

IMAGE AND COMMUNICATION IN THE SELEUCID KINGDOM: THE KING, THE COURT AND THE CITIES

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1. Introduction

The balance of power on which the Hellenistic kingdoms rested was delicate. In the first instance, the king's power depended on his personal charisma, confirmed by his continued success, especially in war, which implied divine support.¹ Other important factors included the king's perceived ability to distribute justice and bring peace to his subjects and, rather paradoxically, legitimacy through descent.² All these elements impacted on the king's ability to mobilize a consensus around his decisions. The reactions caused by Alexander's request in 324 that the *poleis* readmit exiles, or the trouble that Philip V took, in 219 and again in 214, when asking the city of Larissa to admit new citizens into their ranks, show that no king could in all cases simply give orders.³ The issue may have been particularly acute for the Seleucid kings, whose rule, to use Austin's words, 'depended on a judicious blend of pressure and persuasion'.⁴ Issues of communication between the king and his subjects were thus of fundamental importance; historical narratives as well as countless anecdotes testify to the delicate balance between royal distance on the one hand and attention to specific individuals and communities on the other.⁵ Accessibility and punctilious attention to the correspondence are part of the image of the ideal king presented by the Hellenistic literature on kingship, and against this ideal all Hellenistic kings, from Philip and Alexander to the successors, were measured;⁶ whether they successfully managed to live up to it is of course a different matter. The epigraphical documents too, with their emphasis on the visits and wishes of embassies or individuals, stress the importance of direct contact with the king and his court.⁷

However, opportunities for direct contact, given the vast expanses of territory controlled by the Hellenistic kings, will have been limited to a small part of the population of the kingdom. The arrival of the king in a city was thus by definition an extraordinary moment, almost a divine epiphany;⁸

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and such moments, even in the case of kings constantly on the move, such as the Seleucids, cannot have been too frequent. As a result, contact with members of the court, and contact with the words of the king, as transmitted in his letters, will have played an important role. The public reading of a royal letter by the king's friend or ambassador in the *agora* or in the assembly functioned as a substitute for a direct appearance or epiphany, and the inscription of a royal pronouncement within the enclosure of a sanctuary enabled a similar experience of vicarious royal presence in the act of reading.⁹

How exactly was such communication framed, and what role did the court play in what has been described as a 'network of bilateral relationships between the ruling king and the communities in his sphere of power'?¹⁰ The importance of the court for the survival of a territorial monarchy has repeatedly been stressed: the court is the centre from which the king projects his identity as monarch towards the outer world; it constitutes the notional place where the relationship between the king and the elites, whose support he needs in order to control an extended territory, is negotiated.¹¹ Members of the court formed the king's council and, thus, the kingdom's ruling class; at the same time, these court members had connections with communities both within and outside the kingdom, or might form them, for instance as a result of being granted citizenship; communication between the king and the cities or *ethnē* could be channelled through these individuals.¹²

In what follows, I shall focus on those acts of communication that involved some form of speech – as recorded in inscriptions or papyri. Even though some attention to the ways in which such speech was monumentalised is therefore inevitably part of the present investigation, the emphasis here does not lie on the 'spectacular' aspects of royal power and its projection in the form of royal audiences, festivals, processions, benefactions, the establishment of cults and temples or the architectural design of residences. Rather, I want to focus on the entourage of the king to see how members of the court, as well as important representatives of the cities, are presented in the official documents emanating from the royal chanceries. For this reason I shall also leave aside the information (and the documents) transmitted through the literary tradition. Throughout, the focus will be on the Seleucid kingdom, and more specifically, not least because of the limits of the evidence available, on the relationship with the Greek cities of Asia Minor and the Mediterranean world.¹³

It is worth noting at the outset that the chancery responsible for the main official documents was itself part of the court, since its head would be one of the persons from the close entourage of the king: the person

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who took care of the royal correspondence, the *epistolagros*, had to follow the king wherever he went, and some of the official letters still give the impression of having been dictated directly by the king himself.¹⁴ The close connection between the court and the office of secretary is borne out by the curriculum of the three Seleucid *epistolagros* known to date. Of the first, Dionysios, active under Antiochos IV, Polybius says that he was one of the friends;¹⁵ the second, Menochares son of Dionysios, is characterized in a dedication by the *synodos* of the Delians as ‘one of the first friends (τῶν πρώτων φίλων) of king Demetrios I, and *epistolagros*’; similarly the third, Bithys son of Thraseas, defines himself, in a dedication made in Delos, as *συνγενῆς καὶ ἐπιστολαγράφος* of Antiochos IV Epiphanes.¹⁶ Obviously as orders cascaded down the administrative chain, the connection with the court would become looser: while we should assume a degree of shared training, some minor officials may have been influenced by local, rather than courtly and Seleucid, traditions.¹⁷

2. The documents: a typology

What kind of image do the official documents present of the king, his court, and his/their relationship to the larger world? First, it is necessary to address a typological issue. The documents emanating from the Seleucid chanceries have been variously classified;¹⁸ I suggest that they may be helpfully divided into three main categories, based on their addressee(s) and purpose:

- a) letters sent by the king or an administrator to cities, sanctuaries or *ethnē*, often in response to the visit of an embassy, accepting honours awarded or dealing with some specific request or issue; these form the majority of the surviving documentation.
- b) letters sent by the king or an official to an official, and dealing with a specific internal issue.
- c) letters sent by the king or an official to an official, but dealing with a general issue. Three dossiers (two of them preserved in multiple copies) exemplify this type of document: the earliest one (c. 209 BC) concerns the nomination of Nikanor to a high-priesthood and the supervision of all sanctuaries ‘beyond the Taurus’; the second (193 BC) deals with the institution of a state cult for Laodike; the last (c. 187–175 BC) provides for the nomination of Olympiodoros to the supervision of the sanctuaries in Koile Syria and Phoenicia.¹⁹

The distinction between second and third type is not always clear-cut (both may carry the order of inscription, for instance, while the letters of the first group never do). Furthermore, some documents do not fit any of these

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categories. Thus, the letter sent by Antiochos VIII to Ptolemy X Alexander I (RC 71, dated to 109 BC) offers a unique instance of a diplomatic transaction between kings, in connection with the affairs of a specific city, Seleukeia in Pieria. Unique to date is also the *hypomnēmatismos* (memorandum) with which a king Antiochos grants privileges to the Zeus of Baitokaike, although its uniqueness is tempered by the presence of an introductory letter by the same king.²⁰ A dossier from Skythopolis preserves two documents sent by an official to the king, which the writer calls *hypomnēmata* (petitions): these offer a unique example (for what concerns the Seleucid kingdom) of the way a powerful official would address the king in writing.²¹ The *hypomnēma* addressed by the Sidonians in Jamnia to Antiochos V Eupator would show, if more of it were preserved, how a group addressed the king.²² Finally, a document in Uruk preserves what is to date the only certain reference, within the Seleucid administration, to a *diagramma* (edict, regulation, ordinance): thus, general regulations may have been issued under this label – none has survived.²³

