

**Feasting and the Monarchy:  
the Feast as a Venue for Social and Political  
Negotiation between the Macedonian King and  
the Macedonian Elite, from Philip II to the Fall  
of Macedon.**

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Ever since the discovery of the ‘royal tombs’ at Aigai-Vergina in the late 1970’s, interest in ancient Macedon has surged. One of the aspects of ancient Macedon that has received a fair amount of attention in scholarly works is its constitution. Up to 168 BCE, the lands that belonged to the kingdom of Macedon were first ruled by the Argead dynasty and then by the Antigonids, until the Roman army defeated the king and his lands subsequently became part of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

A number of scholars have written on the Macedonian political institutions (or lack thereof) during this period. The most influential works in this respect are Hammond’s *The Macedonian State: Origins, Institutions, and History*, and Hatzopoulos’s *Macedonian Institutions under the Kings*. The former was first published in 1989, the latter seven years later, in 1996. According to Hammond, who focussed mainly on extant literary evidence, the king was invested with near unlimited power. All political decisions were his, including whom he would promote to the rank of ‘Companion’. He was not in any way bound to heed the advice the Companions and other advisors gave. The only other body with any political authority was the Assembly of the *Makedones*, but this group could only be summoned by the king or his representative so in effect their power was very limited.<sup>2</sup> Hatzopoulos on the other hand, basing himself mainly on epigraphic material, has suggested that while the king was clearly the most important Macedonian, there were many others who carried some influence too; prosopographic evidence suggests that the king’s Companions were usually taken from a small group of elite families from all over Macedon, and that these Companions would often hold important posts as dignitaries and generals.<sup>3</sup> In Hatzopoulos’s view, therefore, the members of the Macedonian elite were undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with.

Hatzopoulos’s view is supported by two anecdotes from extant literary sources. In 289 Demetrius Poliorketes, then king of Macedon, decided to wage a war on Pyrrhus. The Macedonian elite however decided this was not in their interest and withdrew their support to Demetrius as well as their troops, leaving him in a precarious position. In order to save his own skin, Demetrius had to flee the camp disguised in a dark cloak, as if “he were an actor, not a king”.<sup>4</sup> A similar situation occurred over a hundred years later, in 168, when the

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<sup>1</sup> Unless mentioned otherwise, all dates are Before the Common Era.

<sup>2</sup> Hammond, N. G. L. 1989. *The Macedonian State: Origins, Institutions, and History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 57-65.

<sup>3</sup> Hatzopoulos, M. 1996. *Macedonian Institutions under the Kings*. MELETHMATA 22. Athens – Paris: Centre for Greek and Roman Archaeology, 333.

<sup>4</sup> Plut. *Dem.* 45.5.

Macedonian army led by king Perseus was defeated by the Romans. While some members of the Macedonian elite were captured alongside their king, most of them chose to leave him and return to their homes.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, then, the Macedonian elite did not derive their political position solely from their relation to the king, they had serious political influence of their own. Since Macedon was not of itself a single ethnic unit, but rather consisted of various peoples bound to the Macedonian king via the local elite, it is sensible to assume that this elite was key to the creation of stability and unity in the kingdom of Macedon.<sup>6</sup>

The power of the elite becomes even more clear when we take into account who were members of the king's inner circle. Contrary to Hammond's claims, the king was not in a position to promote or demote just anyone to the rank of Companion.

“As is clear in both the case of Alexander the Great and of Philip V, about whom we are relatively well-informed, many, perhaps most of the King's ‘friends’ were members not because of their affectionate intimacy with the king – in many cases the relationship was clearly one of antagonism, even of hostility (Alexandros son of Aeropos, Parmenion, and Philotas under Alexander and Apelles, Megaleas, Leontios, Ptolemaios et cetera under Philip V) – but practically *ex officio*, because of their position in the kingdom and in their own *patrides*. Non-Macedonian members could easily be ‘fired’, but the king could not in the same manner dismiss one of the important Macedonians.”<sup>7</sup>

It becomes clear that the Macedonian king needed to constantly appease his Companions in order to maintain their support. This meant that the king and the elite were in a position of continuous negotiation. Yet, curiously enough, none of the extant written sources that discuss the period from the ascension of Philip II to the fall of the Macedonian empire (359-168 BCE) mention a political venue for this extremely important negotiation. The Companions do not appear to have been united in a single body such as a council so that the king could communicate with them as a whole. There are references to daily meetings held by the king, but these meetings are directly associated with campaigns and appear to have been of a strictly military nature.<sup>8</sup> Where, then, did king and elite meet?

In this master's thesis, I propose to solve this problem by exploring the idea that neither a council of any kind nor the king's daily meetings were the most important political venue, but rather that the Macedonian royal feast was used as the ‘ritualised’ setting for the

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<sup>5</sup> Livy 45.32.3-6.

<sup>6</sup> This idea will be developed further in chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> Hatzopoulos, 1996, 333. Cf. Strootman, R. 2014. *Courts and Elites in the Hellenistic Empires: The Near East After the Achaemenids, 330-30 BCE*. Studies in Ancient Persia 1. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>8</sup> For example Polyb. 5.26.15.

dialogue between the Macedonian king and his elite. In order to prove this thesis, the following questions will be answered: for which (types of) occasions did the members of the elite come to the king's court? Did they come at a certain time of year? Who controlled the access to the king, and how? What evidence is there for the king going out of his way to accommodate powerful members of the elite? Vice versa, what evidence is there for the elites doing whatever they could to get the king's favour? Is there evidence for a strained relationship between king and elite at times when the Macedonian empire was increasing or decreasing?

Specifically, two hypotheses will be defended. First, that a significant number of the Macedonian elites had an independent power base, from which they could gain political prestige that could not be taken away by the king. Second, that the architecture of the feast enabled the king to manipulate the social and political hierarchy of his court's members.

During the feast, networks of power were forged through communication, negotiation and the display of proper behaviour. Here, the elite could speak freely to their king according to the principles of *parrhesia*, and of etiquette. At the same time, this is where the competition between the elites themselves was the most cut-throat. In order for the Companions to communicate with their king, they first had to gain access to him. This access was carefully manipulated by the king, for example through deciding the seating arrangements at the feast.

So far, no monographs and a mere six articles have been written about the Macedonian royal feast. One of these is merely a summary of the four articles that were written before 2010.<sup>9</sup> The first article by Kottaridi, written in 2004, and the article by Murray focus mainly on the question whether the Macedonians drank their wine neat or not.<sup>10</sup> Kottaridi's article from 2011 is about the feasting spaces that were recovered at the palace of Aigai-Vergina, and what this tells us about the luxuriousness of the feasts that were hosted by the Macedonian king.<sup>11</sup> Carney's article is mostly concerned with the role of women in the Macedonian 'symposion'. The literary sources do not leave much room for female participation, but the archaeology appears to tell another story. A large number of drinking vessels and other evidence related to drinking have been found in the graves of elite women, suggesting that

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<sup>9</sup> Sawada, Noriko. 2010. "Social Customs and Institutions: Aspects of Macedonian Elite Society." In J. Roisman and I. Worthington eds., *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 392-408.

<sup>10</sup> Kottaridi, A. 2004. "The Symposium." In D. Pandermalis ed., *Alexander the Great: Treasures from an Epic Era of Hellenism*. New York: Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, 65-87; Murray, O. 1996. "Hellenistic Royal Symposia." In P. Bilde et al. eds., *Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship: Studies in Hellenistic Civilization*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 15-27.

<sup>11</sup> Kottaridi, A., 2011. "The Royal Banquet: A Capital Institution." In A. Kottaridi and S. Walker eds., *Herakles to Alexander the Great: Treasures from the Royal Capital of Macedon, a Hellenic Kingdom in the Age of Democracy*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum.

they may have had something to do with the ‘symposion’ after all.<sup>12</sup> Finally, Borza discusses the practical functions of the ‘symposion’, such as being a relief from the rigors of marching with the army.<sup>13</sup>

All articles to some extent deal with the comparison between the Macedonian feast and the Greek symposion. In fact, the feast is called a symposion in all articles, and although the authors are careful to state that the two phenomena were not identical, they do attempt to find similarities rather than differences. A particularly vivid example is provided in the summary article by Sawada, where she states that the ‘symposion’ rituals must have been similar since in both cases the men sat on couches.<sup>14</sup> All of these articles then focus on the Macedonian feast, but as of yet there are no publications on the feast as the main socio-political arena in ancient Macedon.

On January 16-18, 2014, the conference *Feasting and Polis Institutions* was held in Utrecht. While the conference was primarily focussed on Greek (Athenian) feasting, there were also contributions on Hellenistic and Macedonian feasting by Vasiliki Saripanidi, Kathleen Lynch, Manuela Mari and Rolf Strootman. Theoretical contributions to the notion of the ‘symposion’ as opposed to ‘feasting’ were made by Marek Węcowski and Floris van den Eijnde. A publication of the conference proceedings is expected in 2015.

The main issue when studying the ancient kingdom of Macedon, and possibly the reason why so little has been written on the subject, is the lack of literary sources. We know of a number of important Macedonian historians, such as Marsyas of Pella, and their works, but unfortunately these have not survived. The works of which a significant part has survived through the ages, were written by Greeks or Romans, not Macedonians.<sup>15</sup> For them, the Macedonians were only interesting when they were called Alexander the Great, or when they came into contact with either the Greek cities or Rome. However, very little is being said about any of the Macedonian kings in relation to their own, Macedonian elite. This also means that some kings, such as Philip II, Alexander III and Philip V, are discussed in much greater detail than others. Furthermore, only in the case of Polybius’s *Histories* do we have sections of a work that is not written many centuries after the actual events had taken place.

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<sup>12</sup> Carney, E.D. 2007. “Symposia and the Macedonian Elite: The Unmixed Life.” *Syllecta Classica* 18, 129-180.

<sup>13</sup> Borza, E.N. 1983. “The Symposium at Alexander’s Court.” *Ancient Macedonia* 3, 45-55.

<sup>14</sup> Sawada, 2010, 396.

<sup>15</sup> The historians, encyclopaedists and biographers whose work has survived and sheds some light on Macedonian elite society and the Macedonian royal feasts, are, in chronological order: Polybius (2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE), Diodorus (1<sup>st</sup> c. BCE), Quintus Curtius Rufus (1<sup>st</sup> c. CE), Plutarch (1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE), Arrian (2<sup>nd</sup> c. CE), Pompeius Trogus (through Justin’s 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE epitome of his work), and Athenaeus (2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> c. CE).

Finally, most authors had a strong bias against the Macedonians, who in their minds had oppressed the Greek cities and conspired against the Romans.<sup>16</sup>

Although this is all true, I will show that there are still a lot of clues to be found in the extant sources. Furthermore, I will not be using just literary evidence, but evidence from archaeology and iconography as well, to provide a more complete image of the role and function of both the court and the royal feast. Finally, various theoretical approaches will be used to help interpret the available sources. These theoretical approaches are theories on ritualised feasting on the one hand, and court theory on the other.

This theoretical framework will be discussed in detail in the next chapter of this thesis. The relevant archaeological data will be analysed in chapter 3, and the visual sources in chapter 4. Chapters 5-7 will be devoted to the interpretation of the literary sources. As these literary sources are not evenly divided over the time period that is being investigated, chapter 5 will deal with the sources from the time of Philip II only. Chapter 6 will be devoted to Alexander III. The sources for the Diadochoi and the Antigonid dynasty, being far less in number, will be discussed together in the seventh chapter.

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<sup>16</sup> Rhodes, P.J. 2010. "The Literary and Epigraphic Evidence to the Roman Conquest." In J. Roisman and I. Worthington eds., *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 26; Hatzopoulos, 1996, 265.

## **Chapter 2. Ritualised Feasting and the Court**

In this chapter, the methodological framework for this thesis will be provided. First, I will discuss why I have made the decision to use the term ‘feast’, rather than ‘symposion’. This will be done through a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that come with the use of each term. The theory on feasting has already been connected to ritual theory. For this thesis, ritual theory will be used to show how social and political power relations could be acted out and internalised. Finally, court theory will be applied in order to explain the type of power relationship that existed between the Macedonian king and the elite.

### **2.1 The ‘Ritualised’ Feast**

When I first started writing this thesis, it was my intent to call the instances of feasting at the Macedonian royal court ‘symposia’. There was a practical reason for doing so: this was the term that was used in the few articles that had actually been written about the subject.<sup>17</sup>

However, it quickly became clear that the use of the term symposion was problematic as there are multiple definitions of what a symposion is, all varying in strictness. Generally speaking, there is the broad interpretation of ‘symposion’, in which the term stands for a gathering of men, all of relatively equal footing, for the purpose of communal drinking.<sup>18</sup> This broad definition of ‘symposion’, can easily encompass the Macedonian royal feasts. During these events, the male invitees (occasionally women were present also, but this was not standard procedure) would spend the night drinking and chatting with all others in attendance, including the king himself.<sup>19</sup>

Most scholars of antiquity however, prefer a far narrower understanding of the term symposion. According to the speakers of the 2014 conference *Feasting and Polis Institutions*, the most important features of this narrow definition of the symposion are: (1) that the focus of the evening had to be on drinking, food cannot have played an equal role in this respect. Even though some food was consumed, the symposion was not a dining activity. (2) The number of attendees had to be very small, so that a rigorous equality of all men could be realised. (3) Even though the attendees were equal, at least for the duration of the symposion, this did not mean that they refrained from competition. Rather, all men had to take part in

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<sup>17</sup> See the introduction for a more detailed description of these articles and their content.

<sup>18</sup> Węcowski, M. 2002. “Towards a definition of the symposion.” In T. Derda, J. Urbanik, and M. Węcowski eds., *Euergesias charin: Studies Presented to Benedetto Bravo and Ewa Wipszycka by Their Disciples*. Warsaw: Fundacja im. Rafała Taubenschlaga, 349.

<sup>19</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 23.1- 6.

performances of poetry, music and jokes. The necessary oratory and musical skills that the symposiasts would have needed in order to pull these performances off, meant that they needed a significant amount of free time to practice. As such, the symposion was not just an event, but rather an activity, one that could only be practised by members of the aristocracy.<sup>20</sup>

It is clear that the Macedonian royal parties do not qualify as a symposion in the narrow sense. Although for the most part the evening would have been taken up by the drinking party, the Greek word most commonly used in the literary sources for describing the event, δειπνον (or the Latin equivalent *convivium*), suggests that dinner was in fact an important element to the feast.<sup>21</sup> This suggestion is strengthened by the account of the wedding-feast of one Caranus as given by Athenaeus, who in turn was quoting Hippolochus of Macedon.<sup>22</sup> As a part of this event, a wide variety of foods such as duck, bread and pea soup were served.

Furthermore, the number of invitees was not limited to just a few. Arrian describes that at one time, Alexander III invited no less than 9000 people to one of his feasts.<sup>23</sup> This also meant that an event like this would not have been reciprocal. Alexander's guests would not have been able to invite him to a similarly lavish party. This means that even though the guests conversed with each other on an equal basis, they must have been constantly aware of their differences in status and wealth. Finally, most of the entertainment for the Macedonian royal parties was not provided by the guests themselves, but by hired professionals, such as Thessalian dancers.<sup>24</sup>

As the narrow definition of a symposion does not seem to fit the description of the Macedonian royal parties, it would be best to avoid the term symposion at all, in order to prevent confusion. Rather than using the term symposion, I propose to use the term feast. This is an anthropological term, defined as an event essentially constituted by the communal consumption of food and/or drink.<sup>25</sup> The term feast is thus broader, encompassing a wider range of both narrowly sympotic and non-sympotic get-togethers. Another perk of the use of 'feast' is that it has been recognised as a stage for transformations in power relations and

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<sup>20</sup> Weçowski, M. 2014. "When did the Symposion die?" Keynote lecture, *Feasting and Polis Institutions* conference. Utrecht, January 16, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> For example in Diod. 16.93 ;Athen. 1.18a; Curt. 3.12.2-3. Other words that are used to describe the feast are συμπόσιον (Athen. 10.434a-c), πότης (Diod. 16.87), and *epulae* (Curt. 6.8.16). The former two are related to drinking, the latter to dining.

<sup>22</sup> Athen. 4.128.a- 4.130d.

<sup>23</sup> Arr. 7.11.9.

<sup>24</sup> Athen. 13.607.b-e. This does not mean that the guests at a Macedonian feast did not entertain each other at all: they did perform poetry. In section 14.620.b of the *Deipnosophists*, Athenaeus describes that Cassander was so fond of the Homeric poems, that he would often cite them at length during feasts.

<sup>25</sup> Dietler, M. and B. Hayden. 2001. "Digesting the Feast: Good to Eat, Good to Drink, Good to Think: An Introduction." In M. Dietler and B. Hayden eds., *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographical Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 3.

social stratification. It is seen to establish friendship, kinship and solidarity, while at the same time providing a venue for political change.<sup>26</sup> A feast can provide the social setting for the exchange of gifts, as well as the “main context for the arbitration of disputes, the passing of legal judgments, and the public acting out of sanctions (ridicule, mimicry, ostracism, etc.) that maintain social control within a community. Feasts thus ensure that food surpluses are transformed into usable non-food items or services that are crucial for the upkeep and management of a social system, such as control over resources, military, political and social support.”<sup>27</sup>

According to Michael Dietler, social standing and power relations can be manipulated through three different types of feasts that are inherently political. These are empowerment feasts, patron-role feasts and diacritical feasts.<sup>28</sup> These three modes of feasting can occur in the same society at the same time, there is no evolutionary pattern between them. Feasts of the first two types are most important here as they will be identified in later chapters.

The empowering feast is directed towards “the acquisition or creation of social (and economic) power.”<sup>29</sup> This type of feast is a competitive one, for the host is intending to show that he has the power to host larger and better feasts than everybody else. The host gains symbolic credit for using his wealth for a communal occasion and this symbolic credit determines his social standing. Empowering feasts thus create an asymmetrical relationship between the host and the guests: as long as no guest is able to outmatch the host’s hospitality, all guests implicitly acknowledge that the host has a higher social standing than they do. This type of relational social power must be renegotiated continually. If someone hosts a better feast, he will have surpassed the original host not only in symbolic credit, but in social power as well. As such, the acceptance of an invitation to a feast is an implicit challenge: show me what you have got, and I will top it.<sup>30</sup> The staging of continually more spectacular feasts can thus be seen as an attempt to force the opponents to default the obligation inherent in the acceptance of the invitation, receding into a position of dependency.<sup>31</sup> The fact that a maximum was set for the amount of money that was allowed to be spent on entertaining

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<sup>26</sup> Van den Eijnde, F. 2010. *Cult and society in early Athens: Archaeological and anthropological approaches to state formation and group participation in Attika*. PhD Dissertation, Utrecht University, 18.

<sup>27</sup> Van den Eijnde, 2010, 19; 21-22.

<sup>28</sup> Dietler, M. 2001. “Theorizing the Feast: Rituals of Consumption, Commensal Politics, and Power in African Contexts.” In M. Dietler and B. Hayden eds., *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographical Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 75-89.

<sup>29</sup> Idem, 76.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, 77.

<sup>31</sup> Van den Eijnde, 2010, 20.

