

THEATRE AND MUSIC IN ROMAN MACEDONIA



*To Prof. G. M. Sifakis,
with gratitude*

ABSTRACT: This article aims to examine theatrical and musical activity in the Macedonian region during the Roman era. Literary and epigraphic evidence, theatre buildings and dramatic monuments present only some facets of the diversity of cultural life in Roman Macedonia, which we endeavour to reconstitute. At the same time, through the extant scraps of information we attempt to trace the history of Greek theatre up to the end of the Imperial age, stressing the scenic and *thymelic* contests but also including the performances of musicians, mimes, pantomimes, and other “paratheatrical” artists.

THE FIRST DECADES OF ROMAN SOVEREIGNTY over the Macedonian kingdom were a time of cultural and economic decline; gradually, however, some of the new administrative centres (e.g. Amphipolis and Thessalonike) would become active, Beroia would assume a more important role, and Roman colonies would be founded. This is the new political context within which we shall be following both the continuation of pan-Hellenic and local theatrical and musical shows and the changes that emerged in the artistic and religious life of the Macedonians through the interventions of the Roman administration and the impact of Roman culture generally. Our attention will focus on theatrical and musical events and on performances of “paratheatrical” artists: mimes, dancers, buffoons, con-

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jurors, jugglers, acrobats. Cult and mystery rituals, athletic contests and amphitheatre or hippodrome events are excluded, except insofar as they afford occasions or settings for performances with music, singing, dancing or recitation.

I. LITERARY AND THEATRICAL ECHOES

Most of the Macedonian figurines representing theatrical masks or figures from the world of the theatre date from no later than the mid-2nd century BC.¹ Dramatic monuments from the Late Hellenistic period are very rare, even in cities with lively theatrical activity in the preceding period, like Olynthus and Thasos.²

In Pella, the few surviving terracotta statuettes and masks confirm the spread of New Comedy and its influence on Hellenistic art up to the beginning of the 1st century BC.³ Artistic production here was on the whole similar to what we see in other Greek regions: e.g. the head of a young woman (*ψευδοκόρη*) is the same as one from Sicily; two statuettes of young men (*ἐπίσειστοι*) are identical to a pair from Delos; a figurine portrays the “old fat woman” (*παχεῖα γράῃς*) from the Dioskourides mosaic; and so on.⁴ There are also statuettes of comic actors not wearing one of the familiar masks but rendered as caricatures with protuberant features; these may be distortions on the part of coroplasts who confused the theatrical with the grotesque.⁵ One of these statuettes (from the 1st century BC) appears wearing a half-mask just like another one from Thessalonike (from the first half of the 2nd century BC); only conjectures have been proposed to date concerning the theatrical genre to which these half-masks belonged (fig. 1).⁶ In addition, alongside the

1. See Giannou (2016) 77–79.

2. See Chasapi-Christodoulou (1991–92) 317–321.

3. From the 1st century BC Pella gradually declines; see Lilimpaki-Akamati (2004) 53–63.

4. Pella, Archaeological Museum [henceforth: AM] K3689, E1093, E2487; Naples AM 9987. See Chasapi-Christodoulou (1991–92) 290–306, 317–321, where other known types are recorded. Of great interest are 34 terracotta figurines of pedagogues which belong to a burial of the mid-2nd century BC and they probably reflect the influence of Euripides’ drama or New Comedy (Pella AM BE1978/74–107); Lilimpaki-Akamati (1983) 244–245.

5. For example, figurines of slaves wearing masks with open mouth, indicating that they are theatrical (Pella AM E917, E2532, E1348); Chasapi-Christodoulou (1991–92) 306–310.

6. Pella AM E3380; Chasapi-Christodoulou (1991–92) 307–308 pl. 16 (1st c. BC). Thessalonike AM 2818; see Daffa-Nikonanou (1985–86) 186 fig. 11, who assumes that it is a figurine of a comic slave parodying the tragic messenger. A similar one from Alexan-



Fig. 1. A terracotta figurine of an actor with a half-mask from Thessalonike (AM 2818). Photos by Nikos Dionysopoulos (Institute for Mediterranean Studies)

theatrical types there appear figures from the “paratheatrical” world, such as the statuette of a young conjuror with disproportionately large ears and a ball in his open mouth.⁷ These monuments are indicative of the penchant of the period for comic shows and recitals by clowns, acrobats or conjurors.

Another type of pottery widespread in parts of Macedonia in the 2nd and 1st century BC are vessels and stamps, or moulds for making them, with relief decoration of floral motifs, mythological figures or narrative scenes (e.g. battle scenes, chariot races).⁸ Many of these are decorated with subjects inspired by literary works (epic, dramatic, parodic, cinaedic, erotic); these of-

dria, published by Bieber (1955) 97 fig. 385, is interpreted as a caricature of an “idiot”. Ghiron-Bistagne (1970) 277–279 argues that a close parallel from Myrina (fig. 30) is connected with the *Fabula Atellana*.

7 Pella AM E1023; see Chasapi-Christodoulou (1991-92) 307 pl. 16.

8. These are mainly sympotic vessels, which are referred to as “Megarian bowls” or “Homeric skyphoi”, although they are neither characteristic of the pottery of Megara nor decorated exclusively with subjects from Homeric epics. The terms “*grammatika* cups”

ten have inscriptions that help identify the scenes depicted. Most of them were made in Pella or Thessalonike or come from moulds and stamps made by workshops in those cities.⁹

The largest category comprises skyphoi displaying scenes from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*; those inspired by the *Iliou Persis* appear to come exclusively from Macedonia.¹⁰ Of particular note among them are relief skyphoi depicting scenes from *Iliad* 4 and from the slaying of the suitors in *Odyssey* 22, and moulds with scenes from the fall and destruction of Troy.¹¹ From the palace at Aigai and the agora at Pella come fragments of bowls depicting the blinding of Polyphemus or the escape from the Cyclops' cave.¹² Some of the depictions on these vessels adhere closely to the epic narrative (e.g. the slaying of the suitors); most of them, however, appear rather to be filtered through the literary production of Hellenistic writers.¹³

Skyphoi with decoration inspired by drama are also widely found. There are figures clearly drawn from the tragedies of Sophocles (*Ajax*, *Niobe*) and Euripides (among them *Hecuba*, *Ion*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, the lost *Oedipus*, *Oenomaus*, *Melanippe the Wise*, and the lost satyr play *Sisyphus*).¹⁴ There are

(“γραμματικόν ποτήριον”) or “*grammatika* vases” (“γραμματικό αγγείο”) have been proposed for those with inscriptions by Nassioulas (2013) I.103–106.

9. For the geographical distribution of the relief skyphoi in other cities (e.g. Petres, Aigai, Aiane, Stobi) and in production centres outside Macedonia (e.g. Thessaly, Boeotia, Athens, etc.) see Drougou – Touratsoglou (2012) 247. On the Macedonians' preference for this specific type of pottery, see Nassioulas (2013) I.238–239.
10. See Nassioulas (2013) I.406–408. For the epic scenes on a large group of vessels from Petres see Adam-Veleni (2011) 379; on the bowls from Aiane see Karamitrou-Mentesidi (1989) 46.
11. Thessalonike Agora AM PA4878; on parallels see Nassioulas (2006) 57–60. Thessalonike AM 5442, Pella AM 81.104; cf. 81.102, 81.105, 81.131. See Nassioulas (2013) II.77–83.
12. Pella AM B2.81.128, B1.81.127, Aigai AM 17. On parallels see Sinn (1979) 86–87 pl. 8.1, Akamatis (1993) 125–126, 245–246. The extant fragments do not support the hypothesis that the subject was drawn from Euripides' *Cyclops*.
13. Bowls with scenes from *Odyssey* 22 are linked directly with the text, since they quote Homer's lines; Nassioulas (2013) II.106–120 (nos 88, 89, 90, 94, 95). On the literary sources see Nassioulas (2013) I.359 with references.
14. *Aias*: Petres Florina AM 2835 (cf. Athens AM 4203); *Niobe*: Pella AM E1.80.178, E2.80.177 (cf. Athens AM 25655); *Hecuba*: Pella AM 81.106, 81.107; *Ion*: Aigai (unnumbered; Faklaris [1995] 59–60 fig. 2); *Melanippe the Wise* and *Melanippe Captive*: Petres Florina AM 2995, Pella AM A1269; *Oenomaus*: Aigai (unnumbered; Faklaris [1983] 232–233 pl. 93d); *Iphigenia at Aulis*: Petres Florina (unnumbered; Sinn [1979] 109); *Oedipus*: Petres Florina (unnumbered; Adam-Veleni [2011] 378); *Sisyphus*: Pella AM 81.108, Thessalonike AM 5441. According to Nassioulas (2013) I.367–368, 370, 407, scenes from many plays of Euripides (e.g. *Ion*, *Oenomaus*, *Melanippe the Wise*) are found only on vessels from Macedonia.

also depictions that appear to have a connection with drama, although we are unable to identify the plays to which they may allude.¹⁵ More generally, any attempt to trace the immediate sources of these reliefs is bound to meet with difficulties, since most potters probably had access to sub-literary texts (e.g. plots of plays, mythographic accounts, etc.) rather than to the plays themselves.¹⁶ Broadly speaking, the depictions can be divided into three categories: (a) those sharing a subject with lost plays, in which case the immediate source cannot be identified; (b) those that can be matched to specific works; and (c) those that seem to allude (directly or indirectly) to a performance.

Examples of the first category are a relief skyphos from Thessalonike and a mould from Pella, both with the same subject as Euripides' lost satyr play *Sisyphus*.¹⁷ The second category includes two moulds from the agora of Pella depicting (with minor differences) Artemis killing the daughters of Niobe, most probably based on a narrative version of Sophocles' lost tragedy *Niobe*.¹⁸ More interesting are the skyphoi displaying theatrical figures. One mould from Pella is decorated with characters from Euripides' *Hecuba*: in the narrative zone we see the shade of Achilles demanding the sacrifice of Polyxena, while four of the figures depicted wear tragic masks; the old woman with long grey hair (*πολιὰ κατάκομος*) holding a knife is probably Hecuba shortly before the blinding of Polymestor (fig. 2).¹⁹ Figures from a satyr play are also reflected in a mould from the agora of Pella: some of them (Dionysus and the Silenus-Papposilenus group) wear theatrical costumes and masks;²⁰ the presence of Ino suggests a dramatic

15. See Akamatis (1993) 290, Nassioulas (2013) I.378–379.

16. See Nassioulas (2013) I.453–454, who argues that the potters had access to sub-literary texts with prose summaries of poetic literature. See also the discussion by van Rossum-Steenbeek (1998) 31 concerning the mythological information contained in these texts.

17. Thessalonike AM 5441, Pella AM 81.108; see Akamatis (1993) 259 ff. and Nassioulas (2013) I.370–372, for other parallels—an indication of the popularity of the myth in Macedonia.

18. Pella E1.80.178, E2.80.177; Akamatis (1993) 261–267 comments on fragments of the play which place the slaying of the daughters of Niobe in an interior setting—as indicated by the Pellan moulds as well. The relief, however, was probably not inspired by the drama (e.g. a messenger's speech). Van Rossum-Steenbeek (1998) 228–229 and Zervoudaki (2009) 439 argue in favour of an epitome based on tragedies.

19. Pella AM I1.81.96; Akamatis (1993) 133–134, 247–254, 277–282. On the masks see also Webster (1967) 14 (*οἶλος, πάρονλος, λευκός*), 15 (*πολιὰ κατάκομος*). For other moulds with the same imagery (e.g. Pella AM Γ1 81.106, Γ2 81.107) see also Nassioulas (2013) I.361–362.

