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ON JUDGING ALEXANDER: A MATTER OF HONOUR*

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ABSTRACT

Cartledge's insistence that Alexander was guided by the heroic 'moral code of honour' is considered in terms of paradigms established in Stewart's *Honor*, and in contrast with Holt's view of the 'Homeric code'. This paper deals first with Alexander's pursuit of honour in the successive phases of his career, and then with his attempt to accommodate competing codes of honour as he won control of the Achaemenid Empire.

Introduction

In his recent monograph on Alexander the Great, Cartledge briefly summarises a variety of modern judgements on his subject, and concludes, 'Roisman rightly injects a note of sanity by establishing the moral code of honour according to which Alexander would have acted.'[1] Similarly, Holt insists that Alexander should be judged by the values by which he lived, which he takes to be 'the Homeric code'.[2] Cartledge's reference is to Roisman's treatment of 'Honor in Alexander's campaign',[3] and Roisman does indeed use the expression 'a code of honour' (p. 281), when summarising Stewart's characterisation of one model of honour.[4] But Cartledge seems to miss the thrust of Roisman's paper, for Roisman concludes that Alexander

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[1] P. Cartledge, *Alexander the Great: the Hunt for a New Past* (London 2004) 308.

[2] Frank L. Holt, *Alexander the Great and the Mystery of the Elephant Medallions* (Berkeley 2003) 134 and 151.

[3] J. Roisman, 'Honor in Alexander's campaigns', in J. Roisman (ed.), *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great* (Leiden 2003) 279-321.

[4] F.H. Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago & London 1994).

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strove to remove 'any sense of equality between himself and others in his camp or empire', and did this by claiming 'superior honor and rank on the basis of his personal wealth, his office, and his ultimate control over the resources and symbols of his empire' (p. 321).

There is then some confusion here between two models of honour, labelled, as in Stewart's *Honor*, vertical and horizontal. The vertical model has to do with winning honour and recognition as being superior by virtue of rank, power or signal achievement. The emphasis is on competitiveness and securing honour as a reward. But the horizontal model has to do with an entitlement to respect as a member of a group at whatever level, and linked with this is acceptance of an agreed code of conduct; and when Roisman uses the expression 'code of honour' he is referring to this horizontal, more egalitarian model.

Cartledge speaks of Alexander as frequently appearing 'to have acted in accordance with the aristocratic-heroic values of Homer' (p. 202), which Cartledge seems to define by his following reference to 'the general Greek notion of *philotimia*, or competitive seeking of honour and fame' (203). Thus, presumably, honour depended upon recognition by one's peers and inferiors, and not upon the voice of conscience. But Cartledge dulls the distinction by referring to 'the moral code' as synonymous with 'the code of honour'. By contrast, Holt is clearly not imagining the heroic code as a moral code when he writes of the Macedonians of Philip's day as holding fast 'to the heroic warrior code of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*', as he goes on to say: 'In battles, brawls and drinking bouts, the Macedonians measured a man from king to commoner by the implacable standards of Achilles and Agamemnon'.[5] Elsewhere Holt says, 'others aspired to greatness, Alexander to greatestness.'[6] This might be described as the heroic code.[7]

In any case, there is the broader issue of what is meant by the Homeric or heroic code of honour. Adkins' line that it asserted competitive values over against co-operative values may present too stark an antithesis, even when limited to the Homeric poems.[8] There is also unease about the common view that the heroic code reflects a 'shame-culture' as opposed to a 'guilt-

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[5] Holt (note 2) 7. It remains to consider other aspects of the Macedonian code, such as the treatment of women and homosexual activity.

[6] Holt (note 2) 162.

[7] As in Hom. *Il.* 6.208 and 11.784. J.M. Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad* (Durham 1994) 100 describes it as zero-sum system, requiring 'a definite set of virtues' that could only be demonstrated on the battlefield.

[8] So M. Finkelberg, '*Timê* and *aretê* in Homer', *CQ* 48 (1998) 14-28, with reference to A.W.H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford 1960), esp. 30-85.

