

The Mythology of Power in Antigonos II Gonatas' Propaganda

Serena Evelina Peruch, University of Padua-Venice-Verona

Abstract

The death of the Macedon king Demetrios Poliorketes in 283 B.C. brought about a period of political turmoil in Greece. However, Demetrios' successor, Antigonos Gonatas, was able to stabilize the situation in Macedonia and lay the foundations for a balanced government using a program of meticulous political propaganda that was based extensively on mythological references. This chapter aims to demonstrate that Antigonos aligned himself closely with the Macedonian tradition of the Argead dynasty, sponsoring the cults of Herakles and Asklepios. In addition, I argue that Antigonos also sought to establish an original political identity by promoting the god Pan, thus diverging from the previous choices of the Diadochi (who included Ptolemy in Egypt and Lysimachos in Thrace).

Keywords

Antigonos Gonatas; Pan, Herakles; Asklepios

Introduction

The capture and death of the Macedon king Demetrios Poliorketes in 283 B.C. induced a period of political turmoil in Greece and Macedonia, defined by anarchy and chaos between the Diadochi: in 282 B.C. Seleucus declared war on Lysimachus, the King of Thrace, who was defeated and killed in the battle of Curupedium (281). Seleucus crossed the Straits to Europe with the aim of claiming Macedonia and Thrace, but he was murdered by Ptolemy Keraunos, who took the throne. His reign, however, was short-lived. In 280/79 B.C. a great horde of Gauls, coming from the North-West, invaded Balkans and Macedonia, killed Ptolemy Keraunos and tried to plunder the shrine of Delphi. A Greek army, with a large Aetolian contingent, triumphed over the Gauls, and they were definitely defeated the next year by Antigonos Gonatas, Demetrios Poliorketes' son: he obtained a huge victory over the Gauls in Lysimachia

and claimed the Macedonian throne. Therefore, only with the rise of Antigonos Gonatas (c. 277 B.C.) was the instability in Macedonia quashed and the foundation for a solid and balanced government laid. Antigonos promoted a program of meticulous political propaganda that had numerous mythological references at its core. On the one hand, this study aims to demonstrate that Antigonos adhered to certain traditions of the Argead dynasty, such as continuing to promote the cults of Herakles and Asklepios. On the other hand, by making use of the figure of the god Pan, Antigonos also aspired to create an original personal and political identity in order to differentiate himself from the political identities established by Alexander the Great and the other Diadochi.

Plutarch's *Moralia* states that “Ἡρακλέα μιμούμαι καὶ Περσέα ζηλῶ, καὶ τὰ Διονύσου μετιῶν ἴχνη [...]” (Plut. *Mor.* 332a). That is, Alexander attempted to imitate Herakles and Perseus, thereby following in the footsteps of Dionysus (Palagia, 1986, pp. 138-139). What warrants attention here is how Alexander used the figure of Herakles for propaganda purposes or to create a new political image (Heckel, 2015). First, Alexander regularly sponsored sacrifices in honor of Herakles, “his ancestor” (Arr. *Anab.* VI, 3, 2). Second, he minted coins displaying the head of Herakles in his lion skin. Given that the hero was often represented as youthful and without a beard, it is likely that people were meant to recognize the image of Alexander in the guise of Herakles.

Even if Alexander desired to provide his subjects with a glimpse of his features in Herakles' form, he minted no coins that represented his own image. It was not until the Diadochi's generation that we find coins featuring the image of Alexander himself. They chose to depict him as κερασφόρος, that is, “horned.” This portrayal reflected Alexander's desire to be represented on statues and paintings with Ammon attributes.¹ Lysimachos, was the first to employ this iconography on his

¹ Clem. Alex. *Protr. ad Hell.*, 48P: [...] ἐβούλετο δὲ καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος Ἄμμωνος υἱὸς εἶναι δοκεῖν καὶ κερασφόρος ἀναπλάττεσθαι πρὸς τῶν ἀγαλματοποιῶν, τὸ καλὸν ἀνθρώπου ὑβρίσαι σπεύδων κέρατι “Alexander desired to be considered Ammon's son and to be represented by sculptors with the god's horns on his head, but, in this way, he deformed his natural beauty;” Athen. XII, 53, 12: “Ἐφιππος δὲ φησιν ὡς Ἀλέξανδρος καὶ τὰς ἱεράς ἐσθῆτας ἐφόρει ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις, ὅτε μὲν τὴν τοῦ Ἄμμωνος πορφυρίδα καὶ περισχιδεῖς καὶ κέρατα καθάπερ ὁ θεός [...].” “Ephippos says that Alexander wore holy

coins following Alexander's death and he was soon followed by Ptolemy I, who coined the same symbol on his drachms and tetradrachms in the mints of Alexandria and Memphis. Although both Lysimachos (Hadley, 1974; Iossif, 2004; Erickson, 2009, pp. 58–59; Erickson, 2012) and Ptolemy continued to mint coins depicting Herakles' image, they also introduced Alexander's image with the aim of establishing a perfect line of continuity with Philip's son, thus avoiding any symbolic innovation.

We must also remember that the figure of Alexander was highly relevant for all the Diadochi who needed the model of the Macedonian king to stabilize their new political power. In particular, they wished to be considered his legitimate heirs and to include themselves in the "tradition of power" that developed in the aftermath of Alexander's conquests. This tendency changed with the second generation, that of the Epigoni, to which Antigonos himself belonged. In this period, the figure of Alexander declined in popularity, and we can observe a new common aspiration that united the Epigoni, namely, the desire to create a new era that was distinguishable from Alexander's. This can be clearly seen in the Seleukid kingdom, where a Seleukid Era was institutionalized. This was most likely done by Antiochos I Soter, the son of Seleukos I Nikator, who entirely erased Alexander from his propaganda, thus associating himself only with his father Seleukos (Strootman, 2015).