20. Pella K1.81.99; on the masks see Akamatis (1993) 284–285 and Webster (1967) 15c. The same figures with minor variations are found in other moulds from Pella (AM K2 81.97, K3 81.98, K4 81.100, K5 81.101); Akamatis (1993) 282–290. The same theme with



Fig. 2. Detail of a clay mould for a relief vessel from Pella with decoration inspired from Euripides' *Hecuba* (AM II.81.96). Photo reproduced by courtesy of Prof. I.M. Akamatis (Akamatis [1993] pl. 235)

work connected with the house of Athamas.²¹ In both these cases we recognise the characters but we cannot identify the episodes: the potters may quite possibly have been working from an illustrated handbook of dramatic poems.²²

Another category of relief depictions is inspired by cinaedic and erotic works. On two bowls the figures are identified as *kinaidoi*: on a fragment of a skyphos from Aigai the inscriptions mention a *kinaidos* engaged in adultery; in a banquet scene on a skyphos from Florina the *kinaidoi* are providing the entertainment, while one of them is engaged in intercourse with a *hetaera*.²³ The potters may have drawn on cinaedic literature, as far

minor variations is found in two bowls and a relief krater from Petres (Florina AM 3728a, 3728b, 2819); Adam-Veleni (2011) 378 pl. 151e and (2012) 333–334.

21. See Akamatis (1993) 289–290 n. 501, where the plays inspired from the myth of Athamas are discussed, e.g. the satyric drama *Athamas* of Xenocles. According to Nassioulas (2013) I.378, the inscription accompanying the figure of the Satyr on Ino's right could identify him as Marsyas.
22. Cf. the illustrations in manuscripts of Terence, which are based on Late Antique models; Radden Keefe (2015) 53–54.
23. Aigai AM 1993/20, Athens AM 63. See Nassioulas (2013) I.386–389 with parallels. On a detailed discussion about cinaedic scenes in two bowls from Athens (AM 11797) and Thebes (Louvre CA 936) see the study by Tsitsiridis (2014).

as we can deduce from the strongly sexual element in the scenes depicted, although inspiration from mime performances cannot be excluded.²⁴ The same applies to a group of vessels with erotic or pornographic scenes, the sources of which may be sought in Hellenistic texts:²⁵ their decoration comprises mainly copulating figures (with brief passages of dialogue between the partners) and episodes concerned generally with love affairs, such as the betrayed lover discovering the unfaithful wife or mistress *in flagrante*.²⁶ Most examples of cinaedic and erotic scenes come from Macedonia, clearly suggesting a local predilection for the type of literature or performance that inspired them.²⁷ Perhaps this was the reason why the author of the novel *Lucius, or the Ass* chose Beroia as the setting for the action of a troupe of *kinaidoi* (§34-36).

In general, relief vessels with narrative scenes predominate in the Macedonian region for roughly a century, from the mid-2nd to the mid-1st century BC.²⁸ The local workshops incorporated dominant trends in literary and theatrical production into their work, expanding and updating their subject-matter. The decoration of many vessels with scenes from epic poetry and plays by Euripides confirms the influence of epic recitations and tragic performances on the art of the Hellenistic period. Similarly, the terracotta figurines and masks attest to the continued popularity of New Comedy in the Roman era. At the same time, the potters and the coroplasts were more than ever catering to the contemporary taste for erotic literature and drew inspiration from the highly popular performances of “paratheatrical” artists.

24. As Tsitsiridis (2014) 224–225 notes, the potter may well have modelled a scene on a performance by mimes, “presenting the sexual element much more realistically”.

25. E.g. *Peri Aphrodision* of Philainis, *Rhodiaka* of Philippus from Amphipolis, *Ionika* of Alexander Aetolus; Akamatis (1993) 297–299 and Nassioulas (2013) I.390, 456.

26. E.g. two moulds from Pella (AM 81.111, 81.112), fragments of bowls from *Aigai* (BAΠ 48, 1994/169), Thessalonike (Agora PA 12119, 12120); see Akamatis (1993) 292–293 and Nassioulas (2013) I.389–394, II.199–210 with references.

27. For the hypothesis that there had been a particular interest in cinaedic literature in Macedonia since the time of Antigonus, see the discussion in Tsitsiridis (2014) 226.

28. Drougou – Touratsoglou (2012) 247–249 with n. 35–36. Mythological subjects, however, continued to be popular in the Imperial period, especially for the decoration of sarcophagi found in Thessalonike (e.g. the Iliadic battle at the ships, the story of Meleager, the battle with the Amazons, the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis, etc.); Eleutheriadis (2003) no. 331, Papagianni (2010) nos 619, 627, 631, 633, 635, 639, Stefanidou-Tiveriou (1997) no. 138. One particularly interesting piece is an octagonal silver platter (ca. 340) decorated with scenes from the life of Achilles; it was found in the Roman city of Augusta Raurica (Kaiseraugst, Switzerland) and bears the artist’s name: Pausilypos of Thessalonike; Nigdelis (2006) 479–481.

II. FROM THE MACEDONIAN CELEBRATIONS TO THE ROMAN CULT OF THE EMPEROR

In the spring of 167 BC Aemilius Paullus summoned a council in Amphipolis to announce the decisions of the senate about the administration of the Roman province of Macedonia (Liv. 45.29-33; cf. Plut. *Aem. P.* 28.3-6); this was followed by splendid celebrations, including the games he had been enthusiastically planning for quite some time, despite the fact that “the Romans were as yet inexperienced in this sort of festivity and spectacle” (Liv. 45.32.10). Delegations offered sacrifices, and the public performances involved throngs of actors, musicians, and artists specialising in every kind of scenic spectacle. The shows and banquets were universally admired for their magnificence and for the care that had gone into their planning, while even more than the athletic, equestrian and theatrical contests (*scaenicum magis ludicrum*) the crowds enjoyed the impressive display of spoils taken from the Macedonian palaces. In these celebrations the Roman consul brought together elements of the pan-Hellenic festivals with athletic and *musical* competitions (that is, scenic contests and/or contests which took place in the orchestra), the local festal assemblies that were traditional in Macedonia (featuring lavish feasts), and Roman victory celebrations (with the familiar “triumphs”).²⁹

It is clear that Amphipolis had the administrative infrastructure required for such festivities. This is documented both by the cultural life of the city before the 2nd century BC³⁰ and by later inscriptions attesting to an association of artists of Dionysus being active in the area: a gabled stele of 90/89 BC records the honours paid to priests of Athena by their own fellow-priests and a guild of artists (*SEG* 48: 716 *ter*); and a decree of 84/83 BC records once again the crowning of priests of Athena by the guild of artists (*SEG* 61: 485).³¹ The stele of 90/89 BC also contains a list of victors at athletic games; the two inscriptions were engraved on the monument in different circumstances, but date from the same period.³² It may, there-

29. On Macedonian celebrations see Giannou (2016) 79–81. For the features the assembly in Amphipolis shared with the *Olympia* in Dion and the *Xandika* see Hatzopoulos (1996) I. 347.

30. Giannou (2016) 53, 76–77.

31. Gauthier – Hatzopoulos (1993) 164; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki (2011) 235–247 dates it to 89/88 BC.

32. These two inscriptions seem to be contemporary on paleographic grounds; D’Amore – Mari (2013) 229.

fore, reasonably be concluded that a local festival in honour of Athena was held at Amphipolis with athletic and *musical* contests.³³ It seems probable that the local guild was associated with the “Guild of Artists of Isthmus and Nemea”, which had expanded its activity through numerous branch associations to cover the whole of the Greek world.³⁴

Additionally, a series of inscriptions attest to the continued operation of the gymnasium in Amphipolis right through the early Imperial period and confirm its contribution to the education of the young men and the organisation of religious celebrations and athletic festivals of both local and pan-Macedonian scope.³⁵ With regard to the kind of entertainment provided at these festivities, there is only indirect evidence.

An inscription of the 3rd century BC from Amphipolis mentions lectures on history (*ἐποιήσατο ἀκροάσεις*, ll. 6-7) by a scholar who had studied the history of the city and written a book on the cult of Artemis *Tauropolos* (*SEG* 28: 534).³⁶ Where were these lectures given? According to the supplements proposed for the badly worn inscription, either in the theatre (*ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ*) or in the gymnasium (*ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ*).³⁷ The second supplement is reinforced by the reference in the decree to the education of the city’s young men (cf. l. 3: *παιδεύων καλῶς*). Moreover, public lectures and recitals (*ἀκροάσεις*) in gymnasia are mentioned in other inscriptions of the Hellenistic age: for example, a philosopher from Macedonia, probably a Thessalonian, gave lectures on the education of ephebes in the Boeotian town of Haliartos early in the 2nd century BC (*SEG* 44: 409b).³⁸ Nonetheless, the theatre would also have been suitable for lectures, as we know from other

33. On the local scope of the games, probably in honour of Athena, see Koukouli-Chrysanthaki (2011) 237, D’Amore – Mari (2013) 234–241.

34. For the activity of the *Koinon* and the embassies to Rome, Pella et. al. see Le Guen (2001) I.98–111, II.80. On the Guilds of artists see the studies by Le Guen (2001) and Aneziri (2003).

35. On the gymnasium of Amphipolis see Lazaridi (1992) 547–550; on the edict of Philip V which mentions “sacred crown” games in Amphipolis see Giannou (2016) 76–77. For the decrees honouring gymnasiarchs and inscriptions relating to the operation of the *gymnasium* in the Roman age, see Nigdelis (2012b) 592–602.

36. The phrase *ἀκροάσεις ποιοῦμαι*, known from similar decrees, denotes lectures mostly by historians, orators, philosophers and doctors, or recitals by poets, musicians, and the like (e.g. *IScM* I 26, 2nd c. BC; *ID* 1497, 165/4 BC); see also Nigdelis (2015) n. 116, 119.

37. According to Nigdelis (2015) n. 119, *ἐν τῷ θεάτρῳ* is the more likely supplement, although *ἐν τῷ γυμνασίῳ* (longer by two letters) cannot be excluded.

38. See also Austin (2006) 435–453 (no. 252), for commentary on a decree mentioning lectures given by learned men in the gymnasium (*IK Sestos* 1, 133–120 BC). On public lectures and recitals in Hellenistic gymnasia see Gauthier (1995) 1–11, König (2005) 63–71.

regions.³⁹ There is evidence that in Amphipolis the theatre was located next to the gymnasium, although the precise date of its construction is uncertain.⁴⁰

One poetic genre that flourished in this era and was included both in cult celebrations and in the programme of *thymelic* contests was the *encomium*, a song of praise in honour of gods or mortals. It is recorded, in fact, that sometime after 80 BC a poet from Amphipolis called Craterus was the victor in the *Amphiaraia* and the *Rhomaia* at Oropos with an *epic encomium* (*Epigr. tou Oropou* 528).⁴¹ The *paean* engraved on a stele in the Asclepieion in Athens, offered by Macedonicus of Amphipolis early in the 1st century AD, gives us an idea of the hymns performed, with musical accompaniment, at cult rituals (*IG II²* 4473, *SEG* 23:126).⁴² It is reasonable to conclude that *thymelic* contests were held during religious festivals at Amphipolis in honour of Asclepius, whose cult held an important place in the life of the city.⁴³

Generally, the cult of Asclepius, who had been worshipped in Macedonia since the Hellenistic age with sacrifices, festal assemblies, and musical or dramatic contests, continued in the Roman period.⁴⁴ Apart from the *Asclepieia* at Beroia and Morrylos and the *Great Asclepieia* at Philippi and Thasos, there is evidence of celebrations in honour of the god in Kalindoia, Mieza, Thessalonike, Kassandreia and Dion as well as in Amphipolis.⁴⁵ Special banqueting halls were erected in the sanctuaries as well as in public or private buildings hosting religious celebrations, to accommodate ritual feasts and other ceremonial and entertainment needs. Such halls, connected

39. Cf. e.g. *ID* 1506, ll. 7–9: ἐποιήσατο καὶ πλείο[ρας ἀ]κροάσεις [ἐν τε] τῷ ἐ<κ>κλ[η]σιασθηρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ θεάτ[ρῳ, ἀνα]λγνὸς τὰ [π]επραγματευμένα ἐγκώμια (ca. 145 BC). See also Chaniotis (1988) 299–300.

