

South-Eastern Anatolia at a Crossroads

A Multicultural Mediterranean
Area from the Hellenistic to the
Early Byzantine Period

Edited by
Emanuela Borgia



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Tiny Kingdoms of Prophetic Ideals The Impact of the Melting Pot of Roman-dependent South-Eastern Anatolia on the Ideological and Political Concepts of the Roman and Early Byzantine World

Ljuben Tevdovski¹

Abstract

*This chapter reassesses the pre-Roman and Roman history of Cappadocia, Cilicia and Commagene, promoting South-Eastern Anatolia into a revealing case-study for the importance and interplay of perceptions and identities in the classical past and in its modern study. It experiments with the *longue-durée* perspective and the decentring of the 'West' in discourse on 'globalization' and imperialism, with the aim of contributing new perspectives regarding the identities, position, and role of this region. Refraining from the fruitless efforts of adding ethnic or cultural colours that augment the stereotyped grouping of these elites as 'odd Orientals' and 'primitive Natives', the chapter builds a new argument that they might be perceived instead as important agents of the 'globalization' process in antiquity. It proposes the bold hypothesis that the elites of the tiny kingdoms of South-Eastern Anatolia played a central role in conserving, preserving, reimagining, and reinvigorating the ideals and concepts of the united *oikoumene* of the Hellenistic period, and their utilization in the transformation of Roman identities and the creation of a new 'Roman World'. Thus, I suggest that their prophetic ideals overpowered the geopolitical forces and transformed this region from a central area in the Hellenistic *oikoumene* into a central area of the new post-Hellenistic or neo-Hellenistic Rome that we frequently refer to as Byzantium.*

Keywords: *client kingdoms, ancient globalization, post-Hellenistic dynastic network, cosmocrator.*

Anatolia. The name translates into English simply as 'the East'. It represents an essential and omnipresent *topos* of the classical narrative. One need look no further than the founding myths of the classical world, such as those of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, to understand its true importance.² Not merely these stories, but also the numerous historical, mythological, or literary narratives related to or built upon them are inconceivable without Anatolia. At the same time, without this *topos*, it is seemingly impossible to tell the story of the Persian Wars, the Peloponnesian War, the battles of Granicus and Issus, or the confrontations of Sulla and Pompey with Mithridates and the meeting of Cleopatra and Mark Antony that changed both Rome and the Mediterranean so dramatically. Moreover, Anatolia is unavoidable in any narrative of later Roman imperialism.

However, in stark contrast to the 'European' Greece and Rome, which turned into the preeminent symbols of the classical epoch as well as modern western identity, the perception of Anatolia, remained ambivalent through antiquity and later periods. Lingered in historical sources between the 'sophisticated' and 'cosmopolitan' on the one hand, and 'barbarian' and 'primitive' on the other, it got trapped somewhere between the classical and the oriental in modern perceptions and misconceptions. Thus, it resembles most closely a classical symbol for the border to the otherness, or rather the otherness among us.³

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² See Erskine 2001; cf. McMahon 2011: 15–32

³ Versluys 2017: 249–254. Cf. also: Tevdovski and Masalkovski 2021; Tevdovski 2020: 7–8, discussing more extensively the 'classicism' and 'orientalism' in classical antiquity and in ancient Anatolia.

The illustrations or allusions of this ambiguity are so numerous and prominent throughout all historical epochs that one might claim it represents the most immanent characteristic of this important region. Thus, for example, while Anatolia is intimately connected to the genesis and triumph of early Christianity via the figures of St. Paul and Constantine, with its New Rome built by the 'first Christian emperor' and the Nicene Creed, the region has been portrayed as a decadent alternative to Rome and was even one of the causes determining the fall of the West. In addition, Anatolia was the birthplace of some of the key theologians and leaders of the early Church, and, through the efforts of the Byzantine institutions and scholars, crucial for the transferral of classical knowledge and traditions to the West. And yet, because of Byzantium and its traditions, it remains perceived as the birthplace of a different, non-western, type of Christianity and civilization. Furthermore, the region was (and still is) associated with the early spread of Islam and 'oriental culture' in parts of the European continent.

The roots of this subtle, and yet persistent, 'otherness' of Anatolia can be traced to the perceptions and stereotypes created in classical antiquity and in later periods. Due to the overwhelming influence of the classical traditions, later periods have obsessively used and abused this and other classical *topoi*. Yet, any closer look into the classical sources immediately dispels this image of Anatolia, exposing the significant amplification of the 'otherness' from the western to the eastern edges of this peninsula. Thus, while the western coast of Anatolia remains in close relations with the Greek world, as well as its augmented Roman version, classical Greek and Roman perceptions of its easternmost areas varies from the almost unknown and odd or arcane to the simply barbarous.

The context of pure classical 'otherness' of the easternmost areas of the classical East promotes South-Eastern Anatolia into a revealing case-study for the importance and interplay of perceptions and identities in the classical past and in its modern study. This contribution aims to reveal important aspects of the identities and position of this region in the ancient world, through a reassessment of the pre-Roman and Roman history of three different, yet closely interrelated, entities of ancient geography: Cappadocia, Cilicia and Commagene.

These prominent eastern edges of the Greco-Roman world scream alterity through the perceptions of classical and non-classical authors, epigraphy, monuments, and even more through the approaches and attitudes of numerous modern researchers. The inhospitable environment of the Taurus mountain chain is introduced early through the narratives about the dangerous Cilician pirates, and it is increased by the image of the odd temple states in Olba in Cilicia and Comana in Cappadocia, as well as the mysterious cults in the high mountains of Commagene. Its un-classical nature is revealed in the 'Syrian otherness' or Assyrian identity of the elites of Cappadocia and Commagene, and the 'eastern appeal' of the famous Cilician teachers such as Apollonius of Tyana or Paul of Tarsus.

The un-western nature of this region was further entrenched by the numerous theories, assumptions, and misconceptions of the researchers of the 19th and early 20th century. Relying heavily on racial theories, these early studies emphasized the strong Semitic presence in Eastern regions of the otherwise 'Indo-European Anatolia', and the variations of the skin colour of people living beyond the Taurus mountains. In addition, a more subtle degradation and concealed rudiments of racism and Eurocentrism still linger in contemporary analyses through the argument that huge areas of South-Eastern Anatolia unreceptive to the basic principles of the 'Greco-Roman civilization'. They emphasize that around the Anti-Taurus mountain chain even during the Hellenistic period there are: coins with legends in non-classical languages, lack of epigraphic habit and bigger polis-type urban centres, as well as megalomaniac monuments that simply ignore the 'Winkelman canon', making 'travesty' of Classical art through its 'Oriental' dynastic 'hybridity'.⁴

⁴ Versluys 2017.

Yet, no one offers a more convincing picture of the ‘conniving, greedy and immoral’ Orientals of South-Eastern Anatolia, than the self-styled champion of traditional Greco-Roman morality, Cicero. This early prominent governor of the Roman far east, Cilicia, describes the political ambitions of leaders like Archelaus, a chief priest with ‘quasi-royal powers’, ‘who had command over a large body of slaves’ in the temple at ‘the golden’ Comana in Cappadocia. This ‘exotic vista’ of Cicero practically constitutes the ‘oriental *mise en scène*’ of the dominant Gibbonian tale of the decline and fall of the rational Roman world under the influence of the decadent ‘connection between the throne and the altar’, the manipulative priests and superstitious Orientals.⁵ In addition, Cicero’s cynical and arrogant comments on the king of Commagene, constitute the essence of modern western attitudes towards the Eastern elites.⁶ As a western administrator, Cicero, laughs at king Antiochus’ ‘phony credentials, rituals, attire and symbols’, exposing cynically his ‘dependence on Roman recognition and good will’.⁷

It is exactly at this point of Ciceronian cynicism, reflecting so conspicuously all the misconceptions of the Greeks and Romans, that this study gains its arguments for re-exploration of South-Eastern Anatolia and the identities of its elites. This chapter experiments with the *longue-durée* perspective and the decentring of the ‘West’ in discourse on ‘globalization’ and imperialism, with the aim of contributing new perspectives regarding the identities, position, and role of this region. Refraining from the fruitless efforts of adding ethnic or cultural colours that augment the stereotyped grouping of these elites as ‘odd Orientals’ and ‘primitive Natives’, the chapter builds a new argument that they might be perceived instead as important agents of the ‘globalization’ process in antiquity.

It proposes the bold hypothesis that the elites of the tiny kingdoms of South-Eastern Anatolia played a central role in conserving, preserving, reimagining, and reinvigorating the ideals and concepts of the united *oikoumene* of the Hellenistic period, and their utilization in the transformation of Roman identities and the creation of a new ‘Roman World’. Thus, I suggest that their prophetic ideals overpowered the geopolitical forces and transformed this region from a central area in the Hellenistic *oikoumene* into a central area of the new post-Hellenistic or neo-Hellenistic Rome that we frequently refer to as Byzantium.

The Pre-Roman Identity of South-Eastern Anatolia

Despite the Romans’ early perceptions (or representations) of South-Eastern Anatolia as the pitiful edges of ‘their world’, the identity of its elites, and many aspects of the social, political, and religious life of this area were deeply rooted in its peculiar position and inheritance from the pre-Roman past. Thus, before the coming of the Romans, South-Eastern Anatolia represented an area with a central and privileged position in the wide *oikoumene* that exchanged and united the ideas, knowledge and materials of the Old World from the Indian to the Atlantic Ocean.⁸ Developed upon the millennial traditions of the Near East, this ancient globalizing world was gradually forged into a functional imperial system under the Neo-Assyrians, Persians, and Macedonians.⁹

⁵ Kumaniecki 1960: 225–241.

⁶ Yet these stereotypes are not particularly connected to the ‘un-Roman’ concept of royalty. Instead, in his speeches and letters Cicero produces a wider and rather coherent picture of the ‘oriental’ elites of Asia Minor, whose ‘levity (*levitas*)’, fickleness (*inconstantia*), and cupidity (*cupiditas*)’ are in direct contrast to the identities and values of classical Greece and Rome. This stigmatization is most visible in Cicero’s warning to his brother Quintus ‘not to socialize with the inhabitants of his provinces (in Anatolia)’. Cic., *Flacc.* 26.62–27.66; Cic., *Q. fr.* 1.1.15–1.1.27.

⁷ Cic., *Q. fr.* 2.12.2–3. Facella 2006.

⁸ Liebert 2011: 533–560.

⁹ On the phenomena of ancient ‘globalization’, see Nederveen Pieterse 2015: 225–237; Verschuys 2014: 2–14; Gills and Thompson 2006: 127–138; Wilkinson 1987: 31–59.

In the last three pre-Roman centuries, viz. the Hellenistic period, the Near Eastern imperial model went through specific adjustments that were critical for its impact over the ideology and history of Anatolia and the wider *oikoumene*. Although the Macedonians inherited the global model of rule from the Persians, the specific developments of the early stages of Macedonian imperialism brought minor, yet crucial changes.¹⁰ Thus, the swift success of king Philip in making the Macedonian kingdom dominant in Europe and the subsequent, epic decade of the conquests of Alexander the Great were followed by an extended period of instability under the aegis of the new Macedonian global empire. Yet, after two decades of internal rivalry, coalition-building and quest for primacy among the Macedonian regents, aristocrats and generals, the situation was resolved in central Anatolia. There the most influential Macedonian general of the time, Antigonos, who had been by Alexander himself appointed to govern this region, lost an important battle with a coalition of the most powerful Macedonian generals and administrators of Asia, Europe, and Africa.¹¹

The elimination of Antigonos, in the battle of Ipsus in 301 BC, officialised the *status quo* of the end of the 4th century, where different Macedonian generals who effectively ruled immense swathes of territory in Europe, Asia and Africa unilaterally proclaimed themselves as the rulers of the world, primary descendants of the Macedonian Argead dynasty and Alexander's global empire.¹²

These developments were crucial for the transformation of the Persian imperial system into a specific imperial model that I frequently refer to as 'multiversal rule'.¹³ Thus, in the extended *oikoumene*, all the newly proclaimed Macedonian dynasts and their court elites, shared the belief that there was one Macedonian ruler of the universe, who was a divine descendant of Alexander, Philip, the Argead dynasty and their divine ancestors and gods (e.g. Herakles, Dionysos, and Helios).¹⁴ Yet, the propaganda of all the Macedonian dynastic courts offered a slightly distorted perception of the universe, presenting their own dynast (e.g. Seleucus, Ptolemy or Antigonos) as the new Alexander and ruler of the universe and ignoring or altering at will the narratives of the competing dynastic centres.¹⁵ Therefore, every dynast from each of the dynastic centres was continuously obliged to reaffirm his position as a new Alexander and ruler of the universe and obsessively preparing his 'Macedonian phalanxes' for military engagements with his dynastic relatives. Yet, from the outset the dynasts married women who were prominent in the Macedonian aristocracy, in order to create stronger alliances and increase dynastic primacy through a strong lineage from the Macedonian kings, and this behaviour continued throughout the Hellenistic period. Thus, even if one dynast lost the war with his related competitor, in most cases the result was marriage to an influential Macedonian princess from the winning dynastic centre.¹⁶

While the continuous interrelation of the different dynastic centres became the backbone of the new imperial model, other inherited practices from the Near Eastern (and especially Persian) imperial traditions continued throughout the Hellenistic period. Thus, like the Great Kings of Persia, every Macedonian dynast was also promoted as the universal benefactor of all temples, peoples, and cities in his realm, thereby creating a strong bond with the local and regional elites.¹⁷ Yet, Macedonian dynasts, unlike the Persian kings, were proclaimed gods, and the sons and companions not just of the Macedonian

¹⁰ Tevdovski 2020; Ma 2003: 178–179; Briant 1996.