In Macedonia, the situation was somewhat different, and we do not have any evidence that confirms the presence of an "Antigonid Era." Nevertheless, in the figure of Antigonos Gonatas we can observe how the king aimed to create a new kingdom not only by following and respecting the main Macedonian traditions, but also by creating a new dynastic image to identify his political power. Antigonos did not remove the figure of Alexander to the extent that Antiochos did in Asia Minor. Given that Antiochos sought to distance himself from the previous Diadochi, however, Alexander the Great was not the only paradigm whom he wished to follow.

cloths too during the banquets, sometimes Ammon's red dress, the *perischideis* and the horns, as the god used to do."

Antigonos Following in the Footsteps of the Argeads: The Cults of Herakles and Asklepios

Antigonos II Gonatas, son of Demetrios the Besieger, promoted a program of meticulous political propaganda that included numerous mythological references. His aim was to present himself as a devoted upholder of Macedonian traditions. This can be demonstrated by considering his religious choices and the cults he supported during his lifetime.

During his reign, Antigonos paid meticulous attention to the cults of Herakles and Asklepios. My argument presupposes that Antigonos Gonatas had already used Herakles, if not as a model per se, as a Macedonian god whose cult he promoted in his kingdom. This differs from the interpretation of Huttner, who denied that the figure of Herakles was used as a symbol of power before Philip V (Huttner, 1997).

Given that Herakles was considered one of their own ancestors, he was held in high esteem by Alexander and all the Argead kings (Palagia, 1986; Heckel, 2015). Unlike the other Diadochi, Antigonos did not mint any coins with the image of Herakles, not even at the beginning of his political career (Head, 1911, p. 232; Brenk, 1995). He preferred, rather, to mint coins with a new iconography featuring the image of Pan, the god who came to the king's aid during his major battles. As we shall see, the image of Pan was used by Antigonos as a symbol of his own political power.

In this way, Antigonos followed the desire for innovation inherited from his father Demetrios. Indeed, at the beginning of his political career, Demetrios Poliorketes minted coins reproducing Herakles following the Alexander type. After claiming a remarkable naval victory in Cyprus, he then decided to mint a new typology of coins depicting the image of Poseidon, the god who came to his aid during the sea fight against Ptolemy in 306 B.C (Figures 1, 2) (Miedico, 2010, pp. 35, 41, 47, 50; Wallace, 2017, pp. 13-14; Wheatley-Dunn, 2020, pp. 17, 18, 268, 272; Duris, *FGrH* 76 F13).

Contrary to his father, Antigonos never reproduced Herakles' image on his coins. Rather, he took a different approach by presenting himself and his dynasty as part of the same *genos* of Herakles as well as by linking

one of the core symbols belonging to the Argead family with his own image. In this way, Antigonos aimed to strengthen and sponsor the cult of the hero in different cities (Beroea, Antigoneia, and Demetriad), and perhaps proclaimed the hero to be his ancestor because of his closeness with Alexander and the Argead family. To this end, three epigraphical texts from Beroea (modern-day Veria) dating to the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Antigonos are particularly relevant (Brocas-Deflassieux, 1999).² Full texts of these inscriptions (with my personal translation) are quoted below:

A)

Βασιλεύοντος Αντιγόνου ἔτους F και Λ έντυχόντων
 Δημητρίωι τῶν κυνηγῶν Χάρτα τοῦ Νικάνορος, Ἀττύλου τοῦ
 Νικάνορος ἐδόθησαν αἱ ἐπιστολαί. vacat
 Δημήτριος Ἀρπάλωι χαίρειν. Οἱ ἱερεῖς οἱ τοῦ
 Ἡρακ[λ]έους φασὶν τῶν προσόδων τινὰς τῶν
 τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὰς πολιτικὰς κατατετάχθαι·
 ἐπιμελήθηθι οὖν ὅπως ἀποκατασταθῶσιν
 πάλιν τῶι θεῶι· ἔρρωσο. Vacat
 (Hatzopoulos, 1996, pp. 103 sgg)

In the 36th year of Antigonos' reign, after the *kynegoi* Chartas and Attilos, sons of Nikanor, had done a petition to Demetrios, they received these letters:

Demetrios gives regards to Harpalos. Herakles' priests tell that some entrances belonging to the god have been designated to public affairs. You have to make sure they will return to the god. Regards.

Δημήτριος Ἀρπάλωι χαίρειν· οἱ [ἀπε]λευ[θ]ερο[ύ]-
 μενοι πρότερον φαίνονται φιάλ[ας ἀνατίθεςθαι]
 εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν. ἐπεὶ οὖν [έστιν] πε[ριο]υσία εἰς τή[ν]
 χρεῖαν τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀνατιθέτωσαν ἀντί
 τῶν φιαλῶν κέρατα [κ]αί σκύφους· ἔρρωσο.

² Scholars disagree on when Antigonos' reign began. See Tarn (1913, p. 112 n.3) and Chambers (1954).

Demetrios gives regards to Harpalos. It seems that the freedmen used to dedicate *phialai* as offerings to the temple. Since there are more than enough for the god, they shall offer horns and *skyphoi* instead of *phialai* to the god. Regards.

Δημήτριος Ἀρπάλ[ω]ι χαί[ρειν· οἱ ἱερεῖς οἱ τοῦ
 Ἡρακλέους ἀτε[λεῖς ἔστων πάντων ὄσ]ων καὶ οἱ
 τοῦ Ἀσκληπιοῦ- ἔρρωσο. Ἔτους [F_ καί] Λ
 [Δ]ύστρου ΙΕ.

Demetrios gives regards to Harpalos. Herakles' priests must be exempted from all the same taxes Asklepios' priests are free from. 36th year (*sil.* of Antigonos' reign), 15th Dystros.

These inscriptions attest to the presence of a temple dedicated to Herakles, and most likely Herakles 'Kynagidas' (Hunter), in Beroea. These epigraphs also testify that certain figures from Beroea named *kynegoi* (perhaps the governor or 'epistates' of the city) begged Demetrios II, Antigonos' son, to convince Harpalos to return to the shrine a certain amount of money previously confiscated. Moreover, Demetrios had to guarantee certain tax privileges to the priests of Herakles, the same amount previously received by the priests of Asklepios.