40. See Lazaridi (1992) 550; on the dramatic monuments of the Hellenistic period that testify the existence of theatrical activity in Amphipolis see Giannou (2016) 77.

41. Cf. *IG VII* 420, *FD III* 2.49. On *epic encomium* see Hall (2013a) 128.

42. This *paean* shares many common features with hymns of the 3rd century BC (e.g. from Erythrae, of which it seems to be a variation) and later, such as that from 2nd-century Dion; see Piguet (2012) 53–86 with bibliography.

43. That the cult of Asclepius at Amphipolis (and other Macedonian cities) had an official character is also deduced from the role of the priest of Asclepius as an eponymous civic magistrate; see Hatzopoulos (1996) I.153–154.

44. On the introduction and propagation of the Asclepius cult in Macedonia see Voutiras (1993) 256–262 and Mari (2011) 462 n. 27, 29. For the celebration of *thymelic* or scenic contests in the sanctuaries of Asclepius in Athens, Epidaurus and elsewhere in the Roman period see Melfi (2010) 317–338.

45. On the *Asclepieia* at Macedonia during the Hellenistic period see Giannou (2016) 36–37 n. 25, 70 n. 141–142; on the *Asclepieia* at Philippi during the Roman period see below p. 138. See also Riethmüller (2005) I.174–186 (especially p. 183 with n. 18), II.320–324, and Hatzopoulos (1996) I.88, 103, 120, 159.

mostly with the cult of Asclepius or the Mother of the Gods, have been excavated, among other places, at Amphipolis, Beroia, Olynthus and Pella; the lamps found in the remains possibly imply that cultic rites were performed there by night.⁴⁶

An indirect indication of a closer connection between these buildings and spectacles is provided by their decoration. For example, close to the gymnasium at Amphipolis a Late Roman building complex dated to the 2nd/3rd century with mosaic floors displaying mythological scenes was found. The stoa in the south part of the courtyard is decorated with a mosaic floor; in the centre there are three square panels featuring theatrical masks.⁴⁷ The figures must represent pantomimes, since they have their mouth closed; for the pantomime performer (also called *δορχηστής* or *τραγικῆς δορχήσεως ὑποκριτής*) did not speak but represented in turn all the characters in the myth, changing masks (with his mouth closed), enacting tragic and mythical scenes through gesture, rhythmic movement and dance, while one or more artists accompanied his performance with songs and music, interpreting his movements for the audience (*ὑπετραγῶδον*).⁴⁸

Furthermore, some of these buildings were erected close to the theatre, e.g. at Amphipolis and Dion.⁴⁹ At Mieza the theatre was built next to a whole complex of banqueting rooms (probably part of an Asclepieion of the 4th century BC) in the late Hellenistic or early Roman period;⁵⁰ nevertheless, there is no other evidence for contests or performances being held in the region, although archaeological finds show that the theatre was still in use in the 4th century AD.⁵¹

46. E.g. lamps, statues of Asclepius and the Mother of the Gods, and findings related to cult practices were discovered in a private building with banqueting halls at Amphipolis; Malama – Salonikios (2004) 145–155. In Beroia an inscription of 131/130 BC commemorates the construction of an *enkoimeterion* and an *exedra* in the sanctuary of Asclepius (EKM 1. Beroia 18). On Pella's *Metroon* and the sanctuary of Darron, a local "healing" god, see Lilimpaki-Akamati (2004) 54–59.

47. The masks present an older man with long beard and deeply wrinkled forehead, a young woman with hair bound up on the top of the head and tied with a ribbon, and a young man with blond curls; Stikas (1975) 74–79, Lazaridis (1993) 49–50.

48. Lucian's treatise *On dancing* (*Περὶ δορχήσεως*) is a primary source of information for these solo performers of mimetic dance, who became extremely popular in the Imperial period. On pantomime see especially Hall (2013b) 451–473 with references.

49. On Amphipolis see the city plan by Lazaridis (1993) 49–50; on Dion see below n. 188.

50. On the connection of the banquet halls with the sanctuary of Asclepius see Allamani-Souri et al. (2004) 575–577.

51. Allamani-Souri (2000) 97–110, Sear (2006) 418; for the existence of a Hellenistic phase see Poulakakis (2010) 161–162, 166–167.

No testimonies survive to document the role of music events in the religious ceremonies. However, it can be taken for granted that the cult of the Mother of the Gods (with the characteristics of the Phrygian goddess Cybele), which was exceptionally widespread at this time, or of Attis (mythical consort of the Mother of the Gods) included mystic rites with dance of an orgiastic nature.⁵² Figurines depicting Attis in oriental dress holding a syrinx were popular at Amphipolis.⁵³ Moreover, the statuettes of the “mantle dancers” or the “*kalathiskos* dancers”, found in various versions in many cities from the 4th century BC to the Roman period, may be related to cult practices (e.g. in honour of Demeter or Aphrodite) or to puberty rites incorporated in the worship of Artemis and other female deities.⁵⁴ It is also certain that encomia and hymns were performed in celebrations in honour of Apollo at Kalindoia and the Kozani region.⁵⁵

More interesting is a funerary epigram, possibly from Amphipolis, that was dedicated to the Athenian Isidorus, son of Nicostratus, an initiate in the Samothracian and Eleusinian mysteries (*SEG* 55:723, 2nd/1st c. BC); Isidorus was also described as a delightful mime with noteworthy success in his day, who gave many performances “at the Bacchic altars” (ll. 6-10).⁵⁶ There is no evidence of the contexts in which he performed; however, it

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52. The worship of the Mother of the gods shares many common features with the orgiastic cult of Dionysus; besides, statues or symbols of Dionysus have been found in the *Metreo* of Leukopetra (Vermion), Aigai and Pella; see Stefani (2010) 108, Drougou (1997) 41–42, 47–49, and Lilimpaki-Akamati (2000) 59–60, 211–212. In addition, figurines of Aphrodite holding a mask of Silenos or playing a kithara (mostly from Beroia and Pella, dated to the 2nd century BC) reveal the connection between her worship and the Dionysian mysteries; Tsakalou-Tzanavari (2002) nos 259–267.
 53. Amphipolis AM 2748, Thessalonike AM 81; Andrikou et al. (2003) no. 101. A figurine of dancing Attis is dated in the 3rd century BC (Louvre AM CA 1946); Zervaki (2014) 257. Another Hellenistic figurine from Amphipolis (AM 3530) depicts a dancer with krotala wearing a Phrygian cap; Andrikou et al. (2003) no. 156.
 54. On statuettes, e.g., from Beroia (2nd–1st c. BC), Amphipolis, Thessalonike, Pella, Polygyros, Olynthus (4th–3rd c. BC) see Tsakalou-Tzanavari (2002) 122–124 pl. 55, Kortikonti (1994) nos 111, 167, Zervaki (2014) 253, 257. On “mantle dancers” see Friesländer (2001) 1–30.
 55. Apollo is depicted as a *kitharodos* in votive reliefs from parts of Kozani (where he is called *Nomios*) and Kalindoia (2nd–1st c. BC); Pingiatoglou (2012) 221, Voutiras (1997) no. 69. There is no evidence of the festivities in honour of the Muse Clio; that the cult of Artemis was celebrated with torch-races is implied by the depiction of a race torch on the city’s coinage; Koukouli (1969) 358.
 56. Kavala AM A70. According to the inscription, Isidorus “frequently tilled at the Bacchic altars recounting merry speech as a mime” (ll. 6–8); Chaniotis – Mylonopoulos (2006) no. 83, Koukouli-Chrysanthaki (2011) no. 65. The epigram offers evidence for the rituals during the Samothracian Mysteries; Karadima-Matsa – Dimitrova (2003) 335–345.

is tempting to assume that he also took part in festivities in honour of the Egyptian gods at Amphipolis.⁵⁷

In Macedonia, local officials continued to organise public celebrations during the Roman age. One notable example is the *Daisia* festival, for which there survives evidence spanning the period from the 2nd century BC through the 2nd century AD, thus allowing us to follow the evolution of a traditional Macedonian festival within the new cultural context of Roman rule. A decree from Morrylos honouring Alcetas cites his public services to the city, which included sacrifices during religious festivals (*Meletemata* 22.54, l. 9-12).⁵⁸ A similar decree from Lete dated 119 BC institutes annual equestrian events in honour of Marcus Annius in the month of *Daisios*, when the games for “benefactors” were held (*Meletemata* 22.53). Two centuries later, in AD 121/2, another gymnasiarch and “benefactor” was honoured in Lete (*SEG* 1:276); this was Manius Salarus Sabinus, who offered lavish symposia during the city’s festivals (ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς). In a decree from Kalindioia (AD 1) Apollonius (priest of Zeus, Rome, Augustus, and “the other benefactors”) is honoured for the sacrifices and banquets he offered (*Meletemata* 11.K2); in fact, during the annual festival dedicated to Zeus, Rome, and Augustus, he organised sumptuous games and spectacles with special care for the pleasure and enjoyment of the citizens (ll. 21-25). It is obvious that, by the end of the 2nd century BC, the traditional *Daisia* celebrations had already been associated with the celebration of Roman “benefactors” and, by the end of the 1st century BC, were incorporated into the cult of the deified emperor.⁵⁹ The new festival celebrations continued to include processions, public sacrifices, symposia, contests (athletic and/or equestrian), and spectacles intended for entertainment —although of what kind is not specified.

57. On the cult of the Egyptian gods at Amphipolis see Samartzidou-Orkopoulou (2011) 57–59, 69–72.

58. The decree is dated shortly after 206/5 BC, or in 131/130 BC (*SEG* 54:610). The celebration of the *Daisia* is also mentioned in a later inscription from Alcomena, dated before the Roman conquest (*Meletemata* 22.19); see Giannou (2016) 80–81, Hatzopoulos – Loukopoulou (1989) 41–56.

59. In general the Romans, who preferred to link pre-existing celebrations with the cult of the emperor, adopted the Greek model of games (with the addition of bloody spectacles); Chaniotis (2011) 8. On the rituals of the imperial cult in the East see Price (1984) 101–132, Chaniotis (2003) 3–28; on the organisation of imperial cult in the East see the studies by Burrell (2004) and Kantirea (2007).

