



Demetrius the Besieger and Hellenistic Kingship

Warlords and Kings

In the early summer of 307 BC, a young Macedonian general set sail from Ephesus with a fleet of 250 warships. Demetrius, some thirty years of age, and later affectionately known as 'the Besieger', was not of royal blood. His father Antigonus the One-Eyed had been a minor member of the Macedonian royal court, rising to power only after Alexander's death, thanks to his command of the main bulk of the Macedonian army in Asia. By 307, Antigonus had seized control of most of Alexander's conquered territories in western Asia, and now had his single eye fixed on the wealthy cities of mainland Greece. Demetrius' mission in 307 was the 'liberation' of the cities of Greece from the Macedonian dynast Cassander, Antigonus' chief rival for control of the Aegean.

Demetrius sailed first against the city of Athens, ruled since 317 by Cassander's client Demetrius of Phalerum, a

conservative philosopher from Aristotle's Peripatetic school. In June 307, the Besieger's fleet sailed unchallenged into the Piraeus, the main harbour of Athens. His arrival was unexpected. Plutarch, in his *Life of Demetrius*, tells us that the Athenians had mistaken his armada for that of Cassander's ally Ptolemy of Egypt; the Aegean was bristling with Macedonian warships in those days. The deposed Demetrius of Phalerum came to terms with the city's new master, leaving Athens on the following day for Thebes. He eventually ended his days, like many Greek intellectuals of the period, in Ptolemy's court at Alexandria.

The new regime at Athens started with a bang. For ten years, Athens had been governed by Cassander as a narrow oligarchy. Demetrius now restored the ancestral Athenian democracy (at least in name), and promised the Athenians vast gifts of grain and ship-timber from his father's domains in Asia. The Athenians promptly hailed Demetrius as their saviour and benefactor; Demetrius and Antigonus were given the titles of Saviour Gods, and on the spot where Demetrius had first alighted from his chariot on arriving in Athens, the Athenians consecrated an altar to Demetrius the Alighter. Most important of all, as Plutarch tells us, 'the Athenians were the first among all men to address Demetrius and Antigonus as Kings, although both had previously shrunk from using the title'.

The first, but not the last. A year later, after a stunning victory by Demetrius over Ptolemy's fleet off Cyprus, both Demetrius and Antigonus were formally acclaimed as kings by their army. Within three years of Demetrius' capture of Athens, another five men had claimed the title of 'king' for

themselves: Seleucus in Babylon, Ptolemy in Egypt, Lysimachus in Thrace, Cassander in Macedon, and Agathocles in Sicily. As the Hellenistic period wore on, monarchs continued to multiply, particularly in the lands vacated by the steadily shrinking Seleucid kingdom in Asia; by the early second century BC, the Asia Minor peninsula alone was home to a good half a dozen local dynasts bearing the royal title.

What claim did men like Demetrius and Antigonus have to the title of king? In purely legal or constitutional terms, none whatsoever. Demetrius had no connection to the old Macedonian royal line; he and his father were essentially warlords, regional strongmen who could command an army's loyalty. But the Athenians were not wrong to recognize Demetrius as a king. A medieval Greek lexicon, the so-called *Suda*, states the matter most pithily in its short entry on kingship (*'basileia'*):

Monarchical powers are given to men neither by nature nor by law; they are given to those who are capable of commanding troops and handling politics competently. Such was the case with the successors to Alexander.

Kingship in the early Hellenistic world was primarily a matter of power. Demetrius was a man of outstanding charisma, dazzling military success, and colossal personal wealth, and therefore—in the eyes of his subjects, which is all that matters—he deserved the title of king. An impoverished, peace-loving or unsuccessful king was a contradiction in terms: early Hellenistic kings were expected to look and behave like the young Demetrius, handsome and radiant,

rich and warlike, fighting on horseback at the head of his troops. The new generation of kings drew heavily, of course, on the glamorous and dynamic generalship of Alexander the Great; but Alexander's royal authority had always rested first and foremost on his hereditary position as 'national' monarch of the Macedonians. Not so Demetrius.

