

The Cultural Context of Alexander's Speech at Opis*

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At Opis in 324 B.C.E., Alexander announced his intention to discharge all Macedonians who were unfit for service. A wave of protest swept through the army.¹ Unlike the earlier confrontation at the Hyphasis, however, the situation at Opis was about something much more fundamental than the exhaustion and demoralization of the troops and the conduct of the campaign. Here the issue was the nature of the kingship and the relationship of Alexander to his army.² Curtius says the troops believed Alexander was going to send some home and keep others with him while establishing a permanent monarchy in Asia. The list of the veterans' grievances in Arrian includes a lack of respect for them on Alexander's part now that they had lost their usefulness to him; Persian dress; the equipment of the Epigoni; and the introduction of foreigners among the Companion cavalry. Alexander himself, Arrian says, had become quicker to take offense since he was now being cultivated in the Persian manner, and as a result was not as friendly and open towards the Macedonians as he had been in the past. Justin mentions the desire of those troops not dismissed to be allowed to go home. They mockingly suggested that Alexander continue the campaign with his father Ammon, since he no longer had any respect for his soldiers.³ In Diodorus as in Plutarch, the arrival of the Epigoni had something to do with the crisis.

Alexander's response was to arrest the most vocal of the protesters, give a speech, and withdraw from contact with the army.⁴ After a few days he began the substitution of Persians for Macedonian commanders and the assignment of Macedonian military titles to Persian units. It was these acts that brought about the collapse of the protest and led to an emotional reunion, followed by the famous banquet of reconciliation.

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¹Arr. *An.* 7.9–11; D.S. 17.108.3–109.3; Plut. *Alex.* 71.1–5; Curt. 10–2.8–4.2; Just. *Epit.* 12.11.5–12.10.

²Bosworth 1988: 157–58; Carney 35–42.

³Also referred to by Arrian (7.8.3) and Diodorus (17.108.3).

⁴The order of these events is uncertain.

That Alexander gave a speech is certain, but what he said is much disputed.⁵ It is also not always clear what the dispute is about. Some of the disagreement focuses rather narrowly on what Arrian says about Philip and Macedonia at the beginning of the speech, while other issues are raised in regard to the speech as a whole in its political and cultural context. It is important, therefore, to stress at the outset the distinction between the passages that refer to Philip and Macedonia (i.e., *An.* 7.9.2–3) and the speech as a whole, viewed as part of Alexander's attempt to regain control of the army. Some scholars regard the entire speech as a purely rhetorical composition, others think its substance goes back to an authentic core.⁶ There is disagreement, similarly, over the part dealing with Philip's reign. For some this brief section is an accurate summary of the accomplishments of Philip. Authentic or not, it is a good source of history.⁷ For others, however, the passage is seen as simply part of the larger, highly rhetorical speech.⁸ It has little to do with the events that occurred at Opis; it is bad history, not just because of its rhetorical format, but because it presents a false picture of Macedonia at the time of Philip II.⁹

A middle ground, however, is possible. The main reason why the passage regarding Philip and Macedon has managed to generate such divergent opinions is that it simultaneously conveys more than one message. As a result, questions regarding rhetorical format, authenticity and historical content become inextricably confused and influence judgments about the speech as a whole. Here I hope to demonstrate that, first, there is good reason to believe the substance of the speech was spoken by Alexander at Opis; second, the passage

⁵Speech: Plut. *Alex.* 71.1–4; Just. *Epit.* 12.11.5–8; D.S. 17.109.2–3; Curt. 10.2.15–29; Arr. *An.* 7.8.3.

⁶In substance genuine: Tarn 286; 290–96; Hammond 1993: 288; Bosworth 133 (“traces of an original digest of [the] contents”); contra: Wüst, 177–88; Brunt 533 (“an epideictic display by A.”); Adams 50; Carney 29, 33, 38.

⁷Ellis 58–59; Hammond and Griffith 2.657–62; Hammond 1989: 152–65; Hammond 1994: 36–40; Cawkwell 17–18, 39, 47; Demand 152.

⁸Wüst 177–79 (with references to earlier discussion); Brunt 1983: 532–33; Montgomery 37–40; Bosworth 101–13.

⁹Montgomery 39. “This passage is often quoted as basic evidence for the early history of the kingdom, but, as it stands, it is an absurdity,” Bosworth 108. For Bosworth the main point is that while Alexander is supposed to be addressing the generality of Macedonians his speech, according to the passage cited, is directed only to a segment of that group, viz., those who originated in Upper Macedonia. Thus he regards this summary of Macedonian history as “wildly inaccurate” and rejects Ellis’ and Hammond’s views (*ibid.*). Montgomery calls into question the assumption that Philip’s military successes are to be explained as a consequence of his economic reforms, a conclusion endorsed by Borza 215–16.

in Arrian regarding Philip (7.9.2–5, but mainly 2–3) reflects an attempt to do two things simultaneously: a) to counteract negative images of Philip's state-building activity generated by his enemies in the Greek world; b) to justify this activity to a Greek audience by the appropriation of the traditional language and imagery of Greek *Kulturgeschichte*. The passage, I shall argue, is a brief summary of an official version of Philip's reign. It is, in short, a piece of Macedonian propaganda.

I.