The cult of the emperor gradually spread to all Macedonian cities and required the construction of altars and temples (*Augustea*) and the organisation of sumptuous festivals and sacrifices in honour of the imperial family — under the responsibility of eminent Roman citizens, who were high priests and performed the office of *agonothetes*, who was responsible for the organisation of the festivities.⁶⁰ One of the largest and oldest *Augustea* in Macedonia was found in Kalindoia (dating from the end of the 1st century BC) and includes halls for ceremonies, banquets, assemblies (*bouleuterion*), etc.⁶¹

An inscription from somewhere in the environs of Serres, probably dating from the 1st century AD, mentions the cult of the emperor: [— — —] *θέατρον Διὶ καὶ Πώμῃ καὶ θ[εῶ] Σεβαστῶ(?)*] (Samsaris, *Bas-Strymon* 41). The corresponding expressions in the Kalindoia decree for Apollonius (*Διὶ καὶ Καίσαρι Σεβαστῶι θυσίας*, ll. 16-17, and *τοὺς ἀγῶνας Διὶ καὶ Καίσαρι[ι τῶ]ι Σεβ[αστῶι]*, l. 22) suggest that here, too, the word *θέατρον* refers to “public spectacles” dedicated to Zeus, Rome and the emperor. The fragmentary state of the inscription and the fact that no theatrical edifice has been found in the vicinity of Serres preclude any more certain conclusions.⁶² However, games in honour of the emperor in Serres and Amphipolis are attested by a decree honouring Tiberius Claudius son of Diogenes, who was the first *agonothetes* of Serres and high priest and *agonothetes* of Amphipolis (Samsaris, *Bas-Strymon* 37, ca. AD 50-100). The monuments dedicated to gladiatorial combats in Amphipolis show that these formed part of the festive celebrations.⁶³

The imperial cult also occupied an important place in the life of Thessalonike: the register of Roman “benefactors”, (high) priests and *agonothetai* in inscriptions from the end of the 1st century BC to the end of the 3rd century AD provides evidence for local games in honour of Augustus.⁶⁴ For this purpose a temple was erected in the city,⁶⁵ while the operation of the

60. Kanatsoulis (1953-55) 51-58, 69-70.

61. Sismanidis (2007) 150-151.

62. From other inscriptions we know that Serres had the familiar urban structure of Greek cities, with agora, bouleuterion and gymnasium; for the gymnasium see Samsaris (1989) 238-239.

63. Cf. epitaphs of the gladiators Euchrous (RA 1945:51.4), Achilleus (Kavala AM Α144, 2nd c.), Amaranthus (Kavala AM Α134, 2nd/3rd c.); Nigdelis - Tzelepidou (2016) 71-78.

64. Cf. *SEG* 46:812 (27 BC-AD 14), *IG* X.2.1 133 (early 1st c. AD), *IG* X.2.1 131 (37-68), *IG* X.2.1 32 (before 100); *IG* X.2.1 132 (ca. 1st/2nd c.), *IG* X.2.1 128 (1st-3rd c.), *IG* X.2.1 226 (2nd c.), *IG* X.2.1 141 (226 or 228); *SEG* 38:704 (2nd c.) with Nigdelis (2012a) 145.

65. A temple in honour of Caesar was built near the end of the 1st century BC (*IG* X.2.1 31); Stefanidou-Tiveriou (2012) 279. The temple in Plateia Antigoni (near the Serapeion)

gymnasium was linked initially with the celebration of the Roman “benefactors”⁶⁶ and later with the imperial cult, in which context funeral games were organised both for the “hero” Antinous, Emperor Hadrian’s favourite, and for the “god” Fulvus.⁶⁷ We do not know whether the funerary *thematic* (θεματῖται or χορηματῖται or ταλαντιαῖοι) contests attested in an 3rd-century inscription, which included wrestling and pankration contests and sacrifices with the participation of a herald and a trumpeter⁶⁸) were in honour of Fulvus (*IG* X.2.1 262);⁶⁹ there is no indication, however, that any sort of *musical* contests were part of the programme.

The imperial cult also occupied an important place in Philippi, probably from as early as the 1st century AD, where it was celebrated with costly gladiatorial combats and wild-beast fights.⁷⁰ Votive inscriptions mention an association of *philokynegoi*, devotees of the goddess Nemesis in her capacity as protector of arena spectacles.⁷¹ For the requirements of the Roman spectacles, the city’s early Hellenistic theatre was renovated and gradually transformed during the Imperial period: a richly decorated stage building was erected and extensive work was done to the orchestra to convert the theatre into an arena —indeed, by the mid-3rd century it was being used

was also dedicated to imperial worship; it was constructed in the 1st century AD using material from two archaic monuments (one of which perhaps had originally been built in Aineia in honour of Aphrodite); Karadedos (2008) 319–331, Stefanidou-Tiveriou (2012) 281–285.

66. Cf. a decree of 95 BC for the gymnasiarch Paramonus, who was honoured by the youth of the city for his offerings to the gods and the Roman “benefactors” (*IG* X.2.1 4).
67. The connection of the gymnasium with the cult of the deified Fulvus (probably the son of Antoninus Pius) is deduced from a series of altars honouring his priests and agonothetai (*IG* X.2.1 153–170, AD 219–270; cf. *IG* X.2.1 236, AD 206/207); Nigdelis (2006) 40. According to Nigdelis (2006) 51–53, the honorific decree *IG* X.2.1 14 (AD 133) refers to the embassy the Thessalonians sent to Hadrian seeking approval for the establishment of a cult and gladiatorial combats in honour of Antinous. On the creation of special rooms for the imperial cult in gymnasia see Price (1984) 143–144.
68. A funerary inscription from Olynthus (*CIG* 2007h [Add.], 3rd c.) records the name of the trumpeter Σε<ού>ηρας; he may be the Severus of Kassandreia (Σενήρον Τέρακος Κασσανδρέα, l. 4) who took part in the funerary contest in Thessalonike. See Stefanis (1988) nos 2251, 2264.
69. See the discussion by Nigdelis (2006) 280. In the 2nd and 3rd century, the category of *thematic* contests included mostly contests in which money prizes were awarded; see Remijsen (2011) 109 and Aneziri (2014) 428 n. 24.
70. Inscriptions from the Imperial age commemorate prominent citizens who financed gladiatorial combats and wild-beast hunts; see Pilhofer (2009) no. 87. On the imperial cult in Philippi see Hellerman (2005) 80–87 with references.
71. The monuments were found in the entrance of the Western parodos of the theatre (e.g. *SEG* 3: 499, *SEG* 3: 501); see Nigdelis (2006) 179–182, Kloppenborg – Ascough (2011) 330–332.

exclusively as such.⁷² One very interesting feature is the relief decoration, which in the south stoa depicts scenes from the cult of Dionysus and theatrical masks, while the scenes on the pillars in the west side-entrance are linked to bloody spectacles.⁷³ In Thasos, too, the Hellenistic theatre was converted into an arena at the end of the 1st century, while the existence of two construction phases in the stage area in the Roman period show that it continued to be used for Greek as well as Roman contests.⁷⁴ The odeum near the agora in the Roman quarter seems to have been associated with the imperial cult, and possibly also with the cult of Nemesis.⁷⁵

Overall, both the epigraphic evidence and the theatre buildings — the new ones built to meet the needs of the imperial cult and the old ones that continued to be used for performances (alongside arena contests) — are thus tangible proofs attesting alike to the continuation of scenic activity and the gradual Romanisation of the spectacles.

III. THE GAMES OF THE *KOINON* OF THE MACEDONIANS

Evidence of artistic life in Beroia in the Hellenistic age is extremely scarce. From a list of games we know that at the beginning of the 2nd century BC pan-Hellenic athletic and *thymelic* contests were held in Beroia (*EKM* 1. Beroia 140); we may also assume that musical contests formed part of the festivities of the *Asclepieia* and the the cults of other gods.⁷⁶

Two epigraphic fragments, however, suggest that there may also have been scenic activity in the city. An inscribed epistyle from the 3rd century BC with a dedication to Dionysus is thought to have come from the theatre (*EKM* 1. Beroia 21), while a relief stele dedicated to Dionysus by Paramonus in 7 BC attests to the activity of a *thiasos* in the city: ἀγορανομήσας τοῦ θιάσου | ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου Διονύσῳι (*EKM* 1. Beroia 22, ll. 3-4). The relief wreath depicted shows that Paramonus had been honoured by the other members

72. Karadedos – Koukouli-Chrysanthaki (2007) 275–280 with references.

73. Karadedos – Koukouli-Chrysanthaki (2007) 279–280.

74. The cavea was expanded, the stage rebuilt, and the orchestra converted into an arena; a parapet was added later. See Bonias – Marc (1997) 799–807, Sear (2006) 420; on the relief sculptures see Salviat (1960) 314–316.

75. The finds show that it was renovated in the 2nd century on the basis of the old architectural structure; see Marc (1998) 327 ff. On the cult of the emperor at Thasos see Fournier (2006) 514–517, Bernard – Salviat (1962) 596–608.

76. See Giannou (2016) 36–37 with n. 25, 76, 79.

of the association (τὸ κοινὸν τῶν θιασ[τ]ῶν, ll. 5-6) for having assumed the office of *agoranomos* (i.e. he served as the market officer for the association) during a festival of Dionysus.⁷⁷ These festivities may well have included phallophoric processions and theatrical performances, as was commonly the case at Dionysia.⁷⁸ It is, therefore, probable that the city had the architectural monuments necessary to accommodate spectacles and contests (that is, a stadium and a theatre, perhaps also an odeum), although nothing of them has survived.⁷⁹

In the Roman period Beroia became a religious centre of imperial cult, the practice of which was facilitated by the creation of a federation of Macedonian cities, the *Koinon* of the Macedonians, governed by an annually elected officer who was also the high priest of the imperial cult and the *agonothetes* during the assemblies of the representatives of the cities.⁸⁰ We do not know precisely when this honour was conferred upon Beroia, but it may have been in the mid-1st century AD.⁸¹

Information about the organisation of celebrations is supplied by an honorific decree from sometime after AD 98 (*EKM* 1. Beroia 117): Quintus Publius Pytho, high priest of the imperial cult and director of the games of the *Koinon*, organised *thymelic* and athletic contests (l. 14) on the model of the Actian games at Nicopolis (ἱσάκτιοι), with prizes to the value of a talent (ταλαντιαῖοι). He also made many other important and costly donations and even sponsored gladiatorial combats and wild-beast fights. It is clear that the

77. The *agoranomos* oversaw the running of the marketplace during the festival; he was responsible for ensuring “adequate supplies”, and “distributing them at affordable prices”; Nigdelis (2016) 674 with references.

78. On the operation of the association see Nigdelis (2016) 674–676, who documents the connection of the *thiasoi* with Dionysiac festivals in the Imperial age. The phallophoric processions are mentioned in the edict of the proconsul Memmius Rufus (*EKM* 1. Beroia 7, l. 30, ca. AD 100–150). Moreover, Dionysian motifs were prominent in the banqueting areas of private houses, as is attested by table supports with Dionysus and figures from his entourage (Beroia AM Λ365, 383, 390); Stefanidou-Tiveriou (1993b) nos 28, 30, 52. Among other finds, a mask of an old satyr wearing an ivy wreath may be a votive offering to the sanctuary of the god (AM Π830); cf. Zografou (2014) 383 for parallels from Thessalonike.

79. There remain only traces of a circular building from the Roman period, which has been interpreted as a theatre or odeum; generally, on the topography of Beroia’s architectural monuments see Gounaropoulou – Hatzopoulos (1998) 45–47.

80. On the *Koinon* of the Macedonians see Kanatsoulis (1953–55) 27 ff., Deininger (1965) 91–96. On the *agonothetes* of the *Koinon* see Gauthier – Hatzopoulos (1993) 147–151, Kanatsoulis (1953–55) 94–99, and the studies by Gounaropoulou – Hatzopoulos (1998) and Tataki (1988).

