Darius, which may be a distorted reflection of the traditional reverence for royal ancestors in the Near East and the concept of *farnah* mentioned above.³⁰⁰ In any case, Aeschylus is a source for what Greeks thought of the Persian conception of kingship, rather than what the Persians themselves believed. Even if the divinity of Persian kings was largely the result of Greek imagination, as Alexander was becoming more and more Persian a king in the eyes of his Greco-Macedonian retinue, he was consequently becoming a divine king, too. That the issue of *proskynēsis* in front of Alexander became a scandal at his court is particularly telling in this respect: while some of his followers were happy to flatter and please the king, others held that this practice was both un-Greek

²⁹⁸ Hērodotos 7.56.2: Ὡ Ζεῦ, τί δὴ ἀνδρὶ εἰδόμενος Πέρσῃ καὶ οὐνομα ἀντὶ Διὸς Ξέρξην θέμενος ἀνάστατον τὴν Ἑλλάδα θέλεις ποιῆσαι, ἄγων πάντας ἀνθρώπους.

²⁹⁹ Aeschylus, *Persians* lns. 155-157 (ὦ βαθυζώνων ἀνασσα Περσίδων ὑπερτάτη, μήτηρ ἢ Ξέρξου γεραία, χαίρει, Δαρείου γύναι· θεοῦ μὲν εὐνάτειρα Περσῶν, θεοῦ δὲ καὶ μήτηρ ἔφυς). Cf. the discussion in McEwan 1934: 19-21 and Dvornik 1966: 174.

³⁰⁰ Taylor 1931: 3-5, 253-255 on the Persian concepts of *fravaši* and *farnah* and Greek *daimōn*.

and inappropriate for a mortal.³⁰¹ In the end, Alexander had his way, while seemingly steering a middle course between “orientalism” and flattery on the one hand, and traditional Greek restraint on the other. This development, completed under Alexander’s successors, resulted in new model of kingship and new significance for the term *basileus*.

As we have seen, Alexander’s reconceptualization of the *basileus* as an autocratic monarch somehow superior to the rest of humanity, had something to do with his assumption of the throne of “Asia” and the partial integration of native traditions, even if these were somewhat misinterpreted by the Greeks. A more accurate native contribution to Alexander’s association with the divine had in fact occurred earlier, in Egypt. Here Alexander was seen as liberator from Persian rule and was accepted as traditional pharaoh, despite being, in fact, yet another foreign conqueror. More blatantly, when he visited the oracle of Zeus-Ammōn (i.e., Amūn-Rēʿ, whom, as king of the gods, the Greeks equated with their Zeus) in the Libyan Desert, Alexander was not only assured that he would conquer the world, but he was also greeted as the son of the god.³⁰² This was, of course, a standard way of conceptualizing the sacred character of any pharaoh’s kingship; but to Alexander it sounded like an assurance for the fulfillment of his great ambition to surpass even the most illustrious of his forebearers, Hēraklēs and Achilles, each of them credited with one divine parent.³⁰³

³⁰¹ Cf. the arguments of Anaxarkhos (that Alexander is worthy of being honored as god even while alive, as he would surely be honored so when dead) and Kallisthenēs (that Alexander is worthy of the highest honors that are appropriate for *mortal* men) in Arrian 4.10 and 4.11, respectively. Cf. the treatment of the issue in Taylor 1931: 18-21, Bosworth 1988: 284-288 and Worthington 2004: 280-282.

³⁰² Diodōros 17.51; Plutarch, *Alexander* 27.4-5; Arrian 3.3.2 provides the least amount of detail regarding Alexander’s questions and the oracle’s answers, but he makes the most explicit connection with Alexander’s goals: he wanted to rival his ancestral heroes and to be confirmed as another son of the supreme god. Taylor 1931: 4-6, also comparing the Egyptian royal *kʿ* with the Persian royal *farnah*.

³⁰³ On Alexander at Siwah, see especially Bosworth 1988: 282-283 and Worthington 2004: 118-121, 278-279; more generally on Alexander and Egyptian godhead, Taylor 1931: 14-18.

Welcome as Egyptian acquiescence with Alexander's hopes of divinity must have been, Egyptian practice was too exotic and idiosyncratic to account by itself for the change in the conceptualization of kingship. It had not done that to Persian kingship in the past, and it could not do that for Alexander, who left Egypt, never to return alive, by 331 BC. Alexander's visit had left him with a lasting and positive impression, and he later turned to Ammōn to confirm the deification of his comrade Hēphaistiōn and planned his own burial at the god's oracle.³⁰⁴ However, insofar as any natives became prominent at Alexander's court, they came from Persia and the eastern provinces of his empire. We may expect, then, that these eastern influences should have been more decisive in the transformation of kingship. But, as we have seen, apart from providing the model of a more autocratic and ostentatious monarchy, Persian practice did not feature a divine king, except perhaps in cultural mistranslation. That might have been nearly enough, especially for an Alexander searching for any underpinning of his apparently desired divinity — such as the question he allegedly asked of Indian sages, “How can a man become a god?” (Their answer: “By doing something a man cannot do.”).³⁰⁵ While Persian and Egyptian precedents surely contributed to Alexander's enhanced image of his own authority, the concept of a divine king had important Greek roots, too.

Although Classical Greece had known no divine kings of its own, the line between human and divine had already been blurred quite frequently in Greek culture. This was a result of the ubiquitous hero cults dedicated to the real or imagined larger-than-life leaders that later Greeks placed in the Heroic Age.³⁰⁶ What qualified these persons to be honored as heroes is ill-defined and complex. Some were simply renowned ancient rulers or leaders in war, like Adrastos of Argos.

³⁰⁴ Diodōros 17.115.6 and 18.3.5. Cf. Badian 1996: 25; Worthington 2004: 282.

³⁰⁵ Plutarch, *Alexander* 64.9. Cf. Worthington 2004: 273, 283.

³⁰⁶ For the close relationship between *basileis* and heroes, see Van Wees 2006 and Antonaccio 2006.

Others were specifically said to have one divine parent, as with Hēraklēs as son of Zeus, Thēseus as son of Poseidōn, and Achilles as son of Thetis.

According to Pausanias, who recorded a plethora of heroic traditions in his descriptions of Greek cities and sanctuaries in the second century AD, in the Heroic Age “men were changed into gods, who have honors paid to them to this day.”³⁰⁷ But the justice (*dikaiosynē*) and piety (*eusebeia*) to which Pausanias credited the superhuman status of heroes are all too often absent from the myths told about them, and even he doubted the divine parentage of some of these heroes.³⁰⁸ The library ascribed to Apollodōros gave several conflicting details about the parentage of the famed Spartan twins Kastōr and Polydeukēs, in one case asserting that they came to be called Dioskouroi (“the lads of Zeus”) simply because of their virtue or manliness (*andreia*).³⁰⁹ Moreover, we are told that, for all of their virtues and alleged divine descent, the Dioskouroi had to be *transformed* into gods by the will of Zeus, and that so was Hēraklēs.³¹⁰ In other words, mortals became or came to be considered divine, whether this was interpreted as divine favor and fiat or as a mark of subsequent appreciation and glorification by a community.

Although the vast majority of such heroes populated the pages of Greek myth, occasionally contemporary Greeks could attain or reach for this status. In 422 BC, the Spartan Brasidas, who had fallen in battle, was honored posthumously as the (re)founder of Amphipolis, receiving the sacrifices

³⁰⁷ Pausanias 8.2.4 (ἐπεὶ τοὶ καὶ θεοὶ τότε ἐγίνοντο ἐξ ἀνθρώπων, οἱ γέρα καὶ ἐς τὸδε ἔτι ἔχουσιν). Taylor 1931: 7-8.

³⁰⁸ E.g., Pausanias 5.1.6, on the parentage of Oinomaos of Pisa, and 8.4.6, on the parentage of Autolykos; in 2.18.6, he implies that the Dioskouroi and Helenē were children of the Spartan king Tyndareōs, not Zeus.

³⁰⁹ Apollodōros 3.11.2 (καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀνδρείαν ἐκλήθησαν ἀμφότεροι Διόσκουροι). Elsewhere the Dioskouroi are described as sons of Zeus (1.9.16) or Polydeukēs as son of Zeus and Kastōr as son of Tyndareōs (3.10.6).

³¹⁰ Apollodōros 3.11.2 on the Dioskouroi (μεταστάντων δὲ εἰς θεοὺς τῶν Διοσκούρων), and 2.8.1 on Hēraklēs (μεταστάντος δὲ Ἡρακλέους εἰς θεοῦς) echoing Isokratēs' *Address to Philip* 5.132, “Heraklēs, who because of his virtue was exalted by his father to the rank of a god” (Ἡρακλέους πεφυκότας, ὃν ὁ γεννήσας διὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν εἰς θεοῦς ἀνήγαγε).

due to a hero, and commemorated by games and annual offerings.³¹¹ Another Spartan, Lysandros, was honored with cultic games, paeans, altars, and sacrifices by various Greek communities in Anatolia and the islands as their liberator from Athenian tyranny in 405 BC, in this instance during his lifetime and with his cooperation.³¹² Soon after, the Spartan king Agēsilaos II (398–361 BC) wittily refused the divine honors offered him by the Thasians, suggesting that if they had the power to turn men into gods, they had better start with themselves.³¹³ In 336 BC, Philip of Macedon associated himself with the divine when he added a statue of himself to the statues of the twelve gods at the very celebration where he met his destiny.³¹⁴ He had recently arranged for the construction of a rotunda housing the statues of himself and select family members at Olympia, which has been interpreted as a hero-shrine (*herōon*).³¹⁵ Philip, too, had founded or refounded cities, and like Brasidas at Amphipolis, such a founder (*ktistēs*) was typically treated to a hero cult by his foundation.³¹⁶ Five centuries later, the orator Aelius Aristides claimed that Philip received sacrifices as if he were a god by the same Amphipolitans that had once honored Brasidas as their founding hero.³¹⁷ Even if this late testimony is suspect, it is clear that a recognition of superhuman stature could be attained by select inhabitants of classical Greece, at least posthumously. And if Philip had received

³¹¹ Thucydides, 5.11 (τὸν Βρασιδᾶν οἱ σύμμαχοι πάντες σὺν ὅπλοις ἐπιστόμενοι δημοσίᾳ ἔθαψαν ἐν τῇ πόλει πρὸ τῆς νῦν ἀγορᾶς οὔσης· καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οἱ Ἀμφιπολίται, περιεῖρξαντες αὐτοῦ τὸ μνημεῖον, ὡς ἥρωί τε ἐντέμνουσι καὶ τιμὰς δεδώκασιν ἀγῶνας καὶ ἐτησίους θυσίας, καὶ τὴν ἀποικίαν ὡς οἰκιστῆ προσέθεσαν).

³¹² Plutarch, *Lysandros* 18. Taylor 1931: 11.

³¹³ Plutarch, *Moralia* 3: 210d. Taylor 1931: 11-12.

³¹⁴ Diodōros 16.92.5. At 16.95.1, Diodōros concludes that Philippos had not only made himself the greatest of the kings in Europe (μέγιστος γενόμενος τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἐπὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης βασιλέων), but also had included himself as a throne-companion of the twelve gods (τοῖς δώδεκα θεοῖς σύνθρονον καταριθμήσας). Cf. Dvornik 1966: 208-209; Bosworth 1988: 281; Worthington 2004: 274-278.

³¹⁵ On these issues see the cautious treatment in Hammond and Griffith 1979: 691-695; with less reservations, Taylor 1931: 12-13. The precise function of the Philippeion rotunda at Olympia, which is in ruins but was described by Pausanias 5.20, remains unclear, as the statues (*eikones*) of Philip and his closest relatives installed there are not specified as cultic statues (*agalмата*), although they are listed among the statues of gods by Pausanias in 5.17.

³¹⁶ As in the case of Philip at Philippoi, for which see Chaniotes 2003: 434.

³¹⁷ Aristides, *Symmakhikos* 1: 715 (ὧν οἱ μὲν ἔθυσον ὡς θεῶ, οἱ δὲ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ νεῶν εἶχον δεικνύναι).

such honors, it is only natural that Alexander, who vastly exceeded his father's conquests, wealth, and city foundations, should have felt entitled to the same or more.³¹⁸

This blurring of human and divine had additional roots in the cult of personality leaning toward monarchy reflected in the writings of fourth-century BC Athenian authors, especially those dissatisfied with the shortcomings of Athenian democratic politics. The general and historian Xenophōn had developed such a cult of strong personalities in his writings, including the Persian king Cyrus II (in the *Cyropaedia*).³¹⁹ Plato had written of entrusting supreme authority to a “philosopher king”,³²⁰ while Aristotle, even while adopting a different philosophical approach in his *Politics*, concurred that a “best man” ought to rule a polity as king.³²¹ Isokratēs looked around for inspirational monarchs who could lead all Greeks against common foes, considering Dionysios I of Syracuse and Iasōn of Pherai before settling on Philip of Macedon.³²² He also eulogized Euagoras, king of Salamis in Cyprus, that he was as worthy of being considered “a god among men, or a mortal divinity,” as anyone else praised in such terms by the poets.³²³

However, like the flattery describing Ḫammu-rāpi of Babylon in very similar terms, this phraseology in itself fell short of attributing to the mortal king the trappings of a fully-fledged god.³²⁴

³¹⁸ In general, Taylor 1931: 13-14. On Alexander's cities, see Fraser 1996. Plutarch, *Moralia* 4: 328e, attributes to the city foundation policy a notable cultural effect: “Alexander established more than seventy cities among savage tribes, and sowed all Asia with Greek magistracies, and thus overcame its barbarian and brutish way of life. Although few of us read Plato's *Laws*, yet myriads have made use of Alexander's and continue to use them” (Ἀλέξανδρος δ' ὑπὲρ ἑβδομήκοντα πόλεις βαρβάρους ἔθνεσιν ἐγκτίσας καὶ κατασπεύρας τὴν Ἀσίαν Ἑλληνικοῖς τέλεσι, τῆς ἀνημέρου καὶ θηριώδους ἐκράτησε διαίτης. καὶ τοὺς μὲν Πλάτωνος ὀλίγοι νόμους ἀναγιγνώσκομεν, τοῖς δ' Ἀλεξάνδρου μυριάδες ἀνθρώπων ἐχρήσαντο καὶ χρώνται).

³¹⁹ Dvornik 1966: 191.

³²⁰ Plato, *The Republic* 445d, 576e, and *The Statesman* 291e-303e.

³²¹ Aristotle, *Politics* 1284a-1284b (3.13.13-25). Cf. Balsdon 1950: 368-370; Dvornik 1966: 177-187.

³²² Dvornik 1966: 195-204.

³²³ Isokratēs 9.72: λέγοντες ὡς ἦν θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἢ δαίμων θνητός. This type of extravagant praise goes back at least to Theognis of Megara in the sixth century BC: Balsdon 1950: 365.

³²⁴ Cf. Balsdon 1950: 365; Bosworth 1988: 280.

Isokratēs himself qualifies such notions, writing to Euagoras’ son and successor Nikoklēs, that, although “when men look at their honors, their wealth, and their powers, they all think that those who are in the position of kings are equals of the gods,” this was a fallacy readily revealed by kings’ all too apparent troubles, fears, and sorry mortal ends.³²⁵ Isokratēs accordingly urged Nikoklēs to prioritize self-restraint and propriety as the proper attributes of kingship. This does present a pointed contrast to some of the more self-indulgent excesses of Hellenistic kings, and Isokratēs’ discourse found a long afterlife in Greek literature, including Agapētos’ counsel to the Roman emperor Justinian I in the sixth century, and Patriarch Phōtios’ advice to the newly converted Bulgarian king Boris I in the ninth.³²⁶ But it is not the philosophical underpinnings of monarchy that are our main concern.

The cult of Hellenistic monarchs thus emanated from a tradition of Greeks blurring the line between human and divine, combined with more authoritative Near Eastern kingship (and Greek notions about it), and with the more explicit associations between that kingship and the divine. The ruler cult, which went beyond the traditional bounds of Greek posthumous hero-worship by treating the monarch, eventually, as a god while he (or she) was still alive, has been described as one of the most characteristic features of Hellenistic kingship.³²⁷ Such assertions were open to question and ridicule outside the appropriate context, as in the case of Alexander’s troops mocking his claim that Ammōn was his father.³²⁸ Alexander’s assertions of divine parentage and *alleged* demand for divine

³²⁵ Isokratēs, *To Nikoklēs* 2.5: ὅταν μὲν γὰρ ἀποβλέψωσιν εἰς τὰς τιμὰς καὶ τοὺς πλοῦτους καὶ τὰς δυναστείας, ἰσοθέους ἅπαντες νομίζουσι τοὺς ἐν ταῖς μοναρχίαις ὄντας.

³²⁶ Dvornik 1966: 200-201.

³²⁷ Dvornik 1966: 205. For the Hellenistic ruler cult see Taylor 1931: 24-34; Mooren 1983; Green 1990: 396-413; Chaniotes 2003.

³²⁸ Diodōros 17.108.3.

honors in Greece,³²⁹ is said to have led to bitter debates in the Greek city states. At Athens, Dēmosthenēs came under attack for having said that “Alexander could be the son of Zeus and of Poseidon if he wanted to be,” and may have made a motion “to erect a statue of Alexander, the king and invincible god,” while a Spartan named Damis stated, “We concede to Alexander that, if he so wishes, he may be called a god.”³³⁰ Both remarks appear to be tinged with sarcasm, but even if he had made no formal demand to receive divine honors, Alexander clearly desired them. Other communities, especially in western Anatolia, appear to have voted divine honors to Alexander readily, perhaps in because he had delivered them from Persian rule and thus stood as their savior (*sōtēr*).³³¹ Even if this were motivated primarily by Alexander’s personal vanity, it would soon bear fruit in the form of an enduring model of Hellenistic kingship; ironically, this required Alexander’s death, which occurred in June 323 BC, at Babylon.

Alexander was succeeded as king jointly by his half-brother and posthumous son. Neither king, however, was able to govern, as one was an infant and the other mentally impaired. Actual authority passed to a volatile group of Alexander’s officers, who parceled out the provinces amongst themselves and then turned on the centralizing authority of the effective regent, Perdikkas, whom they eliminated in 321 BC. Over the following five decades, Alexander’s former officers, now his Diadokhoi (Successors), would sideline and eliminate his biological family. Five would take the royal

³²⁹ As shown already by Hogarth 1887 and Balsdon 1950: 383-388, this oft-cited accusation appears to be unfounded. Taylor 1931: 21-24, is less skeptical, but still provides a pertinent discussion.

³³⁰ On Dēmosthenēs: Hyperidēs, *Against Demosthenēs* 5.7 (συγχωρῶν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ καὶ τοῦ Διὸς καὶ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος εἶναι εἰ βούλοιο, 23 καὶ ἀφικομένου οσοῦς... στήσαι εἰκό[να Ἀλεξάν]δρου βασιλ[έως τοῦ ἀνι]κῆτου θε[οῦ]); cf. Badian 1996: 26. On Damis: Plutarch, *Moralia* 3: 219e (Δάμις πρὸς τὰ ἐπισταλέντα παρὰ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου θεὸν εἶναι ψηφίσασθαι, ‘συγχωροῦμεν,’ ἔφη, ‘Ἀλεξάνδρῳ, ἂν θέλῃ, θεὸς καλεῖσθαι.’); cf. Aelian, *Varia Historia* 2.19.

³³¹ Balsdon 1950: 365.

title in 306–304 BC and continue in intermittent rivalry with each other.³³² By the time the dust settled in the 270s BC, three chief dynasties of Diadokhoi survived: the Antigonids, now ensconced in Macedon, the Ptolemies in Egypt, and the Seleukids in Babylonia and the East. Lacking close biological connections to Alexander, the Diadokhoi resorted to making up such connections (one posed as an illegitimate son of Philip) or other legitimizing anecdotes (ranging from saving Alexander’s life in battle or hunt to saving — and wearing — his hat and royal diadem during an outing in a Babylonian swamp). The Diadokhoi thus had a vested interest in promoting Alexander’s renown and divinity in every way, as they derived their legitimation through their association with him. In addition to promoting his cult, they minted their first coins with his face on them and imitated his mannerisms, for example the poise of his neck, which generally inclined slightly to the left.³³³

Likewise, Alexander’s Diadokhoi emulated his example as prolific founder or refounder (*ktistēs*) of some cities, and as savior (*sōtēr*) of others, actions that guaranteed at least a minor cult. Thus, Kassandros of Macedon, Lysimakhos of Thrace, Ptolemaios I Sōtēr, Seleukos I Nikatōr, Antigonos I and his son Dēmētrios I all established new cities bearing their names, and often enough those of their spouses and parents.³³⁴ Antigonos and Dēmētrios were given a savior cult as liberators of the Athenians from Kassandros,³³⁵ Antiokhos I Sōtēr earned the same epithet defeating the Galatians, as did Ptolemaios I Sōtēr for lifting Dēmētrios’ siege of Rhodes.³³⁶ Antiokhos II Theos

³³² For the chronology of the formal assumption of *basileia* by the Diadokhoi, see Gruen 2018.

³³³ Diodōros 18.56.2; Plutarch, *Alexander* 4.2: καὶ γὰρ [ὁ] μάλιστα πολλοὶ τῶν διαδόχων ὕστερον καὶ τῶν φίλων ἀπεμιμοῦντο, τὴν τ’ ἀνάτασιν τοῦ αὐχένος εἰς εὐώνυμον ἡσυχῆ κεικλιμένου. Dvornik 1966: 231-232 for a basic discussion of early Ptolemaic coinage. On Alexander’s posthumous divinity, see Taylor 1931: 25-28.

³³⁴ Chaniotes 2003: 436. Most enduringly, Thessalonikē in Greece, bearing the name of Kassandros’ wife.

³³⁵ Billows 1990: 148-150.

³³⁶ Hölbl 2001: 93.

received his epithet, “god,” for restoring democracy in grateful Milētos.³³⁷ The emerging pattern is of conscious emulation of Alexander, pursuing the policies of foundation and benefaction that secured immediate veneration as founder or savior; but for now, full-scale cult as god remained posthumous.

As early as 321 BC, Ptolemaios I Sōtēr of Egypt (323–282 BC) sought to increase his prestige by possession of Alexander’s embalmed remains, which he diverted from their journey home to Macedon and installed in his own province, first at Memphis, then at the new capital Alexandria, Alexander’s most famous urban foundation.³³⁸ Here a major cult of Alexander developed, exceeding the usual honors paid to a Greek city founder, with the Ptolemaic monarchs appointing its chief priests for nearly three centuries.³³⁹ Between founding Ptolemaïs in Upper Egypt (making him *ktistēs*), saving Rhodes from Dēmētrios (making him *sōtēr*) and being treated as a traditional divine pharaoh in Egypt, Ptolemy himself unsurprisingly received divine honors already in his lifetime, although he still had to wait until his death for a fully-fledged Greek cult as god. So did his successors, their cults eventually joined to that of Alexander and served by the same high priest.³⁴⁰ Eventually, the Ptolemies took to arranging incestuous marriages between siblings, starting with Ptolemaios II Philadelphos (285–246 BC) and his full sister Arsinoë II (died 270 BC). While this might seem to be influenced by Egyptian or possibly Elamite/Persian precedents, it was turned from scandal to virtue by the court propagandist Theokritos, who legitimized the new “Sibling Gods” (*Theoi Adelphoi*) by comparing them to the sibling spouses Zeus and Hēra in Greek mythology.³⁴¹ Now, the king and his

³³⁷ Green 1990: 403.

³³⁸ Diodōros 18.26-28; Pausanias 1.6.3. Hölbl 2001: 15.

³³⁹ Hölbl 2001: 92-95. Dvornik 1966: 227 notes that, unusually, Alexander was labeled *theos* in this particular cult, although treated as fully divine.

³⁴⁰ Hölbl 2001: 92-95.

³⁴¹ Hölbl 2001: 36, 112.

spouse became gods even while still alive.³⁴² Moreover, even if preconditioned by Greek hero cults, the cults of Hellenistic kings explicitly treated them as gods, not heroes.³⁴³

The Seleukids acted much like the Ptolemies, adopting divine epithets and honors and engaging in incestuous royal marriages between siblings.³⁴⁴ They founded or refounded more cities than any of their rivals, and dutifully played the role of protector (*sōtēr*) and benefactor (*euergētēs*) of various communities.³⁴⁵ Just as the Ptolemies played the traditional role of pharaohs in Egypt, the Seleukids perpetuated titles and royal models from Babylonia and Persia: “great king,” “legitimate king,” “king of the world,” “king of Babylon,” “king of all countries.”³⁴⁶ After becoming permanently ensconced in the more conservative and humble environment of Macedon in the 270s, the Antigonids adopted a humbler model of kingship, like their predecessor Kassandros (304–297 BC).³⁴⁷ Yet, at Athens, the Antigonid Dēmētrios I had earlier accepted extravagant divine honors for his intervention against Kassandros, and Dēmētrios had been likened to the sun and credited with being the son of Poseidōn and Aphroditē.³⁴⁸ Even pettier dynasts, like the “bourgeois” kings of Pergamon and the kings of Commagene who emerged from the fragmentation of the Seleukid Kingdom,

³⁴² Green 1990: 405-406.

³⁴³ Price 1984: 32-40.

³⁴⁴ Austin 2006: 369 (no. 207), a list of annual priesthood for Seleukos IV Philopatōr and his predecessors from Seleukeia in Pieria. Ogden 1999: 124-127, 140-141, for incestuous marriages.

³⁴⁵ In general, see Ma 1999. On the king as benefactor (*euergētēs*), see Bringmann 1993.

³⁴⁶ Austin 2006: 304 (no. 166), cuneiform cylinder from Babylon, with Antiokhos I Sōtēr titled “great king, legitimate king, king of the world, king of Babylon, king of all countries,” etc.

³⁴⁷ Green 1990: 406.

³⁴⁸ Taylor 1931: 27-28, contrasting Macedon and the rest. Chaniotis 2003: 431; Austin 2006: 91-96.

eventually became the recipients of ruler cults.³⁴⁹ Moreover, the Hellenistic ruler cult spread to the somewhat less Hellenized states of the Parthian Arsakids and the Armenians.³⁵⁰

Between the manpower, territory, and revenue of Hellenistic monarchs and their emulation of Alexander combining Greek hero-worship with more foreign notions of divine or quasi-divine kingship, the Greek term *basileus* had changed substantially in its potential application. From a humble beginning in the Bronze Age, this title now designated, more often than not, monarchs who presented their authority as divine and substantive, if not absolute.³⁵¹ To be sure, this was clearly perceived as flattery, but a flattery that bound the monarch's favor with the subjects' gratitude in mutual cooperation for mutual advantages. In other words, the treatment of the monarch in this fashion was ultimately an ostentatious display of loyalty and gratitude designed to mold his behavior in a beneficial manner.³⁵² The extravagant praise of Dēmētrios in the Athenian hymn composed to welcome him back to the city in 291 BC reflects this social acceptance of a paradoxically mortal divinity:

For the other gods are either far away, or they do not have ears, or they do not exist, or do not take any notice of us, but you we can see present here; you are not made of wood or stone, you are real.³⁵³

This same mortality of the divine king also tended to ensure a modicum of responsibility in his behavior. A ruler, even if flattered as divine, was expected to behave and rule in basic accordance with justice (*dikaiosynē*), recalling the Egyptian and Persian definitions of similar concepts as

³⁴⁹ Chaniotis 2003: 437; Hölbl 2001: 95. The Attalids were deemed gods only posthumously: Taylor 1931: 32-33; Green 1990: 406; on their cults, see more especially Allen 1983: 145-158.

³⁵⁰ Dvornik 1966: 237-239. On the Arsakid ruler cult, see e.g., Dąbrowa 2009, 2010, and Olbrycht 2016.

³⁵¹ It may be worth noting that the title *basileus* was no longer extended to every ruler; certain territorial princes and tribal chieftains had to make do with ostensibly less exalted titles, like *tetrarkhēs* and *phylarkhēs*.

³⁵² Cf. Price 1984: 28-32; Gradel 2002: 59.

³⁵³ Austin 2006: 94; Chaniotis 2003: 431.

imperative responsibilities of kingship. Apart from the dangers already posed by rivals and ambitious relatives, unjust kings could push their subjects to the point of being lynched by them — as in the case of Seleukos VI (for his greedy attempt at excessive taxation) in 93 BC and Ptolemaios XI Alexandros II (for murdering his wife and co-ruler) in 80 BC.³⁵⁴

The development of a Greek model of robust and divine kingship has a natural relevance for the development of the Roman imperial monarchy that emerged on the heels of the last surviving Diadokhoi of Alexander, the Ptolemies. Another part of Hellenistic royal practice arguably inherited by Roman emperors was resorting to association between more than one monarch on the throne. This practice, often called “co-regency,” is found on occasion in Ancient Egypt — although not nearly as frequently as posited by some scholars — and in the Kingdom of Judah, but was generally unfamiliar in the Ancient Near East.³⁵⁵ Among Alexander’s Diadokhoi, however, there was instant and frequent recourse to associations on the throne. The first was arguably that between Alexander’s half-brother Philippos III and posthumous son Alexandros IV in 323 BC, but that association of uncle and nephew, neither of them able to rule on his own, is atypical and took place in very unusual circumstances as a compromise intended to satisfy rival factions at court.³⁵⁶ The more conventional model of associate rule emerged in 306 BC, when Antigonos I and his son Dēmētrios I were declared *basileis*, the first of Alexander’s Diadokhoi to assume kingship in a Greek milieu — Ptolemaios in Egypt and Seleukos in the East were already treated as kings by their non-Greek subjects. Somewhat unusually, in this instance father and son became kings nearly simultaneously — receiving news of his son Dēmētrios’ victory over Ptolemaios in Cyprus, Antigonos was acclaimed *basileus* and crowned

³⁵⁴ Green 1990: 551, 554.

³⁵⁵ Murnane 1977 is still the most extensive treatment of Egyptian coregencies. For Judah, where most of the evidence is implicit in the chronological implication of the Old Testament data, see Galil 1996.

³⁵⁶ Green 1990: 6-8; Errington 2008: 14-15.

with a diadem by his entourage at his urban foundation of Antigonēia in Syria (a precursor of the later Seleukid capital Antioch); Antigonos then dispatched a diadem to his son in Cyprus and there the army hailed both Antigonos and Dēmētrios as *basileis*. The motivation behind this is transparent and universal: Antigonos intended the establishment of his new dynasty and was ensuring that he would be followed by his son. Making his chosen heir king in his own lifetime allowed the father to preempt as much uncertainty and risk at the moment of his passing as possible.³⁵⁷ Similarly hurried associations of sons on their father's throne will be found in the Roman Empire, starting with Gordian I and Gordian II in AD 238 and Valerian and Gratian in AD 253, setting a precedent; in medieval Europe, when he became king in AD 987, Hugues Capet, the "first" Capetian king of France, immediately associated his son Robert II on the throne.³⁵⁸

The practice of association on the throne quickly caught on among other Diadokhoi: Seleukos I Nikatōr associated his son Antiokhos I Sōtēr on the throne in 294 BC, while Ptolemaios I Sōtēr associated his son Ptolemaios II Philadelphos on the throne in 285 BC. The motivation was largely the same, although there were contributing factors at play: Seleukos was deploying his son to govern the more distant "Upper Satrapies" in the east, while Ptolemaios was seeking to exclude from the succession his older sons by a previous marriage.³⁵⁹ Among the Seleukids and Ptolemies, associate rule became very common, the Ptolemies extending this association on the throne to females, usually the king's wife, sometimes his daughter. For example, in 170–164 BC, the Ptolemaic Kingdom was ruled jointly by Ptolemaios VI Philomētōr, his sister and wife Kleopatra II Philomētōr Sōteira, and

³⁵⁷ Billows 1990: 155-160; Gruen 2018: 111-113.

³⁵⁸ Bartlett 2020: 390. Hugues' grandfather Robert I (922–923) and great-uncle Eudes (888–898) had already ruled as kings but had failed to ensconce the family on the throne and are classified as "Robertians" rather than "Capetians." Hugues' association of his son on the throne attempted to secure the family's hold on the crown.

³⁵⁹ Ogden 1999: 69-73, 123-124; Hölbl 2001: 24-25; Errington 2008: 59-60.

their younger brother Ptolemaios VII Euergetēs, later called Physkōn.³⁶⁰ The increased status of royal women and the repeated instances when a woman shared the throne of her husband, father, brother, or son, in a role ranging from regent to senior monarch — most famously, but not exceptionally, Kleopatra VII Thea Neōtera (51–30 BC) — is in itself an innovation in both Greek and Near Eastern culture and a reflection of the growing authority of monarchs who were authoritative, hereditary, and treated as divinities.³⁶¹ This last aspect, divinity, might have helped reconcile a traditional patriarchal society to the increased political importance of royal women. While this had a very limited impact, if any, on later Roman and derivative medieval practice, it confirms the novel character of *basileia*.

The language of symbolic kinship in Hellenistic royal letters.

When it comes to Hellenistic royal correspondence, we find ourselves faced by a stark contrast to the abundant evidence supplied by the Bronze Age palace archives. Here we are at the mercy of the fragmentary and often much later historical narratives, and a selection of royal missives sent mostly to cities or sanctuaries and commemorated by being copied and set up in stone stelae.³⁶² In addition, there survive a number of royal orders sent to royal officials.³⁶³

The inscriptions appear to preserve a single letter sent by one king to another of the same rank, OGIS 1.257. This was written in 109 BC (Year 203 of the Seleukid Era) by a Seleukid “King Antiokhos to King Ptolemaios, also called Alexandros, his brother, greetings.”³⁶⁴ The sender is apparently Antiokhos VIII Epiphanēs (123–97 BC), while the recipient is certainly Ptolemaios X

³⁶⁰ Hölbl 2001: 144.

³⁶¹ On Hellenistic queens, the main general treatment is still Macurdy 1932.

³⁶² Welles 1934: vii.

³⁶³ Collected in convenient translations by TDGR 3 and Austin 2006, together with other texts from Welles 1934.

³⁶⁴ Welles 1934: 289, no. 71: [β]ασιλὲς Ἀντίοχος βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίω τῷ καὶ [Ἀλ]εξάνδρῳ τῷ ἀδελφῷ χαίρειν.

Alexandros I (114–88 BC), while he was king in Cyprus, but not yet in Egypt.³⁶⁵ For both kings, the royal title is given as plain *basileus*, which is standard practice for Hellenistic kings in such documents, and Antiokhos calls Ptolemaios Alexandros his “brother” (*adelphos*). The two kings were indeed related, being first cousins, both grandsons of Ptolemaios VI Philomētōr and Kleopatra II Philomētōr Sōteira through their mothers. Their description as “brothers,” however, is agreed to be an expression of symbolic kinship.³⁶⁶ In view of earlier practice in the Near East, this is to be expected, but one would have hoped for a more substantial corpus of relevant evidence. It is possible that the designation of Laodikē, the queen of the Seleukid Antiokhos III the Great (223–187 BC) as his “sister” (*adelphē*) is also due to the use of symbolic kinship terminology; she was actually his first cousin, the daughter of a king of Pontus and a Seleukid princess.³⁶⁷ The same seems to be true of Kleopatra IV Berenikē III Philadelphos (80 BC), who had been married not to a brother (as suggested by the epithet) but to her uncle, Ptolemaios X Alexandros I,³⁶⁸ and perhaps also for Kleopatra V Tryphaina Philopatōr Philadelphos (58–57 BC), whose husband Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos (80–58 and 55–51 BC) was likewise probably not her brother, but her cousin and uncle.³⁶⁹

The admittedly different class of royal letters to subordinate officials provides more instances of kinship language used to describe the relationship between monarch and administrator. Thus, we find Ptolemaic officials described as the king’s “kinsman” (*syngenēs*) both to others and in speech

³⁶⁵ Welles 1934: 288-293.

³⁶⁶ Welles 1934: 291.

³⁶⁷ Welles 1934: 157-158, no. 36: τῆς ἀδελφῆς βασιλίσσης Λαοδικῆς. She likewise referred to her husband as her brother, in another letter, Austin 2006: 357-358 no. 198.

³⁶⁸ Bennett 1997: 41-43 and Papyrus Adler 12: <https://papyri.info/ddbdp/p.adl;G12/> (accessed, May 1, 2022).

³⁶⁹ Bennett 1997: 54-64.

directed to themselves; but in writing about the king, they humbly refer to him as “lord” (*kyrios*), on a par with the gods.³⁷⁰

Partly compensating for the dearth of an actual royal diplomatic archive, the Jewish intermediaries of the Books of Maccabees and Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* preserve several letters from mostly Seleukid kings to royal officials or Jewish high priests. These suggest that the Seleukids allowed themselves even more familiarity in kinship terminology than their Ptolemaic cousins, which might seem to run counter to the differentiated use of symbolic brotherhood and sonship we have encountered in the language of diplomacy, although the instances might reflect special circumstances. Thus, the underage King Antiokhos V Eupatōr (163–162 BC) addresses his regent Lysias as “brother” (*adelphos*) in a letter announcing the termination of the persecution of the Jews from 164 BC, included in the text of II Maccabees.³⁷¹ Several lines above this, however, the narrative had identified Lysias as the young king’s *epitropos* and “kinsman” (*syngenēs*), the same term we found in Ptolemaic usage.³⁷² Both I Maccabees and Josephus quote a letter of Alexandros I, called Balas (150–145 BC) to the Jewish high priest Jonathan (152–143 BC), opening with “King Alexandros to his brother Iōnathan, greeting.”³⁷³ Similarly, both I Maccabees and Josephus quote a letter of the next Seleukid, Dēmētrios II Nikatōr (147–139 and 129–126 BC), to Jonathan, reading “King Dēmētrios to

³⁷⁰ For example, the dedication of “Kallimakhos, kinsman and epistratēgos and stratēgos of the Indian and Erythraean Sea” to Isis on behalf “of the Lord King” Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos in TDGR 3: 143-144, no. 110 (OGIS 186): Καλλίμαχος ὁ συγγενῆς καὶ ἐπιστράτηγος καὶ στρατηγός... τοῦ κυρίου βασιλέως. Cf. Ptolemaios X Alexandros’ reference to a report from “Ptolemaios, the kinsman and *dioikētēs*,” in TDGR 3: 143, no. 109 (OGIS 761): Πτολεμαίου τοῦ συγγενοῦς καὶ διοικητοῦ.

³⁷¹ TDGR 3: 57, no. 43; II Maccabees 11.22: βασιλεὺς Ἀντίοχος τῷ ἀδελφῷ Λυσία χαίρειν.

³⁷² II Maccabees 11.1: Λυσίας ἐπίτροπος τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ συγγενῆς.

³⁷³ II Maccabees 10.18: βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος τῷ ἀδελφῷ Ἰωνάθαν χαίρειν; Josephus, *JA* 13.45: βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος Ἰωνάθη τῷ ἀδελφῷ χαίρειν.

Iōnathan, his brother, and the Jewish people, greeting.”³⁷⁴ An earlier letter, from Antiokhos III the Great to his governor Zeuxis, is quoted by Josephus as commencing, “King Antiokhos to Zeuxis, his father, greeting.”³⁷⁵ We find an identical usage quoted in both I Maccabees and Josephus, where the letter from Dēmētrios II Nikatōr to Jonathan proceeds to quote another letter, from Dēmētrios II Nikatōr to his “kinsman” Lasthenēs, opening “King Dēmētrios to Lasthenēs, his father, greeting.”³⁷⁶

The references to the royal officials Zeuxis and Lasthenēs as the king’s “father” (*patros*) by Antiokhos III and Dēmētrios II Nikatōr at first glance contradict the expected language of symbolic kinship. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern a nuance between these designations and those in formal use. As we have seen, the narratives incorporating the quoted addresses describe both Zeuxis and Lasthenēs as the king’s “kinsman” (*syngenēs*), a term we also find used for royal administrators in Ptolemaic Egypt. If, as likely, this is the formal symbolic kinship designation to which they were “entitled,” then being addressed as the king’s “father” should be interpreted as an informal royal familiarity. It constituted a special mark of favor that was not extended to all royal officials,³⁷⁷ perhaps recognizing Zeuxis and Lasthenēs’ seniority and trusted proximity to the king. One would expect that neither Zeuxis nor Lasthenēs would have dared impose on the king’s friendly familiarity by calling him “son” (*huios*) in return, nor would a Seleukid king address a foreign king as his “father,” which, in such a context, would imply subordination to the latter.

³⁷⁴ I Maccabees 12.30: βασιλεὺς Δημήτριος Ἰωνάθαν τῷ ἀδελφῷ χαίρειν καὶ ἔθνει Ἰουδαίων; Josephus *JA* 13.126: βασιλεὺς Δημήτριος Ἰωνάθη τῷ ἀδελφῷ καὶ τῷ ἔθνει τῶν Ἰουδαίων χαίρειν.

³⁷⁵ TDGR 3: Josephus *JA* 12.148: βασιλεὺς Ἀντίοχος Ζεύξιδι τῷ πατρὶ χαίρειν.

³⁷⁶ I Maccabees 12.31-32 and Josephus *JA* 13.126-127: Λασθένει τῷ συγγενεῖ ἡμῶν... βασιλεὺς Δημήτριος Λασθένει τῷ πατρὶ χαίρειν.

³⁷⁷ E.g., Antiokhos III’s letter to Ptolemaios (son of Thraseas?) in Josephus, *JA* 12.138, and Antiokhos IV Epiphanēs’ letter to Nikanōr in Josephus, *JA* 12.262.

As an allied but effectively independent foreign monarch whose support Alexandros I Balas and Dēmētrios II Nikatōr needed against their enemies, we might suppose that Jonathan is understandably styled “brother” (*adelphos*) by the Seleukid kings — despite the Jews’ recent rebellion against Seleukid authority and Jonathan not bearing the title of *basileus*. But here, too, the formal usage might have to be distinguished from marks of friendly familiarity. The content of the royal letters and the narrative indicates that Alexandros I Balas formally designated Jonathan his “friend” (*philos*) or “first friend” (*prōtos philos*).³⁷⁸ Alexandros’ son, the young Antiokhos VI Epiphanēs Dionysos (145–142 BC), confirmed Jonathan as high priest and named him his “friend and ally” (*philos kai symmakhos*), the “king’s friend,” or the “king’s first friend.”³⁷⁹ Similarly, Dēmētrios II Nikatōr wrote to Jonathan’s successor Simon (143–135 BC), greeting him as “archpriest and friend of kings.”³⁸⁰ While the Jewish high priests were effectively autonomous rulers, they were still technically deemed to be appointed by the Seleukid kings.³⁸¹ This, alongside the repeated references to them as the king’s “friend,” suggests that this may have been the formal symbolic kinship term for them, as it was for some other royal officials, like the Seleukid commander and royal “friend” Kendebaios, defeated by the high priest Simon.³⁸² As in the case of royal officials occasionally being singled out as “brother” and even “father,” the designation of the high priest Jonathan as “brother” of Seleukid kings seems likely to be an informal mark of friendly familiarity, designed to convey special favor and unfeigned friendship.

³⁷⁸ Josephus *JA* 13.45: φίλον ἐμὸν καλεῖσθα; 13.85: πρῶτον ἀναγράψαι τῶν φίλων.

³⁷⁹ Josephus *JA* 13.145: φίλον τε καὶ σύμμαχον αὐτὸν ἐποιεῖτο καὶ τὴν ἀρχιερωσύνην ἐβεβαίω... καὶ τῶν πρώτων αὐτοῦ καλεῖσθαι φίλων; cf. I Maccabees 11.57: καὶ εἶναι σε τῶν φίλων τοῦ βασιλέως.

³⁸⁰ I Maccabees 13.36: βασιλεὺς Δημήτριος Σιμωνι ἀρχιερεῖ καὶ φίλῳ βασιλέων καὶ πρεσβυτέροις καὶ ἔθνει Ἰουδαίων χαίρειν.

³⁸¹ The date at which the Hasmonean state may be considered independent from the Seleukid Kingdom is debated, see Atkinson 2016: 33-44.

³⁸² Josephus, *JA* 13.225-227: Κενδεβαίῳ ... τῶν φίλων; I Maccabees 15.38 describes Kendebaios as captain of the seacoast (Κενδεβαῖον ἐπιστράτηγον τῆς παραλίας).

The flexibility of expression in specific circumstances is highlighted by Plutarch's anecdote about Pyrrhos I, king of Epirus (307–302 and 297–272 BC), discovering that a letter sent to him purportedly by his patron and ally Ptolemaios I Sōtēr was in fact a forgery by their rival, Lysimakhos of Thrace. The letter did not feature the customary address of Ptolemaios to Pyrrhos, "The father, to the son, greeting," but read "King Ptolemaios, to King Pyrrhos, greeting."³⁸³ While the lack of an expression of symbolic kinship in the more formal, and in this instance fallacious, address is regrettable, it is noteworthy that the more intimate address with the terms "father" and "son" was evidently unexpected by those outside the circle of Ptolemaios, Pyrrhos, and their closest intimates. Apparently, the address was expected to reflect the nominal equality between the two monarchs. A purported letter from the Pontic king Mithradatēs VI Eupatōr Dionysos (120–63 BC) to a contemporary Arsakid king of Parthia also does not include any symbolic kinship terminology, addressed, like Lysimakhos' forgery, simply "King Mithradatēs to King Arsakēs, greeting."³⁸⁴

While the royal correspondence of the Hellenistic monarchs does not include many preserved letters between *monarchs* of equal or differing status, we can cautiously conclude that the basic model developed in earlier times remained largely valid. Equal monarchs continued to address each other as "brother," without attempting to reference the actual relationship between them. Royally appointed officials of various kinds seem to have been designated by the vague and more distant term "kinsman," with other courtiers called "friends," and others still not treated to any term of symbolic kinship or formalized amity. With certain individuals, and perhaps in special circumstances, however, we see the Seleukid king take the more familiar and flattering approach of using the terms "brother"

³⁸³ Plutarch, *Pyrrhos* 6.4: οὐ γὰρ ἦν ἡ συνήθης γεγραμμένη προσαγόρευσις "ὁ πατήρ τῷ υἱῷ χαίρειν", ἀλλὰ "βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος βασιλεῖ Πύρρῳ χαίρειν". On the incident, see Garoufalias 1979: 36; Champion 2009: 29.

³⁸⁴ Sallust, *Mithridates* 1: Rex Mithridates regi Arsaci salutem.

and even “father” informally in addressing the recipients of his letters — something possibly rooted in the more informal origin of Hellenistic kingship in Macedon.

From its humble beginnings, Greek *basileia* had come to designate the greatest non-Greek kings and then a new breed of Greek kings who drew upon the distinct legacies of Greek hero cults and ostentatious eastern kingship to create the Hellenistic model of kingship. Although emulating a single great king, Alexander, Hellenistic kings had to reckon with each other and created a system of states coexisting uneasily, facing as many challenges from within as from without, despite clothing themselves in a visible ruler cult. In the end, they would all be taken over by a new power rising in the west.

In the summer of 30 BC, the last surviving kingdom of the Diadokhoi, Ptolemaic Egypt, came under the control of the man who would become Rome’s first emperor, Augustus. While he maintained that he merely exceeded all in influence and sought to preserve and revitalize the Roman state, in the Hellenistic east he naturally came to be treated as another great king. Modern historians tend to place the beginning of Augustus’ reign as emperor at the time of one or the other of his “constitutional settlements” in 27 BC and 23 BC, but for chronographers the answer was simpler and obvious. An influential chronographic tradition originated in the work of the Alexandrian polymath Ptolemy (Claudius Ptolemaeus) in the mid-second century AD and reached back in time through his canon of Babylonian kings whose reigns had preserved available astronomical information to the otherwise fairly obscure king Nabonassar (Nabû-nâšir, 748–734 BC). In Ptolemy’s canon, adopted by a series of later chronographers (including Theōn of Alexandria in the fourth century AD), Nabonassar’s successors were enumerated in a slightly simplified but basically accurate and complete listing through the end of the Babylonian monarchy, followed by the monarchs of Persia, followed by

Alexander and his heirs, followed by the Ptolemies, followed by Augustus and subsequent Roman emperors.³⁸⁵ Apart from the labels heading the different groups of monarchs, the listing was seamless and continuous. Despite the very different origins of the Roman state, the emperor Augustus and his heirs would inherit and eventually adapt most of the features of kingship we have traced from the Bronze Age Near East to the last Diadokhoi.

³⁸⁵ Several examples are found in *MGH Auct. Ant.* 13: 447-449 (Nabonassar to Phocas), 450-453 (Nabonassar to Rōmanos I Lakapēnos), 454-455 (beginning lost, from Philippos III to Kōnstantinos IX Monomakhos). See Toomer's introduction to *Ptolemy's Almagest* 1998: 9-10, with reconstructed king-list at 11.

Chapter 4: The Roman Emperors

Rome before emperors

“The city of Rome at the outset had kings.” With these simple words the Roman historian Tacitus begins his *Annals*, continuing, equally directly, “liberty and the consulate were instituted by Lucius Brutus.”³⁸⁹ We can afford to be almost as succinct in tracing the origin of Rome’s later emperors, because it did not evolve out of Rome’s original monarchy. While the particulars of Rome’s early monarchy are no longer verifiable, it seems to have been broadly comparable to the relatively modest kingship of the Iron Age Greek World, albeit conditioned by local Italian and Etruscan social and cultural features. According to the received tradition, the Roman king (*rex*) ruled for life with powers over various aspects of society summed up in the concept of *imperium*, but shared authority with the council of elders, the senate, and royal authority was not attained according to what we would consider a hereditary system of succession.³⁹⁰ While received tradition attributed the overthrow of the last king, Tarquinius II, to the excesses of his sons culminating in the rape of their cousin’s wife Lucretia, it appears that the Roman Revolution led by Lucius Iunius Brutus was an aristocratic reaction against the threat of increasingly strong royal authority. Rome’s later kings seem to have based their position on popular support, while challenging the power and privileges of the aristocrats dominating the senate. The “unconstitutional” and oppressive behavior of Rome’s last

³⁸⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1: Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere: libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit.

³⁹⁰ For the early Roman monarchy, see Gantz 1975, Cornell 1995, and Forsythe 2005. Cornell 1982 provides a particularly lucid narrative survey of Roman history; for the monarchy: 17-24. The most extensive surviving Roman treatment is that of Livy (Titus Livius) *Ab urbe condita* 1.1-60, writing in the late 1st century BC.

kings was compared to the stereotypical image of Ancient Greece's "unconstitutional" monarchs, the tyrants, who had also tended to pursue similar policies, from advertising the favor of gods to investing in monumental building and patronizing the arts, while basing their support on the populace.³⁹¹

The overthrow of Rome's original monarchy in, traditionally, 509 BC, brought to power an aristocratic oligarchy. The Roman Republic was characterized by its fundamental opposition to the monarchy it had replaced, exemplified in the division of authority among several levels of collegiate magistrates chosen in annual elections for annual terms. Even the ultimate executive authority (*imperium*) was shared by two praetors, later the two consuls. The rare instances of singular officials were circumscribed in scope or term of authority: a dictator was appointed as sole magistrate with virtually absolute power, but only for national emergencies and with a term limited to six months.³⁹² A purely religious appointee, the *rex sacrorum* ("king of sacrifices") was chosen from among the patrician nobility by the priests (pontiffs) to fulfill some of the religious responsibilities of the former kings, comparable to the *arkhōn basileus* at Athens; but he was banned from holding any secular office.³⁹³ In terms of overall importance in religious affairs, the *rex sacrorum* was gradually supplanted by the *pontifex maximus* ("greatest priest"), who also had no colleague, but was appointed for life and not barred from holding secular offices.³⁹⁴ The largely successful struggle of the commoners (*plebs*) to assert their right to inclusion in the governance of the Republic resulted in the creation of the tribune of the people, an exclusively plebeian collegial office designed to champion their rights in the senate. Each individual tribune of the people was sacrosanct and had the power (*potestas*) to veto any

³⁹¹ Cornell 1982: 21-22.

³⁹² Cornell 1982: 24. On the dictatorship in general, see now Wilson 2021.

³⁹³ Livy 40.42.9. Cornell 1982: 24; Ridley 2005: 281.

³⁹⁴ In general, see Ridley 2005.

proposed legislation he deemed opposed to the people's interest.³⁹⁵ As we shall see, insofar as it had a constitutional foundation, the position of Roman emperor was technically founded upon these offices and their authority, not upon any formal renewal of Rome's ancient kingship.

Like "Philippe Egalité," the duke of Orléans during the French Revolution, the leaders of the overthrow of the Roman monarchy were members of the extended royal family who were presumably resentful at being marginalized from the center of power.³⁹⁶ Nevertheless, they succeeded in establishing a political structure that, although at least periodically dominated by an aristocratic oligarchy, was held up as the opposite of a corrupt and detested predecessor. It created an almost pathological hatred of the idea and notion of king in Roman society. We have already seen Tacitus use the terms liberty (*libertas*) and consulate (*consulatum*) in apposition, effectively equating the two with each other and simultaneously contrasting them to the earlier kingship (*regnum*). Accusations of aiming at kingship were a mortal danger to the accused, and several Roman politicians were executed on such charges.³⁹⁷ Opponents in the factious Roman political arena were quick to seize upon such ammunition against their rivals. When Publius Cornelius Scipio (later dubbed Africanus) defeated the Carthaginians in Spain in 209 BC and released his Spanish prisoners, the Spanish spontaneously acclaimed him king (*rex*). Having commanded silence, Scipio explained to the crowd

that the title he valued most was the one his soldiers had given him, the title of "Imperator." "The name of king," he said, "so great elsewhere, is insupportable to Roman ears. If a kingly mind is in your eyes the noblest thing in human nature, you may attribute it to me in thought, but you must avoid the use of the word."³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ Cornell 1982: 25-26.

³⁹⁶ For the place of Lucius Iunius Brutus and Tarquinius Collatinus in the royal family see Gantz 1975.

³⁹⁷ Cornell 1982: 22, citing the cases of Spurius Cassius (486 BC), Spurius Maelius (440 BC), and Marcus Manlius (382 BC).