We begin with the section of Arrian's speech dealing with Philip's accomplishments. The passage in question is as follows:

Philip took you over when you were helpless vagabonds, mostly clothed in skins, feeding a few animals on the mountains and engaged in their defence in unsuccessful fighting with Illyrians, Triballians and the neighbouring Thracians. He gave you cloaks to wear instead of skins, he brought you down from the mountains to the plains; he made you a match in battle for the barbarians on your borders, so that you no longer trusted for your safety to the strength of your positions so much as to your natural courage. He made you city dwellers and established the order that comes from good laws and customs. It was due to him that you became masters and not slaves and subjects of those very barbarians who used previously to plunder your possessions and carry off your persons. He annexed the greater part of Thrace to Macedonia and, by capturing the best placed positions by the sea, he opened up the country to trade. (*An.* 7.9.2–3, tr. Brunt)¹⁰

That the passage reflects the language and imagery of Greek *Kulturgeschichte* is evident, but it is not sufficient simply to draw attention to this fact and then pass on without further investigation.¹¹ It is essential to

¹⁰There is also a reference to Philip in Curtius' version of the speech:

Look! Men who a short time ago were tribute-paying subjects of Illyria and Persia are now turning up their noses at Asia and at the spoils from all its nations! For men who recently went half-naked under Philip, purple robes are not good enough! They cannot stand the sight of silver and gold, and long instead for their old wooden bowls, their wickerwork shields, their rusty swords. (10.2.23, tr. Yardley)

¹¹Wüst 177–79, for instance, notes the presence of *topoi* of *Kulturgeschichte* in the passage, but goes no further. Montgomery 38–39 repeats this observation, also without further investigation. Bosworth 109 suggests that Arrian, in a process of self-reference, invented the imagery himself but still did so in cultural historical terms. On the subject of *Kulturgeschichte* see Kleingünther; Guthrie; Spörri; Thräde; Cole; Cornell; Blundell, and Sacks, ch 3.

establish at what point in the long tradition of Greek cultural history this passage of Arrian belongs.¹² Certainly by the time of Arrian the theme of tension between uncivilized mountaineers and civilized plains dwellers was commonplace. Thus, Strabo generalizes about Europe as a continent divided into plains and mountains, where the dwellers of the lowlands have come to dominate the more warlike but backward mountaineers. He specifies Greeks, Macedonians and Romans as participants in this civilizing process:

Of the inhabitable part of Europe, the cold mountainous regions furnish by nature only a wretched existence to their inhabitants...[T]he whole of [Europe] is diversified with plains and mountains, so that throughout its entire extent the agricultural and civilized element dwells side by side with the war-like element; but of the two elements the one that is peace-loving is more numerous and therefore keeps control over the whole body; and the leading nations too—formerly the Greeks and later the Macedonians and the Romans—have taken hold and helped.¹³

The Romans not only dominated the wild men of the hills but brought them down to the plains and converted them to settled farming life.¹⁴ Cultural historical themes of this type can be found in great profusion in the poetry, philosophy, history, rhetoric and ethnography of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Multiple scenarios were available concerning how humans might have progressed from barbarism to civilization or, alternatively, having forsaken the simplicity of life in a Golden Age, acquired the arts of civilization.¹⁵ Thus, if Arrian is the one to whom we choose to assign responsibility for the speech, there might in theory be no difficulty in accounting for the wording, imagery, and theory of development that we find in the passage dealing with Philip. But

¹²The genre had existed since the Archaic Age, but began to be systematized in the fifth century (Blundell 3).

¹³2.5.26 (C127), tr. H. L. Jones; cf. Demand 213 n. 11. Needless to say, this process was more than a rhetorical *topos*; it reflected the realities of Mediterranean and European history from early times. This version, too, suited the Romans whose memories of struggles against mountaineers went very deep. But the *topos* also appeared in a reverse form. Herodotus has Cyrus tell the Persians when it was proposed they abandon their harsh land that “soft countries invariably breed soft men and it is impossible for one and the same country to produce splendid crops and good soldiers.” With that the Persians chose to live “as an imperial people in a rough country rather than to cultivate the lowlands as some other nation’s slaves.” Hdt. 9.122; cf. Hp. *Aër.* 24.

¹⁴Strabo cites the example of the Turdetani in Spain, 3.2.15 (C151); cf. Sherwin-White 1–10; Garnsey and Saller 12–13. The transition from pastoralism to settled agriculture as a stage in the progress of culture is found in Dicaearchus, a pupil of Aristotle, Wehrli fr. 49 = Porphy. *Abst.* 4.2.

¹⁵See the sources cited in n. 11 above.

it is unlikely that he is the source. This passage, and indeed the substance of the speech as a whole, is fully consistent with a fourth century cultural, intellectual and political environment.

II.

Interest in genealogies and antiquities had deep roots in Greek historical consciousness. In the *Hippias Maior* the protagonist is cited as saying that popular interest did not run to scientific or philosophical matters but to "the genealogies of heroes and men, the founding of cities in the distant past, and antiquarianism (*archaiologia*) in general" (285d). Indeed, in the fifth century much effort was devoted to the systematic accumulation of lists of benefactors, cultural heroes, inventors and inventions.¹⁶ From the time of Homer onwards the poets gathered large quantities of genealogical information. The author of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, for instance, aimed at providing a universal genealogy for all of Greece, making offspring of the gods kings who ruled over individual Greek cities or non-Greek peoples in the heroic age.¹⁷ Besides the poets, another source of information for the founding of cities was the prose-writing local historians, the *archaioi sungrapheis*.¹⁸ Thus, for example, Acusilaus, Hecataeus and Hellanicus collected and systematized the genealogical narratives of the heroes and kings of Greek and non-Greeks of the heroic age.¹⁹ Ephorus had an interest, according to Polybius, in *apoikias kai ktiseis kai sungeneias* (*proem.*, Book 9). It is precisely this kind of information, primarily heroic myths, that we find in the surviving fragments of Aristotle's collection of constitutions.²⁰

Kings played an important role in cultural historical theories of the rise of the state. Herodotus tells the story of Deioces winning the kingship of the Medes by his just administration (1.92.2f.). It is possible that Democritus'

¹⁶Cf. Kleingünther and Thräde *passim*.

¹⁷West 3.

¹⁸See now Toye 279–302.