81. See Tataki (1988) 447–448. On the activities of the *Koinon* see Burrell (2004) 191–197.

duties of the highest officer of the *Koinon* included organising games and shows during the period of the annual assembly.⁸² Many civic bodies, such as the gymnasium,⁸³ must also have played an active part in these festivities, as must voluntary associations, such as a society of “elders” (*πρεσβύτεροι*).⁸⁴

According to the numismatic and epigraphic evidence, these games must originally have been called the *Koinos* or *Koinon of Macedonia* (like the games of other such federations, e.g. *Koina of Asia*, *Koinon of Galatia*).⁸⁵ In the 3rd century, the festivities of the *Koinon* seem to have been particularly splendid and came to be called the *Alexandreia* or *Alexandrian* games, linking the cult of the emperor with that of Alexander the Great.⁸⁶ The *Alexandrian* games are the context for three “invitations to spectacles with gladiatorial combats and wild-beast hunts”, showing that arena sports were the featured element in the programme of festivities.⁸⁷ There is also evidence of games styled *Olympian* or *Alexandrian Olympian* being held at Beroia

82. On the assembly see Hatzopoulos (1996) I.349–350.

83. A decree of the first half of the 2nd century records specific provisions relating to the financing of the gymnasium during the games (*EKM* 1. Beroia 7); see Nigdelis – Souris (2005) 23–28, 84–89.

84. In a honorific inscription from the Velvendos area (*EAM* 38, dated ca. AD 254), Domitius Eurydicus is recorded as “*presbyterarch* of the *Olympia*”; the title is taken to designate the head of an association of *elders* engaged with the organisation of the *Olympia*. For the inscription’s connection with the games of the *Koinon* see Rizakis – Touratsoglou (1985) 52–53; on Domitius Eurydicus and his titles see Kanatsoulis (1953–55) 79–88 (no. 5), 99–102.

85. According to Burrell (2004) 339, these games must have been called the *Koina* of Macedonia.

86. For the revival of the cult of Alexander the Great under the Severi see Kühnen (2005) 225 ff. It has been argued that the name “Alexandreia” reflects first and foremost the desire of the Beroians to preserve the memory of Alexander the Great; it is not just an attempt to flatter the emperor by associating him with Alexander. See Kanatsoulis (1953–55) 43, 68–69, Burrell (2004) 193.

87. In the first inscription (*EKM* 1. Beroia 68, 25 June 229) the *Macedoniarch* and *agonothetes* of the *Koinon* proclaims a three-day programme of wild-beast fights and gladiatorial combats; see Touratsoglou (1970) 281–285. On the title “Macedoniarch” see the discussion by Nigdelis (2006) 58–59. Both the second and the third invitations (*EKM* 1. Beroia 69, 25 June 240; *SEG* 49:815, AD 252) announce *Alexandrian*, *sacred*, *oecumenical*, *eiselastic*, *isaktian* games; for the completion *ισα[κτιον* (in the second inscription) see Touratsoglou (1970) 285–287. The title *oecumenical* declares that participation in the games was open to people from all over the Roman Empire; on the introduction of the designation *sacred* (*ιερός*), *oecumenical* (*οἰκουμενικός*) and *eiselastic* (*εἰσελαστικός*) to the titles of the contests in the Imperial age (thus preserving and even enhancing the prestige of the festivals) see Aneziri (2014) 428–431. Victors at *sacred* and *eiselastic* games won special honours and privileges, including immunity from hostile action (*ἀσνλία*), money prizes, and a triumphal procession upon their return home; for the *eiselastic* (triumphal) games

in the same period.⁸⁸ Based on the coinage, we must accept that the name *Olympian* was first used in AD 242 or 243, probably reflecting an attempt to re-organise the existing games along the lines of the famous *Olympic* games of antiquity so as to compete with the new *Pythian* games that had been instituted in Thessalonike.⁸⁹ We cannot, however, exclude the possibility that this happened earlier, for example when Hadrian's classical tastes favoured the association of his reign with the cult of Zeus Hypsistos,⁹⁰ or that a second festival may have been celebrated by the *Koinon* (after the emperor had conferred a second *neokoria*⁹¹ upon the city).⁹²

The sources do not permit safe conclusions about the frequency of the games.⁹³ The games held in AD 240 and 252 are described as *sacred*, *ei-selastie*, *isaktioi*;⁹⁴ based on the coinage, the games of 242/3 and 246 must

see Spawforth (1989) 139–140, 146–151. On *sacred* contests giving money prizes at this period see Aneziri (2014) 428.

88. An inscription from Athens dating from the period 253–257 (*IG II²* 3169/70) mentions the victories of the famous herald Valerius Eiectus in many other competitions as well as the *Olympian* games in Beroia; Stefanis (1988) no. 825. In an inscription from Perinthus (Thrace) the *Alexandrian Olympic* games in Beroia are included among the *sacred*, *oecumenical* games in which an athlete was victorious in the 3rd century (Perinthos-Herakleia 31).
89. On the *Pythian* games in Thessalonike see below p. 126. Many festivals in the 3rd century styled themselves *Olympian* (e.g. the *Trophonea* in Lebadea, the *Asclepieia* in Epidaurus et. al.), denoting re-organisation along the lines of the *Olympia* in Elis; see Spawforth (1989) 193–194, Aneziri (2014) 428–429.
90. In this case, one could accept the completion [Ὀλύμπι(ε)ια for an inscription from Sardis commemorating the victories of an athlete in games in Macedonia (*SEG* 53:1355, AD 212–217); for the inscription's connection with the games of the *Koinon* in Beroia see Kanatsoulis (1953–55) 96–97 n. 2, Mari (1998) 158.
91. The term “*neokoroi*” was applied to cities that possessed a provincial temple to the imperial cult — a privilege granted to them by the Roman emperor; Burrell (2004) 1–6.
92. Cf. e.g. provincial coins with two competition wreaths and the inscription KOINON MAKEΔONΩN B NEΩ(KOP) (from the reign of Heliogabalus, AD 218–222) or KOINON MAKEΔONΩN B NEΩKOP(ΩN) OΛYMP/PIA (from the reign of Gordian III, AD 242 or 243/244); see Burrell (2004) 192–197, Kanatsoulis (1953–55) 68–73. According to Klose – Stumpf (1996) no. 197, the presence of two competition wreaths denotes the privilege of organising two sets of games after the city had been granted a second *neokoria*.
93. According to Touratsoglou (1970) 288–289, *oecumenical* games were held in three consecutive periods (AD 240, 243, 246). Kanatsoulis (1953–55) 94–99 argues that the *Olympian* games, like most of the games of the other *Koina*, were *pentetetic* (that is, they were held every four years), because the numismatically attested periods are those of AD 242 and 246.
94. An inscription from Sinope commemorates an athlete who was victorious in other *sacred*, *eiselastie* games as well as those of the *Koinon* of Macedonia (IK Sinope 105, 2nd c.). And in an inscription for a *pentathlete* from Ephesus the games of the *Koinon* of the Macedonians are included among the *sacred*, *oecumenical* games in which he was victorious (Ephesos 1699).

have been of the same type.⁹⁵ In the Roman age such *sacred* and *eiselastic* games were the most important of a number of *sacred* and *oecumenical* games, and only the emperor could grant the right to hold them. Evidently in some years *oecumenical* games were held, as was the custom in other *Koina*; these would have been especially grand and magnificent, with the participation of artists and athletes from every part of the Empire, while in other years the games were perhaps simply annual provincial games.

The games of the Macedonian *Koinon* in Beroia were primarily athletic competitions. The public's keen interest in this kind of entertainment is expressed in the funerary inscription for a baker from Beroia, who had gone to Olympia twelve times to watch the famous *Olympic* games (*EKM* 1. Beroia 398, 3rd c. AD).⁹⁶ However, by the end of the 1st century AD, as seen from the honorific decree for Quintus Publius Pytho, athletic meetings were already being combined with bloody spectacles, the tremendous cost of which was borne by prominent citizens competing for imperial favour. The great popularity that Roman spectacles gradually acquired is demonstrated by the gladiatorial monuments preserved in parts of Macedonia.⁹⁷

These celebrations, however, also provided an opportunity for orators, sophists and historians to present their work. Lucian, who visited Beroia in the 2nd century,⁹⁸ remarks in an "introductory speech" (*prolalia*) that the crowd assembled for the games (*οἱ πανηγυρισταί*) was not a mob interested

95. The name *Olympian* (*Β ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑ*) is found on bronze coins of the year AD 246; see Kanatsoulis (1953-55) 68-73. And on the reverse of a gold competition medal (from Aboukir) we read *ΟΛΥΜΠΙΑ ΔΟC*, that is, the *Olympian* games of 242/3; for a different interpretation see Burrell (2004) 196.

96. On the athletic games in Macedonia during the Imperial period see the study by Albanidis et al. (2008). In the mid-2nd century, Aelius Aristides wrote that an endless number of games were being held in the Roman Empire (*Eis Romēn* 225.12). Van Nijf (2004) 195 estimates the total of known games of the Roman East at about 500 (or even more).

97. On the gladiatorial combats and the monuments erected to the memory of gladiators see Allamani-Souri (1987) 33-57. According to Tataki (1988) 482-484, most of the foreigners living in Beroia at that time took part in the games of the *Koinon*; in fact, roughly half of them were gladiators or had some other connection with the Roman spectacles. The funerary monuments favour the hypothesis that there was a gladiatorial school in Beroia; see Tataki (1988) 505-507, Robert (1940) 27, 55-64, 263.

98. Both the description "noblest" (*ἀρίστης*) of the city and the reference to the assembly of the Macedonians point to Beroia.

only in athletic spectacles but a cultured audience that listened with pleasure to the discourses of the educated (*Herod.* 8).⁹⁹

The festivities of the *Koinon* also included *thymelic* contests on the model of the Actian games. Names and specialisations of artists who took part are recorded in a series of funerary monuments from Beroia, dating from the mid-2nd century to the early 3rd.¹⁰⁰ A funerary stele from the mid-2nd century depicts Spedius Satyrus, a man from Nicopolis who was a *φωνασκός*, that is, a teacher of singing and declamation; a relief wreath inscribed with the word *ἄκτια* proclaims his victory in the rhapsodic declamation contest at the Actian games.¹⁰¹ A musician from Amastris called Cleinus, who died towards the end of the 2nd century, was a skilled performer on the *phorminx*, one of the earliest stringed instruments, and had won prizes at *thymelic* contests.¹⁰²

Besides these traditional categories of artists, new ones emerge in the programme of the festival. A funerary monument was erected for Cyrilla, a mime (*μειμᾶς*), by the man who raised her (*Κλανδιανὸς θρέψας*) and her husband in the early 3rd century.¹⁰³ The inscription records the prizes she won for her performances *ἐν θυμέλαις*, which may be seen as evidence that mimes could take part in contests of the *Koinon*,¹⁰⁴ as, apparently, did oth-

99. This tradition is reflected in a marble funerary relief from Beroia depicting a male figure holding a scroll, which dates from the late early 1st century BC (Thessalonike AM 1068).

100. Spedius Satyrus: *EKM* 1. Beroia 373 (AM 138); Cleinus: *EKM* 1. Beroia 396 (AM 26); Cyrilla: *EKM* 1. Beroia 399 (AM 52); *A[-]ων*: *EKM* 1. Beroia 402 (AM 568); Antigona: *EKM* 1. Beroia 394 (AM 128).