¹¹ Billows 1997.

¹² Strootman 2014a: 307–322; Billows 1997: 316–324.

¹³ Tevdovski 2020: 9–10; Tevdovski 2019: 114–126.

¹⁴ Strootman 2014a: 307–322; Ma 2003: 186–91; Huttner 1997.

¹⁵ Kosmin 2017: 85–94; Strootman 2014b: 38–61.

¹⁶ Müller 2021: 84–90; Tevdovski 2020: 10.

¹⁷ Collins 2000; Schironi 2018: 1–29.



Figure 1: The Oikoumene of Alexander's descendants in the Hellenistic Period (Author)

gods, but also to all the gods of the *oikoumene*. What is more, although they had global pretensions, the Macedonian dynasts and their influential queens ruled concrete regions and entered into even closer relations with concrete religious elites. Thus, the ruler cult of the Hellenistic period was closely related to the process of religious syncretisation of the Macedonian ancestral gods (including Zeus, Herakles, Dionysos, and Apollo/Helios) with the different local and regional gods and religious traditions.¹⁸ However, this globalizing process varied in its intensity, providing greater privileges, exposure and promotion to the local elites and religious and cultural traditions from the areas of strategic interest of the dynasts. Among them were certainly those from the contested territories, who were building relations with more than one of these competing rulers of the universe (Figure 1).¹⁹

South-Eastern Anatolia in the Hellenistic oikoumene

Anatolia and its elites achieved noteworthy prominence from the moment of their integration into the Persian imperial system and early on entered into close relations with the Macedonian royal elites. During the Hellenistic period their importance and status increased even more. A central region of the most influential Macedonian general Antigonos in the late 4th century BC, Anatolia became one of the most contested territories for the different Macedonian dynasts in the 3rd century BC. Situated within the triangle of the most powerful dynastic centres of the Hellenistic period (Pella, Seleucia on the Tigris and Alexandria), Anatolia became an important nexus for the political, economic, cultural, and religious 'globalization' of the Hellenistic *oikoumene*.

This contested status provided various elites with an opportunity to develop close relations and procure privileges from different Macedonian dynasts.²⁰ This process culminated in the middle of the 3rd century

¹⁸ Chaniotis 2011: 157–456; Chaniotis 2003: 431–443; Ma 2003.

¹⁹ Kosmin 2017: 85–94; Strootman 2014c: 325–341.

²⁰ Cohen 1991: 41–50.

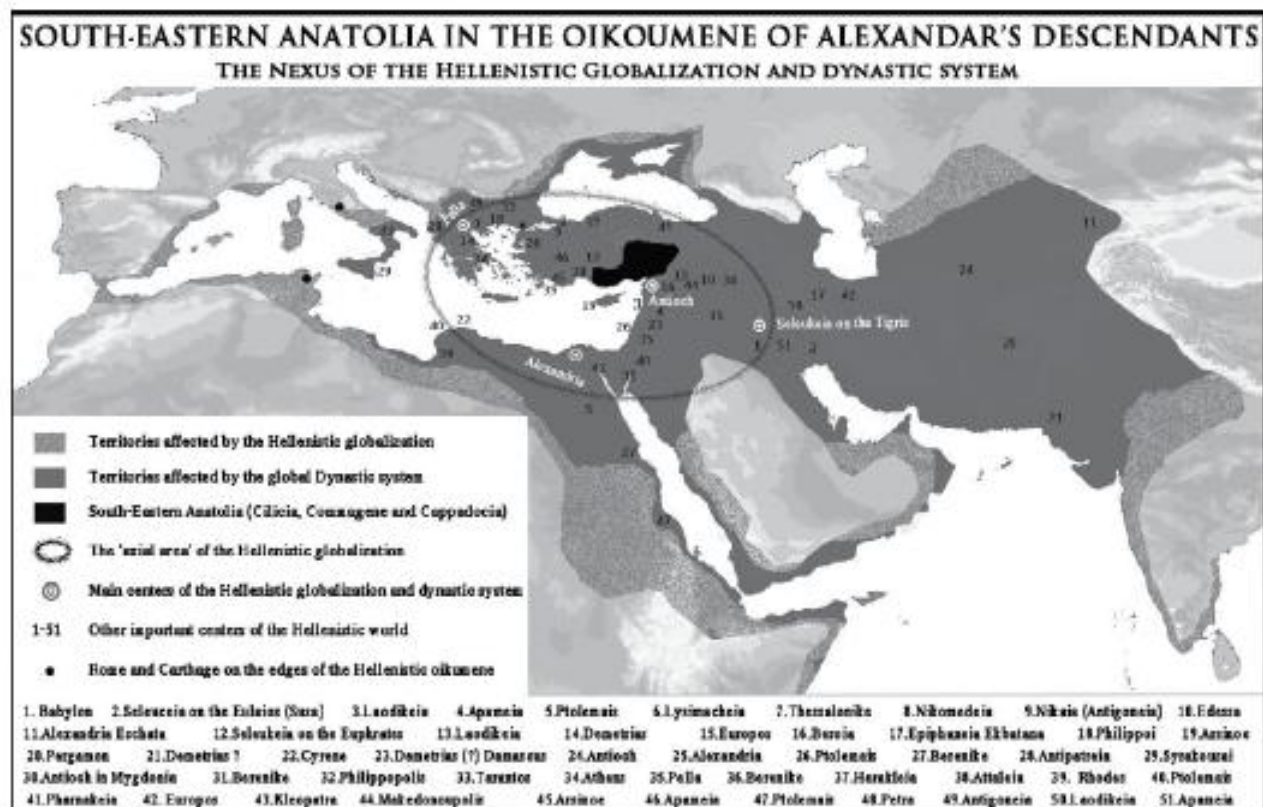


Figure 2: South-Eastern Anatolia in the *oikoumene* of Alexander's descendants (Author)

with the 'War of the Brothers', in which conflict two Seleucid princes competed for the throne of the biggest realm of the Macedonian dynasts in Asia. While the confrontation involved almost all Macedonian dynastic branches, including the Ptolemies, Antigonids and the local branches of Attalus and Achaeus, the real winners were the local elites.²¹

As a capable and irreplaceable military resource of the Seleucid princes in Anatolia, the local elites of eastern and northern Anatolia were for the first time integrated on a high level into the Macedonian dynastic model. Thus, the Macedonian princesses that married the leaders of local elites of Cappadocia, Pontus, and Bithynia in the 3rd century created a precedent that turned into a key component of the new post-Hellenistic dynastic model and the central role of South-Eastern Anatolia in its implementation. Unlike the experiments on the edges of the Hellenistic *oikoumene*, in the cases of Agathocles in Sicily and the princes of India, the integration of the local elites from the central region of Anatolia in the Macedonian dynastic network turned into a permanent feature of the system.²²

These developments over the 3rd century transformed the region of South-Eastern Anatolia into a miniature, colourful mosaic, that reflected some of the most specific characteristics of the elites' identities and relations in the Hellenistic *oikoumene*. With its eastern and southern corners, Commagene and Cilicia, this region bordered the core areas of the Seleucid realm. Filled with important urban centres founded by Macedonian settlers and named after cities and regions in their homeland (e.g. Beroea, Chalcis, Cyrrhus, Larissa, Dura-Europos or Edessa), this 'Macedonian heartland' in northern Syria acquired even greater importance for the Seleucids after the secession of the eastern areas of their

²¹ Tevdovski 2020.

²² McAuley 2017: 189–212; Wenghofer and Houle 2016: 191–208.

realm.²³ The main road passing through this heartland connected the Mesopotamian metropolis of the Seleucids (Seleucia on the Tigris) with their Mediterranean metropolis Antioch and its harbour Seleucia Pieria. In this context, the roads passing through Cilicia, Commagene and Cappadocia represented important extensions of this line of communication, connecting Mesopotamia and regions as far away as Bactria and India with the West through the Mediterranean and with Europe through Anatolia.

Yet, each side of the Taurus (and Anti-Taurus) mountain chain contained its unique characteristics that were strongly connected to the global developments of the *oikoumene*. While the fertile lands of Commagene were open to the Seleucid heartland, Cilicia was one of the most contested territories between the two dynastic cores, for it was here that the huge Asian land potential of the Seleucids was contested by the Ptolemaic thalassocracy in the Mediterranean.²⁴ Finally, the Cappadocian plateau was the main continental avenue where the Seleucid dynasty was trying to extend and stabilize its central rule over the semi-dependent local dynasties and Macedonian elites in Anatolia that were manoeuvring between the ambitions of the Seleucids, Ptolemies and Antigonids. This important central artery of the Seleucid continental influence over Anatolia provided Cappadocian (and later Commagenian) elites with a lasting privileged position in the imperial policies of the Seleucids. Thus, combining Commagene, strongly related to the dynastic core land, Cilicia, constantly contested by the two dynasties of Seleucids and Ptolemies, and Cappadocia, as an early example of the localization of the imperial model and empowerment of the local elites, the region of South-Eastern Anatolia represents one of the most characteristic elements of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* and cultural and political *koine* (Figure 2).

The Roman impact

In stark contrast with South-Eastern Anatolia, at the start of the Hellenistic period, Rome was developing on or beyond the edges of the globalizing *oikoumene*. Being practically invisible from the perspective of the Macedonian dynasts and Hellenistic core areas provided Rome with the advantage of the unexpected and underestimated factor. In addition, its early development was related so closely to the cultural and political impulses of the less globalized edges of the Hellenistic world in southern Italy that many Hellenistic observers perceived it as a 'aspiring' Greek polis.²⁵

Yet, their rapid military successes during the 2nd century BC dramatically transformed the Romans' self-perception as well as how they were viewed in the Hellenistic world. Although many elites and centres in the Hellenistic *oikoumene*, especially its eastern areas, still had no knowledge of the new western factor, the central areas in the eastern Mediterranean were strongly impressed by Roman successes against those who were considered then the rulers of the world. Thus, the new troublemakers from the West, early acquired the reputation for being 'capable and useful in crushing kings and central authority, while not creating kings ... (themselves) ... or not interested in the purple for themselves'.²⁶ This image of the newcomers appealed to many of the smaller players in the centres of the *oikoumene*, and they joined forces with the Romans against the powerful Macedonian dynasts or considered doing so.²⁷ However, during the 1st century BC, once it had become clear that the Romans aspired to much more than a partnership and protecting the smaller players, Roman expansion towards the East met with widespread opposition.

²³ Ball 2000: 156–157.

²⁴ Hölbl 2001: 60.

²⁵ I have written extensively about the early development of Rome from the Hellenistic perspective in other papers. See Tevdovski 2020. See also Nederveen Pieterse 2015: 225–237; Liebert 2011: 533–560.

²⁶ Rawson 1975: 150–151.

²⁷ Eckstein 2008.

At the same time that Roman military interventions started to intensively transform the centres of the Hellenistic *oikoumene*, the cultural and political exposure to the sophisticated, complex and interrelated culture of the ancient globalized world inevitably started to work profound changes on the identity of Rome and its elites. Roman military leaders and many elements of the Italian population were increasingly impressed by the 'marvellous world of the eastern kings'.²⁸ Yet, important segments of Roman traditional elites discovered their identity in the new Roman tradition as the leaders of those who defied the kings and values that united the Hellenistic *oikoumene*.