¹⁹Toye 287. Hellanicus was the author of a *Ktiseis*, a *Ktiseis ethnôn kai poleôn*, an *Ethnôn onomasiai*, a *Peri ethnôn*, and a *Barbarika nomima*, possibly all the same work (Toye 292). The surviving fragments discuss the customs and location of a variety of Scythian, Thracian and Lydian tribes (*FGrH* 4 F66–70; 72–73). Charon of Lampsacus also composed *Ktiseis*, Cornell 1108. Macedon, the eponymous founder of Macedonia, is cited in Hellanicus' *Priestesses of Hera at Argos* (*FGrH* 4 F74).

²⁰Gigon 3.562.

cultural history included an account of benefactor kings.²¹ In Isocrates' *Helen* Theseus gathers the people into a city and establishes a commonwealth among them; they then voluntarily entrust him with the task of governing (32–37). In the *Panegyricus* it is Athens which confers the benefits. The city finds the Greeks living *anomôs* and *sporadên*, and introduces them, by example, to the arts, lays down laws and establishes a *politeia*, replacing *bia* with *logos* (39–40). Androtion rationalized the myth of Theban autochthony by arguing that the Theban Spartoi who followed Cadmus were so called because they had been living scattered about and were of mixed origin.²² Like Philip, Cadmus himself was an outsider, a foreigner, who settled a wandering people in a city. Philochorus, probably reflecting Androtion, presents Kekrops as an outsider who settled the Athenians in twelve cities, led them in their defense of their land against barbarians, and initiated cults.²³ Lycurgus, in an oration delivered in 330 B.C.E., speaks of the special honors given to early kings because of their services to the state (*Leoc.* 88).²⁴ Thus, much of the imagery of Alexander's speech is to be found in a general way in the cultural historical *topoi* of the fifth and fourth centuries.

III.

It has been suggested that Plato, Aristotle and Aristotle's school offer pertinent examples of the kind of rhetorical *topoi* upon which Arrian could have drawn.²⁵ Specifically mentioned is the account of the origins of politics and the city found in *Laws* 3.²⁶ It is true that the image of descent from the hills found there suggests Arrian's usage, but the parallel is deceptive. In its principal respects this account of cultural history has only verbal similarities to Arrian's picture of Macedonian history under Philip. The main purpose of Plato's account, apart from the descriptive details, is to provide a reasoned, probable account of the origins of civilization and of its appropriate arts. For Plato culture evolves on the mountain slopes through a series of stages, including the development of agriculture. Only then do the hillspeople move to the plain for the final step. By the time of this last move they have already mastered all the essential arts of

²¹That is, if we accept the theory that Democritus lies behind Diodorus' cosmogony. On this much-discussed subject see Cole 125–27, 153–63, and *passim*; Blundell 68 and n. 22, 176–77.

²²*FGrH* 324 F60; Harding 186–88.

²³*FGrH* 328 F93–98; Harding 78–79.

²⁴Lists of heroic and divine honors given to kings, oikists, lawgivers, etc., are to be found in Cerfaux and Tondriau 459–66, 468–69.

²⁵Wüst 178–79.

²⁶The account begins at 676a. Wüst does not discuss any example from Aristotle or his school.

civilization, and they themselves initiate the move. There is no question of an outsider providing the impetus.

Arrian tells a very different story. A powerful king, already, by implication, civilized and urbanized, extends his protection to his neighbors who live in exposed, borderland areas. He teaches them the arts of war, agriculture and city life under laws. His main work is the incorporation of these border-dwelling primitives into his own kingdom, the establishment of stable frontiers and the substitution of *jus* for *vis*. Arrian's portrait is that of a king who confers benefits on his neighbors, a cultural hero, a civilizer, a defender, a unifier.²⁷ This account is fundamentally distinct, unlike Plato's not in mere details but in substance. It is not an hypothetical generalization about the rise of civilization; rather, it has all the appearance of a briefly told account of the historical actions of a real king expressed in the language of cultural history. It is this combination of apparently real history and the language of cultural history that lies at the root of the divergent interpretations noted at the beginning of this paper.

There is more, however, to be learned from this review of Plato. The true source of Plato's account is Homer. Indeed, Plato devises the whole story of the rise of politics and city-origins by extrapolating on the basis of Homer's account of the Cyclopes from the *Odyssey* and the founding of Dardania in the *Iliad* (20.216f).²⁸ Thus, knowledge of Plato's elaborate *Kulturgeschichte* would not have been necessary for a fourth century composer of our passage. Alexander, if he is the author, could have fabricated his own account of his father's activities under the inspiration of Homer. The tale from the *Iliad* would have been well known to him (he was thoroughly familiar with Homer and possessed Aristotle's annotated *Iliad*), and, of course, it fitted well enough with the early history of the Macedonians who believed they had originated in the mountainous west and had moved eastwards towards the plains of the Thermaic Gulf.²⁹

IV.

Aristotle throws more light on Arrian's version of Philip's activity as king than does Plato and the tradition of *Kulturgeschichte*. It is true that in his early work

²⁷"So from many tribes and races he formed one kingdom and one people" (Just. *Epit.* 8.6.2); cf. Hammond 1979: 2.662.

²⁸Weil 1959: 75.

²⁹Hdt. 8.137; cf. Borza 78–80.

Aristotle seems to have followed the cultural approach of the *Laws*.³⁰ In his extant political writings, however, we find a very different line of thought. Here Aristotle is gathering or using historical information for the sake of understanding the nature of the constitution, changes in constitutional government, the goal of the state, and the nature of the best constitution. Part of this research included investigations into the historical origins of states, but the approach of cultural history is not used. Political organization for Aristotle is grounded in human nature. Thus the study of history and the observance of contemporary societies, not speculation, is the appropriate way to explore the nature of the state.³¹ Aristotle's comments on kingship are, therefore, based on research into kingship as a reality of human history and of contemporary life.