101. Lagogianni (1983) no. 82. On *phonaskos* see Melidis (2012) 765–783.

102. According to the epigram on the altar erected by Cleinus' wife, he had an excellent knowledge of all kinds of theatrical melodies; see Andronikos (1950) 24–26, Tataki (1988) 133, 483.

103. In fact, Cyrilla is designated as a *θρεπτή*, which probably means that she was brought up by foster parents. On the term *θρέψαντες* in Greek inscriptions see Riel – Malay (2005) 48–49; see also Trakosopoulou-Salakidou (1993) 1560–1562 for the term *θρεπτός* in the inscriptions of Thessalonike, where it signifies “a slave bred in the house” or “a freedman” or “an adopted child”.

104. According to Maxwell (1993) 86–87, it cannot be excluded that the word “crown” (*στέφανος*) refers to awards for stage performances, as “one of the forms of remuneration to actors for stage performances was the awarding of crowns”. However parallels on funerary inscriptions (for singers, performers of poetry et al.) support the case that the phrase *ἐν θυμέλαις στεφάνους* is a reference to *thymelic* competitions: cf. *ταῖς θυμέλαις ταῖς εὐστεφάνοις* (*IG* V.1 734), *στεφάνων [...]* *ἐν θυμέλαις* (*Milet* VI.3 1085), *ἄδων θυμέλαισιν* (*IG* II² 9145), *ἐν θυμ[έλαισι]* (*SEG* 30:132) et al. For a detailed discussion on the admission of mimes to the “sacred” contests see Maxwell (1993) 84–87; on the status of mimes see Dupont (1985) 296–306, Maxwell (1993) 88–93, Csapo – Slater (1995) 369–389.

er “paratheatrical” artists, such as an acrobat, famous in his day, who died young. This acrobat is described as a fellow-performer (*συναγωνιστής*) of the man who raised him (*τοῦ θρέψαντος*), the “great” and “admirable” Maximus. As was common for acrobats, he had more than one specialty: he was “a tight-rope walker” (*καλοβάτης*) or — according to another completion of the inscription — someone who “performed acrobatics on a ladder” (*σκαλοβάτης*); in addition, he was an *ὀξυβάτης*, a category of acrobat for which we have no description, but may refer to a “quickstep” expert, or someone who “climbed on a point”.¹⁰⁵

These artists, some of whom were not from Macedonia, lived and worked in Beroia and presumably took also part in other festive events or symposia, which featured specialties not included in the formal programme of the games. For example, the young lyre-player (*λυροκτύπος*) Antigona gave musical recitals, as recorded in the inscription on the relief funerary altar that her husband dedicated to her early in the 3rd century. The list of performers is completed by heralds and trumpeters, who took part not only in athletic competitions but in arena spectacles as well —as is implied by the fact that the trumpeter Eutychas and the herald Spatalus together with other gladiators dedicated a monument to the *summa rudis* Publius.

Musicians, singers, mimes, acrobats and entertainers took part in the festival of the *Koinon*, where they won fame and awards, as attested by the monuments raised in their honour. For, although these “paratheatrical” artists may for centuries have been excluded from the publicly organised Greek games, in Roman Macedonia they were extremely popular.

IV. OECUMENICAL GAMES AND VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

The Imperial age was a time of prosperity not only for Beroia, as the seat of the *Koinon* of the Macedonians, but also for Thessalonike, as the seat of the Roman administration.¹⁰⁶ Nonetheless, before the end of the 2nd century AD there are few references to *oecumenical* games. The games organised in 42 BC marked a special occasion: after the Battle of Philippi, Thessalonike welcomed the victorious Antony and Octavian with due

105. Stefanis (1988) no. 9, Slater (2002) 325; the acrobat’s third specialty is not readable. Maximus is described as “admirable” (*παράδοξος*) —a title of distinguished athletes, musicians, and artists of all kinds; Tataki (1988) no. 857.

106. See Papazoglou (1982) 197–198.

pomp: a triumphal arch was erected at the Vardar Gate, medallions were struck to commemorate its proclamation as a “free city” (*civitas libera*), and athletic and equestrian events were staged.¹⁰⁷ However, the earliest explicit mention of *oecumenical* games in the city occurs in an inscription from Thespieae recording the victories of an athlete at unnamed games in Thessalonike, which are cited together with the famous games of Isthmus and Nemea (*IG VII 1856*).¹⁰⁸ Sacred games in Thessalonike are also recorded in a list of victories of an athlete found in the Roman agora in Athens (*SEG 36:258*).¹⁰⁹

It is not until we get to the 3rd century that we find a series of inscriptions and coins yielding information about the *Pythian* games, Thessalonike’s answer to the celebrations of the *Koinon* in Beroia.¹¹⁰ The *oecumenical* character of the festival is clear from an altar dedicated to Pythian Apollo in 252/3, for athletes of various national origins competed there (*IG X.2.1 38*); and although the part of the inscription relating to scenic and *thymelic* contests is unfortunately badly worn, it obviously followed the pattern of the *Pythian* games in Delphi, for the list of victors includes a tragedian, a *kitharist*, a *kitharodos*, an epic poet, a herald, and a trumpeter. The evidence from this altar suggests that the *Pythian* festival was a splendid event established in the year 240 and celebrated every four years (*πεντετηρικός*) with *oecumenical* games.¹¹¹ This date for the first *Pythian* festival is corroborated by two inscribed honorific altars dating from that year (AD 240).¹¹² A later inscription from Megara shows that the games continued after the year 252 (*IG VII.1, 49*).¹¹³

107. See Weima (2014) 4.

108. On the dating of the inscription see Nigdelis (2006) 456 (2nd c.), who notes that the athlete had won two victories on the same day.

109. See Nigdelis (2006) 472–473. The athlete’s name and the names of most of the competitions in which he took part are lost; the date of the inscription is also uncertain.

110. See Pelekidis (1934) 39–48, Edson (1948) 190–192.

111. The date for the first *Pythian* festival in Thessalonike is discussed by Nigdelis (2006) n. 124. On the programme of the festival see Leschhorn (1998) 406–408.

112. One of these altars was erected to Titus Flavius Helenus, high priest and *agonothetes* of *Pythia* (*IG X.2.1 178*). The other altar was erected to Gaius Antonius Urbanianus Philistus, magistrate during the first *Pythian* games in AD 240 (*IG X.2.1 214*).

113. This inscription, from 254/5, recounts the career of an athlete who was victorious in all the great games (*περιοδονίκης*), including, among those held every four years, the *Pythian* games in Thessalonike. See Moretti (1953) no. 88; on the dating see Nigdelis (2006) 473–474.

A floor mosaic in an opulent mansion in the city furnishes additional information about the competitions included in this festival.¹¹⁴ In what remains of the central panel we see a victorious quadriga with two wreaths bearing the legend “Pythia”; on their upper parts, the inscriptions attest to two kinds of chariot race, one for teams of four horses (*ἄρμα*) and one for teams of two (*συνωρίς*). These were contests that also featured in the programme of the Delphic games.¹¹⁵

More information about civic celebrations comes from two “invitations to gladiatorial combats and wild-beast hunts” found in the odeum.¹¹⁶ The one dated AD 260 (*SEG* 49:817) mentions *sacred, oecumenical, eiselastic* games in the context of the *μεγάλων Καισαρείων Ἐπινεικίων Καβειρίων Πυθίων* (ll 7-8), which were held on the 20th day of the month *Hyperberraios* (i.e. September 19).¹¹⁷ The adjectives qualifying the *Pythian* games link them to the cult of the emperor (*Caesarea*) and the cult of the city’s patron deity, Cabirus (*Cabiria*),¹¹⁸ and integrate them into the famous *penteteric* games described as *sacred, oecumenical, eiselastic, great*. The epithet *Ἐπινίκια* (i.e. triumphal) may have been added after the defeat of the Goths in AD 254.

In the invitation of AD 259 the qualifying adjectives are only fragmentarily preserved, but it is clear that the games were a *sacred* and *oecumenical* celebration labelled *Pythian*, which cannot be identified with the *penteteric* festival celebrated in AD 260 (*SEG* 49:816, *SEG* 50:638).¹¹⁹ According to the most widely accepted supplement, these games were called the *Actia Pythia* (*τῶν Ἀκτίων Καβειρίων Καισαρίων Πυθίων*, l. 7).¹²⁰ They, too, included gladiatorial combats and wild-beast hunts, like all the games held in

114. AM 6722B (the building stood at the corner of Egnatia and Antigonidon streets). See Asimakopoulou-Atzaka (2011) 380–389.

115. On the Delphic *Pythia* see the study by Weir (2004).

116. See Nigdelis (2006) 81–82 n. 123, with references.

117. The inscription records details about the programme of arena spectacles; see Nigdelis (2006) 78–79.

118. For the coins of the reign of Gordian (AD 238–244) and of Philip the Arab (AD 244–249) see Pelekidis (1934) 43–44, with a comprehensive discussion of their inscriptions and symbols displayed (e.g. competition wreath, tripod, palm or laurel branch, etc.). On the popular cult of Cabirus at Thessalonike see Edson (1948) 188–192.

119. As Nigdelis (2006) 83–84 points out, the version of two different games is supported, additionally, by coins from the reign of Gallienus (AD 253–268) mentioning both the *Pythian* games and the *Actia Pythia* or *Actian* games. For the coins see Pelekidis (1934) 45.

120. For the other proposed completions of the name see the discussion by Nigdelis (2006) 85–86. For the choice of the name *Actia* see Touratsoglou (1988) 307–310.

the context of the imperial cult, and are thought to have been held every five years, beginning in September 255, when the emperor conferred a second *neokoria* upon the city, together with the right to hold a second set of *oecumenical* games, in acknowledgement of the city's victory over the Goths.¹²¹ This interpretation also justifies the epithet *Cabirian*, since the Thessalonians ascribed their victory to the assistance of their divine protector.¹²²

The *oecumenical* celebrations marking the *Pythian* festival are the most visible but not the only contexts for scenic and *thymelic* contests in Thessalonike. The earliest evidence for theatrical performances is found in two fragmentarily preserved honorific decrees from the Late Hellenistic period, which record scenic contests in the city's theatre. The decree honouring Parnassus (62-60 BC) includes, among other honours bestowed on that civic "benefactor", an invitation to sit at the front row (*προεδρία*) at the *Dionysian* festival (*IG* X.2.1 5).¹²³ The same honour was reserved for another "benefactor", about whom nothing more is known (*IG* X.2.1 12, late 1st c. BC). This *prohedria* was a right conferred on prominent citizens for outstanding services to the city; it had, of course, been known throughout the Greek world since the Classical period and was usually granted during scenic contests dedicated to Dionysus —proving thus the importance of theatre in the public life.¹²⁴ The same was true in Thasos, as recorded in a series of inscriptions: the cult of Dionysus had been celebrated in the island since the Classical age and the tragic performances organised in his honour continued to be predominant until the end of the Hellenistic period.¹²⁵

That scenic contests probably continued to be held in the following centuries is suggested by the dramatic monuments. The skill of a famous actor of the 1st century AD may have been demonstrated in tragic competitions in Thessalonike: the tragedian (*τραγωδός*) G. Julius Julianus was crowned victor in the great *Actian* and *Pythian* games and other *penteteric*

121. Nigdelis (2006) 85–88. It is not impossible that a third set of *sacred* games was held in the city between 261 and 268; see Touratsoglou (1988) 314, Nigdelis (2006) 83–84 n. 126.