³⁹⁸ Livy 27.19.3-5: Circumfusa inde multitudo Hispanorum et ante deditorum et pridie captorum regem eum ingenti consensu appellavit. tum Scipio silentio per praeconem facto sibi maximum nomen imperatoris esse dixit quo se milites sui appellarent: regium nomen alibi magnum, Romae intolerabile esse. Regalem animum in se esse, si id in hominis ingenio

Scipio's humble and diplomatic response reflected the intersection of two worlds. His Roman background militated against any association with the word "king," even if non-Romans might wish to attribute it to him as a mark of deserved honor. He was not to be called *rex*; but he welcomed being called *imperator*. Scipio's response, as presented by Livy, highlights the unpalatability of kingship to the Roman state, but also seems to foreshadow its inevitability under another name. Livy, we should remember, wrote under the first emperor.

Meanwhile, the Roman Republic had already collided with Hellenistic kings. Picking on its neighbors and rivals one by one, Rome had turned its struggle to survive into direct and indirect rule over central and southern Italy, implemented through an effective carrot-and-stick policy. Pyrrus I of Epirus (297–272 BC) intervened against the Romans on behalf of the Greek city of Taras (Taranto) in southern Italy and, despite two victories over the Romans (including the eponymous "Pyrrhic victory" at Asculum in 279 BC), was driven out, leaving the Romans masters of the peninsula in 275 BC. The confused affairs of Sicily drew the Romans into the island, where the Greek kings of Syracuse, Hierōn II (275–215 BC) and his grandson Hierōnymos (215–214 BC) vacillated between Rome and Carthage against the background of the First and Second Punic Wars. In the end, Roman

amplissimum ducerent, taciti iudicarent: vocis usurpatione abstinerent. Cf. the earlier description of the incident in Polybios 10.40.2-5, who provides more detail: τῶν δ' Ἰβήρων ὅσοι κατὰ τοὺς προειρημένους τόπους Καρχηδονίους τότε συνεμάχουν, ἤκον ἐγχειρίζοντες σφᾶς αὐτοὺς εἰς τὴν Ῥωμαίων πίστιν, κατὰ δὲ τὰς ἐντεύξεις βασιλέα προσεφώνουν τὸν Πόπλιον. πρῶτον μὲν οὖν ἐποίησε τοῦτο καὶ προσεκύνησε πρῶτος Ἐδεκῶν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτον οἱ περὶ τὸν Ἄνδοβᾶλην. τότε μὲν οὖν ἀνεπιστάτως αὐτὸν παρέδραμε τὸ ῥηθέν: μετὰ δὲ τὴν μάχην ἀπάντων βασιλέα προσφωνούντων, εἰς ἐπίστασιν ἤγαγε τὸν Πόπλιον τὸ γινόμενον. διὸ καὶ συναθροίσας τοὺς Ἰβήρας βασιλικὸς μὲν ἔφη βούλεσθαι καὶ λέγεσθαι παρὰ πᾶσι καὶ ταῖς ἀληθείαις ὑπάρχειν, βασιλεύς γε μὴν οὐτ' εἶναι θέλειν οὔτε λέγεσθαι παρ' οὐδενί. ταῦτα δ' εἰπὼν παρήγγειλε στρατηγὸν αὐτὸν προσφωνεῖν. Polybios' version indicates that Scipio was flattered to be thought king-like (*basilikos*) [in his generosity?], but that he was to be addressed as general (*stratēgos*). Even if Livy's later account is farther removed in time (but might it not have Latin sources?), it remains relevant as reflection on both the incident and on the vocabulary involved by a Roman at the time of the first emperor, Augustus.

rule extended to all of Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and southeastern Spain by the end of the third century BC.³⁹⁹

The Second Punic War had also brought Rome into repeated conflict with the Antigonid king of Macedon, Philippos V (221–179 BC). After defeating Philippos at Kynoskephalai in 197 BC, Rome dismantled Macedonian hegemony in Greece, posing as the liberator of the Greek city states. But Roman protection was quickly deemed onerous, and the same Greeks who had called in Rome against Macedon now invited the Seleukid king, Antiokhos III the Great (223–187 BC), to save them from the Romans. Invading Greece, Antiokhos was driven out by the Romans and defeated by Scipio Africanus' brother Lucius Cornelius Scipio (henceforth Asiaticus), at Magnēsia (190 BC) in Anatolia. The Peace of Apameia (188 BC) constrained Antiokhos to pay heavy reparations and surrender his lands in western and central Anatolia to the Roman ally, the Attalid king of Pergamon. In 168 BC, Rome's local allies having incited another war against Macedon, Lucius Aemilius Paullus (henceforth Macedonicus), brother of Scipio Africanus' wife, defeated the Antigonid king Perseus (179–168 BC) at Pydna and terminated the Macedonian monarchy, dividing the kingdom among four republics under Roman influence. A failed attempt to restore the Macedonian monarchy led to the creation of the Roman province of Macedonia in 148 BC; in 146 BC this was expanded to include most of Greece after the defeat of the Achaean League and the destruction of Corinth. The same year witnessed the destruction of Carthage and the creation of the province of Africa.⁴⁰⁰ In the wake of military action

³⁹⁹ Cornell 1982: 39, 43-47. Taylor 1931: 35 highlights the role of Syracuse in Rome's Hellenistic experience.

⁴⁰⁰ Cornell 1982: 48-51.

had come Roman hegemony or annexation. As a result, long before it had an emperor, Rome had an empire, as a sphere of both direct and indirect control.⁴⁰¹

But it was not the hatred of kings that was driving these interventions and Roman expansion — which impacted monarchies and republics or confederacies alike — nor did any concerted policy of the Roman state. It was the ambition of Roman notables, who identified victorious warfare as the most promising venue for increasing their personal wealth, renown, and standing in Roman society, where they competed with others over their respective *dignitas*. Thus, for example, the secondary *cognomina* adopted by the Scipiones and Paullus after their victories — Africanus, Asiaticus, Macedonicus — were intended to perpetuate the memory of their achievements for posterity and to cast their descendants in reflected glory. Consequently, Roman notables were eager to seize any opportunity to secure a military command against any plausible enemy of Rome or of Rome's increasing number of allies. A particularly egregious example occurred in 58 BC, when the tribune Publius Clodius Pulcher, bitter over the insufficiently generous ransom offered a decade earlier for his liberation from pirates by Ptolemaios, king of Cyprus (80–58 BC), secured a command for Marcus Porcius Cato the Younger to annex the island kingdom; choosing death before dishonor or disempowerment, the king committed suicide and Cyprus became a Roman province.⁴⁰²

Apart from the strain on manpower and resources, Roman leaders' quest for gain and renown through war produced potentially explosive internal conditions, especially after Gaius Marius began to enroll technically ineligible landless Roman citizens in his legions. With sufficient manpower there came victory and glory, converted into an unprecedented seven consulships, five of them consecutive

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Livy 38.40.5, crediting Scipio with expanding the “empire of the Roman people”: imperium populi Romani. For the origins of the concept of a Roman Empire, see Lintott 1981.

⁴⁰² Braund 1984: 134–135, who discusses Rome's legal case for annexing Cyprus; Sullivan 1990: 236–237.

(104–100 BC). Marius had effectively become the patron of his soldiers and they, his clients; he depended on their service and votes for his *dignitas* and political career, while they depended on him for their advancement, such as provision with land. But Marius was not the only ambitious politician at Rome, and others would seek to replicate his success by the same methods, with personal ambition and the semi-formal patron-client relationship eclipsing the interests of the state. In the 80s BC, the rivalry between Marius and Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix over the financially and politically lucrative command against the ambitious and aggressive Mithradatēs VI Eupatōr Dionysos of Pontus (120–63 BC) plunged Rome into a civil war. Sulla won, helping himself to a longer-than-legal dictatorship, later combined with or disguised by consulship (81–79 BC), and the proscription of his opponents as enemies of the state in a conservative reaction; in the end, he retired and died in 78 BC.⁴⁰³ Sulla's ruthless route to authority and his unusual powers and honors naturally provoked comment comparing them to those of the ancient kings or tyrants.⁴⁰⁴ As for Mithradatēs, although expelled from Greece and other Roman provinces and protectorates, he survived to cause another potential conflict, narrowly averted, between the generals Lucius Licinius Lucullus and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) sent in succession to subdue him in the 60s BC.⁴⁰⁵ We will return to Pompey shortly.

Despite some negative attitudes towards even foreign kings,⁴⁰⁶ republican Rome did cultivate positive and cooperative relations with plenty of Hellenistic kings. Some, like Ptolemaios II Philadelphos of Egypt (282–246 BC) in 273 BC and Attalos I Sōtēr of Pergamon (241–197 BC) in

⁴⁰³ Sulla's dictatorship was formally qualified "to write laws and order the republic" (*dictator legibus scribundis et reipublicae constituendae*); on it, see Swain and Davies 2010: 33-40; cf. Bickerman 1980: 195; Syme 1939: 16-27.

⁴⁰⁴ Appian, *Civil Wars* 1.98-100: ὁ δὲ ἔργῳ βασιλεὺς ὢν ἢ τύραννος, οὐχ αἰρετός, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει καὶ βίᾳ, δεόμενος δ' ἄρα καὶ τοῦ προσποιήματος αἰρετός εἶναι δοκεῖν, ὥδε καὶ τότε ἐμηχανήσατο.

⁴⁰⁵ Cornell 1982: 58-68.

⁴⁰⁶ Braund 1984: 55-56.

209 BC, entered these friendly relationships (*amicitia*) with the Romans as equals.⁴⁰⁷ In obscure circumstances, the Ptolemaic court requested and obtained a Roman guardian for the underage Ptolemaios V Epiphanēs (204–180 BC) in c.201–200 BC.⁴⁰⁸ His son Ptolemaios VI Philomētōr (180–164 and 163–145 BC) was rescued from the attack of his Seleukid uncle Antiokhos IV Epiphanēs (175–164 BC) by the peaceful but threatening intervention of a Roman representative in 168 BC.⁴⁰⁹ The same Antiokhos had previously spent time as hostage at Rome, and when he assumed the Seleukid throne at Antioch, he would sometimes advertise his connections to Rome by wearing a toga (*tēbenna*), the quintessential visual symbol of Romanness, “run for office” as an aedile or tribune, and then dispense justice from an ivory curule chair like a Roman magistrate.⁴¹⁰ Whatever the precise motivation for this behavior of an admittedly eccentric king, this betrays the growing influence and renown of Rome in the eastern Mediterranean.

After Rome’s victory at Pydna and the termination of the Macedonian kingship in 167 BC, several kings sent embassies to congratulate the Roman government. Prousius II of Bithynia (c.182–149 BC) visited Rome with his son Nikomēdēs to congratulate the senate in person and offer a sacrifice at the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. Prousius sought to secure Rome’s friendship and territorial concessions for himself and for his son, whom he placed under Roman guardianship.

Polybios and Livy comment that Prousius’ behavior, while seeking to please the Romans, was

⁴⁰⁷ Lintott 1981: 62; Cornell 1982: 43 and Hölbl 2001: 54-55 for Ptolemaios II and Rome; Allen 1983: 66-75 for Attalos I and Rome.

⁴⁰⁸ Commemorated on the coinage issued in 61 bc by the future triumvir Marcus Aemilius Lepidus in honor of his like-named ancestor, the pontifex maximus and *tutor regis*: Crawford 1974 I: 443-444, no. 419.2. Braund 1984: 136, who notes the suspiciously late date of the first references to this.

⁴⁰⁹ Polybios 29.27; Livy 45.12; Diodōros 31.1-2. Hölbl 2001: 147-148.

⁴¹⁰ Polybios 26.1.5-6: *πολλάκις δὲ καὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ἀποθέμενος ἐσθῆτα τήβενναν ἀναλαβὼν περιήει κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν ἀρχαιρεσιάζων καὶ τοὺς μὲν δεξιούμενος, τοὺς δὲ καὶ περιπτύσων παρεκάλει φέρειν αὐτῷ τὴν ψῆφον, ποτὲ μὲν ὡς ἀγορανόμος γένηται, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ ὡς δήμαρχος. [6] τυχὼν δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ καθίσας ἐπὶ τὸν ἐλεφάντινον δίφρον κατὰ τὸ παρὰ Ῥωμαίους ἔθος διήκουε τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἀγορὰν γινομένων συναλλαγμάτων καὶ διέκρινε μετὰ πολλῆς σπουδῆς καὶ προθυμίας. Cf. Diōdoros 29.32. Braund 1984: 14.*

unbecoming of a king — he had shaved his head, wore a freedman’s cap, and referred to himself as the freedman of the Roman people (*libertus populi Romani*) when he met Roman envoys; in the senate house, he prostrated himself before the embarrassed senators and greeted them as “his savior gods.”⁴¹¹ It seems that the Roman senate had enough, as it refused a formal reception to other kings, like Eumenēs II Sōtēr Euergetēs of Pergamon (197–158 BC), publishing a general decree that “no king was to visit Rome.”⁴¹²

Continued Roman presence in the greater Mediterranean world made further contact with kings inevitable. When Ptolemaios VI Philomētōr was driven out of Egypt by his brother and co-ruler Ptolemaios VII Euergetēs (nicknamed Physkōn, 164–163 and 145–116 BC), he sought support at Rome, taking care to impress the Romans with his humility and wretched state.⁴¹³ The Romans may have reconciled the brothers for a while, Ptolemaios VI Philomētōr recovering Egypt and Ptolemaios VII Physkōn subsequently reigning at Cyrene (Kyrēnē). When he escaped a murder attempt, in 155 BC, Ptolemaios VII Physkōn drew up a will bequeathing his kingdom to the Romans — with whom he had ingratiated himself in the meantime — in the event of leaving no legitimate issue.⁴¹⁴ While this was clearly a measure intended to safeguard his life, it also highlights a pattern of increasing reliance on Rome. It seems to have initiated a fashion for such royal bequests: in 133 BC, despising his half-brother, Attalos III Philomētōr Euergetēs of Pergamon (138–133 BC) left his kingdom to Rome; it was to become the province of Asia in 129 BC.⁴¹⁵ Like Ptolemaios VI

⁴¹¹ Polybios 30.18: *χαίρετε, θεοὶ σωτῆρες*. Livy 45.44.3-21: *deos servatores suos senatum appellasse*. Braund 1984: 114.

⁴¹² Polybios 30.19. Braund 1984: 54-55, who points out that despite Roman suspicions of Eumenēs II’s conduct during the war against Perseus of Macedonia, the decree might not have been aimed at him specifically: the loyal Massinissa of Numidia was likewise refused to come to sacrifice on the Capitol, just before Eumenēs II.

⁴¹³ Diodōros 18.2. Hölbl 2001: 183.

⁴¹⁴ TDGR 4: 30-31, no. 31. Braund 1984: 129-131; Hölbl 2001: 187-188.

⁴¹⁵ Allen 1983: 84-85; Braund 1984: 131-133.

Philomētōr, Ariobarzanēs I Philorōmaios of Cappadocia (96–63 BC) and Nikomēdēs IV Epiphanēs Philopatōr of Bithynia (94–74 BC), ejected from their respective kingdoms by Mithradatēs VI of Pontus, sought support and restoration from Rome. Restored, Nikomēdēs IV bequeathed his kingdom to Rome on his death in 74 BC; it was swiftly annexed as the province of Bithynia.⁴¹⁶ The same year, the Romans made a province out of Cyrenaïca, bequeathed to them more than two decades earlier, in 96 BC, by Ptolemaios VII Physkōn’s bastard son Ptolemaios Apiōn.⁴¹⁷

Still within the context of the Mithridatic Wars, Lucullus allowed the return of the Seleukids to Antioch after chasing out the Armenians in 69 BC. However, the Seleukid cousins Antiokhos XIII Philadelphos and Philippos II Philorōmaios could not resist competing for the throne in the by now typical Seleukid pattern, making them incapable of maintaining order in the region and worthless as allies of Rome. Having replaced Lucullus in the east, Pompey quietly terminated Seleukid rule, making Syria — all that was left of the formerly extensive Seleukid Kingdom — a Roman province in 65/64 BC.⁴¹⁸

Meanwhile, in 80 BC, the Roman dictator Sulla had briefly imposed on the Ptolemaic throne an expatriated prince he had captured during his earlier campaign against Mithradatēs, Ptolemaios XI Alexandros II (80 BC), apparently making certain that the new king left a will bequeathing his kingdom to Rome.⁴¹⁹ Rome did not enforce the king’s will, but the new ruler of Egypt, Ptolemaios XII Neos Dionysos (nicknamed Aulētēs, 80–58 and 55–51 BC), brother of the ill-fated Ptolemaios of Cyprus, found it necessary to cooperate with Roman policy and expend exorbitant sums to curry

⁴¹⁶ Braund 1984: 135-136; Sullivan 1990: 33-35.

⁴¹⁷ Braund 1984: 133-134; Sullivan 1990: 232; Hölbl 2001: 210.

⁴¹⁸ Braund 1984: 24; Sullivan 1990: 202-204. Appian, *Syrian Wars* 11.49.

⁴¹⁹ Braund 1984: 134; Sullivan 1990: 89-91; Hölbl 2001: 213-214.

favor with Roman leaders, before finally securing his formal recognition as king and friend and ally (*amicus et socius populi Romani*) during the consulship of Gaius Iulius Caesar in 59 BC.⁴²⁰ Making no move to counter or protest the Roman annexation of his brother's kingdom of Cyprus, Ptolemaios XII Aulētēs soon had to flee the outrage of his subjects in 58 BC. In exile, he sought the support of Pompey at Rome. Roman politics made an issue over the king's disbursal of bribes and elimination of a rival embassy from Alexandria and cited convenient oracular opposition; in face of this, Pompey could not proceed openly or immediately. Eventually, he induced his ally, Aulus Gabinus, governor of Syria, to march into Egypt and restore Ptolemaios XII Aulētēs to the throne in 55 BC. More than ever indebted to the Romans, the king of Egypt had become the client of his Roman patrons, most notably Pompey. Moreover, he named Rome, now effectively under the rule his patrons, the triumvirs Pompey, Crassus, and Caesar, the guardian of his heirs, including the famous Kleopatra VII Thea Neōtera (51–30 BC); the will specifying this was left with Pompey.⁴²¹ Roman and Alexandrine politics had reduced the last surviving kingdom of the Diadokhoi to the position of a dependent power. Despite the perseverance of the designation “friend and ally of the Roman people,” Rome's allied kings were now client kings — clients, moreover, not just to the Roman state, but to specific Roman patrons. A new system of hierarchically-differentiated monarchies was a mere step away, and Rome lost little time in acquiring a monarch — a monarch, moreover, who could not be king (*rex*) and would be greater than kings.

A king by other means: the making of an emperor.

Our word “emperor” is etymologically derived from the Latin term *imperator*. The latter, however, did not originally and does not necessarily convey the same meaning as “emperor.” We have

⁴²⁰ Braund 1984: 26; Sullivan 1990: 233-235; Hölbl 2001: 223-226.

⁴²¹ Braund 1984: 136-137; Sullivan 1990: 237-239; Hölbl 2001: 227-230.

already encountered the Roman proconsul in Spain in 209 BC, Scipio Africanus, declaring to the natives who had acclaimed him king (*rex*) that this was an offensive term for a Roman and that he was *imperator*, as acclaimed by his soldiers.⁴²² Although in retrospect we can see Scipio foreshadowing the terminology of the later imperial monarchy, he was not employing *imperator* as a designation for or equivalent to monarch. *Imperator* designates one possessed of *imperium* (official authority or command), such as the Roman consul or his stand-in, the proconsul. It also became an honorary distinction used by soldiers to acclaim their general after a successful battle. Scipio Africanus might have been the first thus honored, and possibly the first thus empowered.⁴²³ The Greek rendition — but not translation — of *imperator* was *autokratōr*, recalling the title given to Philip and Alexander as commanders-in-chief of the Corinthian League, *stratēgos autokratōr*.⁴²⁴ But it would be nearly two centuries before *imperator*, alongside other terms, would gradually come to designate the new type of Roman monarch, the emperor. Sulla, Pompey, Caesar, and Antony, among many others, were all *imperatores*, without ever being emperors.⁴²⁵ In other words, Rome had *imperatores* long before it had an emperor.

Nevertheless, monarchs — including Rome's ancient kings — could also be said to possess *imperium*. More pertinently, many of the powerful Roman leaders who were acclaimed *imperator* were adopting, consciously or not, aspects of the Hellenistic kingship, amid which their ambitions and Rome's geopolitical interests repeatedly placed them. Let us consider Pompey first.⁴²⁶ Despite earlier alliances, he and his sons are cast in the narrative of history as the primary rivals of Caesar and

⁴²² Livy 27.19.3-5.

⁴²³ Combès 1966: 58-60; Martin 1994: 11-12.

⁴²⁴ In his account of Scipio's declaration, Polybios 10.40.2-5 uses just the word *stratēgos*.

⁴²⁵ E.g., Crawford 1975 1: 373, no. 359 (Sulla); Suetonius 1.76.1: praenomen Imperatoris (Caesar); Suetonius 2.13.2: imperatore Antonio honorifice salutato; and Crawford 1975 1: 101-102, nos. 529 and 545-546 (Marcus Antonius).

⁴²⁶ In general, see Seager 2002.

his heir Augustus; since the latter pair put Rome on the road to a new monarchy, the Pompeians are seen as champions of the republic. Of course, had the proverbial dice rolled differently, such assessments might differ.⁴²⁷

Originally a partisan of Sulla, Pompey had inherited his father's veterans and had armies and victories of his own when he secured a consulship despite his lack of sufficient years and magisterial experience in 70 BC. Alongside his colleague in the consulship, Marcus Licinius Crassus, with whom he had crushed Spartacus' slave revolt the previous year, Pompey curried favor with the plebeians by rescinding Sulla's conservative and elitist legislation and restoring the powers of the tribunes of the people. Grateful tribunes showered Pompey with lucrative commands, including a broadly-defined commission to clear the Mediterranean from pirates, described by Plutarch as "an out-and-out monarchy and irresponsible power over all men," explaining that "these limits included almost all places in the Roman world, and the greatest nations and most powerful kings were comprised within them."⁴²⁸ When Pompey completed this task with politically inconvenient alacrity, he was rewarded by another tribune with Lucullus' lucrative command against the old enemy Mithradatēs VI of Pontus and the latter's son-in-law and ally, Tigranēs II of Armenia (95–55 BC). Plutarch comments that this new commission effectively added the few provinces that had not been part of Pompey's earlier command to it, "placing the Roman supremacy entirely in the hands of one man."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁷ Cf. Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.88: "he had not ceased to exercise power which as regards its strength was that of a monarch, but by the inevitable contrast with Caesar had an almost democratic appearance" (τῇ μὲν ἰσχύϊ μοναρχικῶς δυναστεύων, τῇ δὲ δόξῃ διὰ τὸν Καίσαρος ζῆλον δημοτικῶς νομιζόμενος ἄρχειν).

⁴²⁸ Plutarch, *Pompey* 25.2: ἀντικρυς δὲ μοναρχίαν αὐτῷ διδόντα καὶ δύναμιν ἐπὶ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἀνυπεύθυνον... τοῦτο δὲ οὐ πάνυ πολλὰ χωρία τῆς ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίων οἰκουμένης τὸ μέτρον ἐξέφυγεν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ τῶν βασιλείων οἱ δυνατώτατοι περιλαμβάνοντο.

⁴²⁹ Plutarch, *Pompey* 30.2: τοῦτο δ' ἦν ἐφ' ἐνὶ συλλήβδην γενέσθαι τὴν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαν ὧν γὰρ ἐδόκει μόνων ἐπαρχιῶν μὴ ἐφικνεῖσθαι τῷ προτέρῳ νόμῳ, Φρυγίας, Λυκαονίας, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας, Κιλικίας, τῆς ἄνω Κολχίδος, Ἀρμενίας, αὐταὶ προσετίθεντο μετὰ στρατοπέδων καὶ δυνάμεων αἷς Λεύκολλος κατεπολέμησε Μιθριδάτην καὶ Τιγράνην.

This time, Pompey had learned his lesson and took his time. Expelling Mithradatēs from Pontus definitively in 66 BC, Pompey did not pursue, but traveled as part-conqueror, part-tourist throughout the east from the Caucasus to Jerusalem and Petra, arranging local affairs to his satisfaction on behalf of Rome.⁴³⁰ It was in this context that he dispossessed the last Seleukids, annexing Seleukid Syria as a Roman province, deposed the king of Judaea, confirming his successor only as high priest, and enlarged the existing provinces of Bithynia and Cilicia.⁴³¹ In part giving in to petulant rivalry with his predecessor in command, Lucullus, Pompey had “summoned the subject potentates and kings into his presence, ... remitted punishments in many cases and took away rewards.”⁴³² Tigranēs II of Armenia, already defeated by Lucullus and now betrayed by his own son, tamely submitted to Pompey and came out to meet him in his camp, dismounting and surrendering his sword. The king took off his tiara and attempted to lay it at Pompey’s feet and prostrate himself in supplication. Pompey generously prevented him from doing so and allowed him to keep his kingdom as Rome’s — or Pompey’s — client, after paying fines for his former aggression and being confined to his current possessions.⁴³³ Agreeing to Pompey’s demands, Tigranēs II was saluted as king by the Romans. The king’s traitorous son was offered a small kingdom of his own, Sophene, but was so dissatisfied, that he suggested he would find another Roman patron to give him greater rewards. Pompey had him arrested and displayed in his subsequent triumph at Rome, alongside the Jewish

⁴³⁰ Plutarch 39.3: “most of his time he spent in judicial business, settling the disputes of cities and kings, and for those to which he himself could not attend, sending his friends” (τὴν δὲ πλείστην διατριβὴν ἐν τῷ δικάζειν ἐποιεῖτο, πόλεων καὶ βασιλέων ἀμφισβητήματα διαιτῶν, ἐφ’ ἃ δὲ αὐτὸς οὐκ ἐξικνεῖτο, πέμπων τοὺς φίλους).

⁴³¹ Plutarch, *Pompey* 39.2.

⁴³² Plutarch, *Pompey* 31.30: καὶ μετεπέμπετο τοὺς ὑπηκόους δυνάστας καὶ βασιλεῖς ὡς ἑαυτὸν, ἐπιὼν τε τὴν χώραν οὐδὲν ἀκίνητον εἶα τῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ Λευκόλλου γεγονότων, ἀλλὰ καὶ [p. 194] κολάσεις ἀνῆκε πολλοῖς καὶ δωρεὰς ἀφείλετο καὶ πάντα ὅλως ἔπραττεν ἐπιδείξει τὸν ἄνδρα φιλονεικῶν τοῖς θαυμάζουσιν οὐδενὸς ὄντα κύριον.

⁴³³ Plutarch, *Pompey* 33.3-4. Cf. Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 15.104-105.

king Aristoboulos II (67–63 BC) and several other captive royals.⁴³⁴ Although acting as Rome’s representative, Pompey was effectively making and unmaking kings on his own.⁴³⁵

Pompey’s eastern command expired with his intended target, Mithradatēs VI, the fugitive king of Pontus, who committed assisted suicide after being betrayed by his son Pharnakēs. Now king of Bosporos north of the Black Sea, Pharnakēs II Philorōmaios (63–47 BC) claimed to have acted on behalf of Rome, dispatched his father’s corpse to Pompey, and requested to be recognized as “friend and ally of the Roman people” and to inherit the ancestral kingdom of Pontus. Pompey accepted Pharnakēs as ally and ruler of Bosporos but turned Pontus into a Roman province, appended to Bithynia, in his arrangement of affairs in Anatolia.⁴³⁶ Pharnakēs II was not the only client king to adopt the epithet Philorōmaios, a literal translation of his status as “friend of the Roman people.”⁴³⁷ The first to do so had been Ariobarzanēs I of Cappadocia, who had been propped up by the Romans time and again against Pharnakēs’ father Mithradatēs VI.⁴³⁸ The Seleukid Philippos II also used the epithet,⁴³⁹ but it did not secure him his kingdom, annexed by Pompey. Once an opponent of Lucullus and then Pompey, Antiokhos I of Commagene (c.70–36 BC) also became an ally and Philorōmaios.⁴⁴⁰ Many others were also cowed or cooperative, without advertising this in epithets.

⁴³⁴ Plutarch, *Pompey* 33.3-5: ἐπὶ τούτοις ὁ μὲν Τιγράνης ἠγάπησε, καὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀσπασαμένων αὐτὸν βασιλέα περιχαρῆς γενόμενος ἐπηγγεῖλατο στρατιωτῆ μὲν ἡμιμναῖον ἀργυρίου δώσειν, ἑκατοντάρχη δὲ μνᾶς δέκα, χιλιάρχῳ δὲ τάλαντον ὁ δ’ υἱὸς ἐδυσφόρει, καὶ κληθεὶς ἐπὶ δεῖπνον οὐκ ἔφη Πομπηῖου δεῖσθαι τοιαῦτα τιμῶντος· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἄλλον εὐρήσειν Ῥωμαίων. ἐκ τούτου δεθεὶς εἰς τὸν θρίαμβον ἐφυλάττετο. *Pompey* 45.4: αἰχμάλωτοι δ’ ἐπομπεύθησαν, ἄνευ τῶν ἀρχιπειρατῶν, υἱὸς Τιγράνου τοῦ Ἀρμενίου μετὰ γυναικὸς καὶ θυγατρὸς, αὐτοῦ τε Τιγράνου τοῦ βασιλέως γυνὴ Ζωσίμη, καὶ βασιλεὺς Ἰουδαίων Ἀριστόβουλος, Μιθριδάτου δὲ ἀδελφὴ καὶ πέντε τέκνα. Plutarch, *Pompey* 45.5, considers Pompey’s three triumphs over three continents the factor that most enhanced his glory. Braund 1984: 169-170.

⁴³⁵ Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 17.114, provides a summary of Pompey’s dispositions in the east.

⁴³⁶ Plutarch, *Pompey* 41.5, 42.2. Cf. Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 16.110-113.

⁴³⁷ On the epithet Philorōmaios, see Braund 1984: 105-107.

⁴³⁸ Sullivan 1990: 57, 175.

⁴³⁹ Grainger 1997: 52-53.

⁴⁴⁰ Sullivan 1990: 194.

The scale of Pompey's settlement of the east was unprecedented, going beyond the usual scope of Roman intervention by any one commander.⁴⁴¹

Yet, Pompey had not only carried out a successful campaign on an unprecedented scale, but he had also done so in at least partial imitation of Alexander the Great. As an immensely successful general, Alexander was naturally a model for any ambitious Roman statesman who embarked upon a military campaign. However, Alexander was also a king, a singularly unpromising comparison for a Roman statesman, and it might be better to see him as a point of competitive comparison rather than emulation.⁴⁴² In Pompey's case, the supposed parallels were multiple and noted in his time.⁴⁴³ The *cognomen* Magnus ("the Great") bestowed upon a young Pompey by Sulla or his soldiers after an early victory in Africa in 81 BC, invites a ready comparison, although it is not certain that it was meant as a specific reference to Alexander at the time.⁴⁴⁴ Plutarch reports that Pompey not only possessed "a majesty and kingliness in his nature," but was flattered to have had "a resemblance, more talked about than actually apparent, to the images of King Alexander." He did not discourage the comparison, to the point of some calling him "Alexander" in derision.⁴⁴⁵ During his later triumph at Rome, Pompey, already arrayed as a manifestation of the Roman god Jupiter in his role as triumphator, was said to have worn the cloak of Alexander.⁴⁴⁶ And, like Alexander, Pompey founded or refounded numerous cities — including several in Anatolia commemorating his name and his achievements: Magnopolis,

⁴⁴¹ On Pompey's political and administrative settlement of Anatolia, see Mitchell 1995: 31-34.

⁴⁴² Gruen 1998: 178-183, including a discussion of Scipio Africanus compared to Alexander.

⁴⁴³ Gruen 1998: 183-184.

⁴⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Pompey* 13.3-5; Cassius Dio 30-35.107.1. Kopij 2017: 122-123.

⁴⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Pompey* 2.1-2: καὶ ἐν τῷ νεαρῷ καὶ ἀνοῦντι διέφαινε εὐθύς ἢ ἀκμῇ τὸ γεραρὸν καὶ τὸ βασιλικὸν τοῦ ἥθους, ἦν δέ τις καὶ ἀναστολή τῆς κόμης ἀτρέμα καὶ τῶν περὶ τὰ ὄμματα ῥυθμῶν ὑγρότης τοῦ προσώπου, ποιοῦσα μᾶλλον λεγομένην ἢ φαινομένην ὁμοίότητα πρὸς τὰς Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ βασιλέως εἰκόνας, ἧ καὶ τοῦνομα πολλῶν ἐν ἀρχῇ συνεπιφερόντων οὐκ ἔφευγεν ὁ Πομπήϊος, ὥστε καὶ χλευάζοντας αὐτὸν ἐνίους ἤδη καλεῖν Ἀλέξανδρον.

⁴⁴⁶ Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 17.117, albeit skeptical: αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Πομπήϊος ἐπὶ ἄρματος ἦν, καὶ τοῦδε λιθοκολλήτου, χλαμύδα ἔχων, ὡς φασιν, Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Μακεδόνα, εἴ τῳ πίστον ἔστιν.

Nikopolis, two named Pompeiopolis.⁴⁴⁷ Doing so, he was the first Roman leader in the historical period to found or refound cities named after himself, and to be commemorated by corresponding civic eras.⁴⁴⁸ In this, on purpose or not, he was following in the footsteps of Alexander and other Hellenistic kings. Arguably, if Rome was — or was believed to have been — named after Romulus, Pompey was following the precedent of Rome’s first king, too. Under closer scrutiny, the comparisons between Pompey and Alexander are a lot more tenuous and not necessarily flattering to Pompey.⁴⁴⁹ However, they clearly became part of Pompey’s narrative and created a symbolic connection between the Roman general and the trend-setting model of Hellenistic kingship.

Pompey’s real or alleged proximity to royal precedent did not escape controversy. When Pompey was being voted his extraordinary command against the pirates at the behest of the tribune Gabinius in 67 BC, an incensed consul told him “that if he emulated Romulus he would not escape his fate” — suggesting that if Pompey acted like Rome’s first king, he would perish the same way (at the hands of wrathful senators).⁴⁵⁰ Accusations of seeking kingship had proved lethal in Roman politics before — among the allegations that spurred the violence leading to the murder of the reformist tribune of the people Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus in 133 BC was to have received a royal diadem and purple robe from the Pergamene ambassador carrying the will of Attalos III to Rome and to have been seeking to be crowned king by his supporters.⁴⁵¹ Gracchus, moreover, had dared depose a fellow tribune of the people and had broken tradition by standing for a second, consecutive term as

⁴⁴⁷ Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 17.115, provides a partial list. Compare Mitchell 1995: 31-32.

⁴⁴⁸ Koper 2017: 130-131.

⁴⁴⁹ Gruen 1998: 184-186.

⁴⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Pompey* 25.4: εἰπὼν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὅτι Ῥωμύλον ζηλῶν οὐ φεύξεται ταῦτὸν ἐκείνῳ τέλος. Plutarch, *Romulus* 27.3-8, relates the end of Romulus, including the suspicion that he was murdered by the patricians.

⁴⁵¹ Plutarch, *Tiberius Gracchus* 14.2 (καὶ διὰ τοῦτο γινώσκειν Εὐδημον αὐτῷ τὸν Περγαμηνὸν τῶν βασιλικῶν διάδημα δεδωκότα καὶ πορφύραν, ὡς μέλλοντι βασιλεύειν ἐν Ῥώμῃ), 19.2 (οἱ δὲ ἐναντίοι τοῦτο ἰδόντες ἔθεον πρὸς τὴν βουλὴν, ἀπαγγέλλοντες αἰτεῖν διάδημα τὸν Τιβέριον καὶ τούτου σημεῖον εἶναι τὸ τῆς κεφαλῆς ἐπιθιγγάνειν).

tribune. And while Pompey was capable of making a show of great humility at Rome — claiming reluctance to be voted new commands, humbly wishing for a quiet life with his wife in the country, entering Rome quietly at night to avoid a noisy welcome⁴⁵² — he carried himself with practically regal pomp and ceremony in the east.

At Mytilēnē, he granted the city its freedom and observed poetry contests in his honor; at Rhodes, he listened to the discourses of the sophists before rewarding them; at Athens, he rewarded the philosophers and donated fifty talents for the city's continued reconstruction, following its sack by Sulla during the First Mithridatic War.⁴⁵³ Inscriptions confirm this pattern, with Pompey designated savior (*sōtēr*) and founder (*ktistēs*) at Mytilēnē, savior and benefactor (*euergētēs*) at Milētopolis, and patron (*patrōn*) and benefactor at Milētos.⁴⁵⁴ On a smaller scale, Roman proconsuls had been treated as saviors and benefactors before, like Marcus Claudius Marcellus in Syracuse in 212 BC, Titus Quinctius Flamininus after declaring the freedom of Greece from Macedon at the Isthmian Games in 196 BC, or Paullus Macedonicus at the Games of Amphipolis in 167 BC.⁴⁵⁵ Plutarch attributes Pompey's actions to him seeking to return home “with a reputation more brilliant than that of any other man.”⁴⁵⁶ Pursuit of *dignitas* was natural for any Roman leader, but lavish benefactions of this kind were very much a hallmark of Hellenistic kingship, and their commemoration contrasted with the more sober dedications to other Roman benefactors.⁴⁵⁷ Given Pompey's position of authority, power, and wealth, the comparison to Hellenistic kings is inevitable.

⁴⁵² Cassius Dio 36.24-26 and Plutarch, *Pompey* 26.1, 30.6.

⁴⁵³ Plutarch, *Pompey* 42.4-6. Taylor 1931: 39-40.

⁴⁵⁴ TDGR 4: 75, nos. 75a (Mytilēnē: *σώτηρα καὶ κτίστην Γνάϊον Πομπήϊον, Γναΐω υἱόν, μέγαν, τρις αὐτοκράτορα*), 75c, 75d.

⁴⁵⁵ Taylor 1931: 35-36; for Flamininus, see also TDGR 4: 7-8, nos. 6a-f; for Paullus Macedonicus, see Erskine 2013: 49-50

⁴⁵⁶ Plutarch, *Pompey* 42.6.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. e.g., the simple thanksgiving dedication to Marcus Minucius Rufus from Delphoi, c.110–106 BC: TDGR 4: 56, no. 52.

In an anecdote related by Suetonius, a certain Roman had flattered Pompey as “king” only to insult Caesar as “queen.”⁴⁵⁸ While the point here was to insult Caesar, Pompey’s designation as king, even if satirical, might be significant.

Pompey disbanded his legions when he landed in Italy in 62 BC, allaying fears of his intentions among his opponents. His success had caused both immense popularity and immense jealousy and did not translate into automatic acquiescence with his desires. To secure senatorial approval of his settlement in the east and rewards in land for his soldiers, he entered into an informal alliance with his former colleague in the consulship, Crassus, and with the latter’s ally Gaius Julius Caesar, who had recently become pontifex maximus. This arrangement, known as the First Triumvirate (59–53 BC), was an effort to coordinate and ensure its members’ mutual interests (Caesar was consul in 59 BC, and Pompey and Crassus again in 55 BC), in part by apportioning troubled regions to different triumvirs as proconsuls. Pompey remained embroiled by affairs at Rome, governing his province, Spain, through legates; Crassus took over Syria in the east, facing the threat posed by the Parthians; Caesar took over Roman Gaul and proceeded to conquer the rest of that region to the Rhine and the Atlantic Ocean. The First Triumvirate dissolved after the death of Pompey’s wife, Caesar’s daughter Iulia, in 54 BC, and especially after Crassus perished against the Parthians in 53 BC. Now rich, popular, and crowned with glory, Caesar was cast in the role of a natural rival to a jealous Pompey, resentful of his own more lackluster recent performance and poisoned against Caesar by the conservative faction of the *Optimates*. Pompey (briefly sole consul in 52 BC) and others blocked Caesar’s continued officeholding — exposing him to the threat of prosecution — expelled Caesar’s allies among the tribunes of the people, including Antony (Marcus

⁴⁵⁸ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 49.2: cum Pompeium regem appellasset, ipsum reginam salutavit.

Antonius), and outlawed Caesar in January 49 BC. Caesar had no trouble convincing his troops that the Roman government was being violated and that his — and their — survival depended on taking over the Roman government. The legacy of Marius and Sulla was resurrected in more ways than one and the Roman Republic now endured the first of three consecutive civil wars that would eventually bring Rome under monarchical rule.⁴⁵⁹

With a single legion — most of his forces still stationed beyond the Alps — Caesar entered Italy, defeated Pompey's hastily assembled forces, and entered Rome. Within two months of famously, if metaphorically, throwing the dice and crossing the administrative border of Italy at the Rubicon,⁴⁶⁰ Caesar was master of the capital and the whole peninsula; Pompey and his supporters had fled overseas. At Rome, Caesar made himself dictator, passing emergency legislation before resigning the dictatorship after eleven days.⁴⁶¹ But he retained effective authority and would hold the dictatorship three more times, even while absent from Rome. In 46 BC, Caesar's dictatorship was given a term of ten years; in 44 BC, it was made perpetual. Both were unprecedented and went well beyond what Sulla had done in 81–79 BC, although, like Sulla, Caesar combined the dictatorship with the consulship, serving as consul again in 48, 46, 45, and 44 BC.⁴⁶² Until his death, Caesar remained the ruler of Rome; he felt so secure in his position of power, that he appointed the chief magistrates, including the consuls, for as much as five years in advance.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁹ Syme 1939: 28-46; Cornell 1982: 68-70.

⁴⁶⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 32: "iacta alea est," inquit. Plutarch, *Pompey* 60.2.9: Ἐλληγιστι πρὸς τοὺς παρόντας ἐκβοήσας, "Ἄνερρίφθω κύβος." Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.35: τὸ κοινὸν τότε ἐπειπῶν: "ὁ κύβος ἀνερρίφθω."

⁴⁶¹ Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.48.

⁴⁶² Bickerman 1980: 198-199; Syme 1939: 47-60; Cornell 1982: 70-71.

⁴⁶³ A controversial departure from precedent highlighted as a cause of complaint against Caesar in the sources: e.g., Plutarch, *Caesar* 58; Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 76; Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.128.

It had taken several years until Caesar had disposed of the last Pompeian army in the field, in 45 BC. In the process, he had decisively defeated Pompey himself at Pharsalos in Thessaly (48 BC), before following him in his flight to Egypt, only to discover that the caretakers of the underage Ptolemaios XIII Philopatōr (51–47 BC) had murdered Pompey before he could disembark and now presented Caesar with his head. Caesar rebuked his new allies for murdering a Roman consul and shed some tears.⁴⁶⁴ He also settled in Alexandria to effect a temporary reconciliation between its quarreling monarchs, Ptolemaios XIII and his elder sister Kleopatra VII — who now became Caesar’s mistress — and even restored Cyprus (a Roman province since 58 BC) to Ptolemaic rule under their younger siblings.⁴⁶⁵ Local opposition to Caesar’s dominance and his support of Kleopatra VII led to a short war, in which Ptolemaios XIII was eliminated and replaced as Kleopatra VII’s co-ruler and husband by their younger brother Ptolemaios XIV in 47 BC.⁴⁶⁶ The same year, Kleopatra VII bore Caesar a son, the future king Ptolemaios XV Kaisar (called Kaisarion, 44–30 BC),⁴⁶⁷ and Caesar defeated Pharnakēs II Philorōmaios’ attempt to take over his father’s kingdom of Pontus at Zela, reporting his victory to Rome with famous brevity (*veni, vidi, vici*).⁴⁶⁸ Another victim of Caesar’s military success was Iuba I, king of Numidia (60–46 BC), who was defeated while supporting Caesar’s Roman foes and driven to assisted suicide; Caesar now annexed his kingdom. Having both defeated and excelled Pompey, Caesar returned to Rome to celebrate five triumphs, in 46–45 BC.⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁴ Cassius Dio 42.1–8. Sullivan 1990: 256–258; Hölbl 2001: 232–233.

⁴⁶⁵ Cassius Dio 42.9, 42.34–35. Sullivan 1990: 258–259; Hölbl 2001: 233–235.

⁴⁶⁶ Cassius Dio 42.36–44. Sullivan 1990: 259–260; Hölbl 2001: 235–237.

⁴⁶⁷ Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 52. Sullivan 1990: 262–264; Hölbl 2001: 237–238.

⁴⁶⁸ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 37: Pontico triumpho inter pompae ferula trium verborum praetulit titulum “veni · vidi · vici” non acta belli significantem sicut ceteris, sed celeriter confecti notam; Plutarch, *Caesar* 50.2: τὸ τάχος ἀναγγέλλων εἰς Ῥώμην πρὸς τινὰ τῶν φίλων Ἀμάντιον ἔγραψε τρεῖς λέξεις “ἦλθον, εἶδον, ἐνίκησα”; Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.91: ἐγὼ δὲ ἦλθον, εἶδον, ἐνίκησα; cf. Cassius Dio 42.48.1.

⁴⁶⁹ Plutarch, *Caesar* 55.1–2; Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 37.

By making and unmaking kings, freeing and subjugating communities, Caesar was shaping the east in the same way that Pompey had before him, sometimes maintaining and sometimes modifying his predecessor's arrangements; the Galatian king Dēiōtaros I Philorōmaios (63–40 BC) and the Cappadocian king Ariobarzanēs III Eusebēs Philorōmaios (52–44 BC), although supporters of Pompey at Pharsalos, survived the changes in power at Rome.⁴⁷⁰ In a passage summing up Caesar's "Alexandrian War" of 48–47 BC, the author — perhaps Hirtius rather than Caesar — exposes the rationale behind Caesar's policy there quite plainly: having first fulfilled the terms of Ptolemaios XII's will by making Ptolemaios XIII and Kleopatra VII share the throne, Caesar later replaced the dead king (Ptolemaios XIII) with his younger brother (Ptolemaios XIV), still alongside Kleopatra VII, who had remained loyal throughout; their younger sister Arsinoē was removed from the kingdom to keep the peace, and three legions were left behind to bolster the rule of the monarchs, who did not enjoy the affection of their people, having remained staunch allies of Caesar; the Roman troops would equally protect the rulers if they remained loyal, or keep them in check if they proved disloyal.⁴⁷¹ As the Ptolemies already knew, Roman friendship and protection came at a hefty price.

Following the victory over Pompey at Pharsalos in 48 BC, it was Caesar's turn to be flattered by a series of dedications in Greek cities, naming Caesar as *pontifex maximus*, *imperator*, and consul for the second time. At Athens, we find him, unexceptionably, as savior and benefactor, and at Khios as patron.⁴⁷² At Pergamon, however, he is not only patron and benefactor of its inhabitants, but also "savior and benefactor of all the Greeks," deserving of the dedication "because of his piety and

⁴⁷⁰ On Pharnakēs II and Caesar's arrangements in Anatolia, see Appian, *Mithridatic Wars* 17.120-121; Cassius Dio 42.46-48. On Dēiōtaros I of Galatia and Caesar see Sullivan 1990: 164-169 and Mitchell 1995: 35-37.

⁴⁷¹ Caesar, *Alexandrian War* 33.

⁴⁷² TDGR 4: 78-79, nos. 79a, 79c.

justice.”⁴⁷³ Even more telling are the dedications at Ephesos and Karthaia on Keōs. At Ephesos, the cities of the province of Asia honored Caesar as descended “from Arēs and Aphroditē, god manifest and common savior of human life,”⁴⁷⁴ while at Karthaia he is “the god and imperator and savior of the inhabited world.”⁴⁷⁵ For all their obvious and flowery flattery, the dedications manifestly blended the austere titulature of Roman officialdom with the traditional divine epithets of Hellenistic kingship.⁴⁷⁶ But even while proclaiming Caesar a god while he was still living, they studiously avoided the word *basileus*, which was then the equivalent of Latin *rex*. Yet, Caesar was also compared with Alexander the Great, with whom he shared an alleged descent from Zeus.⁴⁷⁷ Nor did Caesar neglect the foundation or refoundation of cities, although he does seem to have resisted giving them his name: apart from other Roman colonies, in 44 BC he famously refounded the cities of Carthage and Corinth, which had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC to set an example to those challenging Roman power.⁴⁷⁸ Whatever its advantages, this suggests a potentially dangerous disregard for tradition.

Like Pompey, Caesar was subject to criticism by his political enemies, despite his ready clemency towards surrendering foes; among the many he had pardoned were his most famous murderers, Marcus Iunius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus.⁴⁷⁹ Caesar’s last triumph, for his victories in Spain, had occasioned a great deal of criticism as celebrating a victory over fellow Romans,

⁴⁷³ TDGR 4: 79, no. 79b.

⁴⁷⁴ TDGR 4: 79, no. 79d: θεὸν ἐπιφανῆ καὶ κοινὸν τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου βίου σωτήρα.

⁴⁷⁵ TDGR 4: 79, no. 79e: τὸν θεὸν καὶ αὐτοκράτορα καὶ σωτήρα τῆς οἰκουμένης. This inscription is not as precisely dated as the others and may be from 45–44 BC.

⁴⁷⁶ In fact, certain divine honors would begin to be conferred upon Caesar during his lifetime by the Roman senate, but after 46 BC: Gradel 2002: 61–72; Syme 1939: 54–55 thought this more likely retrospective.

⁴⁷⁷ Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.149–154.

⁴⁷⁸ Plutarch, *Caesar* 57.5.

⁴⁷⁹ Plutarch, *Caesar* 57.3, who praises Caesar’s clemency and mildness, and blameless conduct after his victory in the civil wars. Cf. Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 75.

and therefore a national calamity.⁴⁸⁰ Caesar was suspected of Alexander-like ambition for a wide range of conquests and improvements at the end of his life, in part connected to a planned expedition against the Parthians, ostensibly to avenge Crassus.⁴⁸¹ He initiated a reform of the imperfect Roman calendar, based on the calendrical practices of Ptolemaic Egypt; despite the improvement, the change and its design by Caesar occasioned dislike.⁴⁸² The renaming of a month after Caesar, July (Iulius), literally inserted Caesar and his family into the Roman calendar and, through it, Roman religion; Suetonius would list this last honor among those Caesar should not have accepted as a mere mortal.⁴⁸³

Caesar's position as Rome's *de facto* monarch was extraordinary, novel, and offensive in principle. Writing in the early second century AD, Plutarch concludes that

the Romans gave way before the good fortune of the man and accepted the bit, and regarding the monarchy as a respite from the evils of civil wars, they appointed him dictator for life. This was confessedly a tyranny, since the monarchy, besides the element of unaccountability, now took on that of permanence.⁴⁸⁴

This pragmatic but reluctant resignation was accompanied by the conferral of eventually excessive honors on Caesar, possibly in part as his enemies' ploy to undermine him.⁴⁸⁵ Suetonius echoes the same judgment as his contemporary Plutarch, but proceeds to itemize some of Caesar's excessive honors — consecutive consulships, perpetual dictatorship, the censorship, the honorific Imperator as *praenomen*, the honorific *Pater patriae* ("Father of the Fatherland"), a statue among those of the kings, a raised couch in the orchestra — before turning to what he considers honors that

⁴⁸⁰ Plutarch, *Caesar* 56.4.

⁴⁸¹ Plutarch, *Caesar* 58.3-5. Cf. Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 44.

⁴⁸² Plutarch, *Caesar* 59.1-3; Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 40.

⁴⁸³ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 76.1.

⁴⁸⁴ Plutarch, *Caesar* 57.1: οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὴν τύχην τοῦ ἀνδρὸς ἐγκεκλικότες καὶ δεδεγμένοι τὸν χαλινόν, καὶ τῶν ἐμφυλίων πολέμων καὶ κακῶν ἀναπνοὴν ἡγούμενοι τὴν μοναρχίαν, δικτάτορα μὲν αὐτὸν ἀπέδειξαν διὰ βίου τοῦτο δ' ἦν ὁμολογουμένη τυραννίς, τῷ ἀνυπευθύνῳ τῆς μοναρχίας τὸ ἀκατάπαυστον προσλαβούσης.

⁴⁸⁵ Plutarch, *Caesar* 57.2-3: ἕτεροι προστιθέντες ὑπερβολὰς.

were inappropriate for him to accept as a mere human — a golden throne in the senate house and the court, a chariot and litter in the circus, temples, altars, and statues besides those of the gods, a special priest and priestly college, and a month named after him.⁴⁸⁶ This striking list is partly explained by the documented conferral on Caesar of divine honors by the Roman state, even while he was alive, starting in 46 BC. These increased gradually, ranging from something like a hero cult to that of Caesar as a manifestation of Jupiter.⁴⁸⁷ Caesar was a sort of god among men, with an increasingly fully-fledged divine cult, much like the Hellenistic kings he had encountered in the east.

Indeed, Caesar was unable to dispel the impression that he had a “passion for the royal power.”⁴⁸⁸ His conflict with and subsequent intimidation of his fellow consul Bibulus in 59 BC had led to sarcastic suggestions that Caesar served as sole consul.⁴⁸⁹ Now dictator, Caesar’s failure to rise from his seat above the rostra to greet the magistrates and senators advancing to meet him with newly voted honors, was perceived as a slight and a failure to demonstrate proper respect; regretting his behavior, Caesar later suggested that he was prevented from acting appropriately by an epileptic seizure.⁴⁹⁰ Although some of this might have been invented by his enemies, Caesar was quoted as saying that the republic was nothing, a name without substance or form, that Sulla had shown himself a dunce by resigning the dictatorship, and other presumptuous statements.⁴⁹¹ A rumor was spread that the Sibylline books had foretold that Parthia could only be defeated by a king, suggesting that if Caesar were to be victorious, he should be king. Caesar was accordingly hailed as king by some of the

⁴⁸⁶ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 76.1. Cf. Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.106; Cassius Dio 43.14, 43.45, 44.6.

⁴⁸⁷ Gradel 2002: 54-72; Nock 1930: 1-3; Taylor 1930: 64-70.

⁴⁸⁸ Plutarch, *Caesar* 60.1: τὸ δὲ ἐμφανές μάλιστα μῖσος καὶ θανατηφόρον ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἔρωσ ἐξειργάσατο.

⁴⁸⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 20.1-2.

⁴⁹⁰ Plutarch, *Caesar* 60.3-5, who adds that in this instance Caesar had listened to poor advice to act as the senate’s superior. Cf. Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 79, and Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.107.