We will concentrate on Aristotle's main generalizations about kingship. The first to be considered occurs in the discussion of the subject in *Politics* 3, starting at 1284b35. Aristotle divides monarchy into five correct forms. There are four historical *eidê* of kingship: hereditary generalship for life, as in the case of the Spartan kings; the rule of an *aisymnêtês*, an elective tyranny; non-Greek monarchy, hereditary despotism, but governing *kata nomon*; and heroic Greek³² kingship where the king, ruling over willing subjects, is general, judge and the master of religious ceremonies. The fifth form of monarchy is absolute rulership (*pambasileia*).

Of these kinds of kingship, that of the heroic age has the most in common with the passage from Arrian at which we have been looking:

A fourth class of royal monarchy consists of the hereditary legal³³ kingship over willing subjects in the heroic period. For because the first of the line had been benefactors (*euergetas*) of the multitude in the arts or in war, or through having drawn them together (*sunagagein*)³⁴ or provided them with land, these kings used to come to the throne with

³⁰If Festugière 222–24 is right in seeing Aristotle as the ultimate source behind a section in Philoponus that may be from his exoteric work *de Philosophia*; accepted by Weil 1959: 75, 1960: 323 and Cole 52.

³¹Huxley 167, 169; Rhodes 58–59; Blundell 153, 182–85; Saxonhouse 186–87.

³²Newman 3.271 infers that Aristotle is talking about the Greek kings of the heroic age because he makes *hê barbarikê basileia* a separate category of kingship.

³³*Kata nomon*, which is to be taken, according to Newman 3.271, with *gignomenai* and translated as follows: “[kingship] which arose in accordance with law in the heroic times, voluntary and hereditary in character.” Newman comments that these types of monarchy are said to arise in accordance with law because, unlike tyranny, they do not owe their origin to the arbitrary action of an individual but to their subjects’ gratitude for benefits conferred (*ibid.*).

³⁴*Sunagagein* in the sense of forming a city, Newman 3.273.

the consent of the subjects and hand it on to their successors by lineal descent. And they had supreme command in war and control over all sacrifices that were not in the hands of the priestly class, and in addition to these functions they were judges in law-suits. (1285b3–11)³⁵

Aristotle, however, does not restrict the role of kings as benefactors to the Greek heroic age. At 1310b34 he generalizes to include the kings of later periods:

For in every instance this honour [i.e. kingship] fell to men after they had conferred benefit (*euergetêsantes*), or because they had the ability to confer benefit, on their cities or their nations (*tas poleis ê ta ethnê euergetein*),³⁶ some having prevented their enslavement in war, for instance Codrus, others having set them free, for instance Cyrus, or having settled or acquired territory, for instance the kings of Sparta and Macedon and the Molossians.³⁷

We may generalize as follows about Aristotle's doctrine regarding kings of the heroic age. They are the benefactors of their states (Greek or non-Greek, *poleis* or *ethnê*) through one or more of the following activities: they make their states capable of defending themselves by teaching their subjects the arts in general and specifically the art of war; they create unified states (*sunagein*) by drawing previously weak and defenseless people together into cities; they provide their subjects with land; they prevent their enslavement; they have religious and judicial functions.

V.

It is clear that what Arrian has to say about Philip coincides closely with Aristotle's generalizations regarding the kings of the heroic age and gives emphasis to the claim that fourth century sources underlie the speech. Arrian's Philip fulfills all of the criteria of a king of the heroic age: he teaches the arts, including the art of war and living in cities under law; he unifies the people; he frees his subjects from slavery and provides them with land; he is no tyrant ruling by force but a true king ruling over willing subjects by reason of benefits

³⁵Tr. Rackham. Cf. 1286b7f.: "And it was perhaps only owing to this that kingships existed in earlier times, because it was rare to find men who greatly excelled in virtue, especially as in those days they dwelt in small cities. Moreover, they used to appoint their kings on the ground of public service (*euergeries*) and to perform this is a task for the good men."

³⁶Note the formula: *polis* or *ethnos*, cf. 1285b.

³⁷According to Weil 1965: 177 Aristotle distinguishes two historical periods, ancient times and modern times, with a dividing line around the time of the Persian Wars.

conferred;³⁸ his actions mimic those of the Greek city-founders of the heroic age. This coincidence of Arrian and Aristotle raises a number of questions. First is the matter of how closely either reflects the realities of Macedonian kingship. The second is the role that Aristotle's knowledge of Macedonia might have played in the formulation of his theory of kingship.

The nature of the Macedonian monarchy, unfortunately, is an area of much dispute because so much of our information regarding it derives from the reigns of Philip and Alexander and their successors, and it is difficult to know how much of this information can be predicated of earlier rulers.³⁹ In a recent survey of the subject, Eugene Borza lists the following as personal powers of Macedonian kings: control of economic resources; the making of foreign policy, including alliances; command of the army, which may have included the right to make war and peace; religious and judicial functions; the appointment of his successor.⁴⁰ Although this list seems to correlate with Aristotle's in a broad sense (they both include economic, military, religious, and judicial functions; succession in both is hereditary), the similarity is deceptive. Aristotle's depiction of heroic age society is that of a society institutionally complex, where the people, through assemblies and councils and the possession of established rights, have some formalized way of responding to the rule of the monarch.⁴¹ This was not the case in Macedon, which was characterized by the lack of such institutions. Macedonian kings were autocratic with little concern for such constitutional legalities as the consent of the people. Their main function,

³⁸According to Newman 3.256–57, the two characteristics of constitutional kings in Aristotle are that they have extensive powers, which are exercised over willing subjects.