122. Nigdelis (2006) 87–89. This hypothesis is based in part on a coin of that period, which depicts the god defending the walls of the city; Touratsoglou (1988) 309.

123. See Gauthier (2000) 43–44.

124. See Giannou (2016) 73, 75, where decrees from Dion (4th c. BC) and Thasos (3rd c. BC) are discussed. For similar decrees from other regions see Ceccarelli (2010) 102.

125. *SEG* 29:769 (no later than 150 BC), *IG* XII Suppl. 361 (ca. 200–150 BC), *SEG* 29:771 (ca. 150–100 BC).



Fig. 3. The relief of an inscribed funerary altar dedicated to the tragic actor Marcus Var(e)inius Areskon (Thessalonike AM 9815). Photo by Nikos Dionysopoulos (Institute for Mediterranean Studies)

and *trieteric* competitions; for his successes in those games he was granted citizenship of Macedonia and of various Greek cities (IG V 1 662).¹²⁶

Another actor who took part in tragic performances was Marcus Var(e)inius Areskon, to whom an inscribed funerary altar was dedicated by his mother, Var(e)inia Areskousa, and another member of his family, in AD 170–200 (fig. 3).¹²⁷ A female mask in the upper left corner of the relief, with traces of colour still clearly visible on the lips and hair, is not part of the actor's equipment (he is depicted in military costume) but simply identifies the figure as an actor.¹²⁸ The *cognomen* shared by Marcus and his mother, “Areskon” and “Areskousa”, signifies “he/she who pleases” or “who is pleasing or popular”. This is consistent with the assumption that both were members of a family of

theatrical artists —although since women did not act in the official theatre Var(e)inia must have belonged to one of the “paratheatrical” professions.¹²⁹ Her son, however, became a tragic actor and won fame and fortune, as may be deduced from the monument commemorating him.¹³⁰

126. Stefanis (1988) no. 1272.

127. AM 9815 (SEG 43:468, SEG 47:973); Stefanis (1988) no. 296. On the dating see Voutiras (1997) 182; Trakosopoulou-Salakidou (1993) 1566 dates it shortly after 150.

128. Voutiras (1997) 183, Trakosopoulou-Salakidou (1993) 1564, Sifakis (2005) 24–25.

129. Actors and mimes often chose names expressing the pleasure they gave the public; see Chaniotis (1990) 97 and Voutiras (1997) 184, with parallels; see also Strasser (2004) 198–201. On female performers on stage see Marshall (2000) 13–25.

130. The family name Varinius belonged to members of the upper class of many Macedonian

In any case, the vigorous Dionysiac presence in the city in the Hellenistic and Roman period must be connected with local celebrations, including phallic processions and scenic contests honouring the god. Dionysus or figures from his entourage appeared in many of the city's monuments:¹³¹ among others, they were depicted in the relief figures on the pillars known as "Las Incantadas" ("The Enchanted Ones")¹³² and they occupied a special place in the Galerian palace complex.¹³³ In fact, the Dionysiac cult had been officially adopted in Thessalonike by the end of the Hellenistic age and continued to be observed throughout the Roman period, while the god's name was borne by one of the city's four tribes (*φνλὴ Διονυσιάς*; *IG* X.2.1 185, AD 225).¹³⁴

In addition, many of the voluntary associations operating in the city were dedicated to the cult of Dionysus.¹³⁵ An inscription (of the first half of the 3rd century) preserving detailed information about the organisation of a Dionysiac association (*[σπεῖρα] Διονυσι[αστῶν]*) shows that theatrical events (especially representations of episodes from Dionysiac mythology) held a prominent position in the festivities (*SEG* 49: 814).¹³⁶ The important role

cities; Nigdelis (2006) 284–285. However, the lowly occupation of Var(e)inia Areskousa suggests that she was a freedwoman who bore the name of her former master; Trakosopoulou-Salakidou (1993) 1567, Voutiras (1997) 183. Theatrical professions were traditional in antiquity and often passed from parent to child; see Bonaria (1959) 224–242, Sifakis (1979) 76.

131. Floor mosaics of the Imperial period depict a maenad dancing and striking a tambourine (on Grigoriou Palama St.) and Dionysus finding Ariadne in Naxos (on Sokratous St.); Asimakopoulou-Atzaka (2011) 374–380. Dionysus and figures from his entourage adorned sarcophagi (Thessalonike AM 920, 1247) and mostly table supports (e.g. AM 10434, 6774, 6674, 10114, 1212, 6192, 256, 11600); Papagianni (2010) nos 617, 640, Gounari (2010) nos 643, 644, 642, Stefanidou-Tiveriou (1997) nos 100, 101, 109, (1985) nos 6, 7, 8.

132. They were part of a portico at the entrance to the Roman agora; Mentzos (1997) 379–392.

133. Medallion in the Galerian Octagon depicts Dionysus between the deified Galerius and the Tyche of Thessalonike (AM 2466, early 4th c.); Stefanidou-Tiveriou (1997) no. 141.

134. Dionysus is depicted on Hellenistic coins, and a votive inscription of the city to the god dates from the 2nd century BC (*IG* X.2.1 28); Voutiras (1986) 352–354. In addition, two Roman altars are dedicated to priests of Dionysus (*IG* X.2.1 503, AD 132/3; *IG* X.2.1 506, AD 209/210). On the cult of Dionysus at Thessalonike see Edson (1948) 158–181, Voutiras (1993) 256–257; for the phallic processions see Bakalakis (1983) 31–43.

135. According to Nigdelis (2010) 15–16, there are records of nine associations connected with the cult of Dionysus in Thessalonike; for the inscriptions see Jaccottet (2003) II. nos 19–22, Nigdelis (2006) 101–146, Kloppenborg – Ascough (2011) 346 ff. Several associations were devoted to other divinities (e.g. Zeus, the Egyptian gods, Cybele, Heracles, etc.) or to local heroes; Nigdelis (2010) 18–19. There was also an association of fans of arena games (*σνήθεια τῆς Νεμέσεως*); Nigdelis (2006) 178–184.

136. According to Nigdelis (2006) 118, the members of the association re-enacted the myth of

of ritual is also attested by the number and the titles of the officers charged with their performance.¹³⁷ For example, the title *νεβρο<ι>αφόρος* is a definite indication of ephebic initiation ceremonies, like those described derisively by Demosthenes (18.259-260) and in greater detail by the Macedonian poet Antistius (*AP* 11.40), author of an epigram which paints the picture of a boy called Cleodemus dancing with other worshippers at a Dionysiac festival, wearing the deer skin and crowned with a wreath of ivy;¹³⁸ the epigram concludes with the wish that the boy may quickly grow up and lead a chorus of young men.

Moreover, to strengthen the bonds among their members, the associations organised regular entertainments with banquets or symposia (cf. the titles *συνκλίτης*, *τρικλινάρχης*, etc). Also, many members left bequests to their associations in their wills, to pay for memorial celebrations: some of these may be identified with the *Parentalia*, a Roman festival honouring the memory of parents and relatives; others are reminiscent of the Roman *Rosalia*, during which graves were adorned with wreaths of roses.¹³⁹ Although we have no further information about the artistic events that accompanied the associations' assemblies and ceremonies, a funerary altar dedicated to the musician Memnon provides evidence that these involved chiefly music and songs (*IG* X.2 1 480, from AD 237/8).¹⁴⁰ Memnon was a reed-*aulos* player (*καλαμαύλης*), that is, specialising in a particularly popular type of *aulos*, who usually accompanied shows of mimes or recitals with drinking songs —although a *kalamaules* have also had a place in the *thymelic* contests as a solo performer (Athen. 4.176c-d).¹⁴¹ According to the inscription,

the ascent of the god's mother from the Underworld and the god's journey from India to Greece; see also Nigdelis (2010) 29, and Chaniotis – Mylonopoulos (2002) 333, who note that the names of the officials allude to some of the rituals of the association, such as ritual dances, banquets in the sacred chamber, nocturnal rituals etc.

137. Nigdelis (2010) 32–36 with references.

138. Plastira-Valkanou (2012) 633. For deer-skin worn by the followers of the god see Merkelbach (1988) 96–97.

139. A *stèle* from the Serapeion records the donation of a vineyard to the initiates of the association of Dionysus Gongylus, to provide an income to pay for commemorative feasts (*IG* X.2.1 259, 1st c.); Nigdelis (2010) 31–32. An altar contains the testament of a priestess of Dionysus who bequeaths to the association of *Πρωτοφόροι* a vineyard, the income from which was to pay for annual ceremonies in her memory (*IG* X.2.1 260, 3rd c.); Nigdelis (2010) 30.

140. See the detailed discussion by Nigdelis (2006) 135–146.

141. For the art of the *kalamaules* and a depiction of the instrument see Bélis (1988) 233–235. See also Nigdelis (2006) 145–146, where musicians in other Dionysiac associations are recorded: e.g. an *hydraules* in an inscription from Rhodes (*REG* 17 [1904] 203.1b, after AD 212)

Memnon was a member of two associations (the *Asclepiastai* and the “Bacchic community of the *Asianoi*”) and probably played his *aulos* in the festive events or cult ceremonies.¹⁴²

Another inscription in a funeral stele for Cleonice attests that rituals with theatrical events took place in the context of other associations as well (IG X.2.1 299, ca. 2nd c. AD). Cleonice was a member in an association dedicated to the cult of Aphrodite *Nymphia* and participated many times in the reenactment of the sacred marriage of Aphrodite and Eros. Her second name, Cyrilla, is an indication that she was possibly a professional actress, who had a prominent role in the festivities of the association.¹⁴³

One striking piece of evidence relating to these voluntary associations in the city is a stele of the 2nd century AD mentioning an association of *φιλοπαίκτορες*.¹⁴⁴ The word *philopaiktores*, a *hapax*, may denote fans of *paiktes* and, by extension, of the shows in which they appeared; in this case it would mean fans of acrobatic or conjuring spectacles, which included various “paratheatrical” specialties, such as the *ischyropaiktes* (athletes who demonstrated their physical strength), *kontopaiktes* (tight-rope walkers and other balancing artists), *hoplopaiktes* (jugglers who handled weapons) or *psephopaiktes* (jugglers who used pebbles).¹⁴⁵ According to another interpretation, the word *philopaiktor* could be a synonym for *philopaiktes*, in which case the association in question would be a club of “those who appreciated and presumably invented jokes and quips” (Athen. 14.614e, cf. 4.260b).¹⁴⁶ This was a popular type of show, known to date back at least to the 4th century BC, but nothing more is certain about it.¹⁴⁷

The image of theatrical life in Thessalonike is enriched by dramatic monuments spanning the period from the Hellenistic age to Late Antiquity.

and in a list of an Ephesian association (*Ephesos* 566); a *kymbalistria* in a Dionysiac association in Rome (*CIL* VI.2254, perhaps 2nd c.). Cf. also Jaccottet (2003) II nos 159, 184.

142. See Nigdelis (2006) 146 for the possibility of a person belonging to two associations. On the cult of Asclepius in the city see Voutiras (1993) 256–257. On the importance of music in the Dionysiac associations see Jaccottet (2003) I.135.

143. Thessalonike AM P62; Voutiras (2010) no. 570. Nigdelis (2010) 30 n. 93 suggests that she could be a *mimas*, similar to Cyrilla from Beroia; see above p. 123.

