

Christoph Michels, Hans Beck, Achim Lichtenberg (eds.), *The Same, but Different? Monarchical Rule and Representation in the Hellenistic World*, (*Studies in Ancient Monarchies* 11), Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 2025, 693 pp., ill.; ISBN 978-3-515-13636-5

History of Hellenistic monarchies remains a popular research topic among scholars of the ancient world, with every year bringing forth new studies on the topic. Among them one finds the recently published substantial volume in the *Studies in Ancient Monarchies* series, consisting of 22 chapters framed with an extensive introduction and conclusions. Some of the chapters began as presentations given by their authors at the Hellenistic monarchies conference at the University of Münster in March 2022, while others summarize the findings of scholars working in teams led by the volume's editors.

The volume's primary concept is a comparison of convergences and divergences between Hellenistic monarchies, with particular attention given to how their monarchs established and upheld royal and dynastic ideologies and whether their rule was truly reliant on charisma. Among the many topics explored in the volume, its authors devoted much attention to how the concept and ideology of power held by the Argeads permeated and influenced the Hellenistic monarchies rising out of the ashes of Alexander the Great's empire (and *vice versa*); furthermore, they analyzed the diachronic evolution of royal power in Hellenistic monarchies, especially *vis-à-vis* the Roman Republic (cf. pp. 24–26, 32–33).¹

The volume comprises two major parts, with chapters within divided into thematic sections. The first part (*The Diadochi and the Third Century*, pp. 41–406) encompasses four sections. The initial one (*The Formation Phase / Die Formationsphase*, pp. 41–124) surveys the rise of the Hellenistic monarchies and scrutinizes the shaping of their ideologies and forms of visual propaganda.² In turn, the second section (*The Royal Family and the Divine / Die Königsfamilie und das Göttliche*, pp. 127–217) explores religious dimensions of power in Hellenistic monarchies, with the general account in the first chapter and the other two respectively considering the Ptolemaic and Seleucid monarchies.³ Within the third section (*Themes and Contexts of Monarchic Representation / Themen*

¹ Ch. Michels, *Introduction*, pp. 17–37.

² Cf. S. Müller, *Argead Representation and Its Impact*, pp. 41–59; J. Th. Christopher, *Diadochi of the Qin: Early Hellenistic and Chu-Han Ruler Dynamics Compared*, pp. 61–89; R. von den Hoff, *Early Hellenistic Royal Portrait Concepts. "Zeitgesicht," Differences and Civic Portraiture*, pp. 91–124.

³ Cf. G. Weber, *Königliche Schutzgottheiten im frühen Hellenismus. „Konzepte“ und Umsetzungen*, pp. 127–151; S. Pfeiffer, *Eine prospektive Erinnerungsgemeinschaft. Dynastie und Genealogie in der Repräsentation der Ptolemaier*, pp. 153–179; S. Richter, *Zwischen West und Ost. Zur Konzeption von Herrschaft, Dynastie und Kult im Seleukidenreich*, pp. 181–217.

und Felder monarchischer Repräsentation, pp. 221–316), the authors discuss elements of propaganda used by Hellenistic rulers to create and project their image to their subjects and neighboring monarchs. Their tools were royal titulature, Hellenization, patronage of the arts at their courts, and presenting themselves as peacekeepers and peacemakers who strove for their subjects' well-being.⁴ In the final section of the first part (*Impact and Foreign Domination / Ausstrahlung und Fremdherrschaft*, pp. 319–406), the authors present relations between Hellenistic rulers and rulers beyond their borders, discussing their methods of influencing foreign powers.⁵

The second part (*The Second and First Centuries*, pp. 409–643) consists of two thematic sections. The first one (*Comparing Themes and Structures of Representation and Communication / Themen und Strukturen der Repräsentation und Kommunikation im Vergleich*, pp. 409–510) considers similarities between Hellenistic monarchies in terms of aspects of public life, with special attention given to the heritage of earlier governments ruling the lands in question. Another significant functional convergence among Hellenistic monarchies is the existence of ruler-loyalist circles, naturally accreted around gymnasia and sport societies that promoted such attitudes.⁶