As we might expect, the institutional position of these new-style Hellenistic monarchs was rather poorly defined. Their courts were made up of informal circles of friends (*'philoi'*), and the fiscal and administrative structures of the new kingdoms were rudimentary to say the least. Monarchy in the late fourth and early third century was personal, not territorial. None of the successor monarchs ever described themselves as kings 'of' a particular region: they were simply 'kings'. Significantly, when Demetrius lost almost all of his dependent territories after the battle of Ipsus in 301 BC, and his 'kingdom' was reduced to a few maritime fortresses (Ephesus, Corinth, Tyre), he did not cease to be a king: so long as he retained his formidable war-fleet, his royal status was not in question.

As one generation succeeded another in the newly established Hellenistic kingdoms, the charismatic warlords of the late fourth century were gradually replaced by hereditary monarchs. Personal kingship was steadily transformed into a more stable territorial and dynastic kingship. But the origins of the Hellenistic monarchies in warfare, wealth, and personal magnetism were never forgotten. Right down to the end of the Hellenistic period, kings were always depicted in much the same way, as glamorous and dynamic heroes, taking on Alexander's mantle as warriors and conquerors.

The so-called 'Terme ruler', an above-life-size bronze statue of a second-century Hellenistic ruler (now in the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome), shows the king as a muscle-bound superman, powerful and ruthless, ready for new conquests (see Figure 7).

The King at War

War was at the heart of Hellenistic kingship. The acclamation of Demetrius and Antigonus as kings by their army followed hard on the heels of Demetrius' great naval victory over Ptolemy off Cyprus (306 BC), and almost a century later, some time in the 230s BC, the local dynast Attalus of Pergamon used a major victory over the Galatians of central Asia Minor as his justification for claiming the title of king. Numerous Hellenistic kings carried royal epithets or nicknames like *Nikēphoros*, 'victory-bearer', *Kallinikos*, 'winner of fair victories', or *Anikētos*, 'invincible'. A good Hellenistic king was expected to defend his inheritance, expand his territory by conquest, and enrich his army with a regular supply of booty.

The relentless militarism of Hellenistic monarchy has its origins in the carnage out of which the new kingdoms emerged. For thirty years after Alexander's death, vast armies, liberally funded by the booty captured from the Persian royal treasuries by Alexander, fought their way back and forth across Asia and Europe. Between 320 and 309 BC, Antigonus the One-Eyed (not a man in the first flush of youth) was on campaign almost without pause: against Eumenes in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Iran



Figure 7 The 'Terme ruler', a bronze statue of an unidentified Hellenistic prince, from the Quirinal in Rome; the statue was probably taken to Rome as booty some time in the second or first century BC.

(320–316), against a coalition of Ptolemy, Cassander, and Lysimachus in the Levant and Asia Minor (315–311), and finally against Seleucus in Mesopotamia (310–309). Antigonus himself died on the battlefield in 301 BC, still fighting in person well into his eighty-second year. In this grim struggle for land and prestige, the successor dynasts ploughed all their resources into the arts of war: the first Seleucid king, Seleucus I Nicator ('the Conqueror'), was willing to give up his territorial possessions in India to Chandragupta Maurya in return for 500 war elephants.

The most dramatic of all the campaigns waged by the early Hellenistic kings was Demetrius' great siege of the island-city of Rhodes, conducted over an entire year from summer 305 to summer 304 BC. Rhodes, probably the most powerful city-state in the Greek world at this period, had remained formally neutral in the wars of the successors, but showed particular favour to Ptolemy, since much of Rhodes' wealth (and all of her grain-supply) came through maritime trade with Egypt. When the Rhodians showed insufficient willingness to support Antigonus in his war against Ptolemy, Demetrius sailed against the city with a vast armament of more than 370 ships, 40,000 infantry, and an unspecified number of cavalry and pirate allies. Demetrius launched repeated assaults against the Rhodians' walls by land and sea, employing an increasingly Heath Robinson-esque array of siege engines (hence his nickname 'the Besieger'). The most elaborate of these was his famous *helepolis* ('City-Taker'), an armoured siege-tower nine stories high, and so heavy that it required 3,400 men to push it forwards on its 3-foot-thick iron-plated wheels.