Notwithstanding these exceptions, the three main categories of missives proposed above capture and characterize most of the surviving Seleucid administrative correspondence. The documents produced by the Seleucid chancery, whether emanating from the king or from administrators, and whether addressed to cities and other groups or to administrators, always follow the epistolary format. Moreover, the king always refers to them as letters (ἐπιστολή).²⁴ The recipients did not necessarily share this point of view and at times refer to the letter as a *prostagma*, or ‘order’. The earliest surviving attestation of *prostagma* occurs in the dossier concerning the sale of lands to Laodike. It comprises a report by a *hyparchos*, that makes reference to the *prostagma* of the *oikonomos* Nikanor. Since we do not have Nikanor’s original order or missive, it is impossible to determine which generic form it took.²⁵ Instances of royal correspondence (and its reception) offer less ambiguous evidence. In all copies of the dossiers regulating the nomination of Nikanor to the high-priesthood of the sanctuaries in the lands beyond the Taurus and instituting a state cult for Laodike, the first officials in the hierarchical chain (respectively, Zeuxis for the first dossier, Anaximbrotos and Menedemos for the second) refer to the royal letter as an ‘order’, *prostagma*, when transmitting it to their subordinates;²⁶ similarly, in the dossier concerning the nomination of Olympiodoros to the supervision of the sanctuaries of the satrapy of Koile Syria and Phoenicia, Heliodoros, the official who is first in the hierarchical chain, in his own letter to his subordinate defines the royal letter as a *prostagma*.²⁷ Finally, the decree with which Seleukeia-in-Pieria answers the letter sent by Seleukos IV concerning honours for his *philos* Aristolochos also refers (twice) to the royal document with *prostagma*.²⁸

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The administration, then, in a process of reception, may turn the royal letter into a royal order, thereby rendering explicit the power of the royal word.²⁹ But it is significant that these letters are addressed to administrators, and that it is administrators who in their letters choose to label the royal letters *prostagmata*.³⁰ The one apparent exception, the decree of Seleukeia-in-Pieria, is not really an exception, since Seleukeia was under the control of a Seleucid governor, the *epistatēs* Theogenes, to whom the royal letter had been addressed in the first instance, and who, we may suppose, will have loomed large in the redaction of the answering decree.³¹ At any rate: barring one already-mentioned exception, the document explicitly labelled as *hypomnēmatismos* and included in the letter sent by a king Antiochos to a functionary, Euphemos, in charge of the temple of Baitokaïke (a document written in the third person, and closing with the unusual formulation Δεήσει οὖν γραφήναι οἷς εἴθισται, ἵνα γένηται ἀκολούθως τοῖς δηλουμένοις, ‘it will therefore be necessary to write to the usual officials, so that action is taken in accordance with these instructions’), the king himself always speaks of ‘epistles’, and the actual format is indeed that of a letter, whatever the name given to the document by intermediaries or recipients.³² The Seleucids dealt with their political and administrative tasks through letters.

3. Communicative strategies: the prescript

While these documents had different addressees and purposes, the basic elements that shape the image of king and court for the readers or hearers remain the same: monumental context (i.e. the means and place of publication, which may vary); explicit statements (the ‘content’ of the letter) which address the specific situation, and which also vary; and implicit strategies, such as the use of a particular type of language, that remain largely constant.³³ In what follows, I shall focus on the implicit strategies; more specifically, I shall look at the use and implications of the letter-format, as this is the overarching constant in the communicative strategy of the Seleucids; at the presentation of the actors (sender, addressees, ambassadors, intermediaries); and at how the reason for the decision and the decision itself are expressed.

The conventions of Greek epistolary style regulate the Seleucid correspondence: an opening formula in the third person is followed by the body of the letter, in the first person, in which the king or the administrator states his reason for writing, gives his decision or makes an exhortation; the letter closes with a formulaic greeting.

In the prescript, sender and addressee(s) are usually indicated by their name only: the father’s name is absent, as is any indication of title or

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function, though an exception is made for the qualification βασιλεύς that usually precedes the name of the king. From the end of the third century BC onwards, instances of the honorary titles ‘father’ and ‘brother’ for the addressee are attested in the prescript, both epigraphically and in the documents transmitted by the literary tradition.³⁴ The letter of Antiochos VIII to Ptolemy X Alexander I, dated to 109 BC, also presents a very full prescript: ‘King Antiochos to King Ptolemy Alexander his brother, greetings’ ([β]ασιλεὺς Ἀντίοχος βασιλεὶ Πτολεμαίῳ τῷ καὶ [Αλ]εξάνδρῳ τῷ ἀδελφῷ χαίρειν, RC 71); but here a king is addressing another king. Similarly, the two *hypomnēmata* addressed by the *stratēgos* and *archiereus* Ptolemy to king Antiochos, part of the dossier from Skythopolis, specify the nature of Ptolemy’s office in the prescript: but this is unsurprising, in a document addressed to the king.³⁵

The absence of any details as to function, family or origin in the prescripts of most official letters is significant, as some prescripts otherwise testify to a remarkable attention for the identity of the addressees. Thus, while letters addressed to Greek cities usually open with greetings to the council and the people, Seleukos IV opens the already-mentioned letter to the city of Seleukeia-in-Pieria (a Seleucid foundation) concerning his friend Aristolochos with ‘greetings to Theophilos and the magistrates and the city of the Seleukeians-in-Pieria’. The city decree inscribed just before the letter shows that Theophilos was the *epistatēs* of the city: thus, even while omitting to refer to Theophilos’ exact function, the king took care to address all parties involved, paying moreover close attention to their constitutional status: although the standard form of greeting for a Greek city is e.g. Μιλησίων τῆι βουλῆι καὶ τῷ δήμῳ χαίρειν, here greetings are addressed to the *epistatēs*, to the *city*, πόλις, and to its *magistrates*, ἄρχοντες, but there is (for good reason) no mention of *boulē* or *dēmos*.³⁶

4. Communicative strategies: the body of the letter

After the prescript, in agreement with Greek epistolary usage, the sender switches to the first person (usually plural for the Seleucids, whether it is the king or a magistrate who writes);³⁷ the second person (singular or plural, depending on the situation) is used for the recipient, while the third person is reserved for other persons or groups mentioned in the body of the letter.³⁸ The tendency to mention persons only by their name, without any indications of their origins, is present also within the body of the letter; this applies to the addressee(s) as well as to other parties, and independently of whether they are Seleucid functionaries or local intermediaries.³⁹ When writing to the Milesians in 287 BC, Seleukos I simply states: ‘Polianthes is bringing my donation’. When writing to Sardis in 213 BC, the queen

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Laodike refers to the ambassadors who visited her by their name only: Metrodoros, Metrophanes, Sokrates and Herakleides; the names of their fathers are not mentioned – in contrast to the fragmentary city decree that precedes the letter of Laodike on the stone: it gives, as is usual for city decrees, the name of Herakleides' father: Sokrates.⁴⁰

Here too, there are exceptions. In a letter to the city of Mylasa, the dynast Olympichos states that the Mylasan ambassadors showed him the letters sent to the city by 'Ptolemy the brother of king Ptolemy'.⁴¹ Similarly, in the letter introducing the cult of Laodike the new priestess of the royal cult is identified with reference to her father and grandfather: 'Berenike, the daughter of Ptolemy the son of Lysimachos, who is...connected to us through kinship'.⁴² Since the name of the new priestess was to be used to date official documents, it was vital to avoid confusions; but here as in the case of the letter of Olympichos, the identification offers an opportunity to signpost a kinship with the royal house. The only two other instances of identification through the father's name that I am aware of in Seleucid official documents do not occur in letters. In the already-mentioned dossier concerning the sale to another Laodike of the village of Pannos, the main actors (Metrophanes, Laodike herself, the administrator of Laodike's properties Arrhidaios, the archivist Timoxenos, and the *hyparchos* [...]krates) are mentioned by their name and their function only; but in the *periorismos*, the document by the *hyparchos* which sets out the limits of the land, the names and origin of the locals who have attested to the exact border are given in full: Menekrates son of Bacchios, of the *keōmē* of Pythos, Daos son of Azaretos, and Medeios son of Metrodoros, both of the *keōmē* of Pannos.⁴³ The same happens with the donation of lands to the Zeus of Baitokaike: in the *hypomnēmatismos* conveying the royal decision, the village is defined as 'previously owned by Demetrios, son of Demetrios and grandson of Mnasaïos...in the satrapy of Apamea'.⁴⁴ However, these last two documents are not letters; these men are certainly not part of the court, nor 'intermediaries' from the cities; the precision is required, because these locals have attested to the exact confines of the land being sold or given. Furthermore, these documents are all addressed to Seleucid functionaries, not to cities. The above-mentioned documents are the only instances of patronyms in the entire Seleucid correspondence. Never, in letters addressed to a city, is the father's name of any individual mentioned. In those instances in which both the decree (with names and patronyms) and the royal letter are preserved on the same stone, the contrast is striking.