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culture'.[9] But such reservations about the characterisation of the Homeric code as competitive, do not justify the introduction of the term 'moral' as a necessary part of the definition. Further, the modern debate on the political message of the *Iliad* suggests that one should also distinguish between the heroic code and the Homeric lesson.[10] The *Iliad* can be taken as introducing the values of proto-democracy, with the twin principles of competitiveness and co-operation, or competition from an egalitarian base at the level of the aristocracy.[11] Agamemnon cannot dominate simply by power, but has to learn to negotiate, to give advice, but also to listen to it (*Iliad* 9.100).[12]

Then there are issues relating to post-Homeric literature. For Alexander was reputedly a literate man, with a proclaimed passion for Euripides no less than Homer.[13] So if Alexander took a serious interest in Euripides' tragedies, one can hardly use the influence of the Homeric code as sufficient to explain, if not mitigate, Alexander's outbursts of megalomaniac behaviour. A more pernicious influence might have been Aristotle's advocacy of the assertiveness of the *megalopsyches*. Still, Lucian has Hannibal taunt Alexander with the line that, though he did not have the benefit of an education in Greek literature, he did not kill his friends at banquets (*Dial. Mort.* 77.25 (12) Macleod).[14] There is the further problem for the historian that our sources were quite capable of recasting episodes to bring out Homeric associations or give them tragic colouring.[15]

The phases in Alexander's career as king

It would seem to be a mistake to assume that Alexander was inspired, or constrained, by the same code of honour from his accession to his last days.

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[9] Thus, for example, D.L. Cairns, *Aidōs* (Oxford 1993), in his introduction to the notions of shame and guilt, contests the ideas that shame necessarily requires an audience, and that the admission of failure denotes shame, while the admission of transgression denotes guilt (14-26).

[10] Cf. Finkelberg (note 8).

[11] Cf. Donna Wilson, *Ransom, Revenge and Heroic Identity in the Iliad* (Cambridge 2003), reviewed by G. Zanker, *CJ* 99 (2004) 349-53.

[12] Cf. D. Hammer, *The Iliad as Politics* (Norman 2002) on Homer's presentation of Agamemnon's style of rule.

[13] Plut. *Alex.* 8.2-3, 51.8; Strabo 13.1.27.594.

[14] Cf. Philo's denunciation of Flaccus, with the remark: 'The man who goes wrong in the full knowledge of what is right has no defence and already stands convicted at the bar of his conscience' (*In Flaccum* 3 and 7, tr. Colson).

[15] A classic study in this field is J.M. Mossman's 'Tragedy and epic in Plutarch's *Alexander*', *JHS* 108 (1988) 83-93.

Several phases in his career may be delineated. First there was the period after he first became king and had to establish himself as Philip's rightful successor. Here his mission was to project an image of himself as the embodiment of the ideals of the Macedonian monarchy, and in this phase Homeric parallels are of some value in reconstructing a picture of how the Macedonian system worked.[16] Then, when he was established in power, it is probably true that a driving force in Alexander's planning was a desire to rival and surpass his father.[17]

Alexander inherited the situation that a Macedonian expeditionary force had been operating in Hellespontine Phrygia and beyond, but by 334 Parmenion held little more than Abydos on the Asian side of the Hellespont.[18] Thus it is rather an exaggeration to say that 'the invasion of the Persian Empire was Alexander's inescapable legacy.'[19] Still, the situation presented Alexander with the opportunity to establish his position as a warrior king in the Homeric mould,[20] and he followed up on what Philip had planned with the Corinthian League. Thus in 334 he joined up with Parmenion's forces and crossed into Asia, which event he inaugurated with a visit to Troy and a ceremony at the tomb of Achilles. But Cartledge goes too far by suggesting that by crossing the Hellespont and performing the rituals at Troy, Alexander was 'probably' signalling an intent 'to conquer at least the existing Achaemenid Empire as a whole.'[21] Philip had failed in what Isocrates saw as the more realisable goal of liberating the Greek cities of Asia Minor and then guaranteeing their freedom by winning control of Asia Minor as a whole (5.119-23). That had to be Alexander's first objective.