⁴⁹¹ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 77: nihil esse rem publicam, appellationem modo sine corpore ac specie. Sullam nescisse litteras, qui dictaturam deposuerit.

people, but the embarrassed dictator replied that he was not King but Caesar.⁴⁹² On another occasion, apparently using the jocular atmosphere of the Lupercalia as a potential excuse, the consul Antony, Caesar's trusted supporter, ran up to Caesar, seated upon the rostra on a golden throne and arrayed in triumphal attire, and offered him a diadem wound with a laurel wreath. Amid the unenthusiastic support for the gesture by the public, Caesar refused the diadem, to popular acclaim, and instructed it be dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus.⁴⁹³ Discovering Caesar's statues crowned with royal diadems, two tribunes of the people removed the offensive attribute of royalty and arrested those who had hailed Caesar as king.⁴⁹⁴ The annoyed Caesar then summarily deposed the tribunes, supposedly because they had preempted his own rejection of this association with kingship.⁴⁹⁵ A graffito scribbled on one of Caesar's statues suggested that, whereas Brutus had ejected the kings to become the first consul, Caesar, "who had ejected the consuls, is at last made our king."⁴⁹⁶

These awkward episodes appear to have been attempts — evidently, not sufficiently subtle — to test the waters for Caesar's proclamation as king. His refusals and protestations were popular but perhaps not entirely convincing, although some of them might have been arranged specifically to

⁴⁹² Plutarch, *Caesar* 60.1-2: ὡς ἐκ γραμμάτων Σιβυλλείων ἀλώσιμα τὰ Πάρθων φαίνοιτο Ῥωμαίοις σὺν βασιλεῖ στρατευομένοις ἐπ' αὐτούς, ἄλλως ἀνέφικτα ὄντα ... ἐτόλμησαν αὐτὸν ἀσπάσασθαι βασιλέα ... οὐκ ἔφη βασιλεύς, ἀλλὰ Καῖσαρ καλεῖσθαι. Cf. Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 79.2-3: neque ex eo infamiam affectati etiam regii nominis discutere ualuit, quanquam et plebei regem se salutanti Caesarem se, non regem esse responderit ... quoniam fatalibus libris contineretur Parthos nisi a rege non posse uinci, Caesar rex appellaretur. Similarly, Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.108: οὐκ εἰμι Βασιλεύς, ἀλλὰ Καῖσαρ, but in another context. He treats the Sibylline prophecy at 2.110.

⁴⁹³ Plutarch, *Caesar* 61.3-4. Cf. Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 79.2 and Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.109, who have Antonius actually place the diadem on Caesar's head, the latter removing it.

⁴⁹⁴ Plutarch, *Caesar* 61.4: ὤφθησαν δὲ ἀνδριάντες αὐτοῦ διαδήμασιν ἀναδεδεμένοι βασιλικοῖς. καὶ τῶν δημάρχων δύο, Φλάουιος καὶ Μάρυλλος, ἐπελθόντες ἀπέσπασαν, καὶ τοὺς ἀσπασαμένους βασιλέα τὸν Καῖσαρα πρῶτους ἐξευρόντες ἀπήγον εἰς τὸ δεσμωτήριον. Cf. Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 79.1 and Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.108, who record only one statue and one culprit.

⁴⁹⁵ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 79.1. Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.108 gives more detail, but in slightly different context.

⁴⁹⁶ Suetonius, *Divus Iulius* 80.3: Hic, quia consules eiecit, rex postremo factus est.

provide him the opportunity to allay fears that he was aiming at kingship.⁴⁹⁷ But deposing tribunes of the people had ominous precedent with Tiberius Gracchus and Pompey. Plutarch reports that when enticing Caesar to attend the meeting of the senate in which he was murdered, one of the conspirators is said to have suggested that the senate was “ready and willing to vote as one man that he should be declared king of the provinces outside of Italy and might wear a diadem when he went anywhere else by land and sea.”⁴⁹⁸ Something very similar is related by Appian in a different context, intended as a compromise between the Sibylline prophecy requiring a king to defeat the Parthians and the unpalatability of kingship at Rome: “that Caesar ought to be called dictator and *imperator* of the Romans, as he was in fact, or whatever other name they might prefer to that of king, and that he ought to be distinctly named king of the nations that were subject to the Romans.”⁴⁹⁹

Caesar’s seizure of power, extensive reforms, excessive honors, disregard for tradition, effective monopoly on authority, and suspicions over his future intentions exasperated his opponents, too many of whom had been spared by his “artful clemency.”⁵⁰⁰ Ignoring premonitions and omens, Caesar proceeded to the meeting of the senate at the Theater of Pompey on March 15, 44 BC, only to be stabbed to death by a crowd of disgruntled senators, falling at the feet of Pompey’s statue.⁵⁰¹ To Appian, who was comparing Caesar to Alexander the Great, Caesar was “a king in spite of

⁴⁹⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 37. Syme 1939: 55 seems to interpret Antony’s attempted “coronation” of Caesar as the latter’s chance to demonstrate publically that he was not seeking the crown.

⁴⁹⁸ Plutarch, *Caesar* 64.2: μὲν γὰρ αὐτὴν κελεύσαντος ἐκείνου, καὶ προθύμους εἶναι ψηφίζεσθαι πάντας ὅπως τῶν ἐκτὸς Ἰταλίας ἐπαρχιῶν βασιλεὺς ἀναγορευοίτο καὶ φοροίη διάδημα τὴν ἄλλην ἐπιῶν γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν.

⁴⁹⁹ Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.110: καὶ λόγος ἄλλος ἐφόιτα, Σιβύλλειον εἶναι προαγόρευμα μὴ πρὶν ὑπακούσεσθαι Ῥωμαίοις Παρθυαίους, εἰ μὴ βασιλεὺς αὐτοῖς ἐπιστρατεύσειε. καὶ τινες ἀπὸ τοῦδε ἐτόλμων λέγειν, ὅτι χρὴ Ῥωμαίων μὲν αὐτόν, ὥσπερ ἦν, δικτάτορα καὶ αὐτοκράτορα καλεῖν καὶ ὅσα ἄλλα ἐστὶν αὐτοῖς ἀντὶ βασιλείας ὀνόματα, τῶν δὲ ἐθνῶν, ὅσα Ῥωμαίοις ὑπήκοα, ἀντικρὺς ἀνειπεῖν βασιλέα.

⁵⁰⁰ For an overview, Swain and Davies 2010: 190-207. Cf. Taylor 1930: 72-74.

⁵⁰¹ Plutarch, *Caesar* 66.1-7. Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.111-117, describes the conspiracy at some length and highlights the same symbolism.

opposition, even though he did not accept the title.”⁵⁰² In a world familiar with divine kingship, despite his refusal of the title of king, his acceptance of divine honors seems to have amounted to much the same thing as being king. This seems to be reflected by the privileges accorded to Caesar by the senate. While they did not include a royal diadem, as we have seen, they did include sitting on a golden throne and wearing triumphal attire. Normally reserved for the triumphator’s brief moment of absolute glory during the triumphal procession, this was supposed to be the dress of the Roman king, and also of the heavenly king, Jupiter.⁵⁰³ The royal and divine precedents may be conflated, but they are unmistakable. Although his perpetual dictatorship had lasted, as such, for about three months (January to March 15, 44 BC), Caesar had been the closest thing to a monarch Rome had known in some four and a half centuries; whether it was actually his intention to be king, however, remains unclear.⁵⁰⁴

In the long run, Caesar’s murder did nothing to prevent the formation of Rome’s new monarchy any more than the supposed death of the first king, Romulus, at the hands of the patricians had ended Roman kingship seven centuries earlier.⁵⁰⁵ The murderers attempted to rally the population round themselves as tyrannicides and liberators but failed, thanks to Caesar’s popularity and Antony’s acumen.⁵⁰⁶ After a relatively short period of confusion, the Roman state was subjected to the government of the Second Triumvirate (43–33 BC), a college officially superimposed over the institutions of the republic and composed of the three leading Caesareans: Antony, Marcus Aemilius

⁵⁰² Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2.150: βασιλέα τε αὐτὸν ἀπέφηνεν ἀκόντων, εἰ καὶ τὴν προσηγορίαν οὐκ ἐδέχετο. As usual, the case for Caesar actually imitating Alexander is now shown to be overstated: Gruen 1998: 187-188.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Gradel 2002: 148. For attributes of kingship surviving in the cult of Jupiter, see Taylor 1931: 44-45, 54.

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. Syme 1939: 54-57.

⁵⁰⁵ Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.114 for the conspirators citing the murder of “Romulus when he changed from a king to a tyrant” (ὁ καὶ περὶ Ῥωμύλον τυραννικὸν ἐκ βασιλικῆς γενόμενον ἐλέγετο συμβῆναι) as precedent.

⁵⁰⁶ Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.118-148. For an overview, see Swain and Davies 2010: 208-227.

Lepidus (now pontifex maximus), and Caesar's posthumously adopted great-nephew, inaccurately called Octavian (Octavianus).⁵⁰⁷ The triumvirs proscribed their enemies, carried out a war to eliminate Caesar's murderers, and divided the Roman state into three spheres of influence; according to the final disposition in 40 BC: Octavian in the west, Antony in the east, and Lepidus in Africa. Among the first achievements of the triumvirs was the formal and full deification of Caesar as Divus Iulius on January 1, 42 BC.⁵⁰⁸

After the elimination of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi in 42 BC, Antony followed the precedent set by Pompey and Caesar in imposing his own settlement on the east, while also attempting to carry out Caesar's projected war against Parthia. As usual, it was a compromise between continuity and innovation, involving a veritable bevy of local kings. But where Pompey and Caesar had sometimes consolidated or annexed such kingdoms, Antony seemed determined to propagate them. Dēiōtaros of Galatia survived, despite picking the wrong side once more, by timely desertion to the victors of Philippi; when he died, Antony appointed his grandson Kastōr king of Galatia and Paphlagonia (40–37 BC).⁵⁰⁹ Dēiōtaros' secretary and commander Amyntas was given a kingdom in Pisidia, while another non-royal local ally who had proved useful against the Parthians, Polemōn of Laodikeia, was made king at Ikonion in Lycaonia in 39 BC.⁵¹⁰ Surprisingly, a son of Pharnakēs II, Dareios, was made king of Pontus (39–37 BC), including Roman provincial territory;

⁵⁰⁷ Syme 1939: 112-113; Kienast 1990: 61-65. He was born Gaius Octavius and became Gaius Iulius Caesar (in practice usually abbreviated to Gaius Caesar) by adoption, never utilizing the derivative name Octavianus (to which he was entitled by custom after assuming the full name of his adoptive father). "Octavianus" does occur in Cicero's letters (44 BC) and in the writing of much later Roman authors: Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 1.1: Namque Octavianus, patre Octavio, atque adoptione magni avunculi Caesaris ac mox procerum consulto ob victoriam partium placide exercitum Augusti cognomento dictus; Eutropius, *Breviarium* 7.1: Octavianus ... Caesaris nepos, quem ille testamento heredem reliquerat et nomen suum ferre iusserat. Hic est, qui postea Augustus est dictus et rerum potitus; Ammianus 26.1.13: Quibus abolitis, Octavianus Augustus Graecos secutus.

⁵⁰⁸ Gradel 2002: 56-57, 63.

⁵⁰⁹ Mitchell 1995: 37.

⁵¹⁰ Mitchell 1995: 38.

when he died, Polemōn I Eusebēs Sōtēr (36 BC–AD 8) was transferred from Ikonion to succeed him. Polemōn had no obvious claim on Pontus, although he eventually married Pharnakēs II's daughter Dynamis and Antony's granddaughter Pythodōris. Similarly, Amyntas was appointed the new king of Galatia (36–25 BC), leaving Dēiōtaros' great-grandson only Paphlagonia.⁵¹¹ In Cappadocia, Antony eventually replaced the local king with Arkhelaos Philopatris Ktistēs (36 BC–AD 17), the high priest of Komana, and son of a possible mistress of Antony's.⁵¹² Despite their unanticipated origins, the long careers of Polemōn and Arkhelaos reflect well on Antony's choices and on their own abilities.⁵¹³

The same could be said of another appointee of Antony, the Judaeen king Herod the Great (Hērōdēs, 37–4 BC). In 40 BC, during Antony's absence at Alexandria and then Rome, Judaea was overrun by the Parthians, who imposed on its throne their protégé, a Hasmonean named Antigonos (40–37 BC). Herod, son of the powerful Idumaeen Jewish official Antipatros, who had been a friend of Antony's, now came to Rome, seeking support for another Hasmonean prince, Herod's brother-in-law. Herod not only gained Roman support, but Antony, with Octavian's cooperation, appointed Herod king of Judaea, complete with procession to the Capitol, public sacrifice, and the depositing of the decree of appointment in the temple of Jupiter. In 63 BC, the Judaeen kingship had been suspended by Pompey, who allowed the ruling Hasmonean only the titles of high priest and ethnarch (*ethnarkhēs*); now, in 40 BC, Antony renewed the kingship of Judaea, conferring it to a client from outside the ruling lineage.⁵¹⁴ Taking advantages of Roman victories over the Parthians, Herod gradually took over Judaea, before finally taking Jerusalem in 37 BC. Antigonos was captured, led

⁵¹¹ Sullivan 1990: 160-163, 171-174; Mitchell 1995: 38-39.

⁵¹² Sullivan 1990: 177-185.

⁵¹³ Jacobson 2001: 24.

⁵¹⁴ Braund 1984: 24-25; Sullivan 1990: 215-223; Richardson and Fisher 2018: 110-117.

before Antony, and executed at Herod's behest. Herod would maintain himself on his slippery throne, ruthlessly punishing challenges even from within the ranks of his own family, while also navigating the troubled waters of Roman politics.⁵¹⁵ Like Pompey before him, Antony had reversed a predecessor's policy in settling the affairs of the east; otherwise, Antony's actions were consistent, both with his own practices and the by now standard interference of the leading men of Rome in local affairs.

By far the most famous Roman client monarch associated with Antony was Kleopatra VII of Egypt. Following Caesar's murder at Rome in 44 BC, his former mistress had quietly eliminated her younger brother and co-ruler, replacing him with her son Ptolemaios XV Kaisar, nicknamed Kaisarion ("Little Caesar"), openly declared the son of Caesar.⁵¹⁶ Cautious responses to the Roman civil war allowed Kleopatra to survive on her throne and to entice Antony himself to her cause. The Roman triumvir had been making his way through Anatolia, helping himself to its wealth, receiving kings and their wives and spending his time in feasts, pleasures, and spectacles.⁵¹⁷ This enthusiastic reception was calculated to ensure his favor, like that of any Roman general. But also like that of a Hellenistic king. Indeed, at Ephesos, Antony was received as the god "Dionysos Giver of Joy and Benefactor," accompanied by women dressed as Bacchae and men and boys as Satyrs, in a sumptuous Dionysian-themed festival.⁵¹⁸ Susceptible to flattery — though we should remember that our image of Antony is shaped by the hostile propaganda of his vanquisher — Antony might have been reminded of Dionysos' mythological conquests in the east, which had been part of the competitive

⁵¹⁵ Sullivan 1990: 223-225; Richardson and Fisher 2018: 119-127.

⁵¹⁶ Sullivan 1990: 264-265; Hölbl 2001: 239. Apart from Kleopatra VII's official Greek and Egyptian propaganda, Ptolemaios XV is referred to as "Caesar" by Cicero: Hölbl 2001: 238.

⁵¹⁷ Plutarch, *Antony* 24.1-2.

⁵¹⁸ Plutarch, *Antony* 24.3: Διόνυσον αὐτὸν ἀνακαλουμένων χαριδότην καὶ μελίχιον, adding wryly that he was equally "Dionysos Carnivorous and Savage" (24.4: ὠμηστής καὶ ἀγριώνιος). Sullivan 1990: 266-267.

drive for Alexander the Great's ambitious and victorious campaign.⁵¹⁹ As Antony, who also apparently claimed descent from Hēraklēs,⁵²⁰ proceeded eastward, intent on fighting the Parthians, he summoned Kleopatra VII to meet him at Tarsos to answer charges of cooperating with Brutus and Cassius. She arrived, eventually, in a magnificent display portraying her as the goddess Aphroditē, complete with the company of Erōses, Nēreids, and Graces, surrounded by all manner of luxury. The display had the desired effect, both on Antony, and on the bystanders, who reported "that Aphroditē had come to revel with Dionysos for the good of Asia."⁵²¹ For a Hellenistic queen, the comparison was natural enough, and Kleopatra was already being compared to the Egyptian goddesses Isis and Ḥathōr at home; for a Roman general, it was still unusual, though not unfathomable in the east, given his effective position of authority. Another representative of Rome was blurring the line between command and kingship, human and divine.

Antony was following Caesar's footsteps, even into Kleopatra's bed in Alexandria. There he seems to have enjoyed himself, breaking free of the traditional restraints of Roman propriety.⁵²² At Kleopatra's behest, he executed her exiled sister Arsinoē at Ephesos.⁵²³ Troubles in Italy and on the Parthian frontier forced Antony to leave Kleopatra only temporarily (40–37 BC), despite his marriage to Octavian's sister Octavia, who was indispensable in securing continued cooperation between her brother and her husband. Reunited with Kleopatra in Syria in 37 BC, Antony proceeded to bestow upon her Roman territories in Phoenicia and Syria, and to confirm her in possession of Cyprus and

⁵¹⁹ Gruen 1998: 189, pointing out the absence of any strong evidence for Antony emulating Alexander.

⁵²⁰ Plutarch, *Antony* 36.4.

⁵²¹ Plutarch, *Antony* 25.1-26.3: ὡς ἡ Ἀφροδίτη κωμάζοι παρὰ τὸν Διόνυσον ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ τῆς Ἀσίας.

⁵²² Plutarch, *Antony* 28.1-2.

⁵²³ Sullivan 1990: 265; Hölbl 2001: 240-241.

parts of Cilicia, predictably causing a negative reaction at Rome.⁵²⁴ Despite the special favor shown to Kleopatra, other potentates also benefited from Antony's generosity: the grateful Tarkondimotos I of Kastabala in Cilicia adopted the epithet Philantōnios, "friend of Antony."⁵²⁵ But Antony also unmade kings: the Hasmonean Antigonos was removed to make place for Herod; when Artabasdēs II of Armenia (55–34 BC) withdrew from Antony's Parthian campaign, he was blamed for subsequent difficulties and eventually seized and led captive to Alexandria, to be displayed in Antony's parade there in 34 BC.⁵²⁶

In 37 BC, Antony had openly acknowledged the twins Kleopatra had born him, Alexandros Hēlios and Kleopatra Selēnē. Without divorcing Octavia, he may have married Kleopatra. As in the sibling marriage between Ptolemaios II Philadelphos and his sister Arsinoē II, a convenient Greek mythological precedent was found, this time in the heroic philandering of Hēraklēs, who had had offspring by many women.⁵²⁷ Kleopatra celebrated the augmentation of her kingdom by starting a new regnal era, and soon produced a third child by Antony, named Ptolemaios Philadelphos, recalling his glorious ancestor.⁵²⁸ Unabashed by the marital and constitutional irregularities, Antony and Kleopatra advertised their relationship even on coins: Antony minting Roman silver coins with Kleopatra on the reverse at Antioch, while Kleopatra minted bronze coins with Antony in various mints.⁵²⁹ When Antony's Roman wife Octavia set out to join him in the east in 36 BC, bringing

⁵²⁴ Plutarch, *Antony* 36.2. Hölbl 2001: 241-242.

⁵²⁵ Sullivan 1990: 190, 269. On Tarkondimotos (Aramaic *Tarkumuwa and Luwian *Tarḫuntamuwata) and his dynasty, see especially Wright 2012.

⁵²⁶ Plutarch, *Antony* 39.1, 50.2-4. Hölbl 2001: 243-244.

⁵²⁷ Plutarch, *Antony* 36.3-4: οὕτω γούν ὑφ' Ἡρακλέους τεκνωθῆναι τὸν αὐτοῦ πρόγονον, οὐκ ἐν μιᾷ γαστρὶ θεμένου τὴν διαδοχῆν. Sullivan 1990: 269; Hölbl 2001: 241-242.

⁵²⁸ Sullivan 1990: 269.

⁵²⁹ Hölbl 2001: 242. An example in TDGR 4: 111, no. 89a, probably from Antioch.

reinforcements, he accepted the reinforcements, but instructed Octavia to turn back at Athens.⁵³⁰

The rupture with Octavian — and Rome — was imminent.

All this naturally outraged the Romans, as did Antony's parade at Alexandria, something deemed inappropriate for a non-Roman audience if it were an unauthorized Roman triumph.⁵³¹ Worse outrage was to follow. The so-called "Donations of Alexandria" took place in the city's gymnasium in 34 BC, with Antony and Kleopatra presiding from silver thrones on the tribunal. Antony confirmed Kleopatra as queen in Egypt, Cyprus, and various dependencies, and designated her "Queen of Kings" (*basilissa basileōn*); Ptolemaios XV Kaisarion correspondingly became "King of Kings" (*basileus basileōn*) and was advertised again as the son of Kleopatra by Caesar. Antony also proclaimed his son Alexandros Hēlios king of kings of Armenia and the east, his twin sister Kleopatra Selēnē was declared queen of Cyrenaïca, and their younger brother Ptolemaios Philadelphos was declared king of Phoenicia, Syria, and Cilicia. Alexandros Hēlios and Ptolemaios Philadelphos were then supplied with the appropriate royal trappings of the respective Persian and Hellenistic traditions.⁵³² The changes implied by the "Donations of Alexandria" were more apparent than real: there is no evidence that Cyrene, Syria, and Armenia were turned over to Ptolemaic administration; Antony's Roman administration continued to operate within them.⁵³³ In a sense, Antony was simply creating more monarchs. But they were his offspring and, at least nominally, they were being given Roman provinces and conquests; admittedly Antony — and in the case of Cyprus, Caesar before him — had given Roman territory to client kings before.

⁵³⁰ Plutarch, *Antony* 53. Hölbl 2001: 243.

⁵³¹ Plutarch, *Antony* 50.4. Green 1990: 675, believes Antony's parade in Alexandria was misinterpreted as an unauthorized triumph.

⁵³² Plutarch, *Antony* 54.3-5; Cassius Dio 49.41.1-3.

⁵³³ Hölbl 2001: 244.

As on earlier occasions, Kleopatra VII was presented in both her apparel and her title as the “New Goddess” (Thea Neōtera, in Egyptian terms, “New Isis”), with new coinage advertising her title and those of her children.⁵³⁴ Antony, who had been seated similarly enthroned, was the “New Dionysos” (Neos Dionysos, in Egyptian terms, “New Osiris”), a title he shared with Kleopatra’s father Ptolemaios XII Aulētēs, but actually had a separate origin.⁵³⁵ Apart from the identification of Antony with Dionysos at Ephesos in 42 BC, Athenian inscriptions from the early 30s BC testify to his designation there as “the god New Dionysos” (*Theos Neos Dionysos*) and, alongside his Roman wife Octavia, as one of the “two Benefactor Gods” (*Theoi Euergetai*).⁵³⁶ Like Caesar, though not at Rome, Antony had assumed virtually all the trappings of a monarch except for a crown. Moreover, not only did Antony lord over client kings in the same way as other leading Roman statesmen had done before him, but his “Donations of Alexandria” could be interpreted as setting a more explicit precedent for a hierarchically differentiated monarchic system headed by the Roman ruler. While Antony does not wear a crown, he is effectively a Hellenistic king, the consort and co-ruler of the Queen of Kings and stepfather of the King of Kings. And *their* titles suggest their superiority over the other monarchs subject to Antony, who was, after all, in the business of “dispensing justice to tetrarchs and kings.”⁵³⁷ Whatever the intended actual implications of the “Donations of Alexandria,” their very wording was

⁵³⁴ Plutarch, *Antony* 54.6, interprets her title, correctly, as *Nea Isis*: Κλεοπάτρα μὲν γὰρ καὶ τότε καὶ τὸν ἄλλον χρόνον εἰς πλῆθος ἐξιοῦσα στολὴν ἱερὰν Ἰσιδος ἐλάμβανε καὶ νέα Ἴσις ἐχρημάτιζε. Green 1990: 678. An example of the coinage in TDGR 4: 111, no. 89b, and Crawford 1974: 539, no. 543.

⁵³⁵ Plutarch, *Antony* 60.3: “Antony associated himself with Hēraklēs in lineage, and with Dionysos in the mode of life he adopted, as I have said, and he was called the New Dionysos” (προσωκείου δὲ ἑαυτὸν Ἀντώνιος Ἡρακλεῖ κατὰ γένος καὶ Διονύσῳ κατὰ τὸν τοῦ βίου ζῆλον, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, Διόνυσος νέος προσαγορευόμενος). Cassius Dio 50.25.3-4, quotes a speech of Octavian before the battle of Actium, attacking Antony for calling himself Osiris and Dionysos and giving away entire islands and provinces. Similarly, Cassius Dio 50.5.3.

⁵³⁶ *IG II²* 1043: [Ἀντωνίου] θεοῦ νέου Διονύσο[υ]. *Agora XVIII* H273: [Ἀ]ντωνίου καὶ Ὀ[κτ]αίᾶς θυῖν θε[ῶν ε]ὐεργετῶν. Cupello 2018: 43-59, with additional evidence.

⁵³⁷ Plutarch, *Antony* 58.6: πολλὰς τετράρχαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν ἐπὶ βήματος δελτάρια.

bound to meet with opposition from Rome. For, unlike Caesar, Antony was not in sole command of the Roman state.

The stage was now set for the final showdown between Antony and Kleopatra on the one hand, and Octavian on the other. The Second Triumvirate had effectively dissolved with Octavian's marginalization of Lepidus in 36 BC — caught plotting against Octavian as the two took Sicily from Pompey's son Sextus, but betrayed by his troops, Lepidus was deprived of his offices and powers, except for retaining the religious office of pontifex maximus.⁵³⁸ Octavian, despite a long series of early troubles and an unpromising personal military record, was soon left in a dominant position in the Roman west. Mindful of Caesar's precedent, he accepted honors humbly and in moderation, for example accepting an ovation rather than a full-scale triumph for defeating his Roman opponents in Sicily. The approach worked, and more honors followed; according to Appian, Italian towns now added him among their tutelary gods.⁵³⁹

Even without the provocations offered by the policies of Antony, an effective dyarchy between Antony and Octavian was bound to founder under the weight of the inherent competition between them, just as it had between Pompey and Caesar in the past. Following the political and personal provocations posed by the "Donations of Alexandria," Octavian launched a propaganda campaign against Antony, careful to portray the famous and still popular Roman statesman as bewitched and lead astray by the evil queen: "a vote was passed to wage war against Kleopatra, and, to take away from Antony the authority which he had surrendered to a woman. And that ... Antony

⁵³⁸ For an overview of the period, see Swain and Davies 2010: 228-248.

⁵³⁹ Appian, *Civil Wars* 5.132.

had been drugged and was not even master of himself.”⁵⁴⁰ This resonated with the people, even if Antony still had powerful support in the senate. That proved insufficient, and in 32 BC some 300 Antonian senators, including the two consuls, fled to Antony in the east. In the west, Octavian persevered, decisively turning popular opinion against Antony by illegally exposing his will⁵⁴¹; all of Italy now swore an oath of loyalty to Octavian. As if foreshadowing Late Antiquity, the Roman world briefly divided between Antony’s east and Octavian’s west.

The showdown between them was played out at Actium (Aktion) by the opening of the Ambrakian Gulf, on September 2, 31 BC. Unlike Octavian, Antony had in his forces those of a bevy of client kings, with the following present in person: Bocchus II of Mauretania, Tarkondimotos I Philantōnios of Kastabala, Arkhelaos of Cappadocia, Dēiotaros Philadelphos of Paphlagonia, Mithradatēs II Philorōmaios Philellēn of Commagene, and Sadalas III of Thrace; additionally Polemōn I of Pontus, Malkhos of Arabia, Herod of Judaea, and Amyntas of Galatia, as well as the king of Media Atropatēnē sent troops.⁵⁴² Little could express more clearly Antony’s position as lord over many client kings, and they gave him the numerical superiority. But it was of no avail. Through the superb naval command of Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Octavian emerged victorious, although Antony and Kleopatra made their escape back to Alexandria with most of their treasure.⁵⁴³ But they had lost a great deal of their army and fleet and the support of their client kings.

The end came almost a year later, in August 30 BC. Octavian landed in Egypt, eventually overcoming the forces Antony sent against him. Faced by increasing desertions and told Kleopatra

⁵⁴⁰ Plutarch, *Antony* 60.1: ψηφίζεται Κλεοπάτρα πολεμείν, ἀφελέσθαι δὲ τῆς ἀρχῆς Ἀντώνιον ἢς ἐξέστη γυναικί. καὶ προσεπέιπε Καῖσαρ ὡς Ἀντώνιος μὲν ὑπὸ φαρμάκων οὐδὲ αὐτοῦ κρατοίη.

⁵⁴¹ Plutarch, *Antony* 58.2-4.

⁵⁴² Plutarch, *Antony* 61.1-2. Amyntas and Dēiotaros defected to Octavian: Plutarch, *Antony* 63.3.

⁵⁴³ This is interpreted as a success by Swain and Davies 2010: 244, who focus on the grander strategy of Agrippa’s campaign.

was dead, Antony committed suicide.⁵⁴⁴ Like Caesar before him, faced with the head of Pompey, Octavian is said to have shed some tears for his former relative and colleague.⁵⁴⁵ But he was quick to point out Antony's faults and to proceed ruthlessly with his purpose, beheading Antony's eldest son by his earlier Roman wife Fulvia.⁵⁴⁶ Kleopatra, still very much alive, attempted to treat with Octavian but found his terms unacceptable.⁵⁴⁷ Like her uncle Ptolemaios of Cyprus, she chose suicide, making sure to be arrayed like a queen in death.⁵⁴⁸ Octavian gave her the honor of a royal burial, alongside Antony, as she had intended.⁵⁴⁹ Her son by Caesar, Ptolemaios XV Kaisarion, had been spirited out of Alexandria to escape the country, but was betrayed by his tutor and eventually killed: Octavian had been advised that "Not a good thing were a Caesar too many."⁵⁵⁰ By contrast, Kleopatra's children by Antony were spared — though deprived of their nominal kingdoms — and turned over to Octavian's sister, Antony's last Roman wife, Octavia.⁵⁵¹ Octavian was now left the sole ruler of the Roman state, also the sole son of Caesar, the sole ruler of Egypt, and the sole master of Rome's client kings. Had it not been for Rome's republican traditions and Octavian's sensitivity to them, his effective position as a supreme monarch might have been acknowledged explicitly. We consider him Rome's first emperor, usually under his later name, Augustus (30 BC–AD 14).

Octavian's new and unprecedented position at the helm of the Roman state clearly had roots in the historical experience of the Roman elite during the previous decades. It was also informed by

⁵⁴⁴ Plutarch, *Antony* 76.2-78.1.

⁵⁴⁵ Plutarch, *Antony* 78.2.

⁵⁴⁶ Plutarch, *Antony* 81.1.

⁵⁴⁷ Plutarch, *Antony* 72.1, 78.3-5.

⁵⁴⁸ Plutarch, *Antony* 82.1-86.3.

⁵⁴⁹ Plutarch, *Antony* 86.4; Suetonius 2.17.4.

⁵⁵⁰ Plutarch, *Antony* 81.2: οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκαισαρίῃ, an emendation of Homer, *Iliad* 2.204: οὐκ ἀγαθὸν πολυκοιρανίῃ; Suetonius 2.17.5.

⁵⁵¹ Plutarch, *Antony* 82.1, 87.1; Suetonius 2.17.5.

the practices and history of Hellenistic kingship. However, insofar as it could be defined — and it was purposefully *not* defined — the position of Roman emperor was the sum total of the various offices, powers, honorifics, and other distinctions that Octavian accumulated and retained over the course of his long life. The Roman Revolution need not be analyzed in detail here, as this has been done in great detail and majestic Tacitean style long ago.⁵⁵² But it is worth looking at the things that were and were not comprised in the position of Roman emperor.

When the dictator Caesar's will was opened following his murder in March 44 BC, it was discovered that he adopted as son and named as principal heir to his considerable fortune his sister's grandson Gaius Octavius. The 19-years-old now became Gaius Iulius Caesar, omitting the additional name Octavianus, to which he was entitled, presumably because he chose to obscure his humbler origins in the Octavia clan. Nevertheless, later historiographical tradition and convenience have conspired to make him familiar as Octavian for the next 21 years of his life. The adoption and will made him not only the principal heir to Caesar's wealth, but also a natural heir to Caesar's influence, clients, and veterans, instantly accelerating his political and military career.

Already at the start of 43 BC, courted by Antony's opponents, Octavian was irregularly enrolled into the senate and made propraetor (with *imperium propraetore*) to take up a command under the consuls; he henceforth considered that day, January 7, 43 BC, his *dies imperii*.⁵⁵³ For later emperors, this was the day when their reign as a fully-fledged emperor (Augustus) began; in the case of Octavian, it was more simply his formal entry into his first magistracy to have *imperium*. Victory over Antony resulted in Octavian being acclaimed *imperator* for the first time, in April 43 BC.

⁵⁵² By Syme 1939.

⁵⁵³ Augustus 1.1-3. Kienast 1990: 61; Syme 1939: 167, 174.

Henceforth, this was an honorary title he could use more or less permanently,⁵⁵⁴ although he would be acclaimed *imperator* on twenty further occasions, the last in AD 13.⁵⁵⁵ When the consuls died in the aftermath of the next battle with Antony, Octavian took over their legions, and eventually emulated Caesar in crossing the Rubicon and marching on Rome, where he secured his own election as consul in August 43 BC, 23 years before he was eligible to stand for that office.⁵⁵⁶ He would serve as consul on twelve more occasions until 2 BC.⁵⁵⁷ By the end of November, Octavian had reconciled with the Caesarean faction led by Antony and Lepidus and together they made themselves triumvirs for the ordering of the republic (*tresviri rei publicae constituendae*), with official and virtually dictatorial powers for the next five years. The triumvirate would be renewed for an additional five years in 37 BC, to expire at the end of 33 BC.⁵⁵⁸

Meanwhile, on January 1, 42 BC, Caesar was officially enrolled among the state gods as Divus Iulius, his temple to be built in the Forum and his cult to be propagated throughout Italy; on a more purely political level, the magistrates and senators swore an oath to maintain the deified dictator's acts.⁵⁵⁹ Octavian now became Gaius Iulius Divi filius Caesar — son of the god, a distinction no other Roman could compete with, something of palpable value in a group obsessed with competing over *dignitas*; even Caesar, by contrast, had been merely a distant descendant of the goddess Venus.⁵⁶⁰ Victories over fellow Romans (at Philippi, Perusia, and in Sicily) were humbly celebrated with

⁵⁵⁴ Technically, the honorific *imperator* would be superseded by the honorific *triumphator* (if there was a triumph) and then abandoned until the next acclamation: Syme 1958: 177-178.

⁵⁵⁵ Augustus 4.1. Kienast 1990: 66-67.

⁵⁵⁶ Augustus 1.4; Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 26.1, on the “usurpation” of the first consulate.

⁵⁵⁷ Kienast 1990: 65-66.

⁵⁵⁸ Syme 1939: 185-186, 188; Kienast 1990: 61-62. Augustus 1.4, 7.1; Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 27.1.

⁵⁵⁹ Taylor 1930: 78-99; Gradel 2002: 74

⁵⁶⁰ Syme 1939: 202 and 1958: 181, gives 38 BC for the name change; Kienast 1990: 62, gives 40 BC.

ovations (in 40 and 36 BC) rather than triumphs, thereby seeking to lessen criticism like that of Caesar's last triumph over the Pompeians.⁵⁶¹ From 40 or 38 BC, Octavian substituted the honorific *Imperator* for his personal and family names, becoming Imperator Caesar Divi filius.⁵⁶² The *praenomen Imperatoris* had already been granted to Caesar, but he does not appear to have adopted it in his names.⁵⁶³ Here it does not yet mean "emperor" and does not seem to function as an indication of any specific title or power, although it advertises Octavian's military achievements.⁵⁶⁴ The victory in Sicily, which ensured control of the Western Mediterranean and Rome's grain supply, and the subsequent ovation were followed by the conferral of tribunician sacrosanctity (inviolability) on Octavian in 36 BC, extended to Octavian's wife Livia and sister Octavia the next year⁵⁶⁵; although born a plebeian, Octavian's adoption by Caesar had made him a patrician and thus ineligible for the *office* of tribune of the people. In 32 BC, as developments moved toward a conflict with Antony, Octavian obtained the oath of allegiance to himself from "all of Italy." Effectively, the population was being turned into Octavian's clients.⁵⁶⁶ Morally and legally, Octavian now had Italy (and therefore the bulk of Roman citizens) behind him for the coming conflict against Antony — or, technically, against Kleopatra.⁵⁶⁷

In 30 BC, when Octavian became the sole ruler of the Roman world following the deaths of Antony and Kleopatra and the conquest of Egypt, he was granted some of the *powers* of the tribunes

⁵⁶¹ Augustus 4.1. Kienast 1990: 62.

⁵⁶² Syme 1939: 113; more fully Syme 1958.

⁵⁶³ Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 76.1; with more detail, Cassius Dio 43.44.2; however, he (also 52.41.3-4) confuses the import of the title, telescoping its imperial meaning from his own time to 45 BC: Syme 1958: 176-177.

⁵⁶⁴ Syme 1958: 182.

⁵⁶⁵ Kienast 1990: 62, 84. Cassius Dio 49.38.1.

⁵⁶⁶ Augustus 25.2: Iuravit in mea verba tota Italia sponte sua. Syme 1939: 284-289.

⁵⁶⁷ Syme 1939: 288-292.

of the people for life.⁵⁶⁸ In 29 BC, Octavian celebrated a triple triumph for his victories in Illyricum and at Actium, and the conquest of Egypt; Kleopatra provided the convenient excuse for treating the civil war as a foreign war. From 28 BC, Octavian held the honorary position of *princeps senatus*, normally reserved for the eldest and most authoritative of senators; authority he had aplenty, but he was less than 35 years old.⁵⁶⁹ Completing a process he had begun the previous year, in January 27 BC, Octavian came to the senate, yielding all his powers and provinces and thus “restoring the republic.”⁵⁷⁰ In response to the senators’ remonstrances, Octavian was persuaded to accept back a “province” made up of Syria, Gaul, and Spain, exposed areas that contained the majority of legions. Octavian was given the power of proconsul (*imperium proconsulare*) over these areas for a duration of ten years.⁵⁷¹ Octavian was also awarded the civic crown, given for saving another citizen’s life in battle, and other honors.⁵⁷² The restorer of Rome and its republic had been looking around for a new name. Romulus was dismissed as too evocative of kingship (and, moreover, fused with the god Quirinus) and redolent with negative associations from the murder of his brother Remus to his own possible elimination by the patricians. In the end, the new name conferred upon Octavian was the *cognomen* Augustus, meaning “consecrated.”⁵⁷³ This name was added on to the others, and the emperor became Imperator Caesar Divi filius Augustus.⁵⁷⁴ Together or separately, the words Imperator, Caesar, and Augustus, which were adopted by virtually all of Augustus’ successors on the

⁵⁶⁸ Cassius Dio 51.19. Swain and Davies 2010: 250; Bickerman 1980: 200; Syme 1939: 336.

⁵⁶⁹ Augustus 7.2. Syme 1939: 306-307.

⁵⁷⁰ Augustus 34.1: rem publicam ex mea potestate in seantus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli.

⁵⁷¹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 47. Syme 1939: 313; Kienast 1990: 63, 66.

⁵⁷² Augustus 34.2. Kienast 1990: 63.

⁵⁷³ Augustus 34.2. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 7; Cassius Dio 53.16.5-8, discussing the Greek equivalent, Sebastos, as “reverend.” Note the false etymology provided by Isidore of Seville 9.3.16, from *augere* (“to enlarge”). Syme 1939: 313-314. On Romulus as Quirinus, see Taylor 1931: 43.

⁵⁷⁴ Kienast 1990: 63.

throne, would come to designate the Roman emperor. The emperor, whom we can now call Augustus, humbly applied himself to his senate-bestowed command, spending the next few years in his Gallic and Spanish provinces, although he continued to be elected consul at Rome in absentia (27–24 BC).

Finally back at Rome, Augustus was faced with resentment over his monopoly on one of the two consulships, the greatest prize in the career path of any Roman statesman. Recovering from a severe sickness, in the summer of 23 BC, Augustus once more proceeded to resign some of his power by laying down the consulship. Once again, however, he was rewarded for his actions. His proconsular power was now redefined as overriding proconsular power (*imperium proconsulare maius*), allowing him to intervene into the affairs of other proconsuls in the provinces or in the field; in other words, it gave the emperor opportunity to control the military and the provincial administration. Augustus was also allowed to exercise his military *imperium* even within the walls of Rome. Moreover, Augustus was now given full tribunician power (*tribunicia potestas*) which made him in effect, though not in office (for which, as patrician, he was ineligible), a tribune of the people; this strengthened his image as champion of Rome's common people, enabling him to assemble them and put proposals to them; it also included the tribunician veto, although Augustus took care not to use it. It was the year of holding this tribunician power, that Augustus and his successors came to employ to count the years of their reign, attaching it to their formal style.⁵⁷⁵ As with Augustus' *dies imperii* in 43 BC, however, in his case it is not a helpful indicator in reckoning his reign.

As before, Augustus followed up the conferral of his new powers with another absence in his provinces, this time in the east (22–19 BC). When he returned, Augustus was rewarded yet again,

⁵⁷⁵ Augustus 5.4; Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.5. Syme 1939: 335–336.

this time with consular power (*imperium consulare*) and the right to sit between the two consuls with the ceremonial *fascēs* of executive authority.⁵⁷⁶ Appropriately, this time he remained at or near Rome, attending to government reform, including bringing the number of senators down to their pre-Caesarean numbers.⁵⁷⁷ After his former colleague as triumvir Lepidus died in 12 BC, Augustus was elected to the supreme religious office of pontifex maximus, which had once also been held by Caesar, after having already acquired a number of other priestly offices. In this office, he applied himself to correcting mistakes introduced in the keeping of Caesar's calendar and purging dubious prophetic books both in Greek and Latin.⁵⁷⁸ Finally, in 2 BC, Augustus was conferred the honorific designation of *Pater patriae* ("Father of the Fatherland"), which had also once been given to Caesar.⁵⁷⁹

The pattern that emerges from the overview of the names, honors, powers, and offices held by Augustus, is that they are consistently rooted in the constitutional framework of the Roman state. They either adhere to Roman precedent or they seek to circumvent it as inoffensively as possible. Augustus had learned from Caesar's mistakes and, especially once he enjoyed sole power, seems to have adopted a humbler and more moderate approach, while seeking equally wide-reaching authority. In his *Res Gestae*, Augustus asserts that he restored the republic when it was safe to do so and he was in complete control of affairs.⁵⁸⁰ Rather ingeniously, he suggests that after this time, he "possessed no more official power than others."⁵⁸¹ Having refused the offers of a dictatorship, a lifelong consulship, and exclusive censorship, Augustus claims that he "would not accept any office inconsistent with the

⁵⁷⁶ Augustus 8.3-4, with a different emphasis on consular power; Cassius Dio 54.10. Kienast 1990: 63, 66.

⁵⁷⁷ Augustus 8.2. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 35.1.

⁵⁷⁸ Augustus 7.3, 10.2. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 31.1.

⁵⁷⁹ Augustus 35.1. Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 58.

⁵⁸⁰ Augustus 34.1.

⁵⁸¹ Augustus 34.3: potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt.

custom of our ancestors.”⁵⁸² Suetonius reports that Augustus “twice *thought* of restoring the republic” but, realizing “that as he himself would not be free from danger if he should retire, so too would be hazardous to trust the State to the control of the populace, he continued to keep it in his hands.”⁵⁸³ Even without Suetonius’ statement to that effect, it would be obvious that Augustus remained in control of the Roman state until the day he died. But while he might have behaved with propriety and moderation both politically and in his personal lifestyle,⁵⁸⁴ and attempted to stay within the bounds of the offices and powers that were conferred upon him, his immense political stature and central role in the government of the Roman republic belie this image. He was, in fact, much like Caesar and various other Roman statesmen before him, simply much more successful in perpetuating his position of power and that of his chosen heirs. Like the *fasces* symbolizing executive authority at Rome, the bundle of names, honors, powers, and offices accumulated by Augustus by the end of his reign would pass substantially unaltered to his successors. It defined the position — we cannot yet say office — of Roman emperor.

Emperor and kings

Augustus’ claim to have restored the republic (*res publica*), so easily considered a bold-faced lie, need not be interpreted in quite so negative a fashion. Undeniably, Augustus had restored the stability of the Roman state and society after an extended period of recurring civil wars and a much longer period of intermittent social unrest. His “constitutional settlements” in 27 and 23 BC were among the final steps towards normalizing the operation of traditional Roman administration after the effective dictatorship of the Second Triumvirate (43–33 BC) and Augustus’ sequence of

⁵⁸² Augustus 5.1-3, 6.1.

⁵⁸³ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 28.1: De reddenda re p. bis cogitavit...

⁵⁸⁴ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 72-73, 76-77.

uninterrupted consulships with amplified authority (31–23 BC). On a technical level, the republic was being preserved and repaired. Also on a technical level, although our word “republic” derives from the Latin *res publica* (in Greek, *politeia*) and is usually employed to translate it, the Latin term had a vaguer meaning, designating more properly a commonwealth, something belonging to and acting for the citizens; it did not specify what kind of regime happened to preside over it.⁵⁸⁵ While our modern notion of “republic” is *not* a monarchy, the Roman *res publica* could be *either* republican *or* monarchic. This does not, of course, change the fact that for nearly five centuries the Roman *res publica* was characterized by annual, elective, and shared authority intended as the opposite of a vilified kingship, and that now the emperor had emerged as Rome’s extra-constitutional monarch, presiding over the *res publica* and keeping it in order, while maintaining its institutions.

For the senator Tacitus, writing a century later, Rome had started under kings, enjoyed “liberty” under the consuls, and now reverted to monarchy under Augustus.⁵⁸⁶

After laying down his triumviral title and proclaiming himself a simple consul content with tribunician authority to safeguard the commons, he first conciliated the army by gratuities, the populace by cheapened grain, the world by the amenities of peace, then step by step began to make his ascent and to unite in his own person the functions of the senate, the magistracy, and the legislature.⁵⁸⁷

Augustus, who as *princeps* “gathered beneath his empire a world outworn by civil broils,”⁵⁸⁸ faced no opposition, the bravest having fallen in battle or as victims of proscription, “the rest of the nobility found a cheerful acceptance of slavery the smoothest road to wealth and office.”⁵⁸⁹ If the

⁵⁸⁵ Kaldellis 2015: 19–27.

⁵⁸⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1. Cf. the similar formulation by Appian, *Preface* 6, replacing “liberty” with “aristocracy” (in the Aristotelian sense): καὶ τούτων τὰ ἡμίσεα βασιλεῦσιν ἐχρώντο, τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ τοὺς βασιλέας ἐκβαλόντες καὶ ἐπομόσαντες οὐκ ἀνέξεσθαι βασιλέων ἀριστοκρατία τε ἐχρήσαντο ἀπὸ τούδε καὶ προστάταις [ἄρχουσιν] ἐτησίους.

⁵⁸⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

⁵⁸⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1.

⁵⁸⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.2.

republic under the consuls had enjoyed “liberty,” now it was said to be in “slavery.” Tacitus’ summary is effective, even if it glosses over plenty of details, nuances, and complications, but it is also a piece of rhetoric from a specific personal perspective. Stressing change and discontinuity, Tacitus mournfully concludes that while “the officials carried the old names ... few indeed were left who remembered the republic.”⁵⁹⁰ While Tacitus’ bias colors his assertions, he was not wrong that under the emperors Rome’s regime was altered. Appian also concluded that Rome’s new rulers, although called emperors, were in fact kings.⁵⁹¹

In choosing his names, Augustus had seemingly combined the assertions of Scipio (*imperator*, not *rex*) and Caesar (Caesar, not *rex*); the name “Augustus” itself established a connection with the divine, albeit one vaguer and more discreet than the divine honors Caesar had received even at Rome.⁵⁹² Nevertheless, Augustus’ correction to the Roman calendar (which had been allowed to slip since Caesar’s reform) in 8 BC, included the ostentatious renaming of a month in his honor, August (Augustus),⁵⁹³ effectively inscribing him into the calendrical aspect of Roman religion. Equally indiscreet was, of course, the addition of “Divi filius” as the future emperor’s patronymic already in 40 or 38 BC. Nevertheless, in marked contrast to Caesar and despite the long tradition of voting temples to Roman proconsuls, Augustus made a point of not accepting such honors even in the provinces, unless his name were coupled with that of the goddess Roma; in the city he refused official divine

⁵⁹⁰ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3: eadem magistratuum vocabula... quotus quisque reliquus qui rem publicam vidisset?

⁵⁹¹ Appian, *Preface* 6: καὶ ἔστιν ἡδὲ ἡ ἀρχὴ μέχρι νῦν ὑφ’ ἐνὶ ἄρχοντι, οὗς βασιλέας μὲν οὐ λέγουσιν, ὡς ἐγὼ νομίζω, τὸν ὄρκον αἰδοῦμενοι τὸν πάλαι, αὐτοκράτορας δὲ ὀνομάζουσιν, ὃ καὶ τῶν προσκαίρων στρατηγῶν ὄνομα ἦν· εἰσὶ δὲ ἔργω τὰ πάντα βασιλεῖς.

⁵⁹² Gradel 2002: 112-115, considers *Augustus* as possibly parallel to *divinus*.

⁵⁹³ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 31.2: the month chosen corresponded to the one in which he had obtained his first consulship and his greatest conquest, Egypt. Kienast 1990: 64.

honors altogether.⁵⁹⁴ The humble association with the goddess symbolizing Rome was permitted in 29 BC, apparently to meet the flurry of dedications following the final victory over Antony and Kleopatra. Temples and altars to Roma and Augustus are attested at Ephesos, Smyrna, Pergamon, Nikaia, Nikomēdeia, Athens, Caesarea Maritima, Sebastē (Samaria), and Caesarea Philippi in Palestine, and Lugdunum (Lyon) in Gaul, among many others. They were variously built by client kings, Roman citizens, or provincials.⁵⁹⁵

Another association with the divine was Augustus' dedication of a long series of temples and altars at Rome: the temples of Divus Iulius (29 BC), of Apollo on the Palatine Hill (28 BC), of Iuppiter Tonans ("Thundering Jupiter," 22 BC), of Mars Ultor ("Mars the Avenger," 19 BC?), of Quirinus (16 BC), of the Lares (a reconstruction, 4 BC), of Castor (AD 6); the altars of Fortuna Redux ("Returned Fortune," 19 BC), Pacis ("of Peace," 9 BC), Numinis Augusti ("of the Spirit of Augustus," AD 6), Cereris Matris et Opis Augustae ("of Mother Ceres and the Abundance of Augustus," AD 7).⁵⁹⁶ All were dedicated after Augustus' assumption of sole power and while none was specifically consecrated to him, all promoted Augustus' piety and association with the divine (including his adoptive father) and his services to the Roman state, some more transparently than others.

While Augustus stopped short of demanding or receiving an official state cult during his lifetime, he did everything short of that through his policies. Besides, he could not (or would not) stop private worship. But in a manner more obscure from our point of view, he was still the recipient of a sort of social worship. In Roman society, slaves and freedmen, clients, and offspring, were all

⁵⁹⁴ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*, 52. Bowesock 1965: 150-151, provides a list of Roman magistrates with eastern cults. Gradel 2002: 109-111.

⁵⁹⁵ Nock 1930: 27-29; Braund 1984: 109-110.

⁵⁹⁶ Kienast 1990: 62-65. For the special association with Apollo, see Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 94.4-6.

expected to worship the difficult-to-define Genius of their master, patron, or father.⁵⁹⁷ Besides political oaths of loyalty to Caesar and Augustus, each was eventually honored with the designation *Pater patriae*, “Father of the Fatherland.” While this was an honor rather than any sort of magistracy and ostensibly a vote of trust, loyalty, and approval, said to have brought tears to Augustus’ eyes,⁵⁹⁸ it made its bearer the symbolic father (*paterfamilias*) of Roman society, reducing all others to the status of offspring. On this basis, it would have been both acceptable and expected that the emperor’s subjects, Roman citizens included, would be bound to honor him by worshipping his Genius. It was still a substantive sort of worship, and a viable divine cult. The servile implications of worshipping someone’s Genius, however, made an outright divine cult more palatable, for example among the cities of Italy.⁵⁹⁹ Rome could hardly be expected to be more receptive, so less direct assertions of Augustus’ divinity, like this name and his assumption of the role of Rome’s *paterfamilias*, had to make do. Whatever form it took, a divine cult was the republican system’s answer to the appearance of a monarch within it⁶⁰⁰: strange as it might seem today, it was easier for a leader to be a god in the Roman republic than a king.

Private expressions of thanks and praise to Augustus, up to and including comparisons to gods, attribution of divinity, and even shrines, temples, and priesthods, abounded, even at Rome. While the ruler cult seems to reflect absolute monarchy, it was largely the creation of the subject population and communities, not the monarch.⁶⁰¹ By the 30s BC, Rome had every reason to welcome a monarch, as long as he was not called king: “the interests of peace required that all power should be

⁵⁹⁷ Gradel 2002: 36-44.

⁵⁹⁸ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 58. Cf. the retrospective of Cassius Dio 53.18.3.

⁵⁹⁹ Gradel 2002: 141.

⁶⁰⁰ Gradel 2002: 74.

⁶⁰¹ Erskine 2014.

concentrated in the hands of one man,” as even Tacitus is forced to admit.⁶⁰² As we have seen, Augustus’ pacification of the Western Mediterranean in 36 BC, ensuring the grain supply, was followed by the spread of his cult among grateful Italian cities. A pagan writing in the later fourth century AD, Aurelius Victor, attributed “temples, priests, and *collegia* consecrated to Augustus, as to a god, in Rome and throughout the largest cities of all the provinces, both while he was alive and posthumously.”⁶⁰³ Nevertheless, Augustus’ formal deification by the Roman state took place after his funeral; he now became Divus Augustus.⁶⁰⁴ Like the inheritance of the name “Augustus” by his successors, this set a precedent. As Appian put it, “the Romans now pay like honors to each emperor at his death if he has not reigned in a tyrannical manner or made himself odious, although at first they could not bear to call them kings even while alive.”⁶⁰⁵ The deification of emperors was not without its critics, among them the future emperor Julian (Iulianus, 361–363).⁶⁰⁶ Nevertheless, as with his other expressions of modesty, such as forbidding reference to himself as “lord” (*dominus*),⁶⁰⁷ Augustus’ humbler associations with the divine helped him create a more lasting and less offensive monarchy at Rome.