We can also assume that Antigonos and his son paid close attention to handling these religious practices since they attached great importance to the cult of the hero.³ There are no other documents that record a royal intervention in similar circumstances, although it is likely that much evidence has simply not survived. Nonetheless, it seems clear that Herakles was one of the heroes worshipped in third-century B.C. Macedonia and his cult was sponsored by the Antigonid dynasty, especially during Antigonos' lifetime.⁴

³ It is of course possible that Antigonos or, as in this case, his son Demetrios II, had been consulted to resolve other similar issues also related to other shrines.

⁴ The phenomenon of tax-exemption was also common in other kingdoms in different times. For instance, tax privileges are attested for a series of cults and festivals in Asia (*IGR* IV 336; *IGR* IV 1431, Price 1984, p. 107; Dignas, 2002). An inscription from Kasossos, in Karia, of mid-late Hellenism (*LSAM* 71) contains a contract for the sale of a priesthood of Zeus, which seems to have been a public cult in the community. The exemption from taxation (ἀτέλεια) granted to the priest demonstrates that Kasossos was no longer a fully independent community at this time, but rather formed a civic subdivision of the city of Mylasa: exemption from taxation and liturgies is granted to

Another inscription from Beroea, dated slightly earlier to the fourth century B.C., testifies to the presence of the cult for Herakles the Hunter in the same city. This suggests that Antigonos did not introduce the cult for the hero *ex novo*:

ἡ πόλις Ἡρακλεῖ Κυναγίδαι ἐπισ[τατοῦντος ---]⁵
the city to Herakles Hunter, with --- as *epistates*

However, it is possible that Antigonos continued this form of worship and established for himself certain figures, the *kynegoi*, for the development of the shrine. There is no previous mention of these figures in Beroea or in other parts of Macedonia, but we can suppose that such a cult had an important role in the Macedonian society at least from the fourth century B.C. (Roussel, 1930, p. 361).⁶ We shall shortly be able to appreciate this when we consider another inscription from Demetriad.

Let us now turn to another epigram, which was written by a poet named Samos,⁷ son of Chrysogonos and σύντροφος (Polyb. V, 9, 4) of the Antigonid king Philip V.

Ant. Pal. VI, 115:

Τὸν πάτρος Ὀρβηλοῖο μεμυκότα δειράσι ταῦρον,
τὸν πρὶν ἐρημωτᾶν θῆρα Μακεδονίας,
Δαρδανέων ὀλετῆρ ὁ κεραύνιος εἶλε Φίλιππος,
πλήξας αἰγανέα βρέγμα κυναγέτιδι·
καὶ τάδε σοὶ βριαράς, Ἡράκλεες, οὐ δίχα βύρσας
θῆκεν, ἀμαμακέτου κρατὸς ἔρεισμα, κέρα.
Σᾶς τοι ὄδ' ἐκ ρίζας ἀναδέδρομεν· οὐ τοι ἀεικέξ

the priest of Zeus only for those over which the Kasosseis had authority (ὧν ἐν Κασωσ[σε]ῖς κύριοι ὄσιν, l. 11–13). During the Roman Period, Caesar and his governor were interested in the rights of the temple of Asklepios himself. A dispute between the city of Pergamon and a certain M. Fannius concerning the *asylia* of the temple and the *ieroí νόμοι* was settled by the governor. It could be suggested that Fannius, a Roman *privatus*, acted against the special tax status of the temple of Asklepios.

⁵ Veria Museum inv. Λ 254; Hatzopoulos (1996 B, nr. 74, pp. 90–91).

⁶ We do not know if in Macedonia they were part of a religious confraternity that had Herakles as a guide, or if they were simply adepts of this cult. Ptolemaic inscriptions suggest that in Egypt certain *kynegoi* were used by the kings for elephant hunting (Roussel, 1930). We can assume that in Egypt they were part of a cynegetic association, without religious duty. It is difficult to claim the same for the Macedonian *kynegoi* as we do not have sufficient evidence.

⁷ For the attribution of this work to Samos rather than Antipater of Sidon, see Tripodi (1998 p. 130 n. 7).

πατρώου ζαλοῦν ἔργα βοοκτασίας.

Philip, lighting fast destroyer of the Dardans, captured the ox bellowing in the woods of the Mount Orbelos, a beast that used to devastate Macedonia, after he hit his forehead with his hunting spear. Herakles, Philip gave you these horns, symbol of an invincible power, and this skin. This one has grown up from your root; it is not unsuitable to emulate the ancestral taurine murder.

Samos used accurate language recalling the Homeric style, consciously emphasizing the similitude between the king and the hero. In this epigram, Philip V is compared to Herakles because of his strength and power (Tripodi, 1998), and the killing of the oxen by Herakles is defined ‘πατρώος’ (ancestral) (White, 1983, pp. 55–57).⁸ Since this adjective is related to Philip V himself, it must be considered as Philip V’s—or perhaps Samos’—claim to present the Antigonids as Herakles’ descendants. These details are extremely interesting, for they suggest that Philip V belongs to the same *genos* as Herakles. In other words, Philip V, as the recipient or commissioner of the poem, wished to be considered part of Herakles’ lineage.

Given the attention paid to Herakles by Demetrios II (and likely by Antigonos), as the epigraphic evidence from Beroea suggests, it might be assumed that this association between the Antigonid dynasty and Herakles was not an innovation introduced by Philip V. Rather, it could be dated back to Philip V’s ancestors and, of course, to Antigonos Gonatas. The epithet ‘Hunter’ applied to Herakles is also interesting here. The hunt was an important activity for Macedonian kings, and a significant number of frescoes (Despoine, 1980, p. 203; Pellino, 2009)

⁸ Scholars discuss the noun βοοκτασία: Gow-Page (1965, vol. II, p. 73) think of the Cretan Bull, even if we know from Pausanias that Herakles did not kill this bull but only captured it (Paus. I, 27, 10 remembers that Theseus and not Herakles killed and sacrificed the bull). The scholars conclude that the poet had perhaps ‘forgotten the story of the Cretan Bull or knew another version of it’. White (1983 pp. 56–57) suggests that the poet refers to the cattle-slaying committed by Herakles when he captured and killed the ox of Theodamas, king of the Dryops. This episode is recorded by Callimachos (Callim. *Hymn.* III, 161 and *Aitia* I, fr. 24–25.).

and mosaics (Dunbabin, 1999, pp. 8 sgg) depict hunting scenes with kings as their main characters (Palagia, 2000).