Alexander III, suggests that Alexander wanted to be able to control the amount of symbolic prestige elites could gain for their feasts.<sup>32</sup>

The patron-role feast is not about gaining more social power, but rather about legitimising existing asymmetrical social relationships. For this type of feast, there is no longer an obligation of reciprocity such as with the empowerment feast: the guests have already shown that they cannot provide the same type of hospitality as the host, thereby irrevocably placing themselves in a subordinate social position. The acceptance of the host's hospitality by his guests can therefore be recognised as an expression of the legitimisation of the host's greater social standing.<sup>33</sup>

Diacritical feasts are used to create and naturalise concepts of social difference such as class. Through the use of specific styles of consumption and differentiated cuisines, the members of one social rank can create a distinct group profile, for example by serving types of food that are exotic and hard to come by. There is thus a very acute sense of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>34</sup>

The patron-role feasts were generally hosted by the king, whose economical and social position was superior to that of any individual member of the elite, although there are also examples of this type of feast that were hosted by various Diadochoi. Empowerment feasts were the feast of choice for members of the elite, also when the king was one of the invites. The host's intent would have been to show the king that he had the economical power to warrant a high ranking position within the elite, while simultaneously challenging the elite guests to show whether or not they could be his equals.

Aside from the useful analysis of various modes for the negotiation of political and social power through feasting, there is another important theoretical aspect to feasting that is of benefit to this thesis. Feasting has already been explicitly linked to ritual theory. Ritual theory can help us understand the inner workings of the Macedonian royal feasts by explaining why some forms of social action stand out from others, not only in the way in which they are performed, but also in terms of their meaning. Through their dramatic symbolism, that infuses norms and categories with emotions, rituals enable public consciousness to be recalibrated and attuned to a specific social message.<sup>35</sup> The socially constituting force of such events lies in their capacity to transcend the moment itself and

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<sup>32</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 23.6.

<sup>33</sup> Dietler, 2001, 82-83.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, 85-89.

<sup>35</sup> Lüddeckens, D. 2006. "Emotion." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 554.

transform the public's awareness of the social order.<sup>36</sup> "Ritual has the capacity to create a central focus of attention which innately generates common knowledge, the preconditions for any kind of group cooperation or joint action."<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, there is as of yet no consensus on the definition of a ritual. However, most scholars agree that a ritual or a ritual activity is perceived as different from everyday behaviour in that it is a symbolically mediated form of interaction.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, ritual actions are generally more conscious public performances.<sup>39</sup>

It is important to realise that ritual activity does not necessarily mean that the activity in question is rigorously formalised and ceremonial.<sup>40</sup> Ritual performances vary according to their social context and the institution or organisation involved.<sup>41</sup> In some cases, for example during the drunken brawl between Alexander and Clitus, the behaviour of the participants was rather the opposite of formal and ceremonial.<sup>42</sup> Catherine Bell has identified six more attributes to activities that can suggest ritualisation besides formalism. These attributes are traditionalism, disciplined invariance, rule-governance, sacral symbolism, performance and the notion of the body.<sup>43</sup> Other scholars have added participation to this list.<sup>44</sup> The more of these attributes can be detected in a specific form of behaviour, the greater the chance that the behaviour is ritualised, although they are not necessarily all present for every type of ritual activity. For this thesis, the important characteristics are formalism, traditionalism, performance, the notion of the body and participation.<sup>45</sup>

Formal activities create an immediate contrast with casual occasions. They create highly regulated and set roles that the participants must adhere to. The greater the social

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<sup>36</sup> Van den Eijnde, 2010, 13.

<sup>37</sup> Williamson, C. G. 2012. *City and Sanctuary in Hellenistic Asia Minor: Constructing civic identity in the sacred landscapes of Mylasa and Statonikeia in Karia*. PhD Dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Harth, D. 2006. "Rituals and Other Forms of Social Action." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 21.

<sup>39</sup> Dietler, 2001, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, 67.

<sup>41</sup> Wulf, C. 2006. "Praxis." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 398.

<sup>42</sup> Arr. 4.8.3; Curt. 8.1.22; Just. 12.6

<sup>43</sup> Bell, C. 1997. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 138.

<sup>44</sup> Schieffelin, E. L. 2006. "Participation." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 615-626.

<sup>45</sup> For the sake of completeness, I will here provide a short summary of the attributes of ritualised behavior that in my opinion can not be recognised from the available sources on the Macedonian symposium, and will therefore not be discussed in the remainder of this thesis. Disciplined invariance usually manifests itself as a disciplined set of actions, marked by precise repetition and physical control. In cases where rules decide the way in which an event should proceed, we may speak of rule-governance. Sacral symbolism relates to activities that appeal to a supernatural reality, such as the pouring of libations. Bell, 1997, 150-156.

distance between the various participants to the ritual, the more important etiquette, formal greetings and other behaviour that acknowledges social inequality becomes.<sup>46</sup>

Traditionalism presupposes ideals that are embodied in some element of the past. When asked why it is intended that rituals are acted out in the way they are, participants in a ritual often cannot provide the original intentionality. Invoking tradition therefore is not the means to an end, it is the end itself.<sup>47</sup> By adhering to older cultural precedents, participants in a ritual attempt to recreate their ideal social and cosmic order. Traditionalism is a very important tool for creating stability, but also for legitimising one's actions. In fact, the power of traditionalism is such that it appears to have value even when there is an invention of tradition, where the image of earlier times and the ideals associated with it are a modern creation.<sup>48</sup>

Performance is an important part of rituals when the participants to the ritual are conscious of the fact that they are performing highly symbolic actions in public. Through performance, all that take part in a ritual are acting out a certain 'cultural reality'.<sup>49</sup> According to Michael Houseman, this cultural reality is in fact a relationship between all participants. He states that it is "an ongoing reciprocal involvement between subjects implying, for all parties concerned, the attendant qualities of agency, interaction, intentionality, affect and accountability."<sup>50</sup> In other words, performance creates a *habitus* that is expressed simultaneously through a group's lifestyle, as well as through the recognition of authorities and hierarchies.<sup>51</sup>

Related to performance is the notion of the body. On the one hand, the body represents the physical reality of a ritual as it performs the various actions that the ritual requires. On the other hand, it represents the social reality of the ritual: it is the actions as performed by physical beings that make the ritual, and as such, it is also the body that creates the 'cultural realities' that are implicit (sometimes even unconscious) parts of the ritual.<sup>52</sup> With the ritualised greeting of *proskynesis*, for example, it is the movements of the body that convey the message of subordination to the king.

Finally, through the act of participation, it is implied that the participants in the ritual either agree with the current cosmic and social order or, through these exact same rituals,

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<sup>46</sup> Bell, 1997, 139 & 143.

<sup>47</sup> Bloch, M. 2006. "Deference." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 502.

<sup>48</sup> Bell, 1997, 145-148.

<sup>49</sup> Harth, 2006, 22; Wulf, 2006, 403.

<sup>50</sup> Houseman, M. 2006. "Relationality." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 415.

<sup>51</sup> Wulf, 2006, 403.

<sup>52</sup> Idem, 395.

attempt to make changes to the order without causing chaos.<sup>53</sup> Legitimacy can be found in correctly performing rituals, and accusing others of not doing so may undermine their position in society.

By analysing behaviour through ritual theory, an attempt is made to answer the following question: why did the Macedonians behave in the way they did? What did their way of acting mean? The Macedonians themselves explained their own behaviour by pointing out that they were behaving according to ancient customs.<sup>54</sup> This traditionalist explanation suggests that the original meaning of their behaviour had become obscured to them. Yet, they continued to behave in this fashion, because adhering to ancient customs meant an attempt at continually negotiating a stable cosmic and social order, in which both king and elite knew their place in society.<sup>55</sup>

As there are but very little sources that describe the Macedonian royal feasts, it is not possible to reconstruct what occurred at these events in full detail. However, it is clear that the Macedonian royal feast displays several of the characteristics that have been mentioned in this section, such as the traditionalism that has just been discussed. Although the ritualisation of the Macedonian banquet was mostly used to normalise the current status quo, there are examples where ritual was exploited in an attempt to change the social order. When a conflict arose between Philip V and his army over pay, Hermeias manipulated proper court procedure and feasting etiquette to force Philip to reduce his favour towards one of Hermeias' rivals, Epigenes.<sup>56</sup> The introduction of a new ritual such as *proskynesis*, was also clearly intended to change the social order in Macedonian society.<sup>57</sup> Claiming that a rival did not act out rituals and etiquette according to tradition, was a very potent means of reducing said rival's political and social power, whether he was the king or a member of the elite.

## 2.2 The Role and Function of the Court in Argead and Antigonid Macedonia

In order to understand how the relationship between the king and the Macedonian elite was expressed during the ritualised feast, it is important to discuss the manner in which both factions communicated. This is best explained through the framework of court theory. Court

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<sup>53</sup> Rao, U. 2006. "Ritual in Society." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 150.

<sup>54</sup> Arr. 7.11.8-9; Athen. 1.18a; Curt. 6.2.1-3.

<sup>55</sup> Stausberg, M. et al. 2006. "'Ritual': A Lexicographic Survey of Some Related Terms from an Emic Perspective." In J. Kreinath, J. Snoek and M. Stausberg eds., *Theorising Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, 69-70.

<sup>56</sup> Polyb. 5.50.4.

<sup>57</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 54.3-4.

theorists focus on defining the social and political phenomenon of the ‘court’ by attempting to answer the question: how was power structured and maintained by such a small percentage of the population?

There are many definitions of what a court is. Rather than posing an alternative to these existing definitions, I will single out some key elements that can be found in almost all of them. Most of these definitions include the idea of the court as both a spatial and a social centre, where the extended household of the monarch resided and engaged in individual relationships with other members of the court. Furthermore, it is also seen as the political and administrative center of a kingdom.<sup>58</sup> Strootman also lists the court’s functions as a symbolic centre, a stage for monarchic representation and as the locus for (re)distribution.<sup>59</sup> In the case of the Macedonian court, where the king was regularly on military campaigns and moved around a lot, there was no permanent spatial centre. Rather, the court was located where the king was.<sup>60</sup>

The court existed of the king’s extended family, his bodyguards, the royal pages, the *hetairoi* or Companions, intellectuals and specialised assistants such as physicians and secretaries. Most of these men were surrounded by their own families and individual followers.<sup>61</sup> Of these different groups, the *hetairoi* dominated the daily entourage of the king.<sup>62</sup> They comprised of members of Macedon’s traditional officer class and furnished the king with his personal bodyguard, while also providing the pool from which Alexander selected his daily companions at the royal table.<sup>63</sup> Philip II was the first king to recruit some of its members personally, but for the most part, its ranks were filled with members of established families whose lineages and landed bases gave them a certain independence from

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<sup>58</sup> Weber, G. 2009. “The Court of Alexander the Great as Social System.” In W. Heckel and L. A. Tritle eds., *Alexander the Great: A New History*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 83-4.

<sup>59</sup> Strootman, 2014, 34-36.

<sup>60</sup> Weber, 2009, 84.

<sup>61</sup> Herman, G. 1997. “The Court Society of the Hellenistic Age.” In P. Cartledge et al. eds., *Hellenistic Constructs*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 213.

<sup>62</sup> Le Bohec, S. 1986. “L’entourage royal à la cour des Antigonides.” In E. Lévy ed., *Le Système Palatial en Orient, en Grèce et à Rome*. Leiden: Brill, 315-322. It is still unclear whether *hetairoi* and *philoï* are synonyms for the same body of elite men, the former indicating those that served under the Argead kings and the latter under the Antigonids, or whether they represent different categories of men at the Macedonian court. There is no indication in the literary sources of a difference in function between *hetairoi* and *philoï* that would warrant the use of a different word. Only in the work of Arrian are both terms used, so perhaps the different words could just be a matter of literary preference. Given that scholarly research on the matter has not definitively proven whether the *hetairoi* and the *philoï* were the same elite body or not, I will in this thesis adhere to the convention of using the term *hetairoi* for the period of Argead rulership, and *philoï* for the period of Antigonid rulership. When I discuss this group of elite men without specifying under which king they existed, I shall be using the term *hetairoi* or Companions, as clearly not all of the king’s companions can suitably be called his friends.

<sup>63</sup> Curt. 6.8.16.

the king. These families were Macedonia's elite, and each of these families had at least one representative at court, so that they could interact with the king.<sup>64</sup>

Now, there is no direct evidence for these landed bases.<sup>65</sup> However, the literary evidence does provide important clues to their existence. Over the next few chapters, half a dozen references to the king summoning the elite for an important feast will be discussed.<sup>66</sup> The fact that the king had to formally invite the elite, must mean that many of them did not permanently reside at the court. While some of them will no doubt have been ambassadors on a diplomatic mission, this cannot have been the case for all of them. It is likely, then, that they returned home. Many members of the Macedonian elite must therefore have been a part of the king's 'outer court' only, the 'inner court' being comprised of those people that were always around the king.<sup>67</sup> Instead, these members of the elite were invited over for special occasions. As they were not around the king all the time, this affected their political power; there were simply less opportunities for influencing the king's decisions directly.

The trip home must have compensated for the loss of political influence with the king somehow. In the Introduction, I mentioned the abandonment of Perseus by his elite the moment he had lost the battle against the Romans. In fact, in some, though not all sources that describe this event, it is stated that the members of the elite had returned home with their troops.<sup>68</sup> Also, Diodorus mentions that the members of the elite had their own political contacts, independent from the king.<sup>69</sup> It is likely, then, that the members of the elite had their own landed bases from which they drew political power, and to which they had to return regularly in order to maintain them. From this landed base, they would get an income as well as troops.

The king was based in Lower Macedonia, which consisted of the regions Pieria and Bottiaea, enclosed by the Haliacmon and Axios rivers.<sup>70</sup> The other ten core regions of the Macedonian kingdom, also known as Upper Macedonia, were probably ruled mainly by local elite families.<sup>71</sup> In these regions, the elite families would have performed the role of intermediaries between the king and the people. As such, they were in the perfect position to

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<sup>64</sup> Spawforth, A. J. 2007b. "The court of Alexander the Great between Europe and Asia." In A. J. Spawforth ed., *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 85.

<sup>65</sup> As stated before, the literary evidence on Macedonia is not very detailed, and there are no references to any member of the elite being the landlord of any specific area.

<sup>66</sup> See chapters five and six. This is unless the Macedonians were campaigning, at which time all the members of the elite resided in the military camp along with the king.

<sup>67</sup> Strootman, 2014, 31.

<sup>68</sup> Liv. 44.32-46; Plut. *Aemil.* 13-23; Polyb. 29.6; Eutrop. 4.7.

<sup>69</sup> Diod. 16.91.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas, C. G. 2010. "The Physical Kingdom." In J. Roisman and I. Worthington eds., *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 68.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas, 2010, 75.

influence the people's opinions. They were also in the perfect position to overthrow the king with the support of the people, should they so desire.

It is important to realise that the way in which the Macedonian court operated, was decided also by the way in which the process of decision-making worked.<sup>72</sup> All political power in Macedonia appears to have been divided between the king, his family members and the *hetairoi*. The king was the only one with the legal authority to make final decisions. Everyone else could only influence decision-making through the role of advisor. Literary sources mention that a popular assembly existed at least until the time of Antigonos Gonatas, but they appear to only have served as the jury during trials of capital cases.<sup>73</sup> The *hetairoi*, as well as other important members of the elite and civic administrators, could be summoned for a council by the king. However, this council did not assemble on its own and was only intended to serve as an advisory board to the king.<sup>74</sup> Even so, the political power of the king was not without its limits. The two major restrictions here were the limit to his wealth, and the fact that he needed to maintain regional support.<sup>75</sup> This was where the elite came into play, striking deals that furthered both their own interests and those of the king.

The relationship between the *hetairoi* and the king, who interacted with each other on a daily basis, was of an informal nature. The members of the elite were allowed to speak frankly to their king, a custom described in Greek as *parrhesia*.<sup>76</sup> This allowed the king's subjects to voice their own opinion, without having to fear the wrath of the king for disagreeing with him. The fact that they were all allowed to do this, however, does not mean that there was no hierarchy amongst them. The *hetairoi* do not appear to have been united in a single body. Rather, they all maintained their individual relationships with the king and with each other, each attempting to further their own interests or that of their family.<sup>77</sup> The hierarchy among the elites at court was decided through their access to the king. Those trusted men that were invited to dine with the king most often and upon whom the king bestowed most of his gifts, were the highest in rank as they had the most influence upon the king.<sup>78</sup>

This does not mean that the king was free to choose his favorites without regard for the social standing of the men he surrounded himself with. As the elites had the ability to advance the military and political power of the king by granting him the access to their troops,

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<sup>72</sup> Duindam, J. 2003. *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550-1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 10.

<sup>73</sup> Hatzopoulos, 1996, 222.

<sup>74</sup> Idem, 346-347.

<sup>75</sup> Duindam, 2003, 10.

<sup>76</sup> Polyb. 5.27.6.

<sup>77</sup> Strootman, 2014, 32.

<sup>78</sup> Weber, 2009, 85.

their surplus wealth from their landed property, and their diplomatic connections both foreign and domestic, the king had to be very careful not to disgruntle them.<sup>79</sup>

Even so, the king was far from powerless. There were a number of tools at his disposal with which he could influence politics at court. As stated before, he had the ability to bestow gifts, both of money and of land gained from conquest, to whomsoever he chose. He was the sole owner of all mines in Macedonia, and as such his wealth was far greater than that of any other Macedonian.<sup>80</sup> This wealth allowed him to maintain the largest standing army, of which he, as Macedonia's supreme military commander, was fully in control. Specifically in court, the king could employ three tactics in order to gain more control: suppressing those members of the elite with independent power bases (and conversely, favouring those men that owed their position entirely to their ruler), forming close friendships with eminent people outside the court circle in order to bypass the courtiers, and finally playing the various factions within the elite off against each other.<sup>81</sup>

Both the Macedonian king and the members of the Macedonian elite thus had various strategies that they could employ in order to gain or maintain political power. While both parties depended on each other for continued support so that the balance of power could be maintained and the kingdom remained a stable unit, they also had the ability to dispose of one another, if the need arose. The relationship between the king and the Macedonian elite at court was therefore one of constant negotiation and dialogue. And what better time to engage in dialogue than during a feast, where one could enjoy the company of the king in close quarters?

One final, striking feature of the Macedonian court culture, is that it did not change when a different dynasty established itself. The traditions regarding royal power such as easy access to the king, a court that was not fixed to one location and no direct power for the Macedonian people through assemblies, appear to have been so strong and useful for the Macedonians, that Antigonid kings conformed to this type of Argead kingship. From Philip II to Philip V, the Macedonian state was organised in largely the same way. The legitimacy of the king continued to derive not from divine favour, but from his negotiations with the Macedonian landed elite, and through them, with the Macedonian people.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Spawforth, A. J. 2007a. "Introduction." In A. J. Spawforth ed., *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Hammond, 1989, 55.

<sup>81</sup> Herman, 1997, 213.

<sup>82</sup> Ginouvès, R. et al. 1994. *Macedonia from Philip II to the Roman Conquest*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 76; Ma, J. 2011. "Court, King, and Power in Antigonid Macedonia." In R. J. Lane Fox ed., *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedon: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC – 300 AD*.