As for the origins: we have seen that the origin of the men attesting to the confines of the land was mentioned in the *periorismos* concerning the sale of land to Laodike; but that document was not a letter, and the origin of

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the witnesses was pertinent to the delimitation of the land in question. The only other instance in which the origin of an individual is mentioned within all of the official Seleucid correspondence is the dossier concerning Aristodikides of Assos: although the name of his father is nowhere given, his origin is stated.⁴⁵ Within this same dossier, Meleagros, the Seleucid official who is in charge of the affair, is mentioned in the prescript without any further details; when a problem arises because a certain Athenaios is already in possession of the land which the king initially intended to give to Aristodikides, Athenaios is indicated not through his father's name, nor through his geographical origin, but through his function as commander of the naval base, ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ ναυστάθμου.⁴⁶ The new piece of land to be given to Aristodikides is characterized as 'the land formerly of Meleagros', without any further details: but this Meleagros clearly cannot have been the governor mentioned in the prescript.⁴⁷ Thus even in situations where indications as to the exact identity of the people mentioned would be useful, they tend to be avoided;⁴⁸ the best explanation for the reference to Assos as the origin of Aristodikides is to accept it as idiosyncratic.

This situation has caused more than a passing moment of discomfort to historians, since it renders identifications extremely difficult.⁴⁹ But it is worth going beyond the discomfort, to try to look for the meaning, or at any rate the potential impact, of the absence of precise details. Of course, the main reason for such a situation lies in the choice of the letter-form: the letter presupposes an exchange within a community, it presupposes that people know each other and are part of a community. But had they wanted, the royal Seleucid chancery could have chosen a different format, or could have modified the letter-format to suit their needs, as is at times the case, and as the *poleis* that occasionally made use of letters for diplomatic purposes did.⁵⁰ Interestingly, the Seleucid chancery did not do so, and the reason must be that such a situation suited the kind of image the king wanted to project. As stated by John Ma, 'this practice reflects the practical language of empire, and the empire's awareness of itself as an ideally rational state, autonomously organized'.⁵¹ This is certainly true; but we need to accommodate also the lack of identification by patronym of the intermediaries from the cities, which is particularly striking when contrasted with the importance of, and attention to, precise identification in the documents emanating from the cities.⁵² I suggest that the choice of an epistolary format and the lack of personal details results in presenting the king, the court, and the persons named in the letter as part of one and the same community, notionally members of the same family, and sharing in the same interests (the same πράγματα), while at the same time it deprives everyone but the king of any links with a personal past or a place of origin,

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of any personal identity beyond their shared one as members of the kingdom. The frequent references to the ancestors of the king, to the similar policies of the royal brother/sister/wife/children, and to earlier meetings and benefactions are of course also part of this strategy of familial inclusion and simultaneous effacement, as is the use of specific types of titles related to the notions of friendship and kinship.⁵³

The lack of precision concerning the identity of the people mentioned in royal letters has a further dimension, because up to a point it extends also to their function: ambassadors are qualified as such, and the letters nominating friends to some specific function go over the services rendered and the new function to which the friend has been nominated (so for the dossier concerning Nikanor). There are also a few instances in which people are qualified by their specific function (*stratēgos* or *dioikētēs*), as for instance Athenaios (officer of the naval camp) in the dossier concerning Aristodikides, or as the administrator Arrhidaios, the archivist Timoxenos, and the *hyparchos* [...]krates, in the dossier concerning the sale of land to Laodike: but these instances pale when viewed against the background of the entire Seleucid royal correspondence.⁵⁴ Again, the letters that give details as to the exact position of the persons mentioned are mainly letters internal to the administration, not letters sent to the cities, although as a general rule, the documents from the reign of Antiochos III onwards tend to be more forthcoming with information on the status of people mentioned. Arguably, the presence of details as to the function within the Seleucid administration, when coupled with the lack of details as to the individual's 'identity' in traditional Greek terms, would have reinforced the impression that the royal household (the court, the οἰκία) was the centre of the named individual's identity.⁵⁵

5. The 'royal voice'

Let us now look at the way in which the reasons for the king's intervention are presented in royal correspondence. In Greek decrees, the reason for the decision being taken (the so-called 'motivation clause') is typically introduced by ἐπειδή ('whereas, since...'). Interestingly, the reason for a royal decision, as expressed in a royal letter, is only very rarely introduced with an ἐπειδή clause. In all of the letters of Seleucid kings or administrators preserved on stone, ἐπειδή, as far as I can tell, appears only three times, in a letter of Antiochos II to Erythrai, in the recently published letter sent by a Seleucid high administrator to the Limyreis, and in the letter with which Antiochos III nominates a chief governor at Daphne.⁵⁶ The first instance introduces a real motivation clause, which forms the basis for the royal decision that follows: 'And since Tharsynon, Pythes and Bottas declared

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that under Alexander and Antigonos your city was autonomous and free from tribute, and our ancestors were constantly zealous on its behalf, seeing that their decision was just...'; but interestingly, the motivation is an earlier royal decision.⁵⁷ Also in the letter to the Limyreis ἐπειδή introduces a motivation – but here, it is an administrator's decision that is thus motivated, not a king's.⁵⁸ As for the last instance, it introduces an extremely 'weak' motivation: a long participial clause ('as the chief-priesthood requires a man devoted...gods') states the specific needs to be covered through the appointment; ἐπειδή here only introduces the king's action of having nominated a priest (ἐπειδή...ἀποδεδείχαμεν, 'for...we have appointed him chief-priest'), and not any independent reason.⁵⁹

The other term that can also introduce a motivation clause, ἐπεὶ, appears only twice in the Seleucid correspondence. It introduces a motivation, in the account rendered by the inhabitants of an unknown city, as preserved in a very fragmentary letter from a royal official; and, in the dossier concerning the institution of a state cult for Laodike, it introduces what I have called a weak motivation: 'since in the districts under your administration Berenike has been appointed (or Laodike, in the other two copies: ἐπεὶ οὖν [ἀποδεδείχεται]): the earlier royal choice of Berenike (and Laodike) as chief priestess is not explained, it is simply given as the reason why now her name should be mentioned in contracts.⁶⁰

The picture of motivation offered by the analysis of the documents of the Seleucid chancery appears to coincide with that presented by the other Hellenistic chanceries;⁶¹ the tendency towards the avoidance of a formal motivation clause is probably due to the desire to present the decision of the king as entirely free, or due to the king's own personal considerations, and not as resulting from any one external event. But something else may also have come into play here – a desire to cultivate a style of speech different from that of the city-decrees, which do emphasize external motivation through the use of ἐπειδή-clauses. This is all the more likely, since we capture a similar complementarity in the way in which kings and cities present their decisions.