³⁹The older constitutionalist view of Hampl and Granier that the military assembly had acknowledged judicial rights as well as the right to choose the king has been rejected by recent scholars who regard Macedonian kingship as highly personalized. For a survey of the literature see Borza ch. 2 and Errington 218–29. Macedonian government in general was characterized by a lack of formal institutions, such as councils and assemblies, and even the absence of a developed aristocracy other than rival members of the royal household and their allies. Limits on the king's power, as Borza suggests, were situational rather than institutional. "[T]he king's ability to act depended upon a number of factors, including the force of his own personality; the balance of power that existed between himself, other Argeadae, barons, and soldiers; the constraints of the external situation in which the king found himself; and a rather vague set of *mores* concerning tradition. The king could do exactly what he could get away with" (Borza 238).

⁴⁰Borza 237–38.

⁴¹Aristotle's heroic age has much in common with the society portrayed by Homer. On the role of institutions in that society, see Carlier 1984: 185–87; Donlan 24–26; Gschnitzer 1983: 151–63 and 1991: 182–204; Raaflaub 54–55.

apart from the constant struggle to maintain themselves personally in power, was the defense and expansion of Macedonian possessions.⁴²

Nevertheless, given at least the appearance of similarity between Aristotle's heroic kings and Philip's activities as described by Arrian, it might be well to inquire just how Aristotle came to formulate this aspect of kingship. Did he, for instance, develop it with an eye to pleasing his powerful patrons? This would be in line with the argument that the fifth form of kingship, *pambasileia* or absolute rulership, was developed explicitly as an apology for the rule of Philip and Alexander.⁴³ Although this particular theory has not won adherents, there is general agreement that Aristotle was conscious of the changes that were taking place in the nature of Macedonian kingship under Philip and Alexander, and that this awareness may have influenced the shaping of his doctrine on the forms of kingship. However, as will be argued here, Aristotle's knowledge of Macedonian kingship and of developments in Macedon was only one part of this process.

Aristotle had at his disposal large quantities of antiquarian materials regarding the early history of many Greek (and some non-Greek) states.⁴⁴ It was primarily this kind of information that found its way into the constitutions his students gathered.⁴⁵ The surviving fragments of these *politeiai* discuss mythical heroes and kings who unified their people, defended their people against hostile neighbors, and founded cities. Aristotle combined this type of information with historical knowledge from readily available historical sources as well as much detailed knowledge of contemporary politics and constitutional practices.⁴⁶ As a native of Stagira who spent considerable time at the Macedonian court and whose family had traditional ties with Pella, Aristotle had, of course, extraordinary knowledge of Macedonian history, politics and society. But he was also familiar with the histories and life-styles of other non-Greek peoples of

⁴²The successful acquisition of land is strongly argued by Alan E. Samuel as the tie that bound king and people together (Samuel 1276–78). Undoubtedly this is true in a rather narrow sense, but it would be a mistake to read this as meaning that full-fledged imperialism was an essential aspect of Macedonian kingship. Indeed, it was precisely the problem of empire that precipitated the crisis at Opis. Alexander's conquests had by 324 B.C.E. overburdened the weak institutional base of Macedonian governmental structures.

⁴³Kelsen 170–82.

⁴⁴See above, pp. 155 and 158.

⁴⁵Gigon 562.

⁴⁶Cf. Weil 1960: 311–23; Huxley 1972: 157–69, 1980: 258–64.

the north such as the Thracians, Illyrians, and Molossians.⁴⁷ We know too that Aristotle thought that it was possible to make inferences about the past from the way societies of his day were constituted, according to the principle “ancient practices are those of the barbarians of our own times.”⁴⁸ This might be thought to have been the case in Macedonia, whose society and institutions have often been regarded as being closer to Homeric society than the *polis* societies of the south.⁴⁹ But precisely because he knew Macedonia so well, it is unlikely that Aristotle made such inferences. The gap between Homeric and Macedonian kings must have been all too evident to him.⁵⁰ Thus, although he had deep knowledge of Macedonia and close connections with key figures in the court, Aristotle had a much broader base of factual and putatively factual information at hand for developing his theory of the varieties of kingship. His paradigmatic model of kingship was not a speculative invention, nor one created to serve political ends, but a reasonably deduced taxonomy derived from both actual observation of contemporary societies, Greek and non-Greek, and an evaluation of what he took to be historically reliable sources such as the poets and *archaioi sungrapheis* as well as other sources of antiquarian and historical information.

A related question is the extent to which Aristotle might have had Philip and Alexander in mind in his discussion of absolute kingship, *pambasileia*.⁵¹ An extreme case for this possibility has been made by H. Kelsen, who argued that Aristotle developed the theory in order to justify the kingship of the Macedonians.⁵² According to Kelsen, Aristotle’s aim was to vindicate monarchy against its opponents, primarily Greek opponents of Macedon such as Demosthenes, who portrayed monarchy as tyranny and the subjects of monarchs as slaves. A corollary of this thesis was that Aristotle had to denigrate democracy. This version of the argument has not found acceptance, though there is general agreement that it is important to try to estimate the degree to

⁴⁷References in the *Politics* are as follows: Thrace: 1274b24, 1312a14, 1324b11; Molossians: 1310b40; other northerners: Celts: 1269b27, 1324b12, 1336a16; Scythians 1324b11. Of the northern, non-Greek peoples for whom it is likely constitutions were composed, Gigon lists the following: the Bottiaeans (33); the Epirot *koinon* (53); the Thracians (64); the Macedonians (107); the Molossians (117).

⁴⁸Sch. II. 10.153 = Rose 160, Gigon 383.

⁴⁹Edson, 17–44; cf. Friedrichsmeyer (1990), 304–5 on Alexander’s education.

⁵⁰See above, p. 161.

⁵¹For discussion of the earlier literature, with references as far back as Hegel, see Ehrenberg 73.