## 2.3 Conclusion

The framework of ritualised feasting helps us understand the various ways in which power relations could be manipulated through feasting. The symbolical prestige that could be gained by hosting a lavish party could be turned into social and political power. If the guests to one of these feasts were unable to reciprocate the event, they would implicitly acknowledge their socially and politically subordinate position to the host.

Because of the ritualised nature of the event, all participants were aware of the fact that they were putting up some kind of performance for an audience. This audience expected the ritual activity to proceed in a certain manner, as prescribed by etiquette or tradition. A correctly performed ritual could either be used to normalise the social and cosmic order, or do the exact opposite. The ritualised feast thus had the power to change the cultural reality of a community, thereby transforming their ideas of social hierarchy.

A more tangible way to influence power relations, was through the court. The Argead and Antigonid courts served as a platform for elites to gain access to the king and negotiate individual relationships of power. The elites could influence the king through their personal network, their army and their economical wealth, but mostly through regional political power. The elites controlled peripheral regions of the Macedonian kingdom, and the king needed their support in order to keep the kingdom together. The king on the other hand had the most political, social and economical power, and drew the elite to him through court mechanics.

The elites with landed bases could not have been at the court all the time so for them, being invited to a royal feast meant much coveted access to the king so they could attempt to gain favour. Having the king's favour was one of the most important ways in which a member of the elite could outmatch his rivals, and it could be measured by the ease with which one could gain access to the king. The competition between elites was therefore the fiercest in court.

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Leiden: Brill, 524. Although in later times, the *Basileia* in honour of the king were celebrated, providing a possible indication of ruler cult.

## **Chapter 3. Archaeology**

In this chapter I will discuss a variety of archaeological sources that can help further our understanding of the Macedonian royal feast. First, architectural evidence from palaces and large houses helps define the ‘festive’ space. Second, the interior arrangement of this space and the Macedonians’ display of luxury can be identified from small finds and furniture. These objects are found almost exclusively in funerary contexts. Almost all of the evidence discussed in this chapter dates to the period 330-300 BCE, a time when the Macedonian kingdom was at its most prosperous due to the conquests of both Philip II and Alexander III.<sup>83</sup>

Through the discussion of the archaeological sources, the following questions will be answered: what archaeological evidence do we have for the prominence of feasting in the Macedonian (royal) culture? What do palaces tell us about the hierarchy within the festive space? What evidence do we have for the use of display, one of the key ways in which the king could impress his guests?

### **3.1 Palaces and Houses**

So far, three Macedonian palaces have been discovered, at Aigai-Vergina, Pella and Demetrias. I will not be discussing the palace at Demetrias as it remains almost completely unexcavated and unpublished and appears to have been more of a military fortification.<sup>84</sup> As for the other two palaces, they are not fully excavated and published either, although there is a lot of secondary literature on them, especially on Aigai-Vergina. Furthermore, as the palaces suffered from landslides and use as a stone and marble quarry by locals both in ancient and modern times, it has become difficult to establish and date building phases and to reconstruct the complete floor plan.<sup>85</sup> This is especially the case for the palace at Pella, I will therefore mainly be focussing on the festive spaces of the palace of Aigai-Vergina in this section, using the evidence from Pella to provide parallels where necessary.

Even so, it is useful not only to discuss the festive spaces of the palaces here, but also those of some of the large houses that were discovered in the ancient city of Pella, where floors and walls are better preserved. These houses served as the private homes not only of the elites, but of members of the royal family as well. When Philip V was king of Macedon, his

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas, 2010, 76-80

<sup>84</sup> Winter, F. E. 2006. *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 163.

<sup>85</sup> Kottaridi, A. 2009. *The Palace of Aegae: 2007-2009 the Commencement of a Major Project*. Thessaloniki: XVII Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, 29.

two sons, Perseus and Demetrios, each lived in one of the largest houses in the city of Pella, but not in the palace itself.<sup>86</sup> In the House of Helen and the House of Dionyos, some of the feasting rooms still have their spectacular mosaic floors whereas at the House of the Painted Plaster sections of wall decoration have been discovered. The houses are dated to the last quarter of the fourth century, whereas the palaces are generally considered to have been built around the time of Philip II, so they can roughly be dated to the same period.<sup>87</sup>

Not many small finds have been recovered, making it difficult to establish what a room could have been used for. In most cases, all we have left of the individual rooms are the floors and the lower ends of the walls so we can only reconstruct those items that left their traces there: mosaics, columns, impressions of furniture in the plaster. To complicate matters further, rooms would have served multiple purposes so one function does not exclude another. Yet there are some architectural criteria that can help us recognise a feasting room. The most important of these is a heightened band along the edges of the room, on top of which the *klinai* would have been placed.<sup>88</sup> In some cases, the bases for the couches are still present, for example in rooms M1 and M3 at the palace of Aigai-Vergina.<sup>89</sup> However, feasting did not necessarily happen on *klinai* so rooms without the bands could still be feasting rooms. Another indication of a dining room is a door that is not placed in the middle of the wall. Feasting rooms were generally square, so that the couches could easily fit in the rooms while the guests would be able to make conversation with as many of the other guests as possible.<sup>90</sup> The off-centre placement of the door made sure that couches could also be fitted alongside the front wall of the room.<sup>91</sup> Finally, the existence of drainage can also potentially point to the use of the room for feasting, because wine stains would have been regularly cleaned off the floors. Yet without the couch bands or bases, we cannot be absolutely certain of a room's function(s).<sup>92</sup> The palace of Aigai-Vergina has 13 rooms that are undoubtedly connected to feasting due to the presence of *klinai* bands, namely rooms M1, M2, M3, N1, N2, N3, N4, S, R, D, E, G and H on the palace plan from Figure 1.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Livy 40.7-8.

<sup>87</sup> Ginouvès, 1994, 117; Kottaridi, 2009, 15.

<sup>88</sup> Nielsen, I. 1994. *Hellenistic Palaces: Tradition and Renewal*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 83.

<sup>89</sup> Kottaridi, 2009, 55.

<sup>90</sup> Bergquist, B. 1990. "Symptotic Space: A Functional Aspect of Greek Dining-Rooms." In O. Murray ed., *Symptotica: A Symposium on the Symposium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 37.

<sup>91</sup> Feasting rooms were usually square or almost square (see page 27 for a description of the sizes of the feasting rooms of the palace of Aigai-Vergina). Placing the door in the middle of the room would have limited the number of couches that could be placed alongside that wall, as couches were placed side to side. Instead, the door had to be placed off-centre, so that as much couches could be placed alongside the front wall as possible.

<sup>92</sup> Kottaridi, 2009, 55.

<sup>93</sup> Ginouvès, 1994, 86-7 & 117.



Figure 1: Plan of the palace of Aigai. Image taken from [www.macedonian-heritage.gr](http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr).

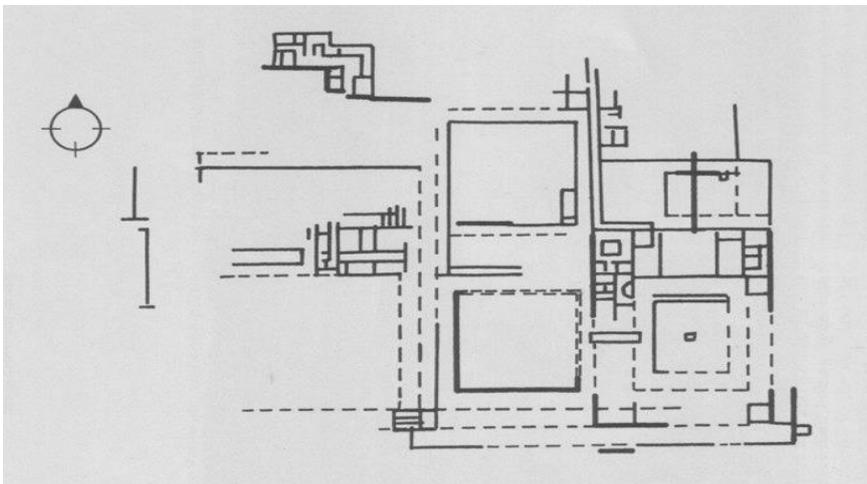


Figure 2: Plan of the palace of Pella. Image taken from <http://myweb.unomaha.edu>.

In the case of Aigai-Vergina room M2, it is still unclear whether the room was used for feasting or whether the three rooms M1-M3 were part of a so-called ‘*flügeldreiraumgruppe*’, where two feasting rooms would flank a large central room. Both side rooms could only be accessed through this central room.<sup>94</sup> An example of this type is the group E-F-G from the same palace, where room F was used to provide access to E and G. Unfortunately, in the cases of the rooms M1-M3, the walls and floors were so damaged that it was impossible to locate the position of the doorways.<sup>95</sup> As such, we cannot be sure whether the rooms were a *flügeldreiraumgruppe* or not. A similar suggestion has also been made for the three sizeable dining rooms to the north of Peristylum I at the palace of Pella (Figure 2). Unfortunately, here again the main entrances to the rooms have not been recovered, so in this case too it remains conjecture whether we are dealing with a *flügeldreiraumgruppe*. In the case of Pella, the two rooms on the sides were both capable of holding 15 couches, whereas the central room was far larger. If the ‘central room’ was in fact used for dining purposes, it could easily have held more than 35 couches.<sup>96</sup>

The rooms at the palace of Aigai-Vergina are of three different sizes. Rooms D, E, G and H are 9.1x9.1 metres, giving them an inner space of roughly 80m<sup>2</sup>. Depending on the size of the couches, that could vary from 1.60 metres to 2 metres in length, a room such as D, E, G or H would allow for 15 couches.<sup>97</sup> Rooms S, R and N1-N4 are slightly bigger, 10.55x10.85 metres, and these rooms in turn could hold 19 couches. Rooms M1 and M3 are significantly larger. Their size of 16x17.66 metres gives them an inner space of around 300 m<sup>2</sup>, which is enough to provide for at least 30 couches.<sup>98</sup> In comparison, the House of Helen at Pella (Figure 3) had at least five banqueting halls.<sup>99</sup> One could fit 19 *klinai*, but in the others there would not have been enough room for more than 11. Two feasting rooms have been securely identified at the House of Dionysos, but there may have been more (Figure 4). One could fit

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<sup>94</sup> Kopsacheili, M., 2011. “Hybridisation of Palatial Architecture: Hellenistic Royal Palaces and Governor’s Seats.” In A. Kouremenos, S. Chandrasekaran and R. Rossi eds., *From Pella to Gandhara: Hybridisation and Identity in the Art and Architecture of the Hellenistic East*. BAR International Series 2221. Oxford: Archaeopress, 19.

<sup>95</sup> Nielsen, 1994, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Brands, G. and W. Hoepfner, eds. 1996. *Basileia: die Paläste der Hellenistischen Könige*. Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 29.

<sup>97</sup> Bergquist, 1990, 50. Assuming that the size of the couches at the palace would be quite generous, so 2 metres in length, four couches could be placed alongside each of the three walls that did not feature an entrance. The entrance would have been over 1,5 metres wide, in order to allow for the movable couches to be placed inside the room. This means that only three couches would have fitted along the entrance wall, giving a grand total of 15 couches in the room.

<sup>98</sup> For the calculations on the amount of *klinai* that could be fitted into the various banqueting rooms, see Bergquist, 1990, 50 and Ginouvès, 1994, 87.

<sup>99</sup> Westgate, R. 1998. “Greek Mosaics in their Architectural and Social Context.” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies (BICS)* 42:1, 106.

11 *klinai*, and the other 15.<sup>100</sup> Given that the king could only feast in one room at a time, technically, there was no need for thirteen different banqueting halls. The sheer number of rooms meant for feasting, may have already been an attempt at impressing the nobles. Also, it alludes to the possibility that feasts were held in multiple rooms at the same time.

The two houses just mentioned are two of the most lavish houses from ancient Macedon that have been discovered so far, but feasts thrown here would have been on a significantly smaller level than those at the palace of Aigai. Given that each *kline* would hold two guests, at least 448 people could be seated indoors in the palace at the same time. However, some scholars have suggested that the outdoor spaces of the *peristylia* around which the rooms were built could also have been used for feasting. If that was the case, a far larger group of up to 3500 people could be entertained at the palace at once.<sup>101</sup>

The size of these feasting rooms is revealing, as any rooms larger than the ones with 15 couches would have made it difficult for the guests to converse with anyone other than the people on the couches closest to them.<sup>102</sup> In the larger feasting rooms, then, all seats are no longer equal but rather part of a hierarchy. The most desirable couches would have been those closest to the king, anyone reclining there would be showing all other members of the elite how close he was to the centre of power. At the same time, everybody else would be able to see which members of the elite were the ones to beat in the contest for the king's favour.<sup>103</sup>

For members of the elite, then, the goal would have been to get invited to feasts with fewer participants, which in turn would have been held in one of the smaller rooms. These rooms would most likely have been used by the king and his inner circle only, and everybody present at those smaller feasts would have been within hearing distance of him. The evidence from the feasting rooms themselves also suggests that these rooms were meant to be used by those that were closest to the king. In the palace of Aigai, the smaller rooms are those with the most expensive and elaborate floor decoration. Thus, rooms E and G had very elaborate pebble mosaics that included floral motifs, female figures, dolphins and possibly an image of the Abduction of Europe, whereas the floors of rooms M1-M3 were covered with marble slabs.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Bergquist, 1990, 50: Rooms Δ, Θ, I and K from the House of Helen are all 8.15 x 8.15 metres, Γ is rectangular in shape and measures 8.15 x 14.45 metres. The internal wall length of the dining rooms in the House of Dionysos range from 8.45 to 10.95 metres, which comes down to an area of between 72 and 120 m<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>101</sup> Kottaridi, A. 2013. *Aigai: The Royal Metropolis of the Macedonians*. Athens: John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, 234.

<sup>102</sup> Bergquist, 1990, 53-4.

<sup>103</sup> Nielsen, I. 1998. "Royal Banquets: The Development of Royal Banquets and Banqueting Halls from Alexander to the Tetrarchs." In I. Nielsen and H. Nielsen eds., *Meals in a Social Context*. ASMA 1, 125.

<sup>104</sup> Ginouves, 1994, 117; Kottaridi, 2009, 55.

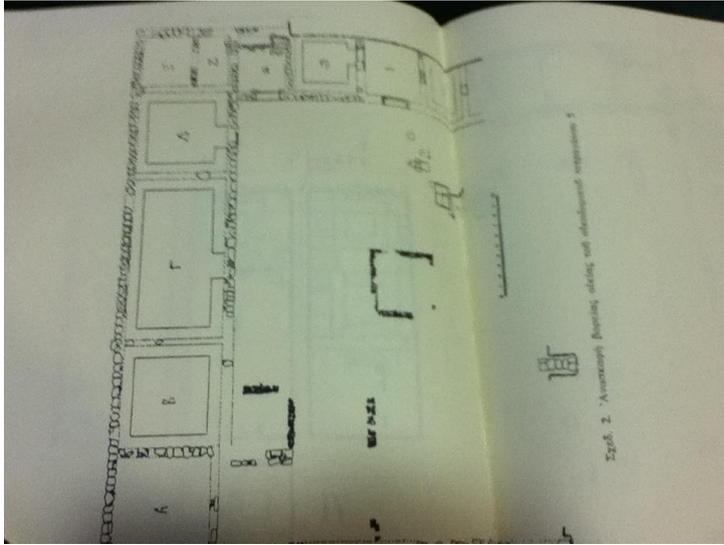


Figure 3: Plan of House of Helen. Image taken from Kiderlen, 1995.

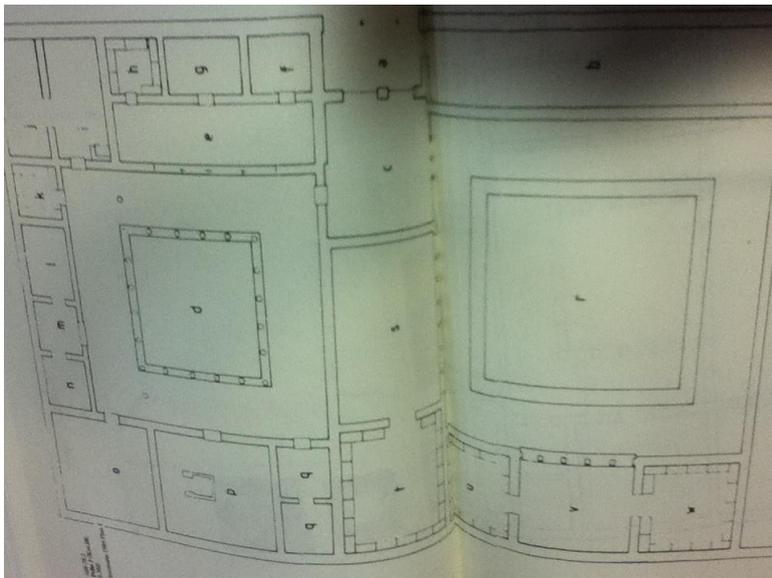


Figure 4: Plan of House of Dionysos. Image taken from Kiderlen, 1995.

Undoubtedly, a marble slab floor was still expensive as marble was not common in Macedonia, but it wasn't nearly as costly as a high quality mosaic.<sup>105</sup> Sadly, the floor mosaics from the palace have not been very well preserved, but one only has to look at the pebble mosaics from Pella, displaying among others the Abduction of Helen by Theseus (Figure 5), to see how exquisite these mosaics must have been.<sup>106</sup>

The decorative architectural features of the feasting rooms such as columns were treated the same throughout the entire palace as well as in the private houses: they were made of local porous limestone and then covered with a thin layer of stucco that made it look as if the limestone were in fact marble.<sup>107</sup> In the case of wall decorations, a comparison similar to the one for floor decoration is hard to make as fragments of painted plaster in red, yellow and white were only found in room S.<sup>108</sup> We can however compare this evidence to the fragments of plaster found at the aptly named House of the Painted Plaster at Pella. So much plaster was recovered from this house that archaeologists were able to reconstruct the wall decoration of the entrance and of a 5 metre high room north of the peristyle.<sup>109</sup> The plaster is painted in four main colours: white, black, yellow and red. Most of the wall decoration consists of continuously coloured surfaces that imitate marble, often in five separate zones. Yet architectural imitations are also found: the top half of the 5 metre wall showed a row of tall pilasters with capitals, and an imitation of a parapet (Figure 6).<sup>110</sup>

The hierarchy of the dining rooms alludes to an important power tool that could be employed by the king. As the host of the feast, he would be responsible for the seating arrangements. He could therefore decide whom he wanted to have close to him during the evening. This means that he had the power to decide with whom he wanted to negotiate, furthering a personal relationship. Also, since the access to the king was an indicator of the social and political power of any member of the Macedonian elite, the king could manipulate the social hierarchy by allowing those elites that were dependent on him to be seated closer to him than those that could pose a threat.

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<sup>105</sup> Westgate, R. 2000. "Space and Decoration in Hellenistic Houses." *The Annual of the British School at Athens (BSA)* 95, 393.

<sup>106</sup> Ginouves, 1994, 121.

<sup>107</sup> Kottaridi, 2009, 27.