Strikingly, while in Greek cities the decision taken and announced in a decree was usually expressed through a form of δοκέω (ἔδοξε...δεδόχθαι...), forms of δοκέω are entirely absent from the extant correspondence of the Seleucids, and are extremely rare in all of the correspondence of the Hellenistic chanceries: the Hellenistic kings announced their decisions through other verbs.⁶² This applies both to letters sent to the cities, and to letters sent to administrators, whether dealing with an internal or an external issue: through all of the Seleucid correspondence, there is no difference in the treatment of motivation and decision.⁶³

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The above has a number of implications, both on the formal level and on the historical level. The systematic avoidance of forms of *δοκέω*, and the tendency to avoid *ἐπειδή* when introducing a motivation, which is a constant in all documents emanating from Seleucid authorities, reinforces the point made above, namely that there is no formal distinction between *ἐπιστολή* and *πρόσταγμα*. A distinction may instead be found in the prescription for engraving the letter: such a request is never made in a letter addressed to a city, but we find it in letters addressed to functionaries and concerning internal issues for which a public guarantee is sought (as for the sale of lands to Laodike), or internal issues that concern actually a large part of the kingdom (the dossiers concerning the nominations of Nikanor and Olympiodoros, for instance).⁶⁴ Furthermore, while the Seleucid letters addressed to cities exhibit a great diversity in display-practices, the epigraphical display of those letters that were inscribed on the specific order of the king is characterized by a striking uniformity: they are all engraved on relatively long and thin gabled stelai. This shape is used for documents found in various regions of Asia Minor, but also in Iran – it was thus not local custom that dictated the choice, but a centralized directive, aiming at emphasizing, also visually, the distinctiveness – and the universal reach – of the royal word.⁶⁵ This concerns the monumental level; but also from the point of view of the language, the uniform treatment by the Seleucid administration of both motivation and decision implies that we must be careful when speaking of a ‘porosity’ between the royal language and that of the civic decrees. Certainly, entire sentences from city-decrees may be incorporated within the royal letter; and entire sentences from royal letters may be incorporated within the answering city-decree.⁶⁶ Moreover, the language used is often the same in both types of documents: the common language of euergetism.⁶⁷ However, the analysis of the way in which motivation and decision are presented shows that it is not just the use of the first person, or the presence of a prescript and greetings, that separate the royal letter from the decree: the distinction between the two forms of communication runs deeper. Interestingly, the relatively few letters by Greek cities that survive do not appear to avoid *δοκέω* or *ἐπειδή*:⁶⁸ the avoidance is thus not simply the consequence of the adoption of the letter-form by the Seleucid chancery, but implies a conscious choice, the choice of emphasizing the personal discourse of the king.⁶⁹

As for the absence of reference to the origins, biological or geographical, of the individuals mentioned in the letters: it is difficult to evaluate how much of it depends on adherence to the conventions of epistolary form, and how much of it is intentional; in the case of dedications, at any rate, the

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king clearly had no problems in giving details, as is shown by the dedication honouring Heliodoros, ‘son of Aischylos, *syntrophos* and the official put in charge of the affairs (ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων)’, made by king Seleukos IV in Delos.⁷⁰ I am thus certainly not arguing that the expansion of the horizons caused by the Hellenistic kingdoms brought about a weakening of family ties, or an estrangement from the city of origin.⁷¹ However, the quasi-anonymity imposed on individuals in the royal letters constitutes an attempt at uprooting them, and at presenting a picture where the only loyalty is to the king and the only referent is the royal authority (the Empire). The abundance of information on the royal family and its connections takes the place of the details specific to individuals, thus reinforcing the effect. The individuals are thus subsumed within the royal family: the official display of family feelings and of a familial style emphasized the ‘patrimonial’ nature of the state, ‘organized and described as a family business (πράγματα)’.⁷² As John Ma has pointed out, this ideology of pervasive, accepted, imperial presence was a tool of domination in itself, a means of naturalizing empire;⁷³ the letter-form, and the specific strategies pursued within it (refusal of the ‘political’ means of indicating identity, i.e. patronym and origin; substitution of the motivation clause by a weak motivation and by the language of euergetism; refusal of the ‘political’ terminology for expressing decision, and choice of alternative forms) formed part of the armoury employed by the chancery.

In his study of the decrees honouring the followers of the early Hellenistic rulers, Herman emphasized that the epigraphic evidence of the decrees conveyed a subjective picture of ancient reality: ‘it does not tell us how the relations between rulers and followers were structured in actuality, but how it was thought appropriate to present them to the public of the Greek cities.’⁷⁴ The same applies to the documents of the Seleucid chancery, and to the persons and actions they present. The courtiers, who emerge so vividly as carriers of the action in Polybius’ work, and who played such an important part in the relationships between the king and the *poleis*, as the honorific decrees voted for them show, mostly are, in the ideologized language of the Seleucid chancery, simply names, without any individual background apart from their earlier (and future) relationship with the king; the collective story of the kingdom replaces, in these texts, their individual story.

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¹ Gehrke 1982, 252–3; Virgilio 2003. For the Seleucids, Austin 2003, 121–2 succinctly states: ‘Royalty...was a matter of recognized personal status, not tied to a specific ethnic or geographical context’. Dedications by Hellenistic kings to the gods of much-frequented sanctuaries are meant to demonstrate their victorious image, and to convey the king’s political claims to the public: see *e.g.* Bringmann 1992, 12–13.

² The Hellenistic treatises on monarchy emphasize the justice and peace brought about by the king (Walbank 1984, 75–84; Bringmann 1992); justice and peace are also thematized in numerous documents emanating from the kings. Legitimacy through descent: Roy 1998. Paradoxes: Ma 2008.

³ Mari 2009, 91–4. Alexander and the exiles: Diod. Sic. 17.109.1, 18.8.2–4, 55–7; see also [Plut.] *Mor.* 221A; Curt. 10.2, 4–7; Just. *Epit.* 13. 5, 2–4. Letters of Philip V to Larisa: *Syll.*³ 543 = *IG IX* 2, 517.

⁴ Austin 2003, 124. Capdetrey 2007, 21–84 emphasizes the ideological aspects of power and the ‘creation’ of a Seleucid space. See also Ma 2004, 26–28 [1999, 30–33].

⁵ Plut. *Demetr.* 42, contrasts Philip, praised for his ease of access, and Demetrios; see also Plut. *An seni* 790a–b, on Seleukos and the necessity for a king of reading and writing letters; Polyb. 5.34.3–5, on how Ptolemy IV Philopator, on his accession to the throne, showed himself inattentive and difficult of approach (ἀνεπίστατον μὲν καὶ δυσέπτευκτον) to members of the court and administrators, thus endangering the kingdom. See Weber 1997; Savalli-Lestrade 2007, 93–5; Virgilio 2010a, 102–5; Petrovic this volume.

⁶ Diod. Sic. 1.70.4. The idealised picture of Ptolemy in Diod. Sic. 1.70.1–10 may go back to Hekataios of Abdera (so Jacoby on *FGrH* 264 F25, and Walbank 1984, 77–8); but see Muntz 2011, who problematizes the assumption. The Letter of Aristaeas certainly portrays a Ptolemy attentive to people and justice (Savalli-Lestrade 2007).

⁷ Numerous Seleucid letters open with a reference to the arrival of ambassadors or individuals: *e.g.* *SEG XXX* 1279; *RC* 9, 11 = *I.Ilion* 33c; *RC* 15, 17. Direct contact between the king and his subjects is usually viewed positively; but contrast the negative view of Antiochos IV Epiphanes’ nocturnal rambles through Antiochia in Polyb. 26.1; Diod. Sic. 29.32, 31.16. On the rules of interaction and etiquette regulating court life and contact with the king, see Herman 1997, esp. 203–4, 211–22.

