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Timothy Howe ✦ Edward Anson ✦ Michael Fronda
David Hollander ✦ Joseph Roisman ✦ John Vanderspoel
Pat Wheatley ✦ Sabine Müller ✦ Alex McAuley
Catalina Balmaceda ✦ Charlotte Dunn



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Late Argeads in Thrace: Religious Perspectives

Denver Graninger

Abstract

This paper collects the principal ancient evidence documenting later Argeads (Philip II, Alexander III, and Philip III-Alexander IV) performing cult in Thrace; three divinities are prominent: Dionysos, the Megaloi Theoi of Samothrace, and Herakles. Three overarching observations are offered: 1) Argead cult activity in Thrace can be seen to resemble what is known of their cult activity in the Aegean and southern Greek world on one hand, and in the territories of the Persian Empire on the other; 2) While what may have inspired Philip II and Alexander III's initial cult actions toward these divinities remains oblique, the preserved sources offer intriguing evidence for later cult actions conducted to these same divinities in Thrace by other elites from outside of the region, including some Argeads; and 3) Thracian sanctuaries and cult sites were a specific, physical environment where Argeads and local elites could have engaged one another and assisted in the development of the kind of Thraco-Macedonian cultural koine described by W. S. Greenwalt among others. The paper includes preliminary discussion of the historiography of: Argead kingship and religion; and cultural relationships between Macedonia and Thrace.

Introduction

Traditional narratives of the reigns of Philip II and Alexander III have tended to highlight those Macedonian kings' interactions with their great military and political rivals, Athens (and, by extension, much of Aegean and mainland Greece) and the Persian Empire, respectively. Both kings were active in Thrace too: Philip campaigned in southern and southeastern Thrace in 356, 353-2, and 346, culminating in his Thracian War of 342-339, which added significant territory in Thrace to the Macedonian kingdom;¹ Alexander was also present in Thrace on at least three occasions: in 340, when, as regent in Pella for the absent Philip, who was engaged in lengthy sieges of Perinthos and Byzantion, Alexander put down a revolt of the Thracian Maidoi and allegedly founded an eponymous city, Alexandropolis;² again in 335,

¹ For recent discussion of Philip's Thracian adventures, see now Delev, 2015; Nankov, 2016.

² Plut. *Alex.* 9. The matter is controversial. *Pap. Ryland* I 19, attributed to Theopompus (*BNJ* 115 F 217), may synchronize Philip's siege of Perinthos and Byzantion with additional campaigning in Thrace undertaken by his

when Alexander, now king, attempted to stabilize Macedonia's northern frontier on his Triballian and Illyrian campaign;³ and finally in Spring 334, when Alexander led his army across Aegean Thrace en route to the Hellespont in pursuit of his war against Darius.⁴ Alexander certainly, and perhaps Philip before him, appointed a *strategos* for Thrace charged with administering some of these territories; three such officials are known: Alexander "the Lyncestian," son of Aeropos, who served 336-334; and Memnon and Zopyrion, the chronology of whose service postdated Alexander the Lyncestian's, but remains otherwise controversial.⁵ Argead ambitions varied, but largely centered on securing the Macedonian homeland, for Thracians were a persistent threat at times of royal transition, acquiring resource rich territories in Thrace, and, perhaps most critically, providing troops for Philip and Alexander's campaigns. But the region could prove too tempting a power base for its administrators and lead to military adventurism that was arguably as threatening to the Argead crown as an unchecked Thrace had been prior to Philip's invasions: Memnon is associated with a rebellion against Antipater that taxed Macedonian resources⁶ and Zopyrion may have campaigned with a force of 30,000 as far north as Olbia before meeting his end.⁷ In any case, that Thrace featured prominently in Argead policy at this date is clear, and one could plausibly argue that the later, spectacular triumphs of Philip in Greece and Alexander in Asia were made possible only as a result of their earlier military successes in Thrace and their negotiation of stability along the northern and eastern marches of Macedonia, the behavior of Memnon and Zopyrion notwithstanding.

The relationship did not begin or end under the last Argeads, however: as W. L. Adams reminds us, citing the impressive entangling of Argead kings with populations and territories regarded by our Greek sources as Thracian in the pre-Philip II era, including Pieria, Bottaia, Mygdonia, Crestonia, Bisaltia, Edonia, and some regions of so-called upper Macedonia, Macedonia was "always the sum of its Thracian frontiers."⁸ A closer reading of the material evidence that has been spectacularly published from both regions in increasing number of late has allowed scholars to begin to appreciate a layered complexity to often cooperative relationships between Thrace, Macedonia, and the inhabitants of the two regions.⁹ And so, while our literary sources privilege the martial aspects of Philip and Alexander's activities in Thrace, there is no reason to assume that there were not also additional dimensions to their

top lieutenants, Antipater and Parmenion, against the city of Angissos in the region of the Tetrachoritai, with which Alexander's campaign against the Maidoi is perhaps to be associated. Cf. Polyen. *Strat.* 4.4.1. For Alexandropolis, see Archibald, 2004, 892, no. 652; Cohen, 1995, 82.

³ E.g., Arr. *Anab.* 1.4-6. This campaign is most probably described by *P. Brit Lib.* 3085 (Clarysse and Schepens, 1985; Hammond, 1987).

⁴ E.g., Arr. *Anab.* 1.11.3.

⁵ See Delev, 2015, 52-54; Heckel, 2006, s.v. Alexander [4], Memnon [3], Zopyrion.

⁶ Diod. 17.62.1-63.1.

⁷ Just. 12.1.4-5, 2.16-17; Curt. 10.1.43-45; Macrob. *Saturn.* 1.11.33.

⁸ Adams, 1997, 81.

⁹ See, e.g., Archibald, 2010; Loukopoulou, 2011; Greenwalt, 2015.

campaigns or, indeed, that Argead kings were not interested in Thrace for other, non-military reasons.

This paper collects the ancient, mostly literary, evidence for late Argead kings, chiefly Philip II and Alexander III, performing cult in Thrace; three principal recipients are attested: Dionysos, the Megaloi Theoi of Samothrace, and Herakles. The argument is modest: there was a significant tradition of late Argead performance of cult in Thrace, particularly in cults local to the region. While such activity can be read both against a longer-term backdrop of cultural relationships between Macedonia and Thrace and within the narrower context of developing Argead policy in Thrace under Philip II and Alexander III, the fragmentary character of the sources unfortunately complicates most attempts to assess definitively specific motives or causes for individual acts of cult. I emphasize instead that this dossier documents actual points of contact between Macedonian kings and cult sites in Thrace, some of which are likely to have been influenced by local Thracian religious traditions. While one must be sensitive to how much we simply do not know about the broader context for such gestures, in the short or longer term, it is possible to read them prospectively as engines of subsequent contact and engagement between Thracians and non-Thracians.

This opens begins with two preliminary discussions of key critical concepts and important developments in the modern historiography. I begin with the mutually implicated thickets of how to interpret Argead religion and how to understand “Macedonia,” “Thrace,” and their relationships. These introductory sections are deliberately exploratory and attempt to contribute to significant, ongoing scholarly conversations with a goal of exposing possibilities rather than restricting them. I then continue with a series of three case studies that treats evidence for later Argeads offering cult in Thrace to Dionysos, the Megaloi Theoi, and Herakles.