And a monarchy it certainly was.⁶⁰⁸ In the most literal sense of the word, Rome and its subjects now had a single ruler at the top. Certain aspects of republican Roman society were quickly monopolized by the effective monarch: the appellations *imperator*, *princeps*, and the celebrations of

⁶⁰² Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1.

⁶⁰³ Aurelius Victor, *De Caesaribus* 1.6. Gradel 2002: 111–112.

⁶⁰⁴ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.10: ceterum sepultura more perfecta templum et caelestes religiones decernuntur. Kienast 1990: 65.

⁶⁰⁵ Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.148, referring to the deification of Caesar: ὦν δὴ καὶ νῦν, ἐξ ἐκείνου πρώτου, Ῥωμαῖοι τὸν ἐκάστοτε τὴν ἀρχὴν τήνδε ἄρχοντα, ἦν μὴ τύχη τυραννικός ὦν ἢ ἐπιμεμπτος, ἀποθανόντα ἀξιούσιν, οἱ πρότερον οὐδὲ περιόντας αὐτοὺς ἔφερον καλεῖν βασιλέας.

⁶⁰⁶ Julian, *The Caesars* 332d, criticizing Augustus for deifying Caesar.

⁶⁰⁷ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 52. On this and the Greek *kyrios* and *despotēs*, see Bréhier 1906: 162–164.

⁶⁰⁸ For a detailed survey of the emperor’s function within the Roman state, see Millar 1977.

triumphs, which now began to resemble Hellenistic royal parades, previously a very different sort of affair.⁶⁰⁹ Something that helped distinguish the new regime as a monarchy was Augustus' transparent determination to ensure that one-man rule would continue at Rome after he was gone. Without sons or brothers of his own, Augustus was determined to work through his daughter Iulia and sister Octavia to settle on an heir from within his own family. His first choice was Octavia's son Marcus Claudius Marcellus, duly married to his cousin Iulia, but dying prematurely in 23 BC. Augustus' next choice, and Iulia's next husband, was the talented general Agrippa, but he also died well before Augustus, in 12 BC. Agrippa and Iulia had produced three sons, and Augustus adopted the two eldest in 17 BC, making them Gaius Iulius Caesar and Lucius Iulius Caesar. Each was titled *princeps iuventutis* ("prince of the Youth") and prepared to embark on a promising political career; Gaius served as proconsul in the east in 1 BC, became consul in AD 1, and was acclaimed *imperator* in AD 3. By AD 4, however, both Gaius and Lucius were dead. Now Augustus adopted his remaining grandson, Agrippa Postumus, and his stepson Tiberius Claudius Nero, who became Tiberius Iulius Caesar, and had already been married to Iulia since 11 BC. Agrippa Postumus was exiled because of a scandal in AD 8; Tiberius lived long enough to inherit Augustus' fortune and name when the emperor died in AD 14.⁶¹⁰ Augustus' determination to ensure an effectively monarchic and dynastic succession is unmistakable. Despite the many failures, it succeeded: Augustus' last choice became Rome's second emperor, Tiberius I (Tiberius Caesar Augustus, 14–37). Even Caesar, by contrast, had not made any succession arrangements.

This hereditary or nearly hereditary succession was naturally criticized, by later emperors, no less. Tacitus records the childless emperor Galba (68–69) boasting of seeking the best man for the

⁶⁰⁹ Erskine 2013: 38; McCormick 1986: 11–34.

⁶¹⁰ Kienast 1990: 71–75. Tacitus, *Annals* 1.3.

job of emperor by looking for an adoptive son not, like Augustus, within the ranks of this own family, but within the whole Roman state.⁶¹¹ Later, the emperor Julian (361–363) would imagine his model emperor, Marcus Aurelius (161–180), questioned by the gods for deifying an unworthy wife and passing his throne to an unworthy son; yet, Marcus Aurelius is shown to acquit himself on the basis of divine and human precedent, concluding “it is the custom to hand down the succession to a man’s sons, and all men desire to do so... it would be almost an injustice to deprive one’s nearest and dearest of what is now long-established.⁶¹² Vindicated by winning the greatest esteem among emperors before the gods, Marcus Aurelius was invited to partake of the company of Zeus and Kronos.⁶¹³

Adoption and testament technically transferred only wealth, names, and clients; succession to Augustus’ position (*statio*), not office, of emperor in a government system that had never formally created such, was a slightly different matter, contingent on the senate conferring the same or similar honors, offices, and powers to Augustus’ heir. Augustus had, of course, foreseen this, and he had secured the conferral of the all-important proconsular and tribunician powers on Agrippa (in 23–12 BC) and on Tiberius (in AD 4–14), making them, effectively, his co-emperors.⁶¹⁴ While this is probably inspired by the Roman tradition of collegial authority, it also seems to reflect the expedient of co-rulership developed in Hellenistic kingship. It meant that when Augustus died, his chosen heir was already substantially in power⁶¹⁵; the alternative, Agrippa Postumus, was quietly eliminated in his

⁶¹¹ Tacitus, *Histories* 1.15.

⁶¹² Julian, *The Caesars* 334b-d: ἄλλως τε καὶ οὐδὲν καινοτομήσαντι. παισὶ τε γὰρ νόμιμον ἐπιτρέπειν τὰς διαδοχάς, καὶ τοῦτο ἅπαντες εὐχονται, τὴν τε γαμετὴν οὐκ ἐγὼ πρῶτος, ἀλλὰ μετὰ πολλοὺς ἄλλους ἐτίμησα. ἴσως δὲ τὸ μὲν ἀρξασθαι τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν εὐλογον, τὸ δὲ ἐπὶ πολλῶν γενόμενον τοὺς οἰκειοτάτους ἀποστερεῖν ἐγγὺς ἀδικίας.

⁶¹³ Julian, *The Caesars* 335d. On Julian’s ambivalence about dynastic succession, see Van Dam 2007: 120–125.

⁶¹⁴ Kienast 1990: 72–73, 76–78.

⁶¹⁵ Most importantly, the tribunician power: Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 23.

island exile.⁶¹⁶ The full set of Augustus' distinctions and powers was duly conferred on Tiberius by the senate, albeit piecemeal over the next year. But there was no doubt that he was as much Rome's ruler as his predecessor, as "consuls, senators, and knights were rushing into slavery," swearing oaths of allegiance to Tiberius, in the wording of Tacitus.⁶¹⁷ Nevertheless, following Augustus' example and perhaps compensating for his embarrassingly monarchical succession, Tiberius scrupulously maintained the republican precedent in form: "in every action of Tiberius the first step had to be taken by the consuls, as though the old republic were in being, and himself undecided whether to reign or no."⁶¹⁸ Tiberius' attempt at humility led him to refuse what he deemed excessive honors, like the renaming of months in honor of himself and his mother Livia (now Iulia Augusta), and the offered state cult; he also refused the praenomen Imperator and the honorific *Pater patriae*, although both were still ascribed to him on numerous inscriptions from his reign; similarly, he is said to have avoided using the name "Augustus," except when writing to kings.⁶¹⁹ Like Augustus, Tiberius forbade being addressed as "lord," and both Tacitus and Suetonius relate Tiberius falling over in his clumsy attempt to withdraw from a supplicating consul.⁶²⁰ Rewarding the senate for their cooperation, Tiberius made it self-selecting, doing away with elections to office and reducing a complacent public to the role of spectators of the political process.⁶²¹ The Roman republic ended, arguably, *after* the long reign of the emperor Augustus.

⁶¹⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.6; Suetonius, *Tiberius* 22.

⁶¹⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7.

⁶¹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.7. Cf. Suetonius, *Tiberius* 30.

⁶¹⁹ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 26. Kienast 1990: 77.

⁶²⁰ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 27; Tacitus, *Annals* 1.13.

⁶²¹ Tacitus, *Annals* 1.15.

The perpetuation of Rome's new, imperial monarchy also became apparent with the succession of the second emperor. If Augustus' noble intention had been to prevent civil war by recourse to monarchy, it too succeeded.⁶²² There was no impulse to end the monarchic experiment: Augustus had already made Tiberius adopt his nephew Germanicus Iulius Caesar, and after he died in AD 17, Tiberius promoted his own son, Drusus Iulius Caesar, whom he gave tribunician power, effectively making him co-ruler in 22–23. When Tiberius himself died in 37, he was succeeded by his adoptive grandson, Germanicus' son Gaius Caesar Germanicus (better known as Caligula, 37–41); Tiberius' biological grandson Tiberius Gemellus, who had been named *princeps iuventutis* and was supposed to share power with his cousin was quickly eliminated, one-man rule maintained.⁶²³ Another sign of monarchic practice was the eventual succession of Gaius' nephew Nero (54–68) to the throne while being underage and under the guidance of his mother Iulia Agrippina — a scenario clearly impossible under the old republican system. Even if stitched together by a web of marriages and adoptions (Tiberius was Augustus' stepson, son-in-law, and adopted son; Nero was Claudius' great-nephew, stepson, son-in-law, and adopted son), an Imperial House had effectively emerged to monopolize the highest, albeit extra-constitutional position in the Roman state.

The Roman imperial monarchy naturally had an impact on Rome's client kings, the "friends and allies of the Roman people." As in the past, they were effectively the clients of Rome's leader, but now there really was only one Roman leader at the top, the emperor; unlike the younger Tigranēs in the 60s BC, eastern potentates could no longer hope to seek an alternative Roman patron.⁶²⁴ Writing probably about AD 24, Strabo could write about the emperor, that "kings, dynasts and decarchies are

⁶²² Suetonius, *Augustus* 28; Tacitus, *Histories* 1.1.

⁶²³ Kienast 1990: 76–83.

⁶²⁴ In general, Braund 1984 and Millar 1996, who also point out some problems with the use of the now familiar term "client king."

and have always been in his portion” of the state.⁶²⁵ Appian later wrote that, Roman emperors selectively “gave kings” to peoples they did not wish to govern directly.⁶²⁶

Like his precursors, Augustus did not undertake a wholesale change of the subject monarchs he found after his elimination of Antony; Polemōn I of Pontus, Arkhelaos of Cappadocia, Amyntas of Galatia, Mithradatēs II of Commagene, Roimētalkēs I of Thrace, and Herod of Judaea were among those who kept their thrones.⁶²⁷ Most of them were accorded Roman citizenship and took the emperor’s name Gaius Iulius as their *praenomen* and *nomen*, although it is often unclear whether this happened under Caesar or Augustus; Marcus Antonius Polemōn I of Pontus, however, was made citizen by Antony.⁶²⁸ The adoption of a former master’s name was also standard practice for Roman freedmen, a somewhat unflattering implication for the client kings, although we have seen it promoted by Prousius II of Bithynia himself; the negative implication is mitigated by the positive notion that freedmen remained part of the manumitter’s *familia*, as signaled by the shared name. It is in similar context that Suetonius remarks that many of “these kings would leave home, dressed in the togas of their honorary Roman citizenship, without any emblems of royalty whatsoever, and visit Augustus at Rome.”⁶²⁹ Seeking to promote amity and stability, Augustus encouraged harmony and intermarriage among his client kings and hosted royal children at his court⁶³⁰ — like several of Herod’s sons, sent by their father.⁶³¹

⁶²⁵ Strabo 17.3.25: καὶ βασιλεῖς δὲ καὶ δυνάσται καὶ δεκαρχίαι τῆς ἐκείνου μερίδος καὶ εἰσὶ καὶ ὑπήρξαν αἰεὶ. Millar 1996: 160, suggests correcting *dekarkhiai* to *tetrarkhiai*, “tetrarchies.”

⁶²⁶ Appian, *Preface* 7: ἔθνεσὶ τε ἄλλοις, ἀπείροις τὸ πλῆθος, αὐτοὶ διδῶσιν τοὺς βασιλέας, οὐδὲν αὐτῶν ἐς τὴν ἀρχὴν δεόμενοι.

⁶²⁷ For Rome’s client kings under Augustus, see especially Bowersock 1965 and Gowing 1990.

⁶²⁸ Braund 1984: 39-45. Millar 1996: 168-171 makes an example of the kings of Bosphoros.

⁶²⁹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 60.

⁶³⁰ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 48.

⁶³¹ Braund 1984: 10-11.

Suetonius asserts that Augustus “nearly always restored the kingdoms which he had conquered to their defeated dynasties, or combined them with others,” and this is partly true.⁶³² Tarkondimotos I of Kastabala had fallen at Aktion, yet his successor was allowed his throne, albeit demoted from king to toparch (*toparkhos*).⁶³³ The ruler of Emesa was deposed outright in 30 BC.⁶³⁴ In both of these instances, the local kingship was restored when Augustus reordered the east again in 20 BC.⁶³⁵ In 29 BC, Augustus had a Commagenian king or claimant, Antiokhos II, tried and executed for his crimes, but the local monarchy continued.⁶³⁶ However, when Amyntas of Galatia fell in battle against highland tribes in 25 BC, Augustus annexed the kingdom as a province, although Amyntas had left offspring.⁶³⁷ Similarly, when Dēiōtaros Philadelphos of Paphlagonia died in 6 BC, his kingdom was annexed to the newly created province of Galatia.⁶³⁸ Augustus also deprived Kleopatra’s children by Antony of their notional kingdoms of Syria and Cyrenaica, which had in fact never ceased to be Roman provinces; the real independent Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt (with Cyprus) was annexed on the elimination of Ptolemaios XV Kaisarion in 30 BC.⁶³⁹

On the other hand, Iuba I of Numidia’s son Iuba II was rewarded with the kingdom of Mauretania after the disappearance of the local dynasty; he married Antony and Kleopatra’s daughter,

⁶³² Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 48.

⁶³³ Bowersock 1965: 46-48 and Sullivan 1990: 191, assume a deposition; Wright 2012: 77-78, demonstrates it was a demotion.

⁶³⁴ Bowersock 1965: 47 and Sullivan 1990: 191, following Cassius Dio 50.2.2; contra Ball 200: 35, who assumes Alexas (Alexandros) of Emesa was deposed and executed only in 20 BC., but see Sartre 2005: 76, 406, n. 167.

⁶³⁵ Sullivan 1990: 191.

⁶³⁶ Bowersock 1965: 57-58; Braund 1984: 166; Sullivan 1990: 198.

⁶³⁷ Sullivan 1990: 173.

⁶³⁸ Bowersock 1965: 52.

⁶³⁹ Sullivan 1990: 279.

Kleopatra Selēnē, a fine example of Augustus' role as royal matchmaker suggested by Suetonius.⁶⁴⁰ In Armenia, a hostile king's brother, Tigranēs III (20–6 BC), was appointed as his successor by Augustus through the services of Tiberius in 20 BC. After his death, further Roman intervention gave the throne to Artabazdēs III (5–1 BC) and, through Gaius Caesar, to Ariobarzanēs of Media Atropatene (AD 2–4).⁶⁴¹ In Thrace, the extinction of the old Odrysian or Astaian dynasty was used by Augustus to unite the area under his Sapaian client Roimētalkēs I (31 BC–AD 12) in 11 BC; when he died, the emperor divided the kingdom between the dead king's brother and son.⁶⁴² Similarly, when Herod the Great died in 4 BC, Augustus divided his kingdom, in response to quarrels amid his family, between his sister and three of his sons, with the title of king suspended: the largest portion went to the ethnarch Arkhelaos (4 BC–AD 6), with smaller portions passing to the tetrarchs Antipas (4 BC–AD 39) and Philippos (4 BC–AD 23). When Arkhelaos was deposed in response to his subjects' complaints, his territory (Judaea proper) was annexed to the Roman province of Syria.⁶⁴³

Augustus' heirs continued to make and unmake client kings as they saw fit, whether out of pure political interest or the conception of their role as patriarch of a family of rulers. Tiberius deposed Raikouporis II of Thrace and Arkhelaos of Cappadocia for their crimes early in his reign, after luring them to Rome, and turned Cappadocia into a province, while entrusting Thrace to a new generation of kings.⁶⁴⁴ On the death of Philopatōr II of Kastabala in AD 17, with his subjects divided among adherents of the monarchy and Roman rule, Tiberius annexed this small kingdom to the

⁶⁴⁰ Sullivan 1990: 279. Roller 2003: 103–106.

⁶⁴¹ Tacitus *Annals* 2.3.

⁶⁴² Bowersock 1965: 58–59.

⁶⁴³ Braund 1984: 66, 139–142.

⁶⁴⁴ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 36–37. Braund 1984: 166–167.

province of Cilicia.⁶⁴⁵ Likewise, Tiberius seems to have annexed Commagene on the death of its king.⁶⁴⁶ The Arsakid Onōnēs I, former king of Parthia and Armenia, became a Roman dependent in Syria, but was killed when trying to escape in 19.⁶⁴⁷ It is in the reign of Tiberius that we get glimpses of Roman emperors investing client kings, albeit indirectly. Through his nephew and adopted son Germanicus, Tiberius installed Zēnōn, a son of Polemōn I of Pontus, as king of Armenia under the name Artaxias III (18–34). The new king was installed in the Armenian capital Artaxata, crowned in the presence of the nobles and a large crowd, and saluted as king.⁶⁴⁸ Tiberius also dispatched a senator to bring an ivory scepter and a *toga picta* when confirming Ptolemaeus of Mauretania as king and “friend and ally.”⁶⁴⁹ He would be eliminated by Gaius.⁶⁵⁰

If Tiberius might be suspected of seeking to limit the number of client kingdoms, his successor Gaius, like a true descendant of Antony’s, seems to have been determined to increase it.⁶⁵¹ With the authorization of the senate — whether sought out of self-effacement or as appropriate for a decision on foreign policy — he granted their thrones to Soaimos of Ituraea, Kotys of Armenia Minor, Roimētalkēs III of Thrace, and Polemōn II of Pontus (the last three were brothers), during a public ceremony staged on the Roman forum, with the emperor presiding from the rostra in-between the two consuls, shaded by silken awnings.⁶⁵² Other beneficiaries of Gaius’ favor were Agrippa I (37–44), who was released from imprisonment and invested with part of the Herodian territories, and

⁶⁴⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.42.

⁶⁴⁶ Braund 1984: 174, n. 17. Sartre 2005: 75, assumes that it was annexed.

⁶⁴⁷ Suetonius, *Tiberius* 49.2.

⁶⁴⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 2.56.

⁶⁴⁹ Tacitus, *Annals* 4.26.

⁶⁵⁰ Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 26.1.

⁶⁵¹ Sartre 2005: 73.

⁶⁵² Cassius Dio 59.12.2.

Antiokhos IV Eupatōr of Commagene, usually thought to have been restored to his father's throne by the same emperor. Antiokhos, however, fell fowl of Gaius and was deposed, before being restored by Gaius' uncle and successor Claudius I (41–54), apparently in 41.⁶⁵³ Claudius also augmented the territory of Agrippa I (37–44), created him king of Judaea in 41, while establishing Agrippa's brother Hērōdēs as king of Chalcis. Like Gaius, Claudius concluded treaties with foreign kings in forum, following ancient rituals, but the details remain unspecified.⁶⁵⁴

By far the most detailed description of a Roman emperor's investiture of a client king is that of Tiridatēs I of Armenia by the emperor Nero in 66, recalling in the main details that of Tigranēs II by Pompey nearly 130 years earlier. Made king of Armenia in 54 by his older brother, the Parthian king of kings Olagasēs I (51–79), Tiridatēs had been expelled by the Roman general Lucius Domitius Corbulo and replaced with a Roman protégé, the Herodian Tigranēs VI, in 60.⁶⁵⁵ Effectively at an impasse with the Romans, Olagasēs was reminded by Corbulo that the Armenians “had always been under Roman domination, or subject to a king chosen by the emperor.”⁶⁵⁶ Eventually, Olagasēs sought a compromise, whereby his brother would be crowned king of Armenia by the Roman emperor Nero.⁶⁵⁷ Meeting with Corbulo at the Roman camp, Tiridatēs agreed to go to the emperor at Rome, and prior to that to lay down his royal insignia before the emperor's image, to resume it only from Nero's hand. Accordingly, some days later, amid a great display, Tiridatēs returned before

⁶⁵³ Sartre 2005: 75.

⁶⁵⁴ Sartre 2005: 78; Suetonius, *Divus Claudius* 25: cum regibus foedus in foro iecit.

⁶⁵⁵ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.1–2. On Nero and Tiridatēs, see Champlin 2003: 221–229, Oller 2014, Schlude 2020.

⁶⁵⁶ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.13: quod pro Armeniis semper Romanae dicionis aut subiectis regi quem imperator delegisset.

⁶⁵⁷ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.24.

a tribunal with an enthroned statue of Nero, made sacrifices, removed the diadem from his head and set it at the foot of the statue.⁶⁵⁸

Tiridatēs then traveled to Rome from the Euphrates with an enormous retinue, accompanied by his sons, as well as sons of his brothers Olagasēs of Parthia and Pakoros of Media, and of Monobazēs of Adiabene. Their advance was likened to a triumphal procession. When he met Nero, who awaited him at Neapolis (Naples), Tiridatēs refusing to surrender his dagger, fastening it to his scabbard with nails before approaching the emperor, who was impressed by the king’s attitude and ingenuity. Tiridatēs prostrated himself before Nero with crossed hands and called him “lord” or “master” (*despotēs*, Greek for *dominus*). Nero then treated Tiridatēs and his retinue to entertainment at the amphitheater at Puteoli, where the king showed off his own prowess by allegedly killing two bulls with a single arrow.

After this, they all proceeded to Rome for Tiridatēs’ coronation. The emperor, seated on the rostra in the forum in triumphal dress and surrounded by military standards, received the king before the eyes of a cheering public occupying even the roofs of nearby buildings. As before, Tiridatēs prostrated himself before Nero, but was immediately lifted up and kissed by the emperor. Tiridatēs delivered a humble address, calling Nero “lord” or “master” (*despotēs*) and himself, although brother of kings, his “servant” or “slave” (*doulos*), and explaining that he had come to worship the emperor as his god, just as he worshipped Mithras. Nero answered politely, assuring Tiridatēs that he would receive what he could receive neither from his father nor from his brothers, and declared him King of Armenia, asserting that the emperor had “the power to take away kingdoms and to bestow them.”⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁸ Tacitus, *Annals* 15.29.

⁶⁵⁹ Cassius Dio 62.5.3: ταῦτα ἐγὼ χαρίζομαι καὶ βασιλεία τῆς Ἀρμενίας ποιῶ, ἵνα καὶ σὺ καὶ ἐκεῖνοι μάθωσιν ὅτι καὶ ἀφαιρεῖσθαι βασιλείας καὶ δωρεῖσθαι δύναμαι.

Nero then instructed Tiridatēs to approach and seat himself before the emperor, removed the king's tiara and replaced it with a diadem, while a praetor translated to the crowd the king's humble words. After the ceremony, the emperor and king went to the theater, where Tiridatēs was seated in a place of honor on the right-hand side of Nero, who received acclamations as emperor. After more entertainment, Tiridatēs headed home with his retinue, touring Roman Anatolia on his way.⁶⁶⁰ Rebuilding his capital Artaxata, he is said to have named it Nerōnia in honor of the emperor. Nero was apparently pleased with the visit of Tiridatēs and sought to lure his brother, the king of kings Olagasēs, to Rome. Perhaps in part because he realized he would be expected to humble himself before the emperor at Rome, Olagasēs made excuses and suggested Nero could come visit him instead.⁶⁶¹

There exist more descriptions of Roman emperors investing client kings. For example, Cassius Dio relates how in *c.* 89, the emperor Domitian (Domitianus, 81–96) crowned the Dacian envoy Diēgis with a diadem, in a move intended to undermine the Dacian king Decebalus.⁶⁶² Cassius Dio provides more detail on the attack of the emperor Trajan (Traianus, 98–117) on the Arsakid king of Armenia, Parthamasiris, for having been invested with his diadem not by the Roman emperor, but by his uncle, the Parthian king of kings Khosroēs (109?–128).⁶⁶³ After Trajan occupied Armenia, he was approached by Parthamasiris, who sought to be confirmed in his position. The king saluted the emperor, removed his diadem and laid it at Trajan's feet. Although Parthamasiris proceeded to explain that he expected to receive his kingdom back as Tiridatēs had received it back from Nero,

⁶⁶⁰ Cassius Dio 62.1.2-7.1; Suetonius, *Nero* 13.

⁶⁶¹ Cassius Dio 62.7.2

⁶⁶² Cassius Dio 67.7.2.

⁶⁶³ Cassius Dio 68.17.1.

Trajan replied that Armenia is to be made a province and allowed Parthamasiris to depart, before causing him to be eliminated.⁶⁶⁴ Trajan's coinage commemorated more positive events of this type, like the *Rex Parthus* ("Parthian king") and *Regna adsignata* ("kingdoms assigned") issues from early 116, and the *Parthia capta* ("Parthia conquered") and the *Rex Parthis datus* ("king given to the Parthians") issues from 116–117.⁶⁶⁵ The last of these issues celebrated Trajan's installation of Khosroēs' son Parthamaspatēs on the Parthian throne as a Roman client. The experiment did not last, as Parthamaspatēs was driven out by his own father, and ended up ruling Osrhoene (Edessa) as a Roman client in northwestern Mesopotamia.⁶⁶⁶ The Parthian Empire of the Arsakids had been too far and too great to reduce to a client kingdom, despite its chronically fractious politics. But pieces of its western periphery, like parts of Mesopotamia and Armenia would find themselves under Roman overlordship or rule time and again.

From the foregoing survey, it emerges that Rome's emperor, during the first century or so of his existence, functioned as the sovereign top-level monarch in a hierarchical system of monarchies, with the kings called "friends and allies of the Roman people" functioning as his vassals or clients.⁶⁶⁷ We have seen client kings advertise this relationship to Rome with the royal epithet *Philorōmaios*, "friend of Rome." Under the emperors, we find increasing use of *Philokaisar*, "friend of Caesar" (more rarely the variant *Philosebastos*, "friend of Augustus"), a reference to the emperor himself alongside or instead of *Philorōmaios*.⁶⁶⁸ We find it with Asandros of Bosphoros (47–17 BC), after whom it became standard for his descendants; also with Antiokhos III of Commagene (?–AD 17) and

⁶⁶⁴ Cassius Dio 68.19–20. Lepper 1948: 6–7; Schlude 2020: 158–160.

⁶⁶⁵ Caló 1952: 19–20; Beckmann 2009: 150–151.

⁶⁶⁶ Lepper 1948: 20–21, 147–149, 212; Schlude 2020: 161, 165, 176.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. Millar 1996: 171, "two-level monarchy."

⁶⁶⁸ Braund 1984: 105–106.

with the Herodians Agrippa I (37–44) and Agrippa II (49–100?). It is notable that wherever both Philorōmaios and Philokaisar appear as epithets following the king’s name, Philokaisar takes precedence, indicating the emperor’s preeminence in the Roman world.⁶⁶⁹ There are also some more specific formulations, as in the cases of Mithradatēs III Philogermanikos Philopatris of Bosporos (39–45), referencing the emperor Gaius, and Hērōdēs Philoklaudios of Chalcis (41–48), referencing the emperor Claudius.⁶⁷⁰

Of course, client kings found other ways of ingratiating themselves with the emperor, most notably (re)dedicating cities under his name or those of his relations. Thus, Suetonius asserts that “each of the allied kings who enjoyed Augustus’ friendship, founded a city called “Caesarea” in his own dominion.”⁶⁷¹ This is surely an exaggeration, but there were plenty of such instances, often involving the renaming of an existing settlement. Thus, for example, Herod the Great turned Stratōn’s Tower into Caesarea Maritima, Arkhelaos of Cappadocia did the same with his capital Mazaka, Iuba II of Mauretania with Iol, while the tetrarch Philippos established his Caesarea Philippi around the site of a temple to Roma and Augustus.⁶⁷² Even Pantikapaion, the capital of Bosporos beyond the Black Sea, appears to have been designated Caesarea.⁶⁷³ Besides Caesareas, client kings established Germanikeia in Commagene, Klaudiopolis and Nerōnias in Cilicia, Agrippeia in the Bosporos. Particularly active in such dedications were the Herodians, who had not only two Caesareas, but also Sebastē (Samaria), Tiberias, Livias, Iulias, Agrippeion, and Autokratōris.⁶⁷⁴ This

⁶⁶⁹ Jacobson 2019: 148–150, 292–295.

⁶⁷⁰ Braund 1984: 105.

⁶⁷¹ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 60. *Caesarea* was, of course, usually rendered *Kaisareia* in Greek.

⁶⁷² Braund 1984: 108–110.

⁶⁷³ Millar 1996: 172.

⁶⁷⁴ Braund 1984: 108. Cf. Millar 1996: 166.

did not keep the client kings from naming other settlements after themselves: witness the Herodian Antipatris, Arkhelaïs, and Hērōdion, another Arkhelaïs in Cappadocia, Polemōnion in Pontus, Antiokheia, Iotapē, and Philadelpheia in Commagene.⁶⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the repeated dedication of major cities to the emperors and their relatives remains a striking demonstration of loyalty to the emperor, as does their building of temples to Roma and Augustus and other manifestations of support for the relatively new imperial ruler cult. For example, Antōnia Tryphaina of Pontus, together with her sons Roimētalkēs III of Thrace and Polemōn II of Pontus, celebrated the cult of the New Aphroditē, Gaius' sister Drusilla, at Kyzikos.⁶⁷⁶

The limited evidence at our disposal does not permit establishing a definitive pattern as to the symbolic language of kinship, if any, employed in communications between the emperor and client kings. Their formal status was “friends and allies of the Roman people” and of its emperor, and this was reflected in their epithets Philorōmaios and Philokaisar. Accordingly, and also given earlier Hellenistic practice, such subordinates might have been addressed as friends (*amici, philoi*), but the apparent correspondence to that practice might be coincidental. Tiridatēs' representation of himself as the servant or slave (*doulos*) of Nero might be a reflection of the extremes of flattery and deference, but it was not too far removed from the unequal bonds of the patron-client relationship (even with its familial connotations) in Roman society, which was largely reflected in that between the emperor and the client kings. Another pertinent factor might be that, however monarchical and paramount the emperor's position, he was *not* technically a king. Perhaps that precluded the use of a symbolic language of kinship (e.g., father—son) at this stage in Roman history. As we will see, however, in

⁶⁷⁵ Braund 1984: 111-112.

⁶⁷⁶ Braund 1984: 114.

time the Roman emperor would play the part of *paterfamilias* to a large family of kings not only implicitly, but also explicitly, being designated “father,” and they, “sons.”

Most of Rome’s original client kingdoms ceased to exist by the end of the first century. Cappadocia had been annexed in AD 17, Mauretania in 40–44, Judaea proper in 44, Thrace in 46, Pontus in 64, Commagene in 72, Emesa then or slightly later, the last Herodian territories in the period 93–100.⁶⁷⁷ Trajan annexed Nabataean Arabia as a province probably a little after the traditionally accepted date, sometime in the period 106–111.⁶⁷⁸ Farther afield, Osrhoene survived until 213 and was definitively annexed in 242.⁶⁷⁹ Armenia was only temporarily occupied by Antony and Trajan, and survived as a client kingdom, as did Bosphoros across the Black Sea. To the east, Rome’s chief rival and partner, the Arsakid Parthian Empire, was replaced in *c.* 224 by the Sāsānid Neo-Persian Empire, which proved to be a more aggressive neighbor. When it comes to the language of symbolic kinship, the relationship between the Roman emperor and at least notionally subordinate kings would be played out among a largely different and later set of polities.

Emperor and *basileus*

A new monarchy having been established at Rome by the emperors, who also assumed the position of patrons to Rome’s client kings, thus becoming supreme monarchs themselves, it would stand to reason that despite their disavowal of the title of king, emperors would be compared to kings. Certainly, as much was implied by Tacitus’ rhetorical summary of Rome’s history down to the triumph of Augustus; Appian, too, had concluded that emperors were indeed kings. Here we will try to see how the position of emperor, *Imperator Caesar Augustus* (or, in Greek, *Autokratōr Kaisar*

⁶⁷⁷ Sartre 2005: 74–80. For the death of Agrippa II, see Jacobson 2019: 133–135.

⁶⁷⁸ Cimadomo 2018.

⁶⁷⁹ Drijvers 1978: 878–885; cf. Ball 2000: 91.

Sebastos), became identified as that of a *basileus*, the Greek term equivalent to the hated Latin *rex*.⁶⁸⁰

The process was long and largely informal, and it is revealed by informal and anecdotal usage.

However, at the end of the evolution, by the seventh century, *basileus* would not only become acceptable as a designation of the emperor but, like emperor, it would acquire a more exclusive and exalted meaning than *rex*.

For all that the Roman emperor was a new species of monarch, constitutionally he was considered something very different from kings. So much so, that there was no need to differentiate with labels: the emperor was Roman, the kings were foreign and generally subject to him; a Roman king was unfathomable, except as a derided concept from the distant past. Thus, when Suetonius described the emperor Claudius concluding treaties with kings in the Roman forum, he did not need to indicate that they were foreign: the word “kings” conveyed that intrinsically.⁶⁸¹

As we have seen, the imperial ruler cult identified the emperor as a monarch without treating him as king. This bridged the conceptual gap between emperor and king, even while emperors like Augustus and Tiberius, and even Caligula and Nero, declined a formal state cult during their lifetimes.⁶⁸² The worship of the emperor’s Genius, which did not imply divinity but implied the subservience of those involved in it, seems to have become official at Rome possibly during the reign of Claudius; it was abandoned under the self-effacing Vespasian (Vespasianus, 69–79) and Titus (79–81), but resumed under Domitian.⁶⁸³ On a more private level, it is clear the cult of the living

⁶⁸⁰ For a full discussion of imperial titles and epithets by Late Antiquity, see Rösch 1978.

⁶⁸¹ Suetonius, *Divus Claudius* 25.5: cum regibus foedus in foro iccit.

⁶⁸² Gaius in 37, Nero in 65: Gradel 2002: 143-145; 60 for Tiberius’ ambivalence even to provincial cults in his name.

⁶⁸³ Gradel 2002: 163-164, 187-190.

ruler was sometimes actively promoted.⁶⁸⁴ Thus, Gaius dressed up as various gods, including Jupiter; whether the specific circumstances were serious or facetious, he was taking up the role of a divine monarch.⁶⁸⁵ The blatant associations of Nero with the sun god Apollo — echoing the much more restrained precedent of Augustus himself — reflected even in Tiridatēs’ assertion to have come to worship Nero as (the sun-god) Mithras, worked much the same way.⁶⁸⁶ Although the eccentricities and unenviable fates of Gaius and Nero discouraged other emperors from adopting them as models too readily, still within the sphere of private practice, Domitian ventured into more ambitious associations with gods, was called “lord” (*dominus*) and “god” (*deus*), and renamed two months after himself, albeit without lasting effect.⁶⁸⁷ Later yet, the emperor Commodus (180–192) secured the title of *Romanus Hercules* from the senate, as one among his many extravagant designations; yet, as has been pointed out, the Roman Hercules was never the subject of a formal state cult with temples, priests, and sacrifices.⁶⁸⁸

Seeking to appear humble, more self-effacing emperors like Augustus and Tiberius had emphatically refused being called “lord” even where it might have been acceptable, within a family or domestic atmosphere, as we have seen.⁶⁸⁹ Similarly, in his panegyric delivered in 100, the consul Pliny (Plinius) the Younger praises the emperor Trajan for his humility before his predecessor and his senatorial peers:

⁶⁸⁴ For a possibly private temple to Gaius at Rome before his death, see Gradel 2002: 149–152.

⁶⁸⁵ Gradel 2002: 146–149, who notes that it was abandoned under the first Flavians, reinstated by Domitian, refused again by Trajan, and revitalized under Marcus Aurelius: 190–193.

⁶⁸⁶ Champlin 2003: 112–114.

⁶⁸⁷ Suetonius, *Domitianus* 13. Gradel 2002: 160.

⁶⁸⁸ Cassius Dio 73.15–16. Gradel 2002: 160–161.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 37–38.

Nowhere should we flatter him as a divinity and a god; we are talking of a fellow citizen, not a tyrant, one who is our father, not our lord. He is one of us — and his special virtue lies in his thinking that so, as also in never forgetting that he is a man himself while ruler of men.⁶⁹⁰

While Trajan was “father,” not “lord,” we should not forget the extensive authority of the *paterfamilias* over his family, in the emperor’s case, all of Roman society. As for “lord,” when Pliny later served as governor of Bithynia and addressed a long series of letters to Trajan, he usually addressed Trajan precisely as his “lord” (*domine*).⁶⁹¹ Among other self-effacing policies, Trajan had rejected the worship of his own Genius, directing it instead to Jupiter Best and Greatest (Iuppiter Optimus Maximus).⁶⁹² This resonated with the senators, and gave Pliny reason to praise the emperor’s humility and moderation (*temperantia, moderatio*) repeatedly, while still referring to “the divine nature of our prince,” which earned him a new cognomen, *Optimus* (“Best”), one he shared with the supreme god Jupiter.⁶⁹³

Whatever its precise form, the imperial cult was not going away, and continued to support the status of the Roman monarch and state, and to provide a framework for expressions of loyalty to them. Perhaps surprisingly, the Genius of the emperor became the object of official veneration again in the reign of the “good emperor” Marcus Aurelius (161–180), who might have been expected to eschew it.⁶⁹⁴ It might have not been coincidence, then, that it was at this time that Christians at Scillium faced persecution for refusing to worship the emperor’s Genius and ended up martyred. Of

⁶⁹⁰ Pliny, *Panegyricus* 2: Nusquam ut deo, nusquam ut numini blandiamur: non enim de tyranno, des de cive; non de domino, sed de parente loquimur...

⁶⁹¹ E.g., Pliny, *Letters* 10.2-6; occasional alternatives include “most pious Emperor” (*imperator sanctissime*) in 10.1 and “most excellent Emperor” (*optime imperator*) in 10.14. Cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1982: 36.

⁶⁹² Pliny, *Panegyricus* 52: Simili reverentia, Caesar, non apud Genium tuum bonitati tuae gratias agi, sed apud numen Iovis Optimi Maximi pateris.

⁶⁹³ Pliny, *Panegyricus* 2: Quid nos ipsi? Divinitatem principis nostri, an humanitate, temperantiam, facilitatem...

⁶⁹⁴ Gradel 2002: 192, who also notes the appearance on coinage of the Genius of the Roman people (*Genius populi Romani*) as a substitute for that of the emperor during periods when the worship of the emperor’s Genius was not enforced: 194-195.

course, it is also possible that the imperial cult had been enforced in this form throughout the period in the provinces.

Like Pompey and Caesar before him, Augustus has been associated with Alexander the Great, the paragon of conquerors but also of kings. As usual, it is difficult to discern any convincing evidence for willful emulation of Alexander, but we are left with suggestive information in our sources. Suetonius records that Augustus used a succession of devices on his seal: first a sphinx, second a head of Alexander, and last a depiction of his own.⁶⁹⁵ Perhaps, as with the name Romulus, the first emperor decided that in the end what he had become was better than an exalted point of comparison or emulation. While at Alexandria, Augustus visited the royal tombs, to gaze upon the sarcophagus and mummy of Alexander the Great himself, crowning the head with a golden diadem and placing flowers over the body. Asked whether he would also like to see the tomb of the Ptolemies, he replied tersely “I wished to see a King, not corpses.”⁶⁹⁶ The veneration of Alexander is clear, and the disdain for the Ptolemies perhaps not unexpected. As has been shown in a discussion on the limits of Byzantine historiography, the Roman elite was fascinated by Alexander but much less so by his royal successors, leaving us with a very incomplete picture of the political history of the Hellenistic Period.⁶⁹⁷ Perhaps to avoid association with his Ptolemaic predecessors, Augustus was not coopted into the Cult of Alexander the Great at Alexandria. But this did not prevent him from

⁶⁹⁵ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 50: in diplomatibus libellisque et epistulis signandis initio sphinge usus est, mox imagine Magni Alexandri, novissime sua, Dioscuridis manu scalpta, qua signare insecuti quoque principes perseverarunt.

⁶⁹⁶ Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 18: per idem tempus conditorium et corpus Magni Alexandri, cum prolatum e penetrali subiecisset oculis, corona aurea imposita ac floribus aspersis veneratus est consultusque, num et Ptolemaeum inspicere vellet, regem se voluisse ait videre, non mortuos.

⁶⁹⁷ Kaldellis 2012: 78.

converting Kleopatra's intended temple to Antony into a *Kaisareion*, dedicated to Caesar and the emperor.⁶⁹⁸

All this bears upon the question of the Roman imperial monarchy emulating Hellenistic kings. An overt association with kingship was, obviously, undesirable and risky. However, comparisons with the greatest of conquerors were irresistible for ambitious Romans. If the Roman emperorship did not descend from Hellenistic kingship, it nevertheless shared a very viable common source in Alexander. As we have seen, divine honors were somehow deemed sufficiently palatable by the Roman public, at least in some forms, providing distinction and foundation for the new imperial monarchy.

In Egypt, in particular, even the most cautious Roman emperor would have had an impossible task in avoiding kingship. To be sure, for the Greek and Greek-speaking population, he could advertise his partly-translated, partly-transcribed Roman names, honors, and offices, as elsewhere in the Hellenistic east. However, for the native Egyptians, he could not fail to assume the position of pharaoh to the same extent that the Ptolemies had fulfilled it in the past. There was an attempt to sidestep the problem: in 29 BC, Augustus' first prefect of Egypt, Gaius Cornelius Gallus, set up a stele on the island of Philai in the Nile, at the traditional southern border of Egypt proper, inscribed in Egyptian, Latin, and Greek. It referred to the new regime obliquely: "after the kings had been defeated by Caesar, son of the god."⁶⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the Egyptian hieroglyphic version of the text places the name Caesar inside a royal cartouche.⁷⁰⁰ Another example, a stele from Mendēs in the north, refers to Augustus as the "heir of the King of Kings" or possibly "heir of the Queen of Kings,"

⁶⁹⁸ Nock 1930: 17-18.

⁶⁹⁹ TDGR 4: 114, no. 93: (Latin) *post reges a Caesare dei filio devictos*; (Greek) *μετὰ τὴν κατάλυσιν τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ βασιλέων πρῶτος ὑπὸ Καίσαρος ἐπὶ τῆς Αἰγύπτου κατασταθείς*. Cf. Hölbl 2001: 250.

⁷⁰⁰ Minas-Nerpel and Pfeiffer 2010.

apparently avoiding a specific title for Augustus while referencing his succession to one of his immediate Ptolemaic predecessors, either Ptolemaios XV Kaisarion or his mother Kleopatra VII.⁷⁰¹ Nevertheless, the distant emperor was soon fitted into the pharaonic mold in temple reliefs and statues, and his names Imperator Caesar — or at least their Greek forms, Autokratōr Kaisaros — were inserted within the requisite royal cartouches as the pharaoh’s throne and personal names.⁷⁰²

In the more Greek parts of the east, meanwhile, Augustus could be referenced with less problematic renditions of his chosen and officially conferred names and titles. But provincials could also readily impute divinity on the emperor. A dedication to Augustus’ daughter Iulia as benefactress of Mytilēnē, for example, attributes divinity to her father, albeit perhaps misled by his patronymic *Divi filius*.⁷⁰³ Mindful of the practice to deify good emperors and feeling the onset of his death, the emperor Vespasian is said to have wryly observed, “Woe is me. Methinks I’m turning into a god.”⁷⁰⁴ About a century later, Pausanias, having described the transformation of ancient heroes into gods, cynically notes that in his own day no man was transformed into a god, “except in flattering words addressed to rulers.”⁷⁰⁵ Of course, this had been true for centuries.

The imperial cult, so central in promoting Rome’s new imperial monarchy in its somewhat roundabout development towards formal recognition, gradually declined in importance, perhaps in response to the increasingly unabashed monarchic character of the regime, which rendered it less crucial. *Divi*, like the deified emperors, had always been a subcategory of *Dei*, the gods, but now they

⁷⁰¹ Huss 1994: 70, n. 10: *jwʿw nj hqʿ hqʿw* or possibly *jwʿw nj hqʿt hqʿw*.

⁷⁰² Examples of the various variants in von Beckerath 1999: 248-249. Minas-Nerpel and Pfeiffer 2010: 274, n. 17, note the possibility that the form *Kaisaros* (as opposed to the normal Greek rendition of Caesar, *Kaisar*) derives from an abbreviation of “son of Caesar.” On the emperor as basileus in Egypt, see Bréhier 1906: 166-168.

⁷⁰³ TDGR 4: 120, no. 98b: Ἰουλίαν, παῖδα Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος θέω Σεβάστω, γύναικα δὲ Μάρκω Ἀγρίππα, τὰν εὐέργετιν. For more direct references, see Kokkina 2012.

⁷⁰⁴ Suetonius, *Divus Vespasianus* 23.4: “Vae,” inquit, “puto deus fio.”

⁷⁰⁵ Pausanias 8.2.5 (οὔτε θεὸς ἐγένετο οὐδὲς ἔτι ἐξ ἀνθρώπου, πλὴν ὅσον λόγῳ καὶ κολακείᾳ πρὸς τὸ ὑπερέχον).

started being seen as lesser gods, demigods, even heroes — Cassius Dio and Herodian translate Latin *Divus* with Greek *hērōs*.⁷⁰⁶ This development seems to be paralleled by the wry joke of the dying Vespasian and the cynical remark of Pausanias. To them we can add the earlier satire of Seneca on the emperor Claudius' *Apocolocyntosis* (“pumpification”) — as opposed to *Apotheosis*. Later, in Cassius Dio's own time, we have his observation of the long-delayed public funeral and deification of the emperor Pertinax (193), “thus was Pertinax made immortal,”⁷⁰⁷ and the remark of the emperor Caracalla, having eliminated his brother Geta: “Let him be a god (*Divus*) as long as he is not alive.”⁷⁰⁸ While the imperial cult persevered and continued to provide a standard expression for loyalty to the monarch, it does not appear to have enjoyed much reverence, at least among intellectuals.

A major blow to the state imperial cults of the *Divi* was the expropriation of many of their resources by the cash-strapped emperor Maximinus I Thrax (235–238); now the temples would have lost their wealth, importance, and their functionality, as well as their priests.⁷⁰⁹ There appears to be no evidence that they were ever restored, but the imperial cult itself survived as a set of ideological slogans and images evoking tradition become ideology. Deified emperors were commemorated with races, splendid funerals, coins, and panegyrics, but apparently without functional worship. The imperial cult had been an important tool for the senate, and the increasing absence of the emperor from Rome might not be irrelevant to these developments. Maximinus never made it to the capital during his reign, and in fact the senate proclaimed two sets of emperors as his rivals in 238. Despite various attempts to promote the imperial cult through propaganda measures under the emperors

⁷⁰⁶ Cassius Dio 56.41.9: *καὶ τὸ τελευταῖον καὶ ἥρωα ἀπεδείξατε καὶ ἀθάνατον ἀπεφήνατε*; Herodian 7.3.5. Gradel 2002: 265.

⁷⁰⁷ Cassius Dio 75. 5.6: *καὶ ὁ μὲν Περτίναξ οὕτως ἠθανατίσθη*.

⁷⁰⁸ *Historia Augusta, Antoninus Geta* 2.9: *Sit divus, dum non sit vivus*. Gradel 2002: 265-266.

⁷⁰⁹ Gradel 2002: 356-360.

Decius (249–251), Gallienus (253–268), and Tacitus (275–276), this seems to have done little to resuscitate it in practice, although it continued to highlight the association between the emperor and the divine.⁷¹⁰ It has been suggested that the “divinity” implied by the term *Divus* had become so diluted that it required replacement by *Deus* (for example on a commemorative coinage for the *Deus* Augustus), and that this explains the appearance of *Divus* as a synonym for *Sanctus* among medieval saints, and its seemingly surprising application to Christian emperors.⁷¹¹

A passing challenge to traditional Roman religion, at the capital itself, was the promotion of the Emesene sun god Elagabalus as supreme god under the emperor Antoninus III, better known by the name of his god (218–222). This attempted to partly displace and partly merge with the cult of the traditional supreme god Jupiter. It failed, not least because the emperor was immature, impulsive, eccentric, and ultimately unsuccessful, having shocked Roman sensibilities and failed to uphold the expected tradition and dignity of an emperor.⁷¹² Yet, a Romanized, militaristic version of the solar cult, personified as Sol Invictus (“the Unconquerable Sun”), “lord of the Roman Empire,” was promoted as an official Roman state cult by the emperor Aurelian (Aurelianus, 270–275), who endowed it with a great temple in the middle of Rome.⁷¹³ In fact, while they had not usually been allowed to eclipse or compete with traditional Roman religion, such associations were not new. Augustus, in more conventional fashion, and then Nero, much more ostentatiously, had associated themselves with the sun, mostly represented by the more traditional Greco-Roman god Apollo. The weakened traditional imperial cult was apparently proving inadequate for the emperor’s needs, and

⁷¹⁰ Gradel 2002: 362–368. Gradel’s analysis contrasts with general assumptions about the imperial cult, e.g., Stephenson 2009: 15–19.

⁷¹¹ Gradel 2002: 364–365.

⁷¹² Halsberghe 1972: 45–129.

⁷¹³ Halsberghe 1972: 130–162; Watson 1999: 191–198.

Aurelian was creating a closer link between the emperor's person and a popular divine protector, whom he accordingly exalted; as he is said to have told mutinous soldiers, they "were mistaken if they supposed that the fates of emperors were in their hands... God had bestowed the purple (and this he displayed in his right hand) and had totally determined the duration of his reign."⁷¹⁴ Aurelian's first choice as protector was the traditional supreme god Jupiter⁷¹⁵; he later shifted the identification of his primary protector to Sol Invictus.⁷¹⁶ This, in turn, was employed to bolster the emperor's claim to virtually absolute authority, and Aurelian received the titles of *Divus* and *Deus* in his lifetime, his coins at Serdica minted with the legend DEO ET DOMINO.⁷¹⁷ The emperor and empress now adopted more publicly the designation *dominus*, respectively *domina*, which had been avoided or used privately before, while also publicly assuming most of the trappings of kingship, including a royal diadem — the very object so ostentatiously refused by Caesar. *Dominus noster* ("our lord") would now become a common introduction to the emperor's name and title on Roman coinage. While these are usually seen as drastic departures from precedent, they were also natural developments of earlier trends.⁷¹⁸

By the late third century, Roman society witnessed a more blatantly monarchic emperor under the more specific protection of a tutelary god of potentially henotheistic inclinations. This trend continued under later emperors, like Diocletian (Diocletianus, 284–305) and his colleague Maximian (Maximianus, 286–305). Despite the continuing popularity of Sol Invictus, these emperors selected Jupiter and Hercules, respectively, as their special protectors among the gods, a

⁷¹⁴ Peter the Patrician fr. 196.

⁷¹⁵ Watson 1999: 186-187; Van Dam 2009: 232.

⁷¹⁶ Watson 1999: 188-191.

⁷¹⁷ Halsberghe 1972: 153; Watson 1999: 188.

⁷¹⁸ *Epitome De Caesaribus* 35.5: Iste primus apud Romanos diadema capiti innexuit... Bréhier 1906: 168; Halsberghe 1972: 152-154; Watson 1999: 180-182.

tradition continued under their respective successors.⁷¹⁹ Maximian's junior co-ruler (Caesar) and later successor Constantius I (305–306) and the latter's son Constantine the Great (Constantinus I, 306–337), were accordingly associated with Hercules by default. However, Constantine sought a different, perhaps more eminent protector god, at one time the sun god Apollo, whose temple he visited in Gaul, making Apollo the companion of Constantine.⁷²⁰ The solar associations are unmistakable and it is probably no coincidence that Constantine's coinage also connects him to Sol Invictus and eastern communities made dedications to him as Hēlios.⁷²¹ It is also probably no coincidence that it was while looking at the sun that he is supposed to have discovered his final patron god, Christ, before the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 — whether this had been his account from the start or only elaborated at a later point makes little difference.⁷²²

Constantine's relationship with Christ constitutes a culmination of the earlier trend of emperors seeking the protection of tutelary gods. Constantine's God was monotheistic, despite some apparent hope on the emperor's part to become a second son of God and replicate Christ's divinity. It would take a while to place the Roman emperor within the Christian religion, but the eventual failure of Arianism would dispel any hopes for adoptive divinity.⁷²³ Constantine's episcopal biographer, Eusebius of Caesarea, compared the emperor favorably to Cyrus and Alexander the Great, before declaring him the new Moses as savior of his people, Christians and Romans alike.⁷²⁴ But Eusebius also likened Constantine to “some heavenly messenger (angel) of God,” when opening the

⁷¹⁹ Lactantius, *De mortibus* 52. Van Dam 2007: 167-168 (on Maximinus II and Jupiter), 230, 233-234.

⁷²⁰ *Panegyrici Latini* 6.21. Van Dam 2007: 85; Stephenson 2009: 129-131.

⁷²¹ Van Dam 2007: 85, n. 7, 178; Stephenson 2009: 157.

⁷²² Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.28-31. Van Dam 2007: 333, discussing Eusebius' gradual expansion of his narrative.

⁷²³ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.7, 1.12. Van Dam 2007: 281-285, 298, 307-309; for Julian's criticism of the implicit polytheism in Christianity: 360.

⁷²⁴ Van Dam 2007: 311.

Council of Nicaea in full regal splendor in 325.⁷²⁵ He also found a place for him in the Church, where he had summoned and hosted the Council whose decisions he intended to enforce — the emperor was a sort of “universal bishop appointed by God,”⁷²⁶ and “a bishop appointed by God over those outside [the Church?].”⁷²⁷ Arranging to be buried in a coffin placed in the middle of twelve cenotaphs representing the twelve Apostles,⁷²⁸ the emperor was evidently intending to take the place of Christ. After his death and the eventual defeat of Arianism, he would be described with equal plausibility but more propriety as the equal of the Apostles.⁷²⁹

One of the other ideological strands coming together in the creation of a Christian (and, for Constantine, Christ-like) Roman emperor was kingship (*basileia*). Christ had been identified as king (*basileus*) and even king of kings (*basileus basileōn*) in Christian rhetoric since the first century.⁷³⁰ The Roman emperor, too, for all his protestations that he was not a king, had been referred to as *basileus* throughout the same period of time.⁷³¹ In fact, despite an often hostile relationship, the Roman Empire and Christianity were largely coterminous in both space and time. Going beyond the earlier precedent of Aurelian and Diocletian, Constantine would appear more regal than his predecessors, sporting a novel, bejeweled diadem: the emperor now had a real crown, and in Christian

⁷²⁵ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.10.3: θεοῦ τις οὐράνιος ἄγγελος. Compare 2.61.1: Τοιαῦτα βασιλεὺς ὡσανεὶ θεοῦ μεγαλοφωνότατος κήρυξ, “a loud-voiced herald of God.” Cf. Van Dam 2007: 312.