For all its strategic importance, Rhodes was certainly not worth the colossal expenditure of resources that Demetrius sank into the siege. The capture of the city rapidly became a matter of personal prestige for Demetrius, not least because the besieged Rhodians continued to be supplied with grain by his three main rivals, Cassander, Lysimachus, and above all Ptolemy, who also sent mercenary forces in support of the city. Demetrius' increasingly extravagant gadgets had something of the theatrical about them: they were a means of impressing the wider Greek world with his unlimited resources of money, human capital, and military power. All to no avail—the city did not fall, and Demetrius, exhausted, finally broke off the siege after a year's effort. The Rhodians sold off the siege equipment left behind, and used the proceeds to build the famous Colossus of Rhodes, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, a titanic bronze statue (30 metres tall) of the sun-god Helios. The Colossus stood for fifty-four years overlooking the harbour of Rhodes, a warning to any Hellenistic king tempted to emulate Demetrius' disastrous military over-ambition.

Demetrius the God

The cities of the Greek world had never had to deal with anything quite like Demetrius before. Some Greeks, such as the Ionians of western Asia Minor, had lived for long periods under the rule of the Persian Achaemenid kings, distant barbarian rulers who intervened very little in the affairs of their subject cities (aside from taxing them). But Demetrius and his rivals were kings of a very different kind. They were

Greek, or at least Macedonian; they possessed massive coercive power, and were prepared to use it to the benefit or disfavour of Greek cities. What is more, they could be highly visible presences in the life of Greek communities: Demetrius himself resided at Athens for several months at a time in the winters of 304/3 and 303/2, living in outrageously dissolute fashion in the rear chamber of the Parthenon itself (much to the Athenians' disgust). The Greeks needed to find a new way of structuring their relationship with these potent and charismatic supermen. The way that they chose was to worship them as gods.

This is less surprising than it might seem at first sight. The Greeks—unlike, say, Christians or Muslims—had never placed a high premium on individual religious conviction ('belief'). Greek religion was an eminently social phenomenon, based on collective rituals—festivals, sacrifices, processions—performed by the entire community. Theology had never interested Greeks very much, and 'faith' was not a salient category in Greek thought. The crucial thing was the reciprocal relationship between men and gods, mediated through prayer and animal sacrifice: we offer you cattle, and you protect us from plague and disaster.

The Hellenistic kings—men of godlike power and status—were prepared to offer reciprocal benefits of precisely this kind. If a city was struck down by an earthquake, or threatened by a foreign army, Demetrius really could rebuild your temples or protect your walls in return for your collective loyalty and dependence. The precise metaphysical character of the kings was simply not that important: worshipping Demetrius as a god did not necessarily involve holding any

alarming beliefs about his bodily fabric, projected life-span, or ability to wield thunderbolts. If Demetrius responded favourably to the correct performance of rituals, then he *really was*, in all important respects, a god just like Zeus or Apollo.

In 291 or 290 BC, Demetrius arrived at Athens during the celebration of a major religious festival, the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter and Kore (Persephone). The Athenians greeted the king with an elaborate religious ceremony, burning incense to him on altars and offering libations. A Dionysiac chorus of men wearing erect phalluses came to meet Demetrius in the streets of Athens; the hymn that they sung to him survives, and reads as follows:

How the greatest and dearest of the gods are present in our city! For a single moment has brought Demeter and Demetrius together here: she comes to celebrate the solemn mysteries of Kore [the Eleusinian Mysteries], while he is here in joy, as is fitting for the god, fair and laughing. His appearance is numinous; his friends are all around him, and he in their midst, as though his friends were stars and he the sun. Hail, child of the most powerful god Poseidon and of Aphrodite! For other gods are either far away, or do not have ears, or do not exist, or take no notice of us, but you we see present here, not made of wood or stone, but real. So we pray to you: first make peace, dearest; for you have the power. That Sphinx who holds sway not over Thebes but over the whole of Greece, the Aetolian, who sits on a rock like the ancient Sphinx, who seizes and carries away all our people, against whom I cannot fight (for it is an Aetolian custom to seize their neighbours' property, and now even that of far-off peoples)—best of all, punish her yourself; if not, find some

Oedipus who will either hurl that Sphinx down from the rocks or reduce her to ashes.

The prayer with which the hymn concludes is a strikingly practical one. The Aetolians of central Greece have been raiding Athenian territory; the Athenians pray to Demetrius to launch a retaliatory campaign against them, either in person or by sending one of his generals ('some Oedipus'). The Athenians clearly saw no incongruity in invoking Demetrius as a god, 'not made of wood or stone, but real', and simultaneously asking for military help against the Aetolians. What seems to us like a standard piece of international diplomacy—an appeal to a stronger power for protection—was expressed by the Athenians as a prayer to a living god.