Narrating Argead Kingship and Religion

Ernst Badian wrote dismissively of the western scholarly predilection for totalizing readings of Alexander: “...it is time to declare a moratorium on comprehensive books and on all-embracing interpretations. We have had too many brews in Heuss’s bottle. There is real work to be done.”¹⁰ While the temptation to read Alexander in a vacuum and as completely *sui generis* remains, as one suspects it may always, much recent scholarship seems to have largely taken Badian’s advice to heart. The Argeads as a dynasty are beginning to creep out from Alexander’s long shadow: a large-scale narrative history of the family has now appeared and the Argeads were recently the central focus of a major international conference, the proceedings of which seem likely to shape directions for future research.¹¹ Such publications take advantage of new archaeological and epigraphic discoveries from Macedonia to contextualize Alexander as an Argead king and, in turn, Argead kingship as a central Macedonian institution conditioned by

¹⁰ Badian, 1976, 330.

¹¹ Müller, 2016; Müller et al., 2017.

its relationship with other Macedonian institutions.¹² More careful reading of the literary evidence, above all the ongoing reassessment of the respective values of the so-called “official” and “vulgate” traditions in the ancient historiography of Alexander, has also helpfully informed this important work of context building.¹³ The evaluative matrix for reading Alexander thus no longer exists on a spectrum defined by the roles of enlightened philosopher-king and murderous autocrat; rather, there is now greater interest in assessing Alexander’s relationship to these Macedonian institutions and his Argead predecessors, and in attempting to grasp what is traditional about his rule and what is innovative in institutional perspective. If Philip II here continues to usefully play the role of narrative foil to Alexander, it is less as object of the son’s derisive competition than as steward of the Macedonian state, by turns as conservative, innovative, and perhaps even occasionally as “great” as his more famous son.¹⁴

Religion occupies a significant position within this broader framework of reading Argead kingship in a Macedonian institutional perspective. That Argead kings regularly performed traditional cult is certain; at a bare minimum, this range of domestic religious duties included cult offered on behalf of himself, his family, and the kingdom.¹⁵ It is similarly clear that these same Argead kings could be in some sense exemplars of a quasi-heroic model of kingship. The religious nature of Argead kingship is thus marked by a pronounced dualism. At one level, the king performed cult like any other elite Macedonian: he prayed, made votive offerings, and sacrificed in ways that could be regarded as normative; true, the stakes were considerably higher, but the basic mechanisms of interaction with the divine were, *mutatis mutandis*, those available to other Macedonians. At another level, the king was exceptional, descended from divinity and perhaps even divine himself.

Within the boundaries of his own kingdom, then, the Argead king enjoyed a complex relationship with the practice and performance of cult. What became of such roles outside of Macedonia? Here, as elsewhere, the sources for Alexander’s life and career offer the best opportunity to answer this question. Earlier scholars approached the problem by emphasizing the perceived excesses or innovations of his religious practice while on campaign against the Persian Empire. Lowell Edmunds, for example, offers salutary discussion of the traditional religious activities of Macedonian kings, but ultimately understands Alexander’s religiosity as an expression of his personal character; a biographical frame of interpretation predominates.¹⁶

¹² E.g., Müller, 2016, 13–40.

¹³ E.g., Bosworth, 1988, 1–15.

¹⁴ Competition: see, e.g., Fredricksmeyer, 1990; more equitable comparison of achievements of Philip and Alexander: see, e.g., Worthington, 2010.

¹⁵ Fredricksmeyer, 2003, 256–258; Christesen and Murray, 2010, 440–441.

¹⁶ Edmunds, 1971, 371: “Alexander’s religiosity is not, of course, a matter simply of the traditions of Macedonian kingship. His preoccupation with religious matters goes beyond any formal requirements of his office”; *ibid.*, 372: “...a dimension of his character usually overlooked ... the main dynamic of his character, the striving for divinity through heroic ἀρετή”; *ibid.*, 378: “Alexander’s emulation of heroes is the sign of his belief in the possibility of his own divinity”; *ibid.*, 381: “...a request for divine honors would have issued from a new fanatical development of the lifelong religiosity of Alexander”; *ibid.*, 383: “A hero cult would suffice a lesser man

Ernst Fredricksmeyer's important study on Alexander's religion charts a similar course.¹⁷ Recent scholarship, as part of the broader turn toward institutional history described above, has tended to weigh religious questions more heavily in the balance than biographical ones. Consider, for example, Fred Naiden, who, drawing attention to more ordinary aspects of Alexander's religiosity and away from the problems of divinity, heroic emulation, and the like, discusses how Alexander used festal sacrifice and the treatment of enemy suppliants to relate to his army: "Alexander's religious leadership was like Alexander: conventional, mostly, but taken to an unconventional extreme. When conventional, it flourished. When taken to an extreme, it failed."¹⁸

Another approach is offered by Manuela Mari's exceptional monograph *Al di là dell'Olimpo*, in which the activity of Argead kings (and other Macedonian elites) at the major Panhellenic sanctuaries is traced via meticulous collection of and commentary on the available sources.¹⁹ Whether at peace or at war, an Argead king away from Macedon was potentially a cultic actor of the highest order. While the evidence again skews heavily toward the late and best attested Argeads, Philip II and Alexander III, who need not have been especially representative, it is possible to build deeper context at Olympia and Delphi in particular where earlier Argead activities are attested. Such an approach has the additional advantage of minimizing in part the influence of much of the literary evidence for Alexander's religion while on campaign in Asia and Africa. Recently, and building on Mari's foundation, Hugh Bowden has drawn attention to the function of sanctuaries as *loci* of communication and engagement where Greeks came to encounter both the divine and one another; Argead patronage of major Greek sanctuaries can be seen to follow a similar logic.²⁰

The present inquiry attempts to steer more closely to the model of Mari and Bowden, but given the small sample size and the heavy representation of Philip and Alexander here, it may resemble perforce the earlier biographical studies of Edmunds and Fredricksmeyer. Thrace poses different challenges than those offered by the panhellenic sanctuaries or the cults and oracles of the inhabitants of the Persian Empire, however, for, in both geographical and cultural perspective, it can be difficult to parse exactly where Macedonia ends and Thrace begins.

than Alexander. He himself sought something more"; *ibid.*, 391: "...a change in his character, a fanatical development of his religiosity."

¹⁷ Fredricksmeyer, 2003, 253: "...Alexander's religion has two major aspects, one, his relationship as an individual and as king to the world of the gods, the other, his relation to Zeus as father, and his own divinity."

¹⁸ Naiden, 2011, 179. I cite in this connection Koulakiotis, 2013, a nuanced and exploratory study that situates Alexander's possible direct interpretation of a portent at Babylon, mentioned at Plut. *Alex.* 73.1-4, in a series of distinct interpretive frames, including the foundation narrative of the Argead dynasty, the traditional religious duties of an Argead king, the influence of relationships with Greek cities, the Persian empire, and, for his sources, the Roman empire as well. Also noteworthy is Aubriot, 2003, who assesses aspects of Alexander's religiosity against the backdrop of normative polis religion, however problematic the idea of "normative polis religion" may be; cf. Kindt, 2012.

¹⁹ Mari, 2002.

²⁰ Bowden, 2017.