⁷²⁶ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 1.44.1: οἷά τις κοινὸς ἐπίσκοπος ἐκ θεοῦ καθεσταμένος.

⁷²⁷ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.24: ὡς ἄρα καὶ αὐτὸς εἶη ἐπίσκοπος, ὡδὲ πη αὐτοῖς εἰπὼν ῥήμασιν ἐφ’ ἡμετέραις ἀκοαῖς: “ἀλλ’ ὑμεῖς μὲν τῶν εἴσω τῆς ἐκκλησίας, ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν ἐκτὸς ὑπὸ θεοῦ καθεσταμένους ἐπίσκοπος ἂν εἶην.” On these attempts to place the Roman emperor in the Christian Church, see Dagron 2003: 127-135.

⁷²⁸ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.60.3: δώδεκα δ’ οὖν αὐτόθι θήκας ὡσανεὶ στήλας ἱεράς ἐπὶ τιμῇ καὶ μνήμῃ τοῦ τῶν ἀποστόλων ἐγειράς χοροῦ, μέσσην ἐτίθει τὴν αὐτὸς αὐτοῦ λάρνακα, ἧς ἐκατέρωθεν τῶν ἀποστόλων ἀνὰ ἕξ διέκειντο.

⁷²⁹ Dagron 2003: 135-143; on Constantine’s subsequent sainthood: 143-148.

⁷³⁰ First Epistle to Timothy 6.15; Book of Revelations 17.14, 19.11-16.

⁷³¹ Cf. Van Dam 2007: 309.

art the saint's halo (nimbus) would take the place of the earlier (and perhaps merely artistic) radiate diadem that had compared pagan emperors to the sun god.⁷³²

The correct Latin names and titles of the emperors and their Greek renditions established under Augustus would continue to be employed throughout the Empire,⁷³³ but informal usage witnessed an increasing number of references to the emperor as *basileus*, the Greek word that at the time technically should have designated king (*rex*).⁷³⁴ We encounter it, for example, in the Gospel of John, written in the late first century AD, where the Jewish priests assert “We have no *basileus* but Caesar” during the reign of the emperor Tiberius.⁷³⁵ Admittedly, in this passage the emperorship is not referenced in a specifically technical way. At a banquet, the emperor Gaius interrupted a debate among his client kings as to their respective nobility, by quoting Homer's line “Let there be one ruler, one *basileus*.”⁷³⁶ Confirming the intended implication of the emperor's choice of quotation, according to Suetonius, he would have assumed a diadem then and there, turning the semblance of a principate into the form of monarchy.⁷³⁷ Reminded that he already outranked any prince or king, he insisted on being treated as a god.⁷³⁸ Cassius Dio confirms that the Romans suspected Gaius' friends, the Judaeian king Agrippa I and the Commagenian king Antiochos IV to have exercised a nefarious

⁷³² *Epitome De Caesaribus* 40.14: Habitum regium gemmis et caput exornans perpetuo diademate; *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 330: φορέσας πρώτοις διάδημα διὰ μαργαριτῶν καὶ ἐτέρων τιμίων λίθων.. Van Dam 2007: 16-17; Stephenson 2009: 206-207. On diadems, see Kolb 2001: 76-79, 105-114, 201-204

⁷³³ Bréhier 1906: 161-162; Wifstrand 1939: 530-531.

⁷³⁴ Bréhier 1906: 165; Wifstrand 1939: 531-539, with some different examples than discussed here.

⁷³⁵ John 19.15: οὐκ ἔχομεν βασιλέα εἰ μὴ καισαρα.

⁷³⁶ *Iliad* 2.204. For the implications, cf. Van Dam 2007: 354-355.

⁷³⁷ Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 22.1: Nec multum a fuit quin statim diadema sumeret speciemque principatus in regni formam converteret.

⁷³⁸ Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 22.2: Verum admonitus et principum et regum se excessisse fastigium, divinam ex eo maiestatem ausserere sibi coepit.

influence on him, “as if two tyrant-trainers.”⁷³⁹ Apart from adopting regal or divine attire at least in some contexts, Gaius is said to have helped himself to the breastplate of the ultimate king, Alexander the Great, stolen from his tomb at Alexandria.⁷⁴⁰ Insofar as this was true, it remained within informal practice.

Also informal is the accusation against Paul and Silas at Thessalonica, during the reign of the emperor Nero. Annoyed at their preaching, the local Jews accused them of having “broken every one of Caesar’s edicts by claiming that there is another *basileus*, Jesus.”⁷⁴¹ As in John 19.15, this does not necessarily seek to provide a technical designation of the Roman emperor, but the implication that the emperor is the *basileus* and the application of the same title to Jesus is treasonous remains clear. In the later second century AD, Pausanias refers to the Roman emperor Hadrian (Hadrianus, 117–138) as *basileus* in the same passage in which he also attributes the title to Euagoras of Salamis and Artaxerxēs II of Persia.⁷⁴² In 216, the emperor Antoninus II, better known as Caracalla (211–217) heard a legal case at Antioch, in which, although attributed his correct names and titles, he was also described as the “most pious *basileus* and judge” in flattery designed to ensure his favor and remind him of the basic function of the monarch as judge, stretching back to Hesiod’s *basileis* and Near Eastern kings.⁷⁴³ The blurring of the line between emperor and *basileus* was problematic from a traditional Roman, Latin-speaking point of view, dominated by the negative connotation of *rex*. But whether Roman citizens or not, Greek-speakers, even if aware of Roman attitudes, were surely less likely to be troubled by this.

⁷³⁹ Cassius Dio, 59.24.1: καὶ μάλιστα ὅτι ἐπυνθάνοντο τὸν τε Ἀγρίππαν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν Ἀντίοχον τοὺς βασιλέας ὡς περ τινὰς τυραννοδιδασκάλους.

⁷⁴⁰ Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula* 52.

⁷⁴¹ Acts 17.7: καὶ οὗτοι πάντες ἀπέναντι τῶν δογμάτων Καίσαρος πράσσοι, βασιλέα ἕτερον λέγοντες εἶναι Ἰησοῦν.

⁷⁴² Pausanias 1.3.2: βασιλεὺς Ἀδριανός. Similarly, 1.5.5.

⁷⁴³ Roussel and Visscher 1942–1943: 179: εὐσεβεστάτω βασιλεῖ καὶ δικαστῇ.

We see this at play in the works of two Greek-speaking contemporaries in the first half of the third century AD, Cassius Dio and Herodian. The former became a senator and had a close relationship with some of the emperors, while the latter was perhaps a minor official. In writing about the emperors, Cassius Dio strictly adheres to rendering their title as *autokratōr*, corresponding to the Latin *imperator*, distinguishing him from other monarchs that he labels *basileus*.⁷⁴⁴ When he does allude to the Roman emperorship as *basileia*, it is in literary references that have no technical import: Marcus Aurelius having died, Cassius Dio observes that his “history now descends from a kingdom of gold to one of iron and rust.”⁷⁴⁵ Similarly, he refers to Rome as the “queen” of cities.⁷⁴⁶

Herodian, on the other hand, does not preserve such distinctions and casually refers to the Roman emperor as *Rōmaiōn basileus*.⁷⁴⁷ He uses the more technical terms rarely, for example when describing the acclamation of Didius Iulianus (193) as *autokratōr* and *sebastos* (Augustus), but describing him clothed with the purple cloak of a *basileus*.⁷⁴⁸ It seems noteworthy that Herodian employs the more formal and technical terms when relating the specific acclamation of a ruler as emperor, almost as if in such cases he were quoting or paraphrasing the original wording. Thus, he has Didius Iulianus attempt to appease the advancing Septimius Severus (193–211) by proclaiming him *autokratōr* and making him partner in the *basileia*.⁷⁴⁹ Later, Severus himself is said to have

⁷⁴⁴ E.g., Cassius Dio 72.13.3-4, referring to the *autokratōr* Marcus Aurelius and the Marcomanic *basileis* Furtius and Ariogaeus: καὶ τὸν βασιλέα σφῶν Φούρτιον ἐκβαλόντες Ἀριόγαισον αὐτοὶ ἐφ’ ἐαυτῶν βασιλέα σφίσιν ἐστήσαντο. καὶ τούτοις διὰ ταῦτα ὁ αὐτοκράτωρ οὔτε ἐκείνον ὡς καὶ νόμῳ τινὶ γεγονότα ἐβεβαίωσεν.

⁷⁴⁵ Cassius Dio 72.36.4: ἀπὸ χρυσῆς τε βασιλείας ἐς σιδηρὰν καὶ κατιωμένην τῶν τε πραγμάτων τοῖς τότε Ῥωμαίοις καὶ ἡμῖν νῦν καταπεσοῦσης τῆς ἱστορίας.

⁷⁴⁶ Cassius Dio 76.4.5: καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο τὴν Ῥώμην καὶ βασιλίδα καὶ ἀθάνατον ὀνομάσαντες.

⁷⁴⁷ E.g., Herodian 1.15.7: Ῥωμαίων βασιλέα.

⁷⁴⁸ Herodian 2.8.6: αὐτοκράτορά τε ἀνείπε καὶ σεβαστὸν προσηγόρευσε. τὴν τε βασιλειὸν πορφύραν ἐπιβαλόντες.

⁷⁴⁹ Herodian 2.12.3. Similarly, at 2.2.9 (Pertinax in 193), 6.8.4 (Maximinus I in 235), 7.5.7 (Gordianus I in 238), 7.10.3-5 (Pupienus Maximus and Balbinus in 238), 8.8.7-8 (for Gordianus III in 238). However, this is not completely consistent:

appointed his own sons to take a share in the *basileia*, each with the title of *autokratōr*.⁷⁵⁰ But in observing that Severus had destroyed three *basileis*, the emperors Didius Iulianus, Pescennius Niger, and Clodius Albinus, Herodian keeps to his usual casual employment of the term *basileus* for the emperor.⁷⁵¹ Describing the funeral and deification of Severus, Herodian similarly observes that it is Roman practice to deify *basileis* who die leaving sons as their successors.⁷⁵² When Severus' son, Caracalla (211–217), proposed a marriage alliance between himself and the daughter of the Parthian king of kings Artabanos V (215–224), he asserted that it was only proper that he, a *basileus* and a son of a *basileus*, should marry a princess (*basilis*), the daughter of a great king (*megas basileus*).⁷⁵³ Even when purporting to reproduce the letter of the new emperor Macrinus (217–218) to the senate, Herodian renders the term emperor as *basileus*.⁷⁵⁴ Similarly, when Caracalla justified his elimination of his brother to the senate, he stated “Zeus created the *basileia* for a sole ruler among mankind on the model of his own position among the gods.”⁷⁵⁵

While Herodian's general use of the term *basileus* for the Roman emperor is not technically accurate and he is aware of the more formal terms employed for the Roman emperor's titles, his text demonstrates how unproblematic this application of the term *basileus* could be, at least in and of itself. Nevertheless, Roman prejudices against kings apart, one could imagine a problem arising from either the undifferentiated use of *basileus* for Roman and non-Roman rulers, or a potential source of embarrassment if the Roman monarch was mere *basileus*, but the Parthian one, as above, *megas*

at 5.5.1, Antoninus III (Elagabalus, 218–222), and at 5.8.10 and 6.1.1, Severus Alexander (222–235) are said to have been proclaimed *basileus*.

⁷⁵⁰ Herodian 3.9.1.

⁷⁵¹ Herodian 3.7.8.

⁷⁵² Herodian 4.1.2.

⁷⁵³ Herodian 4.10.2.

⁷⁵⁴ Herodian 5.1.2.

⁷⁵⁵ Herodian 4.5.7.

basileus.⁷⁵⁶ Herodian seems to know that this is not a mere flattering epithet, as indicated by his description of the Sāsānid takeover in the east, during the reign of Severus Alexander (222–235). He relates that Artaxerxēs (Ardaxšīr I, 224–241), *basileus* of the Persians, defeated the Parthians, killing Artabanos, the earlier *meγas basileus* who wore the double diadem, gaining complete control over the neighboring “barbarians” and reducing them to tributary status.⁷⁵⁷ Having restored the Persian Empire, Ardaxšīr now laid claim to the legacy of Achaemenid Persia and desired to recover the former Persian territories in what was now the Roman east.⁷⁵⁸ Accordingly, Ardaxšīr, now *meγas basileus* himself, sent an embassy demanding that the Romans and their ruler (*arkhōn*) withdraw from Syria and the whole of Asia opposite Europe.⁷⁵⁹ Naturally, the Romans did not acquiesce and war followed.

Informal use of the Greek term *basileus* to designate the Roman emperor continued in Greek texts and, evidently, verbal discourse. This occurs even at a very high level of authorship or audience. Thus, for example, the future emperor Julian (361–363) addressed a panegyric to his cousin, the emperor Constantius II (337–361), in the middle of the fourth century, in which he refers to the emperor as *basileus* numerous times from the very start, addressing him as “most mighty *basileus*.”⁷⁶⁰ By contrast, *autokratōr* occurs only half a dozen times, and not always in the sense of “emperor.”⁷⁶¹ Admittedly trying to highlight the rustic nature of his area, Synesios of Cyrene, later bishop of Ptolemaïs in Cyrenaïca, writes to a friend in 408 that among the local villagers some believed that the

⁷⁵⁶ In Herodian’s quotations from both Caracalla at 4.10.2 and Macrinus at 5.1.4.

⁷⁵⁷ Herodian 6.2.1: τὸν πρότερον καλούμενον μέγαν βασιλέα καὶ δυσὶ διαδήμασι χρώμενον.

⁷⁵⁸ Herodian 6.2.2, 6.2.7.

⁷⁵⁹ Herodian 6.4.5: μέγας βασιλεὺς Ἀρταξέρξης.

⁷⁶⁰ Julian, *Panegyric to Constantius* 1: ὦ μέγιστε βασιλεῦ.

⁷⁶¹ Julian, *Panegyric to Constantius* 9c: καὶ πολλῶν αὐτοκρατόρων, referring to the empress Fausta as daughter, wife, sister, and mother of emperors. In Julian’s oration on Kingship, *autokratōr* occurs only once (88a) and not in the sense of “emperor.”

current *basileus* was Agamemnōn, son of Atreus.⁷⁶² The chronological and political distance between the Homeric Agamemnōn and the Roman emperor Arcadius (395–408) notwithstanding, the story reflects the fusion of emperorship and *basileia* in popular culture. Earlier, Synesios had addressed a speech, *Peri Basileias* (“On Kingship”), to the emperor Arcadius, in which he also applied the term *basileus* to the Roman emperor.⁷⁶³ In it, like Appian, Synesios notes the paradox and proceeds to explain, very directly, that

this very title of *basileus*, I will show to be recent; for it had become a dead letter to the Romans from the time when the people drove out the Tarquini. For it is from this source that while we call you *basileis*, while we deem you worthy of the title and label you as such, you, whether you know it or not, yielding to established custom, seem to evade the dignity of the title. And so, when you write to a city, or to an individual, to a viceroy or to a barbarian ruler (*arkhōn*), you have never shown pride in the title of *basileus*, but rather you designate yourselves *autokratores*.⁷⁶⁴

Just as bluntly, Synesios continues, asking

Is not this, then, clear evidence of a wise policy in the Roman constitution (*politeia*), that although it has manifestly developed into a monarchy (*monarkhia*), it is cautious in so asserting itself by reason of its hatred of the evils of tyranny (*tyrannis*), and employs the name of kingship (*basileias*) sparingly. For tyranny causes monarchy to be detested, whereas (proper) kingship causes it to be admired.⁷⁶⁵

Synesios’ testimony simultaneously demonstrates the general adoption of the term *basileus* as an informal designation for the emperor in the Greek-speaking east, and the fact that the mismatch between unofficial and official use was noticed, discussed, and explained away. While Synesios’

⁷⁶² Synesios, Ep. 148: 16.

⁷⁶³ Synesios, *Peri Basileias* 1.1: τε καὶ συνήθων ἡδονὴν καταδημαγωγησόντων βασιλέα τε καὶ τοὺς συνεδρεύοντας. Cf. the story related of the *basileus* Carinus (mistake for Carus?) in 12.1-7.

⁷⁶⁴ Synesios, *Peri Basileias* 13.2: Ἐπεὶ καὶ τοῦνομα αὐτό σοι δείξω τοῦ βασιλέως ὄψιμον, ἐκλιπὲς Ῥωμαίοις γενόμενον ἀφ’ οὗ Ταρκυνίου ὁ δῆμος ἐξήλασεν. Ἀπὸ τούτου γὰρ ἡμεῖς μὲν ὑμᾶς ἀξιοῦμεν καὶ καλοῦμεν βασιλέας καὶ γράφομεν οὕτως· ὑμεῖς δὲ, εἴτε εἰδότες εἴτε μὴ, συνηθεία δὲ συγχωροῦντες, τὸν ὄγκον τῆς προσηγορίας ἀναδυομένοις εἰκάτε. Οὐκουν οὔτε πρὸς πόλιν οὔτε πρὸς ἰδιώτην οὔτε πρὸς ὑπαρχον γράφοντες οὔτε πρὸς ἄρχοντα βάρβαρον ἐκαλλωπίσασθέ ποτε τῷ βασιλέως ὀνόματι· ἀλλ’ αὐτοκράτορες εἶναι ποιείσθε.

⁷⁶⁵ Synesios, *Peri Basileias* 13.4: Πῶς οὖν οὐ σαφὲς τοῦτο τεκμήριον τῆς σώφρονος ἐν τῇ Ῥωμαίων πολιτείᾳ προαιρέσεως, ὅτι καίτοι μοναρχία προδήλως ἀποτελεσθεῖσα, μίσει τῶν τυραννίδος κακῶν, διευλαβεῖται καὶ φειδομένως ἄπτεται τοῦ βασιλείας ὀνόματος; Μοναρχίαν γὰρ διαβάλλει μὲν τυραννίς, ζηλωτὴν δὲ ποιεῖ βασιλεία.

oration was not official in the same sense that imperial edicts and letters were, it was, after all, addressed to the emperor and his court, indicating a zone of interaction and transition between fully official and fully informal use.

By the fifth and sixth centuries, even as client kings in the east were becoming fewer, the Roman emperor was surrounded by a plethora of mostly Germanic rulers from the north, many of them entering into various treaty relationships of amity or dependence, and some of them eventually making their way into imperial territory. In this context, the emperor, increasingly called *basileus* in Greek, coexisted with other, mostly subordinate rulers, generally described as kings. But how would Greek distinguish between the Roman emperor and barbarian kings, if *basileus* had been employed as the equivalent of Latin *rex* for centuries?

Priskos of Panion, writing in the middle of the fifth century, uses *basileus* to designate the Roman emperor Theodosius II (408–450), even though Priskos was an official, a member of an embassy from the emperor to the Huns, and might have been expected to prefer a more technical usage. While Priskos uses various titles for rulers, he also commonly designates the Hunnic kings Attila and Bleda *basileis* of the Huns or Scythians; in one instance he even refers to both Theodosius and Attila as *basileis* in the same sentence.⁷⁶⁶ Seeking an explanation for a perceived slight on the part of one of the envoys toward Attila, Priskos recalls that the man had differentiated between the Roman emperor and Attila by calling the former a god and the latter a man.⁷⁶⁷ Otherwise, we are given no indication for a differentiation between the titles and status of the Roman and Hunnic rulers.

⁷⁶⁶ Priskos fr. 2-8; in fr. 9 he titles both Theodosios II and Attila *basileis* in the same sentence. In fr. 31.1, Priskos titles the Vandal king Geiseric *arkhōn* (the generic “ruler”).

⁷⁶⁷ Priskos, fr. 11.2 ln. 210-211.

The same practice can be observed a century later in Prokopios' works, where *basileus* is likewise used both for Roman emperors and foreign kings, such as the Persian kings of kings Kawād I (488–497 and 499–531) and Xusraw I (531–579), the Ostrogothic king Theoderic (489–526) and some of his successors, as well as the Vandal king Hilderic (523–530), the last called so in a letter from the Roman emperor no less.⁷⁶⁸ Prokopios also attributes *basileis* to each of the peoples in Britain (including the Angles), as well as to the Lazes and Zēkhoi in the Caucasus.⁷⁶⁹ Similarly, al-Mundir III (512–554), the Laḥmid (Naṣrid) Arab vassal of Sāsānid Persia, is called *basileus* of the Saracens.⁷⁷⁰ The Ġassānid (Ĵafnid) Arab vassal of the Romans, al-Ḥārīt II (528–569) is said to have been invested as *basileus* by the Roman emperor Justinian (Iustinianus I, 527–565), although most sources, including contemporary inscriptions, label al-Ḥārīt *phylarkhos* (“tribal chieftain”).⁷⁷¹ Here, much like Priskos, Prokopios employs *basileus* in the same sentence to designate the Roman emperor and a foreign ruler (in this instance, a vassal). Prokopios likewise uses *basileus* in the same sentence for both the Roman emperor and barbarian kings on several other occasions: citing a letter from the

⁷⁶⁸ Prokopios, *Secret History* 2.34: βασιλέα Χοσρόην; 30.14: ὁ Περσῶν βασιλεὺς; *Wars* 1.17.26: βασιλέως Καβάδου; 3.8.11: Θεοδέριχον τὸν Γότθων βασιλέα; 5.2.11: τὸν βασιλέα (Theoderic's grandson Athalaric); 5.11.5: βασιλέα σφίσι τε καὶ Ἰταλιώταις Οὐίττιριν εἶλοντο; 6.39.5: Οὐίττιριδι μὲν τὸ τῆς βασιλείας ὄνομα; 8.27.5: Οὐίττιρις ὁ Γότθων βασιλεὺς (Vittigis); 6.30.17: βασιλέα τε Γότθων (Hildebad); 7.2.4: βασιλέα ἐκ τοῦ αἰφνιδίου οἱ Ῥογοὶ ἀνείπον (Erarius); 3.9.10: βασιλέα Βανδιλῶν. As quoted or paraphrased by Prokopios, the Ostrogothic monarchs addressed Justinian as *basileus* (5.3.19, 22) but also described themselves as *basileus* (5.6.15); the actual letters preserved in Cassiodorus' *Variae* are in Latin and distinguish between the Ostrogothic *rex* and the Roman *imperator*, *princeps* or *Augustus*, e.g., letters 8.1, 10.2, 10.8–10, 10.15, 10.19, 10.21–26, 10.32.

⁷⁶⁹ Prokopios, *Wars* 6.15.5: βασιλεῖς τέ εἰσι κατὰ ἔθνος ἕκαστον; 8.20.12: βασιλεὺς ἦν τότε Ἀγγιλῶν τοῦ ἔθνους; 8.2.17: Λαζῶν βασιλέως = 8.8.1: Γουβάζης τε, ὁ Κόλχων βασιλεὺς = 8.8.16: Γουβάζης τε ὁ Λαζῶν βασιλεὺς; 8.4.2: τοῖς δὲ δὴ Ζήχοις κατὰ μὲν παλαιὸν ὁ Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτωρ βασιλέα καθίστη — here, as we might expect, there is a differentiation between the titles of the Roman emperor and of his appointee as king of Zēkhoi.

⁷⁷⁰ Prokopios, *Wars* 1.17.30: Ἀλαμούνδαρος ὁ τῶν Σαρακηνῶν βασιλεὺς.

⁷⁷¹ Prokopios, *Wars* 1.17.47: διὸ δὴ βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανὸς φυλαῖς ὅτι πλείσταις Ἀρέθαν τὸν Γαβαλᾶ παῖδα ἐπέστησεν, ὅς τῶν ἐν Ἀραβίῳ Σαρακηνῶν ἤρχεν, ἀξίωμα βασιλέως αὐτῷ περιθέμενος, οὐ πρότερον τοῦτο ἐν γε Ῥωμαίοις γεγονὸς πώποτε.

Vandal king Gelimer (530–533) to the emperor Justinian,⁷⁷² referring to the emperor Justinian and a ruler of the Utigur Huns or Bulgars, Sandil,⁷⁷³ and referring to the emperor Justinian and the Lombard king Audoin (547–c. 563).⁷⁷⁴

That is not to say that Prokopios does not employ other titles. He describes the appointment of al-Ḥārīt's brother Abū-Karib as *phylarkhos*,⁷⁷⁵ and elsewhere uses the non-specific *arkhōn* (“ruler”) for al-Ḥārīt himself.⁷⁷⁶ The Heruls are said to have had a *rēx*, Okhos, before disposing of him, wishing to be kingless; in later passages Prokopios refers to Herul kings as *basileis*.⁷⁷⁷ Odoacer (476–493), who had taken over Italy after overthrowing the last Roman emperor to rule from Ravenna, is called usurper (*tyrannos*) by Prokopios, a term more descriptive than technical.⁷⁷⁸ The Visigothic kings Alaric II (484–507) and Theodis (531–548) he calls *hēgoumenos* and *arkhōn*, and the Thuringian king Heremenifrid, *arkhōn*.⁷⁷⁹ Gesalec of the Visigoths (507–511), Theodebert I of the Franks (533–548), and Theodebald of the Franks (548–555) are also titled *arkhōn*.⁷⁸⁰ Nor does

⁷⁷² Prokopios, *Wars* 3.9.20: Βασιλεὺς Γελίμερ Ἰουστινιανῶ βασιλεῖ. At 3.14.3, Prokopios reproduces a letter to Gelimer from his brother, addressing him as ὁ Βανδύλων τε καὶ Ἄλανῶν βασιλεῦ.

⁷⁷³ Prokopios, *Wars* 8.19.9: Ἀφικόμενοι οὖν οἱ πρέσβεις ἐς ὄψιν Ἰουστινιανῶ βασιλεῖ λέγειν οἱ ἔφασαν δι' αὐτῶν ὡς ἐν ἐπιστολῇ τάδε βασιλέα Σανδύλ.

⁷⁷⁴ Prokopios, *Wars* 8.25.15: Αὐδοῖν τε, ὁ τῶν Λαγγοβαρδῶν βασιλεὺς, τῶν οἱ ἐπομένων τινὰς ἐς Βυζάντιον πέμψας εὐαγγέλια μὲν Ἰουστινιανῶ βασιλεῖ ἐδήλου.

⁷⁷⁵ Prokopios, *Wars* 1.19.10: τούτῳ τῷ φοινικῶν βασιλέα Ἰουστινιανὸν Ἀβοχάραβος ἐδωρήσατο, ὁ τῶν ἐκείνῃ Σαρακηνῶν ἄρχων, καὶ αὐτὸν βασιλεὺς φύλαρχον τῶν ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ Σαρακηνῶν κατεστήσατο.

⁷⁷⁶ Prokopios, *Secret History* 2.28: Ἀρέθα τῷ Σαρακηνῶν ἄρχοντι.

⁷⁷⁷ Prokopios, *Wars* 6.14.38: Ἐρουλοὶ τὸ τοῦ τρόπου θηριῶδες τε καὶ μανιῶδες ἐνδειξάμενοι ἐς τὸν αὐτῶν ῥήγα (ἦν δὲ οὗτος ἀνὴρ Ὀχος ὄνομα), ἐξαπιναιῶς τὸν ἀνθρώπον ἀπ' οὐδεμιᾶς αἰτίας ἔκτειναν, ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἐπενεγκόντες ἢ ὅτι ἀβασιλευτοὶ τὸ λοιπὸν βούλονται εἶναι; 6.15.27: Νῦν δὲ Ἐρουλοὶ, οἱ δὴ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις ἄκνηται, φόνου σφίσι τοῦ βασιλέως ἐξεργασμένου.

⁷⁷⁸ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.1.11: τύραννον.

⁷⁷⁹ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.12.22: τῷ μὲν οὖν τηρικαῦτα Οὐσιγιότθων ἡγουμένῳ Ἀλαρίχῳ τῷ νεωτέρῳ Θευδιχοῦσαν τὴν αὐτοῦ θυγατέρα παρθένον ἡγγύησεν, Ἐρμενεφρίδῳ δὲ τῷ Θεορίγγων ἄρχοντι Ἀμαλαβέργαν τὴν Ἀμαλαφρίδης τῆς ἀδελφῆς παιδα; 5.12.40: Ἀλάριχον τὸν ἄρχοντα; 3.24.7: Θεῦδιν, τὸν τῶν Οὐσιγιότθων ἄρχοντα; 6.30.15: Θεῦδιν ... τῶν Οὐσιγιότθων ἡγούμενον.

⁷⁸⁰ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.12.43: Γισέλιχον, νόθον Ἀλαρίχου υἱὸν, ἄρχοντα σφίσιν ἀνείπον; 5.13.4: Θευδιβέρτου ...

Γερμανῶν ἄρχοντος; 8.20.11: Θευδιβέρτου ... Φράγγων ἄρχοντος, but at 8.24.6: Φράγγων ἄρχηγός; 8.34.17: Θευδιβαλδὸν τὸν Φράγγων ἄρχοντα.

Prokopios maintain consistency in his designations: Theoderic of the Ostrogoths, usually *basileus*, is also called *arkhōn*, while his nephew Theodahad (534–536), previously described as *basileus*, is also called *arkhēgos*; similarly, Audoin of the Lombards, once called *basileus*, is also designated *arkhōn*.⁷⁸¹ The variations indicate technical imprecision, and at least certain instances are chosen, if consciously, to convey a meaning distinct from any specific official title. For example, Prokopios refers to the Vandal king Geiseric (428–477) as *autokratōr* after his brother Gontharis’ death, clearly meaning sole ruler rather than emperor or *imperator*.⁷⁸²

Prokopios’ use of the term *basileus* is not unawares, as indicated by his description of the promotion of al-Hārīt to *basileus* from a lower rank. Moreover, when he discusses the reign of Theoderic in Italy, Prokopios explicitly states that “he did not claim the right to assume either the garb or the name of a *basileus* of the Romans, and was called *rēx* for the rest of his life, for the barbarians are accustomed to call their leaders that.”⁷⁸³ Prokopios does, however, go on to say that Theoderic’s good manner of government gave him all the qualities that are appropriate to one who is a *basileus* by nature.⁷⁸⁴ He concludes that Theoderic, while technically a usurper (*tyrannos*), was in truth a *basileus* no less than any who have held that position since the beginning.⁷⁸⁵ Prokopios’ observations blur the line between a technical use of a title and its moral implications focused on in the realm of philosophy. It would be a mistake to attribute every use of *basileus* in Prokopios’ texts to

⁷⁸¹ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.24.22: Θεωδερίχου τοῦ Γότθων ἄρχοντος (similarly, 6.6.16); 5.13.14: Θεωδάτος, ὁ τῶν Γότθων ἀρχηγός; 8.25.12: Αὐδοῖν τῷ Λαγγοβαρδῶν ἄρχοντι.

⁷⁸² Prokopios, *Wars* 3.3.33: Γίζεριχον ἤδη αὐτοκράτορα ὄντα Βανδύλοις.

⁷⁸³ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.1.26: καὶ βασιλέως μὲν τοῦ Ῥωμαίων οὔτε τοῦ σχήματος οὔτε τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐπιβατεῦσαι ἤξισεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ῥήξ διεβίου καλούμενος (οὕτω γὰρ σφῶν τοὺς ἡγεμόνας καλεῖν οἱ βάρβαροι νενομίκασι).

⁷⁸⁴ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.1.26: τῶν μέντοι κατηκόων τῶν αὐτοῦ προῦστη ξύμπαντα περιβαλλόμενος ὅσα τῷ φύσει βασιλεῖ ἤρμοσται.

⁷⁸⁵ Prokopios, *Wars* 5.1.29: ἦν τε ὁ Θεωδέριχος λόγῳ μὲν τύραννος, ἔργῳ δὲ βασιλεὺς ἀληθῆς τῶν ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ τιμῇ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἠὲ δοκιμηκότων οὐδενὸς ἦσσαν. For Theoderic’s interaction with Roman imperial traditions, see Arnold 2014.

such a philosophical reflection, but this explanation goes some way towards explaining his seemingly haphazard usage.

Agathias, who undertook to continue Prokopios' work, treated titles similarly, possibly conditioned by summarizing Prokopios' work at the start of his own. Sometimes he calls the Roman emperor *autokratōr*, and sometimes *basileus*. But he also uses the title *basileus* for the Persian king of kings, even in his description of the alleged coronation of Šābuhr II (309–379) *in utero*.⁷⁸⁶ Agathias also uses *basileus* for Frankish and Ostrogothic kings, and for the king of the Lazes; there might be an attempt at differentiation between them and the Roman emperor when they are found in the same sentence, in such cases the emperor being termed *autokratōr*.⁷⁸⁷ Nevertheless, referring to lists of Roman *basileis* from Romulus to the emperors of his time, Agathias does not seem to distinguish between kings and emperors, perhaps because he simply means monarchs.⁷⁸⁸ Possibly because they were usurpers or rebels from the Roman point of view, he usually terms the last Ostrogothic kings, Totila and Teia, *hēgemōn*, although in one place he calls them *basileis*.⁷⁸⁹ The title *hēgemōn* is also used for Zabergan, the ruler of the Kutrigur Huns, and for his rival Sandilkhos (Prokopios' Sandil), the ruler of the Utigurs Huns.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁶ Agathias 1.1.1: βασιλεῖ δὲ τῷ Ῥωμαίων; 1.4.3: βασιλεὺς Ἰουστινιανός; 4.2.3.2: Χοσρόης δὲ ὁ Περσῶν βασιλεὺς; 4.25.4: βασιλέα τὸ ἔμβρυον ὀνόματι; 5.14.1: Ὁ γὰρ βασιλεὺς ἐπειδὴ πρότερον Ἰταλίαν ζύμπασαν ἐχειρώσατο καὶ Λιβύην καὶ τοὺς μεγίστους ἐκείνους πολέμους διήνυσσε καὶ πρῶτος ὡς εἶπεν ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὸ Βυζάντιον βεβασιλευκόσι Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτωρ ὀνόματι τε καὶ πράγματι ἀπεδέδεικτο. The examples here and below purposefully exclude material from Agathias' summary of Prokopios.

⁷⁸⁷ Agathias 1.3.4: τοῖς βασιλεῦσι τῶν Φράγγων; 1.6.4: Θεοδέριχος ὁ τῶν Γότθων βασιλεὺς... Ἰουστινιανῶ τε τῷ Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτορι; 1.18.6: Χοσρόης τε γὰρ ὁ Περσῶν βασιλεὺς... Ἰουστινιανῶ τε τῷ Ῥωμαίων αὐτοκράτορι καταπροέσθαι Γουβάζην τὸν Λαζῶν ἐν τῷ τότε βασιλέα.

⁷⁸⁸ Agathias 2.27.7: ἀλλὰ τοὺς μὲν Ῥωμαίων βασιλεῖς ἀπὸ Ῥωμύλου τυχόν καὶ ἔτι πρότερον ἀπὸ Αἰνείου τοῦ Ἀγχίσου ἀρχόμενοι μέχρις Ἀναστασίου τε καὶ Ἰουστίνου τοῦ πρεσβύτου ἀπαριθμοῦνται. Frendo's translation at 62 expands Agathias' "*Rōmaïōn basileis*" to "kings and emperors of the Rome," which is not literally correct.

⁷⁸⁹ Agathias 1.1.1: Ἐπειδὴ Τεῖας ὁ μετὰ Τωτίλαν τῶν Γότθων ἡγεμῶν καταστάς; 1.8.4: Τωτίλα τε οὖν καὶ Τεῖα τοῖς βασιλεῦσι πρότερον τῶν Γότθων γεγενημένοις.

⁷⁹⁰ Agathias 4.11.6: Ζαβεργᾶν δὲ ὁ τῶν Κοτριγούρων Οὔννων ἡγεμῶν; 5.24.2: Σάνδιλχον τὸν ἕτερον ἡγεμόνα.

The absence of differentiation in the titles applied to the Roman emperor and a “barbarian” king is striking, failing to reflect distinctive identity and the special qualities of the Roman emperorship as something at least originally distinct from kingship, something superior to kingship, and something by now laden with additional Christian implications; Attila and Sandil were not Roman, not emperors, and, as far as we know, not Christian. Had these authors been writing in Latin, their prose would certainly have employed different terms to title the Roman emperor and other rulers. Aware of this problem, Justinian’s contemporary, the administrator Iōannēs Lydos, who provides a practical and theoretical discussion of Roman offices and practices in Greek, noted that although the Roman ruler was indeed a *basileus*, he could not be described simply as such, because he was more than the *basileis* whom he appointed to client kingdoms.⁷⁹¹ This comment betrays the technical difficulty of running coherent propaganda in the two languages of the Roman state, where the linguistic and rhetorical priorities of Greek did not always match those of Latin. After some four centuries of relative coherence, the proliferation of rulers within and around the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity muddied the waters and made the singularity of the Roman emperor more difficult to sustain, even in language.

During the previous century, writing in Latin, Ammianus Marcellinus, had employed a range of imperial titles for Roman emperors, and a range of distinct royal titles for barbarian kings. Thus, the emperor Constantius II (337–361) is Augustus,⁷⁹² his cousin Julian (Iulianus, later emperor 361–363) is originally Caesar, then Augustus and *princeps* and *imperator*,⁷⁹³ Valentinian (Valentinianus I,

⁷⁹¹ Iōannēs Lydos 1.6. Cf. Chrysos 1978: 69.

⁷⁹² Ammianus 17.12.1.

⁷⁹³ Ammianus 17.11.1 (Caesar), 20.4.17 (Augustus), 21.4.4 (imperator), 22.7.1 (princeps).

364–375) is also Augustus and *imperator* and *princeps*.⁷⁹⁴ Vadamarius, a king of the Alamanni, is said to have written to Julian as his “lord, Augustus, and god.”⁷⁹⁵ All of these are perfectly traditional Roman titles for the emperor. By contrast, Suomarius, Hortarius, Vadamarius, and Gundomadus of the Alamanni are each titled *rex*,⁷⁹⁶ as are Arsakēs of the Armenians and Meribanēs of the Iberians,⁷⁹⁷ as is also Zizais, appointed king of the Sarmatians by the Roman emperor,⁷⁹⁸ while the Quadi have both a *rex* and a *subregulus*.⁷⁹⁹ Perhaps given its historical and political motivation, Latin appears to have been better suited than Greek in differentiating between emperor and kings.

Prokopios’ usage, in particular, illustrates well the adoption of the standard Greek monarchical term *basileus* to describe the Roman emperor, but it curiously fails to distinguish between him and other monarchs, something reflected amply in earlier sources, like Ammianus. Prokopios’ use of Greek, while less helpful than Latin in distinguishing emperors and kings, cannot provide a complete explanation. After all, other authors writing in Greek at the time of Prokopios, like Iōannēs Malalas, did manage to make just such a distinction. For Malalas, the Roman emperor is *basileus*, but the foreign kings who might have been termed *basileus* in the past, are now titled *rēx*, a Greek rendition of Latin *rex*. For example, Malalas relates the entry of a queen (*rēgissa*) of the Sabir Huns, named Bōa, into allied relations with the Roman emperor (*basileus*) Justinian, after he courted her with gifts and money; she now turned on two other Hunnic kings (*rēgas*) who had been won over by the Persians and defeated them, killing one in battle and forwarding the other to Justinian for

⁷⁹⁴ Ammianus 26.4.1, 27.6.14–15.

⁷⁹⁵ Ammianus 21.3.5: Iulianum autem assidue per litteras dominum et Augustum appellabat et deum.

⁷⁹⁶ Ammianus 17.10.3, 17.10.5, 21.3.4.

⁷⁹⁷ Ammianus 21.6.8.

⁷⁹⁸ Ammianus 17.12.20: Zizaim regem eisdem praefecit.

⁷⁹⁹ Ammianus 17.12.21: Quorum regalis Vitrodorus, Viduari filius regis, et Agilimundus subregulus.

execution.⁸⁰⁰ At the same time another Hunnic king (*rēx*), Grōd, came to Constantinople to be baptized, the emperor standing as his godfather. Killed by his outraged subjects, who replaced him with his brother, Grōd was avenged by Justinian, whose troops chased out the barbarians from the (Crimean) Bosphoros.⁸⁰¹ It is worth noting, however, that Malalas is not completely exclusive in using the term *basileus* for the Roman emperor. He also uses it to designate the Persian king of kings (*šāhan šāh*) Kawād I (488–497 and 499–531) and the Aksumite king of kings (*negusa nagast*).⁸⁰² While these rulers claimed a superior kingship (as indicated by their titles) and, as we shall see, the Persian monarch was perceived as the Roman emperor’s equal, the reason for Malalas’ usage might be that their predecessors had long been termed *basileis*, in contrast to the “novel” Hunnic rulers north of the Black Sea.

Much like Malalas, but writing during the fifth century, Olympiodōros terms Roman emperors *basileis*, while referring to Germanic kings like Alaric of the Visigoths by other titles, such as *phylarkhos*, “tribal leader.”⁸⁰³ Similarly, another fifth-century author, Malkhos, terms the Roman emperor *basileus*, while providing different titles to barbarian kings. For example, during the reign of the emperor Leo I (457–473), Malkhos describes how Theoderic, the “chieftain (*arkhēgos*) of the barbarians,” received back his envoys from the emperor.⁸⁰⁴ Clearly, there *were* ways to distinguish between different kinds of monarchs in Greek, even after *basileus*, long the standard title for king,

⁸⁰⁰ Malalas 18.13: ῥήγισσα ἐκ τῶν Σαβείρων Οὔνων, γυνή τις βάρβαρος ἀνδρεία καὶ πλήθει καὶ φρονήσει, ὀνόματι Βῶα ῥήγισσα.

⁸⁰¹ Malalas 18.14: ἄλλους ῥήγας δύο ἀπὸ ἄλλου ἔθνους Οὔνων.

⁸⁰² Malalas 18.13: Κωάδης ὁ τῶν Περσῶν βασιλεὺς; 18.15: Ὁ τῶν Αὐξουμιτῶν βασιλεὺς.

⁸⁰³ Olympiodōros fr. 3 (Honorius *basileus*), fr. 2, 7 (Alaric *hēgoumenos*), fr. 6 (Alaric *phylarkhos*).

⁸⁰⁴ Malkhos fr. 2: ὁ δὲ Θεοδέρικος ὁ τῶν βαρβάρων ἀρχηγὸς τοὺς πρέσβεις αὐτοῦ δεξάμενος ἐκ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀπράκτους; fr. 4: Ζήνων ὁ βασιλεὺς πρὸς τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῶν Γότθων πρεσβευσάμενος.

came to be used to designate the Roman emperor. Some of these solutions should have been available to Priskos and Prokopios.

Prokopios' later successors showed more differentiation. Menandros the Guardsman, writing in the late sixth century, refers to the Eastern Roman emperor as *basileus* and as *autokratōr*.⁸⁰⁵ He generally uses *hēgemōn* ("leader") for non-Roman rulers, such as Sandilkhos of the Utigurs (Prokopios' Sandil), Silziboulos of the Turks, Sarōsios of the Alans.⁸⁰⁶ The Antai are said to have *arkhontes* ("rulers"), while the monarch of the Avars is referred to by his proper title of *khaganos* (from the eastern title *qaġan*).⁸⁰⁷ Menandros does use *basileus* for the Persian king of kings consistently, both when he purports to quote from Persian statements and letters, and in his own narrative, even in context including the Roman emperor.⁸⁰⁸ He also refers to the ruler of Lazica as *basileus*, perhaps out of respect for historical usage⁸⁰⁹; but the neighboring Suani have a *basiliskos* or *hēgemōn*.⁸¹⁰ The Lombard king Alboin (c. 563–572) is called a *monarkhos*, while the Saracen ʿAmr is a *phylarkhos*.⁸¹¹ Menandros, then, employs a differentiation in titles, reserving *basileus* for the Roman emperor with few exceptions, of which the Persian one is most natural, given precedent and his explicit parity with the emperor, something we will return to in our discussion of symbolic kinship.

⁸⁰⁵ Menandros, fr. 2,21 (*autokratōr*), 6.1,19-20: πρὸς τοῦ Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως σταλέντες.

⁸⁰⁶ Menandros, fr. 2,17 (Sandilkhos), 4.2,1 (Silziboulos), 5.1,2 (Sarōsios).

⁸⁰⁷ Menandros, fr. 5.3,12 and 25.1,1: Βαιανὸς ὁ τῶν Ἀβάρων Χαγάνος (but at fr. 12.4,1 he is called *hēgoumenos* and at fr. 12.6,1, *hēgemōn*); 10.3,22 (of the Turks).

⁸⁰⁸ Menandros, fr. 6.1,112: Χοσρόης ὁ πάντων ἀνθρώπων. εἴπερ βούλεται, βασιλεὺς (quoting a Persian official); 164: ἐξ ἀμφοῖν τοῖν βασιλείων (letters from both *basileis*); 167: Ῥωμαίων βασιλέως; 171: βασιλέως Περσῶν; 211: βασιλέα προσαγορεύεσθαι βασιλέων, etc.

⁸⁰⁹ Menandros, fr. 6.1,253, 456; but at 571 he uses *ephestōs*.

⁸¹⁰ Menandros, fr. 6.1,500 and 582 (*basiliskos*), 249 and 456 (*hēgemōn*), 456 and 570 (*arkhōn*).

⁸¹¹ Menandros, fr. 12.1 (*monarkhos*): Ἀλβούιος ὁ τῶν Λογγιβάρδων μόναρχος, 9.3,45 (*phylarkhos*).

One of Menandros' contemporaries, who also refers to the Roman emperor both as *basileus* and *autokratōr*, relates that Odoacer avoided the title of *basileus* and called himself *rēx*.⁸¹²

Theophylaktos Simokattēs, who wrote in the first half of the seventh century, also calls Roman emperors *autokratōr* and *basileus*, like Menandros.⁸¹³ Also like Menandros, he refers to Persian kings of kings as *basileis*.⁸¹⁴ The ruler of the Turks is quoted as styling himself “the *khaganos*, the great lord of seven races and master of the seven climes of the world” in a letter to the Roman emperor.⁸¹⁵ The Frankish king Theoderic II of Burgundy (596–613) is called *dynastēs*, while Alboin of the Lombards and Kunimund of the Gepids are described with participles suggesting their title was *hēgemōn*, but there is also reference to a Lombard *rēx*.⁸¹⁶ Similarly, an apparently Slavic ruler named Mousōkios is also titled *rēx*.⁸¹⁷ Although interpreting the word as Slavic seems impossible, it is likewise used for the plural Slavic rulers in the *Stratēgikon* attributed to the emperor Maurice (Mauricius, 582–602).⁸¹⁸ These examples suggest that here *basileus* is used much more sparingly for non-Roman rulers. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Theophylaktos was writing around the time when this term became an official title of the Roman emperor.

⁸¹² Euagrius 2.16.6: Μεθ' ὃν Ὀδοάκρος τὰ Ῥωμαίων μεταχειρίζεται πράγματα, τῆς μὲν βασιλέως προσηγορίας ἑαυτὸν ἀφελών, ῥῆγα δὲ προσειπών.

⁸¹³ Theophylaktos Simokattēs 3.9.3: Ἰουστινιανοῦ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος; 3.11.12-13: λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ βασιλεύς; 8.8.3: Ἀρκαδίου τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Θεοδόσιον παῖδα.

⁸¹⁴ Theophylaktos Simokattēs 3.18.11: Χοσρόη, τῷ Περσῶν βασιλεῖ τῷ πρεσβύτῃ; 3.18.13: βασιλέως Ὀρμισδοῦ.

⁸¹⁵ Theophylaktos Simokattēs 7.7.8: τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ὁ Χαγάνος ὁ μέγας δεσπότης ἑπτὰ γενεῶν καὶ κύριος κλιμάτων τῆς οἰκουμένης ἑπτὰ. The identity of the khagan is unclear, but the mention that he ruled in alliance with Stembiskhagan (7.7.9), who can only be Istemi Qaghan of the Western Turks, points to a ruler of the Eastern Turks, perhaps Muqan Qaghan (553–572) or Taspar Qaghan (572–581): Golden 1992: 109, 121-122.

⁸¹⁶ Theophylaktos Simokattēs 6.3.7: τοῦτους ὁ τοῦ ἔθνους δυνάστης (ὄνομα δὲ Θεοδώριχος αὐτῷ); 6.10.7-8: τοῦ Λαγοβάρδου ἔθνους Ἀλβουῖς τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἐκέκτητο. οὗτος εἰς ἔρωτα καταπίπτει νεανιδός τινος· ἡ δὲ νεάνις θυγάτριον ἐτύγχανεν ὃν Κονιμούνδου, τοῦ τῶν Γηπαίδων ἡγεμονεύοντος; 6.10.13: τῶν Λογγιβάρδων ῥηγός.

⁸¹⁷ Theophylaktos Simokattēs 6.9.1: Μουσώκιον τὸν λεγόμενον ῥῆγα τῇ τῶν βαρβάρων φωνῇ.

⁸¹⁸ Maurice 11.4,128: Πολλῶν δὲ ὄντων ῥηγῶν καὶ ἀσυμφώνως ἐχόντων πρὸς ἀλλήλους.

If we can judge from this survey of authors, in informal usage, the term *basileus* had come to be utilized to designate the Roman emperor quite commonly. Moreover, with the passage of time, it was employed increasingly less often to designate other monarchs. Admittedly, there is a difference in the amount of available source evidence before and after 300 and also in the sheer number of monarchs within the Roman horizon; moreover, I have largely excluded specifically poetic texts from this discussion. Even if sometimes found in public settings, the use of *basileus* for the emperor was still technically informal; the proper imperial titles remained in formal use, although Justinian expected to be called not only “emperor” but “lord,” and, according to Prokopios, demanded *proskynēsis*.⁸¹⁹ The Greek terminology used in Justinian’s official documents now included *basileia* for the emperor’s reign, *despotēs* for “lord,” preceding the emperor’s name, and *Augoustos* and *autokratōr* following it; the masculine noun *basileus* itself was still missing.⁸²⁰ The triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire, following the conversion of Constantine, imported a host of Judeo-Christian cultural traditions that did not partake in the traditional Roman repugnance toward kingship; to the contrary, they derived a vast precedent from a tradition of kings anointed by priests and appointed by God. It was one possible answer to emperors searching for a new patron god. But it was also an answer to the waning imperial cult and the monarchic nature of the emperorship.

After a long period of informal use, eventually *basileus* began to be used as an official title of the emperor. This is usually associated with a change in the *intitulatio* of new imperial legislation between November 1, 616 and March 21, 629. The earlier document had designated the emperor Hērakleios (610–641) and his son and co-ruler Hērakleios Neos Kōnstantinos (usually called

⁸¹⁹ Prokopios, *Secret History* 30.26; Iōannēs Lydos, 1.6, attempts to excuse this presumption. Bréhier 1906: 168.

⁸²⁰ Bréhier 1906: 169–171, with examples from papyri; *despotēs* is mostly found in inscriptions. *Corpus Iuris Civilis* 3: 284: Βασιλείας Ἰουστινιανοῦ τοῦ θειοτάτου Αὐγούστου καὶ αὐτοκράτορος.

Kōnstantinos III, 641) “faithful in God Augusti”; the later document styled them “faithful in Christ *basileis*” instead. Although the change in style was not immediately wholesale, with traditional forms persisting for a while in Egypt and the west, from this point on, *basileus* became the primary official title of the Roman emperor. Moreover, it started to be used for this purpose effectively exclusively. The rationale for the change has been discussed at great length by various scholars, focusing primarily on the Hellenization factor and Hērakleios’ victory over the Persians, but a 2010 study by C. Zuckerman seems to have identified the immediate cause more convincingly.⁸²¹

For a long period of time, association to the emperorship was practiced by the sharing of tribunician power and, at first dependent upon lineage and adoptions, the title of Caesar. Under the Antonine emperors (96–192), Caesar by itself (no longer tied to the Julio-Claudian lineage) was used to designate a junior co-emperor, like Lucius Aelius Caesar (136–138) and Titus Aelius Caesar Antoninus (138) under Hadrian; the latter succeeded as the emperor Antoninus I Pius (138–161).⁸²² His adopted sons and successors, Marcus Aurelius (161–180) and Lucius Verus (161–169) reigned together as equal emperors, although only the former had been Caesar and now enjoyed seniority, expressed for example by his sole possession of the title pontifex maximus. Subsequently, Marcus Aurelius caused a further innovation, when he promoted his surviving son Commodus (180–192) from Caesar to fellow Augustus in 177.⁸²³ Marcus Aurelius’ co-rulers are the first instances in which the Roman emperorship was shared among theoretically equal plural emperors. The elevation of an heir first to Caesar, then to Augustus before a ruling father’s death became fairly common. Evidently,

⁸²¹ Zuckerman 2010, building on Chrysos 1978. Bréhier 1906: 172–173 and Shahîd 1972 connect the change in style to the victory over Persia.

⁸²² Kienast 1990: 131–132, 134–136.

⁸²³ Kienast 1990: 147.

Rome's rulers had abandoned Augustus' decision that "not a good thing were a Caesar too many" in favor of dual and soon plural emperorship.⁸²⁴

The next innovations came during the Crisis of the Third Century (235–284), as emperors sought to secure the succession for their heirs under increasingly unstable and adverse conditions. Even before this, Septimius Severus had made his two sons Augusti, Caracalla already in 197, Geta as late as 209; in 211, Severus died and his sons duly succeeded him, returning from Britain to Rome. There was some discussion of dividing the administration of the Empire, with Caracalla to remain at Rome and Geta to station himself at Antioch or Alexandria, another foreshadowing of the later imperial divide.⁸²⁵ If so, this came to nothing, as Caracalla soon eliminated his younger brother.⁸²⁶ Similarly short-lived were the next two attempts at two co-emperors reigning together from the start, both in 238: Gordianus I and Gordianus II, and Pupienus Maximus and Balbinus.⁸²⁷ A longer-lasting experiment along these lines occurred under Valerian (Valerianus, 253–260) and his son Gallienus (253–268), who had only briefly been his father's Caesar; the two attempted to divide responsibility for different parts of the empire, Valerian taking over the east (until his capture by the Sāsānids), while Gallienus remained in the west. The two had extended the imperial college to include at least one or two of Gallienus' sons, but the dynasty did not survive his murder in 268.⁸²⁸

Overcoming at least some of the factors that had rendered the Roman emperorship so unstable during the previous half century, the emperor Diocletian (284–305) gradually built up a college of emperors that was supposed to last and renew itself over time. This began with

⁸²⁴ Itself an emendation of Homer, *Iliad* 2.204; Plutarch, *Antony* 81.2; Suetonius 2.17.5.