<sup>108</sup> Kutbay, B. L. 1998. *Palaces and Large Residences of the Hellenistic Age*. Lewingston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 23.

<sup>109</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>110</sup> Ginouves, 1994, 136.

### 3.2 Finds from Tombs: Metalwork and Furniture

Now that the architectural features of the feasting rooms that would have been used for royal feasts have been discussed, it is time to move on to the items that would have been placed in these rooms. These items can bring further insights into the wealth that the king needed to display in order to impress his guests. The types of drinking ware related to feasting that are found in grave contexts, also provide further information on the asymmetrical relationships of guests at a feast. In this section I will focus on two types of objects that would have been present at any feast, but lend themselves very well to displays of luxury such as were undoubtedly part of the Macedonian royal feast: *klinai* and metal vessels.

We know from literary sources, for example Athenaeus 4.128.a- 4.130d, that the Macedonians usually reclined at their symposia, a fact proven by the *klinai* bands discussed in the previous section.<sup>111</sup> These *klinai* were usually made out of wood, hence the reason why not many of them have survived through the ages.<sup>112</sup> Fortunately, *klinai* were not only used as furniture during a feast, but as funerary couches as well. These pieces of furniture were used as a support for the remains, regardless whether the preferred burial method was inhumation or cremation.<sup>113</sup> In the case of successive burials, more than one couch would be placed in the tomb alongside the tomb walls in either a pi or a gamma shape. In some cases, for example in the Potidaia tomb and the Judgment tomb at Lefkadia, the placement of the couches mimicks the placement of couches in a banqueting room.<sup>114</sup> In various tombs, such as in Tomb II at Aigai-Vergina or the Palmette Tomb at Lefkadia, the *klinai* were made of wood and have deteriorated, causing the objects that were placed upon them to scatter in a particular pattern. However, they were also sometimes made of stone and even painted to make them look more like their wooden counterparts, for example in the Potidaia tomb, and these stone representations are a tremendous help in understanding what the couches could have looked like.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> However, Athenaeus also provides us with some literary evidence that suggests that the Macedonians occasionally sat on chairs during a feast, rather than reclining. Athen. 1.17f –1.18a. Unfortunately, there is no archaeological evidence for these chairs. Thrones were found in a number of tombs, for example in the tomb of Eurydice, but it is impossible to tell whether these are the types of chairs that were also used during feasts.

<sup>112</sup> Andrianou, D. 2009. *Furniture and Furnishings of Ancient Greek Houses and Tombs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 31.

<sup>113</sup> Miller, S. G. 1993. *The Tomb of Lyson and Kallikles: A Painted Macedonian Tomb*. Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 14.

<sup>114</sup> Idem, 17-18.

<sup>115</sup> Descamps-Lequime, S. ed. 2011. *Au royaume d'Alexandre le Grand: La Macédoine antique*. Paris: Musée du Louvre éditions, 486.



Figure 5: Abduction of Helen mosaic from Pella. Image taken from [www.studyblue.com](http://www.studyblue.com).



Figure 6: Reconstruction of a 5 metre high room in the House of the Painted Plaster. Image taken from [www.macedonian-heritage.gr](http://www.macedonian-heritage.gr).

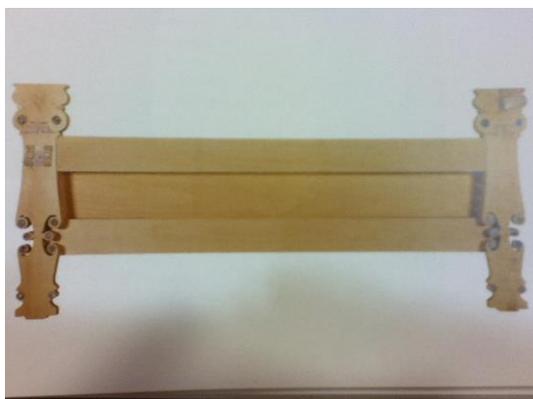


Figure 7: Reconstruction of a wooden kline. Image taken from Descamps-Lequime, 2011.

Based on the stone representations of couches from several tombs in Macedonia, a wooden reconstruction of a *kline* has been made by Sismanidis (Figure 7). According to him, a *kline* was roughly two metres long, one metre wide and one metre high with four supports, one in each corner.<sup>116</sup> Connecting these supports was a wooden frame consisting of three consecutive planks.<sup>117</sup> During a feast, various blankets and sheets would have been draped over the couches so that the guests would be comfortable and warm for the entire duration of the event.

Comparison to painted stone couches suggests that *kline* decoration consisted of both an upper and a main frieze depicting human figures, as well as a lower band of decoration that was predominantly floral but some animals could be displayed there as well.<sup>118</sup> The main frieze would have been larger in size than the other two. Also, floral decoration could be used for the supports. The decoration could either be applied in paint, or on the more expensive couches, in ivory and gold.<sup>119</sup> The figural motifs of the *kline* decoration were those of either a hunt or a battle on the main frieze, and a Dionysiac scene on the smaller friezes.<sup>120</sup> An example of what one of these friezes could have looked like is given for the funerary *kline* from Meda's tomb at Aigai-Vergina (Figure 8).

Even more visible than the *klinai*, which would have been partially obscured by the covers and by other furniture such as low tables placed in front of them once the feasting got under way, were the objects that were placed on top of the low tables. These items consisted of plates for food and a variety of vessels for the drinking of wine. In many graves this so-called 'symptotic ware' has been found, providing us with clues to its great importance for the ancient Macedonians. Symptotic vessels are commonly found in grave deposits all over ancient Macedon, such as in Pydna, Pella, Stavroupolis, Methone, Thessaloniki and Nikesiane.<sup>121</sup> From some of the richest graves such as Tombs II and III at Aigai-Vergina, and tombs Alpha and Beta at Derveni, that undoubtedly belonged to members of the elite if not the royal family, complete sets of symptotic ware have been recovered.<sup>122</sup> These sets will be discussed here, so that we may gain further insight into the wealth displayed at royal and elite feasts.

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<sup>116</sup> See also page 27.

<sup>117</sup> Sismanidis, K. 1997. *Κλίνες και κλινοειδείς κατασκευές των μακεδονικών τάφων*. Athens: Υπουργείο Πολιτισμού. Ταμείο Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων και Απαλλοτριώσεων, 242 & 244.

<sup>118</sup> Sismanidis, 1997, 242.

<sup>119</sup> Kyrieleis, H. 1969. *Throne und Klinen: Studien zur Formgeschichte altorientalischer und griechischer Sitz- und Liegemöbel vorhellenistischer Zeit*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 162-3.

<sup>120</sup> Cohen, A. 2010. *Art in the Era of Alexander the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 13.

<sup>121</sup> Zimi, E. 2011. *Late Classical and Hellenistic Silver Plates from Macedonia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 50-1.

<sup>122</sup> Kottaridi, 2013, 244-261.

In the tombs just mentioned, the grave goods were placed together in groups.<sup>123</sup> As such, all the washing equipment is found together, and the same goes for the weaponry and the sympotic ware. This provides us with good insight into which vessel types were preferred for use during feasts. Some of the more important sympotic vessel types were *situlae*, *phialai*, *oinochoai* and drinking cups. Unlike in southern Greece, in Macedonia it was common for all of the men to mix their wine individually, so that it was made to their own taste. This explains why large container vessels like *hydria* and *kraters* are not placed with the sympotic ware, but are instead used as containers for the remains of the deceased. Instead, the smaller bucket-like *situla* appears to have been the preferred container for wine and water (Herodotus 3.20). *Oinochoai* were either used for the decanting of wine or for ladling it from a larger container to a cup. These cups were usually *kylikes* or *skyphoi*. *Phialai* are also found in great quantities. It is not known what they were used for exactly, but it appears likely that they were intended for the pouring of libations or possibly as drinking bowls.<sup>124</sup>

In her talk on Hellenistic symposia as a feast, Kathleen Lynch discussed the ‘disappearance of the krater’.<sup>125</sup> She described how in the late fourth and early third centuries BCE, the *kraters* and cups used for feasting in Athens shrank in number. According to Lynch, this meant that the feast was less of a shared experience, and more focused on the individual. The smaller drinking ware is indicative of the asymmetrical personal relationships that existed between the guests and the host. In my opinion, the lack of large container vessels for festive usesuch as *hydria* and *kraters* in Macedonia, indicates that a similar process was at work here. As the ritual of feasting no longer required that everyone drank the same wine, the participants to the ritual were no longer automatically equal to all others. The host was also clearly showing off his ability to cater to his guests’ every wishes in terms of wine, herbs and water.

The importance of these vessel shapes becomes even more clear when it is taken into account that all of these items were represented at least more than once and in the cases of the cups no less than four times in the funerary deposits of tombs II and III at Aigai as well as in the Derveni tombs A and B.<sup>126</sup> The vessels were made either in bronze or silver and were

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<sup>123</sup> Themelis, P. and G. Touratsoglou. 1997. *Οι Τάφοι του Δερβενίου*. Athens: Ταμείο Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων και Απαλλοτριώσεων, 193-194.

<sup>124</sup> Zimi, 2009, 32-62.

<sup>125</sup> Lynch, K. “The Hellenistic symposium as a feast.” Conference lecture, *Feasting and Polis Institutions* conference. Utrecht, January 18, 2014.

<sup>126</sup> Barr-Sharrar, B. 1982. “Macedonian Metal Vases in Perspective: Some Observations on Context and Tradition.” In B. Barr-Sharrar and E. N. Borza eds., *Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and early Hellenistic Times*. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 123; Themelis and Touratsoglou, 1997, 193-194.



*Figure 8: Reconstruction of ivory battle/hunting frieze on 'Meda's couch'. Image taken from Kottaridi, 2013.*



*Figure 9: Silverware from Tomb II at Aigai. Image taken from Kottaridi, 2013.*

lavishly decorated with floral patterns, animals and depictions of human heads.<sup>127</sup> Silver vessels appear to have been especially rare, yet 20 silver vessels were located in Derveni tomb B. Only tombs II and III at Aigai-Vergina can compare to this, the former with 19 silver vessels and the latter with a stunning 28 of them (Figure 9).<sup>128</sup> The fact that so many of these expensive items were deposited into a single grave, suggests not only that the deceased buried in the tombs just mentioned came from wealthy or royal families. The amount of sympotic items found in elite graves as well as the sheer number of funerary deposits in which sympotic vessels have been found, underscore that feasting was a very important activity for (male) members of the Macedonian society.

The number of vessels related to feasting that were deposited in graves, suggest that feasting was a very important aspect of Macedonian life. The quantity and quality of these vessels, and also of the *klinai* that were often used to place the deceased on, were indicative of the social status of the deceased and his family. The display of wealth would have been used to impress guests at an empowering feast, allowing the host to gain more social power. Another possibility is that the wealth was used for diacritical feasting, where a certain level of display was required in order to be allowed as a member of the Macedonian elite.

The absence of large vessel types used for a communal consumption of wine, place further emphasis on the individual nature of the feast and, and on the asymmetrical power relationships that existed between the host and his guests. Feasts of this type hosted by the Macedonian king, would have resulted in even more competition for his favour (and as such, for a higher position on the social ladder) between the individual members of the Macedonian elite.

### 3.3 Conclusion

The various archaeological sources for the Macedonian royal and elite feasts confirm the importance of this custom in Macedonian society. The sheer number of banqueting spaces found in the palace of Aigai-Vergina not only shows that feasting was a crucial activity at the Macedonian court, it further suggests that large groups of people could have been entertained by the king at the same time.

Given the size of many of the feasting rooms it becomes clear that, unlike in Greece, the guests would not have been able to communicate with all the other men present. The

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<sup>127</sup> Kottaridi, 2013, 244-261.

<sup>128</sup> Zimi, 2009, 15.

seating arrangements would therefore have provided prestige for those members of the elite that were seated close to the king. The king would have been well aware of this, and could easily manipulate the seating arrangements so that the elites with landed power bases would not get so much social prestige that they could become a threat to him. Prestige could also be gained from being invited to a feast in one of the smaller rooms where it would have been possible to talk to the host and other guests on an equal footing. The fact that more prestige could be gained from being invited to a more private feast, can also be deduced from the floor- and wall decorations of the feasting rooms. The more intimate the room, the more impressive the decorations that were in it.

Even (or perhaps, especially) when the king hosted a feast in one of the smaller rooms, he would have attempted to negate the feeling of equality between everybody present, trying to elevate himself above the others. He could do so by providing each guest with his own *situla* for the mixing of wine, thereby playing down on the communal aspect of the feast, focusing more on individuals. He would have also tried to impress his guests with marvellous and expensive floor- and wall decorations, as well as lavishly decorated couches and metal vessels.

## Chapter 4. Visual Representations of Feasting

Visual evidence for Macedonian feasting comes from votive reliefs and grave stelai and most importantly from the painted Ionic frieze on the back wall of Tomb III at Agios Athanasios (Figures 10-17). The visual references to feasting help us paint a picture of what a Macedonian royal feast would have looked like. The fact that the feast was a popular theme in Macedonian art, also alludes to the feast as the most important locus for social and political activity in Macedonian society.

### 4.1 Votive Reliefs and Grave Stelai

In the case of the votive reliefs and the stelai, the iconographical type seems to have been that of a single, reclining banqueter rather than a full-blown feast.<sup>129</sup> It is first seen in the fourth century, but reaches the height of its popularity during the second and first centuries BCE. Before that time, only two funerary stelai and three votive reliefs depicting banqueters are known.<sup>130</sup> In all cases, however, the iconography is roughly the same. The banqueter is seen reclining on a *kline*, propped up on his left elbow and raising a vessel with his right hand, usually either a *phiale* or a *rhyton*.<sup>131</sup> Often, the banqueter is accompanied by his family or by a servant, standing near a large vessel such as a *hydria* and holding an *oinochoe*. This is for example the case on the stele of Menander. Occasionally not one but two banqueters are depicted, such as on the votive relief from Potidaia, dated to the fourth century. This banqueting theme is seen in almost identical representations on reliefs throughout ancient Greece, from Athens to the Ionic cities in Asia Minor.<sup>132</sup>

It is difficult to tell if the banqueting/feasting theme is based on actual feasts or representations of general feast, or that they perhaps display something else entirely. Several theories on this subject have been put forward. Kottaridi has made the suggestion that we might be looking at a depiction of an ‘Orphic’ or ‘Bacchic’ view of the afterlife, showing the

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<sup>129</sup> Kalaitzi, M. 2007. *Figured tombstones from Macedonia, fifth-first century BC*. PhD Dissertation, Oxford University, 47-51.

<sup>130</sup> Idem, 192.

<sup>131</sup> Ebbinghaus, S. 2000. “A Banquet at Xanthos: Seven Rhyta on the Northern Cella Frieze of the ‘Nereid Monument’.” In G. R. Tsetschladze et al. eds., *Periplous: Papers on Classical Art and Archaeology presented to Sir John Boardman*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 101.

<sup>132</sup> For a large (but not exhaustive) collection of banqueting reliefs from Greece, Italy and Asia Minor, see Dentzer, J.-M. 1982. *Le Motif du Banquet Couché dans le Proche-Orient et le Monde Grec du VIIe au Ier Siècle avant J.-C.* Paris: De Boccard.

eternal banquet of the Blessed after death.<sup>133</sup> Unfortunately, none of the accompanying inscriptions provide us with evidence to support this theory. Another theory was put forward by Charatzopoulou, who has argued for the possibility that this iconographical type celebrates one of the key activities of elite males during their lives instead of in death.<sup>134</sup> If that is the case, the images most likely display a general view of what a symposion looked like.

Most reliefs were carved out of marble, some out of porous stone, and they were then painted. While marble was a rare commodity in Macedon and therefore expensive, its use alone is not enough to prove that we are necessarily dealing with members of the elite, although they are likely to have been responsible for most of these reliefs.<sup>135</sup> However, the possibility cannot be ruled out that moderately wealthy Macedonians who were not part of the elite, also spent large sums of money on grave monuments to ensure that the deceased would be remembered properly.

Since the focus of this thesis is on members of the elites and the royal house at the feast, I will refrain from discussing the reliefs in more detail. What is most important about the votive reliefs and funerary stelai depicting scenes of feasting, is that they were clearly a popular theme, especially in the period when Macedonia was threatened in its existence. The upper class inhabitants of Macedon may have tried to show off their ‘Macedonianness’ through depicting a quintessentially Macedonian feature of life: the feast.

## 4.2 The Painted Ionic Frieze from Tomb III at Agios Athanasios

There is one visual representation of a feast that can without a doubt be connected to the Macedonian elite, and possibly even to the king: the painted Ionic frieze of Tomb III at Agios Athanasios. Agios Athanasios Tomb III was discovered in the 1990’s by Maria Tsimbidou-Avloniti. It is a so-called ‘Macedonian tomb’, originally covered with a tumulus. The tomb was robbed of almost all small finds, including all vessels and human remains. However, a coin of Philip II was found inside, providing a *terminus post quem* for the tomb’s completion. Several other items of furniture that were depicted on the tomb’s Ionic frieze such as the

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<sup>133</sup> Kottaridi, 2011, 167; Hatzopoulos, M. 2006. “De vie a trepas: rites de passage, lamelles dionysiaques et tombes macedoniennes.” In M. Hatzopoulos et al. eds., *Rois, Cites, Necropoles. Institutions, Rites et Monuments en Macedoine*. Athens – Paris: Centre for Greek and Roman Archaeology, 131 & 137.

<sup>134</sup> Charatzopoulou, C. 2006. “La peinture funéraire en Grèce du IVe au IIe S. av. J.-C.: un état de la recherche.” In H. Brecolouaki ed., *La peinture funéraire de Macedoine: Emplois et fonctions de la couleur, IVe-IIe s. av. J.C.* MELETHMATA 48. Athens: The National Hellenic Research Foundation, 46.

<sup>135</sup> Westgate, 2000, 393.



*Figure 10: First section of Agios Athanasios frieze. Figures 10-17 taken from Tsimbidou-Avloniti, 2005.*



*Figure 11: Second section of Agios Athanasios frieze.*



*Figure 12: Third section of Agios Athanasios frieze.*

tables and the *situla* support dating the tomb to the second half of the fourth century BCE.<sup>136</sup> What is more, recently a large number of metal fragments have been reassembled to form a complete set of armour (helmet, chestplate, greaves, spears, knife) and fragments of a horse's bridle, suggesting that at least one of the deceased buried here was a cavalryman.<sup>137</sup>

On the back wall of the tomb, the Ionic frieze was painted with an 3,75 metre long and 0,35 metre high scene of a feast.<sup>138</sup> On the left side of the frieze, three horsemen arrive at the scene, accompanied by five boys with torches and drinking equipment. We then move on to see six guests reclining on couches, being entertained by two female musicians. They are separated from the horsemen by a sideboard laden with various vessels, and a tree. At the far end of the frieze stand a number of soldiers, presumably standing guard.<sup>139</sup>

Tsimbidou-Avloniti has suggested that the tomb might have belonged to one of King Alexander III's *Hetairoi* and that the feast might in fact be a royal one.<sup>140</sup> She argues that the presence of soldiers at a feast means that at least one of the attendants was worth protecting. Furthermore, she has pointed at the young boys that can be seen walking next to the horses and as a part of the armed guard. Tsimbidou-Avloniti holds that these boys must have been *basilikoi paides*, the king's pages that attended to his needs during feasts.<sup>141</sup> She believes that the deceased is depicted on the frieze as the man reclining on the middle couch while holding an elaborate piece of drinking gear: a Persian *rhyton* in the shape of a winged griffin. To her, the *rhyton* as well as the position of the male in the middle of the composition indicate that he is the central figure here and therefore must be the deceased.<sup>142</sup> Guimier-Sorbets and Morizot disagree with her, and have argued instead that the painting is not a representation of an actual feast, but rather shows an ideal, possibly heroic setting.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Tsimbidou-Avloniti, M. 2006. "La tombe macédonienne d'Hagios Athanasios près de Thessalonique." In M. Hatzopoulos et al. eds., *Rois, Cites, Necropoles. Institutions, Rites et Monuments en Macedoine*. Athens – Paris: Centre for Greek and Roman Archaeology, 323.