Narrating Macedonia and Thrace

I regard Thrace as primarily a geographical space in this paper, approximately bound on the north by the Danube river, the east and south east by Pontos and the Propontis, the south by the Aegean, and on the west by a loosely defined corridor linking the Morava and Strymon valleys; the definition, while far from perfect, has the advantage of corresponding in part with some ancient attempts to describe the region's geography;²¹ I treat the major north Aegean islands of Thasos and Samothrace as part of this region.²² These are not hard physical borders, however, and there was no one uniform culture or people that occupied this space. I use the adjective Thracian similarly, in a primarily geographic manner; in truth one may find further afield communities described as "Thracian" in ancient literary sources and material culture identified as "Thracian" by modern archaeologists, from Lake Ochrid in the central Balkans to the Thynoi and Bithynoi of northwest Anatolia to the lower Dnieper River in the Ukraine.²³ But it is well known that Thrace was populated by dozens of distinct ethne, which, while sharing in some cases cultural similarities in addition to residence within this broad geographical region, were nonetheless perceived, and presumably perceived themselves to be, significantly distinct from one another. This not to deny the great likelihood that there were tiers of identity to which inhabitants of Thrace could ascribe depending on setting or purpose in the Archaic and Classical period, only to highlight how problematic "Thracian" is as an ethnic or cultural term of analysis: the question should seldom, if ever, be posed simply as "Thracian or not?" but "which Thracian/s?"²⁴

Implicated with the problem of geography are questions of politics and culture. In brief, our ancient literary sources depict the early development and expansion of the Macedonian kingdom as often having taken place at the expense of Thracian communities, whose territories were incorporated within the Argead state. This was a progressive process, from the very beginning of the Argead dynasty, so to speak, with the displacements of the Thracian Pierians and Bottaians, through the eastern expansion of Alexander I, and culminating in Philip II's massive Thracian War of 342-339, the incomplete nature of which drew Alexander again into the region soon after his accession as king; each stage was likely to have been marked by the cohabitation of Macedonian and Thracian populations, particularly under Philip, who established a network of mixed Macedonian-Thracian settlements that knit some areas of Thrace ever more closely into a northern Aegean and eastern Mediterranean economy and may have produced a measure of stability in these regions that earlier Greek *apoikiai* had been unable to attain.²⁵ So clean a narrative of military and political expansion can mask deeper patterns of cultural interaction, influence, and emulation, though, which are rendered visible, for example, in the decoration of Thracian and Macedonian tombs and their associated

²¹ Bouzek and Graninger, 2015, 13.

²² See Damyanov, 2015, 298-299, 300, with reference to essential bibliography.

²³ Bouzek and Graninger, 2015, 13-15; cf. Bouzek, 2004.

²⁴ Graninger, 2015.

²⁵ Settlements: Adams, 2007; Nankov, 2015, 402-403. Economy: Archibald, 2013, *passim*.

finds; such evidence points to something like a shared ideology of death among some elites in these two vast regions.²⁶ To explain such phenomena as examples of “Thracizing” or “Macedonizing” is, I think, an unproductive step and draws scholars into “either/or” cul-de-sacs in the hunt for origins. It is rather the existence of an elite eschatological koine in both regions—whether the product of processes of hybridization, creolization, misunderstandings in the “Middle Ground”, or the like, or not—and what that in turn may imply about the depth and duration of contact, that is significant.

A strong form of this hypothesis directly related to some of the evidence under consideration in this paper has been developed by William Greenwalt over the last thirty years, whose complex and nuanced arguments I summarize briefly. Greenwalt draws attention to the close proximity of Macedonians and Thracians throughout the Archaic and Classical period and suggests that there was a shared ideology and ritual of kingship that such contact yielded. The dynastic foundation narrative of the Argeads as told at Herodotus 8.137-138 is interpreted by Greenwalt as displaying Thracian influence, which he attributes to Argead anxiety about the legitimacy of their rule in territories and over populations that were once and perhaps continued to be, in some cases, Thracian:²⁷

... this myth almost certainly was very old by the time of Alexander I, and represented the Argead assumption of an indigenous cult formerly maintained by the displaced rulers of the territory. There appears no escaping the recognition that the memory of this transition remained powerful for the Macedonians, as the Argeads claimed an intimate association with the gods of the lands they afterward controlled.²⁸

Several of the apparently religious dimensions of Argead kinship, ranging from the presentation of divine sanction for dynastic rule to the perceived semi-divinity, or even divinity, of the king himself seem to overlap with what is known of Thracian kinship. Greenwalt presses the numismatic evidence and stresses the prominence of mounted horsemen on southwestern Thracian and Macedonian coinages in the late Archaic and Classical periods; the mounted horseman he identifies simply as a “hero,” with whom he believes both Thracian and Macedonian kings would self-identify and indeed be identified as by their subjects.²⁹ Such identifications were facilitated in addition by royal role-playing as divine figures in socially significant contexts like the hunt and symposium: thus, accounts of

²⁶ See, e.g., Greenwalt, 2015.

²⁷ See especially Greenwalt, 1986 and Greenwalt, 1994.

²⁸ Greenwalt, 1986, 121.

²⁹ Greenwalt, 1997, 125: “As the light of the sun dispels darkness, and immortality the fear of death, so did the mounted Hero protect his own and all that was good from chaos, evil, and death. The Hero as such was a kind of St. George—a precursor of Hosios Demetrios.” Nearly identical comments offered at Greenwalt, 2015, 346. Cf. Greenwalt, 1994, 3, n. 2: “I believe that the sources support that, in a manner akin to Thracian custom, early Argead kings drew political legitimacy from their personal identification with a solar and chthonic “Hero” thought responsible for establishing the political order which brought security and protection from enemies both physical and metaphysical; further, that the kings’ participation in certain religious rituals was deemed essential for the productivity of their realm’s land and people.”

Alexander and some of his advisors wearing the costume attributes of divinities appears not as innovative or fanatical but as traditional.³⁰

Greenwalt's thought converges closely with, if it is not substantially authorized by, interpretations of Thracian kingship that emerged from the Thracological school of Bulgarian scholarship, especially as expressed in the writings of Ivan Marazov, who is among the best known exponents of this mode of analysis outside of Bulgaria;³¹ here too there is emphasis on the king as hero, his status as which was demonstrated in ritualized settings such as the hunt and feast, and on the king as priest.³² Fusing the traditional methods of history, art history, archaeology, philology, and Indo-European linguistics with a structuralist semiotics under the guiding hand of a government-sponsored nationalism, Thracology was an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry that aimed to rescue the Thracians from the biases of non-native sources (and the western interpretations reliant upon them), and, in some cases, to reclaim them for Bulgaria as ancestors.³³ The scholarly aims of Thracological analysis are salutary and overlap with, for example, various examples of Marxian-inspired "history from below," which have facilitated the emergence of post-colonial studies and aim to recover historical agency for populations subject, marginal, or otherwise "without history." Thracology has also helped to draw the attention of a more broadly international scholarly audience to problems of Thracian research, as evidenced through the convening of periodic Thracological congresses and the regular publication of proceedings, which generally contain high quality papers describing new finds or presenting original syntheses and are required reading for any student of the region.³⁴ But some dominant assumptions among prominent practitioners of Thracology, such as, for example, that Thracian elite culture was rooted in oral religious doctrine or that vestiges of Thracian ritual can be ascertained in contemporary Bulgarian folk traditions, have rendered the Thracians too much a *tabula rasa* for speculative projection: there is an even greater risk than usual that Thracians be remade in the image of those scholars who study them.³⁵ In the final analysis, there is needed a deeper awareness of both the aims of the critical

³⁰ Greenwalt, 1997, 131.