The authors of chapters in the second section (*The Image of the Ruler between Tradition and Innovation / Das Herrscherbild zwischen Tradition und Innovation*, pp. 511–643) analyze such developments in the final phase of Hellenistic monarchies, when their functioning was disrupted by Rome's growing meddling in Hellenistic matters. One of its crucial and palpable consequences was the decline of political power and prestige of Hellenistic monarchs. Their rule lost its charismatic and autocratic character, although the Seleucids attempted to gloss over this process by propagandizing it as *imitatio Alexandri*. The weakening of royal power led to a concomitant rise of political leagues, large sanctuaries, and *poleis*, which gradually became the kings' partners rather than subjects. For the *poleis*, this brought about greater autonomy. Local coinages no longer showed heads of the kings but could instead pick local symbols and thus express cultural or religious identities; for example, in Egypt of that era we find the first ethnic *politeumata*. Another sign of the growing Roman influence in the Mediterranean world was the royal practice of founding new cities or renaming extant cities with names of Roman dignitaries.⁷

⁴ Cf. S. Wallace, *Contesting Greatness: The Epithet Megas in the Hellenistic Courts*, pp. 221–250; Ch. Michels, *It's All the Greek to Me: Ethnicity, Culture, and Hellenistic Kingship*, pp. 251–284; Ch. I. Chrysafis, *Der hellenistische König als Friedenswächter. Untersuchungen der Bedeutung des Friedens in der hellenistischen monarchischen Ideologie aus transdynastischer Perspektive*, pp. 285–316.


⁵ Cf. H. Beck, *King and Koionon: Ptolemaic Interactions with Greek Federalism*, pp. 319–345; L.-M. Günther, *Hieron II. und das „hellenistische Königtum“ im syrakusanisch-ostadriatischen Spannungsfeld*, pp. 347–360; M. Hoo, *The Power to Impress and Impressing to Power: Translocal Developments in Baktrian Kingship and Royal Representation in the Third and Second Centuries BC*, pp. 361–406.

⁶ P. F. Mittag, *Gleichungen mit vielen Unbekannten. Ptolemäisches auf seleukidischen Münzen*, pp. 409–438; G. Pasquariello, *Victorious Kings: Royal Victories over Galatians and a “Multidimensional” Hellenistic Kingship*, pp. 439–461; A. McAuley, *Imitation and/or Innovation? Royal Incest and the Mithradatids of Pontos*, pp. 463–483; B. Eckhardt, *The King's Men: Loyalist Associations in the Hellenistic Kingdoms*, pp. 485–510.

⁷ Cf. N. Kaye, *The Twilight of Charisma: Hellenistic Kingship in Transition*, pp. 513–554; K. Martin, *König & Stadt. Kommunikationsstrategie in der hellenistischen Münzprägung*, pp. 555–579; P. Sängler, *Being “Greek” in Egypt: The Ptolemies of the Second and First Century and Ethno-cultural Concepts*, pp. 581–594; M. Kovacs, *Dynastic Image and the Visual Imitation of Alexander the Great: Seleukid Kings between*

The aforementioned aims of the reviewed volume led to several key research foci (for more on this, cf. pp. 647–659).⁸ Some of the more important ones are relations between kings and cities, the role of royal courts and dynasties, ideologies of military leadership, and Roman influence on Hellenistic monarchies (cf. p. 650). Analyzed through these lenses, Hellenistic monarchies appear functionally convergent thanks to their Macedonian heritage, but they simultaneously adapted their institutions and administrative practices to local social, cultural, and religious contexts. A variegated mosaic, the world of Hellenistic monarchies still demands sustained scholarly effort to reveal its secrets. One can definitely state that the chapters found within the reviewed volume bring us closer to that aim.

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Tradition and Innovation in the Second Century BC, pp. 595–630; A. Lichtenberger, *City Foundations in Late Hellenistic Kingdoms*, pp. 631–643.

⁸ Cf. J. Wienand, *The Tapestry of Hellenistic Rule: Reflections on the Fabric of Monarchy in a World of Transition*, pp. 647–659.