<sup>137</sup> Tsimbidou-Avloniti, M. 2011. "Άγιος Αθανάσιος, Μακεδονικός τάφος III. Ο οπλισμός του ευγενούς νεκρού." In S. Pingiatoglou et al. eds., *Νάματα: Τιμητικός τόμος για τον καθηγητή Δημητριο Παντερμαλη*. Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 351-360.

<sup>138</sup> Tsimbidou-Avloniti, 2006, 324.

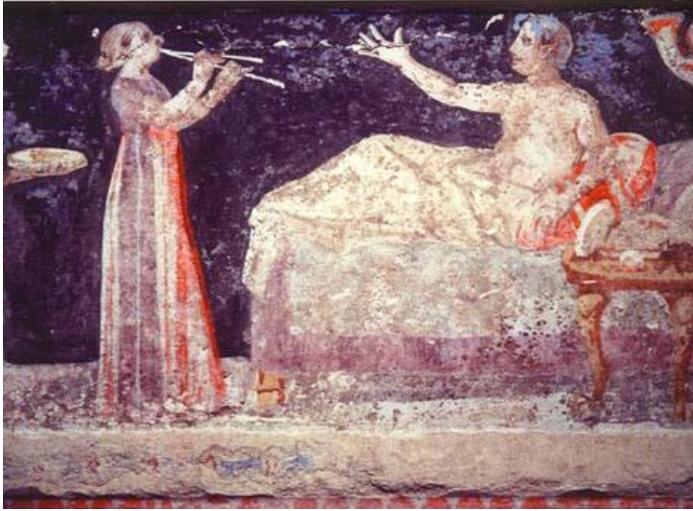
<sup>139</sup> Palagia, O. 2011. "Hellenistic Art." In R. J. Lane Fox ed., *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedon: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC – 300 AD*. Leiden: Brill, 485.

<sup>140</sup> Tsimbidou-Avloniti, M. 2005. *Μακεδονικοί τάφοι στον Φοίνικα και στον Άγιο Αθανάσιο Θεσσαλονίκης*. Athens: Ταμείο Αρχαιολογικών Πόρων και Απαλλοτριώσεων, 139.

<sup>141</sup> Tsimbidou - Avloniti, M. 2007. "Les peintures funéraires d' Aghios Athanassios." In S. Descamps –Lequime ed., *Peinture et couleur dans le monde grec antique*, Milan-Paris: Musée du Louvre éditions, 63.

<sup>142</sup> Tsimbidou-Avloniti, 2005, 125.

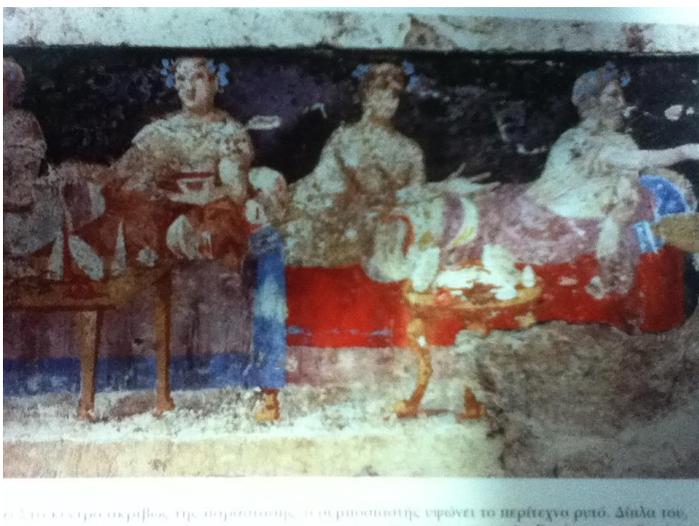
<sup>143</sup> Guimier-Sorbets, A.-M. and Y. Morizot. 2006. "Construire l'identité du mort: L'architecture funéraire en Macedoine." In M. Hatzopoulos et al. eds., *Rois, Cites, Necropoles. Institutions, Rites et Monuments en Macedoine*. Athens – Paris: Centre for Greek and Roman Archaeology, 123.



*Figure 13: Fourth section of Agios Athanasios frieze.*



*Figure 14: Fifth section of Agios Athanasios frieze.*



*Figure 15: Sixth section of Agios Athanasios frieze.*

The colourful pieces of clothing and the presence of horses do suggest that we are dealing with members of the elite.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, Andrianou has pointed out that all six guests (or five guests and a host) are equally tall, on the same line of perspective and they all make similar gestures: not one of them clearly stands out from the others.<sup>145</sup> As for it being a royal feast: surely if the family wanted to stress their connection to the king, they would have made sure he stood out on the painting, for example by having him wear a diadem.

Even though it is impossible to identify any of the people depicted on the Agios Athanasios painting or to connect the image to an actual historical event, the painting does help us get a good sense of what an elite or royal feast might have been like. The overall air of the painting is one of luxury. The guests recline on *klinai* covered with brightly coloured covers that can only have been expensive. They drink from silver and bronze cups, with lots of different foods covering the tables in front of them.<sup>146</sup> Fancy items of furniture are on display such as the marble *louterion*, the basin with water used for ritual cleansing at the start of the symposion, and the *kulikeion*, a display board for the owner's expensive metalware. Thus, the Agios Athanasios frieze painting clearly shows the host's desire to impress his guests.

More so than the votive reliefs and the funerary stelai, the painted Ionic frieze displays a colourful picture of what an elite, or possibly even royal feast would have looked like. The luxuriousness of the event is clear. But especially significant is the fact that this feasting scene is featured so prominently on the monument for a deceased member of the Macedonian cavalry, and therefore almost surely a member of the elite as well. The deceased is likely to have served under Cassander, or possibly even under Alexander III. Again, then, the image is made at a point in time where the Macedonian state and the Macedonian monarchy were undergoing important changes. It is possible that, like with the reliefs, we are dealing with a display of 'Macedonianness' at a particularly turbulent moment in history.

### 4.3 Conclusion

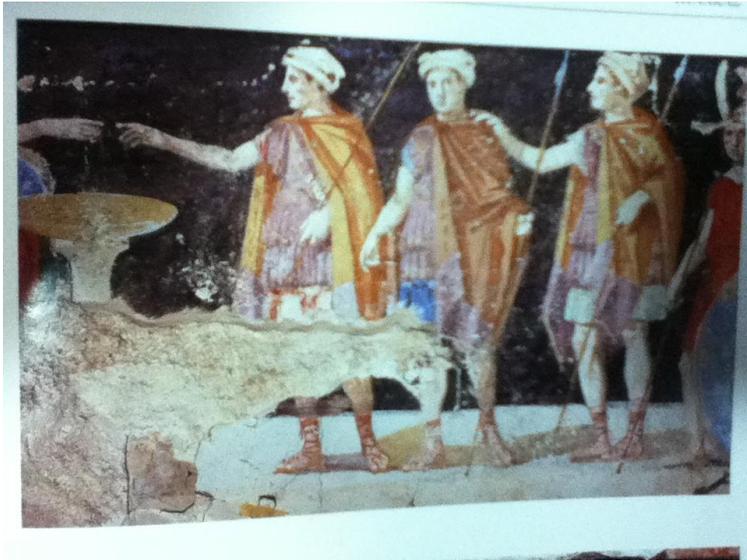
The various visual sources for the Macedonian royal or elite feasts confirm the importance of the custom of feasting in Macedonian society. The fact that banqueting was an iconographical

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<sup>144</sup> Cohen, 2010, 262. Several of the participants in the symposium wear light purple *chitons*, but this does not have to mean that we are dealing with royalty. Officers and companions could also wear it, besides, this colour is more violet than actual purple. The colour of the cloth found with the remains of the male deceased of Tomb II at Aigai-Vergina is much darker than the one depicted here.

<sup>145</sup> Andrianou, 2009, 62.

<sup>146</sup> Tsimbidou-Avloniti, 2005, 122. The items on the tables include eggs, honey, pomegranates, raisins and a number of round and pyramidal objects that represent various sorts of bread and cakes (*popana* and *pyramides*).



*Figure 16: Seventh section of Agios Athanasios frieze.*



*Figure 17: Eighth section of Agios Athanasios frieze.*

theme for funerary stelai, votive reliefs and tomb paintings from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE suggests its prominence in the lives of many Macedonians, particularly elite males. It can also be seen as a display of ‘Macedonianness’, in a time when the future of the kingdom was threatened.

The depictions of Macedonian feasts clearly show the importance of display. The various images feature expensive metal vessels, coloured drapes, finely decorated *klinai* and even display boards, for showing off precious goods that would not be needed during the feast. All in all, they provide a good image of just how impressive a Macedonian royal feast might have been for the king’s guests.

## Chapter 5. Philip II

There are five feasts that were hosted by Philip II that will be discussed in this chapter. These are the feast before the wedding of Philip and Cleopatra, the feast after the Battle of Chaeronea, the feast for the Theban ambassadors, and finally the feast celebrated during the Olympia at Dion, shortly after the capture of Olynthus. The feasts after the Battle of Chaeronea and before the wedding to Cleopatra are discussed by both Diodorus and Justin. The feast after the victory over Olynthus is described by Diodorus. Demosthenes has informed us of the feast for the Theban ambassadors. Furthermore, both Athenaeus and Justin describe the differences between Philip and Alexander, and they include the difference in partying habits. Athenaeus also discusses some of the more extravagant feasting equipment that Philip II had in his possession.<sup>147</sup> Rather than discussing each of the text fragments one at a time, I will be discussing them based on content. All extant fragments either refer to quarrels and drunken behaviour, or to gift-giving and lavish banqueting gear.

### 5.1 Quarrels and Drunken Behaviour

The most important quarrel that is described in the literary sources, is that between Philip and his son Alexander on the eve of Philip's wedding to Cleopatra. It is important to note that this quarrel was not instigated by either member of the royal family, but by Attalus, Cleopatra's uncle and a prime member of the Macedonian elite.<sup>148</sup> At one point during the feast, when Attalus was already drunk, he professed the wish that Philip and Cleopatra would beget a son, who in turn could become the legitimate ruler of Macedon.<sup>149</sup> Now the elite was allowed to speak freely to the king according to the principle of *parrhesia*. But *parrhesia* did not include

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<sup>147</sup> Rhodes, 2010, 26-28; Yardley, J.C. 2003. *Justin and Pompeius Trogus: A Study of the Language of Justin's Epitome of Trogus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 5. All of the extant works are written well after the fourth century. In the *Learned Banqueters*, Athenaeus quotes from the work of Theopompus, who has a very negative view on Philip. Theopompus's work is one of two fourth century Philippic histories that we know of. The other one was written by Anaximenes. Unfortunately, both only survive in fragments. Diodorus used as his sources on Philip II the works of Ephorus of Cyme and his son Demophilus. The latter wrote an account of the Third Sacred War up to the year 340. We do not know for sure what works Diodorus based himself on for the years after 340. It has been suggested that he used the history of Diyllus of Athens, that ran from 356 until the early third century. The account is more detailed before 356 than after and is generally favourable to Philip II. Finally, Justin's work is an epitome of a 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE work by the Gaul Pompeius Trogus. His work is generally more hostile to Philip, having been greatly influenced by the work of Livy.

<sup>148</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 9.4.

<sup>149</sup> As Cleopatra was a Macedonian woman, the child of Philip and Cleopatra would be completely Macedonian, whereas all of Philip's other wives were princesses of other peoples. Olympias, Alexander's mother, came from Epirus. Lane Fox, R. 2011. "Philip: Accession, Ambitions, and Self-Representation." In R. J. Lane Fox ed., *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedon: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC – 300 AD*. Leiden: Brill, 347.

insulting the king's grown son or one of his wives.<sup>150</sup> Alexander took offense to Attalus's comment, and responded by throwing his cup at him. This in turn angered Philip, who came at Alexander with a drawn sword, but tripped before he could reach him. After this had happened, Alexander and his mother Olympias left Macedon and went to Epirus, and then Illyria.<sup>151</sup>

The same Attalus was also involved in another quarrel. Although this quarrel occurred at an elite feast where the king was not present, it is useful to discuss it as it shows how important individual members of the elite could be. When Attalus, "who was a member of the court circle and influential with the king", invited Pausanias to dinner, he gave him so much to drink that Pausanias passed out.<sup>152</sup> When he did, Attalus handed his unconscious body over to muleteers, who abused Pausanias. When Pausanias recovered and pieced together what had happened, he went to the king to charge Attalus with the abuse. However, "Philip shared his anger at the barbarity of the act but did not wish to punish Attalus at that time because of their relationship and because Attalus's services were needed urgently."<sup>153</sup>

There are several important conclusions that can be drawn from the description of these quarrels. The Macedonian royal feast was an occasion at which the king and the members of the elite could express their opinions, even on politically dangerous topics. It was a place where the current status quo could be challenged by anyone who wished to do so. At the same time, it was expected that all parties present behaved in a particular manner, one that emphasised their position in society.<sup>154</sup> This also meant that some members of the elite had more freedom of speech and acting than others. Attalus for example was so important, that he could get away with abusing a fellow member of the elite.

The negative tone of Plutarch's text is an indication that members of the royal family were expected to behave calmly and with restraint, even during a more informal occasion such as the feast, whereas the elites were supposed to adhere to etiquette, which proscribed a polite manner of speaking. The participants' sense of proper behaviour at the feast, shows that the feast was a 'marked' occasion, during which the participants were conscious of the fact that they were a part of a semi-public ritual.<sup>155</sup>

As for other types of drunken behaviour, there are two occasions on which Philip II misbehaved during or immediately following a feast. First, Diodorus describes that after the

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<sup>150</sup> Roberts, J. W. 1984. *City of Sokrates*. London: Routledge, 148.

<sup>151</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 9.4-5; *Just.* 9.7.

<sup>152</sup> Diod. 16.93.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>154</sup> Bell, 1997, 139 & 143.

<sup>155</sup> Dietler, 2001, 70.

Battle of Chaeronea, “in the drinking after dinner Philip downed a large amount of unmixed wine and forming with his friends a comus in celebration of the victory, paraded through the midst of his captives, jeering all the time at the misfortunes of the luckless men”.<sup>156</sup> One of the captives, the orator Demades, rebuked the king for his lack of modesty and unkingly behaviour. Ashamed of his actions, Philip ended the celebration, expressed his appreciation for Demades’ frankness and released him from captivity.<sup>157</sup>

The other example of drunken behaviour is related to the Battle of Chaeronea as well. It is a scene mentioned by Athenaeus, who is citing Theopompus. It occurs shortly after Philip gained his victory, at a time when he was entertaining a number of Athenian ambassadors. Athenaeus writes: “After he (Philip II) drank all night and became extremely intoxicated, he let everyone else leave and now, as day was breaking, wandered off drunk to visit the Athenian ambassadors. Carystius says in his Historical Commentaries: when Philip decided to get drunk, he used to say the following: ‘We need to start drinking, because if Antipater’s sober, that’s enough.’ On one occasion, when he was shooting dice and someone announced that Antipater had arrived, he had no idea what to do and shoved the board he was using to keep score under his couch.”<sup>158</sup>

Diodorus’s anecdote has all the makings of a literary fabrication based on the trope of the base king chided by the wise philosopher (in this case, an orator).<sup>159</sup> However, it is reasonable to assume that Diodorus did not make this story up himself, but rather copied it from an earlier source.<sup>160</sup> In order for this earlier source to be credible to the public, the story would have to correspond to their idea of how the Macedonian court operated. Therefore, the story itself still contains valuable clues about the Macedonian king and elites, even if the confrontation between Philip II and Demades did not actually happen. So what information can be gained from Diodorus’s anecdote?

For starters, if a prisoner was not chided for addressing the king’s behaviour, there is no doubt that members of the elite would not have been chided either. This means that the elites had some form of moral control over the king. Conversely, the king would have this same control over the individual members of the Macedonian elite.<sup>161</sup> This again underlines the importance of status-confirming behaviour: individuals that did not adhere to the rules of etiquette would have risked a negative effect to their social status. On the other hand, it was

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<sup>156</sup> Diod. 16.87.

<sup>157</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>158</sup> Athen. 10.435.b-d.

<sup>159</sup> Mari, M. “‘Macedonian’ features of Hellenistic *panegyreis* and public feasting.” Conference lecture, *Feasting and Polis Institutions* conference. Utrecht, January 18, 2014.

<sup>160</sup> For a discussion of the earlier works that were used in our extant sources, see footnote 147.

<sup>161</sup> Herman, 1997, 203.

not just the king that misbehaved, his ‘friends’ (τῶν φίλων) did so as well.<sup>162</sup> These friends would have been members of the elite. There are two possible explanations for the behaviour of the elites. First, it is possible that the men mentioned here were actually Philip’s close friends, and that they were just goofing around. If this was the case, then this changes the dynamic of the elite-king relationship. If there were elites that the king considered true friends, they might have had an advantage over other members of the elite that were treated more cautiously.<sup>163</sup> The other possibility is that those ‘friends’ that joined the king in his undignified celebration, were flatterers. Flatterers would attempt to gain the king’s favour by publicly agreeing with everything the king said and did, praising him at every occasion.<sup>164</sup>

Athenaeus’s anecdote has Philip II engaging in drunken misbehaviour by himself, without being chastised for his behaviour. Also important is that the king could wander off on his own, without his bodyguards returning him to the safety of his encampment or palace.<sup>165</sup> Clearly, the king enjoyed a great amount of personal freedom, and was not restricted in his movements. At the same time, this anecdote shows how strong the influence of Macedonian members of the elite could be. According to Athenaeus, the king went to some lengths to make sure that Antipater would not be displeased with him. This suggests that Antipater was a force to be reckoned with, and Philip took care to do just that.

## 5.2 Gift-giving and Lavish Banqueting Gear

Philip II won much land and support for Macedon by his war campaigns, but even more by the giving of gifts. There are three accounts of Philip II giving gifts to his guests at a feast, once to Theban ambassadors, once to the actor Satyrus of Olynthus, and once to the Thessalians. Demosthenes describes how Philip II attempted to buy a group of Theban ambassadors with lavish gifts: “Afterwards, at a sacrificial banquet, when Philip was drinking with them, and showing them much civility, he kept offering them presents, beginning with captives and the like, and ending with gold and silver goblets.”<sup>166</sup> According to Demosthenes, the attempt at bribery did not work, and the Thebans rejected all of Philip’s offerings and instead requested that Philip use his wealth not for individuals, but for the public good.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Diod. 16.87.