In any case, from 334 Alexander was not just the supreme commander of the Macedonian forces, but also the *hegemon* of a panhellenic army, with a mission defined not by the Trojan War, but by the oath supposedly taken by the Greeks in or after 479 to seek retribution for the acts of atrocity and

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[16] As can be seen in Carol Thomas, *Alexander the Great in his World* (Oxford 2007) 59-63, 195. The source material on Macedonian institutions is meagre, but modern studies are substantial: in English notably N.G.L. Hammond's *The Macedonian State* (Oxford 1989).

[17] A major theme of I. Worthington's *Alexander the Great* (Harlow 2004); cf. E.A. Fredricksmeyer, 'Alexander and Philip: emulation and resentment', *CJ* 85 (1990) 300-15.

[18] Diodorus Siculus (hereafter D.S.) 16.91.2, 17.2.4-6 and 17; Arrian (hereafter A.) 1.11.6. E. Badian, 'Alexander the Great and the Greeks of Asia', in *Ancient Society and Institutions: Studies Presented to Victor Ehrenberg* (Oxford 1966) 39-41.

[19] Cartledge (note 1) 164.

[20] As Fredricksmeyer (note 17) 304 would put it.

[21] Cartledge (note 1) 165.

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sacrilege committed by Xerxes and his Persian army.[22] But the account of the first campaign in 334 shows that there was no master plan and Alexander learnt that he had more to gain by being less heavy-handed with the local Greeks. Thus, after he reached Ephesus, he commissioned Alcimachus to clear Persian garrisons and quisling tyrants out of Ionian cities, and to establish democracies in their place; at Priene he associated himself with the dedication of the new temple of Athena.[23] In such ways he presented himself as the friend and champion of democracy and Hellenic culture.

Alexander advanced to Gordium in the spring of 333 and accepted the oracular challenge by slashing through the famous knot with his sword to claim that he was destined to be the 'lord of Asia' (A. 2.3.6; Curtius 3.1.16; Justin 11.7.4). This at least was confirmation that his aim was to control Asia Minor, but opened the possibility that his ambition was conquest of the whole Persian empire.

Another clear echo of Homeric epic occurs in Curtius' account of Alexander's seizure of Gaza in 332 BC. The commander of the garrison, the eunuch Batis/Betis, was captured and his defiant mien angered Alexander, who ordered his punishment: 'Thongs were passed through Betis' ankles while he still breathed, and he was tied to a chariot. Then Alexander's horses dragged him around the city while the king gloated at having followed the example of his ancestor Achilles in punishing his enemy' (4.6.29). For Achilles had put thongs through the ankles of Hector's corpse and had dragged him round behind his chariot (*Iliad* 22.359-404), which Homer labels a shameful action (395).[24] But Curtius is the only writer to record this episode, and while Hector suffered this indignity after death, Betis was still alive.[25] Furthermore, Curtius' Latin here provides an intertextual reference to Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.270-73. Even if the episode were historical, the model of Achilles would hardly excuse Alexander's action.[26]

Alexander's visit to the oracle at Siwah, and the diplomatic exchanges with Darius introduced progressive escalation in Alexander's declared intent, and here I would differ from Bloedow's implication that, as a war of conquest

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[22] Texts relevant to this debate include Lycurgus, *Leocr.* 80; D.S. 11.29.2 and Thuc. 1.96.1.

[23] See further Badian (note 18) 37-69.

[24] R. Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (London 1973) 193 tries to shift the blame for the killing of Betis onto the Thessalians.

[25] Admittedly Hector was alive when dragged behind Achilles' chariot according to Soph. *Aj.* 1029-31 and Eur. *Androm.* 339.