This transformation of the identity of members of the Roman elite had its roots in the classical Greek worldview, which was predicated upon a binary antithesis between the Greeks within the city and the 'barbarians' outside its walls. This conception was strengthened through the initial xenophobic reactions to the 'globalization' process. These are visible in the works (and speeches) of early Latin authors, such as Cato the Elder, and were intensified through confrontations with the Hellenistic East.²⁹

However, when the Romans conquered one of the Macedonian realms, the Antigonids, in the Balkans in the 2nd century BC, they had to reimagine themselves through the values of the world that had been globalized by the Macedonian dynasties. Under the noticeable ideological guidance of their new Greek subjects, who transmitted the traditions of the classical poleis, but had also lived under godlike kings for centuries, a new Roman identity emerged.³⁰ It was a globalizing tendency trying to strike a balance between the early elements of the xenophobic and antiglobalist identity of the civic elites on the one hand and the ideas of global *homonoia* dominant throughout the Hellenistic *oikoumene* on the other.³¹

Through this new 'Greco-Roman' discourse, Romans were not illegitimate intruders in the world of the kings. Rather, they were legitimate leaders of the new world of the free Greeks and Romans that was built upon the ideas and traditions of its smaller predecessor envisioned by classical Athens for the needs of its 5th century BC hegemony in the Aegean. Thus, the territories of the Hellenistic world that the Romans had recently acquired were transferred into their own morally superior world, while the wider areas of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* of the 'despotic kings' and their 'slavish' elites as well as their likeminded peers among the Romans were stereotyped as despicable barbaric otherness.

In the 1st century BC, just before Romans' coming to South-Eastern Anatolia, that otherness acquired its conspicuous face with the Roman archenemy from eastern Anatolia, Mithridates.³² This, descendant of the 'rulers of the universe', from the early localized dynastic branches in Anatolia, challenged the credentials of the new emerging power, describing them as greedy pirates and a 'motley rabble of refugees' that challenge the order of the world and its legitimate rulers, because of the 'very low rank' of their ancestors.³³ While Mithridates' propaganda appealed to many elites in the emerging world of Roman Asia and called into question the legitimacy and internal strife created by the Romans, this

²⁸ On the process of progressive 'basilization' of the Roman generals' image, see: Fowler and Hekster 2005: 23; also, an extensive overview from Scipio Africanus to Germanicus in: Tevdovski 2020.

²⁹ Passet 2020; Isaac 2004; Astin 1978.

³⁰ On Polybius theories of the Roman 'almost entire' *oikoumene* see: Strootman 2019: 179–182.

³¹ Strootman 2014b: 38–61; Tarn 1932: 136–138.

³² Mayor 2010; Højte 2009; Kallet-Marx 1996. While numerous ancient (Greek and Roman) authors portray Mithridates in different shades of black, his most consistent attribute in the sources certainly is enemy of the Romans, see: Cic., *II Verr.* 2.51 or Cic., *Arch.* 21, as well as App., *Mith.*; Memn., 22.9; 26.2; Plu., *Sull.*; Plu., *Luc.*; Vell., 2.18.1.

³³ Pompeius Trogus (Pomp. Trog., *Ap. Iust.* 38.4.91–99) presents to us an illustrative version of Mithridates arguments, that: 'They (Romans) themselves had had kings who were such that even their names made them blush: shepherds from the Aborigines, soothsayers from the Sabines, exiles from Corinth, slaves from Etruria, captured or bred at home, or—the most distinguished name of them all—the Superbi. By their own account their founders were suckled at a she-wolf's teats! That is why their

anarchic power of Rome also carried vitality and prevailed in the confrontations with the dynasts from the centres of the Hellenistic *oikoumene*. Thus, almost two centuries after the eastern Anatolian military elites were integrated in the dynastic network of the Macedonian kings, the efficient Roman generals got their chance as well. This new relationship of the Romans with the dynasts culminated in the second half of the 1st century BC when the sons and daughter of the Roman generals Caesar and Mark Antony were enthroned together with their mother, the last Macedonian queen Cleopatra (VII), as the legitimate descendants of Alexander and co-rulers of the universe.³⁴

Yet, the elite class in Rome, strengthened through the accumulation of great resources acquired from the conquered Hellenistic centres, and strongly embracing its identity as challenger of the power of kings, was not ready to give up its privileged position, not even to kings with Roman blood. Thus, supporting the young Octavian in the battle of Actium against the East and its 'wicked ways', the conservative elites of Rome managed to impede the integration of Rome with the Hellenistic *oikoumene*.³⁵ Instead, the new Roman leader Octavian (Augustus) had to make compromises with the old elites of the 'free city', while the remnants of the old defeated and humiliated world were left in ruins on the edges of the new Roman one. They were personified by petty kinglets, some of which with questionable legitimacy and deficient stability, used by Roman elites as examples of the military and ideological supremacy of their empire.

South-Eastern Anatolia in the post-Hellenistic *oikoumene*

Nothing better illustrates the discrepancy between the Roman perception of the elites of South-Eastern Anatolia and their own understanding of their identity and position in the world than the elaborate sepulchral monument of Antiochus Theos of Commagene. Immortalizing himself in a purely Hellenistic manner, through an ambitious architectural, political and religious project, Antiochus presented himself as a living god.³⁶ His colossal temple-tomb displays a row of relief *stelae* depicting his Macedonian ancestors, including Alexander the Great, the founder of the Seleucid dynastic family, Seleucus I Nicator, and eleven descending dynasts (amongst which Antiochus VIII Grypus, the father of the princess Laodice Thea), who represented the key component of the global and local legitimacy of Antiochus Theos of Commagene and his local dynastic branch.³⁷ An important addition to his Macedonian royal lineage, who is also presented in his dynastic 'ancestor gallery', is the mother of princess Laodice Thea: the Ptolemaic princess Cleopatra Tryphaina.³⁸

The monument of Antiochus also utilizes the pattern developed by previous local dynasts of eastern Anatolia and some Anatolian satrapies that had used a standardized narrative to transform their humble

entire population had the temperament of wolves, with an insatiable thirst for blood and a ravenous hunger for power and riches'. See: Adler 2006: 400. I have recently provided a wider analysis on the impact of Mithridates and the conflict with Mithridates on the ideology and identity of Rome (Tevdovski 2020), and I also refer to my forthcoming article in (Versluys and Lilley) for further theoretical background on 'the rulers of the universe' and ancient globalization/glocalization; see also: Naco del Hoyo and Sanchez 2018; Lerouge-Cohen 2017: 223–233; Madsen 2009: 191–202. For a wider overview on Mithridatic worldview/propaganda see Rizzo 1980: 185–196; see also Price 1968: 1–12.

³⁴ Strootman 2010: 140–157.

³⁵ Hekster 2011: 113–114.

³⁶ 'The Great King Antiochos, the God, the Righteous One, the Manifest (Deity)'. Cf. Versluys 2017: 255; Schwentzel 2010: 119–136; Goell et al. 1996: 206–217.

³⁷ Versluys 2017: 63–64; Fleischer 2002: 59–60.

³⁸ Versluys emphasizes the universal presence of the commemorations through ancestor galleries among different Macedonian dynastic branches, placing it in the Hellenistic ideological context, where 'descent was one of the most crucial factors in the legitimacy'. See Versluys 2017: 130–133.

local origin into an argument in favour of their royal genealogy. Presenting these minor local elites as descendants of the Persian kings who ruled before Alexander, Antiochus Theos, like other local dynasts before him, thereby enhanced his credentials as a global ruler.³⁹ Like any other dynast of the Hellenistic period, with this monument Antiochus is not only honouring, but also actively communicating with his 'deified ancestors' and 'all the ancestral gods from Persia and Macedonia' (on the one hand Zeus, Herakles, and Helios, and on the other local deities, including Commagene represented as a goddess).⁴⁰ In addition, many of them are represented as 'syncretized' gods in a purely Hellenistic manner, while the new 'local goddess' Commagene resembles closely the iconography of its model, the goddess Tyche of Antioch, which had been commissioned by the early Seleucid dynasts as a personification of their Mediterranean metropolis.⁴¹

In contrast to the sceptical approach of Roman senatorial elites such as Cicero, the ancestry of this 'local ruler' was not part of a local despot's extravagant self-image, but rather the reflection of a 'belief system' shared in the centres of the Hellenistic world.⁴² When Pompey eliminated the main lineage of the Seleucid dynasts, the Seleucid princess Laodice Thea (who was married to the ruler of the strategically important Commagene, Mithridates Kallinikos and became the mother of Antiochus Theos⁴³) and her children became very credible heirs to the Seleucid throne. In addition, as the daughter of a Ptolemaic princess, Laodice Thea endowed her son Antiochus of Commagene with high status, linking him also to the Ptolemies.

The prestige of this pedigree of Antiochus Theos (of Commagene) was recognized early by the Parthians, who by his time had taken over the greater part of the Seleucid Empire, and yet they were eager not just for his cooperation, but also for legitimization of their global rule through his descent. Thus, in marrying the Parthian king Orodes (II), Antiochus' daughter Laodice became an official queen of the new 'Parthian empire', which by the 1st century BC had spread through most of the eastern areas of the Hellenistic *oikoumene*. The importance of this marriage for the image of global prominence that the Commagenian dynasty wanted to display might be illustrated through her own burial monument in Commagene, where she shakes hands with her brother, the ruler of Commagene, and thus imitates the relationship of her grandmother, a Seleucid princess, with her brothers sitting on the Seleucid throne.⁴⁴

At the same time, other major contenders for global dominance over the *oikoumene*, including Romans such as Mark Antony, had also anticipated the importance of this South-Eastern Anatolian bloodline.

³⁹ Lerouge-Cohen 2017: 223–233; Strootman and Versluys 2017.

⁴⁰ Versluys 2017: 260; Fleischer 2002: 59–60; Goell et al. 1996: 206–217.

⁴¹ The syncretism of the important local/regional cult of Mithras, prominent in many of the names of the post-Hellenistic dynastic elites of this region with Helios and Apollo, the central symbol of the Seleucid dynasts and the Macedonian imperial iconography, represents another important example of 'glocalization' of narratives, that will resurface in the Roman period or at least be utilized in the construction and portraying of the 'Roman Mithras'. See Versluys 2017: 8–9; Strootman 2007: 247–248; Goell et al. 1996: 206–217.

⁴² Versluys 2017: 19.

⁴³ In his great cult inscription Antiochus represents himself as the son of Laodice Thea Philadelphus. The emphasized epithet of 'brother-loving' in the Hellenistic context was connected to co-ruling siblings. Thus, it might suggest, in some Commagenian or even wider narrative, her importance (if not the equal status) in the long-running battle of her brothers for possession of the Seleucid realm that took place in the neighboring core lands of Northern Syria and Cilicia. See Goell et al. 1996: 206–217.

⁴⁴ The reconstruction of one of the four female members of the gallery of Macedonian ancestors on the Antiochus Theos monument as his daughter Laodice, princess of Commagene and queen of Parthia, together with Antiochus grandmother, the Ptolemaic princess, his mother, the Seleucid princess, and his wife, the princess of the early localized dynastic branch in Cappadocia, (if accurate) provides another interesting glimpse in the process of legitimization of the new local dynasties. See Versluys 2017: 63–64.

Thus, princess Iotape, the granddaughter of Antiochus Theos of Commagene born to another of his daughters, was the wife presented in Alexandria to Alexander Helios, the son of Mark Antony by Cleopatra. This recognition of the Commagenian dynastic branch is even more significant, as it is included in the visions of the *oikoumene* projected by the court of the last major living Macedonian dynast and Antiochus' cousin, Cleopatra VII. It was thanks to her bloodline that Iotape was deemed suitable to govern together with this 'new Alexander' vast eastern areas extending from Armenia and Parthia as far as the fringes of the *oikoumene* in India. It is further to be remarked that Alexander, who in the Donations of Alexandria was given the *oikoumene* to share with his siblings Ptolemy Caesarion, Ptolemy Philadelphus and Cleopatra Selene, unlike his brothers was not dressed in the traditional Macedonian dress, but in a 'Persian' one. While this ceremonial iconography resembles the romantic histories of the adoption of Persian customs at the court of Alexander the Great, it also closely reflects the globalizing narrative of a Persian and Macedonian legitimizing heritage that was developed and utilized by the new dynasts in eastern Anatolia and other rulers in western Asia.⁴⁵

Thus, early on the credentials of this local dynastic lineage from South-Eastern Anatolia were unanimously viewed by all the major players of the centres of the ancient 'globalized' world as important for future projects for the great eastern parts of the *oikoumene* as far as India. However, Antiochus' ambitions, like those of any other dynast of the Hellenistic period were not focused exclusively on the East. Instead, his descendants were also awarded with the heritage and legitimacy provided by one of the oldest localized branches of the Hellenistic dynastic lines, viz. that of Cappadocia. Marrying princess Isias, one of the last direct descendants of this dynastic line, Antiochus enlarged his control on one of the royal traditions of South-Eastern Anatolia that would become an important heritage for the wider *oikoumene*.

