

No one doubts that the Roman Republic was a heavily militarized, militaristic and diplomatically aggressive state. And it is equally true that Roman aristocrats of the Middle Republic (264-133 B.C.) were heavily imbued with a warrior ethos (the Roman warrior ethos is described most forcefully by Harris, 1979). No one could run for public office in Rome in this period who had not served 10 campaigns in the army; the higher magistracies were all essentially military commands; we find ex-consuls and ex-praetors happily serving on the staffs of others, or as subordinate commanders, after they had more than done their basic military duty; the major "foreign policy" decision of the aristocratic Senate every spring was where the armies should be sent (for the view that the senatorial debate about foreign policy focused on matters of detail such as where to send armies, see North, *JRS* 71, 1981; for the primitive nature of the institutions of Roman policy-making, see Eckstein, 1987). Yet to focus on Roman militarism, and the militarized culture of the Roman aristocracy, is to present an introverted view of actual conditions in the Hellenistic Mediterranean.

This paper will argue that the martial ethos of the Roman aristocracy is not unusually distinct when placed in its proper historical and cultural context. If we raise our eyes from Rome itself and look at the broader geopolitical field in which Rome was situated, then the heavy militarism and aggressiveness of Rome's competitors for power and security in the Mediterranean becomes obvious. In particular, though Roman aristocrats were tied to militarism, Hellenistic kings were tied to a militarism that was even more continual and intense than that experienced by any Roman aristocrat. Setting aside even the warrior generation of Alexander's Successors, later kings such as Seleucus II, Philip V or Antiochus III (or Attalus I) in the middle and late third century B.C. went to war every year, and led their armies personally into battle every year. Pyrrhus of Epirus, Philip, Antiochus--or Hiero II of Syracuse--were in fact all renowned duelists in single combat. By contrast, because we are talking about 300 or so senators who only served occasionally in the army--not one king who went to war every year--the militarism at Rome, though still perhaps shocking by our standards, was much more "diffuse" than for a monarchy, and--for each individual Roman aristocrat--it was of much less lasting duration.

This paper aims to put the Roman aristocracy into a context of a joint Mediterranean culture of republics and monarchies whose rulers shared certain important values. Whether kings or members of an aristocracy, political elite in the Hellenistic world, of which mid-Republican Rome was a part, placed strong emphasis on and garnered prestige by conquest and displays of individual military valor.