³¹ Greenwalt, 1986, 117, n. 2: "After completing the body of this article, I became acquainted with A. Fol and I. Marazov, *Thrace and the Thracians* [New York: 1977]..." Additional evidence for Greenwalt's convergence with Thracological interpretations: Greenwalt, 1994, 3, n. 2; Greenwalt, 1997, 125; Greenwalt, 2015, *passim*. For a brief introductory discussion of Bulgarian Thracology, with reference to additional scholarship, see: Theodossiev, 2015, 8.

³² Fol and Marazov, 1977, 37-59; Marazov, 2005, 89-101.

³³ See, e.g., Fol and Marazov, 1977, 11: "To hear the voice of Ancient Thrace, it is not enough to read the few inscriptions in Greek characters on stones or rings, but the whole corpus of written sources, archaeological finds and linguistic data has to be assembled and interpreted. In such a situation there is always a discrepancy between historical reality and the way it is presented in the sources; and so in order to get to the genuine article the researcher has to remove the glosses which the Greeks and moderns have put on the text or the excavated object."

³⁴ Usefully listed at Fol, 2015.

³⁵ Fol, 1986; Marazov, 2011; Marazov, 2014.

project and the evidentiary basis of the highly attenuated arguments that can ensue from it, which is absent from Greenwalt's papers.³⁶

Greenwalt's theory is open to criticism on a number of additional fronts. That some Thracian and Macedonian coins shared similar types most probably indicates that that symbol was regarded as indicating a trusted minting authority — any religious significance would be strictly secondary. His approach to Herodotean subject matter that is clearly strongly indebted to folklore and traditional modes of story-telling can be aggressively historicizing,³⁷ while his Thracians occasionally appear to have lived in a primitive timelessness.³⁸ Greenwalt's interest in exploring cultural contacts and influences between Macedonia and its non-Greek neighbors, however, can only be described as productive for scholarship on the region in general and foundational for the present study.

In the ensuing series of case studies, I explore a range of religious activities of the later Argeads in Thrace attested in ancient literary and material sources, with special emphasis on Philip II and Alexander III. While I do not dispute in general the existence of a Thraco-Macedonian elite cultural matrix or its potential to influence the types of Argead religious display in Thrace discussed in this paper, it is difficult, barring the publication of new evidence, to advance the inquiry further in this direction without excessive conjecture. I instead reclaim these cult acts for additional analysis in the following and make three overarching observations: 1) Argead cult activity in Thrace can be seen to resemble what is known of their cult activity in the Aegean and southern Greek world on one hand and in the territories of the Persian Empire on the other. Such gestures in Thrace, as in those other locations, seem possessed of some genuine religious sentiment and not necessarily only or primarily for political purposes, however thoroughly embedded the political is in the religious and vice versa; 2) Setting aside an understandable interest in the deeper and proximate causes of these Argead religious gestures in Thrace, we may begin to appreciate each of these acts of cult as causal in its own right. However one speculates about what may have inspired Philip and Alexander's initial cult actions toward Dionysos, the Megaloi Theoi of Samothrace, or Herakles, the preserved sources offer intriguing evidence for later cult actions conducted to these same divinities in Thrace by other elites from outside of the region, including some Argeads; 3) Finally, and with license for historical imagination, these case studies allow us to see Thracian sanctuaries as a specific, physical environment where Argeads and local elites could have engaged one another and assisted in the development of the kind of Thraco-Macedonian cultural koine described by Greenwalt and others.

³⁶ For an important assessment of Thracological theories of social structure, see Archibald, 2015.

³⁷ See, e.g., Bowie, 2007, 225-228. In general, Greenwalt is aware of folkloric elements in these stories, but decodes some of them as reflecting specific historic circumstances.

³⁸ Even in 1986, the following statement can only have been remarkable: "it is known that a sun-fire-hearth cult was probably the single most important form of religious expression in the Thracian areas of the north Aegean from the Neolithic period on" (Greenwalt, 1986, 121).

Alexander and an oracular sanctuary of Dionysos in Thrace

Greek myth often portrayed Dionysos as a new god who arrived from abroad and sought his origins in a range of fantastic locations beyond the normative extent of Greek culture, including Thrace. While the decipherment of Linear B tablets has led most historians of religion to conclude that Dionysos was in fact an “old” and Greek divinity, his association with non-Greek places nonetheless reveals something of how ancient Greek culture perceived his nature. The difference, disorder, and ecstasy that he induced in communities and individuals who worshipped him is presented as both necessary to the continued good health of those performing cult and potentially dangerous to those who did so immoderately, including the extremes of overindulgence and abstention.

Greek and Roman sources do more than associate Dionysos with Thrace in myth, though: they speak to physical sanctuaries dedicated to him, or a Thracian divinity identified *interpretatio graeca* as Dionysos, with oracular function.³⁹ The attribute is unusual in a Greek context and helps us to see more clearly that we are dealing with one or more local deities, associated in some cases with the sun or Orpheus in addition to prophecy, that have been identified *interpretatio graeca* with Dionysos. I offer a brief seriatim description of what is known of each: 1) a sanctuary on Haimos, presumably the Balkan range or Stara planina, where tablets that contained the sayings of, or were otherwise associated with, Orpheus were located;⁴⁰ 2) a sanctuary in the territory of the Satrai, which Herodotus describes in a brief ethnographic digression, where the mode of divination appears similar to that known of Apollo at Delphi and involved both a female prophetess and interpreters drawn from the Bessi, who must either be a subset of the Satrai or a separate ethnos altogether.⁴¹ The location of the

³⁹ Influential, Thracological interpretations of Thracian Dionysos have been developed by A. Fol and I. Marazov. I present here a useful summary sketch and critique offered by K. Rabadjiev: “Recently this Thracian Dionysus has received an Orphic interpretation (Fol, 1986) or has been explained as parallel to the Cabiri of mystery cult (Marazov, 2011). Thracian Orphism was reconstructed as an elite oral doctrine preaching the principles of the Universe, namely, the harmony between the chthonic, represented by Zagreus, and the solar, represented by Orpheus, in cosmogonic cycles that were created in the intercourse between Mother-Goddess and her solar son, identified on a political level with the king; its proposed date is from the middle of second millennium to the ninth/eighth century. The doctrine is parallel to the Delphian reform, where Dionysus appears in the winter, when Apollo is thought to be absent. The Cabiric interpretation is discussed as an Aegean tradition, reconstructed in mythic and ritual context as Thracian elite ideology. But the assumption of such Thracian doctrines as common in illiterate, politically fragmented communities is strained, and the literary and material evidence to hand concerning religion in Thrace is filled with discrepancies. The different Thracian tribes seem rather to have been influenced variously by the Greeks in their religious behavior and thus one must confront the possibility that there was no common Thracian pantheon” (Rabadjiev, 2015, 446).

⁴⁰ Schol. Eur. *Alc.* 968 (Schwartz); schol. Eur. *Hec.* 1267 (Dindorf).