However, Antiochus was not the only local dynast of South-Eastern Anatolia whose importance grew with the coming of the Romans. While the old local dynasty of Cappadocia (Ariarathes/Ariobarzanes) could claim strong connections and a bloodline legitimized by Seleucid princesses, the new dynasty, which profited greatly from the eastern policies and ambitions of the Roman general Mark Antony, had even wider pretensions for global rule. The new dynast in Cappadocia, Archelaus, bore a dynastic name that was not connected to the traditional Macedonian dynasties in the East, but rather to the earlier traditions of the Macedonian kingdom.⁴⁶ His first known ancestor was the prominent general Archelaus, who together with his brother was leading the efforts of Mithridates VI of Pontus to take over the territories of the Antigonid dynasty in the Balkans from the 'illegitimate rule' of the western newcomers, viz. the Romans. However, like many other Macedonian nobles, later on he grew closer to the Romans, facilitating the reconciliation between Sulla and Mithridates, and was given large estates and privileges. While this first Archelaus was probably married to one of Mithridates' daughters, his strong Macedonian dynastic lineage might be the real reason behind the marriage of his homonymous son to one of the last Ptolemaic princesses, Berenice IV.⁴⁷ Although Cappadocia was a smaller realm than the Ptolemaic one, his son and grandson, likewise named Archelaus, had equally big ambitions.

⁴⁵ The Seleucids did not promote their continuity with the Persians as credentials to global rule, and like all Macedonian dynasts (and probably more extensively than the Ptolemies) exposed the Macedonian identity of their rule. Yet, the propaganda of the Ptolemaic court, in the continuous confrontation with the Seleucids for global legitimacy over the Macedonian empire, implicitly connected the Seleucids with the Persians. This narrative was an official ideological effort to legitimize long-lasting confrontation with the Seleucids, alluding to the prominent narrative of the great Macedonian conquest of the East.

⁴⁶ Sullivan 1980: 1125–1168.

⁴⁷ While Berenice IV is less famous than her sister Cleopatra VII, she ruled the Ptolemaic realm independently and was involved in important dynastic intrigues, until their father Ptolemy XII reclaimed his throne with the assistance of A. Gabinius. See: Chaniotis 2018: 222–223; Bennett and Depauw 2007: 211–214; Hölbl 2001: 227–230; Sullivan 1980: 1151–1152.

Hostile Roman sources attribute the accession of Archelaus to the throne of Cappadocia to the efforts of his mother Glaphyra, who, like Cleopatra (VII), cultivated close personal relations with Mark Antony.⁴⁸ Be that as it may, Antiochus not only was a close ally of Antony, but also continued his policies and came much closer to realising the Hellenistic visions for unity and global rule than the Roman general (and maybe even closer than his grandfather).⁴⁹ Thus, when Antony and Cleopatra lost the battle of Actium to Octavian, Archelaus as well as Antiochus of Commagene and other local rulers changed allegiance and professed their loyalty to the new Roman leader and self-styled son of Caesar.⁵⁰

However, unlike Antony and his ambitious attempt to include his (and thus Roman) bloodline in the line of the rulers of the universe, Octavian, relying on support from the Roman republican elites, had to tone down his ambitions and focus on stabilizing his authority in the city of Rome itself.

In this new global context, the eastern Anatolian rulers were left in a position to recreate the stability and legitimacy of rule in the centres of the Hellenistic world. Thus, while the ambitious vision of reuniting Alexander's empire (by Cleopatra VII and Antony) was stalled by the defeat at Actium, its programme was still prominent in the post-Hellenistic context. While Caesar's son, Ptolemy Cesarion was executed, and his brother Alexander Helios never managed to rule the East together with Iotape, the descendant of Antiochus Theos, their sister Cleopatra Thea did rule the West as a queen. Married to the king of Mauretania, her western realm included territories never ruled by the Ptolemies or any other dynast of the Hellenistic period.

In this context, Archelaus of Cappadocia, the former ally of Antony, and an experienced local dynast, managed to reconstruct the symbolic unity of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* even during the time of Augustus. While Augustus was trying to deceive the Roman elites and centralize his rule in the city of Rome, Archelaus in true Hellenistic tradition aimed at uniting the most prominent remnants of the dynastic networks in the Mediterranean.⁵¹

Thus, through his first marriage with an Armenian princess, Archelaus of Cappadocia strengthened his dynastic ties with the East, establishing links not only to the descendants of the famous Mithridates and Tigranes, but also to the powerful rulers of Parthia. Later, he married the powerful queen Pythodorida, who ruled independently in Pontus and many areas, around the Black Sea. Archelaus' new queen brought with her as inheritance not merely the vast domains extending to the north of Cappadocia as far as Tanais on the Azov Sea, but also an important addition in the dynastic bloodline. As Pythodorida Philometor was the granddaughter of the triumvir Mark Antony through his daughter Antonia, Archelaus was in effective realizing the vision of Caesar and Mark Antony of integrating Roman blood with the legitimate bloodline of the descendants of Alexander the Great and the rulers of the world. This tendency was further developed in Archelaus' policy to marry his daughter Glaphyra off to king Juba, who had previously been married to Cleopatra Selene, the daughter of the last Ptolemaic dynast Cleopatra VII and Mark Antony.⁵²

An even more illustrative episode for this central role of South-Eastern Anatolia in the reconstruction of the dynastic network and legitimate rule is the marriage of Archelaus' daughter in Judaea. Judaea was

⁴⁸ Roller 2018: 51–53; Sullivan 1990: 182.

⁴⁹ For the Hellenistic concept of global rule, see: Tevdovski 2024; Tevdovski 2020.

⁵⁰ Jacobson 2001: 22–38.

⁵¹ Sullivan 1990: 182–185.

⁵² Sullivan 1990: 184–185.

another area that was contested for more than a century by the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasts, and its local elites and traditions were empowered by this global rivalry. Glaphyra of Cappadocia was first married to prince Alexander, who was the first-born son of the newly elected 'foreigner' king Herod and Mariamne.⁵³ Mariamne herself was a member of the previous local dynasty (the Hasmoneans), which had achieved prominence during the period of dissolution of the Seleucid realm. The role of this highborn Cappadocian princess in providing legitimacy to the new dynastic house in Judaea is well documented in the works of the prominent Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. He exposes her dominant role at the court of king Herod, highlighting the importance that the king and the princes attributed to her as well as the 'envy' of the other princesses on the court that were treated by her and others as commoners. Glaphyra, according to Josephus, was aware of her role and constantly (and pretentiously) emphasized her paternal direct descent from the kings of Macedonia and her maternal descent from the rulers of Persia.⁵⁴

Josephus illustrates the importance and legitimizing nature for the cadet lines of the dynasty of Antiochus of Cappadocia on at least three occasions: the marriage of the first-born son Alexander with Glaphyra; the treatment of Glaphyra and her sons with great respect by Herod, even after his decision to execute his son Alexander; and the policies of Herod's successors. Thus, Herod Archelaus, after the death of his father and as the new ruler (ethnarch) of Judaea, decided to divorce his wife and seek his own global credentials through a marriage with the Cappadocian princess Glaphyra.⁵⁵

The dynasty of Archelaus metamorphosed into a regional centre in the eastern Mediterranean that provided legitimacy for the emergent local dynasts and realms in the eastern Mediterranean. Archelaus in the manner of the Macedonian dynasts (re)built a town, naming it Archelais. He moved his court to the Mediterranean coast of Cilicia, in the city of Elaiussa, that he re-founded as Sebaste in the name of Augustus. Numerous princes and princesses of Cappadocian origins were sent to govern (independently or as spouses) kingdoms from Thrace to Judaea and from Mauretania to Armenia. During the rule of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians, the dynasts of South-Eastern Anatolia, played a central role in reconstructing a dynastic network around the Hellenistic *oikoumene*. Thus, a century after the fall of the last Macedonian dynasty with the death of Cleopatra VII, the dynasties of Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Commagene were so connected with those of Emesa, Judaea, Thrace, Bosphorus, Mauretania, Armenia, Media, and Parthia, that soon enough their descendants formed a sort of global class of dynastic descent.⁵⁶ This was not just a continuation of the Hellenistic model that connected the Ptolemies, Seleucids, Antigonids, Antipatrids, and the other Macedonian dynastic houses in one extended dynasty, but also a system that amplified the model and extended its outreach among diverse local elites around the ancient *oikoumene*.

All these dynasties carried more or less the same ideology. Their members were or believed to be descendants of Alexander the Great and the Macedonian dynasts, and as such they were legitimate, godlike rulers of their realm who aspired to rule over other realms and the *oikoumene*.

⁵³ Syme 1995: 150–151.

⁵⁴ Olbrycht 2021: 181. Thus, Josephus explains: 'Alexander's wife, Glaphyra, augmented this hatred against them, by deriving her nobility and genealogy [from great persons], and pretending that she was a lady superior to all others in that kingdom, as being derived by her father's side from Temenus, and by her mother's side from Darius, the son of Hystaspes. She also frequently reproached Herod's sister and wives with the ignobility of their descent; and that they were every one chosen by him for their beauty, but not for their family' (J., BJ 1.24.2).

⁵⁵ J., AJ 16.7.4; 17.13.1–4; J., BJ 1.28.1.

⁵⁶ Sullivan 1978d: 909–941.

In addition, the new post-Hellenistic developments dramatically extended the global system of rule developed by the Macedonian dynasts, making it even more flexible and enduring. Thus, 'while the decentralized model of the Hellenistic global system was united by the reference to the Macedonian identity and royal descent of the dynasts in all the dynastic centres, in the post-Hellenistic realities it was increasingly acceptable to trace the Macedonian roots to Alexander through lineage from dynasts of the Hellenistic period, while the other lines of descent could be related to lesser 'ethnically diverse' kings.'⁵⁷ This development introduced a process of 'globalization' of diverse local cultural and religious traditions that were supported and promoted globally by these numerous post-Hellenistic descendants of the rulers of the universe.

In addition to the central role of this aristocratic network in the Near East and the Mediterranean, it had a tremendous impact on the development of the new imperial centre of Rome. Although Augustus' reign preserved, at least nominally, some of the traditional institutions, even then Rome was being progressively transformed into an imperial centre, modelled upon the traditions of the Hellenistic metropoleis and through the knowledge and worldviews of the elites coming from these core areas of the Hellenistic world. Thus, while Mark Antony started one of his most ambitious imperial projects in the Cilician metropolis of Tarsus when he met there the last Macedonian dynast Cleopatra, his opponent Octavian was trained to govern himself and others by a prominent Stoic philosopher from the vicinity of this great Hellenistic intellectual centre.⁵⁸

Yet, a much more important glimpse into the strong influence of the post-Hellenistic dynastic elites may be obtained in historical sources introducing the royal entourage and the circle of friends of Antonia Minor, the youngest daughter of Mark Antony.⁵⁹ Related to the new emperor Augustus through his sister Octavia Minor, Antonia became an important element of the newly-established Augustan court in Rome. At the same time, she represented a strong connection between this new dynastic centre and the pre-existing dynastic network in the Mediterranean, amended by her father, that soon included two of her half-sisters: Antonia Prima in Anatolia and Cleopatra Selene in Mauretania. In addition, the estates and relations she inherited in the East closely linked her to important representatives of the traditional Hellenistic elites, who were in close relations with the post-Hellenistic dynasts.

Prominent examples of these elites were Alexander the Alabarch and the famous adviser and astrologer Thrasyllus. They both came from a prominent probably aristocratic background that was connected to Alexandria and Ptolemaic Egypt, concluded marriages with the new emerging dynastic families and played a key role in the policies and development of the first Roman dynasty.⁶⁰ Thus, Thrasyllus married princess Aka II, the granddaughter of Antiochus Theos of Commagene by his daughter Iotape, who had once been engaged with the prince Alexander Helios, the son of Mark Antony and Cleopatra.⁶¹ Through his advice and policies, this famous astrologer and influential advisor of the emperor Tiberius was directly involved in the Roman throne's passing to Caligula, the grandson of Antonia Minor and grand grandson of Mark Antony. The granddaughter of Thrasyllus and the Commagenian princess Aka II, Ennia Thrasylla was in intimate relations with Caligula, and her influential husband (the praetorian prefect Macro) was, according to Tacitus, responsible for ordering the execution of Caligula's predecessor Tiberius.⁶²

⁵⁷ Tevdovski 2020: 11.

⁵⁸ While Athenodorus of Tarsus is the most prominent teacher of Augustus, Xenarchus the Peripatetic was another philosopher of Cilician origin on his emerging court. See: Parker 1946: 33.

⁵⁹ See: Segenni 1994: 297–331; Kokkinos 1992.

⁶⁰ Oliver 1980: 130–148; Sullivan 1978d: 932.

⁶¹ Potter 1994: 158–160.

⁶² Barrett 1989: 34–44.