<sup>163</sup> Herman, 1997, 213.

<sup>164</sup> Spawforth, 2007b, 86.

<sup>165</sup> The location of the feast with the Athenian ambassadors is not specified by Athenaeus.

<sup>166</sup> Dem. 19.139.

<sup>167</sup> Dem. 19.140.

Diodorus in turn tells the story of the Olympian festival celebrated in Dion, which occurred right after Philip's victory over Olynthus. Many ambassadors from all over the Greek world came to visit Philip at this occasion, including some Olynthians who had just been defeated. During this festival, he "joined in numerous conversations, presenting to many guests drinking cups as he proposed the toasts, awarding gifts to a considerable number, and graciously making such handsome promises to them all that he won over a large number to crave friendship with him."<sup>168</sup> During one of the feasts that Philip II held at the festival, he met with the Olynthian actor Satyrus, who was not in a festive mood. When Philip asked him what was bothering him, Satyrus stated that he wished to ask for the king's help, but was afraid that he would be turned down. Philip then promised Satyrus that he would help him, and Satyrus revealed that he would like to find suitable husbands for two of the captive Olynthian women, who were daughters of one of his fallen friends. Philip immediately granted his wish. Diodorus then states that "By dispensing many other benefactions and gifts of every kind he (Philip II) reaped returns many times greater than his favour; for many who were incited by hopes of his beneficence outstripped one another in devoting themselves to Philip and in delivering their countries to him."<sup>169</sup>

The third story of gift-giving is known to us through the work of Athenaeus, who again quotes Theopompus. From his story, it immediately becomes clear that Theopompus had no love for Philip. He sets the scene by first describing Philip's nature. According to Theopompus, Philip was prone to surround himself with people that would flatter him, drink with him and entertain him while drinking. "The Macedonian always surrounded himself with people of this sort; because he liked to drink and behave like a fool, he generally spent a large amount of time with them and held meetings during which he made plans about extremely important matters."<sup>170</sup> There is but one occasion where heavy drinking and political meetings could occur at the same time: the Macedonian feast. Here, Theopompus clearly acknowledges the political importance of the Macedonian royal feast. After introducing Philip as a drunk and an immature king, Theopompus continues: "Because Philip knew that the Thessalians were undisciplined and lived dissolutely, he used to throw parties for them, and did his best to entertain them any way he could by dancing, celebrating and putting up with all kinds of bad behaviour. [...] He won over more of the Thessalians who spent time with him by holding these parties than by giving them presents."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Diod. 16.55.1.

<sup>169</sup> Diod. 16.55.2.

<sup>170</sup> Athen. 6.20.b.

<sup>171</sup> Athen. 6.20.b-c.

Neither of the cases just discussed feature members of the Macedonian elite mentioned. Yet I have included these literary sources, because in my opinion, they provide a good image of the Macedonian royal feast as a venue for gift-giving. The main principle for gift-giving remains the same regardless of the ethnicity, background and social standing of the receiver: reciprocity. A gift is given so that the receiver feels the obligation to present the gift-giver with a return gift that is at least equally as valuable as the original gift.<sup>172</sup> However, it is clear from the three anecdotes that neither one of the receivers could have had the economical wealth to present the Macedonian king with a physical gift that could equal or outmatch the original. This was not what the king wanted either. Those who received the king's gifts but had no means of reciprocating them, became indebted to and dependent on the king. This debt could be repayed by another valuable commodity: continued loyalty to the king.<sup>173</sup> In fact, his generous gift-giving is likely to have drawn to the court members of the nobility that were in need of financial support, who were hoping to get in the king's good graces.<sup>174</sup> However, it is important to note that the gifts the king gave, could be taken away again at any time, if the person who had received them no longer had his favour.<sup>175</sup>

Feasting itself can be a form of gift.<sup>176</sup> The host provides his guests with food, drink and entertainment. In return for his hospitality, the host can expect to be invited to a similarly lavish feast hosted by any of his guests. But in the case of the Macedonian king, the majority of his guests would not have had the economical power to host a return feast that was equal in grandeur to the one the king had thrown. In these cases, the king is hosting a patron-role feast.<sup>177</sup> The king could not expect his guests to repay his hospitality in the same manner. Again, he therefore might have hoped to create loyalty. Another possibility is that the king was trying to impress and intimidate his guests by showing off his wealth, and through that wealth, his social power.<sup>178</sup>

From the archaeological sources that were discussed earlier, it has already become clear that the Macedonian kings were indeed very wealthy. There are also a number of literary

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<sup>172</sup> Van den Eijnde, 2010, 20.

<sup>173</sup> Weber, 2009, 96.

<sup>174</sup> Hayden, B. 2001. "Fabulous Feasts: A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting." In M. Dietler and B. Hayden eds., *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographical Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 29-36.

<sup>175</sup> Herman, 1997, 217.

<sup>176</sup> Dietler, 2001, 73.

<sup>177</sup> See page 15.

<sup>178</sup> Wiessner, P. 2001. "Of Feasting and Value. Enga Feasts in a Historical Perspective (Papua New Guinea)." In M. Dietler and B. Hayden eds., *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographical Perspectives on Food, Politics and Power*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 116-119.

sources that confirm this. These sources further show that the Macedonian kings displayed their wealth solely during feasts and festivals.<sup>179</sup>

A fragment of Demosthenes's work in which gold and silver goblets are mentioned, has already been discussed.<sup>180</sup> Another valuable object is a gold drinking cup that weighed fifty drachmas. According to Athenaeus, who quotes Duris of Samos, Philip used to take this cup with him when he went to bed.<sup>181</sup> Athenaeus also mentions drinking horns with silver or gold lips.<sup>182</sup> Justin writes about some other objects. He tells that when Philip won the Battle of Chaeronea, he concealed his joy and behaved very modestly. One of the ways in which he did this was by keeping the entertainment at his feasts to a minimum, and abstaining from using perfumes and garlands.<sup>183</sup> The fact that Justin mentions these particular objects, must mean that they were considered to be anything but modest.

The fragment of Justin already hints at the lavishness of the entertainment during the feasts. There are two more fragments that confirm this. Diodorus writes that for the wedding of Philip's daughter Cleopatra, who was to be wed to the king of Epirus, Philip planned his most splendid feast yet. He invited all of his friends from all over Greece, and ordered the members of his court to bring as many of their personal diplomatic connections along as possible.<sup>184</sup> This shows that Philip's elites were not all at the court, and that they had their own personal diplomatic connections that were not related to those of the king. Philip went to great lengths to provide spectacular entertainment for all these men. Among others, he hired the actor Neoptolemus to provide the entertainment: "He (Philip II) was determined to show himself to the Greeks as an amiable person and to respond to the honours conferred when he was appointed to the supreme command with appropriate entertainment. [...] At the state banquet, Philip ordered the actor Neoptolemus, matchless in the power of his voice and in his popularity, to present some well-received pieces, particularly such as bore on the Persian campaign."<sup>185</sup>

Athenaeus (again quoting Theopompus) drops a few other names: "Philip summoned some of the members of his inner circle and told them to fetch the pipe-girls, Aristonicus the citharode, Dorion the pipe-player and others who routinely drank with him; for Philip took people like this around with him everywhere, and had plenty of equipment ready for drinking

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<sup>179</sup> Andrianou, 2009, 126-127.

<sup>180</sup> Dem. 19.139.

<sup>181</sup> Athen. 4.155.d.

<sup>182</sup> Athen. 11.476.d-e.

<sup>183</sup> Just. 9.4.

<sup>184</sup> Diod. 16.91.

<sup>185</sup> Diod. 16.91-92.

parties and festivities.”<sup>186</sup> Athenaeus continues by saying that Philip always surrounded himself with musicians and comedians at feasts, so it is clear that he structurally paid a large amount of money on entertainment.<sup>187</sup>

It is clear that ostentation had an important role to play in feasting. Philip II spent a lot of money on precious drinking wares. He also put a lot of effort into providing the best entertainment possible, by hiring famous actors and musicians to perform at his feasts. The actor Neoptolemus, the citharode Aristonicus and the pipe-player Dorion are mentioned by name, a clear indication of their fame throughout the Greek world. By showing his guests not only how much money he had, but also how well connected and how generous he was, the king attempted to impress and intimidate his guests at the same time. Yet again, he could show that no one was his match, either economically or socially, and that it was therefore best for everybody to stay on his good side.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The Macedonian royal feast as hosted by Philip II was a relatively informal occasion in that the evening was not planned out from start to finish. However, the ritualised nature of the feast did mean that there was a certain type of behaviour that was expected from both the host and the guests. This type of behaviour was naturalised as etiquette, or good manners. This gave both parties moral control over the other: they each had the right to chastise the other when they did not behave in a proper manner. Being chastised in public could mean a loss of face, and as such, of social status.

The relationship between the king and the members of the elite as expressed during the feasts was one of relative equality: all guests were allowed to speak their mind, as long as they adhered to the rules of etiquette. As a means of furthering his relationships, the king presented his guests with a grandiose evening and often lavish gifts. This was a potentially strong power tool, as it immediately showed to all that were present how useful the favour of the king was. At the same time, the king could also further the competition among the elites, by showing who was currently in the position to enjoy this favour, or rather: who was the one to beat at that particular moment. Those members of the elite that were dependent on the king's gifts, would have made sure to stay on the king's good side at all times, sometimes resorting to outright flattery. The king could also attempt to impress or intimidate his guests by showing off through ostentation.

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<sup>186</sup> Athen. 10.435.c.

<sup>187</sup> Athen. 10.435.d.

The more independent members of the elite on the other hand, could use the royal feast as a venue for putting pressure on the king with regards to certain political decisions. The elite was allowed to speak freely about such topics, and the king, as much bound by etiquette as the elites were, had to listen. With some particularly powerful members of the Macedonian elite, such as Antipater or Attalus, Philip clearly did more than simply listen. In these cases it was the king trying to please the elites, rather than the other way around.

## Chapter 6. Alexander III

By far the largest part of the extant literary sources that discuss Macedon, deal with the reign of Alexander III. There are a few that exclusively discuss Alexander. Arrian wrote about the travels of Alexander in his *Anabasis*. Quintus Curtius Rufus wrote a history about Alexander, while Plutarch wrote his biography. Other works, like Diodorus' *Bibliotheca Historica*, are about the entire history of men from the Trojan war to roughly 60 BCE and therefore also include a section on Alexander.<sup>188</sup> Athenaeus and Justin also mention him in their writings.<sup>189</sup>

Given the amount of relevant literary passages, I will again use a thematic approach when discussing them. There are a number of important themes that can be distinguished. First, there is the clash between traditional Macedonian customs on the one hand, and the new Persian influences on the other. The second theme is conspiracy, both by and against the king. Thirdly, like with Philip II, there is a lot of evidence for ostentation and the large scale of the Macedonian royal symposium. Finally, there are a number of short references that can not be related to either of the themes just mentioned. These will be discussed separately.

### 6.1 Traditional Customs and Oriental Influences

There are two major conflicts that are described by the various sources, that are at heart about the tension between the Macedonian elite who wanted to uphold their own traditional customs and values, and the king, who wanted to integrate the Macedonian and Persian kingdoms by creating new customs and traditions, shared by all. These conflicts are the murder of Clitus and Callisthenes' refusal to perform *proskynesis*.

Clitus had joined the king's Companions back when Alexander's father Philip was still king, but he was still a member now that Alexander was the monarch. As such, he had joined Alexander on his campaign. During the Battle of the Granicus, Clitus had even saved Alexander's life. Now at some point during the campaign, Alexander had invited the

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<sup>188</sup> Hammond, N. G. L. 1993. *Sources for Alexander the Great: An analysis of Plutarch's Life and Arrian's Anabasis Alexandrou*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 9-27; 152-154; 189-190; 324-325 ; Arrian is almost unique for crediting his sources, namely Ptolemy and Aristobulus. Ptolemy, the later ruler of Egypt, had intimate knowledge of Alexander as a person as well as of his campaign. Aristobulus was a Greek, who focussed mainly on Alexander's relations to the Greeks, both in Greece and in his court. Curtius Rufus' principal source is Clitarchus, son of Dinon, who accompanied Alexander on his expedition and wrote a highly coloured account of it, describing it as a brilliant adventure led by a spoiled tyrant. For Plutarch, five of his sources are known. His main source was also Clitarchus. Furthermore he used Marsyas of Pella, who was a friend and contemporary of Alexander's, Aristobulus and Onesicritus, who was also present as a writer during the campaign. Plutarch's final source is Satyrus, who was quite the gossip and sensation seeker. Diodorus' sources on the life of Alexander were Clitarchus and Diyllus of Athens, who wrote his history about 25 to 50 years after Alexander's death.

<sup>189</sup> For a discussion of the sources that were used by Athenaeus and Justin, see footnote 147.

Companions to feast with him and they all became very drunk. According to Arrian, at this point the flatterers that surrounded Alexander started praising him, comparing him to Herakles.<sup>190</sup> Curtius Rufus and Justin on the other hand, claim that it was Alexander who started boasting about his own military performances, listing all the ways in which he was superior to his father.<sup>191</sup> At one point, Clitus could not take it anymore, as he was fed up with Alexander's recent behaviour: "It was well known that Clitus had long been vexed at Alexander for the change in his style of living in excessive imitation of foreign customs, and at those who flattered him with their speech."<sup>192</sup> Clitus then started to defend the memory of Philip, which resulted in a heated argument between him and the king. During the course of this argument, Clitus made some derogatory remarks about Alexander that infuriated the king. Alexander then took the javelin from one of his guards, and stabbed Clitus to death with it. When Alexander came back to his senses, he deeply regretted what he had done. When he tried to understand why this had happened, he realised that he had failed to sacrifice to Dionysos on the proper moment and that this was his punishment.

As for the story of Callisthenes, it is told by Arrian, Plutarch and Justin. Alexander had for some time been trying to get his Macedonians to perform *proskynesis*, or obeisance, as the Persians did. The Macedonians were in the habit of saluting their king in the same way they saluted one another, without any reverence. Yet Alexander preferred to instate one form of greeting, to be used by people from all ethnicities.<sup>193</sup> The extant sources are very negative about *proskynesis*. Justin for example calls it "a point of Persian pride to which he had hesitated to advance at first lest the assumption of everything at once should excite too strong a feeling against him."<sup>194</sup>

During Alexander's initial attempt at instating *proskynesis*, an attempt of which we are informed through the work of Curtius Rufus, the king asked some of his most trusted friends to make a speech at one of his feasts. For this feast, Alexander had personally invited the *principes amicorum*, the first among his friends.<sup>195</sup> He wanted to try and convince all Macedonians to accept the custom of *proskynesis*, and probably figured that if he could get the most powerful elites on his side, the other ones would automatically follow. Alexander himself pretended to leave the banquet shortly before the speech commenced, so that he could observe the responses of the Macedonians from behind one of the curtains.<sup>196</sup> However, the

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<sup>190</sup> Arr. 4.8.3.

<sup>191</sup> Curt. 8.1.22; Just. 12.6.

<sup>192</sup> Arr. 4.8.4.

<sup>193</sup> Just. 12.7.

<sup>194</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>195</sup> Curt. 8.5.9.

<sup>196</sup> Ibidem.

Macedonians were very negative in their response to this idea. When Alexander returned from behind the curtain, he pretended as if nothing had happened. Later that evening, when some Persian men came in and paid Alexander reverence, they were mocked by Polyperchon. This infuriated Alexander, and he dragged Polyperchon from his couch and ordered he be put in prison.<sup>197</sup> In the next chapter, we will see that this time in prison apparently did not affect Polyperchon's status.

At a later point during his campaign, Alexander tried again. This time, again during a feast, he toasted the health of his guests with a golden cup. He then passed the cup along to one of his Macedonians, who was in on the plan. This Macedonian, who is not named in any of the sources, drank from the cup, prostrated himself before Alexander and then received a kiss from him. He then passed the cup along to the next guest, who performed the same action. This ceremony proceeded until the cup reached the philosopher Callisthenes of Olynthus. Callisthenes did drink from the cup, but did not make obeisance before approaching the king for a kiss. The king was not paying attention, as he was in a conversation with Hephaestion. However, one of the other Companions, Demetrius son of Pythonax, alerted Alexander to the fact that Callisthenes had not made obeisance. The king therefore did not allow Callisthenes to receive his kiss. Callisthenes is reported to have said the following about this: "I am going away only with the loss of a kiss."<sup>198</sup> According to Justin, Callisthenes' refusal, as well as that of some prominent Macedonians, proved fatal as they were all put to death on the pretence that they were conspirators against the king.<sup>199</sup>

Aside from the two major conflicts that have just been described, there are four other occasions where the sources refer to the negative thoughts and responses that were evoked by the new oriental influences. Two of these come from the work of Justin, and two are by Curtius Rufus. Justin first describes how after Alexander had seized king Darius's baggage and his family, he was fascinated by Darius's wealth and display. According to Justin, this admiration, or jealousy even, of Persian splendour caused Alexander to start indulging himself in excessive luxury during feasts.<sup>200</sup> Then Justin writes that after Darius had died, Alexander went overboard not only on ostentation, but on the adoption of Persian customs as well.

"Alexander assumed the attire of the Persian monarchs, as well as the diadem, which was unknown to the kings of Macedonia, as if he gave himself up to the customs of those whom he had conquered. And

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<sup>197</sup> Curt.8.5.21-24.

<sup>198</sup> Arr. 4.12.3.

<sup>199</sup> Just. 12.7.

<sup>200</sup> Just. 11.10.

lest such innovations should be viewed with dislike, if adopted by himself alone, he desired his friends also to wear the long robe of gold and purple. That he might imitate the luxury too, as well as the dress of the Persians, he spent his nights among troops of the king's concubines of eminent beauty and birth. To these extravagances he added vast magnificence in feasting; and lest his entertainments should seem jejune and parsimonious, he accompanied his banquets, according to the ostentation of the eastern monarchs, with games; being utterly unmindful that power is accustomed to be lost, not gained, by such practices."<sup>201</sup>

Curtius Rufus describes the feast that was held after the surrender of Scythia. The feast was a very luxurious one, that will be described in more detail in section 3 of this chapter. What is important here, is that Curtius Rufus states that this banquet displayed "all that was corrupt in the ancient luxury of the Persians, or in the new fashions adopted by the Macedonians, thus intermingling the vices of both nations."<sup>202</sup> He does not describe what exactly was corrupt about it, but one can assume that he felt that it was all a bit too much.