⁴¹ Her. 7.111: “[the Satrai] have the oracle of Dionysos in the highest part of the mountain range in their country. The pronouncements at this shrine are interpreted by the Bessi, who are numbered among the Satrai, and as at Delphi it is a prophetess who is the mouthpiece, and her utterances are no more elaborate than those of her counterpart at Delphi.” Trans. Waterfield, with modifications: οὔτοι (Σάτραι) οἱ τοῦ Διονύσου τὸ μαντήιον εἰσι ἐκτμήμονι· τὸ δὲ μαντήιον τοῦτο ἔστι μὲν ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων τῶν ὑψηλοτάτων, Βησσοὶ δὲ τῶν Σατράων εἰσι οἱ προφητεύοντες τοῦ ἱεροῦ, πρόμαντις δὲ ἡ χρέωσα κατὰ περ ἐν Δελφοῖσι, καὶ οὐδὲν ποικιλωτέρον.

sanctuary is uncertain, but thought to be within territory commanded by the Satrai at that time, perhaps in the Rhodope mountains or on Pangaion.⁴² Cassius Dio mentions a Dionysos sanctuary that had become a bone of contention between the Bessi and Odrysi in the second half of the first century and posed severe challenges to developing Roman order in the region.⁴³ It is plausible that this sanctuary was identical to that mentioned by Herodotus. Archaeological remains have yet to be conclusively associated with the site;⁴⁴ 3) a sanctuary of Dionysos in the region of Krestonia in the territory of the Thracian Bisaltai, located in the new lands added to the Macedonian kingdom during a period of territorial expansion under Alexander I:⁴⁵ fire seems to have been a principal mode of divination there.⁴⁶ The discovery of a statue of Dionysos from a location just south of Dysoron in northern Krestonia may suggest that the sanctuary lay nearby;⁴⁷ 4) A sanctuary of an oracular Dionysos described by Macrobius among the otherwise unattested Thracian Ligyreoi, where prophecies were delivered under the influence of large quantities of unmixed wine.⁴⁸ Another description of a Dionysos sanctuary, although without explicit oracular function, is found later in the same author's work:

... we learn that in Thrace the sun and Liber are considered the same: they call him Sebazius and worship him in a splendid ritual, as Alexander writes (*FGrHist* 273 F 103), and on the hill Zilmissus they dedicate to him a round temple, its center open to the sky. The temple's round shape points to the sun's shape, and light is let in through the roof to show that the sun purifies all things when it shines down from on high, and because the whole world opens up when the sun rises.⁴⁹

⁴² See, e.g., Archibald, 1998, 109; Fol and Spiridonov, 1983, 52-53.

⁴³ Dio 51.25.5; 54.34.5.

⁴⁴ The curious site of Perperikon has been associated by some with the sanctuary mentioned by Herodotus, but the identification remains controversial. Cf. Sears, 2013, 29.

⁴⁵ New lands: Thuc. 2.99.3-6; see, e.g., Hatzopoulos and Loukopoulou, 1992, 15-25, 30-31.

⁴⁶ [Arist.], *Mir. aus.*: 842a15-24: "There is a large and beautiful sanctuary of Dionysos there [sc. in Krestonia in the land of the Bisaltai], in which it is said that, at festival and feast times, whenever the god is about to create prosperity, a great flash of fire appears, and all those living in the neighborhood of the sanctuary see it, but when the god is about to create famine, it is said that this light does not appear, but that darkness covers the area, just as on other nights." ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλο αὐτόθι (sc. ἐν τῇ Κραστωνίᾳ παρὰ τὴν Βισαλτῶν χώραν) ἱερὸν Διονύσου μέγα καὶ καλόν, ἐν ᾧ τῆς ἐορτῆς καὶ τῆς θυσίας οὔσης λέγεται, ὅταν μὲν ὁ θεὸς εὐετηρίαν μέλλῃ ποιεῖν, ἐπιφαίνεσθαι μέγα σέλας πυρός, καὶ τοῦτο πάντας ὁρᾶν τοὺς περὶ τὸ τέμενος διατρίβοντας, ὅταν δ' ἀκαρπίαν, μὴ φαίνεσθαι τοῦτο τὸ φῶς, ἀλλὰ σκότος ἐπέχειν τὸν τόπον ὥσπερ καὶ τὰς ἄλλας νύκτας.

⁴⁷ Hatzopoulos and Loukopoulou, 1989, 98-99, with further references. Dionysos is epigraphically attested in the region during the imperial period. Cf. *SEG* 37.561; *BE* 1992, no. 327.

⁴⁸ Macrobius *Sat.* 1.18.1: "What I've said about Apollo can be taken to apply to Liber too. For Aristotle, who wrote *Discourses on the Gods*, advances many proofs to support his claim that Apollo and father Liber are one and the same, including the fact that the Ligyreans in Thrace have a shrine consecrated to Liber from which oracles issue. In this shrine the soothsayers drink a great deal of unmixed wine before pronouncing their prophecies, as those on Claros drink water" (trans. Kaster). Kaster, 2011, 245, n. 470, suggests that the Hellenistic mythographer Aristokles (cf. *BNJ* 33) was a more likely source for such a tale.

⁴⁹ *Sat.* 1.18.11, trans. Kaster.

Zilmissus is otherwise unknown as a place name in Thrace, although it is tempting to associate it with the epithets in Ζυ(λ)μυζδρ- applied to Asklepios and related deities at his important sanctuary in Batkun, in the western Rhodope mountains.⁵⁰ It is not clear if Macrobius is describing the same Dionysos sanctuary in these two passages and if either description could in turn be applied to his sanctuary among the Satrai or in Kretonia.

The final, and most directly relevant for the purposes of this paper, addition to this abbreviated catalogue is a sanctuary allegedly consulted by Alexander III, which may be identical with one of the preceding four or a separate, distinct site.⁵¹ Suetonius, describing the visit of C. Octavius to such a sanctuary, writes:

Later, Octavius was leading an army through remote parts of Thrace, and in the grove of Father Liber consulted the priests about his son with barbarian rites, they made the same prediction [viz., as Publius Nigidius, who, after learning of the baby Octavian's birth, had declared that the ruler of the world had been born - *dominum terrarum orbi natum*]; since such a pillar of flame sprang forth from the wine that was poured over the altar, that it rose above the temple roof and mounted to the very sky, and such an omen had befallen no one save Alexander the Great, when he offered sacrifice at the same altar.⁵²

No other source places either luminary at such a sanctuary in Thrace, however, and one has good reason to suspect its historicity. *Post factum* reinterpretation of omens, or their wholesale invention, as predicting prodigious futures could be made central to the ideology of Hellenistic rulership; compare, for example, the fire miracle that was alleged to have accompanied the birth of Seleukos I.⁵³ And various late Republican and early Imperial Roman luminaries, including Augustus, had on occasion been keen to the link their fortunes with those of Alexander, sometimes in fantastic ways.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ For the site, see Tsontchev, 1941; for the inscriptions associated with it, see *IGBulg* 3.1, 1115-1276; *IGBulg* 3.1, 1277-1278, 1302-1304 also most likely were originally published there. The epithets may refer to the cult of an earlier Thracian divinity whose functions overlapped in some measure with those of Asclepius and/or be essentially topographic at root. Sabazios was well known in Thrace: see, e.g., Tatscheva-Hitova, 1978.

⁵¹ For a useful critique of the scholarly tendency to regard the ancient sources as essentially confused and referring to a smaller number of sanctuaries, see Iliev, 2013.