⁵²Kelsen 170–82. Kahn proposes a view of Aristotle “the trimmer, or at least as the courtier,” but eventually rejects it because “such a hypothesis avoids taking seriously the philosophic doctrines” involved (Kahn 375) or, it could be added, Aristotle’s moral character.

which contemporary developments in Macedonia are reflected in Aristotle's doctrine of kingship. The problem has been how to define this influence.

Aristotelian specialists since W. L. Newman have tended to see the idea of the *pambasileus* as a theoretical construct, an integral and necessary part of Aristotle's constitutional theory. It is, as R. G. Mulgan explains, "an essential part of [Aristotle's] general concern for justice in the distribution of power."⁵³ This is not to say that Aristotle wrote only, or exclusively, as Newman puts it, "to prevent the infringement of the claims of a hypothetical *pambasileus*."⁵⁴ Aristotle was aware of the discussion of the ideal king by Xenophon and Isocrates and of the changing nature of kingship under Philip and Alexander. He wrote, again to quote Newman, "to demonstrate that no one was a natural *pambasileus* who did not possess transcendent virtue and an immense superiority to everyone else belonging to the State. Only a man of this type could claim to be above the law."⁵⁵ After the condemnation of Philotas and Callisthenes and the murder of Cleitos it was more appropriate to think of Alexander as a tyrant resembling a wild animal than a ruler of incomparable virtue.⁵⁶

The fact that Aristotle's analysis of kingship might in some way reflect his experiences with Macedon is thus not proof that he subverted his own analysis of political structures to justify Macedonian state-building and imperialism. By the same token the use of Aristotle's analysis by a Philip or an Alexander, if this were the case, would not be proof that they had learned of these ideas from Aristotle. It is, at best, only an indication that they had, as one would expect, a firm grasp of the realities of their power and prerogatives, and

⁵³Mulgan 1974: 27. Mulgan has this to say in his overall survey of Aristotle's political thought: "Nothing that Aristotle says leads one to believe that justifiable absolute rule for Greeks was anything more than a theoretical possibility. He cannot have meant the account of the absolute ruler as a description of his former pupil Alexander the Great...But this does not mean that he did not have Alexander in mind as he was writing. He may have been thinking of Alexander as a ruler who claimed the right to rule absolutely over Greek without possessing the necessary personal qualities" (1977: 87). Carlier sees *pambasileia* in Weberian terms as "un *Idealtypus* qui permet de comprendre les royautes réelles." (1993: 117). Fredricksmeyer (1979: 59) thinks that Aristotle might have unintentionally encouraged Philip's ambitions towards absolute monarchy, but it is doubtful that Philip needed theoretical guidance for his *Realpolitik*. What he did need was justification, and in this respect Aristotle's scholarly classifications might have provided direction in the shaping of Macedonian state propaganda.

⁵⁴1,277.

⁵⁵1,277.

⁵⁶Thus Carlier 1993: 117. For opposition to monarchy and tyranny in the fourth century see Carlier 1984: 234.

of how these were viewed by the Macedonians—primarily the Macedonians in the army. That they might have picked up a method of shaping perceptions of Macedonian kingship is, however, another matter.

VI.

We can now return to some of the issues raised at the beginning of this paper. First is the question concerning the use of the speech made by Alexander as part of his effort to restore discipline. As noted at the start, there is disagreement regarding the speech's authenticity, some scholars regarding it in its totality as a rhetorical exercise by Curtius and Arrian, others agreeing that, although these writers had a hand in its composition, the speech is in substance authentic.⁵⁷ Here I argue that the nucleus of the speech is indeed authentic and best suits a fourth century context.

The two surviving versions of the speech, those of Arrian and Curtius, initially appear quite different, but on analysis can be seen to have much in common. It seems more than likely that Alexander began his speech with a reference to his father's achievements, if only to highlight his own even more significant accomplishments. This much at least is common to both Curtius and Arrian.⁵⁸ Both Arrian and Curtius make reference to the embattled state of Macedon at the time of Philip. While Curtius does not detail Philip's work in securing the borders and incorporating Upper Macedonia the way Arrian does, this activity is implied by his account. Both speeches explicitly contrast past and present, the benefits conferred by Philip and the superior benefits conferred by Alexander. Since Curtius' narrative is based on the vulgate tradition, this is good evidence that at least this part of the speech goes back to fourth or third century sources.⁵⁹

Arrian's speech falls broadly into three parts:

1. a catalogue of Philip's conquests and benefactions, followed by a longer and more significant list of Alexander's conquests and benefactions (7.9.1–8);
2. Alexander's self-justification of himself as a good king and war leader, in which he claims he has been extraordinarily generous, not keeping the wealth of empire for himself but sharing it even to the point of paying off

⁵⁷See above, n. 6.

⁵⁸For Curtius, see n. 10.

⁵⁹Bosworth 112 thinks the "original nucleus" around which the speech was composed goes back to either Ptolemy or Aristobulus.

the debts accumulated by the soldiers with whom he has eaten, slept and suffered (7.9.9–10.4);

3. a peroration containing another list of conquests and a declaration that, since he has been deserted by his troops, he will turn to the barbarians for protection (7.10.5–7).