Last but not least, in Curtius Rufus VI.2.1-3, the negative change in Alexander's character once he had defeated the Persians is described. Curtius Rufus writes:

"But Alexander, as soon as a mind which was better qualified for coping with military toil than with quiet and ease was relieved of pressing cares, gave himself up to pleasures, and one whom the arms of the Persians had not overcome fell victim to her vices: banquets begun early, the mad enjoyment of heavy drinking and being up all night, sport, and troops of harlots. There was a general slipping into foreign habits. By emulating these, as if they were preferable to those of his country, he so offended alike the eyes and minds of his countrymen, that by many of his former friends he was regarded as an enemy. For men who held fast to their native discipline, and were accustomed with frugal and easily obtained food to satisfy the demands of nature, he had driven to the evil habits of foreign and conquered nations."<sup>203</sup>

Throughout all of the literary sources, there is but one reference to an attempt of Alexander's to unify the Macedonians and Persians, rather than him emulating all that is base in Persian behaviour. Arrian mentions a public banquet Alexander hosted after he had sacrificed to the gods, yet the specifics of the occasion are not mentioned. At this banquet, he seated the Macedonians around him, and the Persians next to them. People from other

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<sup>201</sup> Just. 12.3. Justin is the only source that attributes the element of games before or during the banquets as a foreign element. Others such as Arrian describe this as a known element to Macedonian feasting, that occurred even before Alexander's army left for Persia. Arr. 7.14.1.

<sup>202</sup> Curt. 9.7.15.

<sup>203</sup> Curt. 6.2.1-3.

ethnicities were seated further away. Arrian states that “those around him (Alexander) drank from the same bowl and poured the same libations, with the Greek soothsayers and Magi initiating the ceremony.”<sup>204</sup>

Aside from the final reference by Arrian, the sources are unanimous in stating that it was Alexander who was corrupted by the new Persian influences, and stopped acting in a proper manner, which meant behaving according to Macedonian traditions.<sup>205</sup> The Macedonian elite was not pleased with this. The issue seems to be that Alexander wanted to unite Macedon with all the lands that he had conquered, to form one large empire, with a shared culture that was upheld by all the inhabitants, regardless of ethnicity.<sup>206</sup> He therefore needed to incorporate into this shared culture elements of all the local cultures, so that the change towards this new, shared culture would not be so dramatic. This is why he attempted to introduce Persian influences to his court.

The Macedonian elite on the other hand, saw themselves as conquerors, as the dominant culture. For them, the newly conquered lands were an extension of the great Macedonian kingdom, and did not warrant the creation of a whole new empire. This is one of the reasons why the Macedonian elite rejected all of Alexander’s attempts to ‘persianise’ them. Other reasons are that the Macedonian elite did not want to share their privileged position of power with the members of the Persian elite, and that they disagreed with Alexander’s attempt to enlarge the distance between the king and the elite in general through ceremony.

These differences in vision caused tension, not only between the Macedonians and the Persians, but also between the Macedonian elite and their own king. More and more members of the elite saw Alexander as a threat to their way of life as he tried to rob the elite of some of its political power. The moment the elites started acting up, Alexander became enraged and took severe measures, punishing the elites. This would not have increased his popularity. One of the results of his behaviour that can clearly be recognised in the literary sources, is the increase in conspiracies. Plutarch writes that the Macedonians considered the man who held the highest military power to be their king.<sup>207</sup> This person could change, so long as someone was king. Alexander’s ‘persianised’ behaviour, meant that the elites started doubting whether

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<sup>204</sup> Arr. 7.11.8.

<sup>205</sup> Bell, 1997, 145-148.

<sup>206</sup> I define the term empire as follows, based on the definition by Karen Barkey: an empire is a large, composite and differentiated polity linked by various relations to a central power that has the ability to exercise political control over its subjects through the exploitation of hierarchical and quasi-monopolistic relations. However, as the central power has the ability to exploit and negotiate these relations, so do the subordinate groups, or more specifically; the intermediaries. Barkey, Karen. 2008. *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 9.

<sup>207</sup> Plut. *Dem.* 45.5.

he should remain king.

## 6.2 Conspiracies

As far as the literary history of Macedon is concerned, there is no Argead or even Antigonid king that had to deal with remotely as many conspiracies as Alexander.<sup>208</sup> Almost all of the conspiracies against other kings that are mentioned in the literary sources, had to do with succession.<sup>209</sup> Once a king had secured his position on the throne, he was generally accepted by the Macedonian elite, people and the army. This was not the case with Alexander.

The most famous conspiracy against him was the Conspiracy of the Pages, mentioned by both Arrian and Curtius Rufus. Furthermore, according to Justin, the death of Alexander was also due to a conspiracy. As for conspiracies between members of the elite, there is the conspiracy against Dioxippus as mentioned by Curtius Rufus and Diodorus. Even though Dioxippus was an Athenian, the story of the conspiracy against him is still a valuable piece of information on how the elite dealt with those people that were becoming too powerful for their liking. Finally, Alexander is not just the object of various conspiracies, according to Curtius Rufus he also actively initiated one against Philotas (who was in turn accused of having been part of a conspiracy).

It is said that the conspiracy of the pages was caused by a hunt. During this hunt one of the king's pages, a boy called Hermolaus, was first to attack a wild boar that Alexander had wanted to attack. He therefore had the boy whipped. This infuriated a number of other pages, and they decided to kill Alexander.<sup>210</sup> Their plan was to escort him to his tent after he had been feasting, at which point he would be alone, drunk and unsuspecting. The pages were expected to stand guard over him, so they had access to weapons with which to kill the king. However, on the night the pages had chosen for their attempt, Alexander continued to party all night and into the next day.<sup>211</sup> At that point, the watch had already ended for the pages that were in on the conspiracy. The next day, the plot was discovered and thwarted.

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<sup>208</sup> While there were plenty of conspiracies shortly after the death of Alexander, neither of the men involved were (Macedonian) kings at this time.

<sup>209</sup> The Macedonian process of succession was rather confusing, as all male relatives of the deceased king had an equal claim to the throne. It therefore regularly happened that more than one candidate was championed, such as in the case of Alexander IV and Philip Arrhidaeus, resulting in chaos and often murder.

<sup>210</sup> Curt. 8.6.2-7.

<sup>211</sup> According to Curtius Rufus, this was simply an unfortunate coincidence for the pages. Arrian however writes about a certain Syrian seer, who warned him that the conspiracy was about to happen and that he should return to his guests and continue drinking. Curt. 8.6.16-17; Arr. 4.13.5.

According to Justin, the king was not so fortunate when Antipater attempted a conspiracy.<sup>212</sup> He claims that while the reported cause of the disease that killed Alexander was excess in drinking, the real cause was poisoning. Antipater sent the (incredibly potent) poison to his son Cassander, who organised a feast to which the king was also invited. Then he passed the poison on to his two other brothers, Philip and Iollas. These two were assigned to taste and mix the king's drinks. As such, they were in the perfect position to poison Alexander's drink after it had already been tasted, so that no one would suspect anything. Justin claims that the fact that Alexander was murdered is not well known, because of the chaos that ensued after his death.<sup>213</sup>

The last conspiracy that was concocted by members of the Macedonian elite, is that against Dioxippus. Dioxippus was a famous boxer, and one of Alexander's favourites. This caused jealousy among the other members of Alexander's inner circle. During the feast that was organised to celebrate the surrender of the Scythians, one of the other guests, a Macedonian by the name of Coragus, had had too much to drink and challenged Dioxippus to single combat.<sup>214</sup> Coragus was a veteran who had distinguished himself in battle on numerous occasions, and as such, all of the Macedonians that were witnesses to the fight expected him to win. However, Dioxippus was victorious, gaining him even more respect from the king, but not from the Macedonian elite. They were now even more jealous and decided to take matters into their own hands. They bribed one of the king's attendants to steal away from the next feast a golden cup, and hide it between the cushions that Dioxippus had reclined on. The attendant then reported the golden cup as stolen. When Alexander's servants went looking for it, they found the cup where Dioxippus had been seated. This caused Dioxippus great embarrassment, and he fell from the king's favour. Dioxippus, knowing that he had been set up, wrote a letter to Alexander explaining the whole situation, and then took his own life.<sup>215</sup> Although the king upon reading the letter regretted not having paid more attention to the situation, there is no mention in any of the primary sources about the responsible Macedonians being punished for their actions.

Finally, there is the conspiracy against Philotas. Philotas was a powerful cavalry commander in Alexander's army, and the son of an even more powerful member of the Macedonian elite: Parmenion. At one time, Philotas' brother-in-law accused him of being an accomplice in a conspiracy against Alexander. Some non-elite Macedonian soldiers had been

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<sup>212</sup> Just. 12.13-14.

<sup>213</sup> Just. 12.14.

<sup>214</sup> Diodorus mentions the name of the Macedonian as Coragus. However, Curtius Rufus says that the name of the Macedonian was Corratas. Diod. 17.100.2; Curt. 9.7.17.

<sup>215</sup> Diod. 17.101.4.

planning to kill the king, but their plan was discovered by one Kebalinos. He went to Philotas to tell him about the conspiracy, but apparently Philotas did not report it. When the conspiracy came to light, Philotas was accused of being a co-conspirator. Philotas denied having had any part in the conspiracy, but Alexander had secretly condemned him already. According to Curtius Rufus, “Philotas was even invited to a banquet, which was his last, and the king had the heart, not only to dine with him, but even to talk familiarly with the man whom he had condemned.”<sup>216</sup> Afterwards, he had Hephaestion torture Philotas until he confessed, and then he was stoned or speared to death.<sup>217</sup>

There is clear evidence of a power struggle that was happening between the Macedonian elite and Alexander during his reign. Instead of working together to further common interests, both parties tried to gain as much power as possible, in an attempt to become powerful enough to get rid of the other party. The moment the elite felt that the king was no longer on their side, they attempted to have him removed. Elites even turned on other members of the elite who, in their opinion, had become too powerful as an individual. Alternatively, the king could employ this same strategy to remove members of the elite that had become too powerful from the political board. The overall picture that is presented about the relationship between king and elite is one of distrust.

This can be related to the growth of the Macedonian empire. Alexander’s campaign provided ample opportunities for members of the elite to distinguish themselves. At the same time, the newly conquered lands were divided between the king and the elites, providing all of them with far greater economical and social power than they ever had before. Finally, as stated in the previous section, the larger size of the empire also meant that the political system under which the king and elite had operated up until that point, was up for review. Alexander and the Macedonian elite were therefore attempting to negotiate a new balance, but it appears that neither party was satisfied with the other.

### 6.3 Splendour and Scale

A number of literary fragments have already been discussed in which the over-the-top display and larger scale of feasting are mentioned. We already know of the golden cup from which the guests had to drink before performing *proskynesis*, and of the golden cup that was used to frame Dioxiippus.<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, Justin and Curtius Rufus have been quoted in section 6.1,

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<sup>216</sup> Curt. 6.8.16.

<sup>217</sup> Curt. 6.8.16.

<sup>218</sup> Arr. 4.12.3; Diod. 17.101.3-4.

claiming that Alexander started dressing in gold and purple, wore a diadem, and spent lots of money on concubines and lavish entertainment and games at banquets.<sup>219</sup>

In the *Deipnosophists* 12.537d-539d, Athenaeus discusses in great detail the luxury that was displayed by Alexander while he was on campaign.<sup>220</sup> He describes how Alexander had a gold throne and couches with silver feet that he used for him and his inner circle. The king made sure that the banqueting area smelled nice by having the ground sprinkled with expensive perfume and sweet-smelling wine, and burning myrrh and incense. Occasionally, Alexander would dress up in sacred garments, and pretend he was Herakles or Hermes. As for the entertainment during feasts, there were apparently a great many actors that had accompanied the Macedonian army, and they all tried to amuse the king and his guests during dinner. Arrian adds to this that apart from athletic games, Alexander also regularly held musical games for the entertainment of his guests.<sup>221</sup>

During special occasions, even more luxury was displayed. When Alexander organised a mass-wedding of himself and 91 of his most trusted officers to Persian noblewomen, he decorated each couch with a marriage robe worth 20 minas of silver. The decoration of the banqueting tent consisted of draperies and linen cloths, as well as purple and scarlet fabric with gold thread woven into it and expensive curtains with an animal pattern. The curtain rods were gilded and silvered. Athenaeus further mentions that the tent was held up by fifty large gilded columns set with precious stones and covered with silver. The celebrations lasted for five days and included a huge number of performances.<sup>222</sup> Alexander invited so many people, that there were trumpeters who announced each ceremony and entertainer, because many of the guests could not see what was happening.

Apart from the mass-wedding, there are other pieces of literary evidence that suggest not only that the Macedonian royal feasts were incredibly luxurious and ostentatious, but also that they were often of a very large scale. For the feast that was held to celebrate the surrender of Scythia, a hundred golden couches were set up, each covered with purple cloth.<sup>223</sup> This means a minimum amount of two hundred banqueters. The same number of couches had also been used right before the king started his campaign, during the festival of Zeus and the Muses at Dion. Here, the couches were placed inside a large tent.<sup>224</sup> In this case too, it was

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<sup>219</sup> Just. 12.3; Curt. 6.2.1-3.

<sup>220</sup> According to Plutarch, Alexander was personally involved in each feast he hosted. He had his chief cooks and bakers report to him about the menu, and during the evening, he spent a lot of time making sure that everybody got served equally large portions. Plut. *Alex.* 23.1-6.

<sup>221</sup> Arr. 7.14.1.

<sup>222</sup> In Athen. 12.538e-539a, Athenaeus lists all those that performed during the wedding.

<sup>223</sup> Curt. 9.7.15-17.

<sup>224</sup> Diod. 17.16.3-4.

Alexander himself who invited his friends, officers and various ambassadors to the event.<sup>225</sup> There is a possibility that this was the same tent that was later brought along with Alexander when he went on his Persian campaign, as the tent that was used for the celebration of the mass-wedding was of the exact same size.<sup>226</sup> When Alexander held his joined banquet with the Persians (see also section 6.1), he is said to have invited no less than nine thousand guests.<sup>227</sup> On another occasion, he feasted six thousand officers, and they were seated on silver chairs and couches covered with purple drapes.<sup>228</sup>

Not only could feasts have a large number of guests, they could also go on for a very long time. The mass-wedding lasted five days, the feast at Nysa ten days, and the feast that was held when the army had successfully completed their journey through the desert went on for seven days.<sup>229</sup>

All the royal feasts that have just been described, did not come cheap. According to Athenaeus, Alexander spent a minimum of 6 or 7 minas per guest for each feast.<sup>230</sup> Over the course of his kingship, the feasts continually became more expensive, until they reached the mark of ten thousand drachmas. At this point, Alexander ordered that this was the maximum amount of money that was allowed to be paid for a single feast, both by him and by those members of the elite that entertained him in return.<sup>231</sup>

It was not just Alexander then that showcased his wealth. Athenaeus also mentions a number of Macedonian elites that did exactly this. One example relates to feasting: he reports that according to Agatharchides of Cnidus, the friends of Alexander would gild their snacks when they had a feast for him. When they wanted to eat the snacks, they would remove the gold and throw it away. “The result was that their friends got to admire the expense to which they went, but the profit went to the slaves.”<sup>232</sup> All the other examples are not feasting related, but will be mentioned here nonetheless as they show clearly how the same tactics of showing off were used not only by Alexander, but by the elites as well.

Hagnon apparently wore gold nails in his boots and sandals, while Clitus always wore purple robes. Perdiccas and Krateros liked to work out, and therefore their baggage included hides with which they could fence off an area to exercise in, as well as the dust that was needed to create the flooring for a wrestling pit. Leonnatus and Menelaus on the other hand

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<sup>225</sup> Diod. 17.16.3-4.

<sup>226</sup> Athen. 12.538.b-c.

<sup>227</sup> Arr. 7.11.9.

<sup>228</sup> Athen. 1.17f.

<sup>229</sup> Curt. 8.10.17; Diod. 17.106.1.

<sup>230</sup> Athen. 4.146c.

<sup>231</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 23.6.

<sup>232</sup> Athen. 4.155d.

liked to hunt, so their baggage included fabric screens of almost twenty kilometres long, so that they could set off an area in which they could hunt in private.<sup>233</sup>

When the ostentation and display that were part of Alexander's feasts are compared to that of Philip II's feasts, it immediately becomes clear that Alexander spent even more money on feasting than his father did. This is not surprising: due to the conquest of Persia, Alexander was far wealthier than his father had ever been. Also, the growth of the empire meant that larger expenses on feasting were probably expected of Alexander. This also explains why Alexander's feasts were of a larger scale: there were simply far more nobles that needed to be appeased. Alexander's feasts were usually of the patron-role type, where he could show to everybody else that they could not compare to him and therefore were of a lesser social status.<sup>234</sup> Now that Alexander had the largest empire, that meant that he also had to show that he could host better parties than anyone else in the world. In the cases of elite display, it makes the most sense that they would show off to each other, rather than to the king whose wealth they could not match.

The literary references to Alexander's feasts are usually quite negative. The same can be said for the literary references to Philip II that were discussed in the previous chapter. This is probably due to the fact that many of these texts were written by Greeks, who favoured relative equality in politics. This is a sentiment that was not shared by the Macedonians, as far as we can tell from the rich archaeological sources where expensive grave goods were quite common.<sup>235</sup>

## 6.4 Loose Fragments related to Feasting

In this section, a number of loose literary fragments are discussed that do not fit any of the categories from the previous sections, yet do provide insight into the political importance of the feast and to the negotiated relationship between the king and the Macedonian elite. Given that the various fragments are not all topically related, they will all be analysed immediately, rather than at the end of the section.

In Arrian 7.25.1-2, the death of Alexander is described.<sup>236</sup> Interesting about this fragment is that Arrian describes how Alexander, even after he had fallen ill and had to be

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<sup>233</sup> Athen.12.539.c-d.

<sup>234</sup> Dietler, 2001, 82-83.

<sup>235</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>236</sup> The death of Alexander is also related to feasting. In all sources (that is, Arrian, Plutarch and Diodorus who mention this event in detail), it is stated that Alexander fell ill after he had been feasting at the house of one of his Companions, a Thessalian named Medius. Plutarch and Arrian describe how Alexander came down with a fever shortly after leaving the feast, whereas Diodorus mentions that Alexander was stung by sharp pains during

carried around because he could no longer walk, would still spend the entire day in the banqueting hall, rather than in his private rooms. This shows the importance of the banqueting hall as a meeting point and a place for Alexander to do politics. This importance is underlined by a section in Curtius Rufus, on the victory banquet after the Battle of Issus. Alexander was wounded in the thigh during this battle, but even so he went on to take part in the feasting with his closest friends, rather than resting and receiving treatment.<sup>237</sup> Important to note here is that it was Alexander himself who decided which of his friends were allowed to come and dine with him: “he directed that the most intimate of his friends be invited.”<sup>238</sup>

An event that shows the downside of the Macedonian feasting culture is the burning of Persepolis. During the feast to celebrate the Macedonian victory, the men present became intoxicated and receptive to the inciting comments on the Persians that were delivered by one of the concubines, a woman named Thais.<sup>239</sup> The king therefore led them to the palace, where they threw torches to burn the palace down.<sup>240</sup> If there is truth in the story, then that shows how much influence others could have on the king when they actually had to opportunity to come close to him. However, there are many more references to Macedonian alcohol abuse, which suggests that we might be dealing with a literary trope.<sup>241</sup> The fact that stories like this, regardless of whether they happened in the manner described, have the feast as their setting, means that apparently the feast was the epitome of Macedonian culture.

The last fragment is by Plutarch, who describes that after returning from the funeral of Caranus, he assembled many of his friends and officers for feasting.<sup>242</sup> Here then, we see again that it was Alexander himself who decided who was to be invited.