⁸²⁵ Herodian 4.3.6-7.

⁸²⁶ Kienast 1990: 165-167.

⁸²⁷ Kienast 1990: 188-193.

⁸²⁸ Kienast 1990: 212-219.

Diocletian's association of Maximian (286–305) as his Caesar in 285, promoting him to Augustus in 286.⁸²⁹ This dyarchy was expanded into a tetrarchy in 293, when each of the two Augusti appointed a junior co-ruler, Caesar, to himself. As the first to enjoy sovereign power, Diocletian was considered the seniormost emperor, even if he shared the title of Augustus with Maximian.⁸³⁰ Although the emperors went wherever they were needed near the threatened frontiers (almost completely ignoring the capital, Rome), there was a general geographical distribution to the Tetrarchy: Diocletian and his Caesar Galerius governed from the east, Maximian and his Caesar Constantius from the west. When Diocletian abdicated in 305, Maximian was induced to do the same. Their respective Caesars now became Augusti, recruiting new Caesars of their own.⁸³¹

Like the Julio-Claudian and Antonine dynasties before it, the Tetrarchy attempted to organize itself through a series of intermarriages and adoptions: the first set of Caesars were sons-in-law and adopted sons of their respective Augusti. However, blood connections could not be overlooked, and the premature death of the new Augustus in the west, Constantius I (305–306), precipitated a series of internal struggles, as the Tetrarchic organization clashed with the natural ambitions of biological sons, most notably Maximian's son Maxentius, and Constantius I's son Constantine the Great (306–337). In the process, the Tetrarchic organization was dissolved, giving way to a system of several equal emperors, some of them recognized by the others, some not. Civil war reduced this to two Augusti in east and west by 313, respectively, Licinius and Constantine, subsequently seconded by their sons as Caesars. By 324, there was only one Augustus, Constantine,

⁸²⁹ Van Dam 2007: 235-236.

⁸³⁰ Van Dam 2007: 237-240.

⁸³¹ Van Dam 2007: 243-245.

reigning alongside his sons, and later a nephew, as Caesars.⁸³² While the Tetrachy had failed, Constantine's apparent succession arrangements at the end of his life suggested a return to a four-emperor system. This was preempted by the soldiery, which eliminated Constantine's nephew and installed his three surviving sons as his sole successors. Civil wars reduced them to two in 340, then finally just one in 350.⁸³³

After a period of rule by a sole Augustus (350–364), albeit sometimes seconded by Caesars, collegial rule returned under Valentinian I (Valentinianus I, 364–375), who quickly associated his brother Valens (364–378) as Augustus, leaving him the east. Valentinian later made his son Gratian (Gratianus, 367–383) fellow Augustus, skipping the Caesarship altogether, and expanding the college of emperors to three. When Valentinian died, Gratian was compelled to recognize his younger half-brother Valentinian II (375–392) as fellow Augustus. After Valens perished against the Goths at Adrianople, Gratian appointed a senior commander named Theodosius I (379–395) emperor in the east to handle the emergency. Even before Gratian's murder in 383, Theodosius raised his own eldest son, Arcadius, to Augustus; after the death of Valentinian II in 392, Theodosius also made his younger son Honorius Augustus. In this way, from 364 until 395, the Roman Empire was governed almost without interruption by a college of three Augusti. The division of the Empire on the death of Theodosius in 395 was neither the first nor the last, technically speaking; theoretically, the whole Roman state remained under the collective authority of the legitimate emperors recognizing each other and issuing their laws in all their names. The tendency toward multiple emperorship would continue, largely because of the desirability of co-rulership to secure the succession, for centuries to come. In fact, it was practiced in the surviving eastern Roman Empire until the fifteenth century.

⁸³² Van Dam 2007: 245-247.

⁸³³ Barnes 1982: 3-16; Van Dam 2007: 248-249.

After this long period of emperors associating co-rulers as not only subordinate Caesars, but more frequently theoretically equal Augusti, it became desirable to include additional terminology that would help differentiate between the highest-ranking emperor and other members of the “imperial college.” Hērakleios settled upon the term *basileus*, which immediately effectively eclipsed the other imperial titles which were never formally set aside. Ironically, both the term *basileus* and the additional qualifier *meγas* (“great”) would prove insufficient to maintain a clear distinction, in part because Hērakleios himself insisted on sharing both with his eldest son and co-ruler.⁸³⁴

⁸³⁴ Zuckerman 2010: 880-885. Dagron 2003: 31, describes how the differentiation between emperors should have worked, rather than how it actually played out.

Chapter 5: A Quarrelsome Family of Rulers

Barbarians and Romans

Starting in the late fourth and early fifth century, parts of the Roman Empire were settled by various foreign peoples who had crossed the imperial frontier peacefully or under arms. Between peace and war, they maintained constant relations with the Roman state and its representatives, and the contrast (or not) between the titles attributed by Roman writers to their rulers and to the Roman emperor have already been discussed above.⁸³⁵ Most of the “barbarians” in question were of Germanic origin and, at least intermittently, entered into formal treaty relations with the Roman Empire, becoming treaty allies or “federates.” This usually entailed some sort of arrangement whereby a group was granted permission to settle in specified areas and to manage itself, in exchange for keeping the peace and supporting the emperor with manpower in warfare. The relationship was loosely reminiscent of that between Roman emperors and client kings, in that the emperor enjoyed precedence and at least nominal authority over the federates and their rulers. In fact, the arrangements between the Roman government (or governments) and different groups varied over time and included breakdowns, improvements, and aggressive negotiations by word or sword. In the process, by the end of the fifth century, the western portion of the Roman Empire came to be replaced by a mosaic of Germanic kingdoms. In the year 500, they included: the Vandals in Africa; the Suebi in northwestern Spain; the Visigoths in Spain and southern Gaul (Aquitaine); the Franks

⁸³⁵ General surveys in Goffart 2006 (who notes problems with traditional assumptions about both federates and Germanic peoples) and Heather 2006 and 2010.

in northern Gaul; the Burgundians in eastern Gaul; the Ostrogoths in Italy; the Heruls and Gepids in parts of Pannonia; the Lombards and Thuringians a little farther from the former Danube frontier; Roman Britain had been left to its own devices after *c.* 410, and was divided between several native kingdoms and new ones established by encroaching groups from northern Germany and Ireland; if he ever existed, the historical prototype of king Arthur would have been a Roman leader against the Anglo-Saxons.⁸³⁶

After a stressful period in the fifth century, when Rome was sacked twice, in 410 by Alaric I of the Visigoths (395–410) and in 455 by Geiseric of the Vandals (428–477), something like a relatively stable system of kingdoms engaged in war, trade, and diplomacy emerged in the western portion of the Roman world. Without waxing poetic, with Orosius, how the barbarians were beating their swords into ploughs,⁸³⁷ or about how, like Athaulf of the Visigoths (410–415), they replaced their dream of conquering the Roman Empire with that of upholding it,⁸³⁸ the new monarchs had a vested interest in peace. They sought internal peace, giving them stable rule of Roman people and lands and the revenue coming from them, but also external peace, cemented through diplomacy and intermarriage with neighboring monarchs.

This created a network, in which the surviving Roman emperor, ruling from the eastern Roman capital of Constantinople, was not always central, but enjoyed pride of place. It would be a mistake to assume that Romans took imperial propaganda portraying the emperor and the empire as

⁸³⁶ Arthurian literature, both history- and literature-oriented is vast, but the historical possibilities are conveniently collected by Ashley 2010.

⁸³⁷ Orosius 7.7, echoing Isaiah 2.4 and Micah 4.3.

⁸³⁸ Orosius 43.4-6.

rulers of all peoples or the entire globe literally.⁸³⁹ The imperial territory had long been likened to the inhabitable world (*oikoumenē* in Greek),⁸⁴⁰ while an emperor might be flattered as “restorer of the globe” or “preserver of the globe” or “pacifier of the world,” as in the case of Aurelian.⁸⁴¹ We have already seen the emperor Caracalla describe the emperorship as established for a sole ruler among mankind in imitation of Zeus’ rule among the gods. In the Christian Roman Empire, in times of transition, there was a call for “an emperor from God, for the army and the *oikoumenē*.”⁸⁴² In the eleventh century, the emperor Basileios II (976–1025) claims in his epitaph that the King of Heaven had proclaimed him “*autokratōr* of the Earth, great *basileus*.”⁸⁴³ But while the propagandistic universalism of Roman emperorship is unmistakable, in actual practice the Romans had more realistic views and aims. The *oikoumenē* was the habitable, civilized part of the world, and that had already been part of the Roman Empire; the globe was the Roman orb (*orbis Romanus*) rather than the Terrestrial orb (*orbis terrarum*).⁸⁴⁴ Yet, even so, the new kingdoms in the west were located upon Roman soil, which gave the surviving Roman Empire in the east a perfectly legal claim to either some sort of political influence or to reclaim these territories.⁸⁴⁵

It was in these circumstances that the Roman Empire and the new kingdoms of the west interacted through peaceful or hostile means. The seniority and preeminence of the emperor does not seem to have been questioned, and there was a tendency to seek averting conflict and military action. In diplomatic exchanges between rulers, these activities resurrected the language of symbolic

⁸³⁹ On the propagandistic universalism of Roman emperorship, see Treitinger 1969: 164-169.

⁸⁴⁰ Aristides, *Panegyric to Rome*: 82, 96.

⁸⁴¹ Watson 1999: 174.

⁸⁴² Dagron 2003: 68.

⁸⁴³ Asdracha 1992–1993: 310, no. 102: ἀφ’ οὗ βασιλεὺς οὐρανῶν κέκληκί με αὐτοκράτορα γῆς, μέγαν βασιλέα. Bréhier 1949: 51; Stephenson 2003: 49-51.

⁸⁴⁴ Bréhier 1949: 51; Chrysos 1989: 19.

⁸⁴⁵ Chrysos 1989: 19-20.

kinship. This evocative language had been so prominent in the diplomacy of the Bronze Age, but less visible in the far sparser documentary record of later times and places. As we have seen, the relationship between early Roman emperors and client kings apparently did not allow for the employment of this language, presumably because the two were perceived or supposed to be so different from each other. The kings were “friends and allies” (as advertised by epithets like *Philorōmaios* and *Philokaisar*), or clients, or “servants” of the Roman emperor. Romans did make some use of the language of symbolic kinship, as evidenced by the title *Pater patriae* (“Father of the Fatherland”), bestowed upon Caesar, Augustus, and the latter’s successors on the throne, the respectful form of address to the senate, “conscript fathers,” and even a flattering recognition of seniority: Appian describes a tense early meeting between Octavian and Antony, in which Octavian tries to ingratiate himself with Antony by addressing him as “Father Antony.”⁸⁴⁶

The development of the Roman language of symbolic kinship that would carry over into the Middle Ages and has been described as a “Family of Rulers”⁸⁴⁷ was fostered by that of the imperial college and especially Diocletian’s Tetrarchy. In addition to relying on the imperial titles of Augustus (senior) and Caesar (junior) to signal the relative status of its four members, the Tetrarchy employed the language of symbolic kinship internally. In the Tetrarchy, two “brother” Augusti ruled in tandem with each other and with two junior co-rulers titled Caesars, who were described as the “sons” of the Augusti.⁸⁴⁸ While there is no evidence that Maximian was adopted as Diocletian’s son during his brief spell as mere Caesar (in 285–286), following his elevation to Augustus in 286, Maximian

⁸⁴⁶ Appian, *Civil Wars* 3.2.15: *πάτερ Ἀντώνιε*.

⁸⁴⁷ Ostrogorsky 1936: 41-61; Ostrogorsky 1956: 1-14; Grabar 1954: 117-123; Dölger 1940: 397-420; Kazhdan 1992: 11-16; Arhweiler 1975: 46-47.

⁸⁴⁸ On the Tetrarchy and its composition, see, for example, Jones 1964: 38-42, and Barnes 1982: 3-8. The non-biological adoptive or symbolic relationships among the emperors in the Tetrarchy are stated in the panegyrics addressed to them: Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 45.

became Diocletian's brother, admittedly a slightly junior one, as reflected by his adoption of the epithet *Herculius* ("of Hercules") as opposed to Diocletian's *Iovius* ("of Jupiter").⁸⁴⁹ Parallel to their promotion to Caesars, Galerius was made son-in-law and adopted as son by Diocletian Augustus, while Constantius I was made son-in-law and adopted as son by Maximian Augustus. The subordinate status of the Caesars to the Augusti matches that of sons to fathers in traditional Roman society. In a somewhat convoluted passage that nevertheless highlights this dynamic, Lactantius attempts to explain why, when Galerius became an Augustus in 306, he did not name his friend Licinius as one of the two new Caesars. According to Lactantius, this was so that Galerius would not adopt Licinius as his son, as Caesar, but would one day make him directly his brother, as Augustus.⁸⁵⁰ This establishes a basic and unsurprising correlation for symbolic kinship in Roman society, which matches that we have encountered in the Ancient Near East: brothers enjoyed relative equality in status, while sons were always considered subordinate to fathers. This is not to say that there are no occasional surprises: according to Ammianus Marcellinus, when Constantius II made his cousin Julian Caesar in 355, he addressed him as "beloved brother" rather than "son."⁸⁵¹

This kind of irregularity or flexibility in the attestation of symbolic kinship has been seen as indicative of the lack of any systematic usage, therefore disproving the rationale for even talking of a "Family of Rulers."⁸⁵² While it is certainly true that the label is a modern one (it also appears as "Family of Kings" or "Family of Princes"), and that the symbolic kinship terminology is not always the one that might be expected, the usage is certainly there and conforming to general patterns that

⁸⁴⁹ Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 45-50; *ibid.*, Mamertinus 1.5, 4.1., 9.1, etc.: *fratres*; Lactantius, *De mortibus* 8.

⁸⁵⁰ Lactantius, *De mortibus* 20.

⁸⁵¹ Ammianus 15.8.12: *amantissime mihi omnium frater*. The actual relationship, first cousins in the male line, is given at 15.8.8: *Iulianum hunc fratrem meum patrualem*.

⁸⁵² Chrysos 1989: 14-16; Chrysos 1992: 37; Mōyseidou 1995: 51-71, 397-405, 497-421; Canepa 2009: 125-127, 293-294.

are rational; exceptions can mostly be explained, much as we have seen with the seemingly careless and informal use of kinship terms by Seleukid kings during the Hellenistic Period.

A test case for the use of symbolic kinship terminology in diplomatic exchanges between monarchs would be the relations between the Roman Empire and Sāsānid Persia. In his *Life of Constantine*, Eusebius of Caesarea quotes a letter from Constantine to the Sāsānid king of kings Šābuhr II (309–379), in which the Persian monarch is referred to as the “brother” of the Roman emperor.⁸⁵³ The same relationship is reflected in the letters between Constantius II and Šābuhr II quoted by Ammianus Marcellinus, where each monarch addressed the other as “brother” in 358.⁸⁵⁴ The only thing surprising about this characterization is that it appeared so late in the history of the neighboring empires, although the religious differences between a now Christian Rome and Zoroastrian Persia might have been expected to problematize the kinship terminology additionally.

Parallel to the description of the Persian king of kings as the Roman emperor’s equal, we find subordinate monarchs taking their place as the “sons” of the Roman emperor. Thus, when Tzathios, king of Lazica, rebelled against the Persians in 522, he went to Constantinople and was baptized by emperor Justin I (Iustinus I, 518–527), who proclaimed the Lazic king his “son.”⁸⁵⁵ Obviously, this development was met with much annoyance in Persia. Nevertheless, the Persian king of kings Kawād I (499–531), sending a letter of warning to the Roman emperor Justinian I (527–565) in 529, referred to the relationship between them as that of “brothers,” as already established a long time in

⁸⁵³ Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 4.11: ἀδελφέ μου.

⁸⁵⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus 17.5.3: Rex regum Sapor, particeps siderum, frater Solis et Lunae, Constantio Caesari fratri meo salutem plurimam dico; Ammianus Marcellinus 17.5.10: Victor terrae marique Constantius, semper Augustus, fratri meo Saporis regi salutem plurimam dico. Cf. Rösch 1978: 155.

⁸⁵⁵ Theophanes Confessor, s. AM 6015=522/3.

the past.⁸⁵⁶ Similarly, Kawād's son and successor Xusraw I (531–579) addressed Justinian as “brother” in 561.⁸⁵⁷

Under special circumstances, however, the usual terms of symbolic kinship between monarchs could change. Thus, in 577 the Roman Caesar Tiberius (later emperor Tiberius II, 578–582) described himself in a letter to Xusraw I as the Persian ruler's “son” rather than “brother.”⁸⁵⁸ Tiberius was not necessarily abandoning the parity between Rome and Persia: the context specifically referred to the disparity of age between the older Xusraw and the younger Tiberius, and, moreover, Tiberius was not yet emperor, a dignity still occupied by his adoptive father, Justin II (Iustinus II, 565–578). Within this symbolic framework, Tiberius could have described himself either as Xusraw's “nephew” (“brother's son”) or “son,” with more or less the same effect. The situation is analogous to one we have encountered in the Egyptian-Hittite correspondence in the thirteenth century BC, in which a son of the Hittite king addresses the Egyptian king, describing himself as his “son.” Since one of the aims of the language of symbolic kinship is to coopt the parties involved, presumably the closer implications of a father-son relationship were preferred to those of an uncle-nephew relationship. Symbolic kinship is designed to create harmony around a designated project of the proponent of the language of symbolic kinship; in most instances, that recommended the closest and most intimate relationship.

⁸⁵⁶ Ioannes Malalas 18.44: Κωάδης βασιλεὺς βασιλευόντων, ἡλίου ἀνατολῆς, Φλαβίῳ Ἰουστινιανῷ καίσαρι σελήνης δύσεως. ἤϋραμεν ἐν τοῖς ἡμετέροις ἀρχείοις ἀναγεγραμμένα ἀδελφοὺς ἡμᾶς ἀλλήλων εἶναι (“Kōadēs, king of kings, of the rising sun, to Flavius Iustinianus Caesar, of the setting moon. We have found it written in our ancient records that we are brothers to each other.”). Cf. Rösch 1978: 156.

⁸⁵⁷ Menander Protector 6.1.175-80: Θεῖος, ἀγαθός, εἰρηνοπάτριος, ἀρχαῖος Χοσρόης, βασιλεὺς βασιλέων, εὐτυχής, εὐσεβής, ἀγαθοποιός, ᾧ τινι οἱ θεοὶ μεγάλην τύχην καὶ μεγάλην βασιλείαν δεδώκασι, γίγας γιγάντων, ὃς ἐκ θεῶν χαρακτηρίζεται, Ἰουστινιανῷ Καίσαρι, ἀδελφῷ ἡμετέρῳ (“Divine, good, father-of-peace, venerable Khosroēs, king of kings, fortunate, pious and beneficent, to whom all the gods have granted great fortune and a great kingdom, giant of giants, formed in the image of gods, to Iustinianus Caesar, his brother”). Cf. Rösch 1978: 156.

⁸⁵⁸ Menander Protector 10.1.1-15: ὡς πρεσβυτέρῳ τυγχάνοντι βασιλεῖ Περσῶν αὐτὸς ἔτι Χοσρόου παῖς καθεστώς.

When the Persian ruler Xusraw II (590 and 591–628) was forced to seek refuge in the Eastern Roman Empire in 590, he implored the help of the emperor Maurice (Mauricius, 582–602), offering not only territorial concessions, but also describing himself as the emperor’s “son.”⁸⁵⁹ In a later speech, Xusraw is indeed quoted calling the same emperor his “father.”⁸⁶⁰ Maurice eventually acceded to Xusraw’s requests, called him his “son,” and successfully supported his attempt to recover the Persian throne with a Roman army.⁸⁶¹ The breach of the expected “brother” relationship between the two monarchs is easily explainable by the predicament of the Persian monarch and his desperation to obtain the assistance of his Roman counterpart.

Nearly two decades later, when Maurice was murdered in 610, Xusraw II, who had been friendly to his benefactor and fulfilled his various obligations, decided to take advantage of the change on the Roman throne, posing as Maurice’s avenger, even after Hērakleios (610–641) eliminated and replaced Maurice’s murderer Phocas (602–610). In 615, hard-pressed by the advance of the Persians throughout the Roman east, the Roman government attempted to mollify the Persian monarch by promising various concessions. In a letter to Xusraw, the senate implored that he “consider Hērakleios, our most pious emperor, as a true son, who is eager to perform the service of Your Serenity in all things.”⁸⁶² Xusraw remained hostile, and in 626, the emperor Hērakleios tried to establish an anti-Persian alliance with a Turkic (possibly Khazar) chieftain while in Lazica. In

⁸⁵⁹ Theophylaktos Simokatta 4.11.11: Χοσρόης ὁ σὸς υἱὸς καὶ ἰκέτης (“your son and suppliant”); Sebeos, 20/g32.

⁸⁶⁰ Sebeos, 32/g40.

⁸⁶¹ Theophylaktos Simokatta 5.3.11: παῖδα Χοσρόην ἀποκαλῶν; compare Euagrius 6.17: τοῦ Χοσρόου καὶ τῶν παίδων πρὸς τοὺς παῖδας πραξάντων, but this latter account might be a more casual expression (“made him a guest instead of a fugitive, a son instead of a runaway”); compare also Theophanes Confessor, s. AM 6081=588/9, so seems to envision a formal adoption.

⁸⁶² *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 615 [709]: δεόμεθα δὲ τῆς ὑμετέρας ἡμερότητος καὶ Ἡράκλειον τὸν εὐσεβέστατον ἡμῶν βασιλέα γνήσιον ἔχειν τέκνον, προθύμως ἔχοντα ἐν ἅπασι τὴν θεραπείαν τῆς ὑμετέρας ποιεῖν γαλήνης.

addition to bestowing on him various precious presents, Hērakleios called his new ally his own “son.”⁸⁶³

Perhaps Xusraw should have cooperated, because in his desperation Hērakleios succeeded in outmaneuvering the Persians and carrying the war deep into their territory, reaching their royal residences. The series of defeats and Roman advance precipitated Xusraw’s deposition, imprisonment, and eventual execution by his own son Kawād II (628). The new Persian monarch opened negotiations with Hērakleios, sending him a pacific missive, in which he addressed the Roman emperor as “clement” and “brother” and talked of “fraternity.”⁸⁶⁴ Responding to the conciliatory letter of Kawād II, Hērakleios replied graciously, but from a position of superiority, calling Kawād II his “son.”⁸⁶⁵ Given the circumstances, Hērakleios felt that he could press his advantage. The succession of short-lived and troubled Persian monarchs that followed the fall of Xusraw resulted in peace between the Eastern Roman Empire and Sāsānid Persia, including the restoration of a large set of territories around the Eastern Mediterranean that the Persians had occupied, and of the True Cross, which they had removed as plunder from Jerusalem.

The examples of symbolic kinship designations from the diplomatic evidence related to the Roman-Persian wars reveal a fairly consistent, yet flexible set of familial terms used to describe the diplomatic and power relationships between monarchs. Reviving, perhaps to some degree coincidentally, earlier patterns, greater monarchs described each other as “brothers,” while sometimes

⁸⁶³ Patriarch Nikēphoros cap. 12,25: καὶ ἅμα τέκνον ἴδιον ἀποκαλῶν.

⁸⁶⁴ *Chronicon Paschale* s.a. 628 [735]: Παρὰ Καβάτου Σαδασαδασὰχ Ἡρακλείῳ τῷ ἡμερωτάτῳ βασιλεῖ Ῥωμαίων τῷ ἡμετέρῳ ἀδελφῷ πλείστην χαρὰν ἀπονέμομεν. Τῷ ἡμερωτάτῳ βασιλεῖ Ῥωμαίων καὶ ἀδελφῷ ἡμῶν... [736] καὶ τοιαύτην πρόθεσιν ἔχομεν, ἵνα μεθ’ ὑμῶν τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ ἀδελφοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ τῆς Ῥωμαϊκῆς πολιτείας καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ ἐτέρων βασιλίσκων τῶν κύκλῳ ὄντων τῆς ἡμετέρας πολιτείας ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ἀγάπῃ διάγωμεν. διὰ δὲ τὸ χαροποιθῆναι τὴν ἀδελφότητα ὑμῶν τοῦ βασιλέως τῶν Ῥωμαίων τοῦ ἐπιλαβέσθαι ἡμᾶς τοῦ αὐτοῦ θρόνου...

⁸⁶⁵ Patriarch Nikēphoros cap. 15 (62-64): ᾧ ἀντέγραφε καὶ Ἡράκλειος, τέκνον τὸν Σειρόην καλῶν.

calling lesser rulers “sons.” In specific circumstances, however, this basic paradigm could be renegotiated with the employment of different terms, in which the equality between greater monarchs was replaced by the familial but unequal relationship between father and son.

In the west, on formerly imperial ground, the new kingdoms needed and desired the benefits of continuing Roman administrative and cultural practices. This desire for legitimizing continuity dictated that at least some of the new rulers cast themselves in the guise of imperial functionaries, acting on the emperor’s behalf. An example of this process is the pairing of the title king (*rex*) with Roman titles like consul or patrician (*patricius*), as in the cases of Odoacer (476–493) and Theoderic (489–526) in Italy, Gundobad in Burgundy (473–516), and Clovis I of the Franks (481–511) in Gaul.⁸⁶⁶ Similarly, various princes in the Caucasus were granted titles like patrician or *kouropalatēs* by the Roman emperors ruling from Constantinople.⁸⁶⁷ Such largely notional identification with distant imperial supremacy was sometimes reinforced by participation in the “Family of Rulers” headed by the emperor of the Romans.⁸⁶⁸ The conferral of courtly titles worked simultaneously as a reward for the non-Roman ruler and as a way in which he could be presented as a Roman official — to the emperor’s Roman audience, but probably just as importantly to the non-Roman monarch’s Roman subjects.

The Ostrogothic king Theoderic was referred to as the “friend and son” of the Roman emperor Zeno (474–491).⁸⁶⁹ But this instance is complicated by the possibility that the terminology here reflects Theoderic’s adoption as the emperor’s son-in-arms (*adoptio per arma*), rather than the

⁸⁶⁶ See for example Chrysos 1978: 59–62; Amory 1997: 92; McCormack 1989: 155–180; Scheibelreiter 1989: 203–220. See the cautious treatment by Jones 1962: 126–130.

⁸⁶⁷ Toumanoff 1966: 603–605. Also see Chrysos 1978: 62–64.

⁸⁶⁸ For listing of Germanic kings addressing the Roman emperor as their father, see Helm 1932: 386.

⁸⁶⁹ Malchus fr. 18.4 (435) [= Müller FHG 4 fr. 17 (124)]: φίλος αὐτῶν καὶ υἱὸς λεγόμενος.

rhetorical language of symbolic kinship between monarchs.⁸⁷⁰ The same might apply to the senatorial rescript to the next emperor, Anastasius I, in which the senate referred to Theoderic as the emperor's "son."⁸⁷¹ King Theoderic's grandson and successor Athalaric (526–534) wrote to the next emperor, Justin I, indicating his desire to receive imperial approval and to be treated as the emperor's "son."⁸⁷² This was predicated on a similar recognition for Athalaric's father Eutharic, but here again we might be dealing with a son-in-arms. At a later stage, during the Roman campaigns to conquer Italy from the Ostrogoths, the Ostrogothic king Totila (Baduila, 541–552) wrote to the emperor Justinian, informing him that if he would only settle for honorable peace and cooperation — as between Theoderic and Anastasius — in such circumstances, Totila would be honored to have the emperor as his "father" and ally.⁸⁷³ This exchange certainly implies a degree of negotiation with both symbolic and material implications for the relationship between Goths and Romans.

The Burgundian king Sigismund (516–523) wrote in the most flattering terms to the emperor Anastasius I, declaring that his very people belonged to the emperor.⁸⁷⁴ Bishop Avitus of Vienne referred to Sigismund as "our lord, your son, the patrician Sigismund," but his letter was addressed to the patriarch of Constantinople, rather than to the emperor Anastasius.⁸⁷⁵ Avitus' involvement in the correspondence is a reminder that, as in the case of Cassiodorus at the Ostrogothic court, the diplomatic relations between king and emperor were largely conducted by and had an impact on the Roman population, including the elite, living in the new kingdoms in the west.

⁸⁷⁰ Cf. Chrysos 1989: 15. On the *adoptio per arma*, see Claude 1989.

⁸⁷¹ *Collectio Avellana* 2: no. 114 (508): domini nostri invictissimi regis Theoderici filii vestri.

⁸⁷² Cassiodorus, *Variae* 8.1.3-4.

⁸⁷³ Procopius, *Wars* 7.22.24: πατήρ τε ἂν ἐμὸς εἰκότως καλοῖο καὶ ξυμμάχου.

⁸⁷⁴ Avitus, *Opera, Ep.* 93 (100): vester, quidem est populus meus.

⁸⁷⁵ Avitus, *Opera, Ep.* 9 (43): domnus meus, filius vestrus, patricius Sigismundus; the addressee is apparently the patriarch of Constantinople.

Receiving some sort of titular distinction from the emperor Anastasius I (491–518), the Merovingian king of the Franks Clovis I celebrated it with a lavish ceremony and parade at Tours, an important civil and ecclesiastical center in formerly Roman Gaul, loosely imitating imperial practice and designed to impress both his own people and his new Roman subjects.⁸⁷⁶ After this, we find the Merovingian kings of the Franks described as “sons” of their “lord” and “father,” the emperor, and were ready to use that designation themselves, as exhibited in the letters of Theodebert I (533–548) to the emperor Justinian, and of Childebert II (575–596) to the emperor Maurice.⁸⁷⁷ Insofar as symbolic kinship terms are concerned, the expressed relationship is exactly as we would expect. Despite some tension over Frankish appetites for Italy, the Franks’ distant location and the fact that Clovis had converted to Roman (Catholic) Christianity, helped keep relations distant but usually good.

Symbolic kinship also operated among the emperor’s theoretically subordinate monarchs. The Ostrogothic king Theoderic refers to the king of the Warnii as his “brother.”⁸⁷⁸ Similarly, Theoderic wrote to the Burgundian king Gundobad, referring to him as his “brother,” but in the same letter described the Visigothic king Alaric II (484–507) as his “son.”⁸⁷⁹ In a letter to the

⁸⁷⁶ McCormick 1986: 335–337; McCormick 1989: 163–172.

⁸⁷⁷ Theodebert I to Justinian, *MGH Epistolae III. Epistolae Austrasicae* 19 (132) and 20 (132–133): domni et patri, Iustiniano imperatore, Thodebertus rex; Childebert II to Emperor Mauricius, *MGH Epistolae III: Epistolae Austrasicae* no. 25, 138: Domino glorioso ... semper Augusto, patri, Mauricio imperatore, Childebertus rex; to the emperor’s son and co-ruler Theodosius, *ibid.*, no. 43, 149: ad serenissimum atque piissimum patrem nostrum, genitorem vestrum, Mauricium imperatorem; and to Archbishop Laurentius of Milan, *ibid.*, no. 46, 151: sacratissimi patris nostri imperatoris. Cf. Rösch 1978: 154–155. On the Frankish kings and the Roman emperors, see Gasquet 1888: 162–204; on Childebert II, see Reverdy 1913: 61–86. The Germanic kings addressed each other as “brothers,” Marculf I no. 9 in Zeumer 1882: 48, and Cassiodorus, *Variae*, *MGH Auct. ant.* 12, nos. 3.1–4, 78–81 (written in the name of Theoderic of the Ostrogoths).

⁸⁷⁸ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 5.1.1: vestra fraternitas.

⁸⁷⁹ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 3.2.3: fraternitatem tuam; filio nostro Alarico. Gundobad is called Theoderic’s brother also in a letter to Alaric II, *ibid.* 3.1.4: fratrem nostrum Gundibadum, and in a letter to the kings of the Heruli, Warnii, and Thuringians, *ibid.* 3.3.2: fratris nostri Gundibadi regis.

Frankish king (called Luduin), Theoderic calls *him* the “brother” of Alaric II, Theoderic’s “son.”⁸⁸⁰

As we can see, on the whole, the Germanic kings considered each other equals and brothers,⁸⁸¹ but as in the relationship between the Romans and the Sāsānid Persians, specific circumstances allowed the renegotiation of the relationship to mark one party’s superior status. In the case of Alaric II, the circumstance is easily identifiable: he was the son-in-law of Theoderic, which allowed the latter to define him as “son” rather than “brother.”

Justinian’s long-drawn-out reconquest of Italy from the Ostrogoths proved short-lived. Three years after his death, in 568, the peninsula was invaded by the Lombards, who proceeded to gradually conquer most of it during the next two centuries.⁸⁸² The relationship is mostly remembered as hostile, framed as it is by the opposites of Romans and barbarians, Catholics and Arians, but in fact included plenty of nuance and cooperation. Indeed, during the curious interregnum on the Lombard throne in 574–584, between the reigns of Cleph (572–574) and his son Authari (584–590), the Lombard dukes are said to have sent envoys to the emperor Maurice, “asking for peace and imperial patronage.”⁸⁸³ Apart from Ravenna, Naples, and the southernmost portions of Italy, Rome remained under notional imperial rule, although it was increasingly isolated. During the seventh and eighth centuries, geographical distance and other political and theological issues gradually made Rome more and more independent from the Roman emperor at Constantinople, under the local leadership of its bishop, the Pope.⁸⁸⁴

⁸⁸⁰ Cassiodorus, *Variae* 3.4.2-4: filio nostro rege Alarico; fratrem vestrum, filium nostrum regem Alaricum.

⁸⁸¹ Marculf I no. 9, in Zeumer 1882: 48.

⁸⁸² For a basic survey of the Lombard kingdom, see Wickham 1989: 28-47.

⁸⁸³ Fredegar, *Chronicon* 45 (143): Post haec legationem ad Mauricem imperatorem dirigunt, hi duodecim duces singulos legatros destinant, pacem et patrocium imperii petentes. Gasquet 1888: 217, n. 1.

⁸⁸⁴ On the growing independence of Papal Rome, see Noble 1984.

Seeking support against the encroachments of ambitious Lombard kings, the Popes increasingly turned to the Franks for protection. In addition to having long been Catholic, the Franks were neighbors and natural rivals of the Lombards; moreover, they were now under the leadership of the vigorous Carolingians. Possibly in gratitude for receiving tacit Papal support to make himself king in the place of the last Merovingian, Pippin the Short (751–768) intervened in Italy in 754 and 756, forcing the Lombards to disgorge the Papal possessions they had overrun and to turn over to the Pope the former Roman administrative seat in the peninsula, Ravenna. The Donation of Pippin marks the beginning of the Papal State. Popes would continue to seek Frankish royal support. In 781, Pippin’s son Charlemagne (Karl I, 768–814) conquered the Lombard kingdom and made it his own. In 799, mutilated and expelled by a rival faction at Rome, Pope Leo III sought refuge at Charlemagne’s court at Paderborn. After returning to Rome to be vindicated and reinstated, Pope Leo proceeded to crown Charlemagne emperor on Christmas Day, 800.⁸⁸⁵

While not all of our sources are explicit on that point, Charlemagne was made a Roman emperor, even if the Pope appropriated the right to make one without any precedent. Now emperor, Charlemagne began to address the Roman emperors in the east as “brother,” rather than “son,” since they had arguably become equal in status.⁸⁸⁶ This has been identified as one of the primary motivations for Charlemagne’s decision to seek emperorship, alongside his involvement in Church

⁸⁸⁵ *Annales Regni Francorum*, s.a. 801. Sullivan 1959: 2-3, provides a sampling of source testimonies and extracts (sometimes translated) from older scholarly interpretations.

⁸⁸⁶ Charlemagne, *Letters*, no. 32 (546-548) to Nikēphoros I (802–811): fraternitatis tuae, and no. 37 (556) to Mikhaēl I (811–813): Karolus ... imperator et augustus idemque rex Francorum et Langobardorum dilecto et honorabili fratri Michaeli glorioso imperatori et augusto ... dilectae fraternitatis tuae. Compare Einhard’s *Vita Karoli Magni* 28 (32-33), who writes that after being crowned emperor at Rome, Charlemagne sent frequent embassies to the emperors at Constantinople, calling them brothers: mittendo ad eos crebras legationes et in epistolis fratres eos appellando.

policy and rulership over several peoples (most notably, Franks and Lombards).⁸⁸⁷ The expected negative reaction at Constantinople was slightly delayed, and there was a suggestion that the empress regnant Eirēnē (797–802) would marry Charlemagne, something that helped destabilize and end her reign.⁸⁸⁸ Succeeding regimes, like that of Nikēphoros I (802–811) viewed Charlemagne’s emperorship as a threat. But they did not have luxury to do so for long: defeated by the Arabs in the east and killed against the Bulgars in the north, Nikēphoros belied his name and left a precarious international situation to his heirs. His son-in-law, the emperor Mikhaēl I Rangabe (811–813), might have engaged in some hostile diplomacy, pointedly calling Charlemagne his “son,” if we can believe an at least partly dubious story in Notker.⁸⁸⁹ If so, Mikhaēl soon overcame his repugnance sufficiently to send envoys to Charlemagne’s court, which recognized Charlemagne as emperor, albeit not a Roman one, in 812.⁸⁹⁰ Correspondingly, it was under Mikhael I, that the Eastern Roman emperor began to incorporate the qualifier “of the Romans” into his title, which had long been reduced to the more casual “in Christ faithful emperor”; of course, the Romans had always been implied, but *basileus tōn Rōmaiōn* now became ubiquitous in official eastern Roman usage.⁸⁹¹

Charlemagne, for his part, did not actually press for the inclusion of “Romans” in his title, preferring

⁸⁸⁷ E.g., Schramm 1951: 449-515; Folz 1969: 22-29; Arnold 1997: 76-83; Becher 2003: 81-97; Hartmann 2010: 226-228 for a summary of Charlemagne’s varied diplomatic experience with the Eastern Roman Empire; 167-176 for his relationship with the Pope and Church, possibly in competition or adversity with the eastern Romans.

⁸⁸⁸ Barbe 1990: 318-337.

⁸⁸⁹ Notker 1.26. Cf. Thümmel 1983 and Latowsky 2013: 50-57, who notes, correctly, that Mikhaēl I did not come to the throne until a dozen years after Charlemagne’s coronation as emperor and the corresponding claim of “brotherhood.”

⁸⁹⁰ As emperor and Augustus, according to the *Annales Regni Francorum, s.a.* 812 (355): imperatorem eum et Basileum appellantes, or perhaps here we are to understand *basileus* as a gloss for *imperator*, as proposed by F. Dölger 1943b: 220 n. 33 (1976: 305 n. 33); emperor of the Franks (not necessarily a formal title), according to Theophanēs the Confessor, s. AM 6304 (AD 811/12) (494): πρὸς Κάρολλον, βασιλέα τῶν Φράγγων. See Tsirpanlis 1974: 347-360. For Bulgaria’s role in this rapprochement between Byzantium and the Franks, see Sophoulis 2012: 180.

⁸⁹¹ Folz 1969: 24-25; Treitingner 1969: 187.

less specific wording, while insisting on being “emperor,” “crowned by God,” “pacific,” and “brother” to his eastern Roman counterparts.⁸⁹²

A decade after Charlemagne’s death, in 824, his son and successor, the emperor Louis the Pious (Ludwig I, 814–840) received envoys from the eastern emperor Mikhaēl II (820–829), who addressed him as “beloved and honored brother,” and also “glorious king of the Franks and Lombards, called their emperor.”⁸⁹³ While Charlemagne’s claims were thus ostensibly vindicated again in the reign of his son, the eastern Roman formulation carefully avoided attributing any Romanness to Louis’ imperial title, and the slightly vague phrasing possibly implied that it was dubious in itself.

Louis the Pious’ grandson, Ludovico II, emperor and king of Italy (855–875), had a number of interactions with his eastern Roman counterpart, Basileios I (867–886), not least an alliance against Muslim raiders in southern Italy and the Adriatic. Despite their mutual interests and alliance, the imperial title would cause a diplomatic rift, including a display of both erudition and restrained vitriol, possibly the work of the Papal archivist Anastasius the Librarian, who had possibly briefly served as Pope in 855, and who was also employed as an emissary to Constantinople. Responding to a non-preserved letter from Basileios I, Ludovico II took issue with several points in a letter written in his name and addressed “Ludovico, by the decree of divine providence *Imperator* Augustus of the

⁸⁹² For the title, see for example, Charlemagne, *Letters*, no. 35 (552): Carolus serenissimus Augustus a deo coronatus, magnus et pacificus imperator, Romanum gubernans imperium, qui et per misericordiam Dei rex Francorum et Langobardorum. It is uncertain whether at the time of his coronation at Rome in 800 Charlemagne had been acclaimed specifically as Roman emperor or not: Fichtenau 1957: 75. The *Liber Pontificalis* 98.23 (7), has: “Karolo piissimo Augusto a Deo coronato, magno et pacifico imperatore vita et victoria!,” although it adds “ab omnibus constitutus est imperator Romanorum”; the *Annales Regni Francorum*, s. a. 801 (352), has: “Karolo Augusto, a Deo coronato magno et pacifico imperatori Romanorum, vita et victoria!” See the discussions by Dölger 1943b, and Schramm 1951.

⁸⁹³ Preserved only in Latin translation, in Emperor Louis the Pious, *Letters*, in *PL* 104, col. 1314c: Michael et Theophilus fideles in ipso Deo imperatores Romanorum dilecto et honorabili fratri Ludovico glorioso regi Francorum, Longorbardorum, et vocato eorum Imperatori.

Romans to our most beloved spiritual brother Basileios, most glorious and most pious *Imperator* of New Rome.”⁸⁹⁴ While the address is ostensibly considerate, it inverts the eastern Roman worldview by attributing the more genuine and traditional Roman imperial title to Ludovico II, while making Basileios the emperor of New Rome. And novelty, as we have seen, was not something welcome to Romans, even in less loaded contexts.

The letter makes multiple additional references to “brother” and “fraternity,” but quickly comes to the point of dispute, apparently raised by Basileios: the *imperatorium nomen* (“imperial name”). Evidently, Basileios had expressed doubts as to the legitimacy of the Frankish emperor, citing earlier precedent, in which Franks could only have had *reges*, but not *basileis*. Basileios was apparently insisting that only the one holding authority (*imperium*) at Constantinople was entitled to be *basileus*.⁸⁹⁵

Ludovico II — or Anastasius on his behalf — proceeds to school the eastern emperor that *basileus* was the Greek term for monarch or king and was far from exclusive, being applied to the rulers of the Jews and the Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Moabites in Scripture, as well as all sorts of other peoples from the Hellenistic east to the Barbarian west in other books. He also cites the recognition of his imperial dignity by his uncles, “glorious kings,” and insists that his ancestor Charlemagne was no usurper but crowned by God.⁸⁹⁶ Continuing to question Basileios’

⁸⁹⁴ Emperor Ludovico II: 386: *Lodogicus divina ordinante providentia imperator augustus Romanorum dilectissimo spiritualeque fratri nostro Basilio gloriosissimo et piissimo atque imperatori novae Romae*. Discussion and partial translation by Gasquet 1888: 407-420.

⁸⁹⁵ Emperor Ludovico II: 386.

⁸⁹⁶ Emperor Ludovico II: 386-388.

understanding of monarchs' titles, Ludovico discusses a number of these, including those of the *chaganus* of the Avars and the *rex* of the Bulgars.⁸⁹⁷

Responding to Basileios' assertion that Ludovico II does not even rule all Franks, the latter asserts the opposite, before responding to Basileios' surprise that Ludovico calls himself emperor of the Romans rather than emperor of the Franks. This sentence could hold the key to the immediate origin of the diplomatic scuffle; the next betrays the underlying problem. Ludovico remarks that "if we were not emperor of the Romans, we should not be emperor of the Franks either," before proceeding to trace both the Carolingian kingship and the Carolingian empire to the Roman Church: For the princes of the Franks were first called kings, then emperors, those, that is, who had been anointed for this purpose with holy oil by the Roman pontiff. A defense of Papal anointings on Scriptural grounds follows, as well as a comparison between Frankish-born emperors and Spanish-born ones like Theodosius.⁸⁹⁸ Before moving on to other matters, Ludovico revisits titles by pointing out the alleged uselessness of *rēx* (in Greek), since it ought to be the equivalent of *basileus*.⁸⁹⁹

We do not know the specific outcome of this exchange. However, after this point in time, the eastern Roman emperor no longer referred to any sort of western emperor, not even one of the Franks, except perhaps at the point of a lance, as we shall see below. Surprisingly, this did not affect the new status of "brother" that Charlemagne had obtained when he became an emperor. In fact, this designation was preserved even for Carolingian and post-Carolingian *kings*, as shown by the addresses to the French and German kings in Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos' (913–959)

⁸⁹⁷ Emperor Ludovico II: 388-389.

⁸⁹⁸ Emperor Ludovico II: 389: *quia nisi Romanorum imperatores essemus, utique nec Francorum.*

⁸⁹⁹ Emperor Ludovico II: 390-391; the Latin text transcribes the Greek genitive form phonetically as *riga*.

compilation, *De cerimoniis*.⁹⁰⁰ In 968, Bishop Liudprand of Cremona arrived at Constantinople as an emissary from the German king and western emperor Otto I the Great (936–973), seeking to arrange a marriage between his son and co-ruler Otto II the Red (973–983) and a sister of the underage emperors Basileios II and Kōnstantinos VIII. Liudprand accordingly described his master as “August emperor” and “brother” to the senior eastern emperor, Nikēphoros II Phōkas (963–969), referring to both emperors as “holy” (*sanctus*), a sign of respect ultimately descended from the emperor’s pre-Christian divinity.⁹⁰¹ There was apparently no issue over “brotherhood,” but Liudprand wrote home bitterly that Otto was being described not as emperor, *basileus*, but as king, *rēx*.⁹⁰² What made him even more bitter, was that the sought-after bride was refused, while one had been granted earlier to the Bulgarian ruler Petăr I (927–969), who was recognized as *basileus* even by the eastern Romans.⁹⁰³ Liudprand complained that his lodgings did not keep out the elements, argued repeatedly with the emperor and his courtiers, stormed out without dinner, was partly mollified, then made to stand bareheaded before the emperor outdoors while ill, was instructed on the inappropriateness of the German king being called emperor, and finally returned home emptyhanded.⁹⁰⁴ As for Otto II, he finally obtained an eastern Roman bride, Theophanō, the non-imperial niece of the next senior

⁹⁰⁰ *De cerimoniis* II 48 (689): εἰς τὸν ῥῆγα Γαλλίας· εἰς τὸν ῥῆγα Γερμανίας· ἐπιγραφὴ εἰς πάντας τοὺς προειρημένους... Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Ῥωμανὸς, πιστοὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ Θεῷ βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων, πρὸς ὃ δεῖνα τὸν πεποθημένον πνευματικὸν ἀδελφὸν τὸν περιβλεπτον ῥῆγα and (691): εἰς τὸν ῥῆγα Φραγγίας... Κωνσταντῖνος καὶ Ῥωμανὸς, πιστοὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ Θεῷ, ὑψηλοὶ αὐγουστοὶ αὐτοκράτορες μεγάλοι βασιλεῖς Ῥωμαίων, τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ, πεποθημένῳ καὶ πνευματικῷ ἡμῶν ἀδελφῷ ὃ δεῖνα τῷ εὐγενεστάτῳ περιβλέπτῳ ῥῆγι Φραγγίας. For several later examples, see Dölger 1940: 406-407 (1976: 46-48).

⁹⁰¹ Liudprand, *Embassy* 7: fraternitati tuae; 20, 38: sanctus imperator.

⁹⁰² Liudprand, *Embassy* 2: Ipse enim vos non imperatorem, id est βασιλέα, sua lingua, sed ob indignationem ῥῆγα, id est regem, nostra vocabat.

⁹⁰³ Liudprand, *Embassy* 16: imperatoris filiam in coniugium duxit, 19 (*basileus*).

⁹⁰⁴ Liudprand, *Embassy* 1 (house), 26: Petrus, Bulgarorum vasileus. For Liudprand’s embassy, see Squatriti in his introduction to his translation of Liudprand: 29-37; Shepard 2008: 545-546.

emperor, Iōannēs I Tzimiskēs (969–976).⁹⁰⁵ In 982, while fleeing from Saracens in the south of Italy, Otto II sought safety and transport in an eastern Roman ship, telling its captain he intended “to go to your emperor, my brother.”⁹⁰⁶

In 1189–1190, a portion of the Third Crusade led by the western Roman emperor Friedrich I Barbarossa (1152–1190) made its way through the Balkan Peninsula en route to the Holy Land. Among other logistical difficulties, there arose yet another diplomatic squabble over the imperial title. Much like his distant predecessor Ludovico II, Friedrich Barbarossa treated the eastern Roman emperor as emperor and brother, but not quite of the Romans, referring to him as “emperor of Constantinople” or “emperor of the Greeks.”⁹⁰⁷ Thus, Friedrich, “by God’s grace Roman emperor, ever Augustus,” addressed a letter to his son, Heinrich VI, “illustrious king of the Romans, Augustus,” complaining of “our brother, the emperor of Constantinople,” who “mendaciously called himself emperor of the Romans” and called Friedrich “merely king of Alamannia.”⁹⁰⁸ Unlike the missives of Ludovico II, however, Friedrich’s were backed up by a Crusader army in the middle of Thrace, a few days away from Constantinople. The eastern emperor Isaakios II Angelos (1185–1195 and 1203–1204) decided that diplomatic concessions were the best solution and, dragging his feet the whole way, gradually offered increasingly more acceptable addresses for his western counterpart, in stages:

⁹⁰⁵ Thietmar 2.15. On the empress Theophanō, see the volume edited by Davids 1995.

⁹⁰⁶ Thietmar 3.21: *visitemus imperatorem vestrum, fratrem scilicet meum.*

⁹⁰⁷ *Historia de expeditione Friderici imperatoris* 31: *Manuele imperatore Constantinopolitano*; 35: *imperatore Grecorum Ysaakio*; 39: *Greci imperatoris Ysaakii.*

⁹⁰⁸ *Historia de expeditione Friderici imperatoris* 40-43: *Fridericus dei gratia Romanorum imperator et semper augustus p̄dilecto filio suo Heinrico [illustri] Romanorum regi augusto [salutem et] sincerum paternę dilectionis affectum... fines imperii fratris nostris imperatoris Constantinopolitani*; 49-50: *idem Gręculus se mendose imperatorem Romanorum, ipsum vero domnum nostrum serenissimum augustum non imperatorem Romanorum sed regem tantum Alamannię nuncupavit.*

from “king of Alamannia,” to “most high-born emperor of Alamannia,” and finally, “most noble emperor of Old Rome and king of Alamannia, the beloved brother of Our Majesty.”⁹⁰⁹

This examples above allow us to conclude that the language of symbolic kinship functioned largely as expected in the admittedly modern concept of the “Family of Rulers.” The Roman emperor (*basileus*) at Constantinople occupied the position of nominal *paterfamilias* in these notional relationships, while various kings (*reges*), especially in the west, were designated “son” or, increasingly, “spiritual son.” The emperor shared an equal status with the Sāsānid king of kings of Persia (also designated *basileus*), and he shared the designation *basileus* itself with more distant rulers that had been attributed that title in the past. The coronation of Charlemagne as emperor demonstrated the general logic of these arrangements, as it immediately led to him changing his symbolic relationship to the emperor at Constantinople from “son” to “brother.”⁹¹⁰ This explanation is consistent with both sociological expectation and the available historical precedents. The designation of “spiritual brother” was not, however, extended by the eastern Roman court to western kings who were not considered successors of Charlemagne, such as the rulers of England and Hungary.⁹¹¹ Meanwhile, as seen during the diplomatic arguments between Basileios I and Ludovico II in the ninth century, and between Isaakios II Angelos and Friedrich I Barbarossa in the twelfth, the Roman emperorship, which everyone agreed was singular, was fiercely contested by the monarchs of New Rome and Old Rome, each insisting on his own legitimate and exclusive claim. From the eastern Roman view, the westerners’ claims were tantamount to usurpation; from the western point of view, the eastern

⁹⁰⁹ *Historia de expeditione Friderici imperatoris* ; Treitinger 1969: 190-191.

⁹¹⁰ The relative equality in status implied by the term “brother” was correctly interpreted as befitting the highest rank in the “Family of Princes” in the later study by Dölger 1943a: 167-168 and also Ostrogorsky 1956: 11.

⁹¹¹ For example, King Henry II of England appears as “friend” of the emperor: Dölger 1943a: 401 n. 8 (1976: 39). The status of the Hungarian king as “son” may be inferred from a letter addressed to him by the Byzantine emperor in Iōannēs Kinnamos 5.6 (217): ἐνθα γεγονώς Στεφάνω ἔγραψεν ὧδε. ἤκομεν, ὦ ἐμὲ παῖ.

Romans were Greeks, and at any rate the Roman Empire had been transferred (“translated”) to Charlemagne and his successors in 800.⁹¹²

Bulgarians and Romans⁹¹³

The Bulgars are a people of uncertain origin that appeared on the horizons of the Roman Empire in the late fourth or fifth century. They were apparently part of the Hunnic confederation of Attila, and might have remained under the rule of Attila’s son Hernac, if he is identical with the Irnik of the Bulgar king list.⁹¹⁴ The linguistic and ethnic identity of the Bulgars remain unclear, but they are likely to have been as eclectic as the Huns.⁹¹⁵ In the sixth century, they collaborated and intermingled with Turkic groups coming in from the east.⁹¹⁶ We have encountered the Kutrigur and Utigur sub-groups dealing with the emperor Justinian. After a period of dependence on the Avars in the west and the Turks in the east, in the mid-seventh century, the Bulgars were located north of the Black Sea and led by Kuvrat of the Onogundurs (*c.* 632–665), an ally of the emperor Hērakleios, who conferred upon him the court dignity of patrician (*patrikios*), might have been baptized at the emperor’s court in his youth.⁹¹⁷ His death in 665 was followed by division among his sons, with many of the Bulgars migrating to new homes, while others became subjects of the Khazars.⁹¹⁸

One of the migrating groups, led by Kuvrat’s son Asparuh (*c.* 668–694), settled at the Danube. Although the eastern Romans had long lost control over the area, excepting some ports and

⁹¹² On *translatio imperii*, see Van den Baar 1956 in general, and 23-24, for the earliest specific use of the term.