The new emperor of Rome, Caligula, 'tutored to rule Rome' by his childhood friends Antiochus IV of Commagene and his ally Herod Agrippa I of Judea, gave new privileges to his dynastic allies and strengthened their influence in the eastern Mediterranean.⁶³ Thus, he gave great amount of tax money to the Commagenian king, as well as a portion of the territory of Cilicia, thereby transforming this dynastic centre into an influential actor in eastern Mediterranean relations. He also gave the husband of Antiochus' royal relative Ennia Thrasylla the important position of governor of Egypt, and their ally Herod Agrippa I parts of the territories of his grandfather Herod the Great.⁶⁴

The next Roman emperor, Caligula's uncle Claudius, the son of Antonia Minor and grandson of Mark Antony, also owed his throne to the same advisers and lobbyists of the dynastic network. In addition to the close relations and privileges given to his royal friends and relatives, he was aided by Balbillus, the son of Thrasyllus and the Commagenian princess Aka II, who came from Alexandria in Claudius' support when he became emperor.⁶⁵

Balbillus the Wise, as he is also known, accompanied Claudius on his expedition to Britain as commander of the military engineers, was given highest honours and became one of the longest standing advisers and court astrologers of different emperors of the line of Antonia Minor and even further. In addition, this prominent descendant of the Commagenian dynastic branch was appointed by Claudius and Nero as High Priest at the Temple of Hermes and Director of the Library in Alexandria, *procurator* of the Asia province in western Anatolia, as well as prefect of Egypt. Thus, he became one of the early cases of the numerous royal descendants of the rulers of the universe who ruled the core territories of the Hellenistic world not as kings, but as high officials of the Roman emperors.⁶⁶

From centre of the *oikoumene* to 'centre' of the Empire

The traditional elites of Rome viewed with great diffidence the efforts of the Julio-Claudians, and especially the descendants of Antony, to rule from Rome according to the international standards established by the dynasts of the Hellenistic period and followed by their descendants in South-Eastern Anatolia and the wider areas of the Hellenistic *oikoumene*. However, the strong coalition between Roman military leaders and eastern dynasts radically transformed the city and gained the support of many elements of the population of Rome and Italy as well, who supported and utilized the societal changes brought about by what I suggest to call 'globalisation waves' from the centres of the Hellenistic world.⁶⁷

Thus, after the death of Nero, the last Julio-Claudian and the least popular in conservative Roman circles, some of the 'anti-monarchists' of Rome dared to believe in the return of republican *libertas*. Their hopes were in vain. The dynastic network of the eastern Mediterranean, which has grown strong in the period of the Julio-Claudians, was more than prepared for the challenge. In AD 69, while Rome was struggling to re-envision its new 'free world', the post-Hellenistic elites in the East selected the new ruler of the *oikoumene* in Alexandria and strongly supported his subsequent establishment in Rome. Through this

⁶³ See: Adams 2007: 202–203. Also, see Dio (D.C., 59.24.1) and his presentations of the attitudes of certain Roman city elites that 'were aware that the kings Agrippa and Antiochus were keeping company with him (Caligula) like a couple of tyrant teachers'. For a wider analysis on the influence of the *tyrannodidaskaloi* Antiochus IV and Herod Agrippa I and the other 'easterners', over Rome and its emperors, see: Andrade 2012: 441–475.

⁶⁴ Borgia 2013: 89.

⁶⁵ MacMullen 1966: 140.

⁶⁶ Baslez 1994: 767–773; Sullivan 1978d: 932.

⁶⁷ Tevdovski 2024; Tevdovski 2020.

new Roman general, Vespasian, who, unlike Caesar and Mark Antony, was perceived to have insignificant descent not only in the Hellenistic centres, but also in Rome, the post-Hellenistic dynastic network was integrated into the highest positions in all areas of Roman governance and transformed the newly established Roman world to its core.

Among the key allies of Vespasian were the dynastic elites of southeastern Anatolia. The most powerful and wealthy of the dynasts to join forces with Vespasian was Antiochus IV of Commagene.⁶⁸ He was not only influential in Rome, but through his alliance with emperors such as Caligula and Claudius and local dynasts like Herod Agrippa of Judaea his influence had grown extensively in the eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁹ In addition to his kingdom of Commagene he was given by Caligula parts of the realm of his royal relatives of Cappadocia, thus establishing his presence in the important coastal areas of Cilicia.⁷⁰ His daughter Iotape was also given a smaller realm in Cilicia, where she ruled in the coastal capital once built by Archelaus of Cappadocia (Elaiussa-Sebaste) together with king Alexander, Archelaus' grandson, from his daughter Glaphyra and her husband Alexander of Judaea.⁷¹ In order to advertise his enlarged realm and strengthened legitimacy Antiochus IV gave the name of Antiochus Archelaus Epiphanes to his first-born son by Iotape. This ambitious Commagenian prince who bore the pretentious name of two Anatolian dynasties and the epithet of the Seleucid dynasts was, thanks to his army of 'Macedonians',⁷² among the allies to help the future emperor Titus complete the important mission in Judaea.

Antiochus IV of Commagene shared his strong influence in the eastern Mediterranean with his close friend and ally Herod Agrippa of Judaea. Agrippa married his daughter Drusilla to Antiochus Archelaus, while her sister Berenice, after her first marriage with the wealthy Alexandrian Marcus Iulius Alexander, was married to the king of Pontus and Cilicia, Polemon (II).⁷³ Polemon (II) was another prince who, through the lineage of his mother queen Pythodorida, was a direct descendant of Mark Antony and thus a cousin of Roman emperors Caligula, Claudius, and Nero as well as the Roman empresses Valeria Messalina, Agrippina the Younger, and Claudia Octavia.

But, when, in the last year of his rule, Nero sent the general Vespasian and his son Titus to stabilize the situation in Judaea, Berenice's ambitions grew. She used all her 'wealth and influence' to support Vespasian on his campaign to become emperor and created a strong connection with Titus.⁷⁴ In July AD 69, the prefect of Egypt, Tiberius Iulius Alexander, the brother of Berenice's late husband Marcus Iulius Alexander, and son of Alexander the Alabarch, proclaimed Vespasian emperor in Alexandria.⁷⁵

Therefore, it was simply logical that the coalition of a Roman general and the East would bring another 'Cleopatra' to Rome, as was the case of Caesar a century before. This Herodian princess and Cilician

⁶⁸ J., BJ 5.11.3.

⁶⁹ Osgood 2011: 120; 289.

⁷⁰ Borgja 2013: 89.

⁷¹ Borgja 2013: 90.

⁷² Josephus informs us that, like many Macedonian dynasts, the prince appeared in front of Jerusalem 'bringing with him, besides numerous other forces, a bodyguard (the king's companions) calling themselves Macedonians, all of the same age, tall, just out of adolescence, and armed and trained in the Macedonian fashion' (J., BJ 5.11.3). This is a typical continuity with the institutions of the Hellenistic period, when, 'attested for the courts of all Macedonian kingdoms, are the royal pages (*basilikoi paides*) – an age-group consisting of youths between the ages of about 14 and 18 and functioning as 'a training school for the commanders and officials of the Macedonians' (Curt., 8.6.6; cf. Strootman 2013: 45–46). Yet, in the post-Hellenistic context, Josephus makes a clear distinction between the heroic image of the prince and his companions, that were trying to embody the image of 'the genuine Macedonians', although 'most of them (were) lacking any claim to belong to that race' (J., BJ 5.11.3).

⁷³ Murison 2016: 83; Osgood 2011: 120.

⁷⁴ On Tacitus' joke of the seduction of Berenice's beauty vs. 'her money', see: Andrade 2012: 450; cf. also: Murison 2016: 83.

⁷⁵ Murison 2016: 80; Sullivan 1978d: 933.

queen, with a convenient Macedonian dynastic name, Berenice, with her influence and dynastic style greatly annoyed the anti-monarchist Roman elites, represented only the tip of the iceberg. The waves of intensive 'globalization' coming from the East were to transform Rome to its core during the period of rule by the Flavians.

During the Flavian dynasty the most influential post-Hellenistic kingdoms in the eastern Mediterranean ceased to exist, but their dynastic elites continued to influence the Roman global politics. The case of the Commagenian dynasty represents one of the most vivid illustrations for this ambivalent process. Thus, Antiochus Archelaus and his father were among the most influent dynasts that assisted with Titus' operation in Judaea and Vespasian's enthronement. Moreover, Antiochus Archelaus' royal father-in-law Balbillus the Wise (whom we have already met) not only was a former prefect of Egypt, but also went back to Rome as an important advisor of the new emperor Vespasian. However, the mounting global influence of these dynasts provoked fears among their regional competitors as well as the concern of some of their Roman allies as to the possibility of a dangerous coalition between these powerful dynasts and their Parthian relatives. While there is no direct evidence of such plans, Antiochus Archelaus and his brother Callinicus soon decided to oppose the Roman force and their relatives (the allied kings of Chalcis and Emesa) who were sent to Commagene to take over their realm and subsequently fled to the King of Parthia.⁷⁶ Yet, this did not put an end to the Commagenian rulers' cordial relations with Vespasian. He not only allowed their father (Archelaus IV) to come to Rome, but also welcomed back from Parthia Antiochus Archelaus and his brother with honour, according them extensive resources and privileges.

For example, Antiochus Archelaus' son Caius Iulius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappos was elevated to some of the highest positions in Rome. He and his cousins (the sons of Antiochus Archelaus' sister, queen Iotape) became members of the Roman Senate and served as suffect consuls as well as Roman administrators of important areas of the former Hellenistic *oikoumene*.⁷⁷

In addition, Antiochus Archelaus' father-in-law and dynastic relative, Balbillus the Wise himself also enjoyed close relations with Vespasian, who, in the last period of his reign, even instituted games in his honour. Thus, as in previous centuries when cities in the Aegean organized games or built monuments to celebrate the privileges given by Seleucid, Antigonid or Ptolemaic dynasts, and Antiochus Theos of Commagene and other Anatolian dynasts later, the new Roman dynasty gave privileges to Ephesus so as to glorify the descendant of all these kings, Balbillus the Wise, and instituted the new festival of the Balbilleian Games.⁷⁸

The royal family of Commagene was now part of the extended imperial court of Rome, and their descendants would occupy some of the most important posts in the city and elsewhere in the empire. Legitimized by their lineage, the dynastic network of South-Eastern Anatolia metamorphosed into a key element of the development of the Roman imperial system as of the reign of Vespasian. If the dynasts in the time of Julio-Claudians were related to the new dynastic family in the capital city and crucial for its relations with the East, during the rule of the new Flavian dynasty their influence and culture was actively transforming all areas of the life of the city and the Roman empire.

⁷⁶ Facella 2010: 197; Levick 1999: 165–166; Bowersock 1973: 135. For the assistance provided by Aristobulus of Chalcis and Sohaemus of Emesa, see also: Levick 1999: 165; Sullivan 1978a: 320; Sullivan 1978b: 792–793; Sullivan 1978c: 218.

⁷⁷ For Iulius Alexander Berenicianus and Iulius Agrippa, see below.

⁷⁸ On Balbillus' ancestor, Antiochus I as benefactor of the people of Ephesus and the temple of Artemis, see: Fraser 1978: 359–360.

This process culminated around the end of the first century when a new representative of the military took power in Rome. If Vespasian was an outsider lacking a Roman pedigree, the new military leader Trajan was not even from Italy. Elevated to the imperial throne by the military in reaction to an emperor of Italian noble descent who had been installed by the Senate, Trajan relied on and strongly promoted the non-Italian elites, especially those coming from the centres of the Hellenistic world.

During his long and influential rule, he created a 'Roman world' that extended far in the East and included not only the centres of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* in Mesopotamia, but also one of the most prominent dynastic poles of the post-Hellenistic world, viz. the Parthian metropolis of Ctesiphon. Thus, at the beginning of the 2nd century, South-Eastern Anatolia was transformed from a center of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* that was subject to challenge by the Romans and the Parthians into a strategic region of what can be considered, on my opinion, the new Post-Hellenistic empire of Trajan.

In a single century, the kings of the eastern Mediterranean went from the petty remnants of the great kings whom Rome opposed and defeated to forming part of the core element of the new ruling class of the Roman empire. Even the Senate, that as the core of the traditional Roman elites, confronted strongly the 'eastern kings' and their Roman imitators, was transformed including also the post-Hellenistic dynastic elites in the time of Trajan. The conversion of the Senate into an 'Eastern club', as Hammond calls it, was a process initiated by Caesar, and represented the high accomplishments of the lasting coalition of the 'royal faction' in Rome, supported strongly by the military, with the dynasts of the Hellenistic and Post-Hellenistic world in the Mediterranean and the Near East.⁷⁹ In the time of Trajan this coalition had an increasing importance in Rome's government, which led to the thorough integration of Rome in the Hellenistic/post-Hellenistic *oikoumene* during the reign of the Severan dynasty.⁸⁰

Thus, some of the descendants of South-Eastern Anatolian dynastic elites, and their extended dynastic network, at the end of the first and during the 2nd century were not bound anymore by the borders of their narrow realms (that were no more existent). More than a century after the last Macedonian dynast (Cleopatra VII) was eliminated as a contender for global rule, the rulers of the new post-Hellenistic dynastic cores, could already be acclaimed in Hellenistic fashion as 'descendants of so many kings'.⁸¹ While they governed their ancestral lands and other realms as Roman administrators, they were also members of the Roman imperial court and Senate and therefore figured among the most prominent political, economic, cultural, and religious leaders of the Roman world.