[26] J. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* (New York 1995) 118 notes that 'Homer's critique of Achilles' loss of respect for the enemy pervades the *Iliad*', and that this failure betokens his 'loss of humanity and moral disintegration'.

was inherent in a war of revenge, Philip and Alexander both started with the acceptance that the two were interlocked. Bloedow concludes that 'the extent of the conquest would depend on just when the Great King was eliminated.'[27]

In the next phase, after finally defeating Darius at Gaugamela, Alexander had the window of opportunity to change the rules and set his own standards. Admittedly, initially little had changed, as Darius fled eastwards to regroup in Bactria, and the war would continue. Alexander's immediate response was to head south, and when he reached Babylon he adopted the role of liberator, as he had done in Egypt. This also meant that he was making a sharper distinction between the Persians and the other peoples of Asia. This helps to explain the mass murder of Persians when he reached Persepolis at the end of 331. The heroic code of conduct hardly explains Alexander's viciousness here, but the history of prejudice against Persians is of some importance, for 'once the concept of "otherness" takes root, the unimaginable becomes possible.'[28] Of course race prejudice and demonisation can be activated for political purposes, and can similarly be switched off or fade.[29] Indeed, Greek attitudes to the Persians were certainly not consistently hostile from 479 down to Alexander's day: an example of Greek willingness to treat Persians on individual merit appears in Xenophon's account of the exchange between Agesilaus and Pharnabazus (*Hellenica* 4.1. 29-40), on which J.M. Cook notes the Greeks' admiration for Pharnabazus' 'almost Homeric sense of honour'.[30] From 334 Alexander had been justifying his war by the history of Persian aggression under Darius (Curtius 5.6.1) and Xerxes (A. 2.14.4; Curtius 5.6.1), and with more immediate charges against Darius III. Xerxes' destruction of Greek temples was no doubt used to justify Alexander's wars to Greeks long before it was invoked as a reason for destroying Persepolis.[31] Furthermore, it seems likely that Alexander did vilify the Persians, as Arrian suggests in Alexander's speech before the battle of

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[27] E. Bloedow, 'Why did Philip and Alexander launch a war against the Persian Empire?', *AC* 72 (2003) 261-74, quotation from p. 273. Thuc. 1.96.1 indicates that Greeks from 478 BC thought of punitive action rather than the conquest of the Persian Empire. Furthermore, Alexander's symbolic crossing of the river Halys need not have signalled the intent to conquer the Persian Empire.
[28] S. Drakulic, *The Balkan Express* (New York 1994) 3; cf. William Hazlitt's essay of 1816 on Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* in *Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe. Vol. 4 (London 1940) 216.
[29] Cf. R.J.B. Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy* (London 2005) 419-20.
[30] J.M. Cook, 'The rise of the Achaemenids', in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge 1985) 290-91.
[31] A. 3.18.12; D.S. 17.72.3; Strabo 15.3 6.730; Curtius 5.7.4; Plut. *Alex.* 38.4.

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Issus (A. 2.7.3-9).[32] All this helps to explain the massacre when Alexander arrived in Persepolis, and then the systematic destruction of the royal city, when he left in May 330. Against this background it is not clear that the heroic code of conduct explains Alexander's viciousness here, especially as Alexander himself is said to have regretted the destruction of Persepolis later. And the 'othering' of the Persians was hardly a strategy that could be attributed to Homeric influence, as the Greek leaders in the *Iliad* do not treat the Trojans with racist contempt: Achilles is out of line in his treatment of Hector.[33] In any case it can be argued that the second round of destruction was something of an exercise in team-building, as Alexander prepared for the march north and the next confrontation with Darius.[34]