Kings were not always present in person. Greek cities performed regular sacrificial rituals in honour of absent Hellenistic monarchs, modelled on pre-existing civic cults of the Olympian gods. One of our earliest descriptions of a civic ruler-cult comes from the small city of Aegae, on the west coast of Turkey, where the Seleucid victory over Lysimachus in 281 BC was marked with the establishment of a new temple dedicated to King Seleucus I and his son Antiochus:

So that the Revealed Gods Seleucus and Antiochus should be honoured by men in a manner worthy of their good deeds, let a temple, as beautiful as possible, be built beside the sanctuary of Apollo, with its own surrounding sanctuary. Let two cult statues be dedicated, as beautiful as possible, with the inscriptions 'Seleucus' and 'Antiochus', and let a statue and

altar of the Saviour Goddess be erected in front of the temple. Opposite the temple, let an altar be founded, with the words 'Of Seleucus and Antiochus' inscribed on it, and let a sacred precinct, as beautiful as possible, be marked out. During the main annual sacrifice, let bulls be brought into the sanctuary for the Saviours Seleucus and Antiochus, and sacrificed just as for Apollo; and let two sacrifices be performed every month on the day that the city was liberated (by Seleucus and Antiochus). Let the civic tribes be reorganised, so that there should be six instead of four, and let the two new tribes be named 'Seleucis' and 'Antiochis'... And let the hall of the prytanes and the hall of the generals be rebuilt, with that of the prytanes renamed the 'Seleuceion' and that of the generals renamed the 'Antiocheion'.

The new cult of the Seleucid kings is clearly modelled on the existing cult of Apollo at Aegae. Crucially, ruler-worship has not been imposed by the Seleucids: the people of Aegae have introduced the cult of their own accord, as a way of cementing their future relations with their new Seleucid rulers. It is especially interesting to see the city reorganizing its political structure (the civic 'tribes') and even renaming certain public buildings in honour of the Seleucid kings. Likewise, after Demetrius' first capture of Athens in 307 BC, the Athenians created two new tribes named after their royal benefactors, 'Antigonis' and 'Demetrius'. Like the cults of Hellenistic kings, these honorific gestures were symbolic ways of expressing the cities' gratitude and loyalty to their new masters. The cities could of course expect to receive juicy privileges in return—internal autonomy, military protection, exemption from royal taxes, and so forth.

Kings and Cities

In 303 BC, Demetrius' troops captured the small Greek city of Sicyon in the northern Peloponnese. Sicyon was a town with a long history, and had enjoyed some modest international fame in the age of its tyrant dynasty, the Orthagorids, in the early sixth century BC. Late fourth-century Sicyon was a small farming and manufacturing town, lying on a gently sloping coastal plain between the Helisson and Asopus rivers, at the foot of a formidable slice of table-land, protected on all sides by precipitous cliffs. This high plateau caught the Besieger's attention, as being completely impregnable for siege-engines. Demetrius promptly instructed the demolition of the existing town in the plain, and ordered the Sicyonians to relocate their homes to the easily defensible upper acropolis. As the historian Diodorus Siculus relates:

Demetrius gave help to the mass of citizens in the construction work, and restored their freedom to them, for which benefaction they granted him honours equal to those of the gods. They renamed the city Demetrias, and voted both to celebrate annual sacrifices, festivals, and contests in his honour, and to grant him the other honours due to a city-founder.

The people of Sicyon were not the only Greeks to be forcibly relocated by Demetrius. In northern Greece, near the modern city of Volos, no fewer than fourteen small Greek towns were depopulated to provide the raw manpower for a new royal capital, also named Demetrias. Quite

how cavalier Demetrius and his father Antigonus were in their treatment of existing communities can be seen in a long inscription from the Ionian city of Teos, in which Antigonus orders the immediate transfer of the entire population of nearby Lebedos into Teos, in the face of increasingly desperate practical objections from both cities.