⁹¹³ Part of this text was published, in a more concise version, as Mladjov 2015a.

⁹¹⁴ Moskov 1988: 146-175; Rašev 2005a” 30-33; Atanasov 2015: 13-17.

⁹¹⁵ On the eclectic nature of the group labeled “Huns,” see Maenchen-Helfen 1973.

⁹¹⁶ Rašev 1992 and 2005a: 27. Kim 2013: 140-143.

⁹¹⁷ Patriarch Nikēphoros I, *Breviarium*: 22 (71): Koubratos, nephew of Organas, possibly the Hunnic ruler whose baptism at Constantinople was mentioned earlier, at 9; both were named patrician. This might be supported by the discovery of signet rings from a hoard at Malaja Pereščepina in what is now Ukraine, the monograms of which have been interpreted to read Χουβρατου πατρικιου “of the patrician Khoubratos”: Jordanov 2001: 10-12.

⁹¹⁸ Fine 1983: 66-67.

strongholds, the emperor Kōnstantinos IV (668–685) set out to preempt the threat in 680. Despite some initial success, his forces were defeated, and the Bulgars established their core settlement in the former Roman provinces of Moesia Inferior and Scythia Minor, between the Haimos Mountains, the Danube, and the Black Sea. The lack of source evidence makes it difficult to estimate what, if any continuity there was in this core area of the new Bulgar state. The region had suffered repeatedly from the depredations of Goths, Huns, Avars and Slavs in the past, and it is unclear how much Roman population was left, if any. Much later Rus' and Serbian chronicles record the establishment of the Bulgars as rulers over the local Slavs and Vlachs, the latter usually identified as Romance-speaking pastoralists.⁹¹⁹ At any rate, the Bulgar state lacked the sort of continuity with the Roman past that the Frankish Kingdom and other Germanic polities enjoyed in the lands of the former Roman west. Moreover, the Bulgars, like their Slav subjects and confederates, were not Christians, at least as a whole. Their state and society's connection to the Roman world was its trade and diplomatic relations with the Roman Empire, which had committed itself to paying tribute to the Bulgar king to secure peace, probably in 681. The agreement may have been open to interpretation as a treaty making the Bulgars Roman federates.⁹²⁰ There is no such notion in the surviving Bulgarian inscriptions, but at least some Roman writers assumed as much.⁹²¹

⁹¹⁹ *Russian Primary Chronicle* 11 (55) from the twelfth century: *населеници* (settlers or oppressors?) among the Slavs; *Gesta regum Sclavorum* 5 (23-24), from (probably) c.1300: conquerors of "Sylloduxia," then of the Vlachs.

⁹²⁰ Fine 1983: 67-69; Božilov and Gjuzelev 2006: 87. It is difficult to accept the view of Kyriakēs 1993: 217-234, who interprets the Bulgaro-Byzantine treaties and the Greek title of the Bulgarian monarch (*arkhōn*) in the seventh to early tenth centuries as indicative of the Bulgars becoming federates of the Byzantine Empire. Kyriakēs' views are accepted by (e.g.) Havlíková 1999: 409 and a similar conclusion was reached by Whittow 1996: 272-273. On the sources, see the detailed analysis of Marinow 2018.

⁹²¹ Genesis 4.7, who states that the Bulgars "had received from the Romans the lands around Dorystolon and Moesia in which to dwell" (ὅς παρὰ Ῥωμαίων ἐν κατοικήσει Δορυστόλου καὶ τῆς Μυσίας γεγένητο).

In traditional fashion, Roman policy turned a problem into a solution. A brother or cousin of Asparuh, Kuver, had entered Avar service with his followers and then settled in the area of the former Roman province of Macedonia as federates of the Roman emperor. Nevertheless, as with earlier Roman federates, the terms of the agreement were re-negotiated by hostilities, threatening the important Roman city of Thessalonica, and necessitating an expedition by the emperor Ioustinianos II (685–695 and 705–711).⁹²² Kuver's associate, Mauros, was honored as a patrician by the Roman emperor, but the relationship remained fragile.⁹²³

When the emperor Ioustinianos II returned from exile in Crimea and sought to recover his throne in 705, he found support from the Bulgar king Tervel (c. 694–715), with whom he advanced on Constantinople. Entering the city through an abandoned aqueduct, the emperor was able to recover the throne, and proceeded to reward his new ally: Tervel was betrothed to the emperor's daughter and made Caesar in a lavish public ceremony.⁹²⁴ The conferral of the quasi-imperial title of Caesar (in Greek, *Kaisar*) on Tervel is surprising, even if it had lost its earlier meaning of junior co-emperor, but it does fit broadly into the pattern of coopting foreign monarchs with Roman court dignities.⁹²⁵ Whether for the purpose of his projected marriage to the emperor's daughter or his appointment as Caesar, or already before this, Tervel *might* have converted to Christianity, as suggested by his seal which, in good Roman fashion, implores the Mother of God for assistance; if so,

⁹²² Fine 1983: 44-49, 71-72.

⁹²³ On Mauros, see Jordanov 2001: 13-15. His lead seal (or possibly his son's) reads *Μαύρω πατρικίω καὶ ἄρχοντι τῶν Σερμησιάνων καὶ Βουλγάρων*: Oikonomides 1986, no. 25 (38); Beševliev 1992, no. 80 (245-246); Jordanov 2001: 13-15.

⁹²⁴ McCormick 1989: 165, discusses this in the context of ceremonies involving Germanic leaders, from the Goth Athanaric at Constantinople in 381, to the Frank Clovis at Tours in 507.

⁹²⁵ For the investiture of Tervel as Caesar in 705, see Patriarch Nikēphoros I, *Breviarium* 42 (103): τὸν δὲ Βουλγάρων ἄρχοντα Τέρβελιν ἔξω τείχους Βλαχερνῶν σκηνοῦμενον πολλὰ φίλοφρονησάμενος, τέλος παραγενόμενον πρὸς αὐτὸν χλανίδα τε περιβάλλει βασιλικὴν καὶ Καίσαρα ἀναγορεύει, καὶ συμπάρεδρον ποιησάμενος προσκυνεῖσθαι σὺν αὐτῷ ὑπὸ τοῦ λαοῦ ἐκέλευε, καὶ πλείστα παρασχόμενος δῶρα πρὸς τὰ ἑαυτοῦ ἐξέπεμπε. Atanasov 215: 279-287.

it was a personal conversion.⁹²⁶ We know little of how this new relationship developed; at a later point, the emperor attacked the Bulgars in 708, then sought their support again, when he was threatened from within in 711. This time they were unable to help him. Nevertheless, when Constantinople was besieged by the Muslims for the second time, in 717–718, the Bulgar king assisted the Romans; whether this was Tervel or his successor remains unclear.⁹²⁷

For a few decades, relations between the Roman Empire and Bulgaria remained peaceful, judging by the lack of notices in the chronicles; a treaty concluded in 716 governed trade between the two polities.⁹²⁸ Although a later Bulgarian chronicle, of dubious quality, attributed the building of the Bulgar capital Pliska to Asparuh,⁹²⁹ it is possible that this vast earthwork perimeter did not become the center of the polity until Tervel and his heirs.⁹³⁰ The Bulgar kings also commissioned long earthwork ramparts across strategic points of access or entire plains, surrounding the core territory of their kingdom; while these appear to have had strategic and military features, they also served as an ample reminder of the coercive power of the new monarchy over its mostly non-Bulgar subjects.⁹³¹ During the mid- and late eighth century, the relationship between Bulgaria and the eastern Roman Empire turned hostile, with several Bulgar kings undone by their losses to the energetic emperor Kōnstantinos V (741–775); three of them ended up as exiles at the emperor's

⁹²⁶ Tervel's title of Caesar is documented by a surviving seal, inscribed Θεοτόκε βοήθει Τερβελλίου καίσαρος, "Mother of God, assist the Caesar Tervel." Oikonomides 1986, no. 26 (38-39); Jurukova and Penčev 1990: 17-18; Beševliev 1992, no. 81 (246-247); Jordanov 2001: 17-19

⁹²⁷ Theophanes Confessor *s. AM* 6305 (AD 812/13) indicates that in 716 Bulgaria was led by Kormesios, presumably Tervel's successor; however, the same source, *s. AM* 6211 (AD 718/19), describing Bulgar support for the attempted restoration of the former emperor Anastasios II in 718 would have Tervel still alive, unless it applied his name to the ruler by mistake. Atanasov 2015: 298-307. On eight-century Bulgaria, see Fine 1983: 74-78.

⁹²⁸ Shepard 1995b: 231.

⁹²⁹ VMB: 195.

⁹³⁰ Atanasov 2015: 224-229, 258-261 (for the Nikuližel site as main royal residence at least before 705), 290-297.

⁹³¹ Rašev 1982 and numerous studies, focuses on the traditional military aspects; Squatriti 2002 emphasizes the more symbolic aspects of these projects.

court, where one, Telerig (767–777), was made a patrician and married off to a cousin of the empress Eirēnē.⁹³²

By the end of the century, however, Bulgaria was holding its own and, under Krum (797–814) it weathered a major Roman invasion under Nikēphoros I (802–811), who perished during his retreat, while expanding to the south, west, and north, at the expense of the Romans, Slavs, and the Avars. Krum’s advance was one of the reasons for the diplomatic rapprochement between the eastern Romans and the Franks in the early ninth century.⁹³³ Following a defeat at the hands of the Romans in 816, Krum’s son Omurtag (814–831) made peace, and even supported the Roman government against a major rebellion in the Balkans, that of Thōmas the Slav, despite at least limited internal persecution of Christianity in this period.⁹³⁴ We do not know if, even at their most cooperative, the Bulgar and Roman rulers engaged in a language of symbolic kinship. More likely, given the (usual) difference in religion, they would have been described as “friends” at best, while Roman literary sources and Bulgar inscriptions tend to stress the other’s “otherness.”⁹³⁵

Things would change in the second half of the ninth century. The conversion of Boris I of Bulgaria (852–889) to Christianity in 864 under the auspices of the Roman emperor Mikhaēl III (842–867) made the Bulgarian ruler quite literally the emperor’s “spiritual son”: Boris was baptized with the Roman emperor as godfather (by proxy), taking the Christian name Mihail.⁹³⁶ Boris seems

⁹³² Telerig’s seal as patrician, including what appears to be his Christian baptismal name, Theophylaktos, reads: Χριστῆ βοήθει τῷ σῶ δούλῳ Τελερῆνυ Θεοφυλάκτῳ πατρικίῳ. Oikonomides 1986, no. 41 (51); Jordanov 2001: 20–21; Beševliev 1992, no. 82 (247), interpreted “Theophylaktos” as the phrase “God-protected.”

⁹³³ Sophoulis 2012: 192–220. More generally on Krum, Fine 1983; 94–105.

⁹³⁴ Fine 1983: 103–109.

⁹³⁵ VMB nos. 11–17, 22–25, 27.

⁹³⁶ For the conversion and baptism of Boris I, see the various accounts in the Continuator of Theophanēs, §4.13–15 (162–165); Symeōn Logothetēs, §131.25, 243, considers the Bulgars’ conversion to have led to their submission to the emperor and to the Romans: καὶ Χριστιανοὶ γενέσθαι καὶ ὑποτάττεσθαι τῷ βασιλεῖ καὶ Ῥωμαίοις ἠτήσαντο; Genesisios, §4.16; Skylitzēs,

to have been worried about the influence the Roman Empire could exercise in Bulgaria through the Christian Church, and from early on sought an autonomous patriarchate for his kingdom. When this request was rebuffed by the Roman patriarch of Constantinople, Phōtios (858–867), Boris turned to Rome in 867.

Pope Nicholas I (Nicolaus I, 858–867) responded enthusiastically, sending western missionaries into Bulgaria, in tandem with the East Frankish king Ludwig II (843–876). The competition between Rome and Constantinople for ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Bulgaria and southeastern Europe more generally precipitated the so-called Photian Schism, which would exacerbate disagreements and differences between the eastern and western portions of the Church; incompletely resolved, it would contribute to the later, permanent Great Schism of 1054. Dissatisfied with the policy of Nicholas' successors on the Papal throne, who refused to appoint as archbishop of Bulgaria Boris' nominees (two future Popes), the Bulgarian ruler inclined toward Constantinople once more. At a council at Constantinople in 870, jurisdiction over Bulgaria was restored to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In a little-known sequel, the Roman emperor Basileios I (867–886) and the restored patriarch Phōtios (877–886) mended relations with the Papacy by restoring ecclesiastical jurisdiction over Bulgaria to Pope John VIII (Ioannes VIII, 872–882) and promising not to interfere there in 878. But Boris does not seem to have taken note, although he sent more presents to the Pope. The effects of his vacillation between Rome and Constantinople and his failure to fully follow up on the last, external decision as to ecclesiastical jurisdiction, resulted in something

Reign of Mikhaēl III, §7. Compare the modern treatments by Jireček 1876: 151-155 (1978: 169-173); Zlatarski 1927: 20-43; Runciman 1930: 102-108; Grégoire 1966: 112-114; Obolensky 1966: 498-501; Ostrogorsky 1969: 230-231; Gjuzelev 1969: 51-86; Toynbee 1973: 364-365; Browning 1975: 54-56; Fine 1983: 117-120; Shepard 1995b: 238-241; Božilov and Gjuzelev 2006: 171-176.

along the lines of what he had sought all along: an autocephalous church for his kingdom, albeit one largely in harmony with the rites of the Eastern Church.⁹³⁷

Peaceful relations between Bulgaria and the Roman Empire continued for three decades after Bulgaria's conversion in 864 without interruption. Despite references to Bulgarians and Romans now being *brothers* in Christ,⁹³⁸ the symbolic relationship between the Roman emperor and the Bulgarian king within the "Family of Rulers" was one of father and son. Thus, the Roman envoy Leōn Khoirosphaktēs describes the Roman emperor Leōn VI (886–912) as the "father and emperor" of Boris' son and second successor, the Roman-educated Simeon I of Bulgaria (893–927).⁹³⁹ Thus, too, Patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos of Constantinople (901–907 and 912–925) refers to the underage Roman emperor Kōnstantinos VII as the "spiritual father" of Simeon.⁹⁴⁰ Similarly, in the same period, the contemporary Armenian king of kings Ašot II (913–928) visited Constantinople and was received with honor; the emperor called Ašot "my beloved son."⁹⁴¹

Simeon was born in 864, the year of Bulgaria's conversion and the long-lasting peace between Bulgaria and the Roman Empire.⁹⁴² He was at least the third son of his father and may have been destined for an ecclesiastical career, like emperor Basileios I's son Stephanos, who eventually became the patriarch of Constantinople (886–893).⁹⁴³ Simeon spent a number of years as a student at

⁹³⁷ On Bulgaria and the Photian Schism, see Mladjov 1999: 173–174; more generally, Dvornik 1948.

⁹³⁸ Emperor Leōn VI, *Taktika*, §18.42: ἄτε διὰ τῆς μιᾶς πίστεως ἀδελφῶν ὑπαρχόντων. Similarly, Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letters*, nos. 9 (54–55), 17 (114–116), and 31 (206), makes much of this spiritual brotherhood between the two peoples (not their rulers), while elsewhere continuing to portray the Bulgarians as spiritual sons of the Romans, e.g., no. 17 (118) and no. 21 (144).

⁹³⁹ Leōn Khoirosphaktēs, *Letters*, no. 13: σὺ πατρί τε καὶ βασιλεῖ. Simeon, on the other hand, repeatedly and perhaps dismissively referred to Leōn VI as "your emperor" (ὁ σὸς βασιλεὺς) in his messages to Khoirosphaktēs: nos. 1 and 3.

⁹⁴⁰ Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letters*, no. 9 (64): σοῦ πνευματικοῦ πατρός, τοῦ θεοστεφοῦς ἡμῶν βασιλέως.

⁹⁴¹ Yovhannēs Draxanakert'ci 55.5 (198).

⁹⁴² Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letters*, no. 27 (188–189); no. 29 (200–201) states that Simeon was nearly sixty in 923.

⁹⁴³ For this possibility, see Runciman 1930: 123, 137; Božilov 1983: 36; Shepard 2006: 142.

Constantinople, learning history, theology, the rhetoric of Dēmōsthenēs and the syllogisms of Aristotle. As an apparent mark of success, he was dubbed *hēmiargos* (a hapax meaning “half-Greek”).⁹⁴⁴ Patriarch Nikolaos I makes repeated references to Simeon’s knowledge of history in their correspondence, and references edifying events.⁹⁴⁵ We can imagine that during his stay at Constantinople, Simeon was purposefully exposed to all the glory and pretensions of Roman propaganda. But while this sought to impress, it could also backfire, and J. Shepard has discerned a likely correlation between foreign princes raised at the imperial court and then seeking parity with the emperor or more, proffering the cases of Theoderic of the Ostrogoths, Simeon of Bulgaria, and Stefan Uroš IV Dušan of Serbia (1331–1355), the first of whom assumed some of the trappings of Roman emperors, including the title *princeps*, while the last two proclaimed themselves emperors.⁹⁴⁶

Whatever he experienced at Constantinople, Simeon returned to Bulgaria perhaps shortly before his father’s abdication in 889 and became a monk.⁹⁴⁷ Retiring to a monastery, Boris left the throne to his eldest son, Vladimir (889–893). The new king disappointed his saintly father with lewd behavior and by allegedly trying to restore paganism. Exasperated, Boris resumed his military attire and led a coup, deposing and blinding his son. Returning to his monastery, Boris now secularized Simeon and made him the new king of Bulgaria, threatening him with the same fate if he, too, strayed from the path of righteousness.⁹⁴⁸ According to a letter of Patriarch Nikolaos, Simeon never quite abandoned the austerity of a monk in his personal habits.⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁴ Liudprand, *Retribution* 3.29: Hunc etenim Simeonem emiargon, id est semigraecus, esse aiebant, eo quod a puericia Bizantii Demostenis rhetoricam Aristotelisque silogismos didicerit. Shepard 2006: 141-143.

⁹⁴⁵ Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letters* nos. 10 (70-73), 20 (134-139), 25 (176-179).

⁹⁴⁶ Shepard 2006; on Theoderic appropriating aspects of Roman imperial traditions, see Arnold 2014.

⁹⁴⁷ Sergheraert 1960: 47; Bogdanov 1974: 19.

⁹⁴⁸ Regino, *s.a.* 868.

⁹⁴⁹ Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letters* no. 14 (94-95).

In what has been described as a standard pattern of governments sizing each other up across the medieval frontier, the new Bulgarian ruler was soon provoked by a slight on the part of the eastern Roman emperor Leōn VI, who failed to correct a corrupt scheme that transferred the Empire's international market with Bulgaria to Thessalonica and allowed Bulgarian merchants to be abused. What followed was a war in which the Bulgarians defeated the Romans twice, despite themselves suffering heavy defeats in-between from the Magyars, who attacked from the north as Roman allies.⁹⁵⁰ With some difficulty, Simeon was able to weather the storm and pick off his enemies one by one, defeating the Romans at Boulgarophygon in 896 and driving the Magyars out of their own homelands with the help of the Pečenegs.⁹⁵¹ In exchange for peace, the Roman emperor agreed to pay tribute.⁹⁵² Thereafter, relations between Romans and Bulgarians appear to have been more or less peaceful for about a decade and a half, until Leōn VI died in 912 and was succeeded by his younger brother and co-ruler Alexandros (912–913). Among other changes to his brother's policies, the new emperor revoked the tribute to Bulgaria, treating the Bulgarian envoys badly, and provoking Simeon into reaction.⁹⁵³ But before Simeon could take up arms against him, Alexandros died, leaving the throne to Leōn VI's underage son Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos (913–959).⁹⁵⁴

⁹⁵⁰ Some of the Byzantine sources and modern apologists for Byzantine emperors place the blame for Simeon's acts of aggression on him: among the sources, see Skylitzēs, *Reign of Leōn the Philosopher*, §12 (but contrast his *Reign of Alexandros*, §6); modern scholars, e.g., Karlin-Hayter 1967: 26; Karlin-Hayter 1969: 586-589; Browning 1975: 57-58; Tougher 1997: 173-174. For example, Tougher overlooks the point that Simeon's need to establish the "military credentials" of his regime was necessitated by the slight dealt to it by the Byzantine emperor in the first place. For the opposite view, see Jireček 1876: 162, 166-167 (1978: 181-182, 186); Zlatarski 1927: 286-289, 357-359; Runciman 1930: 144-145, 155; Jenkins 1966a: 202-231; Grégoire 1966: 127-128; Obolensky 1966: 502-503; Ostrogorsky 1969: 256; Fine 1983: 137, 142-143; Božilov 1983: 87-89, 98-99; Shepard 1989: 16, 19-20; Whittow 1996: 286, 288; Shepard 1999: 570, 573-574; Marinow 2011: 158. The economic causes of conflict are reexamined by Karayannopoulos 1994: 52-64, who sees in this a mere pretext for a very ambitious Bulgarian expansionism.

⁹⁵¹ For Bulgaria and its Magyar and Pečeneg allies or attackers, see Mladjov 1998 and Mladjov 2015b.

⁹⁵² Fine 1983: 137-140.

⁹⁵³ Continuator of Theophanēs §6.6. Cf. Simeonova 1996: 60.

⁹⁵⁴ Fine 1983: 142.

Provoked by the Roman government a second time, and perhaps resentful at the very notion of having a doubly illegitimate minor as his “spiritual father,” Simeon eventually redressed his status vis-à-vis the Roman emperor in a settlement with the imperial regency in August 913. Simeon reached Constantinople with a large army and proceeded to blockade the peninsular city by land, building a ditch from the Blakhernai Palace on the Golden Horn in the north to the Golden Gate on the Sea of Marmara in the south. Allegedly surprised by the strength of the walls, their guards, and military engines, he retired to Hebdomon, a suburb and parade ground at the seventh mile marker from the center of Constantinople, and made overtures for peace. The regency for the underage Roman emperor Kōnstantinos VII readily accepted the proposal, and even brought in two of Simeon’s sons to dine with the emperor at the Blakhernai. At this point, the leading regent, Patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos went out (*exēlthe*) to Simeon; Simeon bowed his head before the patriarch, and the latter, having read out a prayer, placed on Simeon’s head his own veil (*epirriptarion*) instead of an imperial crown (*stemma*).

Thus far, the narrative follows the *Chronicle of Symeōn Logothetēs* and most of the early chroniclers who followed his mid-tenth-century account.⁹⁵⁵ A later and largely derivative set of accounts, first represented by Iōannēs Skylitzēs in the late eleventh century, related the same general

⁹⁵⁵ Symeōn Logothetēs 135.10-11 (301): Αὐγούστῳ δὲ μηνὶ Συμεῶν, ὁ Βουλγαρίας ἄρχων, ἐκστρατεύσας κατὰ Ῥωμαίων σὺν ὄχλῳ βαρεῖ κατέλαβε τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν καὶ δὴ περικαθίσας αὐτὴν χάρακα περιέβαλεν ἀπὸ τε Βλαχερνῶν καὶ μέχρι τῆς λεγομένης πόρτης Χρυσῆς, ἐλπίσι μετέωρος ὦν ἀπονητὶ ταύτην πάντως ελεῖν. ἐπεὶ δὲ τὴν τε τῶν τειχῶν κατέμαθεν ὀχυρότητα τὴν τε ἐκ τοῦ πλήθους καὶ τῶν ὀπλῶν καὶ τῶν πετροβόλων ἀσφάλειαν, τῶν ἐλπίδων σφαλῆς ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ Ἐβδόμῳ ὑπέστρεψεν εἰρηνικὰς σπονδὰς αἰτησάμενος. τῶν δὲ ἐπιτρόπων τὴν εἰρήνην ἀσμενέστατα ἀποδεξαμένων ἀποστέλλει Συμεῶν Θεόδωρον μάγιστρον αὐτοῦ συλλαλῆσαι τὰ τῆς εἰρήνης. ἀναλαβόμενοι δὲ ὁ πατριάρχης Νικόλαος καὶ Στέφανος καὶ Ἰωάννης μάγιστροι τὸν βασιλέα ἤλθον μέχρι τῶν Βλαχερνῶν καὶ εἰσήγαγον τοὺς δύο υἱοὺς Συμεῶν καὶ συνεισιτάθησαν τῷ βασιλεῖ ἐν τοῖς παλατίοις. Νικόλαος δὲ ὁ πατριάρχης ἐξῆλθε πρὸς Συμεῶν, ᾧ τινι τὴν κεφαλὴν ὑπέκλινε Συμεῶν. εὐχὴν οὖν ὁ πατριάρχης ποιήσας ἀντὶ στέμματος, ὡς φασί, τὸ ἴδιον ἐπιρριπτάριον τῇ αὐτοῦ ἐπέθηκε κεφαλῇ. δώροις οὖν ἀμέτροις τε καὶ μεγίστοις φιλοφρονηθέντες ὁ τε Συμεῶν καὶ οἱ τούτου υἱοὶ εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν χώραν ὑπέστρεψαν, ἀσύμφωνοι ἐπὶ τῇ εἰρημένῃ εἰρήνῃ διαλυθέντες. Similarly, the Continuator of Theophanēs, §6.5 (385): Νικόλαος δὲ ὁ πατριάρχης ἐξῆλθε πρὸς Συμεῶν, ᾧ τινι τὴν κεφαλὴν ὑπέκλινε Συμεῶν. εὐχὴν οὖν ὁ πατριάρχης ποιήσας ἀντὶ στέμματος, ὡς φασί, τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιρριπτάριον τῇ αὐτοῦ ἐπέθετο κεφαλῇ.

story, but altered some of the details, most notably bringing the Bulgarian monarch himself into the city for the banquet at the Blakhernai after an exchange of suitable hostages, omitting any going out by the patriarch, calling Simeon a barbarian, and using a different, much more generic, term for the crown (*stephanos*).⁹⁵⁶ The two narrative traditions end the same way: laden with treasures, Simeon and his sons returned home without having signed a formal peace treaty.

The idiosyncratic episode related above constitutes an important development in the constitutional history of the medieval Bulgarian state, and a revealing instance of the methods and priorities of eastern Roman foreign policy, including the consistent insistence on the Roman emperor's exclusive monopoly on the Roman imperial title. The disappearance of any Bulgarian narrative sources, combined with the understandable repugnance and embarrassment of the Byzantine texts over any even partial concession, leaves us with a succinct, incomplete, and perhaps purposefully opaque account of the precise import of what happened to Simeon outside Constantinople in 913.⁹⁵⁷ That Simeon went on to use the imperial title, calling himself even “emperor of the Romans” (*basileus tōn Rōmaiōn*), claiming parity with the eastern Roman emperor (and, at times, perhaps seeking to replace him), is clear enough. However, the exact relation of this to

⁹⁵⁶ Skylitzēs, Kōnstantinos, the son of Leōn 3 (200): Ἀλλὰ τούτων κατὰ τὴν πόλιν πραττομένων Συμεὼν ὁ Βουλγαρίας ἄρχων μετὰ βαρείας δυνάμεως εἰσβολὴν κατὰ Ῥωμαίων ἐποιήσατο, καὶ τὴν βασιλῖδα φθάσας χάρακα περιέβαλεν ἀπὸ τε Βλαχερνῶν καὶ μέχρι τὴν βασιλῖδα φθάσας χάρακα περιέβαλεν ἀπὸ τε Βλαχερνῶν καὶ μέχρι τῆς λεγομένης Πόρτης χρυσῆς καὶ μετέωρος ἦν ταῖς ἐλπίσι ῥαδίως ταύτην ελεῖν. καταμαθὼν δὲ τὴν ὀχυρότητα τῶν τειχῶν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν τειχοφυλακούντων καὶ τὴν τῶν πετροβόλων καὶ τοξοβόλων ὀργάνων δαψίλειαν, ἀφέμενος τῶν ἐλπίδων ἐν τῷ Ἐβδόμῳ ὑπέστρεψεν, εἰρηνικὰς σπονδὰς ἐξαιτούμενος. τῶν δ' ἐπιτρόπων ἀσμενέστατα δεξαμένων τὸν λόγον ἀποστέλλει ὁ Συμεὼν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ μάγιστρον Θεόδωρον ὁμιλῆσαι περὶ εἰρήνης. οὗ παραγενομένου καὶ λόγων κινηθέντων πολλῶν ὁ πατριάρχης ἅμα τοῖς λοιποῖς ἐπιτρόποις ἀναλαβόντες τὸν βασιλέα ἐν τοῖς παλατίοις ἦλθον τῶν Βλαχερνῶν, καὶ ὁμήρους δόντες ἀξιολόγους εἰσήγαγον τὸν Συμεὼν ἐν τῷ παλατίῳ, καὶ συνειστιάθη τῷ βασιλεῖ, τοῦ Συμεὼν ὑποκλιναντος τῷ πατριάρχῃ τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ εὐχὴν δεξαμένου παρ' αὐτοῦ, ἐπιθέντος, ὡς φασι, τῇ τοῦ βαρβάρου κεφαλῇ ἀντὶ στεφάνου τὸ ἴδιον ἐπιρριπτάριον. μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἐστίασιν, ἀσυμβάτων γενομένων περὶ τῆς εἰρήνης, δώροις δ' ὁ Συμεὼν καὶ οἱ τούτου παῖδες φιλοφρονηθέντες εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ἀπηλλάγησαν χώραν. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἐπράττετο τῆδε.

⁹⁵⁷ Fine 1983: 145, 147-148; Whittow 1996: 288; this is doubted by Howard-Johnston 2006: 346.

the ceremony involving Nikolaos Mystikos and Simeon in 913 has remained a subject of much debate among historians.

The only additional narrative source that comes to the historian's rescue on this specific event is an oration, possibly composed by Theodōros Daphnopatēs, after the conclusion of a long-lasting peace between Bulgaria and the Eastern Roman Empire in October 927, following more than a decade of further military conflict.⁹⁵⁸ In highly rhetorical and allegorical language, infused with Classical and Biblical imagery that shows off the author's erudition and partly obscures the identities of his characters — we must assume that his audience was “in the know” — the oration provides an overview of past events, including the ceremony in 913. While recognizing that this important source was not really part of the scholarly discussion of the events of 913 until after R. Jenkins' publication on it in 1966, it makes sense to summarize the testimony of this source before turning to its interpretation.

The orator tells us that Simeon, possessed by the “torrent of vainglory and whirlwind of ambition,” seized “both crown and throne,” proclaiming himself (emperor) and profaning his seals (with the imperial title) in an act of insurrection and apostasy. Simeon is accused of thus having “rejected his father,” the Roman emperor, and “the pledge of his sonship.” Turning to the actual ceremony, we are told that Patriarch Nikolaos “excluded ... the lords of the Senate, out of reverence to the imperial office,” while Simeon, “hidden beneath his helmet of darkness,” demanded “confirmation of the covenant” by “fellow celebrants.” But Nikolaos opposed this, declaring it “abominable for Romans to do obeisance to an emperor unless he were Roman.” Instead, Nikolaos

⁹⁵⁸ *Oration*, ed. Dujčev 1978: 217-295, including the complete Greek text and its English translation by Jenkins, and detailed treatment of older literature. Earlier treatments include those of Jenkins 1966b, Karlin-Hayter 1968, and Stauridou-Zaphraka 1976. Aspects of the *Oration* are also treated by Todorov 2001, Marinow 2011 and 2012.

invited Simeon to wear his “makeshift diadem” for a while, and to let *his own* fellow celebrants do him obeisance. After musing on Nikolaos’ ability to restrain Simeon, the orator concludes that the “brother went off by the same way he had come, leaving the scepter to the child,” Kōnstantinos VII.⁹⁵⁹

What happened during the ceremony outside Constantinople in 913? For a long time, the significance and importance of the event were overlooked, for example even by the usually meticulous S. Runciman, who only noted that the Patriarch went out to visit Simeon himself, and was “received with marked respect,” before discussing terms.⁹⁶⁰ In 1929 the eminent Bulgarian historian V. Zlatarski made something of the ceremony, but, misled by the origin of the Slavic imperial title *česar’* (the later *car’*, “tsar” = Greek *basileus*) from Latin *Caesar*, assumed that Patriarch Nicholas had crowned Simeon Caesar (Greek *kaisar*), the highest dignity *below* that of the Roman emperor himself. Thus, according to Zlatarski, Simeon returned home as the *Caesar* of the Bulgarians in 913, and only proclaimed himself emperor a little later.⁹⁶¹ This misconception was immediately corrected by C. Radoslavov and S. Romanski, who pointed out the clear distinction between the titles for emperor

⁹⁵⁹ *Oration* §12 (274-275): ὁ φιλοδοξίας ποταμός, ὁ τῆς προεδρίας τυφών... εὐθύς οὖν τὸ στέφος καὶ ὁ δίφρος ἐθριαμβεύετο, στέφος δὲ τὴν Εὐρώπην ἀπεστεφάνωσε... Τὸ ἐξῆς ὁ δῆμος καὶ ἡ ἀποστασία μᾶλλον, ἢ γὰρ ἀνάρρησις καὶ τ’ ἄλλα, οἷς ἡ σφραγὶς ἐβεβήλωτο, καὶ ὠδίνετο τὸ κακὸν καὶ τὰ γεννήματα τοῦ τεκόντος ἐξιδιάζεται καὶ ἀθετεῖ μὲν τὸν πατέρα, ἀθετεῖ δὲ τὸ πνεῦμα δι’ οὗ ὁ ἀβράβων τῆς υἰότητος. εἶργει τέως τοὺς τῆς συγκλήτου τὸ κράτος τιμῶν καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν χαρισάμενον, ὁ δὲ τῆ τοῦ Ἰακώβου κενεῖν συγκαλυπτόμενος τοὺς συνεόρους αἰτεῖ καὶ εἰς ἰσχὺν τὴν διαθήκην προτείνεται, ὁ δ’ ἀντιτείνεται, βασιλέα προσκυνεῖσθαι σαφῶς ἐρών εἰ μὴ Ῥωμαίων Ῥωμαίους ἀπώμοτον “ἢ βραχὺ τιθεῖς τὸ περινοηθέν σοι διάδημα προσκυνητὰς ἔχε τοὺς συνεόρους.” §13 (274-275): ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν τὴν εἰρήνην τιμῶν καὶ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς ἔτι τιμώμενος ἀστασίαστος τοῖς ἀστασίαστοις ἐφίσταται, καὶ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ὁ ἀδελφὸς ἴχνησιν ἐπιβάς συναποίχεται, τῷ παιδί τὰ σκῆπτρα λιπῶν. Analysis at 226-228, 238-240; compare Jenkins 1966b: 298-300; Fine 1983: 146.

⁹⁶⁰ Runciman 1930: 156-157.

⁹⁶¹ Zlatarski, *Istorija*, 364-374.

(*česar'*/*car'*) and Caesar (*kesar'*) in medieval Slavic sources, and also noted that the ceremony at Hebdomon in 913 did not resemble the investiture of a Caesar at all.⁹⁶²

The Slavic imperial title was *česar'* (цѣсарь), later rendered *car'* (царь) (tsar).⁹⁶³ Although this Slavic title for emperor and the Roman court title Caesar, *kaisar* (καῖσαρ) both derived from Latin Caesar, they are not synonymous and are not confused with each other in medieval sources, where the court title (and ancient Roman name) of Caesar corresponded to a separate Slavic word with a different spelling: *kesar'* (кесарь).⁹⁶⁴ Like German *Kaiser*, despite its derivation from Caesar, the Slavic title denotes an emperor, having entered Slavonic via Gothic *Kaisar*, at a stage where the term still designated a full emperor. The distinction between the Slavic words for emperor and Caesar can be found already in the earliest Slavic manuscripts, translating the New Testament. The passage in John 19.15, where the Jewish priests declare “We have no *basileus* but Caesar” is rendered in Old Church Slavonic as “We have no *česar'* but *Kesar'*,” demonstrating the equivalency between Slavic *česar'*/*car'* and Greek *basileus*.⁹⁶⁵ The title *česar'*/*car'* was utilized as an exact equivalent of *basileus*, designating emperors among contemporary rulers, but also other monarchs that were previously and traditionally called *basileis*, like kings from Classical literature and Scripture, such as King David. This versatility in the usage of the title led to confusion among westerners over whether it denoted emperor or king,

⁹⁶² Romanski 1929: 125-128; Radoslavov 1929: 163-172. Also see the criticism of Zlatarski by Snegarov 1947: 23-35. On the title of Caesar (*kesar'*) in medieval Bulgaria, see Biljarski 1989. Zlatarski's view was adopted by some later authors, like Sergheraert 1960: 124-125; Bogdanov 1974: 122-123.

⁹⁶³ Zlatarski 1927: 368-374; Sergheraert 1960: 124-125; Bogdanov 1974: 122-123.

⁹⁶⁴ Romanski 1929: 125-128; Radoslavov 1929: 163-172. Also see the criticism of Zlatarski by Snegarov 1947: 23-35. On the title of Caesar (*kesar'*) in medieval Bulgaria, see Biljarski 1989.

⁹⁶⁵ НЕ ИМАМЪ ЦѢСАРЪ · ТЪКЪМО КЕСАРЪ. For a discussion of the title *česar'* (still pronounced this way in the eleventh century, in 1016, when Bulgarian troops shouted βέζεϊτε, ὁ τῷέσαρ (“Flee! The Emperor!”) when under attack by the emperor Basileios II: Skylitzēs, Reign of Basileios and Kōnstantinos §40 (356) (Skylitzēs accidentally inserts the Greek definite article between the two words transcribed from Bulgarian).

or some intermediate station between them. By trying to correct this in adopting the Latin form *imperator* (and *Pater patriae*) in 1721, as part of his westernization of the Russian court, Peter the Great (Pëtr I, 1682–1725) inadvertently contributed to the misunderstanding and demotion of tsar. However, careful observers, like his older contemporary John Selden, were able to discern its correct meaning, in a medieval context, as emperor.⁹⁶⁶

The renowned Byzantinist G. Ostrogorsky agreed with Romanski in 1935, and demonstrated, moreover, that the crown designated *stemma* was specifically the headgear of the emperor, as opposed to the Caesar's coronet (called *kaisarikion* or more generically *stephanos*, “wreath”).⁹⁶⁷ Ostrogorsky also drew attention to the exceptional and suggestive use of the imperial title for Simeon in two passages immediately surrounding the description of these events in the Slavic translation of the Logothete's chronicle, as supporting his conclusion — on this and other grounds — that in 913 Patriarch Nicholas crowned Simeon emperor of the Bulgarians.⁹⁶⁸

F. Dölger, on the other hand, concluded that the ceremony implied the formalization of spiritual kinship, whereby Simeon was adopted as the Roman emperor's son. For Dölger, the reference to the laying-on of the patriarch's veil instead of a crown emphasized the substitution of this adoption for the imperial coronation which Simeon had originally desired.⁹⁶⁹ The utility and probability of such a solution are highly dubious, which fails to take into account the very specific actions described, as well as the suggestive inferences about crowns, emperors, brothers, and

⁹⁶⁶ Selden 1672: 19. Modern practice has muddled the waters further: like the modern kings of Greece are termed “*basileis* of the Hellēnes,” the modern kings of Bulgaria are termed “tsars of the Bulgarians”; moreover, the Russian emperor was called “tsar of Poland” in Russian, in his capacity as king of Poland. In these instances what was once the medieval imperial title carries a royal meaning.

⁹⁶⁷ Ostrogorsky 1935: 123-124.

⁹⁶⁸ Ostrogorsky 1935: 127-129, 137; 1969: 261-263.

⁹⁶⁹ Dölger 1935: 62; 1939: 227-231; Karlin-Hayter 1968: 37-38.

acclamations. Other scholars took an even more critical approach, dismissing the identifications of the ceremony as either coronation or spiritual adoption, and seeing it as a mere patriarchal blessing.⁹⁷⁰ The common feature of these “minimalist” interpretations is to focus on only what the sources say explicitly and to resist the temptation of following the narratives’ seeming implications. Stereotypes about Byzantium aside, one must wonder whether this is the best approach to sources of such political and rhetorical character.

In 1966 R. Jenkins made a significant contribution to the issue by translating and discussing the most pertinent sections of the oration probably composed by Theodōros Daphnopatēs in 927 in relation to our conundrum. Jenkins built upon medieval glosses and earlier scholarship to interpret the convoluted references of the text in a way that fleshed out and largely explained the vague picture of the narrative accounts. He summed up the oration as follows: the Bulgarian king (*arkhōn*),⁹⁷¹ driven by ambition, staged an insurrection by usurping the imperial title and rejecting the spiritual fatherhood of the Roman Emperor. Simeon’s demands in 913 were answered, Jenkins continues, with a partial and possibly sham concession played out during the ceremony at the Hebdomon: he is crowned with the black patriarchal veil (*epirriptarion*), “bunched up into the semblance of an imperial *stemma*,” and “wittily described” as a “helmet of darkness.” However, the patriarch counters Simeon’s demand for obeisance (*proskynēsis*) from the present Romans, by excluding the members of the Senate and declaring that Romans can only pay obeisance to a Roman emperor. Since Nikolaos goes on to state that Simeon should wear his “makeshift crown” for a while and let his own fellow-celebrants do

⁹⁷⁰ Amantos 1947: 67; Snegarov 1947: 1-47; Vojnov 1967: 193; Stauridou-Zaphraka 1972: 117-118; Kyriakēs 1993: 143-144; Bakalov 1995: 152-155; Mōyseidou 1995: 78-80; Havlíková 1999: 419; Petkova 2003: 163. Howard-Johnston 2006: 342, also seems to espouse a minimalist, though not very revealing interpretation of the events.

⁹⁷¹ I render the unspecific Early Medieval Greek and Slavic terms for the Bulgarian ruler (*arkhōn*, *knjaz*) as “king,” based on their rendition in Papal and Frankish documents as *rex Bulgarorum*. Compare Radoslavov 1929: 161-163, and Havlíková 1999: 415.

him obeisance, Jenkins concludes that the ceremony constituted Simeon's coronation as emperor (*basileus*) of Bulgaria. Now an emperor (though not a Roman one) and a spiritual brother (rather than spiritual son) of the Byzantine emperor, Simeon goes home without overthrowing and replacing Kōnstantinos VII.⁹⁷²

Jenkins' interpretation, which had vindicated, partly corrected, and augmented Ostrogorsky's, was contested by P. Karlin-Hayter in 1968. While accepting some of Jenkins' conclusions,⁹⁷³ Karlin-Hayter suggested that the critical passage Jenkins interpreted as an account of the ceremony at the Hebdomon in 913, actually reflected various earlier dealings between Simeon and the Byzantine emperor Leōn VI (886–912). She specifically objected to the possibility that what Jenkins translated as "helmet of darkness" could be an acceptable reference to the patriarchal headgear, and saw the imperial "brother" who "went off by the same way he had come" as Kōnstantinos VII's uncle, the emperor Alexandros (912–913). Karlin-Hayter suggested that Dölger's interpretation of the ceremony as reflecting a spiritual adoption was more compelling.⁹⁷⁴

Karlin-Hayter's arguments were impressive enough to discourage G. Loud from utilizing the oration in 1978.⁹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Loud went on to not only trace the use of (purple) *epirriptaria* in imperial ceremonial costume in Byzantine and derivative (Frankish) ceremonial, but also to argue that Patriarch Nikolaos must have crowned Simeon with a real imperial *stemma* and a properly imperial (purple) *epirriptarion*. He suggested that the story of Simeon's coronation with the black patriarchal *epirriptarion* was a subsequent fiction intended to disguise the actual extent and validity of the

⁹⁷² Jenkins 1966b: 298–300; 1966a: 231–232.

⁹⁷³ Including the authorship of Theodōros Daphnopatēs and the preferable nature of the Logothete's account: Karlin-Hayter 1968: 32–35, 39.

⁹⁷⁴ Karlin-Hayter 1968: 37–38.

⁹⁷⁵ Loud 1978: 110–111.

unpopular concession to Simeon.⁹⁷⁶ Loud also thought an *epirription* could be discerned under an imperial *stemma* or *kamelaukion* on one of Simeon's early imperial seals.⁹⁷⁷ Loud's analysis of the textual, pictorial, and sigillographical evidence is impressive and attractive, but the scarcity of the narrative testimonies makes it difficult to accept his conclusion as anything more than a possibility.

Jenkins' reconstruction of the events on the basis of both the *Chronicle of the Logothete* and the oration gained significant support. Dujčev, who published the complete text of the oration in 1978 alongside Jenkins' English translation, supported Jenkins' interpretation and countered the opposing arguments of Karlin-Hayter (in favor of a spiritual adoption) and Stauridou-Zaphraka (in favor of a patriarchal blessing).⁹⁷⁸ In 1975 E. Chrysos pointed out the added significance of the Logothete's implication that Simeon's coronation took place at the Hebdomon, a parade ground that had been employed for this purpose in Late Antiquity.⁹⁷⁹ Jenkins' arguments were reiterated and reinforced by J. Fine in 1983, who qualified the common implication that Simeon was duped into accepting a sham coronation.⁹⁸⁰ Similar conclusions were reached at the same time by I. Božilov.⁹⁸¹ In 1989 J. Shepard built onto the case put forth by Jenkins, Chrysos, Fine, and Božilov, combing through the evidence, qualifying several a priori assumptions, and making a case for a more peaceable and reactive character to Simeon's policies.⁹⁸² The common conclusion of these relatively detailed investigations was that Patriarch Nikolaos crowned Simeon emperor of the Bulgarians at the

⁹⁷⁶ Loud 1978: 119-120.

⁹⁷⁷ Loud 1978: 117-118. For the seal, see Jordanov 2001: 51-53.

⁹⁷⁸ Dujčev 1978: 236-250.

⁹⁷⁹ Chrysos 1975.

⁹⁸⁰ Fine, *Balkans*, 144-148, with an extensive review of the arguments for an imperial coronation.

⁹⁸¹ Božilov 1983: 103-112; compare Božilov 1986: 78-79. Božilov's treatment is marred only by his ongoing assumption that the ceremony in question took place at the Blachernai palace (although in 'Idéologie' he seems to contradict himself).

⁹⁸² Shepard 1989: 20-24; compare Shepard 1999: 574.

Hebdomon, in an improvised ceremony that nevertheless took care to deny him emperorship over Romans.⁹⁸³

Among the recent contributions to the study of the problem, we should single out that by P. Georgiev in 2001.⁹⁸⁴ Georgiev revisited the argumentation in the earlier literature, discussed the use and character of the patriarchal *epirriptarion*, and discovered a type of Byzantine imperial coronation ceremony that fits more closely than any other with what our sources succinctly indicated about that of 913. This ceremony, described in an account of the enthronement of Manouēl II Palaiologos (1391–1425) as senior emperor in 1391, constituted a blessing and confirmation (*apokatastasis*) of an emperor who had already been crowned on a previous occasion.⁹⁸⁵ Here, as Georgiev notes, we find an excellent parallel to what happened to Simeon in 913: after the removal of the emperor’s crown, the emperor bowed his head while the patriarch pronounced a prayer and, amid the usual acclamations, anointed the emperor’s head with holy oil and crowned it with his own headgear (*koukoulion*).⁹⁸⁶ Georgiev proceeded to reinterpret the *Haidou kyneē*, which Jenkins had translated as a “helmet of darkness” in the oration as a sarcastic pun of “precious” (*hadys*) helmet and to identify it with a helmet-like crown that Simeon wears on several of his seals. Georgiev concluded that the patriarchal veil was attached to this crown and inferred from the language of the later ceremony involving Manouēl II that Simeon must have used the title “emperor and ruler of the Bulgarian people” (*basileus kai arkhōn tou ethnous tōn Boulgarōn*).⁹⁸⁷

⁹⁸³ Aleksandrov and Mihajlov 1991, no. 25: 78-79; Norwich 1992: 128 n. 1; Whittow 1996: 288-289; Treadgold 1997: 473; Mladjov 1999: 179; Stephenson 2000: 22-23; Vačkova 2005: 56-57; Božilov and Gjuzev 2006: 252-253; Marinow 2011: 157-159; Nikolov 2006: 124-151; Leszka 2013: 134-158.

⁹⁸⁴ Georgiev 2001.

⁹⁸⁵ Appended by Verpeaux 1966 to Pseudo-Kodinos: 351-361.

⁹⁸⁶ Pseudo-Kodinos: 353-355; Georgiev 2001: 9-10.

⁹⁸⁷ Georgiev 2001: 10-13; for Simeon’s crowns, see Atanasov 1999: 62-96.

Georgiev's ingenious reinterpretation of Jenkins' "helmet of darkness" and his reconstruction of the Bulgarian imperial title (in a completely unattested form!) are interesting but seem a little strained. On the other hand, while a late fourteenth-century ceremony can hardly serve as a secure reflection of tenth-century practice, the parallels between the descriptions of the coronations of Manouēl II in 1391 and Simeon in 913 are striking, notwithstanding the disparity in time and in the amount of detail. One of the important implications of Georgiev's study is that the Roman accusations of Simeon's usurpation of imperial authority were more than a rhetorical device, and indicated that he had already proclaimed (and crowned?) himself emperor before meeting Patriarch Nikolaos outside Constantinople in August 913.⁹⁸⁸ In other words, the patriarch did not so much make Simeon an emperor, as recognize him as such, perhaps taking the opportunity to qualify him as emperor of his own people, just like emperor Mikhaēl I's envoys had done with Charlemagne a century earlier.

Given the rivers of ink already expended on the subject, it is not surprising that some scholars would cautiously resign themselves to noting the variety in interpretations.⁹⁸⁹ As we have seen, the two chronicle traditions that describe the meeting between Simeon and Patriarch Nikolaos differ in its *implied* location. According to the Logothete, Simeon had opened negotiations for peace from the Hebdomon southwest of Constantinople, and after (or while?) his sons were with Kōnstantinos VII at the Blakhernai within the city, Patriarch Nikolaos went out (*exēlthe*) to meet and crown Simeon with the patriarchal veil. Skylitzēs, on the other hand, notes an exchange of suitable hostages and has

⁹⁸⁸ Georgiev 2001: 13-15; compare Nikolov 2006: 132-134; for the primary sources, see Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letter* 5 (30-33), attempting to dissuade Simeon from usurpation (*tyrannis*) of the empire, and the *Oration*, 274-275.

⁹⁸⁹ Toynbee 1996: 366 n. 2, accepts a coronation (contra Mōyseidou 1995: 79), but cautiously states that we do not know "whether this coronation was genuine or sham, or whether the Patriarch crowned the Khan as 'Caesar' or as 'Emperor of the Romans' or as 'Emperor of the Bulgars' or just as 'Emperor.'" Note, however, that Toynbee was unaware of the import of the *Oration* of 927; Slavova 2010: 239-251.

Simeon come into the city for the banquet at the Blakhernai palace. Proceeding directly to the coronation, Skylitzes seemingly implies that it took place at the Blakhernai. Some scholars declared a preference for Skylitzes' account as more coherent and placed the ceremony at the Blakhernai palace within the walls.⁹⁹⁰ But in fact, it is the opposite. First, Skylitzēs betrays a lack of coherence, mentioning Simeon's departure with his sons, after having failed to mention them earlier in his narrative. Second, it is easier to suppose that a careless author might imagine Simeon in the reception at the Blakhernai, than to imagine him absent and represented by his two sons. Third, that Simeon, all the while claiming the imperial title, would have been allowed into Constantinople, is impossible to believe.⁹⁹¹ Fourth, while suitable hostages would have been exchanged in any case, one wonders what hostages would have been suitable enough if Simeon were to enter the city himself.⁹⁹² Fifth, the Logothete's statement that Patriarch Nicholas went out of the city to meet Simeon would be rendered senseless if we were to accept the account of Skylitzes, where the Logothete ought to be more trustworthy, being closer to the original sources and the events. Speaking of hostages, it might be noted that *if* Simeon's sons remained at Constantinople while Nikolaos went out to meet their father, *they* might have served as hostages for Nikolaos' safety.

The meeting between Simeon and Nikolaos doubtless took place outside Constantinople. And unless we fathom a ridiculous and rather humiliating image of Simeon waiting in front of the Blakhernai Gate while his sons were entertained by the Byzantine court, Nikolaos must have made his way to Simeon at the Hebdomon. Long used as a military parade ground, the Hebdomon would

⁹⁹⁰ Zlatarski 1929: 816; Dölger 1939: 228-229 n. 2.

⁹⁹¹ With Runciman 1930: 156 n. 3, Karlin-Hayter 1968: 34, and Shepard 1989: 39 n. 103.

⁹⁹² With Karlin-Hayter 1968: 34. Compare the careful arrangements for Simeon's meeting with the Byzantine emperor Rōmanos I Lakapēnos at Kosmidion *outside* Constantinople in 923 or 924, described by Symeōn Logothetēs 136.29-37 (320-324).

have been a suitable location for Simeon's headquarters and, as noted by Chrysos and Shepard, its past association with imperial coronations made it a suitable place for what happened next: Nikolaos' coronation of Simeon.⁹⁹³

Now that we can be reasonably certain of where our episode took place, we may revisit the more convoluted issue of what happened during it. The Logothete's very general sketch of the ceremony simply had Simeon bow his head before the patriarch, who crowned Simeon with the patriarchal veil (*epirription*) instead of a crown (*stemma*). This is fully borne out by the fuller but more allegorical language of the oration *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*. Simeon, already crowned, demanded obeisance (*proskynēsis*) from all, as appropriate to an emperor. But Patriarch Nikolaos excluded those members of the Senate who were present, declaring that Romans could not perform obeisance to an emperor who was not Roman. Nevertheless, Nikolaos invited Simeon to wear his makeshift (*perinoēthen*) crown and receive the obeisance of his own, i.e., Bulgarian, retinue.

The orator refers to Simeon's headgear on two occasions and in two different ways. In the first instance, *Haidou kynēe*, "Hadian helmet," which Jenkins translated as a "helmet of darkness," might well be an unsuitable reference to the patriarchal headgear.⁹⁹⁴ In Greek myth the attribute of the god of the Netherworld, this headdress had the ability to make its wearer invisible. Whatever the intended meaning, the implications seem negative, and might well refer to an imperial crown Simeon had "usurped" before reaching Constantinople.⁹⁹⁵ But as to the second instance, there can be no

⁹⁹³ Chrysos 1975: 171-173; Shepard 1989: 22, 40-41 n. 111. For the Hebdomon see also McCormick 1986: 155, 212-213 n. 87. For Simeon's familiarity with ancient history, see Nicholas I, *Letter 20* (134-137).