⁵² Suet. Aug. 94.5, trans. J. C. Rolfe: *Octavio postea, cum per secreta Thraciae exercitum duceret, in Liberi patris luco barbara caerimonia de filio consulenti, idem affirmatum est a sacerdotibus, quod infuso super altaria mero tantum flammae emicuisset, ut supergressa fastigium templi ad caelum usque ferretur, unique omnino Magno Alexandro apud easdem aras sacrificanti simile provenisset ostentum.*

⁵³ App. Syr. 56. Mention of the event occurs in the digest of the so-called Seleukos Romance preserved in that work. Cf. Fraser, 1996, 37-46; Primo, 2009, 29-35; Kosmin, 2014, 94-100; Ogden, 2017, 54-56. See Engels, 2010, 167, who casts doubt on the historicity of Alexander's visit to a Thracian oracle of Dionysos because of similarities with an omen better attested in the Seleukos tradition; the suggestion is clever, but the quite substantial evidence for Argead and more broadly Macedonian interests in Thrace is not properly weighed in his assessment.

⁵⁴ E.g., the parallel traditions of the siring of Alexander and Octavian by a divine serpent: see, e.g., Ogden, 2009. For the variegated Roman reception of Alexander, see, e.g., Spencer, 2002; Spencer, 2009.

Nevertheless, there is nothing intrinsically improbable about Suetonius' account. C. Octavius had, after all, served as *propraetor* of Macedonia in 60, when he campaigned in Thrace and won a great victory there.⁵⁵ Alexander, too, was active in Thrace on at least the three occasions mentioned in the introduction of this essay — campaigning against the Maidoi in 340, the Triballians and Illyrians in 335, and en route to the Hellespont with his invasion force in 334 — and, given the deeper cultural implication of Thrace and Macedonia developing in the Archaic and Classical periods, there may indeed have been other opportunities for Alexander to visit the sanctuary. One of these sanctuaries could in theory have been visited by Alexander at some point in his life before crossing the Hellespont. While the fire oracle mentioned in Suetonius has obvious parallels with that attested at the Kretonian sanctuary, there is no reason why multiple modes of divination could not have been practiced at the Dionysos sanctuary among the Satrai or the Ligyreoi.⁵⁶ But the various permutations of answers to the paired questions of “which sanctuary?” and “when?” are not a central focus of this paper: barring new evidence, the only prudent response can be *non liquet*.

While Alexander's consultation of oracular Dionysos is typically made to fit what we know of his campaign history in Thrace, given the prominence of this sanctuary, the high profile of Dionysos in traditional Argead religion, and the existence of what Zosia Archibald has usefully described as a “culture of creativity” in the north Aegean predicated on strong interactions with people from peripheral areas, one can imagine other, non-military motives for such a consultation.⁵⁷ There is understandable temptation to see in Alexander's visit this sanctuary, a reflection of the deeper cultural connections between Macedonia and Thrace that have been discussed at points in this paper. Greenwalt, for example, associates some unusual features of the Argead foundation narrative as related by Herodotus with Thracian cults of an oracular, solar Dionysos and would perhaps read Alexander's consultation as an example of how an Argead king might meet his traditional obligations.⁵⁸ However tantalizing such an interpretation might be, it remains grounded in the hypothetical warrens of early Archaic Thracian and Macedonian history about which little is certain.⁵⁹ One may productively reframe the point, though, and see Alexander's consultation not as an end result of a deep Thraco-

⁵⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 3.2: *Bessis ac Thracibus magno proelio fuis*. Note the prominence of the Bessi here, who appear in Herodotus as interpreters of an oracle of Dionysos in Thrace (7.111).

⁵⁶ For fire miracles, see, e.g., Burkert, 1985, 61.

⁵⁷ Archibald, 2013.

⁵⁸ Greenwalt, 1994, 6: “Considering Herodotus' admission that this foundation myth had a bearing on fifth-century Argead ritual, and realizing the currency of Dionysian oracles—at least one of which is reported to have relied upon the powers of a female prognosticator—throughout lands originally settled by Thracians, it seems that the ‘miracle of the loaves’ mythologically refers to a ritual in which a women [sic] (here the wife of a king) uses fire (without which, of course, no baking could occur) in an effort to read the future—probably with a special interest in the forthcoming harvest.” Greenwalt here misses much of the evidence for oracular Dionysos in Thrace, however: there is no mention of the sanctuary with Orphic tablets mentioned in the scholia to Euripides, that mentioned by Macrobius, or even Alexander's visit as recounted by Suetonius.

⁵⁹ The interpretation is not without other challenges. See, e.g., Müller, 2017, 187, who plausibly suggests that Zeus rather than Dionysos was chief patron of the Argeads in the Herodotean account of the foundation of the dynasty.

Macedonian cultural matrix, but rather as a driver of it. Bowden has usefully characterized Greek sanctuaries patronized by the Argeads as “places of communication that enhanced understanding” between Greek communities and Macedonian kings;⁶⁰ it is possible to make a similar set of assumptions about Thracian sanctuaries and to view Alexander’s activities accordingly.⁶¹ In broader perspective, there is a rich dossier of examples of Argead kings demonstrating an interest in and consultation of oracles outside of Macedonia.⁶² Alexander’s visit to a sanctuary of oracular Dionysos in Thrace ought to be listed alongside them. While each of these consultations may be explained through recourse to purely local circumstances, the general, long-term pattern of consultation of non-Macedonian oracles is significant in its own right.

Finally, to return to the biographical frame of reference that this paper has otherwise set out to avoid, it is striking how many aspects of this encounter anticipate what are typically regarded as subsequent developments in Alexander’s religious praxis: the accommodation of local cult and oracles; the interest in spectacle and public display; and the prominence of Dionysos. At the same time, it is becoming more clear that such elements of Alexander’s religiosity may have had some Argead antecedents.⁶³

Samothrace and the Megaloi Theoi

While the sanctuary of the Megaloi Theoi on Samothrace was clearly no typical Thracian cult site, ancient literary sources regularly note a Thracian influence on the cult; and elements of the island’s archaeology can be associated with the material culture of mainland southeastern Thrace and northwestern Anatolia, including inscriptions in a Thracian language, and attest to continued Thracian influence after the establishment of a Greek *apoikia* and well into the Classical period.⁶⁴ The Mysteries celebrated there attracted a clientele from a broad geographical range throughout the sanctuary’s history, including both Macedonia and Thrace, and cults of Kabiroi or Great Gods are prominent in both regions; explicit evidence for the popularity of the cult and sanctuary tends to be Hellenistic and Roman in date, however, and little is known about who attended and from where in earlier centuries.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Bowden, 2017, 180.

⁶¹ For a useful typology of Thracian sanctuaries, see Rabadjiev, 2015, 448-449.

⁶² For Argead consultation of Greek oracles, see now Bowden, 2017, 168-170. For Alexander’s interest in oracles, see, e.g., Koulakiotis, 2013; Edmunds, 1971, 378-381.

⁶³ See, e.g., Stoneman, 2017.

⁶⁴ Archaeology: Ilieva, 2010. Inscriptions: Fraser, 1960, no. 64; Matsas, 2004, fig. 2. Cf. Brixhe, 2006; Dana, 2015, 244-245. The alleged Thracian influence on the cult has recently been contested at Rabadjiev, 2017.