⁸ See the recently published decree from Aigai, Malay and Riel 2009, 40 l. 4–5: ἡ θεοὶ οἱ ἐπιφανέ[ν]τε[ς] τιμώνται Σέλευκος καὶ Αντίοχος (*SEG LIX* 1406). A decree from Teos (*SEG XLI* 1003 = Ma 2004 [1999], no. 17) remembers the personal intervention of the king in the assembly (ll. 16–17), which the *polis* then embedded in its cultic life, through ritual repetition. On epiphanies, see Petrovic §1 in this volume.

⁹ On the presence of the king (*παρουσία* becomes, in Ptolemaic Egypt, the term describing the visit of a king, as well as, characteristically, the tax to be paid for the visit), see Savalli-Lestrade 2003, 35; on the effect of *parousia* caused by the reception of a letter, Ceccarelli 2013, 23, 29.

¹⁰ Austin 2003, 123.

¹¹ Weber 1997; Herman 1997; Spawforth 2007 for Alexander; close discussion of the court of Antiochos III in Strootman 2011a.

¹² On the court and its role, see Herman 1997; Paschidis 2013. Issues of definition, especially in regard to titles, are discussed in Savalli-Lestrade 1998, *passim* (esp. 256–7 and 266 for the difficulty of knowing whether an official is also a *philos*; see also Savalli-

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Lestrade 2001). For the contact between king and cities, see Strootman 2011b, with ample bibliography; on local intermediaries, Paschidis 2008.

¹³ On the diversity of interactions within the very diverse territories controlled by the Hellenistic kings, see Ma 2003a, 179–83; such diversity applies particularly to the Seleucids: Ramsey 2011. A welcome addition to the Near Eastern material is the letter of a king Seleukos (the second?) to his administrator Herophantos, from Drangiana, Rougemont 2012 no. 80 bis.

¹⁴ Schubart 1920.

¹⁵ Polyb. 30.25.16 (= Athen. 5.195b): ἐνὸς γὰρ τῶν φίλων, Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐπιστολαγράφου, χίλιοι παῖδες ἐπόμπευσαν ἀργυρώματα ἔχοντες, ὧν οὐδὲν ἐλάττον' ὀλίκην εἶχεν δραχμῶν χιλίων (this makes his very high status clear: cf. Wallbank 1957–79, III 453). The office existed already under Alexander the Great, when it was the prerogative of a member of the court: an inscription on the wall of the gymnasium at Tauromenion states that Kallisthenes served under Alexander in that capacity (*SEG* XXVI 1123).

¹⁶ *I. Délos* 1543 and *I. Délos* 1549, respectively. On Dionysios, Menochares and Bithys see Savalli-Lestrade 1998, 53, 70, and 87–8 respectively; if Menochares' father is the Dionysios who was secretary under Antiochos IV, then the office could be transmitted within a family. On the title, see Muccioli 2001; a connection between the title of ἐπιστολαγράφος and that of συγγενής is well attested for the Ptolemaic kingdom from the last third of the 2nd century BC. Hellenistic chanceries are discussed in Virgilio 2010a, 112–16; Virgilio 2011, 55–69.

¹⁷ Above, n. 13. The unique instance of a Seleucid 'non-epistolary' *prostagma*, *C.Ord.Ptol.* 32 (Βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου προστάξαντος. | τοῖς ἐν τῷ Κροκοδιλοπολίτη κληρού[χοις...]) (the rest is lost), dating to the very short period during which Antiochos IV Epiphanes controlled Egypt, in 169 BC, might be a case in point: this opening is characteristic of the Lagid chancery, although the designation 'Krokodilopolites' for the Arsinoite nome may imply a reaction against the local tradition (Lenger 1980², 78); the Ptolemaic scheme is however altered by the insertion of the name of the king, extremely rare in Lagid non-epistolary *prostigmata* (Bencivenni 2011, 143).

¹⁸ See notably Holleaux 1933, 13–19 [=1942, 211–12]; Bikerman 1938, 190–7; more recently Capdetrey 2006, 106–12; 2007, 335–41; Wörrle 2010, 365–7; Bencivenni 2011.

¹⁹ References below, nn. 26 and 27. On the various administrative levels touched by the correspondence, and on the possibility that at times some levels may have been omitted in order to emphasize the direct presence of the king, see Bertrand 2006.

²⁰ *RC* 70 = *IGL.Syr* 7 4028, probably end of the 2nd century BC, rather than Antiochos II or III. On the form, cf. Bikerman 1938, 195; Capdetrey 2006, 110.

²¹ *SEG* XXIX 1613, d and f (199–195 BC): [βασ]ιλ[ε]ί μεγάλ[ω]ι Ἀντιόχ[ω]ι ὑπόμνημα [παρὰ Πτολ]εμ[αίου] στρατηγού | [καί] ἀρχιερέως. ἀξιῶ, ἐάν σοι φαίνηται, [β]ασιλεῦ, [γραφήναι...], strikingly, written in the first person singular, while the king is addressed with the second person singular; the choice may betray Ptolemaic influence, as the writer had served under Ptolemy, before changing camp. Another instance of high official writing to a king, the letter of Adeimantos to Demetrios Poliorketes (*SEG* XLV 479 = *CID* 4 no. 11) is discussed by Wallace 2013.

²² *SEG* XLI 1556 (163 BC). On these documents and on the form taken by the royal answer (a validation of the *hypomnēma*), see Bikerman 1938, 196–7; Capdetrey 2006, 111–12.

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²³ Van der Spek 1995; Capdetrey 2006, 109; 2007, 337. An inscription from Kolophon mentioning the farming of civic taxes κατὰ τὸ διάγραμμα τοῦ βασιλέως (ll. 23–4), may refer to a Seleucid or a Ptolemaic regulation (*SEG* XLVIII 1404, dated to 300–250 BC). The label πρόγραμμα in Joseph. *AJ* 12. 145 could be an inference, as it is not part of the royal message, which may itself have undergone modifications.

²⁴ A point stressed by Bencivenni 2011, 140.

²⁵ *I. Didyma* 492 ll. 57–9 (= *RC* 20, ll. 5–7). The *hyparchos* implicitly considers all documents he has received as *prostagmata*; this is to date the only instance of the use of *prostagma* for the letter of an administrator. Within this dossier, the royal letter with the sale is defined ὡνή (l. 43) by the king himself, and πρῶσις as well as ὡνή by the administrator writing the covering letter (l. 7 and 16): the content may override formal determinations.

²⁶ Nikanor: *prostagma* in *SEG* XXXVII 1010 (the stele from Pamukçu), l. 10 and *SEG* LIV 1353. ll. 8 and 21 (the stele from Philomelion: here, one of the lesser administrators, Aineias, in passing on the instructions to his subordinate Demetrios distinguishes between the letter of Zeuxis and the *prostagma* of Antiochos, ll. 7–8); but *epistolē* within the royal letter, *SEG* XXXVII 1010, l. 47 (cf. Ma 2004 [1999], no. 4). Cult of Laodike: *RC* 36–7 (= Ma 2004 [1999], no. 37, l. 2: πρόσταγμα, but cf. ἐπιστολῶν in the royal letter, l. 35); for the other copies, see Robert 1949, 5–31 (from Nehavend), and Robert 1967 (from Kermanshah) = *I. Estremo Oriente* nos. 277–8 and 271–2 respectively.