For example, the sons of king Alexander and queen Iotape both entered the Senate in Rome in AD 94.⁸² In addition, the younger prince Iulius Alexander Berenicianus was also elected as suffect consul and governed in western Anatolia as proconsul of the province of Asia, and his older brother Iulius Agrippa was suffect consul, member of the Praetorian Guard in Rome and quaestor in the same province of Asia.⁸³

Their sister Iulia Iotape married another senator of similar dynastic descent. Her husband Iulius Quadratus Bassus was descended from the Galatian dynast Amyntas, who was himself a descendant of

⁷⁹ Syme 1988a: 23, 195.

⁸⁰ In the words of Syme, "Trajan's favour went conspicuously to a dynastic group: the descendants of kings and tetrarchs" that took over many of the highest political, administrative and military posts in the empire. See: Syme 1988a: 315. Cf. also: Tevdovski 2024; Hammond 1938.

⁸¹ This ultimate attribute of legitimation of the 'global rulers' in the Hellenistic period is well summed up by Plutarch (Plu., *Ant.* 85.3) through the words of Charmion, the servant of the dead queen Cleopatra (VII), when approached by the Roman newcomers and their morals. See: Pelling 1988: 321.

⁸² On the Roman consulship of 'king Alexander', see: Sullivan 1978d: 937.

⁸³ Bowie 2014: 76; Syme 1988a: 326–340.

the Attalids and the local elites of Galatia. While Amyntas' dynastic elevation was connected to the early eastern policies of Mark Antony, which helped his ambitions towards Cappadocia and Cilicia, his descendant Quadratus Bassus' ambitions and accomplishments, which were related to the policies of Trajan, were much more global. During his long career, he was consul, a member of the college of pontiffs, and governor of Galatia, Cappadocia, and Judaea (the lands of his ancestral kingdoms and those of his wife).⁸⁴ His prominence in the empire also led towards his appointment as governor of Syria, the central province of the Roman East, established over the core areas of the once Seleucid realm. Finally, as prominent general of the emperor Trajan, soon after its conquest, the governor of the new province of Dacia.⁸⁵ Thus, Quadratus Bassus came to rule territories never before ruled by his ancestors among the dynasts of the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic *oikoumene*.

Numerous relatives of this extended dynastic network filled important Roman institutional positions and served as governors of Roman provinces in Anatolia as well as other areas of the former Hellenistic *oikoumene* such as Cyrenaica, Crete, Thrace, or Achaëa.⁸⁶ Yet, their constantly growing position and newly acquired privileges in the Roman imperial system, did not replace their main credentials as descendants of the rulers of the universe. Instead, the dynastic identity of these new Roman elites was slowly turning into a standard precondition upon which they built their position in the evolving Roman imperial system. A real glimpse into the early stages of this assimilation is provided by a descendant of the Commagenian and Emesan dynasties by the name of Sohaemus. Although like many of his relatives he was a senator and had already served as consul in AD 144, as the descendant of kings he was assigned the realm of Armenia and ruled 'in succession to his ancestors' this strategically important kingdom for over two decades.⁸⁷

Yet, the most striking example of the identity of these dynastic elites and their integration with Rome in the post-Hellenistic global system comes from the main line of the Commagenian dynastic branch. Thus, the first-born son of the famous king Antiochus Archelaus, Caius Iulius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappos, who served as Roman magistrate, suffect consul and senator, died in Athens while he was serving as the archon of the city. It is striking that Athens was ruled by a proud descendant of these Roman 'enemies'.⁸⁸

Yet, once we are over the shock of the relatively rapid pace of the ideological changes, it might even seem appropriate and logical that the massive funerary monument of this ruler standing higher than the Acropolis, is built on the hill that was fortified and used by his Macedonian predecessors to rule the city in the Hellenistic period.⁸⁹ Even more important than its central location is the iconography of Philopappos' grandiose monument, which recalls, even if in smaller dimensions, the representation patterns developed on the funerary monument of his illustrious great-grandfather and the founder of

⁸⁴ Rémy 1989: 202–204.

⁸⁵ Syme 1988a: 14.

⁸⁶ Caius Iulius Severus, for example, another Roman senator and suffect consul of the 2nd century AD, proud of his ancestors, king Amyntas and the Macedonian dynasts of the Hellenistic period, served as governor in Germania Inferior. Syme 1988a: 342.

⁸⁷ D.C., 71.2.3. See: Birley 1999: 71; Chaumont 1976: 150–151.

⁸⁸ Smith 1998: 71; Baslez 1992: 89–101; Sullivan 1978b: 792–795.

⁸⁹ The Mouseion hill was fortified by the Macedonian king Demetrius the Besieger, who came to Athens from South-Eastern Anatolia, just as Philopappos, and used the city as a landing ground in Europe, in his attempt to wrest the Balkans and Macedonia from the Antipatrids. Like previous Macedonian dynasts, he approached the Hellenes with the promise of 'freedom'. However, he later placed his Macedonian guards on the Mouseion hill and ruled Athens in Hellenistic manner as a god, frequently visiting the neighboring, lower hill of the Acropolis until he took over the throne of Macedon as the first member of the Antigonid dynasty.

the Commagenian dynastic branch, Antiochus (I) Theos. In a striking similarity with the conception developed on the Theos *hierotherion* (sacred tomb) in Nemrut Dağ, the Philopappos monument legitimizes him as a king (*basileos*).⁹⁰ Through a composition of a small gallery, 'the king Philopappos' statue is flanked with those of his dynastic ancestors: the Macedonian dynast Seleucus I Nikator, the founder of the Seleucid dynasty, and his grandfather Antiochus IV, the last reigning dynast of Commagene. In addition, in the manner of all Hellenistic dynasts, both the style and iconography of the monument are sensitive to its local audiences and context.⁹¹ Thus, in the same manner as that of Antiochus Theos, which integrates the Persian myth and the local traditions of Commagene, the hill-top monument overlooking Athens also adds to Philopappos' dynastic narrative his accomplishments and status in relation to the new Roman context and local traditions.⁹² Yet, the Philopappos monument makes one important adjustment to the centuries-long tradition of legitimization of his ancestors. Unlike Theos' monument in Commagene, this dynastic monument avoids the ultimate legitimization symbol for global rule, Alexander the Great. While the name of this descendant of dynasts includes the attribute Philopappos, which in the Hellenistic context alludes to his activity as co-ruler, his Latin identity emphasizes his close relationship with the emperor Trajan, that I believe could be considered as the new 'Roman Alexander'.⁹³

This elusive aspect of the *cognomen* of the dynastic descendant from the early 2nd century AD enables us to comprehend the level of integration of Rome into the post-Hellenistic *oikoumene*. Throughout the 2nd century the new global Roman elites who based their identity on and represented themselves as descendants of the rulers of the universe were still in a position to restrain their aristocratic pretentiousness and march under the flag of the ambitious western 'Alexanders' with a different background.

However, the second half of the same century provides important signs of the inevitable change. The clearest example of this transformation is the life of Avidius Cassius.⁹⁴ This great man of Rome in the middle of the 2nd century was Philopappos' grandnephew, by his first cousin Iulius Alexander Berenicianus. However, Avidius' mother Iulia Cassia Alexandra did not inherit from her father the senator Berenicianus merely the prominent dynastic bloodline of the Cappadocian and, Commagenian dynasties. Through the senator's marriage with Cassia Lepida, who came from a prominent Roman family, Alexandra was also a direct descendant of the emperor Augustus. On the other hand, Avidius' father Avidius Heliodorus, like the father of Balbillus the Wise, was a prominent scholar, 'philosopher' and administrator from the Macedonian colony of Cyrrhus, which was situated in the core lands of the former Seleucid realm in northern Syria, and now in a central position of the Roman province of Syria; he was later appointed prefect of Egypt.⁹⁵

This post-Hellenistic and Roman 'Alexander in the making', like many of his dynastic cousins in the 2nd century AD, was also a Roman senator and governor, but, more importantly, with his armies he invaded Media, took Mesopotamia with its Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic centres such as Seleucia-on-the-

⁹⁰ As he was called by his friends: Plu., *Moralia* 628a.

⁹¹ Kleiner 1983: 15.

⁹² Smith summarizes that Philopappos is presented as a 'Macedonian king (righthand inscription), as an Athenian citizen, demesman, and archon (central himation statue with label), and as a Roman consul, praetorian, and personal acquaintance of the emperor'. Yet, he is presented on the monument with the titular king, as the title of archon of Athens, known from other textual and epigraphic evidence, might not be appropriate in the context of his kingly monument: Versluys 2008: 342–356; Smith 1998: 70–73.

⁹³ Versluys 2008: 342–356; Smith 1998: 70–73.

⁹⁴ Jarvis 2015: 666–676; Aste 2011; Hekster 2002: 34–37; Ball 2000: 17; Millar 1993: 117; Syme 1988b: 689–701.

⁹⁵ Syme 1988b: 696–697.

Tigris and Ctesiphon, and there were even 'rumors' in Rome that he had crossed the Indus River. In close resemblance with Anthony and Germanicus, Cassius governed the Roman territories in Syria, went to Egypt with a successful mission, and was officially given the Hellenistic East to govern, as *rector Orientis*, by the emperor himself. It might have been only a misunderstanding, involving the empress in Rome as well, that he proclaimed himself ruler of the entire *oikoumene*. Although strongly supported in the centres of the former Seleucid and Ptolemaic realms, the bid for the throne was unsuccessful – this time.⁹⁶

The triumph of the descendants of Alexander in Rome

The episode of Avidius Cassius and his short-lived 'rule of the universe' is often perceived as another showcase for the rapacity and megalomania of the 'Oriental elites'. However, it instead provides an important sign of the ideological change of the 2nd century AD and the high status and level of influence of the post-Hellenistic dynastic elites of the eastern Mediterranean over the 'Roman world' in this period. Let us not forget that Cassius proclaimed himself Emperor at the suggestion of the Roman empress Faustina the Younger, and that the emperor Aurelius even after Cassius' proclamation as emperor showed respect for his 'dear friend' and a willingness to reconcile their differences. That the Cassius affair was not an incident, but the spirit of the era, we are also reminded through the prominent life of another dynastic descendant from Syria and Anatolia of the same period. Thus, in AD 170 when Cassius, as *rector Orientis*, was given *imperium* over the entirety of the eastern section of the Roman empire by Marcus Aurelius, his 'dynastic relative' from Antioch and fellow commander from the wars against the Parthians married the empress of Rome, Lucilla, daughter of emperor Marcus Aurelius and empress Faustina the Younger.⁹⁷ Lucilla was not only the daughter of an emperor when she married the influential Roman senator, consul and general from Antioch, Cnaeus Claudius Severus, but also an Augusta of Rome, as the widow of the late emperor Lucius Verus. Unlike Cassius and perhaps influenced by the example of his fate, Cnaeus Claudius Severus, who lived in Rome as an influential senator, three times refused the offer of the imperial throne.⁹⁸

Finally, a bit more than a decade after the Cassius affair, and in the last years of the long life of his dynastic cousin and potential emperor Claudius Severus, another general with the same *cognomen* Severus made a real difference for the Roman world. Septimius Severus was not descended from the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic dynasts, and his origin was not even connected to the central areas of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* in the eastern Mediterranean. Thus, the 'Orient' did not initially support him, but rather Pescennius Niger a man that, on the contrary, had important individual ties to the East.⁹⁹ Severus was a military commander from the West, supported and enthroned by the military faction, like Antony, Vespasian, and Trajan.¹⁰⁰ But, like Antony and Titus, Septimius Severus also had his 'oriental' queen.

Iulia Domna's father was a high priest, like the father of Archelaus I of Cappadocia, and she had been foretold that she would marry a 'king'.¹⁰¹ Thus, in order to gain credibility, Severus decided to take as

⁹⁶ Peachin supports the possibility that empress Faustina instigated the usurpation, following Dio's narrative. See: Peachin 2006: 139, Syme 1988b: 700.

⁹⁷ The other daughter of Marcus Aurelius and Faustina, Aurelia Faustina, had been married even earlier to Claudius Severus, the prominent philosopher and senator descending from the Anatolian (Galatian) dynasts. Syme 1988a: 18.

⁹⁸ This steadfast refusal perhaps enabled him to outlive his wife Lucilla, his father-in-law Marcus Aurelius, and his brother-in-law Commodus.

⁹⁹ Butor 2006: 143–153.

¹⁰⁰ Hekster 2008: 12–13.