But another major battle with Darius was not to be, as Darius was murdered by Satibarzanes and Barsaentes (A. 3.21.10), with or without the prior agreement of Bessus, the satrap of Bactria, who had hoped to trade Darius, but found that Alexander was not minded to trade or take prisoners. Thus from 330 Alexander effectively replaced Darius as king of the Persian empire, or, as he may have preferred to see it, as the king of Asia. After he reached Bactria, Alexander began to adopt elements of Persian court ritual, including *proskynesis*, in part to provide continuity for his new subjects, who would now accord him respect in the same way as they had Darius. This naturally riled his Macedonian troops and Alexander went into a defensive mode, insisting on loyalty to his vision. Victims of his intolerance now included Callisthenes, Philotas and Parmenion, and Cleitus. Heroic inspiration has been claimed for the wild banquet at which Alexander killed his friend Cleitus in a drunken rage: thus Sp. Marinatos writes that 'Alexander himself organised turbulent banquets where they all drank too much; but this is exactly a heroic, a Mycenaean feature', and Holt says that the situation began in the 'customary' way with binge-drinking, while 'the gritty warriors boasted of their prowess in Homeric fashion, each one competitive and unduly sensitive to any perceived slight from his peers.'[35] Cartledge recognises that Alexander was 'blind drunk and out of control', but tones this down

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[32] Bosworth (note 29), in his commentary on this speech, notes that the orientalising is at least consistent with what Greeks were writing in the 4th century, as seen for example in Isocrates, *Paneg.* 4.150-56.

[33] Cf. Shay (note 26).

[34] Cf. J.E. Atkinson, 'Troubled spirits in Persepolis', in U. Vogel-Weidemann & J. Scholtemeijer (edd.), *Charistion: Festschrift C.P.T. Naudé* (Pretoria 1993) 5-15.

[35] Sp. Marinatos, 'Mycenaean elements within the royal houses of Macedonia', in B. Laourdas & Ch. Makaronas (edd.), *Ancient Macedonia* (Thessaloniki 1970) 48; F. Holt, *Into the Land of Bones: Alexander the Great in Afghanistan* (Berkeley 2005) 77; Roisman (note 3) 316-21.

in the following reference to the manslaughter as his 'unthinking action' (p. 72). But philosophers and rhetoricians were less understanding and treated the murder of Cleitus as a prime example of unjustified abandonment to anger.[36]

At the Hyphasis it is not impossible that Alexander used Coenus to set up the mutinous scene that allowed him to appear to be persuaded not to advance further east to the Ganges. To defend his honour, Alexander could boast that in getting as far as the Hyphasis he had travelled further east than Dionysus, and he had taken the Rock of Aornus on the Indus, which Heracles had been unable to seize (A. 5.26.5; Curtius 8.11.2). So Alexander could turn back having already succeeded where Dionysus and Heracles had failed. A second line of justification for turning back was created by the staging of a sacrifice on the Hyphasis, which had to be aborted because the sacrificial victims proved to be unpropitious (A. 5.28.4).[37] But the image was all important and Alexander chose to make his point by extending the boundaries of the camp he was leaving behind, and by erecting for posterity twelve massive altars, one for each Olympian deity, and couches of similar extreme proportions (Curtius 9.3.19; A. 5.29.1; Plut. *Alex.* 62.8; D.S. 17.95.1). From this point, as Alexander was returning to the west, the test was not whether he could conquer, but whether he could control what he had conquered.

The journey down the Indus was eventful enough, but worse was to follow when Alexander made his way westwards through the Gedrosian desert. His logistics failed and some 75% of those with Alexander lost their lives (Plut. *Alex.* 66.4).[38] Alexander could blame satraps for failing to provide supplies, but ultimately he carried the responsibility, and it is not clear that he ever fully recovered the confidence of his troops.

In this final phase, his decisions became stranger, as when he sent an envoy Nicanor to the Olympic Games in 324 to announce that all Greek cities were to take back their exiles, despite all the political and economic

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[36] A. 4.8.8-9.6; Curtius 8.1.19-2.11; Plut. *Alex.* 50.1-52.2; Justin 12.6.1-16; and *i.a.* Sen. *Ep.* 83.19; *De Ira* 3.17.1; Plut. *Mor.* 71c; cf. Sen. *Nat. Quaest.* 6.23.3 on the killing of Callisthenes.