Focusing on the Antigonid family, Plutarch reveals that king Demetrios Poliorketes practiced this activity from his youth (Plut. *Demetr.* 3; Tripodi, 1998). However, the hostile sources transpiring from Plutarch's text used the theme of the hunt to tarnish Demetrios' reputation by describing the king as a "hunter of women" (Plut. *Demetr.* 27, 6–7; Tripodi, 1998, pp. 115–118).⁹ In any case, we can affirm that Demetrios practiced this activity too and could have taught it to his son Antigonos. In this way, the term "hunter" connected with the figure of Herakles allowed Antigonos to ennoble the cynegetic activity that was used by his father's enemies as a pretext to undermine Demetrios' political image.

Other epigraphic evidence testifies to the presence of the cult of Herakles in other cities connected to the Antigonid family, such as Demetriad and Antigoneia (Papazoglou, 1988, pp. 323–326). These data confirm the importance of the god. For instance, in 1986 an inscription was discovered in Demetriad. This white marble stele, dated to the years of Philip V's reign, mentions the presence of a shrine dedicated presumably to Herakles Kynegidas. This is likely considering the presence, in this document as well, of Herakles' other *kynegoi*.

Παρ' Αντιπάτ[ρου] ·
 Οί κυνηγοί τοῦ Ἑρα[κλέ-]
 οὺς χρωματίνου[ς]
 τοὺς πετάσους φαί-
 νονται φορεῖν. δεῖ δὲ
 αὐτοὺς ἔχειν πελ-
 λούς ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ
 τὰς χλαμύδας κατὰ
 τὴν ἱστορίαν ἣν ὁ βα-
 σιλεὺς εἰσηγεῖται πε-
 πὶ τοῦ πράγατος. ἔγ-
 δος οὖν ὅπως ἀναγρα-
 φῆ τὸ εἶδος τοῦτο εἰς
 λιθάριον καὶ ἀνατεθῆ

⁹ This mockery could be considered an overturning of the king's desire to be seen and appreciated by his subjects as a real hunter.

έν τοῖς ἱεροῖς.
 Ἔτους Χ καὶ Λ
 Ἀπελλαίου ΚΔ

From Antipatros: it seems that Herakles' *kynegoi* wear colorful *petasoi*. It's better if they wear dark grey *petasoi* and similarly *chlamydes*, following the story that the king tells regarding this argument. You must provide, then, that this decision regarding the colors has to be carved in a little marble stele and to be placed inside the sanctuaries. 37th year of Philip's reign. 24th Apellaios.

In light of this epigraph, we might say that the cult of Herakles the Hunter lasted until Philip V's reign. At this time, the figures of *kynegoi* were present in different parts of Macedonia. The term ἱεροῖς suggests that there were different sanctuaries where the *kynegoi* used to live. Consequently, the cult of Herakles the Hunter seems to have been spread and been organized in various Macedonian regions.

Herakles' worship is also attested in Demetriad, a city founded by Demetrios Poliorketes in 294 B.C. An inscription found 400 meters north of the theatre reports the name of Herakles in the genitive form. Considering the weight and the size of the stone, it has been suggested that it was not moved away from the original site and that Herakles' shrine was found here (Intzesiloglou, 2006, p. 70). We can read only the name of the hero on this inscription, without any epithets, and so it cannot be determined conclusively whether it was an epigraph dedicated to Herakles the Hunter. Either way, this inscription is important as it shows the persistence of the cult of Herakles.

Ἡρακλέου[ς]
 Of Herakles

Let us now consider the city of Antigoneia in Macedonia, where a no-longer-extant inscription of the third century B.C. was found (Papazoglou, 1988, pp. 323–326). It must be noted that scholars disagree in considering the city one of Antigonos' foundation (Papazoglou, 1988, pp. 323–326); however, Stephanus of Byzantium refers to Antigoneia as

follow: Ἀντιγόνεια: Ἀντιγόνου κτίσμα τοῦ Γονατοῦ. It is possible, for this reason, to think that the city in question was founded by Gonatas, and to suppose that the Antigonids sponsored, or even introduced in this city, the cult of Herakles.

Ἡρακλεῖ
ἐπινίκ[ω]¹⁰
ἢ πόλ[ις]¹¹

the *polis*,
to Herakles Victorious

This inscription attests to the presence of the cult of the hero. It does not, however, mention Herakles the Hunter, but rather Herakles the Victorious. Nevertheless, this inscription, as well as the previous ones from Demetriad, confirms that Herakles was worshipped in two different cities founded by the Antigonid kings.

We can assume that Antigonos aimed to afford more importance to the cult of Herakles, and perhaps declared the hero to be his ancestor because of his closeness with Alexander and the Argead family. The hero was chosen by Antigonos as a “common denominator,” which is to say that he aimed to link one of the main symbols belonging to the Argead family to his own image and political propaganda.

Let us now turn to an examination of the image of Asklepios and how his cult was treated by Antigonos. We shall see that Gonatas, as for the case of Herakles, accepted and sponsored the cult and the festivals for Asklepios because of his closeness to Alexander and the Argead family. But, first, we must briefly go back to one of the inscriptions from Beroea dating from the thirty-sixth year of Antigonos’ reign. Demetrios II had to assure Herakles’ priests certain tax privileges, equal to those that the priests of Asklepios had previously received. In Beroea, during

¹⁰ The word ἐπίνικος is not very common. It is connected to Herakles on the coins minted in Ephesos during the imperial period. See Sève-Feissel (1979, pp. 229–326 nr. 20 and p. 294); Karwiese (1970) s.v. Ephesos.