¹⁰¹ Ball 2000: 404–405. Cf. also: Langford 2013.

his second wife a prominent princess, much like Herod Archelaus did with the Cappadocian princess Glaphyra. Iulia Domna's dynastic branch had humble origins among the nomadic tribal chieftains that had once served the Macedonian kings.¹⁰² Yet, soon after the coming of the Romans, these local elites who lived close to the core areas of the former Seleucid realm and the Roman province of Syria gained in importance and prominence. The marriage of their leader Sampsiceramus (II) with the Commagenian princess Iotape and the marriage of their son with princess Drusilla, the daughter the Ptolemy of Mauretania and great-grandchild of the last Macedonian dynast Cleopatra (VII) and Mark Antony, transformed Emesa into one of the most prominent centres of the dynastic descendants of the rulers of the universe.¹⁰³

Domna, in the style of Caesar's Cleopatra or Titus' Berenice came to Rome with a Roman general 'destined to rule the universe'.¹⁰⁴ Yet, by the end of the 2nd century it was a different Rome, and in marked difference from Caesar, Antony or Titus, Septimus successfully placed his new '*despoina of the oikoumene*', Isis and Augusta upon the throne.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the new 'oriental' queen was there to stay and also there to change Rome forever. Through Domna, the post-Hellenistic elites of the eastern Mediterranean were finally able to accomplish the stalled vision of the last dynast of the Hellenistic period: to integrate the military might of Rome into the Hellenistic global system and stabilize once again the central areas of the ancient *oikoumene*.¹⁰⁶

The new Roman emperors, thanks to their descent from the princess Iulia Domna, were not content to play the part of a latter-day Alexander the Great in the fashion of Roman generals and previous emperors. In the former Hellenistic world and perhaps for many in other areas of the Roman world, through their mother's lineage they were the legitimate, or at least very credible, heirs of Alexander the Great, just as Ariarathes Eusebes of Cappadocia, Mithridates of Pontus, Antiochus Theos of Commagene, Ptolemy Caesarion, and Alexander Helios before them.

Therefore, the consistent claim of the Severan emperors regarding their Hellenistic heritage, ideas and symbols was not just a personal affinity or megalomania, as some biased Roman and classical-minded modern authors have suggested. Instead, according to my opinion, this represented a well-developed ideological and religious global conception initiated in eastern Anatolia and promoted strongly for two centuries by its elites through the creation of a wider post-Hellenistic dynastic network.

This ideology adopted and utilized by the Roman emperors of the 3rd century AD was not just a successful, but also an inevitable phenomenon. It was widely acclaimed in the centres of the former Hellenistic *oikoumene*, which by that time had turned into central areas of the Roman world as well. This ideology was not just legitimization of the global rule of the emperor. Rather, its extensive use by the emperors was also aimed at legitimizing and strengthening the claims and aspirations of a large number of elites who had also based their credentials on the post-Hellenistic global dynastic network and its ideas.

¹⁰² Birley 1999: 69.

¹⁰³ Sampsiceramus entered in coalitions with numerous dynasts and developed close relations with the Herod Agrippa I as well. He married his daughter, also named Iotape, to Herod Agrippa's brother Aristobulus, while his son married Agrippa's Drusilla. Birley 1999: 70.

¹⁰⁴ Ball 2000: 404–405; Tarn 1932: 135–160. On later developments of the concept, see: Tommasi Moerschini 2016: 190; Rowan 2012.

¹⁰⁵ Levick 2007: 153.

¹⁰⁶ Domna celebrated in Hellenistic manner as '(Tyche) Good Fortune of the Inhabited World' was, thus, like Cleopatra VII (the New Isis) before, predestined to return its universal concord, or the Hellenistic ideal of *Homonoia*. Strootman 2010: 140–157; Levick 2007: 153; Tarn 1932: 138–140.

Thus, with their post-Hellenistic credentials, Caracalla, Geta or 'Heliogabalus' were perceived by appropriate audiences as direct descendants of the Macedonian divine kings who had supposedly united the world and brought prosperity before.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, they were also descendants of the Cappadocian, Emesan, Mauretanian, Commagenian or Nabataean royalty, whose real or purported descendants from the East were now their new global dynastic court and prioritized contenders for the global rule.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, they were obliged to live up to the expectations of their extended court of 'eastern philosophers' and dynastic peers, frenetically trying, through 'Macedonian clothes', 'dynastic image and behavior', 'hair style', 'cups' or 'breastplates', and iconography that involved Heracles, Helios or Dionysus, to be the most authentic and most credible Alexander among Alexanders.¹⁰⁹

Thus, Caracalla, on the borders of Macedonia, in the style of his dynastic relative, the Commagenian prince Antiochus Archelaus, and with the colossal taste of the prince's great grandfather Antiochus Theos, 'assembled a phalanx consisting only of Macedonians, sixteen thousand men, which he called 'phalanx of Alexander' and which he equipped with weapons which had been used in Alexander's time...' ¹¹⁰ In addition, walking 'around in Macedonian clothes, with a cap on his head and boots on his feet', in front of 'the Macedonian phalanx...he ordered their leaders to adopt the names of Alexander's generals.'¹¹¹ This, certainly, played well into the personal and family narratives of many post-Hellenistic dynastic elites that he was surrounded with, as they were based on the ancestry from the same Macedonian generals, who later became divine rulers of the universe.¹¹² One can only speculate whether their new military *cognomen* given by Caracalla, like Antiochus, Seleucus, Ptolemy, Philip, Antipater, or Amyntas, related directly to their supposed lineage from different Macedonian dynasts, or they used it to make some new additions to their dynastic legacy.

Finally, there emerged in the 3rd century new Roman emperors who were born with dynastic names such as Alexander or Philip in the core areas of post-Hellenistic world and raised with their values. They were the descendants of the priest-princes who had supported and professed Roman emperors'

¹⁰⁷ Cassius Dio (D.C., 78.7.1-2), for example, in a critical voice, and through the traditional senatorial (Romanocentric) narrative, observes the new imperial ideology, saying that the emperor (Caracalla) 'was so obsessed with Alexander, that he used certain weapons and cups which he thought had belonged to him. Moreover, he put up a large number of statues of him in the army camps and in Rome, and he assembled a phalanx consisting only of Macedonians, sixteen thousand men, which he called 'phalanx of Alexander' and which he equipped with weapons which had been used in Alexander's time... Not yet satisfied he called that same Alexander 'the Augustus of the East'. He once wrote to the Senate that he [Alexander] had entered into the body of Augustus in order to have a longer life through him, having lived such a short life before... This is how he behaved and, by Zeus, he went around with a large number of elephants to create the impression that in this respect also he imitated Alexander, or rather Dionysus'. This new level of obsessive *imitatio Alexandri*, or rather renaissance of the Hellenistic imperial traditions, is extensively presented by other authors as well, Herodianus, the later Aurelius Victor and in *Historia Augusta*. See: Burgersdijk and van Waarden 2010: 78-80.

¹⁰⁸ Birley 1999.

¹⁰⁹ Thus, Herodian presents this reinvigorated Hellenistic pomp 'After having settled the problems with the garrisons on the Danube and having gone to Thrace, which borders on Macedonia, he (Caracalla) was suddenly Alexander and he breathed life into his memory in all possible ways. He ordered statues and images to be placed in all cities. Rome, too, he filled with these, in the Capitol and in other temples, to demonstrate his kinship with Alexander. He himself walked around in Macedonian clothes, with a cap on his head and boots on his feet. He selected a number of youths, whom he called 'the Macedonian phalanx'. He ordered their leaders to adopt the names of Alexander's generals' (Hdn., 4.8.1-2) (Trans. C.R. Whittaker).

¹¹⁰ D.C., 78.7.1-2.

¹¹¹ Hdn., 4.8.1-2.

¹¹² It certainly played well, at the same time, in the ethnic narrative of 'the genuine Macedonians', as Josephus calls them. Although the Jewish historian made a serious effort to distinguish the Macedonians among all others that claimed this popular identity in the East, in many cases the distinction between these 'two categories', if they existed, might have been vague.

accession to power in the past. Yet, now, 'in accordance with the will of Gods, their predecessors', they were the new rulers of the universe (*cosmocrators*).¹¹³

The most revealing image of the new ideal emperor and ruler of the *oikoumene* is furnished by the *Historia Augusta*. His name was simply Alexander, and he refused all the names of previous Roman emperors that the Roman Senate offered to add as his *nomen*. He did not need any other titles or credentials, because, as he kindly stated before the Senators: 'This very name which I now bear, albeit a foreign one (for the Romans), seems to weigh heavily upon me'.¹¹⁴ That name, or rather symbol, certainly represented the ultimate credential and ideal for many elites and, through the sanctuaries, also for wider audiences of the ancient *oikoumene*, including some newly attached areas in the West. The author of *Historia Augusta* exposes vividly all the omens that assured the *oikoumene* that the new-born Alexander was predestined to be its idealized universal ruler. Thus, we read:

'The omens that predicted his rule were as follows: first, he was born on the anniversary of that day on which, it is said, Alexander the Great departed this life; secondly, his mother bore him in a temple dedicated to Alexander; and thirdly, he was called by Alexander's name. Furthermore, a dove's egg of purple hue, laid the very day he was born, was presented to his mother by an old woman; and from this the soothsayers prophesied that he would indeed be emperor. [—] We must add, moreover, that a woman named Olympias acted as his nurse – this was also the name of the mother of Alexander the Great – and it happened by chance that he was reared by a certain peasant named Philip which was the name of Alexander's father. It is said that on the day after his birth a star of the first magnitude was visible for the entire day at Arca Caesarea, and also that in the neighbourhood of his father's house the sun was encircled with a gleaming ring. And the soothsayers, when they commended his birthday to the favour of the gods, declared that he would someday hold the supreme power. [—] Also, a laurel sprang up in his house close to a peach-tree, and within a single year it outgrew the peach, and from this the soothsayers predicted that he was destined to conquer the Persians. The night before he was born his mother dreamed that she brought forth a purple snake, and on the same night his father saw himself in a dream carried to the sky.'¹¹⁵

For the author of this principal source for the history of Rome and Roman emperors in the 3rd century, there is no doubt that the new emperor was considered a reincarnation of Alexander the Great. While for the Hellenistic-minded audiences his credentials as a descendant of the Emesan, Commagenian and Judaean dynasts inevitably suggested such continuity of global rule, the importance of the *Historia Augusta* is that it was written in Latin and thus appealed mainly to western audiences. This text, through one of the longest of its imperial biographies, aspires to create a new picture of the ideal Roman emperor that is built upon the values and traditions of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* as they were shared and transmitted by the post-Hellenistic elites of its core areas. Therefore, its narratives, its mysterious tone and even its fictional elements are in direct relation with the ultimate 'Hellenistic' hagiography of the universal ruler, viz. the Alexander Romance, that was also translated into Latin in the same period.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ The title *cosmocrator* was used early for Alexander of Macedon (greetings from Aristotle in *Historia Alexandri Magni*). Later through 'secular legends of Alexander the world-ruler (*kosmokrator*) were proliferating as a shining archetype of the Roman and Byzantine cosmocratic cosmopolitan'. In later Byzantine iconography it referred to Jesus, as king of heaven and earth, together with the related term *pantocrator*. Chin 2016: 137; Stoneman 2008: 96–97.

¹¹⁴ *Hist. Aug., Alex. Sev.* 1.8. (191–195) (trans. D. Magie).

¹¹⁵ *Hist. Aug., Alex. Sev.* 1.13 (201–205) (trans. D. Magie).

¹¹⁶ Although *Historia Augusta* claims to be composed in the 3rd century, with its historical narrative ending then and its dedication to Diocletian modern researchers continuously argue in favor of a 4th century dating (Thomson 2012: 53; Dessau 1889). However, this dating discrepancy does not problematize its rootedness in the Hellenistic-minded narratives. Instead, it is

The emperor Alexander, like his famous Macedonian namesake and most of the dynasts from the Hellenistic period, and their post-Hellenistic descendants, had many tutors. This also prepared him to ascend the throne to Rome, and his *paideia* and the adopted Roman taste for simplicity and moderate behaviour made him more popular among the senatorial elites than many of his Hellenistic-minded imperial predecessors.¹¹⁷

Yet, a glimpse of the personal religiosity or value system of this 'Syrian boy', as portrayed by the *Historia Augusta*, exposes the value system constructed by the post-Hellenistic dynastic elites that triumphed over Rome in the 3rd century AD. Thus, we understand that:

'[in the] early morning hours he (Alexander Severus) would worship in the sanctuary of his Lares, in which he kept statues of the deified emperors – of whom, however, only the best had been selected – and also of certain holy souls, among them Apollonius, and, according to a contemporary writer, Christ, Abraham, Orpheus, and others of this same character and, besides, the portraits of his ancestors. [—] But Alexander the Great he enshrined in his greater sanctuary along with the most righteous men and the deified emperors.'¹¹⁸

Thus, like his dynastic ancestor Antiochus Theos of Commagene and, most probably, also like Antiochus' grandson Caius Iulius Alexion, the priest-king of Emesa,¹¹⁹ the 'Roman' dynast Alexander had his own sanctuary of hero-ancestors. There, as all post-Hellenistic dynasts, he displayed his dynastic lineage, which included the emblematic figures of the global rule (Alexander the Great and the Macedonian dynasts) as well as other figures who legitimized his dynastic inheritance in the new post-Hellenistic context.¹²⁰ Thus, according to the *Historia Augusta*, the sanctuary, like the monument of Philopappos, reflected its Roman context, integrating carefully selected predecessors from the new dynastic centre of Rome. Yet, Alexander's dynastic ancestors are also there, additionally delicately emphasized through the inclusion of their globalized religious and ideological traditions. Thus, Alexander's sanctuary includes the famous Cilician philosopher and religious leader Apollonius of Tyana, who travelled throughout the *oikoumene* from India to Rome, as well as the prominent founding-father of the local religious traditions of Judaea, Abraham. The presence of Jesus, a living God, king and prophet from Judaea, strongly promoted in the centre of the *oikoumene* through the ideas and *paideia* of the prominent Cilician, Paul of Tarsus, and Orpheus, the legendary king, singer and prophet from Macedonia, whose religious

more than obvious that its Western (Latin) sources disappear after the narration of Caracalla's life, and the tone and style changes dramatically towards a Hellenistic one (Syme 1983: 15; Barnes 1978: 38). Thus, for example, the '*Life of Alexander Severus*' according to some researchers is not a historical narrative, but instead a fictional one (Syme 1983: 15; Baynes 1926: 57–67; 118–144). As Thomson argues *Historia Augusta*, made an important influence on the 'literary culture of the Roman elite', and, this, is not as much important as historical work, but as an ideological guideline for the elites living in the universe, united under the will and brilliance of the *cosmocrator* (Thomson 2012: 68–69).