[37] He may also, at least later, have claimed that he changed plans because he had received more reliable intelligence on what lay beyond the Hyphasis (cf. A. 6.1.4-5).

[38] A major disaster even if camp-followers constituted the majority of the casualties (A. 6.25.5), and Alexander made thank-offerings for the army's safe delivery from Gedrosia (A. 6.28.3). The episode is fully analysed by A.B. Bosworth, *Alexander and the East* (Oxford 1996) 166-85. The effects were somewhat mitigated by the fact that Craterus and a substantial section of the Macedonian forces had been sent to Carmania by a less risky route via Arachosia and Drangiana.

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problems that this would cause.[39] The crisis which this edict created was compounded by the flight to Greece of Alexander's treasurer, Harpalus, with a large amount of money that he had looted from the treasury in Babylon. The Harpalus affair showed that Alexander's authority in Greece and Macedonia was unclear: demands for Harpalus' arrest and surrender were made to Athens separately by Antipater, Olympias and Philoxenus the satrap of Caria.[40] Alexander faced the challenge whether to content himself with being king of Asia or to head west.

While Alexander was in Carmania, he gave orders for the construction of ships at Thapsacus, and instructed that they were to be sailed down to Babylon (A. 7.19.3-4; Plut. *Alex.* 68.2; Strabo 16.1.11.741). Part of his plan was to establish colonies around the Persian Gulf (A. 7.19.5). It was even said that Alexander planned to conquer and colonise Arabia to force the Arabs to recognise him as their third god, beside Uranus and Dionysus, and so acknowledge that he had equalled Dionysus' achievements.[41] The formal pretext for military action in Arabia was that the Arabs had failed to send envoys as reason and protocol demanded, and thus had not voluntarily surrendered to him.[42] Quite separately, Alexander issued orders for the construction of 1000 ships for operations in 'the west', and specifically to assist in a campaign to destroy Athens (J. 13.5.7).

The picture is complicated by the tradition that, after Alexander's death, Perdiccas read out to the troops in Babylon a memorandum purporting to be Alexander's plans for the future, the so-called Last Plans, a document, designed to appear credible to the troops, but fantastic enough to secure their rejection.[43] These included a campaign to win control of the North African territory as far as the Pillars of Heracles and then Spain (D.S. 18.4.4;

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[39] The view that Alexander also mandated Nicanor to instruct the Greeks to accord him divine honours was roundly discredited by G.L. Cawkwell, 'The deification of Alexander the Great' (1994), reprinted in I. Worthington, *Alexander the Great: A Reader* (London 2003) 263-72. But Badian, 'Alexander the Great between two thrones and heaven', reprinted in the same *Reader*, 245-62 shows that he at least actively promoted the idea in the winter of 324/3.

[40] Antipater, Olympias and Philoxenus sent messages demanding Harpalus' extradition: D.S. 17.108.7; Hypereides, *Demosthenes* 8; Plut. *Mor.* 531a; and Paus. 2.33.4. On the implications of the demands made separately by the three see C.W. Blackwell, *In the Absence of Alexander: Harpalus and the Failure of Macedonian Authority* (New York 1999), esp. chap. 2.

[41] A. 7.20.1; Strabo 16.1.11.741, giving Zeus rather than Uranus as the first deity, and citing Aristobulus as his source. An article on the Carmania march and Dionysus by Dawn Gilley is to appear in *AHB*.

[42] A. 7.19.9; Strabo 16.1.11.741, with Bosworth (note 38) 152-53.

[43] E. Badian, 'A king's notebooks', *HSCP* 72 (1968) 183-204.

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A.7.1.2). Arrian adds that in some accounts Alexander also had plans to take his fleet into the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and other accounts mentioned Sicily and the Iapygian promontory (A. 7.1.3). And there was even a tradition that Alexander planned to circumnavigate Africa (an extravagance noted by A. 7.1.2 and Plut. *Alex.* 68.2).[44] But the fact remains that Alexander had plans for launching two major naval operations, in the eastern Mediterranean and around the Arabian peninsula. It is possible that he did entertain the idea of a punitive campaign against the Carthaginians as a matter of honour – enough to alarm experienced officers and war-weary troops.