²⁷ Cotton and Wörrle 2007, with the new fragments in Gera 2009; Jones 2009; Bencivenni 2011.

²⁸ *RC* 45 = *IGL.Syr* III 2, 1183, ll. 2–3 and 23, dated to 186 BC. Detailed analysis of the language employed by the royal chancery and the city in Holleaux 1933 [= Holleaux 1942, 205–54].

²⁹ Wörrle 2010, 365–7; Bencivenni 2011. Proposals to label these texts as ‘epistolary *prostagmata*’ are in my opinion misleading: formally, these are letters. While the offices of ἐπιστολογράφος, ὑπομνηματογράφος and ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν προσταγμάτων are attested in Lagid Egypt, only that of ἐπιστολαγράφος is known for the Seleucids (Virgilio 2010a, 115; Virgilio 2011, 63–4; Bencivenni 2011, 144).

³⁰ On the ideological effect obtained by the fact that these documents address officials only, without even mentioning the communities concerned by the decisions, see Ma 2004, 109–11 [=1999, 147–50]. The use of the term *prostagma* by a high official writing to a subordinate has also hierarchical implications, as it strengthens the position of the writer: Bencivenni 2011, 147.

³¹ Bencivenni (2011, 143) emphasizes that cities that were not subordinate in the way Seleukeia was always refer in their decrees to the king’s communications as letters, even when they actually were orders: e.g. *SEG* I 366.16–18 (letters of Antiochos II brought by Boulagoras to Samos in c. 246 BC and addressed to the city, to the Seleucid *phourarchos* based in Anaia, and to the *dioikētēs*, and containing what must have been orders).

³² Baitokaike: *RC* 70 = *IGL.Syr* 7 4028 ll. 30–1 = Austin 2006, no. 172 (above, n. 20). Cf. Wörrle 2010, 365–7, who rightly emphasizes the fluidity of the whole category of epistolary *prostagma*. I fully agree with Bencivenni’s main points; indeed, the absence of documents introduced with βασιλέως προστάξαντος in the Seleucid kingdom is striking and says much about perceptions of empire and differences in respect to

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Ptolemaic Egypt (for the unique instance of Seleucid non-epistolary *prostagma*, see above, n. 17).

³³ On the language of euergetism, and in general on the rhetoric underlying and underpinning the interaction between the Seleucid kings and the cities, see Ma 2004, 139–45 [= 1999, 186–94], with further references.

³⁴ Epigraphically: in the dossier concerning Olympiodoros (above, n. 27), the king writes to Heliodoros ‘his brother’, and Heliodoros to Dorymenes ‘his brother’. Literary tradition: Joseph. *AJ* 12.148 (Βασιλεὺς Ἀντίοχος Ζεύξιδι τῷ πατρὶ). In the context of a story of forged letters, Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 6. 6–7 records that Ptolemy used to open his letters to Pyrrhus with ὁ πατὴρ τῷ υἱῷ χαίρειν – but he refers here to private letters.

³⁵ *SEG* XXIX 1613, d and f (above, n. 21). Petitioners addressing the king in a *hypomnēma* may mention the king’s title: Ptolemy addresses the king Antiochos ‘the Great’; the Sidonians, Antiochos Eupator (above n. 22); Bickerman 1938, 196. On the choice of royal titles and their importance see Muccioli 2001 and 2013, as well as van Nuffelen 2009.

³⁶ *RC* 45, ll. 1–2 (= *IGLSyr* 3, 2 1183, ll. 29–30): βασιλεὺς Σέλευκος Θεοφίλωι καὶ Σελευκέων | τῶν ἐν Πιερίαι τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρειν. Similarly, when writing to Laodikea-in-Media in 193 BC to transmit information on the institution of a cult of Laodike, Menedemos greets the governor, Apollodotos, the *archontes* and the city: Μενέδημος Ἀπολλοδότῳ καὶ Λαοδικέων | τοῖς ἄρχουσι καὶ τῇ πόλει χαίρειν, *I.Estremo Oriente* 277.

³⁷ Virgilio 2010a, 120–2 (and 2011, 37, 208–11 and 224–30) makes a case against the ‘rule’ of the use of first person plural by the Seleucid kings. There are indeed oscillations; but Virgilio himself accepts that most instances fit the rule. Moreover, some of those that do not (e.g. the dossier from Teos, *SEG* XLI 1003–5 = Ma 2004 [1999], no. 19, A–D; the letter of Laodike to Iasos, *SEG* LII 1043 = Ma 2004 [1999], no. 26) can be explained through the specific situation (see Ma 2004, 365 [=1999, 320–321] for the possibility that the letters Ma 2004 [1999] no. 19 B–D may emanate from Antiochos the younger and his queen). In the recently published, very fragmentary, letter of a Queen Laodike to Kolophon (Debord 2013, 15–17), the *περὶ ἐμοῦ γενόμενον* at l. 7, if the reading is correct, might be explained by the fact that the Queen must differentiate between herself and the king.

³⁸ This may seem evident to us, as it coincides with our modern, occidental habits of letter-writing. But this need not always be the case; the sender for instance might refer to himself (or to the addressee) in the third person. In the Sumerian and Akkadian letters of the pre-Sargonic and Sargonic period, the addressee is referred to with the third person, as in the prescript (Kienast and Volk 1995, 4–6); similarly in the administrative letters of the Ur III period (Sollberger 1966, 3); Old Babylonian used the third person for the addressee as a courtesy form, besides the direct address in the second person (Sallaberger 1999, 22–48 and 49–73, compare German ‘Sie’ and Italian ‘Lei’); in the earliest Greek letter, *SEG* XXVI 845, the sender (Achillodoros) refers to himself in the third person (see Ceccarelli 2013, 38–9, 45, and 335–6).

³⁹ J. and L. Robert 1983, 114–15, and Ma 2004, 104 and 156–7 [= 1999, 141 and 207–208], have remarked on this feature. The following list of persons identified by name only shows how widespread the practice is: Polianthes, a royal functionary (*RC* 5, 288/7 BC); Sopatros, a Seleucid functionary and addressee of the letter, but also the ambassadors of the Athymbrianoi Iatrokles, Artemidoros and Timotheos

