

## **HERMOLAUS, THE ROYAL ARGEAD HUNT AND ROYAL PEROGOTIVE**

The role of Hermolaus in the context of the “Pages’ Conspiracy” against Alexander the Great has been visited many times in the past. This paper will consider Hermolaus’ role in that episode, but from a new perspective: it will not be concerned with the precise historicity of the unfolding of the episode, with Alexander’s “orientalization” per-se, or with Callisthenes’ participation in an active plot against Alexander the Great’s life. Rather (against the background of Argead precedent), this paper will consider that Hermolaus was imbedded in a plot against Alexander’s life, and the symbolic importance of Hermolaus’ challenge to Alexander’s continuing exercise of kingship. Argead kingship brought responsibilities, among them a sense of justice, reinforced by a traditional sense of how an Argead monarch (untethered as he frequently was) was expected to abide by established mores. Pricked by the tone-deaf teaching of Callisthenes, Hermolaus (among others of his peers) came to believe that Alexander was moving from the status of legitimate king to that of illegitimate tyrant. That being the case, Hermolaus acted to challenge Alexander in the context of symbolic space. Since the Royal Hunt had long been established as a symbolic legitimizer of royal power among the Argeads long before Alexander, when Hermolaus struck at the object of a hunt before Alexander had the opportunity to do so, he was usurping a royal right which reinforced regal authority. By this action, Hermolaus did not intend to claim the royal mantel for himself, but rather meant to underscore that, in his opinion, Alexander had abandoned the justifiable moral underpinnings of kingship to the point where he had become “illegitimate”, thus a tyrant of some sort. Alexander understood the essence of Hermolaus’ protest demonstrated by his pre-mature thrust, and so punished Hermolaus. This punishment itself was interpreted by Hermolaus’ young and idealistic cohort as being proof of Alexander’s abandonment of his traditional royal responsibilities, ending in a murder plot (prompted by Callisthenes’ academic conclusions, if not his active participation.)

**William Greenwalt  
Santa Clara University**