⁶⁵ Geographic background of participants in the Mysteries: Dimitrova, 2008. For cults of the Great (Samothracian) Gods in Thrace and Macedonia, see, e.g., Baege, 1913, 175-181; Cole, 1984, 57-86; Elvers, 1994, 263-265; Rabadjiev, 2017. Recent discussion of Samothrace from the perspective of social network analysis: Blakely, 2016.

Argead involvement in the cult was not insubstantial. Plutarch and Himerios famously claim that Philip and Olympias fell in love during a celebration of the Mysteries in which they were being initiated.⁶⁶ The Alexander of Quintus Curtius Rufus, drunk and banqueting, condemns Philip's interest in the Mysteries, however: in a list of criticisms of Philip that preceded a violent confrontation that resulted in the murder of Cleitus the Black in Curtius' account, Alexander asserted that "praise was due not to those who had witnessed the initiatory rites of Samothrace at a time when Asia should have been laid waste by fire, but to those who by the greatness of their deeds had surpassed belief."⁶⁷ Brian Bosworth interpreted the criticism as referring to the tradition of Olympias' betrothal to Philip on the island and disparaging Philip's lack of youthful military accomplishment; he notes in addition the roster of mythical figures, including the Argonauts and Dioskouroi, who were allegedly initiated at Samothrace and suggests that Alexander may be criticizing by association both their achievements, which also compare poorly with those of Alexander himself, and the assistance that they were alleged to have provided to initiates, which Alexander did not need.⁶⁸ That Philip was legitimately interested in the cult, however, and that such interests were broadly known does not seem debatable.

The architectural development of the sanctuary has been brought into close contact with this literary tradition. The foundation of the so-called "Hall of Choral Dancers," a major building in the sanctuary, has been closely dated to 340-330 and plausibly associated with an Argead patron, most likely Philip.⁶⁹ If the patron has been properly identified, it is conspicuous that the building does not have primarily the character of an oversize votive, although it certainly did function as such in some sense; rather, the placement, plan, and architectural decoration all strongly suggest that the building had a cultic function and played an important role in the performance of the Mysteries.⁷⁰ The building may in addition have housed a

⁶⁶ Plut. *Alex.* 2; Himer. 1.12.346 (p. 41 Duebner). For the betrothal, see now Greenwalt, 2008, who regards the events as essentially historical and makes a plausible case for the second half of the 360s.

⁶⁷ Curt. 8.1.26 (trans. Rolfe): *Laude dignos esse, non qui Samothracum initia viserent, cum Asiam uri vastarique oporteret, sed eos, qui magnitudine rerum fidem antecessissent.*

⁶⁸ Bosworth, 1995, 58. Cf. Baynham, 1998, 187. Philip would not likely have been in position as a *meirakion* to invade Asia, however, and it is worth considering the possibility that Alexander here critiques a longer-term interest of Philip's in the cult that extended beyond the occasion of the betrothal of Olympias. Might Philip have been a more frequent visitor to the sanctuary? Philip's youth may also suggest that other members of his family may have patronized the sanctuary in some form: see Mortensen, 1997, 17-24, with the cautious comments of Greenwalt, 2008, 98, n. 6.

⁶⁹ Wescoat, 2010, 30: "Constructed in the third quarter of the 4th century, the Hall of Choral Dancers is the earliest of the marble buildings that would rapidly come to distinguish the sanctuary in the late 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. Its construction coincides with Philip II's legendary interest in the island; elements of its Ionic entablature, particularly the combination of a frieze course and dentils, recall Philip II's tholos at Olympia. A connection between the king and Sanctuary that would become so central to Macedonian and Ptolemaic royal interests is hard to ignore." Cf. Lehmann 1998, 73-78.

⁷⁰ Wescoat, 2010, 30; cf. Marconi, 2010, 132-133. Westcoat has downdated into the third century on architectural grounds the Altar Court and Hieron, both of which had often been regarded as later contemporaries to the Hall of Choral Dancers and thus likely the result of Argead patronage: Wescoat, 2015, 125-132.

commissioned statue of Skopas depicting Aphrodite and Pothos: Philip II emerges here too as a plausible patron.⁷¹

Alexander's relationship with the cult is less well known; his purported criticism of Philip on this point need not indicate that he was himself was opposed to the cult per se, only that his father's interest was extreme. Indeed, Philostratos claims that one of the altars erected by him in India to mark the extent of his campaign was dedicated to the Samothracian Kabiroi.⁷²

After Alexander's death, an impressive building within the *temenos* on Samothrace was dedicated ca. 323-317 to the Great Gods in the name of Philip III Arrhidaios and Alexander IV, although responsibility for the dedication must ultimately lie with the co-kings' guardians.⁷³ The building was unique for its combination of Thasian and Pentelic marbles; while the former had been used in the construction of the Hall of Choral Dancers, the latter was new at Samothrace and may have represented an attempt by the Argead dynasty and its handlers to appropriate or otherwise claim for Macedonia the cultural patrimony of Athens.⁷⁴ While probably not as directly tied to the central actions of the cult as the Hall of Choral Dancers, Philip III and Alexander IV's dedication was spatially linked to a theatral area near the head of the sacred way through the sanctuary, for which it may have served as a shelter or reception space; precisely how this theatral area functioned remains obscure, although most scholars agree that it too must have been significant in the performance of the cult.⁷⁵

Finally, a later fragmentary decree of the council of Samothrace dated ca. 288-281 attests to land on the mainland that the "kings Ph[ilip] and Alexander" had set aside as a *temenos* for the gods, presumably the Great Gods of Samothrace.⁷⁶ The *temenos* had apparently been lost in the interim, but was returned to the city by Lysimachos, who is honored in the decree. While either Philip III and Alexander IV or Philip II and Alexander III could be imagined as the kings mentioned in the inscription, the admittedly vague phrasing may just suggest that the former alternative is to be preferred. Since Philip II and Alexander III at no point ruled as co-kings, one would be forced to imagine in effect two acts of consecration, one initially performed by Philip II and a second connected with Alexander III that either confirmed Philip's decision or extended the size of the *temenos*; the matter is cleaner in the case of Philip III and Alexander IV, especially given the votive monument offered in their names in the sanctuary.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Wescoat, 2013.

⁷² Philostr. *V. Apoll.* 2.43.

⁷³ Dedicatory inscription: McCredie, 1979, 8 (*SEG* 29.800); possible dedicators: Landucci, 2015, 71.

⁷⁴ Wescoat, 2003.

⁷⁵ Function of Philip and Alexander's dedication: Wescoat, 2012, 73-76; function of theatral area: Wescoat, 2012, 69 and *passim*. Cf. now Palagia, 2017.

⁷⁶ McCredie, 1968, 220 (*SEG* 46.1185; BÉ 1969, no. 441). Cf. Ager, 1996, 86-87, no. 24.

⁷⁷ Cf. BÉ 1969, no. 441.

The evidence thus collected has typically been regarded as reflecting the successful ambitions of Philip II to create a sanctuary for Macedonia to rival those at Delphi, Delos, and Olympia. Certainly these building works seem to have stimulated an intense interest in the sanctuary among several Hellenistic dynasties, especially the Ptolemies, but including as well the Antigonids and perhaps also the Seleucids.⁷⁸ Philip's investment in the cult has also been regarded as an extension of his developing northern Aegean policy, by which he sought to expand the core territories of the Macedonian state to the east along the coast to the Propontis; good relations not simply with the sanctuary of the Great Gods but with the polis of Samothrace as well would have conferred concrete benefits. Such a reading doubtless contains a great deal of truth, but minimizes the insistence of the literary tradition on Philip's zeal for the cult. One would desperately like to know what Philip II was reacting to within the sanctuary. While there were earlier monumental structures in the temenos of the Great Gods, built by earlier benefactors or the city of Samothrace itself, these appear more modest in building material and decoration: the Hall of Choral Dancers would have been the star of this sacred space for at least a generation.