⁹⁹⁴ With Karlin-Hayter 1968: 30.

⁹⁹⁵ With Georgiev 2001: 11, but without necessarily accepting this as a pun on "precious helmet."

doubt that Simeon's "makeshift" (or "improvised" / "contrived") crown is the patriarch's *epirription*.⁹⁹⁶ But did that render the coronation invalid?

If we can accept Georgiev's recourse to the description of Manouël II's coronation in 1391 as a pertinent parallel (it cannot be called precedent), the use of the patriarch's veil instead of the crown would have made no difference to the legality of the ceremony. If, on the other hand, we cannot trust it to apply to the tenth century, we have to consider the fact that improvised coronations were not unusual. In 63 BC, King Pharnakēs II of Pontus (63–47 BC) had been crowned, in the absence of a proper diadem, with a broad papyrus leaf (*biblon plateian*) instead.⁹⁹⁷ More pertinent is the case of the Roman emperor Julian (360–363). Lacking a proper crown, the troops crowned him with a military officer's torque (*torquis*), though only after he had rejected as improper earlier proposals to use his wife's neck ornament (*colli decus*) or a horse's frontlet (*phalera*).⁹⁹⁸ Henry III of England (1216–1272) was crowned with his mother's chaplet (*serta*) instead of the unavailable royal crown.⁹⁹⁹ The most direct parallel to Simeon's coronation with the patriarchal veil in 913 comes from April 1285, when Cardinal Jean Cholet used his own *galero* hat to crown the French prince Charles of Valois king of Aragón.¹⁰⁰⁰ This, combined with Charles' failure in Aragón, earned him the derisive nickname "king of the hat" (*rey del xapeu*).¹⁰⁰¹ While this is no precedent for Simeon in 913, it would not be surprising if the eastern Roman accounts wanted to dismiss him as an "emperor of the veil."

Clearly, the form a crown took was far less important than the coronation itself. Julian's improvised coronation with a torque actually set a trend, acted out even within the comfort of the

⁹⁹⁶ With Shepard 1989: 41 n. 115.

⁹⁹⁷ Appian, *Mithridatic War* 12.16.111.

⁹⁹⁸ Ammianus 20.4.17-18; the English translations "chain" or "collar" are inexact.

⁹⁹⁹ Norgate 1912: 4-5, n. 1.

¹⁰⁰⁰ D'Esclot, *Cronica*, cap. 136 (682).

¹⁰⁰¹ Compare Muntaner, *Chronicle*, cap. 103, 297, 301 (vol. 1, 248, 297, 301).

palace, where proper crowns were readily available.¹⁰⁰² Moreover, while Kōnstantinos VII's *De Cerimoniis* provides a set of "model" coronations, the addition of detailed and varying descriptions of actual coronations from Late Antiquity betrays the fact that these ceremonies themselves varied according to the necessities of the time and the choices of the participants.¹⁰⁰³ Whatever the idiosyncrasies of Simeon's coronation by Patriarch Nikolaos in 913, it must have been considered acceptable to him. The implications of our sources are clear: Simeon had been recognized as emperor, apparently only of his own people, by the eastern Roman court, and left for home in peace.¹⁰⁰⁴ On the other hand, Patriarch Nikolaos had done everything possible to diminish the extent of this concession, by denying Simeon any claim to the *Roman* emperorship itself. Even so, Nikolaos' rapid fall from power in February 914 seems due to the unpopular concession he had made.¹⁰⁰⁵

To our Roman sources the answer as to why Simeon grasped at the Roman emperorship was an easy one, and their image of Simeon's megalomania has permeated even into the works of modern scholars.¹⁰⁰⁶ The historical background is more nuanced. As we have seen, the conversion of Simeon's father Boris I to Christianity under the auspices of the eastern Roman court made the Bulgarian ruler literally the Roman emperor's "spiritual son": Boris was baptized with the emperor Mikhaēl III (843–867) as godfather (by proxy), taking the Christian name Mihail.¹⁰⁰⁷ And, as we have seen, despite the constant references to Bulgarians and Romans as brothers in Christ, the Bulgarian monarch was designated the "spiritual son" of the Roman emperor. But pagan Bulgar rulers had "moved in

¹⁰⁰² MacCormack 1981: 194-195, 241-246, 352 n. 171.

¹⁰⁰³ Constantine VII, *Book of Ceremonies*, cap. 38-39, 91-96 (191-202, 410-440); Dagron, *Emperor*, 54-83.

¹⁰⁰⁴ The ever-increasing body of Simeon's lead seals includes a type describing him as "peacemaking emperor," which can hardly be placed at any other juncture in history: Shepard 1989: 32-33, 48 n. 206; Atanasov 1999: 93.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Compare Loud 1978: 118-119.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Compare Runciman 1930: 173-174, Browning 1975: 67, Norwich 1992: 145.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Symeōn Logothetēs 131.25 (243).

different circles.” Their title, although rendered in Greek by the seemingly lowly but generic *arkhōn* (“ruler”), was considered sovereign and rendered in Latin as *rex* (“king”).¹⁰⁰⁸ Informal texts in Greek gave the pagan Bulgar rulers a variety of titles, almost all generic, frequently *kyrios* (“lord”). Bulgar inscriptions in Greek used *arkhōn*, and after Christianization and the adoption of a Slavic script, its Slavonic and equally generic equivalent, *knjaz*, both qualified with “from God” even before the Conversion. A handful of inscriptions from the reigns of Omurtag (814–831) and Malamir (831–836) utilize the title *kanasybigi*, the meaning of which is still debated, but also seems to have struck a claim to sovereign authority, given the pictorial and textual contexts in which it is encountered, such as Omurtag’s gold medallion imitating the coin and seal imagery of Roman emperors.¹⁰⁰⁹ While the oft-cited title *khan* is not actually attested for Bulgar rulers (unless it be equated to *kana* in *kanasybigi*), there is some later evidence that suggests the use or equivalency of the title *qağan*.¹⁰¹⁰

Now, after Conversion, Bulgaria was under much stronger eastern Roman cultural and religious influence, which exacerbated issues related to the status and sovereignty of its ruler, who was flattered and put in his place at the same time by being described as the emperor’s “spiritual son.” Educated for a while at Constantinople, Simeon would have been acutely aware of Byzantine claims to superiority; as monarch he might well have resented the very notions which had been intended to impress and overawe him. Repeatedly insulted and underestimated by eastern Roman governments, Simeon seems to have identified recognition as fellow emperor and “brother” to the Roman emperor

¹⁰⁰⁸ E.g., Emperor Ludovico II: 388-389; Annales Laurissenses et Eginhardi, in *PL* 104, col. 479b: Crumas, rex Bulgarorum; col. 497c: Rex Bulgarorum Omortag; Anastasius Bibliothecarius, *Liber Pontificalis s.a.* 705: Terbellii, Bulgarorum regis; *s.a.* 858: gloriosus rex Bulgarius... Michaelis Bulgarici regis. Pope Nicholas I in *PL* 119, col. 1152d: regem Bulgarum Michaellem. Pope John VIII in *PL* 126, col. 758b: Dilectissimo filio nostro Michaeli Christianissimo regi.

¹⁰⁰⁹ The words are usually divided as *kana sybigi*. Curta 2006: 27-31; Beševliev 1992: 72-80. Minkova and Ivanov 2018 argue for dividing the title *kanas ybigi* (there is an incidence of *arkhōn ybigi*) and interpreting it as “ruler from God.”

¹⁰¹⁰ *Gesta regum Scavorum* 5 (22): quem lingua sua cagan appellabant, quod in lingua nostra resonat imperator. VMB: 199, Gagan Odeljjan.

as crucial to redressing this situation. We have already seen a reflection of this in the oration *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*: before the ceremony of 913 Simeon had rejected and usurped his “father,” the Roman emperor; when Simeon heads home after his coronation by Patriarch Nikolaos, our orator refers to him as the emperor’s “brother,” who has left Kōnstantinos VII to reign in peace. In the subsequent letters sent by Theodōros Daphnopatēs to Simeon on behalf of the new senior Roman emperor Rōmanos I Lakapēnos (920–944), we find a reminder that his “spiritual brother” Simeon had once “held the rank of son,” before renouncing this “spiritual sonship,” overturning the proper order, and declaring himself emperor.¹⁰¹¹

Insulted by the Roman emperor Alexandros and encouraged by the subsequent Doukas plot in Constantinople, Simeon apparently seized the opportunity to redress his position vis-à-vis the Roman court. He seems to have identified recognition as emperor (possibly *Roman* emperor) as the key to this reassessment and to more considerate treatment in future, but in the end he settled for an acceptable compromise: the coronation at the Hebdomon and recognition as emperor (apparently of the Bulgarians, *not* Romans) by the patriarch/regent Nikolaos Mystikos, the renewal of the earlier peace, and the promise of a dynastic marriage between Simeon’s daughter and the underage Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos.¹⁰¹² Simeon’s apparent satisfaction with the settlement seems to be reflected in his issue of a series of seals celebrating him as “peacemaking emperor” and omitting

¹⁰¹¹ Daphnopatēs, *Correspondence* 6 (69, 73).

¹⁰¹² The marital arrangement is largely inferred from a garbled reference in Eutykhios of Alexandria, *Annales*: col. 1151, §512, where, erroneously, we are told that Simeon wanted to marry his son to Kōnstantinos VII’s sister, and a non-specific reference by the patriarch Nikolaos I, in his letter no. 16 (108-109). See Runciman 1930: 299-301; Zlatarski 1927: 817-822; Božilov 1983: 108-110; Shepard 1989: 22-23. While Simeon clearly must have hoped for influence at Constantinople following Kōnstantinos VII’s marriage to his daughter, there is no reason to suppose he was aiming at the court dignity of *basileiopatōr*, which had been conferred only once before, to the father of an emperor’s mistress; if the brief conferral of the title to Kōnstantinos VII’s eventual father-in-law, Rōmanos Lakapēnos turned this into a pattern (it was the last instance of the title’s use), that happened after Simeon’s attempted marriage alliance.

any mention of Romans.¹⁰¹³ Repudiated soon afterwards by the new regency at Constantinople (headed by the empress-mother Zōē), the settlement of 913 established the new status of the Bulgarian monarch but also bedeviled relations between Bulgaria and the Roman Empire for the remainder of Simeon's reign.

The implications of the titles and familial relationships referred to in the *Oration* are relatively clear. Simeon, originally king (*arkhōn*) of Bulgaria and “spiritual son” of the Byzantine emperor, had become emperor (*basileus*) of Bulgaria and “spiritual brother.” This is not only to be inferred from the references in the *Oration* of 927 quoted above but is also supported by diplomatic letters sent from the Roman court to Simeon in the 920s, after the association of Rōmanos I Lakapēnos (920–944) on the throne alongside the young Kōnstantinos VII. The repudiation of the settlement of 913 by Zōē in the following year, and the rise of Rōmanos Lakapēnos to the throne in 919–920, had ruined Simeon's plans for the future of Bulgaro-Roman relations. This resulted in a decade-long war during which Simeon tried, among other things, to assert himself as “emperor of the Romans,” as advertised on his seals, and to secure the abdication or deposition of Rōmanos Lakapēnos, writing to that effect to the patriarch and to the senate.¹⁰¹⁴ Simeon won another signal victory over the Romans at Akhelos near the Black Sea in 917, and twice captured Adrianople, but although this undermined the regime of Zōē, it did not resolve matters to his satisfaction.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹³ Jordanov 2001: 46-48, who corrects an earlier interpretation by Mihajlov 1989-1990: 111-112; Shepard 1989: 32-33; Božilov and Gjuzelev 2006: 254; Totev 2006: 218-222. See also the discussion in Atanasov 1999: 62-96. The seal's inscriptions read: Ἐπινοπυδὸς βασιλέος πολὰ τ(ὰ ἔτη)/Συμεὸν βασιλεὺ(ς) πολὰ αὐξί τ(ὰ ἔτη), reflecting both Byzantine imperial acclamations (*De cerimoniis* I §77, 373: εἰρηνοποιῶν βασιλέων πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη) and an epithet used at the acclamation and in the style of Charlemagne (Charlemagne, *Letters*, no. 35 (552): *magnus et pacificus imperator*).

¹⁰¹⁴ Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letters*, no. 18 (122-123) and 28 (190-197).

¹⁰¹⁵ Fine 1983: 148-153.

After almost a decade of war, a meeting with Rōmanos I at Kosmidion on the Golden Horn just northwest of Constantinople in either 923 or 924 attempted to find some resolution, but if it did, it was only tentative. One aspect of the meeting were the elaborate preparations, with a wooden platform divided by a wall but pierced by a window for the two emperors to meet, one coming by land, the other by sea; remembering an ambush on his ancestor Krum a century earlier, Simeon had the platform inspected before the meeting; hostages were exchanged; Rōmanos sought the protection of a holy relic wrapped around his shoulders. As Simeon arrived at the platform, he was escorted by select troops arrayed in parade armor, who proceeded to acclaim him emperor in the Roman tongue — whether that meant Greek or Latin, we are not told — in full view of the senators looking on from the walls of Constantinople.¹⁰¹⁶ Rōmanos rebuked Simeon for shedding Christian blood and reminded him of his own mortality, in the hope to induce him to make peace. He offered tribute in exchange for peace, but no concessions of land or of the Roman imperial title. Simeon agreed to conclude a treaty and left after receiving gifts. While the *two emperors* were still conversing, *two eagles* were seen to come together in the air above them and then part, one flying over Thrace, the other over Constantinople.¹⁰¹⁷

The Roman sources portray this as a triumph for the humble majesty of Rōmanos Lakapēnos, who made the presumptuous barbarian ashamed of himself, and saw him off from Constantinople

¹⁰¹⁶ Symeōn Logothetēs 136.33: παρεγένετο Συμεών πλήθος ἄπειρον ἐπαγόμενος εἰς πολλὰς διηρημένον παρατάξεις τῶν μὲν χρυσασπίδων καὶ χρυσοδοράτων, τῶν δὲ ἀργυρασπίδων καὶ ἀργυροδοράτων, τῶν δὲ πάσῃ ὄπλων χροιά κεκοσμημένων, πάντων καταπεφραγμένων σιδήρω, οἱ μέσον αὐτῶν διειληφότες τὸν Συμεών ὡς βασιλέα εὐφήμερον τῇ τῶν Ῥωμαίων φωνῇ. Fine 1983: 153-155. The date of the meeting is problematic because the cited chronological indicators do not agree with each other (September, 2 Indiction)

¹⁰¹⁷ Symeōn Logothetēs 136.37: δύο φασὶν αἰετοῦς, τῶν βασιλέων ὀμιλούντων, ἄνωθεν αὐτῶν ὑπερπτήναι κλάγξαι τε καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους συμμίξαι καὶ παραυτίκα διαζευχθῆναι ἀλλήλων, καὶ τὸν μὲν ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν ἔλθειν, τὸν δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν Θράκην διαπτῆναι. τοῦτο οἱ ἀκριβῶς τὰ τοιαῦτα σκοποῦντες οὐ καλὸν ἔκριναν οἰωνόν· ἀσυμβάτους γὰρ ἐπὶ τῇ εἰρήνῃ ἀμφοτέρους διαλυθήσεσθαι ἔφησαν.

with the relatively small price of diplomatic gifts. Simeon may have preferred a truce with Rōmanos to settle affairs in Serbia, where yet another Bulgarian protégé had been suborned by Roman diplomacy.¹⁰¹⁸ The seemingly discouraging omen of the eagles, in the Logothete’s narrative is interpreted by M. Whittow as a possible reflection of the language of a court oration that points to a much more favorable outcome for Simeon: the two eagles flying above the two emperors strongly point to mutual recognition: presumably, Simeon was recognized as emperor of the Bulgarians in the expectation that he would drop his claims to the Roman emperorship.¹⁰¹⁹

In this period, in several letters written by the patriarch Nikolaos I Mystikos attempting to mollify Simeon and induce him to peace, we find reference to the emperor Rōmanos I Lakapēnos writing to Simeon as “brother,” clearly reflecting the change in the monarch’s status.¹⁰²⁰ More explicitly, there are the three preserved letters written by Theodōros Daphnopatēs on behalf of Rōmanos to Simeon in c. 925–927.¹⁰²¹ Here the Bulgarian monarch is reminded that although he had once “held the rank of son,” he had more recently “renounced this spiritual sonship,” overturning the proper order and declaring himself emperor.¹⁰²² In one of the more entertaining expressions of medieval diplomacy, Daphnopatēs pointed out that Simeon was as justified to title himself “emperor of the Romans,” as to call himself “lord of the entire Earth” or “caliph of the Saracens.”¹⁰²³ Despite

¹⁰¹⁸ Fine 1983: 154.

¹⁰¹⁹ Whittow 1996: 291-292; for the view that Simeon had been humbled and defeated by the encounter, see Runciman 1929: 170-171 and 1930: 92-93; Jenkins 1966a: 243; Ostrogorsky 1969: 265; Browning 1975: 67; Treadgold 1997: 478.

¹⁰²⁰ Patriarch Nikolaos I, *Letters*, no. 25 (181) “ἀδελφόν σε ὀνομάζει καὶ φίλον ἡγαπημένον; no. 30 (206): τὸν φιλόχριστον ἡμῶν βασιλέα τὸν σοὶ ποθοῦμενον ἀδελφόν; no. 31 (212-214, quoting Rōmanos): γράψον πρὸς τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν.

¹⁰²¹ Theodōros Daphnopatēs, *Letters*, nos. 5-7.

¹⁰²² Theodōros Daphnopatēs, *Letters*, no. 6 (73) πῶς ἐν υἱοῦ τάξει διατελῶν, τῆς πνευματικῆς ἐκείνης ἀποτηδήσας υἰότητα ... καὶ [τὴν] τάξιν συγγέας καὶ ... β[ασι]λέα ἑαυτὸν ... ἀνη[γ]όρευ[σας].

¹⁰²³ Theodōros Daphnopatēs, *Letters*, no. 5 (59) Εἰ τοίνυν βασιλεὺς ἐπιθυμῆς καλεῖσθαι Ῥωμαίων, ἔξεστί σοι βουλομένῳ καὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπάσης κύριον ἑαυτὸν ἀναγορεῦν, ἧς οὐδὲ τὸ βραχυτάτον μέρος ἔσχεις εἰς κατοικίαν, κἂν μέγα φρονεῖς· εἰ βούλει δέ, καὶ ἀμερουμένη τῶν Σαρακηνῶν, ὅπως καὶ μᾶλλον ἧς φοβερὸς τοῖς ἀκούουσιν.

such castigation, the Bulgarian ruler is consistently and repeatedly referred to as Rōmanos’ “spiritual brother” in all three letters.¹⁰²⁴ Simeon is condemned for claiming the title “emperor of Romans,” yet he is grudgingly allowed to call himself “emperor of the Bulgarians,” though not without the implication that he had no legitimate right to an imperial title.¹⁰²⁵ In seeming contradiction to his own assertion of being willing to recognize Simeon as Bulgarian emperor, the Roman emperor is made to ask rhetorically “how could there be two emperors, as you vainly endeavor, different in origin, unlike in character, and (both) exalted by the imperial dignity?”¹⁰²⁶

This reflects a bargaining position: by suggesting that Simeon does not really have the right to call himself an emperor at all, the Roman government was hoping that he would be satisfied with recognition as emperor of the Bulgarians, a concession Rōmanos I, like Nikolaos Mystikos before him, was willing to make. By simultaneously questioning and allowing Simeon’s imperial title (in reference to the Bulgarians), the Roman court was seeking to force him to abandon his claim to being a Roman emperor. Moreover, if the Roman emperor were to concede to the Bulgarian monarch an imperial title that was arguably not proper (i.e., Roman), the concession, repugnant as it might have been, would have been somewhat mitigated.

¹⁰²⁴ Theodōros Daphnopatēs, *Letters*, no. 5: πνευματικέ μου ἀδελφέ (59, 61, 63), alongside the more general expressions of fraternity, like ὑμῶν πνευματικῆς ἀδελφότητος (57), σῆς ἀδελφότητος (57), ὑμῶν ἀδελφότητος (57), σὴ ἀδελφότης (63), ὑμετέραν ἀδελφότητα (67); no. 6: πνευματικῶ μου ἀδελφῶ (69), etc.; no. 7: πνευματικοῦ μου ἀδελφοῦ (81), etc.

¹⁰²⁵ Theodōros Daphnopatēs, *Letters*, no. 6 (73): ὡς οὐ περὶ τοῦ μηδ’ ὄλως καλεῖσθαι σε βασιλέα γεγράφαμεν, ἀλλὰ περὶ τοῦ σεαυτὸν γράφειν βασιλέα Ῥωμαίων. In the following statement, the writer states that in his own country Simeon could do as he pleases, but not quite properly, because he did not have an ancestral right to the imperial title: ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν τῇ ἰδίᾳ πατρίδι ἔξεστί σοι ποιεῖν ὃ βούλει· εἰ δὲ δεῖ τάληθές εἰπεῖν, οὐδ’ ἐν αὐτῇ. Πόθεν γάρ σοι τὸ τοιοῦτον προσαρμοσθήσεται ὄνομα; Ἀπὸ προγόνων;

¹⁰²⁶ Theodōros Daphnopatēs, *Letters*, no. 7 (73): Πῶς δὲ καὶ δύο βασιλεῖς ἔσονται, καθὼς αὐτὸς ματαιοπονεῖς, καὶ γένει διεστηκότες καὶ τρόποις διηρημένοι καὶ τιμῇ βασιλείας ὑπερκείμενοι;

One might ask why Simeon continued to insist on being Roman emperor — there is no evidence that he ever titled himself specifically Bulgarian emperor.¹⁰²⁷ The standard answer seems to be his impertinence, megalomania or perhaps even desperation at a cherished goal slipping away.¹⁰²⁸ There is a possible alternative explanation in Simeon's poorly understood and poorly documented western contacts.¹⁰²⁹ We know exceedingly little about relations between Bulgaria and the western powers, including the Papacy after the end of the Photian Schism and the reign of Simeon's older brother Vladimir, who was allied with the German king against the Moravians. Some of the lines of communication would have become more tenuous by the transfer of the Magyars to Pannonia; but Simeon had lands, allies, and vassals as far as the Adriatic. Two of his father's nominees for the archbishopric of Bulgaria, whose nomination had not been approved by the Popes at the time, ended as Popes themselves — Marinus I (882–884) and Formosus (891–896). One might imagine some contact with them, even if it were only a question of diplomatic niceties.

We have more definite evidence from the pontificate of John X (Ioannes X, 914–928). In 922/923, Patriarch Nikolaos wrote to Simeon that he had detained at Constantinople two visiting papal legates, Theophylactus and Carus, who had been directed by the Pope to go on to Simeon's court and arrange peace between Bulgarians and Romans. The stated mission was convenient for the Roman court, but the detention of the legates, ostensibly for their safety, might suggest a more nefarious purpose. Slightly later, still at the behest of Pope John X, a legate named Madalbert completed a two-year mission to Bulgaria before convoking the Second Synod of Split in 928.¹⁰³⁰

¹⁰²⁷ Fine 1983: 155-156.

¹⁰²⁸ Shepard 2006:

¹⁰²⁹ Mladjov 1999; see also Vačkova 2005.

¹⁰³⁰ Farlati 1765: 103.

Madalbert's purpose in Bulgaria is unknown. It has been suggested that he was tasked with making peace between Simeon and the Croatian king Tomislav, a project close to the heart of a pope with interests in Illyricum. In exchange for Simeon's cooperation, the Papacy might have made concessions to Simeon, perhaps including recognition of his imperial title and the patriarchal dignity of his archbishop.¹⁰³¹

The only source suggesting anything along these lines is the early thirteenth-century correspondence between Kalojan of Bulgaria (1197–1207) and Pope Innocent III (Innocentius III, 1198–1216). Kalojan wrote to Pope Innocent,

Since it has pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to make me lord and emperor of all Bulgaria and Wallachia, I have enquired in the writings of our ancients and the books and laws of our predecessors, emperors of blessed memory, how they established the kingdom of the Bulgarians and the imperial foundation, and, on careful investigation, we have found in their writings that those emperors of the Bulgarians, Simeon, Petăr, and Samuil, our predecessors, received the crown of the empire and the patriarchal blessing from the most Holy Roman Church of God...¹⁰³²

While it is unlikely that Simeon and his successors received their imperial crowns from the Papacy, if Kalojan was inventing the whole precedent completely without any foundation in fact, this could have risked his entire diplomatic enterprise. Pope Innocent III was unable to verify Kalojan's claims — he apparently found some references to relations with and gifts from Boris I Mihail, who was a king, not emperor — and the Pope was not likely to create or recognize another emperor in the geopolitical situation of the early thirteenth century (although the Fourth Crusade would soon present him with a *fait accompli*). Accordingly, Innocent III sent a legate to crown Kalojan king (and

¹⁰³¹ Zlatarski 1929: 507–509, 513–514; Runciman 1930: 173–174; Browning 1975: 67.

¹⁰³² *Gesta Innocentii III* no. 70 (102).

his archbishop primate of Bulgaria), but Kalojan wrote back thanking the Pope for crowning him emperor.¹⁰³³

Given Simeon's preoccupation with his title and status in the tenth century, it is unlikely that he would have settled for anything less than the title he was already being accorded by Constantinople; if the Papacy needed concessions or cooperation, it might have had to provide at least tacit agreement to Simeon's imperial claims. As we have seen, from a western (and for that matter an eastern) point of view, the emperorship was implicitly Roman. That created a problem with the very notion of a Bulgarian (or Frankish) emperor; but it also might have meant that the title emperor did not need to be qualified with references to specific peoples. Especially given the long vacancy on the imperial throne in the west following the murder of the Italian king and emperor Berengario I (888–924), it is remotely possible, that Simeon was given some imperial recognition by the Papacy.¹⁰³⁴ Is this why he continued to assert the Romanness of his emperorship and to demand recognition as ruler of the west precisely at this point? There is too little concrete evidence to answer this question, but between Simeon's study of history and Bulgaria's intensive contacts with the west during his youth, it is unlikely that he was unaware of such possibilities.¹⁰³⁵

Simeon might have been praised as “great among emperors” and “new Ptolemy” as well as “new David” by writers at his court, but his work was completed by his much less glamorous son and successor.¹⁰³⁶ The reluctant concession of a (non-Roman) imperial title and brotherly status for the Bulgarian monarch by the eastern Roman court offers a striking parallel to the Roman reaction to the

¹⁰³³ Sweeney 1973, with a special focus on the relationship to Hungary.

¹⁰³⁴ On Berengario of Friuli, see Wickham 1995: 168-177 and Rosenwein 1996.

¹⁰³⁵ More fully, Mladjov 1999.

¹⁰³⁶ Encomium on Simeon in *Simeonov Sbornik*: 35: ВЕЛИКЪИИ ВЪ ЦАРИХЪ СИМЕОНЪ. Rašev 2004.

imperial coronation of Charlemagne a century earlier, with the identical change in status of the Frankish rulers vis-à-vis the Roman emperor. As can be seen, concessions of imperial status were singularly repugnant to the Roman court. Scholars have observed that after the imperial coronation of Charlemagne, the Roman emperor began to consistently augment his title with the epithet “of the Romans”¹⁰³⁷; after that of Simeon, the Roman emperor began to invariably add the title *autokratōr*.¹⁰³⁸ As we have seen, neither element was actually novel: the emperors at Constantinople had always been Roman emperors, and *autokratōr* had been the original Greek rendering of Latin *imperator*, though forming only one of at least three standard titles that had long been used in combination to designate the extra-constitutional head of the Roman state.¹⁰³⁹ The increasingly consistent usage seems to reflect a conscious effort to assert the genuine, legitimate, and exclusive nature of Roman emperorship.

It should come as no surprise that the Roman court turned to other expedients in minimizing the symbolic extent of the unwelcome concessions of 913. Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos’ compendium *De cerimoniis* contains two sets of formulae for diplomatic exchanges with Bulgaria. The first set of formulae contains the questions posed by and to the Bulgarian emissaries to the Roman court. The *arkhōn* of Bulgaria is at first described as the “spiritual grandson” of the Roman

¹⁰³⁷ Stein 1930: 182-183. As Ostrogorsky 1969: 199 n. 2 and Röscher 1978: 112-116, point out, there are plenty of exceptions showing use of the title “emperor of the Romans” between the reigns of Hērakleios (610–641) and Mikhaēl I (811–813), but “it remains true that before 812 the title of Basileus seldom appeared with the addition Ῥωμαίων, and after 812 seldom appeared without this, so that the simple designation of Basileus was gradually superseded by the title βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων.” Compare Treitingner 1969: 187-188, and Bréhier 1949: 47.

¹⁰³⁸ Ostrogorsky 1935: 112 (1970: 295).

¹⁰³⁹ Since the accession of Domitian (81–96), Roman emperors were invariably titled “Imperator Caesar [*name(s)*] Augustus” (in Greek Ἀυτοκράτωρ Καῖσαρ [*name(s)*] Σεβαστός), excluding any additional victory titles and wishful epithets. Latin made little distinction between names and titles here, which was all the more helpful, given the somewhat informal authority of the first Roman emperors. The formal and virtually exclusive use of βασιλεὺς in imperial documents is dated to the reign of Hērakleios (610–641), although it had been used informally or semi-formally in the Greek provinces for centuries: Bréhier 1949: 45-46.

emperor. We are then told that his title has changed, and he is now described as the “spiritual son” of the Roman emperor.¹⁰⁴⁰ Another change is recorded in the second set of formulae, dealing with the address of letters to the Bulgarian ruler. Here the *arkhōn* of Bulgaria is described as “spiritual son” of the Roman emperor, followed by the notation that in the current form of address he is to be styled “the lord so-and-so, emperor of Bulgaria”.¹⁰⁴¹

These addresses are seemingly inconsistent with the straightforward progression of titles discussed previously. To resolve these inconsistencies, we should consider the position of Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos. The embarrassing concessions to Bulgaria’s rulers in 913 and 927 represented the policy of his political enemies, and yet were done partly in his name. On a more personal level, the Bulgarian wars had provided the setting for the exile of his mother and the rise to power of Rōmanos Lakapēnos; the Bulgarian peace and dynastic marriage had done little better, for that was the setting for the advancement of Rōmanos’ son Khristophoros ahead of Kōnstantinos VII himself: hitherto treated as the second seniormost emperor, he was now demoted to third. As a Roman, as a historian, and as a man, Kōnstantinos VII had various reasons to put Bulgaria in its place where he could, that is in literary output.¹⁰⁴²

That would explain the use of the original Roman title for the rulers of Bulgaria, “*arkhōn* from God”. As we have seen, this title had been replaced with an imperial one by Simeon I in 913, which had been accepted, albeit grudgingly, by Patriarch Nikolaos Mystikos and Emperor Rōmanos Lakapēnos. However, we find the title *arkhōn* in continued use in the Byzantine literary sources,

¹⁰⁴⁰ *De cerimoniis* II 47 681:3-19, 682:1-17: πνευματικός πάππος, πνευματικός ἔγγονος → ἐλθόντος εἰς υἰότητα, πνευματικός υἱός.

¹⁰⁴¹ *De cerimoniis* II 48 690:6-16: πεποθημένον καὶ πνευματικὸν ἡμῶν τέκνον → πεποθημένον καὶ πνευματικὸν ἡμῶν τέκνον τὸν κύριον ὁ δεῖνα βασιλέα Βουλγαρίας.

¹⁰⁴² Shepard 1995a and 2008: 508; Todorov 2004.

even after the peace and dynastic marriage between the Roman and Bulgarian courts in 927. Here the official chronicler, possibly our friend Theodōros Daphnopatēs, calls Simeon’s son Petār I (927–969) *arkhōn*, and only lets the term emperor (*basileus*) slip in when describing the honor done to his Lakapēnid bride Maria.¹⁰⁴³ To a conservative Roman court the innovation was as improper as it was unwelcome, and it could safely be slighted in at least some domestic documents, though not in actual official practice.¹⁰⁴⁴

I would suggest that the same attitude of the Roman court led to a modification, by a sort of *oikonomia*, of the spiritual relationship between the Roman and Bulgarian ruler. This modification entailed replacing the term “spiritual brother,” proper for a fellow emperor, with the “spiritual grandson” and “spiritual son” of *De Cerimoniis*. The justification for this was readily available in the marriage of Petār I of Bulgaria to Rōmanos I Lakapēnos’ granddaughter Maria. Having become the grandson-in-law of the Roman emperor, Petār could now be described in less symbolic and more familial terms as a “grandson”, without any overt slighting of his status. When supreme power passed to Rōmanos’ son-in-law Kōnstantinos VII Porphyrogennētos, the Roman emperor could start referring to Petār as his “spiritual son”. While this designation fell quite short of the actual familial relationship, in which Petār was married to the niece of Kōnstantinos VII’s wife, it reflected the generational change in the accession of Rōmanos’ notional “son” on the Roman throne. It may be worth noting that the Bulgarian emissaries are not recorded as referring to the emperor as the

¹⁰⁴³ Theophanēs Continuatus, VI 23 412:2-3 (Πέτρον υἱὸν αὐτοῦ προβαλόμενος ἄρχοντα: his son Petār succeeding as *arkhōn*); 415:7-8 (χαίρουσα δὲ ἐν οἷς βασιλεῖ προσήρμοστο ἀνδρὶ: happy in marrying a man who is an emperor). Much the same text appears, however, in Symeōn Logothetēs 136.51: χαίρουσα δέ, οἷς βασιλεῖ προσηρμόσθη ἀνδρὶ καὶ δέσποινα Βουλγάρων προσηγορεύθη.

¹⁰⁴⁴ As indicated by the *intitulatio* of Patriarch Theophylaktos’ letter to “Petār, emperor of Bulgaria”: Patriarch Theophylaktos: 184, Πέτρῳ Βουλγαρίας βασιλεῖ.

“spiritual father” of their sovereign.¹⁰⁴⁵ Perhaps Kōnstantinos VII’s re-definition of Petăr’s status was not accepted at the Bulgarian court — or perhaps it was not noticed, if it had remained only on parchment.

This mutation of the simpler structure of relationships in the “Family of Rulers” reflects the ability of the Roman court to creatively circumvent any uncomfortable implications of its own conceptual system. The increasing frequency of dynastic marriages between Roman imperial houses and other monarchs beginning in the tenth century provided an expanding range of possibilities for describing the relationship between monarchs. In addition to providing new possibilities, the appearance of actual familial ties resulted in the insertion of additional relationship indicators. Let us consider a couple of examples from the first half of the fourteenth century.

In 1319, the eastern Roman Empire was governed simultaneously by three generations of Palaiologan emperors as co-rulers, namely Andronikos II (1272–1328), his son Mikhaēl IX (1294–1320) and his son Andronikos III (1313–1341). In March and October of that year, the three emperors individually issued chrysobulls for the monastery of Hilandar on Mount Athos, putting into effect the endowments intended for the monastery by the Serbian King Stefan Uroš II Milutin (1282–1321). Milutin had married Simōnis, a daughter of Andronikos II, two decades earlier. In the chrysobulls, the Serbian king appears as the “son and in-law” of Andronikos II, as the “brother and in-law” of Mikhaēl IX, and as the “uncle” of Andronikos III. These descriptions are coincidentally close to our own expressions of true familial relationships, but the “son” and “brother” we find in the first two cases are in fact extensions of the original language of the “Family of Rulers.”

¹⁰⁴⁵ *De cerimoniis* II 47 682:3-4: Πῶς ἔχει ὁ μέγας καὶ ὑψηλὸς βασιλεὺς ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ χρυσοῦ καθεζόμενος θρόνου.

The departure entails the reflection of generational change, and the insertion of the actual relationship with the terms “in-law” and “uncle.”

In 1325, Emperor Andronikos II issued two chrysobulls to the monastery of Zographou on Mount Athos, putting into effect a donation of the Bulgarian emperor Mihail Asen III (“Mihail Šišman,” 1323–1330). The ruler of Bulgaria had recently married Theodōra, a daughter of Andronikos’ deceased son Mikhaēl IX. Perhaps because the orphaned Theodōra was now in essence the “daughter” of her grandfather, the Roman emperor could describe Mihail Asen III as his “beloved son”.¹⁰⁴⁶

A different relationship emerges from a chrysobull of the Bulgarian emperor Ivan Aleksandăr (1331–1371) issued to the same monastery in 1342. Ivan Aleksandăr refers to the late Roman emperor Andronikos III as his “beloved brother and in-law” and to Andronikos’ son Iōannēs V (1341–1376, 1379–1390, 1390–1391) as his “beloved nephew and in-law”.¹⁰⁴⁷ In terms of actual relationships, Ivan Aleksandăr’s son and co-ruler Mihail Asen IV had married Maria, the daughter of Andronikos III and sister of Iōannēs V. This, perhaps more so than the original fraternity of emperors in the “Family of Rulers,” allowed Ivan Aleksandăr to describe Andronikos III as his “brother.” It is also worth noting that in this case, it was the Bulgarian ruler who took advantage of the generational change on the Roman throne. What is possibly novel is that Iōannēs V, in his chrysobulls confirming Ivan Aleksandăr’s donations, did not feel himself slighted in describing the Roman emperor as his “beloved uncle and in-law”.¹⁰⁴⁸ This was only possible because of the gradual

¹⁰⁴⁶ Zographou Greek chrysobulls 22:1-2 (July 1325), 23:1-2 (September 1325), περιπόθητος υἱός.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Zographou Slavic chrysobull 3:48-53 (January 1342), ВЪЗЪЛЮБЕНЪМЪ БРАТОМЪ И СВАТОМЪ, ВЪЗЪЛЮБЕНАГО ДНЕПЕСА И СВАТА.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Zographou Greek chrysobulls 31:1-3, 32:1-3 (January 1342), 36:1-2 (October 1344), περιπόθητος θεῖος καὶ συμπένθερος.

transformation of the original “Family of Rulers” into an even more flexible and less theoretical system.

The present discussion has addressed an important aspect of the perception of the “Family of Rulers” as construed by medieval monarchs. The evidence suggests that this notional system of “international” relationships was subject to revision and evolution, matching the necessities and realities of the times. Starting as a very simple and almost fully theoretical concept, the “Family of Rulers” became increasingly complex due to the Roman court’s efforts to circumvent unwelcome implications of changes in the status of neighboring monarchs. However, the increasingly frequent creation of true familial ties between Roman and foreign monarchs began to obscure the limited original categories of symbolic family relationships. By the Palaiologan age, traces of the notional “Family of Rulers” had become largely a supplement to simplified descriptions evoking actual relationship.

Back in tenth-century Bulgaria, Petăr I’s Roman marriage and long peace with the Roman Empire provided long-term stability for both societies, although both continued to be subjected to natural and hostile threats. The end of Petăr’s long reign would lie under the shadow of foreign invasion and a doomed future. However, that came at the end of an unprecedented four decades of stability. Unlike his father, Simeon, Petăr was able to lay aside the chief causes for continued friction with the eastern Roman Empire without surrendering anything he needed. He was recognized as emperor of his own people, which is as much as Simeon had ever achieved where it came to external recognition. Petăr did not need to be *Roman* emperor, and therefore he could forego the diplomatic friction or outright hostilities implicit in maintaining such a claim. Unlike Simeon, Petăr is actually

attested as Bulgarian emperor on his seals, both in Greek and in Cyrillic.¹⁰⁴⁹ As we have seen, his description as the Roman emperor’s spiritual grandson or son now sidestepped the original basic formula requiring brotherhood for parity. But it did not eliminate it. An argument that the disappearance of the phrase “from God” from the Bulgarian monarch’s title as recorded in the dubiously accurate entries in *De cerimoniis* conveyed his loss of sovereignty — implicitly to the eastern Roman emperor¹⁰⁵⁰ — is unwarranted. Petăr’s “humble” seals proclaiming him *basileus eusebēs* (“pious emperor”) or *despotēs* have their exact parallels in eastern Roman sigillography and numismatics. Moreover, at least one series of seals bears the abbreviation for *autokratōr* or *Augoustos*, either term indisputably imperial. As for his missing authority from God, it is described as exactly that, God-driven (*theokybernetēs*) and “friend of Christ,” another standard imperial designation, in a letter addressed to him by Patriarch Theophylaktos of Constantinople, which also addresses Petăr as the *basileus* of Bulgaria.¹⁰⁵¹ It is the same title, transcribed phonetically by Liudprand of Cremona as *vasileus*, that Petăr was accorded at Constantinople in 968, to the bishop’s annoyance, since it was being denied his master, Otto I.¹⁰⁵²

Petăr’s abandonment of his father’s *Roman* imperial title resulted in improved international relations and, simultaneously, a new, national (if we may use the term) emperorship for the Bulgarians. Whatever ideological functions the title conveyed to literate and illiterate audiences of the time — and at the very least it evoked divinely-anointed Biblical monarchs — this was now

¹⁰⁴⁹ Jordanov 2001: 58-60, Πέτρος καὶ Μαρίας βασιλεῖς Βουλγαρῶν, and Πέτρος καὶ Μαρίας ἐν Χριστῷ αυτοκράτορες Βουλγαρῶν; 65-66, Петръ и Царь България (the readings supply the omitted letters in the labels).

¹⁰⁵⁰ Thus, Beševliev 1963: 333; Bakalov 1983: 37.

¹⁰⁵¹ Patriarch Theophylaktos: 184, Πέτρῳ Βουλγαρίας βασιλεῖ; 185, σῆς θεοκυβερνήτου ἐξουσίας. On *theokybernetēs*, see Treitinger 1969: 43; on *philokhristos* see Treitinger 1969: 215; Rösch 1978: 65.

¹⁰⁵² Liudprand, *Embassy* 19: Petrus, Bulgarorum vasileus. Liudprand himself considered Petăr a king, *Embassy* 16: Petro Bulgarorum rege. For more positive appraisals of Petăr, see Fine 1978 and the volume edited by Leszka and Marinow 2018.

provided at national, if not local level. It also functioned as an innovation in the concept of the Transfer of Empire (*translatio imperii*).¹⁰⁵³ Whether based on Biblical or Ptolemaic precedent, this entailed the linear succession of great monarchies. In its classic medieval manifestation, the Transfer involved the passing of Empire from the Romans to the “Greeks” and then to the Franks. However, by the thirteenth century (though possibly earlier), we find a non-exclusive variant of such relationships imagined in Bulgaria. A genre of literature called *Razumnik*, containing collections of questions and answers about the natural and spiritual world, listed a number of peoples, but among them, “In the world there are three empires, like the Holy Trinity in Heaven... first, the Greek Empire, second, the Alamannian, third, the Bulgarian Empire; in the Greek Empire is the Father; in the Alamannian is the Son; in the Bulgarian, the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰⁵⁴ Like the Bulgarian translation and extension of an eastern Roman list of rulers reaching “all the way to Zōē and Kōnstantinos, the Greek emperors,” during the time when Simeon was already claiming an imperial title (914–919),¹⁰⁵⁵ the Bulgarian emperorship (at least once it was defined as Bulgarian as opposed to Roman) evidently did not aim at being exclusive. In that, it appears to reflect its original purpose of asserting parity and commanding respect, issues integral to the notions of hierarchically differentiated monarchy and the symbolic language of kinship that we have explored. Unlike the Frankish approach, however, the Bulgarian one did not seek exclusive possession of the implicitly or explicitly Roman emperorship.

¹⁰⁵³ E.g., Nótári 2011.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Tăpkova-Zaimova 1983: 392. In these Slavic texts, “Greek” is equivalent to “Roman.”

¹⁰⁵⁵ Simeonov Sbornik: 721–725.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

What is an emperor, and why is he somehow greater than mere kings? That is a question that would naturally arise when encountering the notion of the supreme status of an emperor and the theoretically universal quality of his rule in medieval narratives and diplomatic exchanges. It provoked a response, designed to limit its political impact without necessarily challenging its basic assumption: that the king is emperor in his own kingdom.¹⁰⁵⁶ To the medieval European monarchies, the most immediate origin of the concept of the emperor's superiority over other kings was, of course, the Roman imperial precedent. Yet, it seems worth exploring how the Roman emperor, who was not supposed to be a monarch or even exist, became a supreme monarch and, symbolically, the father of what has been called a "Family of Rulers." The Roman emperor had his origins, in turn, in the world of ambitious Roman statesmen interacting with and adopting aspects of Hellenistic kingship, which itself was rooted in a combination of Greek and Near Eastern traditions. The evidence suggests a long pre-history to the notional supremacy of the Roman emperor, reaching, conceptually, to the early sophisticated monarchies in the Ancient Near East. As we have seen in this study, the chain of evidence does not always exhibit demonstrable continuity, although this is at least partly the result of the availability of evidence; parallels in aspects of hierarchically differentiated kingship are highly suggestive. Reconstructing the links in this discontinuous chain as a comparative study would be worthwhile.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Post 1953: 296-320.

The first explicit models of monarchy pertinent to medieval Europe, complete with a mythical origin story and a mission relating the authority and responsibility of the monarch to the legitimizing overarching authority of the divine, are found in Bronze Age in the Ancient Near East, more specifically in Mesopotamia and Egypt, discussed in Chapter 2. Features of these monarchies included, in areas where there were plural polities, notions of equality or difference in status, expressed through the language of titles and symbolic kinship. The more isolated world of the Ancient Egyptians produced a fairly literal concept of divine kingship, while the more interconnected world of the remainder of the Fertile Crescent, still legitimizing monarchs through the divine (with occasional claims of blatantly divine kingship, such as that of Narām-Sîn of Akkad in *c.* 2250 BC), was more focused on the establishment of a working network of polities, whose rulers could find a reasonably satisfactory place in relation to each other. As could be expected in a generically patriarchal society, supreme kings assumed the position of “father” to subordinate kings, who were designated their “sons.” The designations both reinforced and imposed the system of power relationships, but remained, inevitably subject to change, like historical circumstances themselves and like the culturally inflected understandings of paternity and appropriate filial relations.

By the Late Bronze Age (*c.* 1500–1200 BC), Egypt and Hittite Anatolia had joined the Fertile Crescent in creating a club of great powers, each ruled by a monarch mutually recognized as a “great king” and writing to his counterparts as “brother.” By contrast, the surviving subordinate kings appear to have enjoyed a lower status than before, now generally designating themselves “servants” of the “great king.” The symbolic father-son relationship, however, is still detectable in exchanges between the “great king” of one polity and the sons of the “great king” of another. While diplomacy could not prevent hostilities, and sometimes the symbolic language of titles and kinship caused

friction in and of itself, the diplomatic system of the Late Bronze Age appears fairly developed and functional. Following the collapse of the Bronze Age state system, Iron Age monarchies (c. 1200–525 BC) appear to have eventually engaged in diplomatic exchanges utilizing the same or similar language but documented by now extremely scarce evidence. The Persian conquest of the entire Near East by Cyrus and Cambyses in the late sixth century BC replaced the system of kingdoms with a single empire, whose monarch adopted many aspects of the pre-existing models of kingship but had no near equals to engage in the same kind of diplomacy.

At the same time, a different concept of monarchy had developed in Greece, discussed in Chapter 3. With the collapse of the palace societies of Bronze Age Greece, here the closest thing to a monarch left was a formerly subordinate official called *basileus*, who now functioned in a range of roles at the apex of society, from tribal chieftain to one of several like-titled notables or oligarchs within the same city state. Iron Age Greek society apparently did not provide *basileis* with enough material and political resources for them to compare with the “great kings” of the east, who were sometimes described, in contrast, with the designation *tyrannos*, intended to convey not illegitimate or necessarily oppressive rule, but a more absolute type of authority. From this humble beginning, *basileus* would soar very high, on the wings of ambitious and successful monarchs: rulers of a more tribal Greek society, Philip (359–336 BC) and Alexander (336–323 BC) of Macedon would first establish their hegemony over most of Greece, then take on the Persian Empire. Alexander’s success in this enterprise entailed the adoption or adaptation of eastern practices and precedents that, combined with his personal position of power and wealth, leadership, charisma, and sense of heroic or even divine entitlement rooted in the cultural traditions of Greek society itself, made this *basileus*, at least, a very different, more impressive specimen than his predecessors.

While Alexander's dynasty did not long survive him, his generals established themselves as his successors, Diadokhoi. Legitimizing themselves through their association with him, they enhanced his status and treated him to a full ruler cult, modeling their kingship on his, and emulating him in every way, including, in many areas, an increasingly ostentatious ruler cult of their own. Consequently, the *basileis* of the Hellenistic World (c. 330–30 BC) did not compare to their humbler Iron Age Greek predecessors, but, especially in the east, assumed many of the trappings of the more impressive tradition of eastern monarchs. By doing so, they recreated a state system of great powers, with rulers treating each other as equal, expressed in the symbolic language of brotherhood. As stressed in the foregoing discussion, the concrete evidence for this remains extremely limited.

Into this world intruded Roman statesmen, coming from a society that had overthrown and vilified its own Iron Age monarchy and professed disdain for any such institution. As discussed in Chapter 4, ambitious Romans were obsessed with their status and *dignitas*, and attracted by the image of Alexander the Great, at least, as the quintessential military conqueror; but he was also the model king. Their success combined with the ready adaptability of local populations. Pompey, Caesar, and Antony, among others, assumed aspects of what had long characterized Hellenistic kingship, in the first century BC. The same was true for their successor, Augustus, the first Roman emperor, whose public humility did not make him any less of a monarch. Effectively monarchs, treated as such by most of their subjects, and bolstered by a varied but ubiquitous ruler cult, Roman emperors had assumed the position of earlier “great kings” in all but name. Moreover, by making and unmaking allied (client) kings, they performed as a superior, supreme type of monarchy, ruling over subordinate monarchs. And while express use of what we might consider familial language to describe the relationship between the emperor and client kings is not available, the conferral of Roman citizenship

on them along with the emperor's names implied their cooption into the expanded family of the emperor, even if as freedmen or clients.

By the fourth century AD, the Roman emperorship had become a more unabashed monarchy, soon bolstered by a different and decidedly non-republican tradition in the form of the Judeo-Christian legacy. *Basileus*, long used informally — and maybe not exclusively enough — for the emperor in Greek, gained increasing currency in that function, and in the early seventh century became the most visible official title of the Roman emperor, during the reign of Hērakleios (610–641); naturally, it began to be used increasingly exclusively for him, at least where current monarchs were concerned.

By this time, the emperor coexisted with a largely novel set of monarchs, as new peoples and polities had appeared around and within the Roman Empire, especially in the west. As explored in Chapter 5, their kings were fitted, at least notionally and occasionally, into the conceptual mold of Rome's allied or client kings as federates; they were thus the subordinates of the Roman emperor. The language of symbolic kinship having been employed for the purposes of differentiating between senior and junior members of the Roman college of emperors itself, it was now applied to the relationship between the Roman emperor on the one hand, and the subordinate non-Roman kings on the other: the emperor was “father,” the kings “sons.”

After initial acquiescence in this model of international relations, some monarchs came to resent and challenge this framework, seeking at least political parity, as fellow emperors (implicitly, of the Romans) and “brothers” of the Roman emperor at Constantinople. The Frankish king Charlemagne (768–814) obtained an unprecedented coronation as emperor at the hands of the Pope at Rome in 800 and secured a reluctant and perhaps only partial recognition as “brother” and

emperor (of the Franks?) from the Roman emperor at Constantinople a dozen years later. While taking up the legal and religious aspects of emperorship with relish, Charlemagne showed himself diplomatic enough by playing down the Romanness of his title in relations with the eastern Romans. By 870, this compromise was foundering, and a testy exchange between Charlemagne's descendant and his eastern counterpart seems to have ended any eastern Roman recognition of western emperors, although Frankish kings were still honored as the emperor's "brother."

With his people more fully integrated into the post-Roman world following their recent conversion to Christianity, the Bulgarian king Simeon I (893–927) also challenged the exclusive status of the eastern Roman emperor as "emperor" and "father." An initial bid at the Roman emperorship by Simeon ended in an unusual coronation at the hands of the Patriarch of Constantinople in 913 and a compromise much like that secured by Charlemagne a century earlier: Simeon was to be emperor of the Bulgarians and "brother" to the emperor of the Romans. Provoked by the revocation of the treaty arrangements by the next regime at Constantinople, Simeon asserted his claims to be Roman emperor and embarked on a war that lasted a decade. An apparent tenuous rapprochement at the end of Simeon's life was followed by another treaty under his son and successor, Petăr I (926–969) who proceeded to marry the granddaughter of his Roman counterpart, Rōmanos I Lakapēnos (920–944). The new Bulgarian monarch dropped any claims to the Roman emperorship and was recognized as emperor of Bulgaria. Taking advantage of the new marital connection between them, the Roman emperor could now describe the emperor of Bulgaria not as symbolic "brother," but as somewhat less symbolic "grandson." While this compromise did not guarantee good relations between the Roman and Bulgarian courts indefinitely — the Romans would conquer Bulgaria in 1018 and control it until 1186 — it resolved the quarrel over the symbolic

language of titles and kinship between them in a more definitive manner than the relationship between Roman emperors at Constantinople and their western counterparts. While the “native” emperorship of the Bulgarians did not abandon Roman precedent and propagandistic language, later also claiming “Greeks” as its subjects (from the thirteenth century), it never insisted on possessing its exclusive and theoretically universal aspects. That, in turn, secured it ongoing recognition at the eastern imperial court, in marked contrast to its western counterparts, who would run into friction over this issue time and again.

Given that a king was emperor in his own kingdom and, as Rōmanos Lakapēnos sarcastically remarked to Simeon of Bulgaria, the latter could call himself caliph of the Saracens if he felt so inclined, why should such matters of phrase and title be considered important enough to argue over at the time, or for us to explore today? There was always an element of consent to government, monarchic or otherwise, imperial or regal. And this, in the form of diplomatic recognition, applied also to mutual recognition between the monarchs of different polities, who coexisted and interacted with each other. The nature of this interaction was dependent on their ability to find their places in some sort of agreed relationship. After all, in the Ancient and Medieval periods, offended monarchs anxious about their credibility and legitimacy could sometimes drag their subjects into costly and dangerous ventures.

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