## 6.5 Conclusion

The changing size of the Macedonian empire had two important consequences. First, the gain in political and economical power from the conquest of Persia, meant that the level of display

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the feast, where he was drinking large amounts of unmixed wine. Plutarch further adds that before Alexander went to Medius, he had already been at a feast, namely that for Nearchus, which he had organised himself. Arrian 7.25.1-2; Plut. *Alex.* 75.2-5; Diod. 17.117.1-2.

<sup>237</sup> Curt. 3.12.2-3.

<sup>238</sup> Curt. 3.12.2.

<sup>239</sup> Curt. 5.7.1-2

<sup>240</sup> Diod. 17.72.1-6.

<sup>241</sup> For example, there is mention of a drinking contest between Proteas and Alexander. Alexander lost this contest, but Proteas died of alcohol poisoning. Athen. 10.434a-c. He is not the only one, after the funeral of Caranus Alexander proposed a contest in the drinking of unmixed wine, that according to Plutarch, caused forty-one participants to die of alcohol poisoning. Plut. *Alex.* 70.1. Similarly, Hephaestion is reported to have died from drinking too much. Diod. 17.110.7-8.

<sup>242</sup> Plut. *Alex.* 70.1.

and ostentation had to be greatly increased. Alexander was no longer just the monarch of a moderately sized kingdom, but the head of the largest empire in existence at that time. He needed to show off accordingly, to people that were accustomed to far more impressive displays of wealth and power than Alexander had previously shown. This also meant that the king had to increase his expenses, but this was easily done as Persia was a greater source of wealth for him than Macedonia had ever been.

Second, immense pressure was put on the relationship between the king and the elite. The Macedonian elite gradually lost some of its power position, on the one hand because there was a great increase in the number of elites that were a part of Alexander's court, most of them of Persian origin. These elites all vied for the king's attention and favour, and it became increasingly difficult to get close to him. For such a large group of courtiers, it was difficult to maintain easy access. This was hard to fathom for the Macedonians, who were used to having direct access and freedom of speech when it came to their king. On the other hand, the traditional Macedonian culture that was so important to the elite was slowly being replaced by a new, joint culture that was supposed to bind the Persians and the Macedonians together as one people, citizens of one empire. This meant that the Macedonians, who considered themselves conquerors and victors, had to adapt to accommodate the defeated Persians, something that was incredibly difficult to digest.

As the elite no longer felt that they held the king's favour, they became increasingly hostile towards him and his politics of unity. This disturbed the balanced relationship between king and elite that had existed up until this point. Neither the elite, nor the king could count on the other party to have their back. This explains the increase in known conspiracies, both by the elite and by Alexander himself, as both parties tried to limit the power the other party was trying to gain.

## **Chapter 7. From the Time of Alexander IV and Philip Arrhidaeus to the Antigonid Kings**

There is far less material available on any of the other Macedonian kings, be it Argead or Antigonid, than there is on Philip II and Alexander III. Therefore this chapter is not devoted to a single king, but rather to all the literary evidence on feasting in the period from the death of Alexander III to the fall of the Macedonian empire in 168. Given the small amounts of evidence on each individual king or on the members of the elite that served a particular king, this chapter will not be thematic, but rather chronological. I will first discuss the sources that deal with the period when the last of the Argeads, Alexander IV and Philip Arrhidaeus, were kings. Then I will discuss the feasts that occurred while Antigonus I Monophthalmus and Demetrius Poliorketes were the rulers of Macedon. The next king that will be discussed is Antigonus Gonatas, and finally there is Philip V.

The principle source for the period after the death of Alexander III is Diodorus Siculus. There is also the occasional reference to the period of either the Diadochoi or the Antigonids by Athenaeus. Furthermore, Plutarch has written a biography on Demetrius Poliorketes.<sup>243</sup> For Philip V, the main source is Polybius' *Histories*.<sup>244</sup>

### **7.1 The Last of the Argeads**

There are some literary references to feasting that discuss the period in which Alexander IV and Philip Arrhidaeus were the monarchs of Macedon. Neither of these literary references are related to either king, but they do mention a number of important Macedonians that held very high rank under Philip II and/or Alexander III, and who were active players in the Wars of the Successors (323-280 BCE).

Alcetas was the brother of Perdiccas and a general in Alexander III's army. Diodorus mentions how he used feasting to convince the Pisidians, who lived in southern Asia Minor, to become his allies in the upcoming battle against Antigonus Monophthalmus. "By employing the most friendly language in his conversation with them, by each day inviting the most important of them in turn to his table at banquets, and finally by honouring many of

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<sup>243</sup> For a discussion of the origin of the works by Diodorus, Athenaeus and Plutarch, see footnotes 147 and 188.

<sup>244</sup> Polybius. *The Histories*. Transl. R. Waterfield. 2010. Oxford: Oxford University Press, ix-xv. Polybius lived around the same time as Philip V did and wrote an eyewitness account of the Greek defeat at the hands of the Romans. However, he does not appear to have been present at the Macedonian court, so these stories must have come from some other source. Unfortunately, this source is not named in Polybius' work. We also know much about Philip V through the work of Livy. However, Livy does not mention any Macedonian royal feasts in his work, so his work will not be discussed here.

them with gifts of considerable value, he secured them as loyal supporters.”<sup>245</sup> Unfortunately for Alcetas, in the end his scheme failed and the Pisidians surrendered themselves to Antigonus, leaving Alcetas with no choice but to end his own life.<sup>246</sup>

Another former officer of Alexander III that is mentioned by Diodorus is Peucestas. When Alexander III was still alive, he had awarded Peucestas with the position of general (στρατηγός) of Persepolis.<sup>247</sup> After Alexander’s death, when the conflict arose between various of Alexander’s former generals, Peucestas took sides with Eumenes against Antigonus. When Eumenes arrived in Persepolis with his army, they were warmly welcomed by Peucestas, who hosted a feast for the entire army.

“With the company of those participating he filled four circles, one within the other, with the largest circle inclosing the others. The circuit of the outer ring was of ten stades and was filled with the mercenaries and the mass of the allies; the circuit of the second was of eight stades, and in it were the Macedonian Silver Shields and those of the Companions who had fought under Alexander; the circuit of the next was of four stades and its area was filled with reclining men – the commanders of lower rank, the friends and generals who were unassigned, and the cavalry; lastly in the inner circle with a perimeter of two stades each of the generals and hipparchs and also each of the Persians who was most highly honoured occupied his own couch. In the middle of these there were altars for the gods and for Alexander and Philip.”<sup>248</sup>

Peucestas did not have the means to entertain several thousand men indoors, so he had a feasting space set up outside, with the couches placed in circles. Like the Macedonian kings at their royal feasts, Peucestas now had the power to decide whom he would seat where, at the same time indicating whom he thought were the most important men in Eumenes’ retinue. Given the circular shape of the feasting space, everyone attending the feast would have been able to see clearly whom Peucestas had placed in which rank. Shortly after this event, Eumenes entertained important members of the army in order to assure himself of their continued support. During the course of this feast, Eumenes is said to have drunk too much, after which he fell ill.<sup>249</sup>

The third and final Successor that is mentioned as using feasting as a means to bind another faction to him, is Seleucus. Seleucus was the satrap (σατράπης) of Babylon, and when

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<sup>245</sup> Diod. 18.46.2.

<sup>246</sup> Just. 13.6-8.

<sup>247</sup> Diod. 19.22.1.

<sup>248</sup> Diod. 19.22.2-3.

<sup>249</sup> Diod. 19.24.5.

Antigonus came along with his army, Seleucus “honoured him with gifts suitable for a king and feasted the whole army.”<sup>250</sup>

The final reference that will be discussed in this section, is on Polyperchon. Athenaeus quotes Duris of Samos, who has described Polyperchon as second to none in terms of generalship or the esteem in which he was held, yet when he got drunk, he put on a yellow outfit and started dancing through the night.<sup>251</sup> Apparently, then, Polyperchon had such high status that he could enjoy feasts without having to worry about his image.

Given the unstable political situation after the death of Alexander, it is no wonder that everyone was looking for as much support as possible. This explains the various feasts hosted by different Diadochoi. The various Successors were trying to gain the upper hand over all the others by forming every possible alliance they could. As such, the feasts are both of the patron-role type and of the empowerment type. For old allies, patron-role feasts would have been hosted, whereas the empowerment feast was more suited for the entertainment of new allies that were not yet aware of the social and political power of their host. Through display and gift-giving, the hosts would have tried to raise their own status and force their guests into a subordinate social position. At the same time, some elites such as Polyperchon had such high status already, that they could actually enjoy themselves at feasts without having to consider the social and political consequences of their behaviour.

## 7.2 Antigonus and Demetrius

The only feast that we know of that was hosted by Antigonus Monophthalmus was one that was celebrated on the occasion of the Aphrodisia. This particular feast was deemed noteworthy only because there was an immense variety in the types of food that were served, including meats and several types of non-indigenous fish.<sup>252</sup> On Antigonus’ son, Demetrius Poliorketes, there is also very little evidence. Diodorus states that in peace time, Demetrius was quite fond of lavish feasting, dancing and revels.<sup>253</sup> He preferred the parties that were hosted by one of his love interests, a pipe-girl named Lamia. This preference caused jealousy amongst the members of the elite, for whom Demetrius had less attention, and whose parties he attended less frequently.<sup>254</sup> The only other piece of literary evidence that relates to feasting, refers to the large amount of flatterers that were present in Demetrius’ inner circle of the

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<sup>250</sup> Diod. 19.55.2.

<sup>251</sup> Athen. 4.155.c.

<sup>252</sup> Athen. 3.101.e-f.

<sup>253</sup> Diod. 20.92.4.

<sup>254</sup> Plut. *Dem.* 27.3; Athen. 3.101.e-f.

court. They would manifest themselves primarily at feasts, making speeches or proposing toasts in the king's honour.<sup>255</sup>

The sources also mention two lavish feasts by two of the other Diadochoi, one by Ptolemy and one by Seleucus, that were organised to celebrate the defeat of Demetrius and his surrender respectively.<sup>256</sup> Even though neither Ptolemy nor Seleucus were ever king of Macedonia proper, they were both Macedonians and kings, with a Macedonian-style court. As such, they can still provide information on the types of events for which the court was required to assemble in a festive setting.

Here we see again that the proper way to celebrate a victory was by hosting a feast. Also, we get some information on the types of food that were considered exotic enough to be worth mentioning in a literary work. A ruler could definitely also impress his guests through the food and drink that was presented at a feast. Finally, the two sources on Demetrius make clear that members of the elite expected Demetrius's attention and favour and would even resort to flattery to get it. When someone came in between them and their opportunity to converse and negotiate with the king, such as Lamia did, they did not take this lightly.

### 7.3 Antigonus Gonatas

There are two fragments in the work of Athenaeus in which a royal feast hosted by Antigonus Gonatas is described. These fragments are reminiscent of the types of literary references that were discussed earlier in the chapter on Philip II. The first one is about drunken misbehaviour. At one time, Antigonus partied until the sun came up, then went to Zeno's house and convinced him to join in on a drunken visit to the king's love interest, a citharode named Aristocles.<sup>257</sup>

The second literary reference is on Antigonus impressing envoys from Arcadia, in the hope that gift-giving would help him secure an alliance with the Arcadians. Athenaeus describes how Antigonus threw a fantastic feast with various types of entertainers, including Thessalian dancing-girls. Upon seeing the girls, the Arcadian envoys who had already drunk too much, lost their minds and started jumping on the couches, screaming, fist-fighting and otherwise behaving in an uncivilised manner.<sup>258</sup> The response of the Arcadian men clearly shows the difference in expenditure between the feasts that were hosted in mainland Greece

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<sup>255</sup> Athen. 6.261.b.

<sup>256</sup> Plut. *Dem.* 50.1-2; Diod. 20.76.6.

<sup>257</sup> Athen. 13.603.e.

<sup>258</sup> Athen. 13.607.b-e.

as opposed to those in Macedon. Again, the royal feasts were intended as patron-role feasts, where the king showed all others that they were not in his league.

## 7.4 Philip V

During his reign, Philip V had a number of enemies amongst the Macedonian elite. The principal one was Apelles, one of the king's advisors, who was supported by other high ranking members of the elite such as Megaleas, a royal secretary, and Leontius. These members of the elite worked against Philip V's attempts to ally himself with the Achaean League, as they preferred the Aetolian League. Both in the discovery of the treason and the punishment of those involved, the feast was important.

Megaleas and Leontius exposed themselves at a feast in celebration of the successful campaign against the Aetolians, where they "aroused the suspicions of Philip and the other guests as they were plainly not as happy as everyone else at the success of the campaign."<sup>259</sup> Later that evening, both men became heavily intoxicated and went after the man they held responsible for the failure of their mission: the leader of the Achaean League, a Greek named Aratus.<sup>260</sup> After this, the king punished them by sending both men away to Corinth. Apelles, on the other hand, who was the mastermind behind the plan, could not be so easily sent away. He must have had far more power than either of the other men, because the king could not send him away or remove him from office. Instead, the only thing Philip V could do was to bar Apelles' access to him. He was no longer allowed to come to decision-making procedures and the king's daily meetings, probably held during the feast, nor was he allowed to enter the king's private rooms. The only time when he was allowed near the king, was during official ceremonies.<sup>261</sup>

Here then, like with Alexander III, we get a glimpse of the ways in which the elite could rise against their king when they disagreed with his decision-making. At the same time, we also learn more of the ways in which the king could create a hierarchy amongst his courtiers by means of controlled access to the king. Apelles was too powerful to just be disposed of, but by denying him free access to the king, Philip V made sure that Apelles dropped in social status. It is interesting to see that the feast plays an ambiguous role here. Members of the elite that were out of the king's favour could be excluded from the more private gatherings, which undoubtedly would have been held in one of the smaller feasting

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<sup>259</sup> Polyb. 5.14.10-5.15.1.

<sup>260</sup> Polyb. 5.15.2-3.

<sup>261</sup> Polyb. 5.26.15.

rooms (see chapter three), but not from the large official events at which everyone was supposed to be present. This shows that the king was not the only one who could manipulate the royal feast, the elites could also. By showing up to royal feasts where their presence may not have been wanted, they conveyed the message that they had so much political power themselves that they did not need the king's favour.

## 7.5 Conclusion

The conflicts between the Successors meant that a large number of Macedonian elites were now scrambling to get as much political support as possible. In order to gain this support, they had to take on the role of the monarch. They were now the ones attempting to create a new social and political hierarchy by throwing the most lavish parties. However, once the new Antigonid dynasty was established, it appears that everything reverted back to the way it had been under the Argead kings.

For example, the literary evidence for the period from 323 to 168 BCE provides us with clues as to the types of events for which it would be required for the elite to come to the court and celebrate. These types of events included religious festivals, victories, and feasts intended to force new alliances, such as visits by foreign ambassadors. In that sense, nothing had changed from the earlier Argead period in Macedonian history. Besides this, it again becomes clear that there were members of the elite that had such status of their own that even when they publicly went against their king, such as Apelles did, they could not be so easily removed from the political scene of the feast. In the case of Polyperchon, his odd behaviour at feasts does not appear to have affected his political and social standing at all.

As for the king, he still had the power to push a particular member of the elite down in the social hierarchy by showing that he was now out of favour. He could do so by not inviting this member of the elite to his more intimate feasts as well as by denying him access to his person.

## ***Chapter 8. Conclusion***

Throughout this thesis, I have used literary, archaeological and visual sources to argue in favour of the idea that the Macedonian royal feasts, hosted by both the Argead and the Antigonid rulers, were the main venue for the negotiation of personal relationships between the king and the members of the Macedonian elite. The importance of the Macedonian feast as a social phenomenon is attested through the use of feasting as an artistic theme, especially in times when the Macedonian identity was being threatened. The negotiation between king and elite was sorely needed. Although the social hierarchy was for a large part decided by who had the most direct access to the king, some members of the elite were at least partly independent from the king with regards to their own position on the social and political ladders. These members of the elite has their own landed bases, which provided them with their own income and troops. Furthermore, the elites had their own diplomatic connections.

This also meant that for many elites, the court was not their permanent home unless they were on a campaign with the king, as they had to take care of their own property. The Macedonian elite therefore was a part of the ‘outer court’ only, they were not in the king’s presence every day. Instead, the king invited the elite over for special occasions: religious festivals, weddings, victory feasts and diplomatic events. There is no evidence in the literary sources that these events took place at a certain time of year, but it would make sense if they happened during the winter, when no military campaigns would be waged. This means that the elite may not have been in contact with the king as much as one might expect. As such, these feasts would have been incredibly important events for them, as they would get a chance to influence him personally.

The elite drew their legitimacy from the king, and they also expected to benefit from the advantages that a united Macedon could bring: a stable kingdom, a large army and military victories. The king, on the other hand, needed the elites to keep the more remote parts of Macedon within the kingdom. The elites’ position then, was that of mediators between the king and the Macedonian hinterland. As the elite was well aware that the king needed them as much as they needed him, their relationship was one of mutual back scratching. On occasion, this meant that the king had to back up a member of the elite such as Alexander the uncle of Philip II’s wife Cleopatra who was discussed in chapter 5, simply because he was too powerful and the king needed his support. Conversely, some members of the elite would do whatever it took to get in the king’s good graces, resorting to flattery.

When this relationship soured because the interests of the king and the elite no longer matched, both parties could attempt to get rid of the other. As far as the elite was concerned, the king as a political institution had to be upheld, but the person who filled the position of king could be replaced. If the king tried to remove the elites from power or allied himself with too many non-Macedonians for the elite's liking, they could take action by conspiring to have him killed. From the literary sources, we can conclude that this was the case specifically when the Macedonian empire was expanding, under Alexander III and Philip V. In the same way, if the king felt that some members of the Macedonian elite were becoming too powerful, he would try to have them removed from the board, or lower their position in the social hierarchy.

The king had considerable influence on this hierarchy. Those members of the elite that he allowed to be closest to him, had the greatest chance of influencing the king's domestic and foreign politics. The king could therefore display favour by giving some members of the elite more access to him. From the literary sources, it appears that the king was in charge of this access himself. The elites that were in the king's favour could also count on personal benefits such as land grants and gifts, a tactic that Philip II was particularly fond of.

The display of favour was most visible during feasts. Through the manipulation of the seating arrangements by placing the members of the elite that were considered a threat as far away from the king as possible, so that they would not have a chance to converse with him, he could show everybody present whom he valued most highly. At the same time, the feasts were also used as a venue for displaying the king's elevated status. The king was wont to throw political patron-role feasts. This type of feast was intended to show all guests present that they were not in the position to throw parties as lavish as the king could, and therefore that they were necessarily his social and political subordinates.

Another type of feasting, the empowerment feast, was hosted by the members of the elite themselves. This type of feast was intended to set the bar for the entertainment of the guests so high, that they would not be able to reciprocate the generosity of the host. If that happened, the guests implicitly admitted that they were positioned lower on the social ladder. However, if they could reciprocate, they could challenge the host's own social position. The feast was the venue for the most intense competition for social and political power: competition between the king and the elites, but also competition between the elites among themselves.



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