Curtius' speech is similar in content and theme but has a different emphasis. The conquests and benefactions of Philip and Alexander are mentioned in broad generalizations and debts are singled out in particular, but the main focus is upon the desertion of the troops and the necessity of turning to the barbarians that this imposed on Alexander. According to Justin, Alexander alternated between rebuking his men and telling them not to tarnish the glorious campaign with *seditio*, suggesting that the speech emphasized the success of the campaign and heaped guilt on the veterans for betraying Alexander (12.11.7). Plutarch says only that he heaped abuse on the troops (*Alex.* 71.3). I conclude from the foregoing that the precis of the speech which was available to Arrian and Curtius included the following: a statement regarding the benefactions conferred by Philip and Alexander; justification of Alexander's behavior as king in relationship to his men; Alexander's angry response to the perceived betrayal of the veterans and hence his "abuse" of the troops.⁶⁰

All of these points of the precis, the benefactions of Philip and Alexander, the justification of Alexander's role as a war leader, and his expectations of loyalty, fit well with what we know of Alexander's personality, the situation he faced at Opis, and the traditions of Macedonian kingship. That he would begin with Philip is in accord with his rivalry with his father as well as with the need to reassert his Macedonian paternity.⁶¹ It made sense to try to convince his veterans that, whatever had been said about Ammon, Philip was his true father and, further, that Alexander was a true son of his father. Philip had unified a weak and exposed Macedonia, enriched it and expanded its frontiers. Alexander had done the same, only on a far grander scale. Regarding his role as a war leader, the primary traditional responsibility of all Macedonian kings, Alexander needed to say little. He reminded the veterans that he had shared their life on the march and in battle. Above all he had not kept the loot of empire for himself but had divided it generously with them. Most recently he

⁶⁰For a slightly different summary see Bosworth 103.

⁶¹Fredricksmeyer 1990: 300–315.

had paid off their accumulated debts. In short, he was no oriental monarch. He had lived up to his own ideals of being a good king and a great warrior.⁶²

In the speech Alexander does not respond directly to the individual grievances, the Persian dress, the incorporation of the barbarians in the army, the luxury of the court, or any of the other complaints. His aim is not to refute criticisms directly, item by item, but to focus on the main problem, the apparent changes in the nature both of the monarchy and of his relationship with his men.⁶³ Essentially the speech is an assertion that Alexander, even more than his father, had lived up to Macedonian expectations regarding the kingship. He is first and foremost a Macedonian king, not an oriental monarch. Like his father, Alexander has enriched, honored, and brought glory to the army and people of Macedonia. He was in the forefront of every battle. Beside these unassailable facts, everything else, all the individual grievances, are beside the point. These claims are strictly in accord with what we know of the expectations for Macedonian kings, as outlined above, and thus also in accord with Alexander's expectations about how his speech might be received by the veterans. He concludes the argument by attempting to turn the veterans' complaints upside down: it is not Alexander who has abandoned the veterans, it is they who have abandoned him.

It was a good speech but it failed to convince his audience. What Alexander said was true but disingenuous.⁶⁴ He could not go far enough to satisfy the veterans. The nature of the monarchy had, in fact, changed; the veterans were surely right on this point. That they were unable and unwilling to accept these changes, together with the loss of the close personal relationship with Alexander that had characterized the early years, was the essence of the controversy. They wanted a return to the old ways. They opposed integration with the barbarians and objected to the now commonplace use of Persian dress and ceremonial. They regarded Alexander's pretensions to divinity as ridiculous and blasphemous. The lavish expenditures at Susa looked like those of an oriental monarch. While Alexander was planning fresh conquests, they wanted

⁶²This accords with the tradition that Alexander's favorite line from the *Iliad* was Helen's description of Agamemnon as "a good king and a mighty warrior" (*Il.* 3.179; *Plut. Mor.* 331c); on Alexander's heroic ideals see Fredricksmeier 304–5.

⁶³Cf. Carney 29–31, 37–42.

⁶⁴What he had to say either directly or by implication about the monarchy only involved the immediate and unique situation in which he and his veterans found themselves. It does not provide a basis for any generalizations about the Macedonian monarchy throughout history.

to go home. The proposal to send some of them back to Macedonia, while reasonable in itself, was seen as rejection, and a proof that he had lost touch with his men. Alexander miscalculated if he thought he could convince the veterans just by recalling the past and reasserting tradition. Too much had happened to achieve reconciliation by means of a speech, especially one that did not address the real issues. It was only the fact that Alexander had a number of alternatives at hand that he did not have at the Hyphasis that enabled him to overcome his stubborn troops.⁶⁵

VII.

We turn now to the passage in Arrian regarding Philip (*An.* 7.9.2–3). Historians who have focused on the historicity of the passage and touched lightly or not at all on its language have, understandably, latched onto Arrian's exposition as, at minimum, containing an essential kernel of truth regarding Philip's organization of Macedonia.⁶⁶ The intended audience for this speech, however, was not scholars but instead the veterans of Alexander's army at Opis. Since a speech of some kind was certainly given, we can agree with Bosworth that those soldiers would have ridiculed the notion that Philip had turned them from nomads into agriculturalists by bringing them down to the plains. They knew well that they and their ancestors had been domiciled for generations in the plains and piedmont of Lower Macedonia.⁶⁷ Further, the wording of the passage as we have it, its clever allusions to Homer and Greek cultural history, and its carefully constructed stylistic antitheses would have been wasted on an audience of veterans.

If the troops at Opis are not likely to have been the intended audience of our passage as we now have it, we are left with two possibilities. The first, and the one most often cited, is that the speech is a purely rhetorical construction, wholly the invention of Arrian, bearing no relationship to the events at Opis.⁶⁸ This explanation disposes of the problem of what Alexander said at Opis by asserting that we do not know what he said. But there is good reason, as we have seen, to believe that the intellectual and cultural context of the passage

⁶⁵Carney 42.

⁶⁶Or, alternatively, they have focused mainly on the wording and imagery of the passage in order to attack its authenticity.

⁶⁷Bosworth 108.