¹¹ Pazaras-Chatzopoulos (1997, p. 89, nr. 70); Sève-Feissel (1979, pp. 229–326, in part. p. 294 nr. 20).

Antigonos' reign, both the cults of Herakles the Hunter and Asklepios were present, and the Antigonid dynasty conferred tax privileges on both the priests of Herakles and Asklepios.

It is worth noting that the presence of the cult of Asklepios is not an isolated case. We know of four decrees from Philippi, Pella, Amphipolis, and Kassandreia – published in 1952 – (Herzog, 1952), and of other two from Aigiai and Beroia – published in 2021 – (Bosnakis & Halllof, 2020) that testify to the presence of a cult of Asklepios during the reign of Antigonos Gonatas¹². These inscriptions, all of which are very similar, state that ambassadors from the island of Kos arrived in Macedonia to encourage the acceptance of a sacred truce and to invite the inhabitants of the cities to celebrate the Asklepieia in honor of Asklepios. The decrees of Pella, Kassandreia, Philippi and Amphipoli clearly underline that King Antigonos was very much inclined to accept this truce and to join the invitation¹³.

It is important to understand why Antigonos sponsored the cult of Asklepios. This god had been worshipped since the fifth century B.C. in Athens, Thessaly, and of course Epidauros. He had also become important during the reign of Alexander the Great. Arrian informs us that, during his expedition to Asia, the Macedonian king organized sacrifices and solemn oaths in honor of Asklepios (Arr. *Anabasis* II, 5, 8). In addition, we know that the Argeads hired *ιατροί* from the Asklepieion of Kos as their personal physicians. Philip II, for instance, would take into his service *ιατροί* from Kos from his first expedition in Thrace (358 B.C.) (Berve, 1973, p. 79). Alexander, likewise, engaged physicians from the same island.

It is not surprising that the cult of this god was known in Macedonia from the fourth century B.C. During the following centuries, its presence is also attested in other places such as Amphipolis, Egina, Thessaloniki and Thrace. Moreover, the Macedonian kings had shown a considerable interest in medical subjects from the fifth century B.C. We know the

¹² In this paper I will focus only on Macedonian decrees regarding Antigonos Gonatas and Macedonian *poleis*. Nevertheless, the ambassadors from Kos visited also different cities in the Peloponnese, South Italy, Sicily, and Egypt (Rigsby, 1996).

¹³ The absence of Antigonos' approval in the decrees of Aigiai and Beroia could be explained by the fact that the ambassadors had not met the king yet.

names of the physicians hired to cure the Macedonian royal family, including Hippokrates, Perdicca's ἰατρός, or Nikomachos, Aristotle's father and Amyntas III's personal physician. Philip II and Alexander, as we have seen, engaged ἰατροί from the same island too. Building on these sources, we can assume that the main physicians hired by Macedonian kings came from this *polis*. Kos can be identified as the city from which the most competent physicians came; it was also where the cult of Asklepios had its origin. This cult lasted until the second to third century B.C.

If we consider once more the aforementioned decrees of the Asklepieia of Kos, it is possible to assume that Antigonos may have desired the enrichment of Asklepios' cult in these cities to allude to Alexander's family and to continue the ancient local traditions connected to the god.

There could, of course, be other reasons to explain why the cult of Asklepios was so important and widespread in Macedonia. We should also consider the geological changes that took place in Macedonia and in particular Pella. In the middle of the fourth century, because of geomorphological and climate changes, this city lost its access to the Thermaic Gulf from which a lake named Loudia emerged (Crusostomou, 1990, pp. 206-207; Hammond, 1972, pp. 145-149; Crusostomou, 2002, p. 112, footnote 98). In fact, the air became so humid and unhealthy that the mortality rate rose as a result of malaria (Crusostomou, 2002, pp. 98-117). These circumstances meant that people felt the need to worship a protector god against disease, and Macedonian sovereigns also desired to develop medical knowledge (Crusostomou, 2002, pp. 98-117; Antela Bernàrdez-Sierra Martin, 2016, pp. 307-417). In Pella as well as in other cities in which the cult of Asklepios was present, the god could be associated with Apollo or Hygieia—other gods associated with curing diseases—but also with Herakles. This hero, in truth, was worshipped as a protector from illness in different parts of Greece, so that he assumed the epithets Alexikakos (savior from the evils) and Kallinikos (glorious) (Salowey, 2002, pp. 171-177).

According to the scholiast to Aristophanes' *Ranae*, one of the most noteworthy sanctuaries of Herakles Alexikakos was located in the

Athenian deme of Melite, and its foundation was connected to a plague (Schol. *Ar. Ran.* 504)¹⁴. The same scholiast further notes that a famine ended because of a statue of Herakles built by Agelades, one of Phidias' teachers.¹⁵ In the Peloponnese and in particular the cities of Mantinea and Titane, a cult of Herakles as protector from evils was also attested. (Thuc. V, 64, 1; V, 66, 1 Paus. II, 11, 8; Salowey, 2002, pp. 171–177). Moreover, in Asklepios' shrine at Epidauros a stele with a dedication to Herakles Alexikakos was found, thus reinforcing the connection between the two gods (*IG IV*, 1092). Pausanias also recalls that Asklepios cured Herakles' wounds in Laconia (Paus. III, 19,7; III, 20, 5).

The evidence presented above sheds some light on why Antigonos Gonatas might have desired to reconnect his religious propaganda to Asklepios and Herakles. It was a way to allude to ancient mythological traditions that had also been revived by Philip and Alexander.

Antigonos and Pan: A New Symbol of Power

While the previous section of this paper explored how Antigonos and his descendants positioned themselves as rightful and obvious successors to the Argead kings by sponsoring the cults of Herakles and Asklepios, this section will illustrate how the Antigonid king strove to differentiate himself from the previous sovereigns. I shall demonstrate that Gonatas did so by associating himself with the image of the god Pan, a deity highly relevant to his claimed Argead ancestors, but whom no one had used before as a symbol of political power.