¹¹⁷ Many modern scholars have highlighted the bias of Cassius Dio, as author of the classical dichotomy between Elagabalus and Alexander Severus, as 'good' vs. 'bad' emperor. Yet, beyond Dio's personal interests and affinities there was a wider tendency among the senatorial and other conservative elites in Rome to portray the Hellenistic ideology or iconography of the emperors as non-Roman, 'bad' and even anti-Roman. The most obvious examples of such stereotyping are Caligula, Nero, Domitian, or Caracalla, while Alexander Severus is in a group of emperors, like Trajan, Philip the Arab, and even Augustus, able to manage more smoothly the globalization process and integration of Rome into the Hellenistic *oikoumene*. On Dio: Davenport 2011; Sidebottom 2007; Barnes 1984; Millar 1964. See also: Burgersdijk and van Waarden 2010; Alston 1998; Zanker 1988.

¹¹⁸ *Hist. Aug., Alex. Sev.* 2.29–31 (234–241) (trans. D. Magie).

¹¹⁹ On Emesene royal tombs, see: Ball 2000.

¹²⁰ The Aboukir Medallions, frequently dated in the period of rule of Alexander Severus, represent a remarkable verification in the material culture of the resurrected Hellenistic ideology in the narrative of global rule of the Severan dynasty. See: Vermeule 1982.

interpretations and utilizations grew extensively during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, in such context, might also be illustrative of the syncretizing tendencies developed through the strong interaction of the elites from the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic dynastic cores.¹²¹

Finally, if we still wonder whether the new standard for the ruler of the *oikoumene*, Alexander, leans more on the Roman globalized value-system or rather on the continual discourse of the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic dynastic traditions, the *Historia Augusta* provides the ultimate argument in Latin, explaining that:

‘When Alexander himself consulted a prophet about his future, being still a small child, he received, it is said, the following verses, and first of all, by the oracle: “Thee doth empire await on earth and in Heaven”’.¹²²

This prophecy epitomizes the new Roman emperor, portraying Alexander as a universal ruler who is not only a god, but also a ruler in the heavens. This was a concept of divine kingship based on the court ideologies and ruler-cults of the Macedonian dynasts of the Hellenistic period as well as their post-Hellenistic dynastic descendants like Antiochus Theos of Commagene.¹²³ It exposes an enduring ideological, political and religious system that was continuously offered by the ‘eastern elites’ to the Roman leaders from Caesar and Antony to Vespasian and Septimus Severus. The triumph of this cultural, political and ideological *koine*, inherited and further developed by the post-Hellenistic dynastic elites, managed to integrate Rome into the globalizing *oikoumene* developed during the Hellenistic period.

Conclusions

In the year 51 BC, when Cicero, was sent far from Rome to govern the new province of Cilicia, he encountered aspects of the Hellenistic *oikoumene* that were less visible from its western fringes. While in the West, the Roman antiroyal ideas found fertile ground at least among some formerly independent or semi-dependent Greek *poleis*, the traditions of these regions and their elites were much more coherent with the ideology of the Macedonian and previous dynasties of the Near East.

He came back with even greater awareness for the upcoming dangers for the ‘freedom of Rome’ and the newly imagined Mediterranean *oikoumene* of ‘free’ cities and peoples led by the Romans. Cicero had a clear understanding that although Pompey won the military confrontation in the East, it was Mithridates and his Hellenistic concepts that won in the ‘war of ideas’.¹²⁴ Aware that the Roman generals and

¹²¹ The promotion of the life of Apollonius by Domna and other ‘eastern’ emperors of the 3rd century is documented by other sources. Yet, even if we interpret the presence of Jesus, as an addition of a hypothetical later author, or if we add to these religious traditions, or replace them with, the globally prominent Mithraism, and the cults of Sol Invictus, Isis and Serapis, or Jupiter Dolichenus in the 3rd century AD the arguments for their promotion in the context of the dominance of the traditions of the Eastern-Mediterranean elites remains. *Hist. Aug., Alex. Sev.* 2.29–31 (234–241) (trans. D. Magie).

¹²² *Hist. Aug., Alex. Sev.* 1.13 (203) (trans. D. Magie).

¹²³ During the period of rule of Alexander (Severus) his famous historian Cassius Dio, another Roman senator from Anatolia, and administrator of different provinces of the empire, even revitalized the image of the Roman archenemy Mithridates (VI of Pontus). This early post-Hellenistic descendent of Alexander and dynastic relative of the new Roman emperor, in Dio’s histories was not an oriental despot anymore, but an idealized charismatic, brave, and strong leader with royal dignity that people followed with passion. D.C., 36.9.2–3; 37.12.2; 37.1.7. For the Roman authors of the 3rd century Mithridates has a greatness recognized even by the skies, signaling his birth with a comet. *Iust.*, 37.2.2–3.

¹²⁴ The new Roman Alexander, Pompey, in his triumph was presented in close, or even obtrusive, resemblance to the Hellenistic universal symbol of rule, and even more instructively wore ‘Alexander’s cloak, which he had found among Mithridates’ treasures’. The words of Elder Pliny (Plin., *N.H.* 7.95) on Pompey reveal the early appropriation of the formula of ultimate legitimization of the Macedonian divine dynasts: ‘He (Pompey) matched the glorious achievements of Alexander the Great, yes, even almost those of Hercules and Dionysus’. Burgersdijk and van Waarden 2010: 70.

administrators in the East were intensively integrating in the Hellenistic *oikoumene*, as aspiring dynasts or establishing close relations with the dynastic network, he managed to come back to Rome from a period that he lived as a sort of exile and face them in the final battle for the Republic.¹²⁵ There, writing his famous *Philippicae*, styled after Demosthenes' speeches against the Macedonian aggression to the detriment of the freedom of the Greeks, he confronted the vision of the 'new dynasts' Caesar and Antony to integrate Rome and its elites into the Hellenistic *oikoumene*.¹²⁶

While Cicero did not survive this last battle for the 'freedom of the city', his ideas were a key factor in stalling the vision of an integrated world professed by Cleopatra in the Alexandrian donations.¹²⁷ Yet, almost two centuries later another great orator felt the need to address Athens and Rome in a strong stance against the 'barbaric' Philip of Macedon. Although the Macedonian king had died almost half a millennium before the speeches of Aelius Aristides, his imperialist vision was very much alive.¹²⁸ Exclaiming that 'no one should show patriotic fervour for Pella or Aegae', Aristides harshly challenged the credentials of the dynastic descendants of Philip and the Macedonian dynasts, that by the 2nd century AD became not just archons of Athens, or consuls of Achaëa, but also the closest associates and relatives of the Roman emperors.¹²⁹ Yet, by then it was already too late.

Rome was already strongly 'Macedonized', or rather globalized and strongly integrated in the *oikoumene* and cultural and political *koine* developed during the Hellenistic period.¹³⁰ The elites of South-Eastern Anatolia that Cicero once arrogantly derided and their dynastic relatives had turned into exponents of the *oikoumene* and the Roman empire. By the beginning of the 3rd century their belief system and the statues of their deified ancestors were neither hidden among the remote peaks of the Taurus mountains as in the time of Cicero nor proudly emerging over democratic Athens as in the time of Aristides. Instead, they dominated the main squares, palaces, and temples in all Roman provinces, and in the city of Rome itself.¹³¹

This experimental *longue-durée* perspective on the creation of the 'Roman world' that questions its embedded discourse does not try to create a coherent new narrative. Yet, it is bold enough to ask unusual questions. Who, for instance, won the global battle for the rule of the universe? The 'Mighty Republic'

¹²⁵ These elements of Cicero's republican discourse are particularly evident in his accusations for the Roman governors of Macedonia and Syria. He points out that these Roman representatives in the important centers of the Hellenistic world have acquired important elements of its ideology and culture. For Cicero 'Piso (governing Macedonia) was a tyrant: (and) Gabinius (governing Syria) is the servant of tyrants'. He exposes their close relations with the local elites and their values and system of rule and warns of the great danger for the city of Rome from this coalition of Roman leaders and the Hellenistic elites'. Cicero anticipates that these globalizing Romans are more threatening for the status quo in Rome than the Macedonian kings and their descendants in the East that they emulate or serve to. They have become an integral part of the *oikoumene* united in 'serving' the Great Kings and, thus, the 'non-Roman', 'non-Greek' and 'barbarian' consulships of Piso and Gabinius have been worse for the city of Rome than the invasion of Hannibal' and the invasion on the Roman world by Mithridates. Steel 2001: 47-52.

¹²⁶ Cic., *Off.* 3.83; Cic., *Phil.* 2; Cic., *Ad Brut.* 2.3.4.

¹²⁷ Strootman 2010: 140-157.

¹²⁸ On Aristides' *imitatio* of Demosthenes' language in order to create the ultimate 'barbarian' and 'tyrant' of Philip, see: Asirvatham 2008.

¹²⁹ While Philopappos dynastic monument recently erected to overlook Athens from the dominant hill in the city, was certainly provoking Aristides classical idyll of Greece, his confrontation with Philopappos' dynastic relative Iulius Severus, elected to govern Achaëa and, later, Asia (western Anatolia), was also of a personal character. In this context, Aristides manages in his speeches to portray not just the Persian, but also the Macedonian ancestors of these elites as 'barbarians', unrelated to the Greeks and hostile to the Romans. Asirvatham 2008; Behr 1981: 334.

¹³⁰ On the concept of ancient 'globalization' as 'Macedonized' world, modeled on relating to a 'culture only partly one's own', see: Liebert 2011.

¹³¹ Hdn., 4.8.1-2.

with its generals or the petty kingdoms counting on legitimacy and continuity in the globalizing *oikoumene*?

In addition, it suggests that many answers to such questions conspicuously present themselves once we decide to put aside, for just a moment, our Eurocentric and Classical perspective. Thus, no one should be particularly surprised that the credentials, traditions, and capacities of the centrally positioned elites of the globalized Hellenistic world were strong enough to overcome, in the long run, a competitor from the outskirts of the *oikoumene*.

However, if the impact of South-Eastern Anatolia and its elites on the overall dynamics of the three initial centuries of Roman imperialism, presented in this study, are not convincing enough, we should look for clues in the next centuries. There, for approximately one millennium, the Roman empire, or rather *Basileia ton Rhomaion*, was led from Anatolia, by dynastic rulers, each portrayed as the new Alexander, and governing the world by the 'good will of God', in close relations with the powerful priest elites, frequently descending from the same dynastic lines.¹³² Like their 'classical predecessors' from South-Eastern Anatolia, the new Roman *basileis basileōn*, although relying on the capacities of the traditional Hellenistic metropoleis, like Alexandria, Antioch and Thessalonica, and effectively governing only Anatolia during the most of this period, remained consistent in their universalist pretensions. They were praised through their court ideology as descendants of the Roman, Macedonian, and Armenian kings, and as such *pantocrators* on Earth and rulers of the entire *oikoumene*.

¹³² The Byzantine emperors like the Persian kings ruled 'by the will of God(s)'. The development of this concept might be traced to Caracalla reforms in the 3rd century AD, who gave equal status to all people living in his empire, transforming *Pax Romana* (the Roman peace) into *Pax Deorum* (Peace of/with Gods). See: Hekster 2008: 3–10.