As at the Dionysos sanctuary patronized by Alexander, here too on Samothrace, one can glimpse, however briefly, the type of interaction that could have facilitated contact between some elite Macedonians and Thracians. If Suetonius only allows us to infer that Alexander's inquiring of a Thracian oracle influenced the visit of C. Octavius nearly three centuries later, we may be able to see more immediate echoes of Philip's investment on Samothrace in the form of the major architectural dedication and likely intervention in a territorial dispute made in the name of his son and grandson, Philip III and Alexander IV.

Herakles and the Danube

The last member of this abbreviated catalogue is also the most tendentious. The Argead dynasty cultivated a special relationship with Herakles, claiming descent from him as part of their broader project of presenting themselves as part of *to Hellenikon* and perhaps even worshipping him as ancestor.⁷⁹ The association was so strong that an Athenian commentator like Isocrates could explicitly commend Philip to the model of Herakles, who served as both Argead dynastic ancestor and defender of Hellenism.⁸⁰ Literary sources suggest that Philip and Alexander each worshipped Herakles in Thrace. Both attestations are problematic, however. Philip's attempted offer of cult to Herakles is connected with his Scythian campaign in 339, but our principal accounts for the events appear confused and the entire episode has been suspected;⁸¹ I treat the campaign as essentially historical, but acknowledge the considerable

⁷⁸ Landucci, 2015, 72-82.

⁷⁹ On the cult of Herakles in Macedonia, see Iliadou, 1998; the older study of Baegel, 1913, 184-198 remains valuable. Stafford, 2012 offers a broader view of the hero. See now Koulakiotis, 2017.

⁸⁰ Isoc. 5.109-115. For a reevaluation of the brand of Hellenism championed by Isocrates (less chauvinistic and ethnic, more cultural and economic), see Pownall, 2007.

⁸¹ See recently, e.g., Bichler, 2017.

problems posed by the sources. We are on more secure ground with Alexander, but his gesture was primarily intended to delimit the northern boundary of Macedonian administered territory. Neither gesture seems to have taken place within the space of a Thracian sanctuary, however, as was the case for Alexander's consultation of Dionysos and Argead interventions at Samothrace.

Periodic shortages of funds during Philip's Thracian war of 342-339 forced him to campaign north of the Balkan range on several occasions and led to a particularly messy entanglement with the Scythians of Dobrudja and their king, Atheas.⁸² With the long sieges of Perinthos and Byzantion bogged down by early 339, Philip used the pretext of dedicating a statue of Herakles *ex voto* on the Danube, in territory commanded by Atheas, to attempt to extort funds from the Scythian king; this threatened cult activity ultimately resulted in battle, in which Philip was victorious, Atheas was killed, and the Macedonians won considerable spoils, including a substantial herd of Scythian horses.⁸³

This is not the last heard of Argead worship of Herakles on the Danube. During Alexander's campaign against the Triballoi in 335, he crossed the Danube and forced a neighboring Getic population to flee. After plundering and razing the nearby Getic town, he offered sacrifice to Zeus, Herakles, and the Danube.⁸⁴ While returning to Macedon, Philip had previously lost all of his Scythian spoils precisely in the region of the Triballoi.⁸⁵ Thrace as a space of Argead competition is a secondary thread that runs through much of this material.⁸⁶

Conclusion and Antigonid coda

Our Hellenocentric sources reveal the Argeads to have been keen participants in panhellenic cult and sanctuary life; there is no reason why this should not have been the case in Thrace as well. The case studies offered in this paper present varied contexts for such activity, ranging from honors for Herakles, dynastic Argead ancestor, at signal points on military campaign and closely linked to the expansion of Macedonian power in Thrace, to dedication of cult buildings in the sanctuary of the Great Gods on Samothrace, behavior which most closely resembles Argead patronage of panhellenic sanctuaries, to consultation of a conspicuous Thracian oracle. While Argead political ambitions in Thrace and a deeper tradition of shared elite culture among the Argeads and some Thracians certainly conditioned each of the cult acts discussed in this paper, I have offered a somewhat more prosaic range of observations: that Argead cult

⁸² For discussion of these events, see now Delev, 2015, 50-51; Worthington, 2008, 138-140; Hammond and Griffith, 1979, 581-584. Recent discussion of Atheas (Ateas) in a Thracian context: Braund, 2015, 354-356.

⁸³ Just. 9.2.

⁸⁴ Arr. *Anab.* 1.4.5. For Argead sacrifice to and propitiation of rivers, see Baege, 1913, 165-168. For Alexander's various delimitations of boundaries, see Heckel, 2012.

⁸⁵ Just. 9.3.1-3.

⁸⁶ Cf. Fredricksmeyer, 1990. Such a tendency may be visible as well in the names of some new or newly reorganized settlements in Thrace: Philippi, Alexandroupolis, Philippopolis.

performance in Thrace did not differ substantially from what can be observed of their other performances of cult outside of Macedonia; that these performances could inspire additional cult performances by non-Thracian elites in Thrace, including Argeads; and that these case studies offer poignant examples of religious settings in Thrace where Argeads and some Thracians could have engaged with one another, which circumstances may have helped further the mingling of Thracian and Macedonian cultures.

There is an Antigonid coda to this fragmented Argead tale, for several Thracian cult sites would be patronized by this Successor dynasty. The Macedonians dedicated a statue of Philip V in the sanctuary of the Megaloi Theoi and Perseus famously fled to Samothrace after Pydna seeking asylum in the sanctuary.⁸⁷ More than any ruler since Philip II and Alexander III, Philip V made inland Thrace a priority and was active there throughout his reign, even founding a city, Perseis, in neighboring Paeonia in 183.⁸⁸ On a subsequent campaign in 181, Philip made a lengthy and difficult ascent to Haimos.⁸⁹ There, according to Livy, he dedicated altars to Zeus and the Sun and sacrificed at them; the divinities almost certainly represent the *interpretatio romana* of a local Thracian divinity or divinities and recall earlier Argead practice in the region.⁹⁰

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⁸⁷ Philip's statue: ed. pr. McCredie, 1979, 16 (SEG 29.795; Hatzopoulos, 1996, II, no. 34). Perseus' flight: Liv. 44.45.15, 45.5-6; Plut. *Aem. Paul.* 23, 26.

⁸⁸ For the Thracian policy of Philip V and Perseus, see Hatzopoulos, 1983. For Perseis, see Cohen, 1995, 99.

⁸⁹ By *Haemus*, Livy may indicate Rila, as opposed to the Balkan range, which is the traditional meaning of the word. For detailed discussion of the passage, see Jaeger, 2011. Livy implausibly notes that Philip ascended the mountain in order to reconnoitre possible invasion routes of Italy.

⁹⁰ Liv. 40.21-22. Cf. Hammond and Walbank, 1988, 469, who write of "an act of political and religious propaganda."

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