Particularly relevant here is an inscription found in Beroea in 1975 and subsequently published by Pazaras-Chatzopoulos (1997, pp. 71–78). The following verses were carved on a white marble stele:

B)
 Πάν καὶ ἐν Ἀρκαδίᾳ μέγα τίμιος, ἀλλὰ
 πόθος με πνεῦμα Μακεδονίᾳ σύμμαχον ἠγάγετο,

¹⁴ The passage οὐκ Μελίτης μαστιγίας in Aristoph. *Ran.*, 501 refers to this shrine located in Melite, which must, therefore, have been in existence as early as 405 B.C., the date of the performance of the *Ranae*. See Salowey (2002, pp. 171–177).

¹⁵ We do not know exactly which famine. What we do know is that it happened before 405 B.C., the year in which this play was performed.

Ἴπποκλέους δὲ ἀρετὰ με τεθαλότα καὶ νέον ᾧδε
 θῆκ' ἐγὲ τε ἐκ προγόνων κισσὸν ἀναψάμενος.
 Ἀθάνατος βασιλεῖ<ο>ς ἐπεὶ χάρις ἄδε Φιλίππου
 καὶ τέκνων τέκνοις αἰδίως ἐδόθη
 καὶ κτεάνων ἀτελῆς δόμος ἄτε ἐπίσημος.
 Ἀντιγόνου φάμα τόνδε ἐφύλαξε νόμον.

I, Pan, greatly benefit from the honors I receive in Arcadia, but a desire pushes me, as a breath of wind, to become an ally of Macedonia, and the virtue of Hippokles took me here, as a thriving and reinvigorated god, wearing ancestral ivy. With an eternal benevolence, king Philip has decided to give to his heirs, forever, a house without taxation, as a distinguished sign. Antigonos' reputation guarded this law.

In this epigram, the god Pan is speaking. While Pan affirms that he benefits from honors in Arcadia, he also desires to become an ally of Macedonia, considering Antigonos' reputation and Hippokles' glory. A precise date is difficult to pin down, but we can be confident that the epigram dates from the reign of Antigonos reign, as Pan claims that he had decided to become an ally of Macedonia and praises Antigonos and his rulership.

The association between Antigonos and Pan perhaps originated after the king defeated the Gauls in the battle of Lysimachia in around 280 B.C. The Gauls from the north had been forced to leave their country because of either famine or overpopulation, and they ravaged all the territories through which they passed. After they defeated and killed Ptolemy Keraunos, king of Macedonia, in 279 B.C.,¹⁶ the Gauls, with their leader Brennos, arrived in Delphi where a coalition of Greek forces drove them away. Some of the Gauls whom Brennos had left in the northern territories of Greece wished to conquer Macedonia. At the time, the European remains of Seleukos' kingdom were the point of contention between Gonatas and Antiochos I. However, when Antigonos learned of this new danger, he decreed a truce with Antiochos and faced the Gauls

¹⁶ After he assassinated Seleukos, Ptolemy Keraunos became king of Macedonia. When the Gauls began to devastate the territories in the Balkans, the king of the Dardanian people—whose identity is uncertain—asked Ptolemy to become his ally to defeat the common enemy. Ptolemy, underrating the danger, was killed by Brennos soon after.

in Lysimachia. We must remember here that Antigonos, after the death of his father in 283 B.C., had but few outposts in different parts of Greece, and no one could expect a victory from him; however, foreseeing the Gauls' actions, Antigonos defeated them and became king of Macedonia. According to Justin:

[...] tantaque caedes Gallorum fuit, ut Antigonos pacem opinio huius victoriae non a Gallis tantum, verum etiam a finitimorum feritate praestiterit.

The massacre of the Gauls was so big that the fame of this victory gave Antigonos not only peace from the Gauls but also from the ferocity of the bordering peoples. (Iust. XXV, 2, 6–7)

On the occasion of Antigonos' wedding some years later, the poet Aratos from Soli wrote some verses in celebration of the king. A *scholium* of Theon from Alexandria clarifies the content of the work (Martin, 1974, pp. 14–18). It was a hymn for Pan, written to celebrate the huge victory in Lysimachia, which Antigonos had secured owing to the help of Pan.¹⁷ The god became, in this way, Gonatas' ally.

Consequently, the victory over the Gauls became a theme not only for Antigonos, but also for most of the Hellenistic kings from the third century B.C. Every occasion thereafter could be used by different sovereigns to highlight their victory over these new barbarians. Ptolemy II is celebrated in Callimachus III's hymn after he defeated a coalition of Gauls who rebelled in Alexandria (Call. *Hymn III*, vv. 185–187). Subsequently, Attalos triumphed over the Celts and added to his name the title of Savior (Paus. I,8,2; I, 25,2). Moreover, he was also known by

¹⁷ Not all scholars consider these verses the celebration of Antigonos' victory in Lysimachia. Indeed, this text was found on an Egyptian papyrus (whose date is still the subject of debate), and Barbantani struggles to find a plausible explanation for why a papyrus recalling an Antigonid victory would be present in Egypt, considering the strained relationship between Ptolemy and Antigonos (Barbantani, 2001, pp. 124–125). Either way, we must consider that the Gauls' invasion was an issue that all the Hellenistic dynasties had to face. The Antigonids and Seleucids had to combat a Gallic invasion, while the Ptolemies had to deal with a governability problem caused by the Gauls. This evidence suggests that the presence in Egypt of an *encomium* to Antigonos might not be seen as a diminution of Ptolemy's power. These verses, indeed, could be seen as a model that reflected a very real theme concerning all dynasties.

the name Galatonikes, that is “Victor of the Gauls” (Allen, 1983, pp. 195–199). With this victory, Attalos obtained the diadem and clearly used this historical success for his political propaganda (Strootman, 2005, p. 123).