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(*RC* 9, 281 BC); Meleagros (*RC* 10–13, c. 275 BC); Tharsynon, Pythes and Bottas, the ambassadors sent by the Erythraioi, as well as Alexander and Antigonos, the kings (*RC* 15, c. 270–60 BC); Metrophanes, Laodike, Arrhidaios (acting manager for Laodike), Timoxenos (the archivist), Nikomachos (the *oikonomos*), and the hyparch [...]*krates*, in the dossier concerning the sale of land to Laodike (*RC* 18–20); Glaukippos and Diomandros, sent by the Milesians to Seleukos II (*RC* 22, c. 246 BC); Herophantos, in the letter from Drangiana edited by Rougemont 2012, no. 80bis; Diogeitos, presumably a Koan ambassador (*RC* 26, 242 BC); Sophron, in a letter of Olympichos (at the time a Seleucid administrator) to Mylasa (*SEG* XL 970, c. 240 BC); Zeuxis and Ktesikles (Seleucid administrators) and a local intermediary Metrodoros, in a letter of Antiochos III to Sardis (*SEG* XLIII 862, 213 BC); Metrodoros, Metrophanes, Sokrates and Herakleides, ambassadors of the Sardianoi, in a letter of Laodike to Sardis (*SEG* XXXIX 1284, 213 BC); Zeuxis in a letter of Antiochos III to Sardis (*SEG* XXXIX 1285, c. 213 BC); Philotas, Bithys, Zeuxis, Nikanor and Dion in the dossier concerning the priesthood of Nikanor (*SEG* XXXVII 1010, 209 BC); Philomelos, Aineas, Demetrios in the copy from Philomelion (*SEG* LIV 1237); Demophon, Philiskos and Pheres, ambassadors of the Magnesians, in the letters concerning the festival of the Leukophryena (*RC* 31 and 32, c. 205 BC); Ikadion and Anaxarchos, administrators, in the dossier concerning the group established on Ikaros (*SEG* XXXV 1476); Pythodotos and Polythrous, ambassadors of the Teians (*SEG* XLI 1003); Ptolemy, in a letter to Amyzon (*RC* 38); Apollophanes (a doctor) in a letter to Kos (*SEG* XXXIII 673); Aristeas, in a letter by an administrator to Seleukeia Tralleis, also mentioning Themistokles ‘the *stratēgos*’ (*RC* 41); Kleon and Heliodoros (*diōikētai*), Ptolemy (*stratēgos* and *archiereus*), Marsyas, Theodotos, Lysanias, Apollophanes, Leon, Ploutogenes and Dionikos, in the Skythopolis dossier (*SEG* XXIX 1613); Strouthion (the *diōikētēs*) in the letter of Laodike to Iasos (*SEG* XXXVI 984); the ambassadors Phantias, Hermias, Aischrion, Apollonios, Hermogenes, Iason, Aineas, Parmenides, Pankrates, Dias, Euandros, Thargelios, Hermias, Aristeas, Menekrates, Herakleodoros, Dionysios, Proteas, Dionysikles, Antileon, Hierokles and Menes, in Zeuxis’ letter to Herakleia (*SEG* XXXVII 859B); [...]orou and [...]doros (but no patronyms) in a fragmentary letter to Sardis (*SEG* XXXVII 1003); [...]yndos, Aichmon and Iphikrates, ambassadors of the Limyreans (Wörrle 2011); Anaximbrotos, Menedemos, Apollodotos, and Thoas, in the various copies of the letter ordering the institution of royal cult for Laodike; Theophilos and Aristolochos in the letter of Seleukos IV to Seleukeia in Pieria (*RC* 45); Heliodoros, Dorymenes, Diophanes, and Olympiodoros, in the dossier concerning Olympiodoros (above n. 27); Euphemos (*RC* 70).

⁴⁰ Resp. *RC* 5 (Polianthes at ll. 15 and 22 of the stele = l. 6 and 17 of the royal letter), and *SEG* XXXIX 1284 = Ma 2004 [1999], no. 2.

⁴¹ *I.Labraunda* 3, ll. 5–6; the identification of this Ptolemy is disputed.

⁴² Both in the letter sent by Antiochos III to Anaximbrotos, and in the covering one of Anaximbrotos to Dionytas: *RC* 36, ll. 4–5, and 37, ll. 31–2. Her father is Ptolemy of Telmessos. The two other copies of the dossier, sent to Media, nominate as priestess Laodike, daughter of Antiochos III.

⁴³ The dossier is *RC* 18–20 (= *I.Didyma* 492), dated to 254/3; it comprises a letter of Antiochos II to Metrophanes (*RC* 19); a letter of Metrophanes to a subordinate (*RC* 18); and the report on the delimitation of the borders by the *hyparchos* (*RC* 20).

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⁴⁴ *RC* 70. Welles (1934, 285–6) notes that this information probably came from a land-register, just as the information concerning the delimitation of the land sold to Laodike (*RC* 18–20) was to be inscribed in the archives in Sardis.

⁴⁵ *RC* 13, 10, and 12 = *I.Ilion* 33 a, b, c, of 275/4 BC.

⁴⁶ *RC* 12 = *I.Ilion* 33, ll. 53–4.

⁴⁷ *RC* 11 = *I.Ilion* 33, l. 29

⁴⁸ As Shane Wallace points out to me, another excellent example is the letter of Antigonos to Scepsis, *RC* 1: much ink has been spilt on the identity of the individuals mentioned (see, for instance, Hauben 1987).

⁴⁹ So J. and L. Robert 1983, 114–15.

⁵⁰ For letters from *poleis* see Ceccarelli 2013, 311–30 and appendix 3.

⁵¹ 2004, 156 [=1999, 207–8].

⁵² On the importance and practices of identification in the Greek *polis*, see Bertrand 2007.

⁵³ References to ancestors: Antiochos I or II to Erythrai, *RC* 15 = *I.Erythrai* I 31, ll. 23–4 (c. 270–60 BC); Seleukos II to Miletos, *RC* 22 = *I.Didyma* 493, ll. 2–3 (c. 246 BC); reference to policy under grandfather in letter of Seleukos (II or III) from Drangiana, Rougemont 2012, no. 80bis; in the dossier on the nomination of Nikanor, Ma 2004 [1999], no. 4, ll. 40–1 (209 BC); in the letter of Antiochos III (?) to Ilion, *RC* 42 = *I.Ilion* 37, Ma 2004 [1999], no. 34, ll. 3–4 (197–6 BC?); in the nomination of *archiereus* in Daphne by Antiochos III (c. 189 BC), *RC* 44, *I.G.L.Syr* 3.2, 992, ll. 26–7; in the letter of Seleukos to Heliodoros (above n. 27); in the letter of Seleukos to Seleukeia in Pieria concerning Aristolochos, *RC* 45 = *I.G.L.Syr* 3, 2 1183, ll. 32–3 ('goodwill to our father, our brother and ourselves'). References to family: letter of Laodike to Sardis, mentioning her brother (the king), and the children (*παιδιά*), *SEG* XXXIX 1284 = Ma 2004 [1999], no. 2; references to Laodike, the son Antiochos, the other sons Seleukos and Mithridates, in the letter of Antiochos III to Herakleia, and generic ones to the kings, the children, and ancestors in that of Zeuxis (*SEG* XXXVII 859); to her brother, in Laodike's letter to Iasos, Ma 2004 [1999] no. 26, ll. 4–10 and 29–32 (c. 196 BC); larger discussion in Schmitt 1991. Titles, friendship and kinship: Savalli-Lestrade 1998; Mitchell 2009; Muccioli 2000, 2001, 2013; Van Nuffelen 2009. On the issue in general, van Bremen 2003; specific focus on the terminology of the *oikos* and on familial terminology among the Seleucids in Coloru 2012.

⁵⁴ Aristodikides is a *philos*, *I.Ilion* 33, 36–8 and 59–61 (this is the first attestation of the title for the Seleucids, cf. Savalli-Lestrade 1998, 11–12 and 263); Seleukos II, writing to Olympichos (*I.Labraunda* 1.1, *SEG* XL 969), refers to Korthis as 'the priest of Zeus of Labraunda'. Nikanor is *philos* and ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ κοῦθῶνος in the king's letter; the latter only in Zeuxis' letter; his new post is defined with precision, *archiereus* and supervisor. Apollonphanes is 'doctor of ourselves and our brother', *SEG* XXXIII 673; functionaries (τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων τεταγμένοις) are mentioned in *RC* 31; the letter by an administrator to Seleukeia Tralleis (*RC* 41) refers to Themistokles 'the *stratēgos*'; in the dossier from Skythopolis (*SEG* XXIX 1613) Ptolemy is referred to as *stratēgos* and *archiereus*, Kleon and Heliodoros as *dioiketai*, there are an *oikonomos* and anonymous phourarchs; Strouthion appears as *dioiketēs* in Laodike's letter to Iasos (*SEG* XXXVI 984); a *dioiketēs* whose name is lost appeared in the letter of Antiochos III to Herakleia (*SEG* XXXVII 859); a *dioiketēs* (name lost) was mentioned in *RC* 43, sent by Antiochos III to the Plutonion in Nysa; Aristolochos is τῶν τιμομένων φίλων (*RC* 45); Heliodoros is

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περὶ τῶν πραγμάτων in the recently published dossier concerning Olympiodoros (above).