In the late fourth and third centuries BC, hundreds of new Graeco-Macedonian cities were founded by the Hellenistic kings across western Eurasia, many of them laid out on a scale hitherto undreamed of in the Greek world. As we saw in Chapter 2, Seleucus I founded four huge new cities in north-west Syria alone (Antioch by Daphne, Apamea on the Orontes, Laodicea by the Sea, Seleucia in Pieria), the first two of which had populations numbering in the hundreds of thousands by the later Hellenistic period. The physical remains of these cities give an unnerving sense of the power and ambition of the early Hellenistic monarchs. In western Asia Minor, the city of Ephesus, refounded by Lysimachus and (temporarily) renamed Arsinoeia after his wife Arsinoe, was planned on a truly spectacular scale: its fortifications, 9 kilometres long, are estimated to have required some 200,000 cubic metres of cut stone for the curtain wall alone.

These new cities served several purposes. Most of them bore the name of their royal founder or members of his family, advertising the dynasty's power and prestige: Egyptian Alexandria and Kandahar in Afghanistan both preserve the name of their founder, Alexander the Great, while Thessaloniki, the second city of modern Greece, was named by the successor monarch Cassander after his wife Thessalonice

(Alexander's half-sister). Many cities were home to large military garrisons: the main highway across Asia Minor was studded with new Seleucid fortress-towns at 40-kilometre intervals, and Demetrias, in northern Greece, became known as one of the 'fettters of Hellas'. In the vast open spaces of Seleucid Asia, the new cities served as centres of bureaucracy and taxation for the budding regime; more than 30,000 administrative seal-impressions have been excavated at Seleucia on the Tigris, the capital of Seleucid Mesopotamia.

On the most practical level of all, the cities served to house a deluge of hopeful migrants from Greece and Macedon into the newly conquered lands of the colonial Near East. Every year, tens of thousands of men and women set out from the old Greek lands for a better life in the 'New World' of Ptolemaic Egypt and Seleucid Asia, swelling the population of mega-cities like Seleucia on the Tigris or Alexandria in Egypt. The kings' personal reputation for generosity, machismo, and loose living was not the least of the enticements drawing people across the sea. In his fourteenth *Idyll*, the poet Theocritus imagines two young Greeks, Aeschines and Thyonichus, planning their getaway to the land of the Ptolemies:

If you really mean to emigrate, then Ptolemy's the best paymaster for a free man. What sort of fellow is he otherwise? The best there is—considerate, cultured, partial to the ladies, as pleasant as can be, knows who his friends are (and his enemies even better), bestower of great favours upon many, and doesn't refuse when asked, just as a king ought to behave... So, if you fancy clasping the military cloak on

your right shoulder, and have the guts to stand firm on both your feet to meet a strong man's charge, then off with you to Egypt.

Theocritus should know: himself a native of Syracuse in Sicily, he emigrated to Alexandria around 270 BC.

The Royal 'Club'

One of the most striking features of the new royal regimes was their similarity to one another. Royal coins and portrait sculpture depict Hellenistic kings and queens in much the same way, whether they happened to rule in Afghanistan, Cappadocia, or Sicily. Kings were almost invariably shown as clean-shaven, with thick wavy hair and a plain diadem (a kind of narrow headband) marking their royal status (see Figure 8); all of these elements were taken over from the official iconography of Alexander the Great. Courts and royal administration took similar forms pretty much everywhere:



Figure 8 Silver tetradrachm of Demetrius the Besieger.

Attalid financial officials in western Asia Minor carried the same titles as those in the Seleucid kingdom to the East (the *hemiolios*, *epi tōn hierōn*, *dioikētēs*, *eklogistēs*, etc.). Royal letters and edicts were composed in a single, 'international' chancery style, and in cases where the opening lines of a royal letter happen not to have survived (as frequently happens with stone inscriptions), it is often impossible to tell which king was the author.

A king's conduct towards his subjects was governed by certain conventional expectations. Kings were expected to be munificent towards their dependants, to respond to private and public petitions, and to recognize symbolic honours with a generous package of material benefactions (the reciprocal relationship that the Greeks called *euergesia*, the conferral of social status in return for good deeds, discussed further in Chapter 6). A particularly telling anecdote is recounted by Plutarch in his *Life of Demetrius*:

An old woman once started pestering Demetrius as he was passing by, and repeatedly demanded a hearing. When he replied that he had no time, she screeched back at him 'Then don't be king!' Demetrius was deeply stung, and after reflection returned to his house. He put off all other business, and for many days devoted his time to receiving those who required an audience, beginning with this old woman.