Considering these propagandistic strategies, the association between Antigonos and Pan seems significant insofar as it was an allusion to the recent victory of the Greeks against the Gauls in Delphi, which had happened two years earlier in the battle of Lysimachia (279 B.C.). Moreover, it could be considered a reference to the events of the fifth century B.C., namely, the Second Persian War (480 B.C.). Pausanias is the main source to record the Gauls’ pillage of Delphi in 279 B.C. He tells us that Apollo helped the Greeks in this fight and that some stones fell from Mount Parnassus, crushing the Gauls and granting a certain victory to the Greeks. We know that Pausanias took his inspiration from the events that occurred during Xerxes’ invasion of Greece as recorded by Herodotos, who described the Persian attempt to conquer the shrine (Hdt. VIII, 35–39.). In the eighth book, the historian recalls how Apollo intervened during this fight to save his sanctuary. When the Persians arrived to conquer Athena Pronoia’s shrine, two enormous stones fell from Mount Parnassus and many Persians died. Instantly, a supernatural fear gripped the enemies:

ἐπεὶ γὰρ δὴ ἦσαν ἐπιόντες οἱ βάρβαροι κατὰ τὸ ἱρὸν τῆς Προνηΐης Ἀθηναΐης, ἐν τούτῳ ἕκ μὲν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κεραυνοὶ αὐτοῖσι ἐνέπιπτον, ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ Παρνηησοῦ ἀπορραγεῖσαι δύο κορυφαὶ ἐφέροντο πολλῶ πατάγῳ ἐς αὐτοὺς καὶ κατέλαβον συχνοὺς σφραων, ἕκ δὲ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τῆς Προνηΐης βοή τε καὶ ἀλαλαγμὸς ἐγένετο. Συμμιγέντων δὲ τούτων πάντων φόβος τοῖσι βαρβάροισι ἐνεπεπτώκεε. (Hdt. VIII, 35–39)

In fact, when the Barbarians, in their assault, arrived next to Athena Pronoia’s shrine, exactly in that moment thunderbolts fell over them from the sky and two stones, knocked off Mount Parnassus, crashed over them with a big noise and fell on a fairly large number of them. And clamors and war cries rose from Pronoia’s temple. Having combined all these factors, a terror-fear had broken down on the βαρβάροι.

A similar event took place two centuries later. In fact, Pausanias tells us that, during the night of his retreat, Brennos and his men were

captured by a “panic-fear” that paralyzed their actions. The Periegetes has no doubt in confirming that this reaction was caused by Pan, who rushed to the aid of the Greeks:

καὶ οἱ μὲν ἑστρατοπεδεύσαντο ἔνθα νύξ κατελάμβανεν ἀναχωροῦντας, ἐν δὲ τῇ νυκτὶ φόβος σφίσιν ἐμπίπτει Πανικός· τὰ γὰρ ἀπὸ αἰτίας οὐδεμιᾶς δεῖματα ἐκ τούτου φασὶ γίνεσθαι. ἐνέπεσε μὲν ἐς τὸ στράτευμα ἡ ταραχὴ περὶ βαθεῖαν τὴν ἑσπέραν, καὶ ὀλίγοι τὸ κατ' ἀρχᾶς ἐγένοντο οἱ παραχθέντες ἐκ τοῦ νοῦ, ἐδόξαζόν τε οὗτοι κτύπου τε ἐπελαυνομένων ἵππων καὶ ἐφόδου πολεμίων <αἰσθάνεσθαι> μετὰ δὲ οὐ πολὺ καὶ ἐς ἅπαντας διέδρα ἡ ἄγνοια. (Paus. X, 23, 7)

And they (the Gauls) encamped where night overtook them in their retreat, and during the night a Panic-fear won them over. For causeless terrors are said to come from the god Pan. It was when evening was turning to night that the confusion fell on the army, and at first only a few became mad, and these imagined that they heard the trampling of horses at a gallop, and the attack of advancing enemies. But after a little time the delusion spread to all.

By identify similarities and differences between Pausanias’ story and that of Herodotos, we can see that in 480 B.C. Pan’s name does not appear, but a more generic phobos is present. We can therefore assume that Pausanias (or his potential source Hieronymos) used the name of the god, thus creating a link between the fight of the Greeks in Delphi of 480 and the new fight in 279 B.C.

In fact, we can assume that Hieronymos of Cardia or one of the other historians active at Antigonos’ court had revised the Herodotean data, adapting it to the Antigonid propaganda. He thus aimed to create recollections and allusions between these two Delphian events. Moreover, within this framework, we might suppose that the double allusion to the Delphian events that took place in 480 B.C. and 279 B.C. sparked a connection with the Antigonid victory at Lysimachia where Pan was Antigonos’ main ally.

Other numismatic and archaeological evidence from Macedonia confirms that the cult of Pan was highly attested during Antigonos’ reign

(Borgeaud, 1988, p. 48). The god's face, beardless and horned, is carved on the tetradrachms minted by Antigonos after his victory against the Gauls.¹⁸ Other bronze coins with Antigonos' monogram are well-known, with Pan depicted with a *tropaion*, which serves as a clear allusion to the help offered by the god during the battle of Lysimachia (Merker, 1960, pp. 39–59; Brett, 1950, pp. 62–63).¹⁹ In this way, these coins became another instrument used by Gonatas to publicize his victory over the Gauls and his alliance with the god Pan as one of the new symbols of the Macedonian kingdom (Figure 3).²⁰

The cult of the god Pan was present in Macedonia from the fifth century B.C and can be connected to the Macedonian kings. Plinius the Elder records that the painter Zeuxis gave king Archelaos (at the beginning of the fourth century B.C.) a painting of Pan as a present (Plin. *Nat. Hist.* XXXV, 62). Moreover, we can find a numismatic precedent. King Amyntas II minted certain coins on one side of which we find a figure that seems to be Pan's head (Head, 1963, *sv. Aminta* II no. 2., p. 168). Pan may even be associated with the figure of Alexander the Great, although the sources are too limited to confirm it. Plinius the Elder is the only author who testifies that the painter Protogenes represented Alexander standing next to the god Pan (Plin. *Nat. Hist.* XXXV, 106). Instead, the identity of a statue from Pella²¹ is widely discussed by scholars who disagree about the subject represented (Figure 4) (Voutiras, 2018). It is

¹⁸ Scholars disagree about the precise date. On the one hand, some think that Antigonos minted this type of coin immediately after the battle of Lysimachia. Another possibility is to consider these coins as connected with the capitulation of Athens in Antigonos' hands after the Chremonidean War. See Panagopoulou (2000).