⁵⁵ Herman (1980–81), in analyzing 57 decrees honouring followers of Hellenistic rulers over the period 330–280 BC, proposed that the lack of precisions in the early decrees of the cities implied the refusal of explicitly acknowledging the royal authority; but see Savalli-Lestrade 1998, 251–81, and in particular 275–81. Paschidis 2013 suggests that the egalitarian overtones of the non-codified court terminology underlined the friends' total dependency on the king, while at the same time enhancing their authority in dealing with other power structures.

⁵⁶ *RC* 15; Wörrle 2011; and *RC* 44. Virgilio 2010b (=Virgilio 2011, 123 and 128), has proposed to restore ἐπειδή in the lacuna at the beginning of l. 2 of the very fragmentary royal letter from the sanctuary of Sinuri in Karia; similarly, ἐπειδή has been restored at ll. 3–4 of the answer of Antiochos V Eupator to the Sidonians in Jamnia (*SEG* XLI 1556); in both cases, alternative restorations are possible.

⁵⁷ *RC* 15, l. 21: καὶ ἐπειδὴ οἱ περὶ Θεορσύνοντα καὶ Πυθῆν καὶ Βοτῆτῶν ἀπέφαινον διότι ἐπὶ τε Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Ἀντιγόνου αὐτό[ν]ομος ἦν καὶ ἀφορολόγητος ἡ πόλις ὑμῶν, καὶ οἱ ἡμέτεροι πρόγο[νοι] ἔσπενδον ἀεὶ ποτε περὶ αὐτῆς, θεωροῦντες τούτους τε κρί[ναν]τας δικάως....

⁵⁸ Wörrle 2011 (at l. 7 ἐπειδή is certain, but the context is extremely fragmentary; the date is c. 197).

⁵⁹ *RC* 44, ll. 18–31. That the nominee had been a valued friend of the royal house had been mentioned in the opening of the letter. For a detailed analysis of the overall structure of the letter, see Welles 1934, 182–5.

⁶⁰ *SEG* XXXVII 1003 (Ma 2004 [1999], no. 36, l. 7: καὶ ἐπεὶ ἀπελ[ογίσ]αντ[ο...]; probably c. 197 BC); and *RC* 36, ll. 17–18 (from Dodurga, Ma 2004 [1999], no. 37) = ll. 13–14 of the copy from Kermanshah, ll. 26–7 of that from Nehavend (references above, n. 26).

⁶¹ There are only two further instances of ἐπειδή in Welles 1934: *RC* 3, l. 79, not for a motivation, and *RC* 7, l. 9, to introduce a motivation. One ἐπειδή appears in the corpus of the ordinances of the Ptolemies (Lenger 1980², 23.1). Among recently published documents, the letter of Eumenes II to the inhabitants of Toriaion (*SEG* XLVII 1745, ll. 39–43) offers another fascinating case of ἐπειδή for a 'weak' motivation. As for ἐπεὶ, there are only 9 further instances of it in Welles 1934 (*RC* 1, ll. 13 and 16; 3, ll. 31 and 86; 21, l. 6; 54, l. 8; 60, l. 9; 65, ll. 11 and 15; 67, l. 1; 73, l. 3; 75, l. 1); and four more in Lenger 1980² (*C.Ord.Ptol.* 45, l. 7, where the meaning is not causal; 52, l. 22, in a letter addressed to Ptolemy Euergetes, his sister Kleopatra and his wife Kleopatra by priests; and 53, l. 85 and 54, l. 8, two collections of ordinances and amnesties by Ptolemy Euergetes II, Kleopatra II and Kleopatra III (dated to 121/0–118 BC). Cf. Ceccarelli 2013, 306–7.

⁶² Only five letters in Welles 1934 use forms of δοκέω: two by Antigonos (*RC* 1, ll. 64 and 70 and *RC* 4, ll. 7–8); two by Eumenes II (*RC* 52, l. 23, where the term refers to a decision of the Ionian league, not to a royal one, and *RC* 53 II b, ll. 7–9, not for any decision, but to state the impression that the king has formed of the situation); and *RC* 61, l. 6, again not for an official decision (the latter is announced at l. 20: ἐκρῶνον οὖν). εἰ δοκεῖ (οἱ ἂν δοκῆ) appears three times in Lenger 1980² (in 58, l. 17; 62, ll. 16 and 19; and 63, ll. 11 and 15) always in requests addressed to the kings, with the meaning 'if you please'. Since Welles' publication (1934) numerous other royal letters

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have been found – their number has probably doubled. The lack of an updated corpus makes it very difficult to extend the analysis to all royal correspondence; but there is no reason to expect a different distribution. See also Ceccarelli 2013, 300–306, with contrastive discussion of some instances in which dynasts attempted to emulate, rather than avoid, civic forms (so for instance Mausolos, *I.Labraunda* 1: [ἔ]δοξε Μουσώλλωι καὶ [Ἀρτε]μισίῃ· ἐπειδ[ὴ] Κνώσοι...).

⁶³ A form of δοκέω is used in a document transmitted by Josephus: in *AJ* 12.148, the letter ‘to Zeuxis father’, where we find βουλευσαμένω μοι μετὰ τῶν φίλων τί δεῖ ποιεῖν, ἔδοξεν; similarly, an ἐπεὶ appears in a letter of Antiochos IV in which, again, the king is presented as deciding with his friends: ἐπεὶ οὖν συμβουλευομένοις ἡμῖν μετὰ τῶν φίλων (Joseph. *AJ* 12.263). Without going as far as contesting the authenticity of these documents, it is evident that their text might have been easily (and accidentally!) modified. Discussion of the way in which decisions are taken and presented, and specifically of the role of the courtiers in the decisional process, in Savalli-Lestrade 2003, 22–6; for Macedon, Hatzopoulos 2013.

⁶⁴ Bencivenni 2010; 2011, 145. Meleagros does suggest to the Ilieis that it might be a good idea to inscribe the agreement with Aristodikides (*RC* 13; *I.Ilion* 33a, ll. 13–17); but this is not requested in the royal letter.

⁶⁵ Bencivenni 2011.

⁶⁶ The phenomenon described by Chaniotis (1999) as ‘Empfängerformular’.

⁶⁷ Ma 2004, 136–55 [=1999, 182–206]; Mitchell 2009.

⁶⁸ Ceccarelli 2013, 311–30.

⁶⁹ Note also the important remarks of Paschidis 2013 on the ‘hierarchical exception’ whereby a city can express *philia* towards a king, but a king does not manifest *philia* towards a *polis*. Notwithstanding the contrary opinion of Capdetrey 2006, 116–17; 2007, 340–1, the conclusions of Bertrand (1985, 115) seem to me to remain valid.

⁷⁰ *IG* XI 4, 1113.

⁷¹ See the excellent discussion of van Bremen 2003.

⁷² Ma 2004, 110 [=1999, 148]. See also Bertrand 2006; and Paschidis 2013, who emphasizes how the absence of court rules, codified hierarchies and specialization of administrative functions consolidate the centripetal tendency of monarchical rule.

⁷³ Ma 2004, 11 [=1999, 150]. On the role of royal rhetoric in the construction of the empire, see also Ma 2003b.

⁷⁴ Herman 1980–81, 104.

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