⁶⁸See above, n. 8 and 9. As already noted, however, Bosworth 112 believes that Arrian found a report of the speech in his sources, though the bulk of the speech is a rhetorical elaboration by Arrian himself.

regarding Philip is fourth century in origin. The key justifying idea of rule by consent rather than force was a rhetorical commonplace by the latter half of that century. Isocrates in his letter to Philip exhorted him to rule over the Macedonians “not as a tyrant but a king” (5.154), and in his *Panegyricus* he credits Athens with teaching the Greeks in ancient times to replace *bia* with *logos* (39–40). Bosworth notes that the dedication at Delphi of Daochus of Pharsalus, honoring his grandfather who ruled Thessaly for twenty-seven years *ou biai alla nomoi*, is exactly contemporaneous with Alexander.⁶⁹ In this context Aristotle’s analytical-historical division of kingship, with its clear distinction between tyranny and monarchy, may not have appeared especially original to the Macedonian court. It may, however, have been seen as a clearer, more comprehensive, empirically based exposition of a subject that was already familiar, at least in outline, from rhetorical and propagandizing sources.

On this hypothesis the passage was composed in the Macedonian court for consumption by fourth century Greeks, friendly and hostile alike. Certainly, this audience, rather than Alexander’s hard-bitten veterans, would have been better attuned to the nuances of the speech. As we have seen, the language of the passage is laced with the *topoi* of *Kulturgeschichte*. More to the point, emphasis is given to Philip’s role as city-founder, his substitution of law for force, as the culmination of his activity. Appropriately, this is the rhetorical climax of the passage. Philip, the tamer of backward frontier dwellers, brings them within the framework of civilization. Yet Philip’s main activity was most assuredly not urbanization, at least not in the Greek sense of that term.⁷⁰ Secondly, Philip had good reason to employ the traditional language of city-founding. Control of Greek public opinion was as important to the Macedonian royal house in the fourth century as it had been in the past, perhaps even more

⁶⁹Bosworth 122.

⁷⁰Indeed, if we begin with the assumption that urbanization is to be taken in the traditional Greek sense of colonization, synoikism or metoikism, just the opposite will be the case. Philip’s destruction of Galepsus, Methone, Apollonia, Olynthus, Stagira, the dissolution of the Chalcidian League, and the Macedonization of Amphipolis, Crenides, Oesyme and Potidaea (Pydna having already been Macedonized), could be regarded as a program of deurbanization, since these were the true urban centers of Macedonia (Griffith 1979: ch. 10; Hammond 1989: 154–62). Pella, while a great palatial center and administrative center, was not a city in the Greek sense of the term. The towns Philip did found seem to have been mostly garrison foundations and administrative centers, particularly in areas that traditionally lacked such establishments. Their main purpose was to hold down tribal areas and defend the frontiers. But this was urbanization in a Macedonian context, with Macedonian state aims as the goal, rather than Hellenic urbanization (Borza 162; 167–72; 172, n. 25; 210; 213; 216–19).

so.⁷¹ For Philip the problem was to find a way to counter Demosthenes' portrayal of him as the destroyer (or unjust occupier) of Amphipolis, Methone, Pydna, Potidaea, Olynthus and the thirty-two cities of the Chalcidian League.⁷² True or false, it was a long list. More damage control was required to contradict allegations that Macedonia was a state ruled by force;⁷³ that Philip's power was based on injustice, perjury and treachery and had been acquired by rapacity and artifice;⁷⁴ and that the king was a barbarian, a tyrant against whom the one safeguard was mistrust because "every king and tyrant is an enemy of freedom and a foe of laws."⁷⁵ Even Isocrates, as noted above, reflects some of this sentiment when he urges Philip to rule over the Macedonians "not as a tyrant but as a king."⁷⁶ Philip needed to put forward a counter version of his activities to balance these allegations.

From this perspective we reconstruct our passage from Arrian as follows. It is a pleasingly phrased appeal to a Greek audience that serves at the same time to conceal or reinterpret the very real, and none too gentle, activity of state-building that took place under Philip. But the actual language is the poetic, attractive language of Greek cultural history that by the second half of the fourth century was commonplace. Philip, the founder of a wholly new kind of state that, in reality, fitted neither the theory of *Kulturgeschichte* nor Aristotle's history, is turned into a city founder in the old sense, a *ktistês*, synoikist, an *archêgetês*, a lawgiver of the same standing as the great founders or reformers of the Greek past. The comparison flatters Philip, provides a ready retort to Greek critics, and legitimizes his activity. To the assertion that Philip was a barbarian and a destroyer, the response is made that, on the contrary, Philip was a teacher of the arts of civilization, a founder of cities, and a lawgiver.⁷⁷ To

⁷¹Dissemination of the myth of Argive origins of the Argeads had had a noteworthy success in influencing Greek public opinion in the past. For the most recent discussion of this subject see Borza 80–84, with references.

⁷²D. 1.8, 9; 2.7, 14; 4.4, 35–36; 6.17; 7.26–28; 9.26, 32.

⁷³Philip was a *tyrannis*, D. 1.5; an *anthrôpos hubristês*, 1.23.

⁷⁴D. 2.9, 10.

⁷⁵D. 6.24–25.

⁷⁶Isoc. 5.154.

⁷⁷A commonplace of the Heroic Age and the Age of Migrations was the eponymous founding of cities by individuals who were honored after their deaths as heroes and founders by the settlers (Malkin 116–17, 126–29). Philip's action in founding and naming Philippopolis after himself harks back to this practice and suggests conscious appropriation of the custom. Such actions would have been regarded as hybriistic in the historical age (Fredricksmeyer 1979: 52; 1990: 306–7).

allegations of tyranny and violence the propagandist responds by deftly appropriating the benign language of Greek cultural history that also served to conceal the heavy-handed activity of the city founders of ancient times. His work in building Macedonia was, in short, no different from what the Greeks, in their idealized past, had supposedly done. Although Philip lost the overall propaganda war with Athens, his image as the civilizer and city-builder of Macedonia persists.⁷⁸

⁷⁸On this see the discussion of the historiography of Philip by Borza 5–8.

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