¹⁹ Whether Antigonos minted his coins after the battle against the Gauls or to celebrate his conquest of Athens, both moments are significant for the king's political propaganda. The figure of Pan carved on these coins could highlight the close link between Antigonos himself and the god Pan, the new symbol of his reign.

²⁰ The victory over the Celts became a theme for all the Hellenistic dynasties. I quote as an example the case of the Attalid kingdom: after Attalos triumphed over the Celts, he started to credit his adoptive father, Philaeteros, saying that he was the one—instead of Antiochos Soter—who drove away the Galatians from Asia to Phrygia in 275 B.C. This idea is demonstrated clearly on the coins he minted in that time. On Pergamene tetradrachmes, instead of the image of Antiochos, the image of Philaeteros appeared on the front, while on the reverse a seated Athena Nikephoros was represented. See Schultz (1997), Mørholm (1984, p. 188), and Strootman (2005, p. 123).

²¹ Marble statuette of Alexander (?)—Pan; late fourth century B.C. Archaeological Museum, Pella.

possible, of course, that it is a portrait of Alexander. However, there is reason to believe that the hypothesis of Voutiras is more convincing (2018, pp. 400–401). Voutiras denies that this marble statue represents the Macedonian king because his hair is not represented using the typical *anastole*, and while the shape of the ears reflects the nature of a beast, this cannot prove any affinity with Alexander or another specific person. Therefore, we can suppose that this statue is a generical portrait of a young man with goat horns.

In the light of this evidence, we can focus on Pan as a *symmachos* of Antigonos, the god who gave him the victory at Lysimachia and power in Macedonia. Pan can be considered as another innovative instrument used by the king to reference the Argead family, thus reintroducing ancient traditions while differentiating himself from Macedonian kings.

Pan was an established figure in the Greek mythological tradition, but no one before Antigonos had ever associated him with the idea of conquest and power. Pan, in this way, became a new figure connected to Antigonos' personal and political power. Pan was a figure who was "built" simultaneously with Antigonos' political fame and power.

It is worth touching on one final point before drawing any conclusions. It is interesting to note that inscription A, discussed in the first part of the paper, and inscription B, the epigram where Pan himself is speaking,²² were both found in Beroea. As regards Beroea, Edson convincingly argued that the city might be considered the birthplace of the Antigonids (Edson, 1934, pp. 213–246). To demonstrate his point, he highlights a text from an epigram written by the poet Samos,²³ the aforementioned *syntrophos* of Philip V. In these verses, Philip is called Beroeios, which means "from Beroea," and this, according to Edson, strongly suggests the provenance of the Antigonid family from this *polis*. The epigram is reported below (*Ant. Pal.* VI, 116):

Σοὶ γέρας, Ἀλκείδα Μινυαμάχε, τοῦτο Φίλιππος
 δέρμα ταναμύκου λευρὸν ἔθηκε βοῶς
 αὐτοῖς σὺν κεράεσσι, τὸν ὕβρεϊ κυδιῶντα
 ἔσβεσεν Ὀρβηλοῦ τρηχὺν ὑπὸ πρόποδα.

²² See pp. 20 sgg.

²³ This man is known only by this epigraph.

Ὁ φθόνος αὐαίνοιτο, τεὸν δ' ἔτι κῦδος ἀέξει
 ρίζα Βεροιαίου κράντορος Ἡμαθίας.

Philip donated, as a reward, this wild smooth skin belonging to an ox of deep bellow, and these horns to you, Alkeides, enemy of the Minyans. That ox which, exulting because of his arrogance, killed below the harsh layer of the Orbelos mount. Would that the envy dry up! And could the rote of the Beroean sovereign of Emathia increase your glory!

Now, if it is indeed the case that the Antigonids' birthplace was Beroea, the epigram of the speaking Pan assumes further importance. An inscription dating from Antigonos' reign is a significant presence in this city, for in this epigraph the god himself—protector and ally of the king—speaks to record the glory and the fame of Antigonos and Philip II. In addition, the epigraph can be considered as further proof to corroborate the idea that Beroea is a significantly important *polis* for Antigonos and his *genos* and, therefore, that it is possibly their ancestral land. Beroea certainly remains the city where Antigonos, following the reconstruction of the events presented in this study, enhanced significant cults from a religious and political perspective. Gods and heroes recalling the Argead family already coexisted in Beroea, but they were adapted to suit Antigonos' political and propagandistic needs.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to show that Antigonos Gonatas promoted meticulous political propaganda based on two principal aims. On the one hand, he sought to follow in the footsteps of the previous Diadochi, because he needed to be considered a member of the Argead *genos*. Correspondingly, he honored the Macedonian kings by recalling their religious and mythological traditions. In this way, we can better understand the aims of Antigonos and his successors (such as Philip V) by associating the Antigonid *genos* with Herakles and Asklepios. However, in a move that differs from the successors of Alexander, the Diadochi, Antigonos Gonatas also strove to distance himself from Alexander. In so doing, he used the figure of the god Pan to create an original personal and political identity.

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Figure 1: Tetradrachm of Demetrios Poliorketes demetrios_poliorketes/Newell_123.1 With permission of wildwinds.com



Figure 2: Tetradrachm of Demetrios Poliorketes. With permission of wildwinds.com, ex Monnaies D'Antan, Oct. 2009.



Figure 3. Antigonos Gonatas, AR tetradrachm. [antigonos_gonatas/SNGCop_1199](#). With permission of [wildwinds.com](#), ex Triton VIII auction, Jan. 2005



Figure 4: Statuette of a nude youth believed to be Alexander III as Pan.

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