Some ancient writers were, it seems, reluctant to accept that Alexander's plans for the conquest of Arabia were partly motivated by rivalry with Dionysus, but scholars are now more prepared to take the idea seriously.[45] Cartledge thinks that Alexander progressed from emulating Achilles, to rivalling Heracles and finally Dionysus. Cartledge concludes: 'Perhaps all that was left was to compete with himself as a god presiding over a universal empire? That would certainly have been "striving to better the best", a thoroughly modern version of the age-old Homeric aristocratic ideal.'[46] It could be argued that Cartledge reflects an incomplete image of the Homeric code of honour. But even if he is right, it is questionable whether Alexander's plans for further campaigns in 324-23 could be described as guided by a 'moral code of honour'.

Competing codes

If Alexander was going to humiliate the peoples he conquered, he had to be prepared to use force to ensure that they stayed humiliated and submissive.[47] But if there were logistical or moral limits to the amount of force he could use, then it made sense to avoid gratuitous humiliation of his new subjects. If Alexander's mission was to do more than raid, loot, rape, slash and burn, he had to show some respect for the codes of conduct by which the people he conquered lived. This he obviously did when he chose to pose as the liberator of the Egyptians and then the Babylonians. Thus we may ask to what extent Alexander compromised his own honour by showing respect for the conventions of the peoples he defeated.

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[44] The idea is reflected in A. 4.7.5, 5.26.2 and 27.7.
[45] P. Högemann, *Alexander der Grosse und Arabien* (Munich 1985) 120-35; Worthington (note 17) 181-82 and 205-06; Roisman (note 3) 293, and more cautiously A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and Empire: The Reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1988) 169.
[46] Cartledge (note 1) 199; cf. p. 226, attributing the idea to Schachermeyr.
[47] Cf. William Hazlitt (note 28).

A motif of the sources is the respect which Alexander showed for the female members of the Persian royal family, and in particular Sisygambis. Curtius relates that while Alexander was in Susa at the end of 331, he received a gift from Macedon of garments, bales of purple cloth and seamstresses. Alexander told Sisygambis that if she liked the garments, she could have the material and the seamstresses to teach her granddaughters how to make the garments. The queen mother melted into tears, because she did not like to admit to Alexander that there was no greater disgrace for a Persian lady than to work in wool. Alexander brought an amicable end to this embarrassing situation (Curtius 5.2.17-22). Of course Sisygambis as the queen mother had a special role in Persian dynastic politics, so that Alexander's treatment of her need not suggest a willingness in general terms to respect the Persian code of honour with regard to women. And, for the contrast, after Alexander's troops overran the Persian camp at Issus in 333, the common troops scrambled to grab jewellery and anything of value, and in the process engaged in gratuitous violence against the women (D.S. 17.35.4-7; Curtius 3.11.21-23). Carney plausibly suggests that this brutal treatment was 'probably more typical'.[48] But Alexander probably did adopt a milder approach after the sack of Persepolis.

Much is made of Alexander's chivalrous respect for Darius' widow, Stateira, but then there is the awkward tradition that she died in childbirth, two years after her capture (Plut. *Alex.* 30.1; Justin 11.12.6-8). Then there is the case of Roxane, daughter of the Bactrian baron Oxyartes. After Alexander's capture of Oxyartes' fortress in the latter part of 328, Alexander met Roxane and took her as his wife, for she was 'the most beautiful woman in Asia they had seen apart from Darius' wife' (A. 4.19.5). Roxane was the first prize and Alexander claimed her for himself, making the connection between his action and Achilles' taking of Briseis (Curtius 8.4.26). But Alexander was more likely following his father's policy of using marriage as a means of winning over another princely family.[49] The marriage also forged a bond between Alexander and the Bactrians, and this caused resentment amongst Macedonians of a nationalistic disposition.[50] Achilles and Agamemnon might clash over the prize of a playmate, but they were respectably married, to Deïdameia and Clytaemnestra respectively, and had sons by them, but Alexander had not married before he left Macedon, and there was no all-