Ben trovato, but unlikely to be true. Precisely the same story is told of King Philip II of Macedon, of Alexander's Macedonian regent Antipater, and of the Roman emperor Hadrian; a somewhat similar story attached itself to Demetrius' older contemporary Seleucus. Clearly we are dealing with a piece

of ancient folk wisdom about how a good king *ought* to behave. All Hellenistic monarchs were subject to the same social rules, many of which were inherited by the Roman emperors who eventually succeeded them in the eastern Mediterranean.

This convergence of royal styles and ideology is, at first sight, somewhat surprising. After all, the local circumstances of the Hellenistic kingdoms were very far from uniform (Chapter 2). In Egypt, the Ptolemaic king was pharaoh to several million native Egyptians, who had very different expectations of their rulers; the brother-sister marriage practised by the Ptolemaic dynasty (unthinkable in a traditional Greek or Macedonian context) is only the most obvious concession to traditional pharaonic styles of rule. The third- and second-century Antigonid kings, by contrast, ruled over a fairly uniform ‘old world’ kingdom of Macedonians and Greeks. The Seleucid kingdom was culturally the most complex of all, being made up of a baffling variety of different Near Eastern peoples (Iranians, Babylonians, Jews, Arabs . . .), with a relatively small Graeco-Macedonian settler class concentrated in the new Seleucid cities.

But the kingdoms also had a great deal in common. All the kings competed for the services of a vast, itinerant population of mercenary soldiers, many of Greek or Macedonian origin, but also including ever larger numbers of Celts, Thracians, Illyrians, Arabs, and others. Since Hellenistic royal gold and silver coinages were mainly struck in order to pay the wages of these soldiers of fortune, it is hardly surprising that royal coins end up sharing a common ‘visual language’ of kingship. What is more, although the heartlands of the

major kingdoms were culturally very diverse, military rivalry between the dynasties was largely played out in a fairly small and homogeneous region, the Aegean basin and (to a lesser extent) the Levantine coast. To take an extreme instance, between 310 and 280 BC, the coastal cities of Caria in south-west Asia Minor passed from Antigonos to Ptolemy I (309), were regained by Antigonos (308), fell to Lysimachus (301), were briefly reconquered by Demetrius (287), were recovered by Lysimachus (286–285), were lost to Seleucus (281), and at last fell into the hands of Ptolemy II (280–278). Should we be surprised that the kings ended up speaking more or less the same diplomatic language—and offering a fairly similar ‘package’ of fiscal benefits—to the Greek cities of the region?

Finally, although every now and then a monarch professed a claim to universal rule, in practice the Hellenistic kings saw themselves as peers. Right from the outset, the successor monarchs recognized, implicitly or explicitly, their rivals’ claims to royal status. The early Hellenistic dynasts addressed one another as ‘king’ in their correspondence, and Demetrius’ refusal to do so is cited by Plutarch as an instance of his exceptional arrogance and pride:

Alexander himself never refused the title of King to any other monarch, nor did he call himself King of Kings, even though he himself had granted the title and status of king to many others. But Demetrius used to mock and laugh at those who gave the name of King to anyone but his father and himself, and was delighted to hear people drinking toasts at banquets to King Demetrius, Seleucus the Elephant-Master, Admiral Ptolemy, Lysimachus the Treasurer, and Agathocles the

Island-Master of Sicily. The other kings, when this was reported to them, found his attitude highly amusing.

In fact, even Demetrius was in the end compelled to recognize his position as one monarch among many. In 298, Demetrius was a fleet-commander without a kingdom, and Seleucus was a king without a navy; a formal alliance between the two men was sealed at the coastal town of Rhosus in Turkey (near modern Antakya) by the marriage of Seleucus to Demetrius' daughter Stratonice. The exchanges between the two men, says Plutarch, 'were at once put on a royal footing': Seleucus entertained Demetrius in his army-camp in lavish fashion, before Demetrius received Seleucus on board his vast flagship. By this point, King Lysimachus had already married Ptolemy's daughter Arsinoe, and several marital exchanges between the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties took place in the third and second centuries BC. Each king wielded absolute power in his own domain, but, as in early modern Europe, each monarch was also part of a wider 'royal club', a rich source of potential allies, rivals, and marital partners. After the loss of all his royal territories in mainland Greece (288–287 BC), and a last desperate adventure in Asia Minor (287–285), Demetrius eventually threw himself on Seleucus' mercy, and ended his days in captivity at his son-in-law's court, where he quietly drank himself to death, in the fifty-fifth year of his life.