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[48] E. Carney, 'Macedonians and mutiny: discipline and indiscipline in the army of Philip and Alexander', *CP* 91 (1996) 19-44, quotation from p. 27
[49] Cf. Worthington (note 17) 139-40.
[50] When Philip married a· *Macedonian* girl, Cleopatra, her uncle Attalus supposedly prayed to the gods that they would now give the royal household a legitimate heir (Plut. *Alex.* 9).

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Macedonian heir. Thus Roxane was more than another Briseis.[51] So by what code of honour does one explain Alexander's appropriation of Roxane?

But Alexander was not finished with marriage as an instrument of policy, for in 324 at Susa he organised a mass marriage ceremony, in the Persian manner, for himself and 91 of his Companions (A. 7.4.4-8; Athen. 12.538b-c). He himself took as additional wives Darius' daughter Stateira and Parysatis, the daughter of Artaxerxes III Ochus. At the same time, he registered as marriages the partnerships of some 10 000 of his Macedonian troops with their Asian women. This was surely an exercise in social engineering, to confirm the ranks of honour in his Asian empire. We lack evidence as to whether Asian women who did not resist the charms of these Macedonian troops faced the risk of honour killing by their families. In any case, Macedonian troops rebelled against the way Alexander was giving preference to Persian nobles by means of the marriages, appointments and adoption of their customs. This erupted into a mutiny at Opis.

Another catalyst for this mutiny was the arrival in Susa of the 30 000 sons of noblemen from the eastern satrapies, known as the *Epigonoi* (A. 7.6.1-2; Plut. *Alex.* 71.1), who had been rounded up earlier[52] and trained for service as a separate force in Alexander's army. From the Persian point of view Alexander's scheme was an adaptation of an Achaemenid practice, as the Persian king used to demand of subject peoples each year a contingent of boys to serve the king. The Babylonians supplied a contingent of 500, labelled *kurtash* to distinguish them from outright slaves (*garda*).[53] Alexander presumably set up this corps of young Persians in the same way, as conscripts, but with a higher level of function in the new order, and thus showed respect for what Persians would accept as honourable in terms of Achaemenid precedent. Ordinary Macedonian troops resented this development and saw it as a threat to their position and a challenge to their honour. At the same time Persians were brought in to swell the ranks of the phalanx. Macedonian warriors would now be odd men out in an army of soldiers.

Conclusion

There were distinct phases in Alexander's reign, and he survived by adapting to new situations. At least sometimes he learnt from his mistakes and certainly developed ways of harmonising, as far as he could, the Macedonian

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[51] Holt (note 35) 86-91 makes a telling comparison with the case of Sharbat Gula.
[52] Perhaps in 327, as suggested by Curtius 8.5.1.
[53] Cf. M.A. Dandamaev in M.A. Dandamaev & V.G. Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* (Cambridge 1989) 172-73.

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model of empire and the traditions of the Persians and the peoples who had been subject to the Achaemenids. After turning back at the Hyphasis, he gradually lost the confidence of his troops, and indeed seems to have gradually lost touch with reality, as can be seen in his preoccupation with winning divine honours. It does not seem that invocation of the Homeric or heroic code of honour, whether as the virtues demonstrated on the battlefield (note 7), or the raunchy range of talents described by Holt is enough to explain and justify each action of Alexander in its context. To turn the heroic code into a moral code looks even more like a case of special pleading to keep his true admirers satisfied. The Homeric 'moral· code of honour' may serve as a palliative, but is hardly sufficient as the key to understanding Alexander the Great. But it is tempting to think that at the end he gave up the will to survive because he sensed the shame of failure.

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