144. Thessalonike AM 6167; Nigdelis (2006) 191–196.

145. On acrobatic or conjuring spectacles see Vickers (2016) 160–161 with references.

146. See the detailed discussion by Nigdelis (2006) 194.

147. Demosthenes (2.19) mentions “low comedians and composers of indecent songs” that took part in the drinking-parties held by Philip II. It is attested, indeed, that the king paid a fee to an association of jesters (*γελωτοποιοί*) in Athens (Athen. 14.614d); see Giannou (2016) 45 n. 50.

Most of these come from public buildings near the agora and from the city's cemeteries. Some items are inspired from comedy: a figurine of a slave from the end of the 2nd century BC appears to be a variation of a very well-known New Comedy type, that of the slave who is usually seated on an altar (here he sits on a tabouret); a statuette of the 2nd century BC depicts a comic actor in the common type of the "leading slave" (*ἡγεμὸν θεράπων*) with a wreath on his head; the terracotta masks of a "servant maison" (*θεράπων μαίσων*) of the 2nd century BC and a young satyr of the late 1st century BC were found in the agora; two comic actors (now minus their heads) on a table support adorned a banqueting room (after 250).¹⁴⁸ Notable, also, is a plastic vase of the so-called Knidian type, the body of which had been shaped in the form of a comic actor's head; other finds included flat life-size masks, which were most probably used as decorative or apotropaic objects or as *oscilla*; e.g. an elderly Papposilenus with closed mouth.¹⁴⁹ A few more fragments of comic masks (mostly from the agora), a tragic mask of a young beardless man with a high *ὄγκος* from the odeum, and three terracotta antefixes with tragic masks attest to the continuity of scenic performances.¹⁵⁰

More numerous and noteworthy are the monuments depicting "para-theatrical" artists. A funerary inscription records that Terpnos from Attaleia was eagerly acclaimed whenever he took part in *thymelic* contests (*IG* X.2.1 436, AD 150-250). We do not know what these contests were, but given the significance of Terpnos' name ("delightful") we may assume that he belonged to the world of the "paratheatre", and quite possibly was a pantomime.¹⁵¹ A decorative marble antefix depicting, according to the inscription on it, Astyanax with a pantomime's mask and a Phrygian cap may come from a building connected with spectacles, i.e. the odeum.¹⁵² A female mask with no mouth opening, which was found in a tomb dating from the begin-

148. Thessalonike AM 135; Korti-Konti (1994) no. 33. Agora PA 12674, 3843, 6031; Zografou (2014) 378-382. AM 80; Stefanidou-Tiveriou (1985) no. 22.

149. Thessalonike AM 4920 (2nd c.). AM 4302; Korti-Konti (1994) 100-101 (cf. a parallel from Beroia AM Π830). For fragments of tragic and comic masks from the agora and for flat masks of Silenus from the *balneum* see Zografou (2014) 379-385; on the flat life-size masks see Webster (1995) I.99.

150. Thessalonike, Agora PA11463, AM 19350 (late 2nd/early 1st c. BC); Zografou (2014) 381-382. Thessalonike AM 11222α, 11222β, 11223.

151. Stefanis (1988) no. 2399. On the tendency of many (mime and pantomime) actors to take stage names see Maxwell (1993) 94-96.

152. Thessalonike AM 1827 (2nd c.); Despinis (2003) no. 201. According to Jory (2012) 199, the name on the mask could celebrate a theme of a pantomime dance, the story of Astyanax.

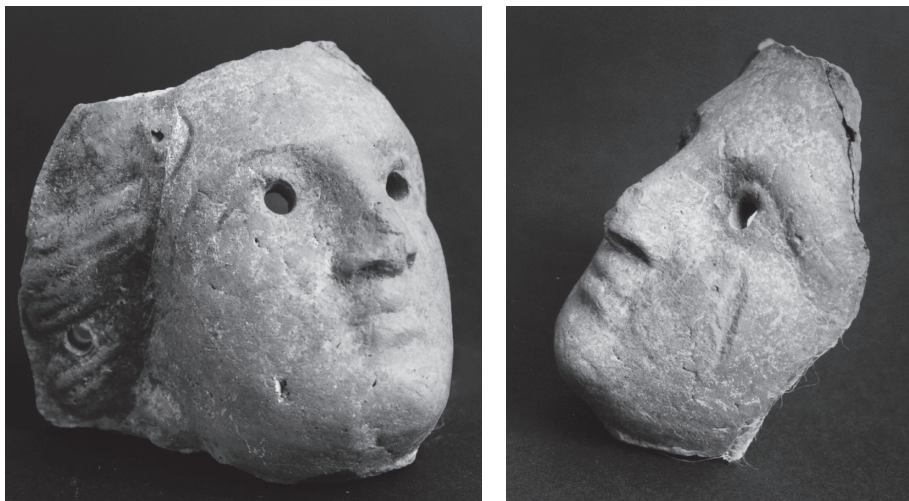


Fig. 4. A female pantomime mask from Thessalonike (AM 114). Photos by Nikos Dionysopoulos (Institute for Mediterranean Studies)

ning of the 1st century, probably portrays a pantomime (fig. 4).¹⁵³ A series of figurines without masks but with comically distorted features are thought to depict mimes: among them are two figures of mimes made from the same mould at the beginning of the 1st century and representing male figures with exaggerated features, especially fat lips and big ears,¹⁵⁴ and two terracotta caricatures with the word *ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ* on the back, one of a bald man and the other of an elderly naked concubine, from the 1st/2nd century — a clear indication of female mimes appearing naked on stage (fig. 5a-b).¹⁵⁵ An inscription for Lucius Canuleius Zosimus was later modified by the insertion beneath his name of a phrase denoting a mimic specialisation: *ὁ μαλακός* (IG X.2.1 451, AD 145/6 or 261/2);¹⁵⁶ the funerary stele, however, featuring a relief of Nemesis, is an indication of a connection with the Roman specta-

153. Thessalonike AM 114; Korti-Konti (1994) no. 34. On the pantomime mask see Jory (1996) 18–19.

154. Thessalonike AM 125, 126; 8192, 8193, 10679. Korti-Konti (1994) nos 38, 39.

155. Thessalonike AM 11601, 11602. Korti-Konti (1994) 57–58, nos 95, 96. See also Csapo – Slater (1995) 370–374, with evidence of female mimes appearing naked at the Floralia. The shaven head is a common characteristic of certain mime actors, particularly the character called the “stupidus”, who usually played the role of the deceived husband in the adultery mimes; Maxwell (1993) 8, 46. One may assume that these figurines depict two characters that took part in the same mime performance.

156. On *malakos* see Tsitsiridis (2014) 212, who argues that the word is used instead of *kinaidos*; more information about *malakos* is given in an epistle from Hibeh (P. Hib. I 54,



Fig. 5a-b. Two terracotta figurines of mimes from Thessalonike (AM 11601, 11602). Photos by Nikos Dionysopoulos (Institute for Mediterranean Studies)

cles.¹⁵⁷ There is no more specific evidence for the contexts in which mimes and dancers performed: some recitals may have had a place in the *thymelic* contests, while most would have been commercial shows, public or private, that sought to please the general public.¹⁵⁸

Thessalonike appears as a major cultural centre of international renown, attracting philosophers and orators who doubtless delivered public lectures and orations in the agora and the gymnasium. A funerary inscription of the

ca. 245 BC): Zenobius, a *malakos*, is going to take part in feasts dressed in pretty clothes and to the accompaniment of *tympanon*, *kymbala* and *krotala*.

157. On the inscription see Hornum (1993) no. 109, with the supplement by Nigdelis (2006) n. 253. One cannot exclude the possibility that mime performances took place in the arena; or that the former gladiator became involved in the world of popular stage entertainment.

158. Cf. the pseudo-Lucianic novel *Lucius, or the Ass*, where the hero (who has been transformed into a donkey) is depicted as being forced to have sexual intercourse in the city's theatre with women condemned to be eaten by the wild beasts (§52–53).

2nd or 3rd century commemorates a Bithynian from Nicaea as a wise rhetor (ῥήτωρ σοφός[ς, *IG* X 2.1 512); another, from the 3rd century, is dedicated to a well-educated man (πάμμον/σον) named Dessareotes (*IG* X.2.1 479). Similarly, cultured Thessalonians are commemorated in other Greek cities: an altar paying tribute to the orator M. Vulpus Sirmicus Maximus was erected in Mykonos in the 2nd century.¹⁵⁹

Thessalonike, especially in the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, was associated with important poets who cultivated the art of the epigram as an autonomous intellectual creation that circulated in clubs and societies and was addressed to an audience of their peers or of literati.¹⁶⁰ Philippus of Thessalonike was known not only as an epigrammatist but also as the publisher of a collection of epigrams under the title *Stephanos* (1st c.). Among the poets represented in the collection are two of his compatriots, Antipater, one of the most famous epigrammatists of the Augustan age, and Epigonus.¹⁶¹ Thessalonike was also the home of some of the poets in the *Palatine Anthology*, who were Macedonians by birth, like Parmenion, a follower of Callimachus, and his rival Antiphanes the Macedonian, to whom a *paean* is attributed, and Adaeus.

Moreover, the name Damaeus is attached to an epigram dedicated to the god Osiris on a votive tablet (late 2nd c. BC) found in the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods in Thessalonike (*IG* X.2 108).¹⁶² This poet may possibly be the same as the Damaeus or Amaeus son of Hegesander who won the crown in the *prosodion* contest in the *Mouseia* at Thespieae (146-95 BC);¹⁶³ this was a popular type of song in the Hellenistic age, a processional hymn performed by chorus and flute as the ceremonial procession approached the temple or altar to begin a cultic rite. Another monument surviving at Thespieae is the elegiac couplet (carved on the marble base of a statue) by the poet Herennia Procla, daughter of a Roman family from Thessalonike.¹⁶⁴

The participation of Thessalonians and other Macedonians in contests or in the cultural life of other Greek cities is confirmed by a handful of

159. Nigdelis (2006) 459, Tataki (1998) 186. See also above p. 111.

160. See the detailed presentation of their work in Plastira-Valkanou (2012) 615–636, with particular reference to their skill in writing verse and in intertextual references.

161. Of particular interest are three epigrams in which Antipater expresses his admiration for the performances of the aulos-player Glaphyrus (*AP* 9.266, 517) and the pantomime Pylades (*AP* 16.290), which he attended in Rome; Plastira-Valkanou (2012) 624.

162. AM 979; Plastira-Valkanou (2012) 633.

163. Roesch, *IThesp* 167; Nigdelis (2006) 424.

164. Roesch, *IThesp* 271; Plastira-Valkanou (2012) 633.

inscriptions from the Imperial period.¹⁶⁵ Some of these artists would likely have performed in their native city as well, as for example did the famous 2nd-century *kitharodos* M. Vulpius Heliodorus, whose victories at *oecumenical* games are commemorated in an inscription from Argos (*IG* IV 591).¹⁶⁶

The theatrical image of the city is completed by its archaeological buildings. The odeum was erected in the Roman agora over the ruins of a late 2nd-century structure. It had a stage with a proscenium decorated with sculptures.¹⁶⁷ After the mid-3rd century, the odeum was enlarged to accommodate a variety of scenic performances, while in the mid-4th century it began to be converted into an open theatre, although this project was never completed.¹⁶⁸

We know that Roman Thessalonike had a stadium and a theatre, where athletic and *musical* contests were held. Excavation has uncovered part of a building designed for spectacles near the palace of Galerius, which could have combined both functions. This building has been identified with the theatre-stadium mentioned in the Byzantine sources (*PG* 116.1174-1184) and must have been built in the 1st century.¹⁶⁹ A Latin inscription for the wild-beast fighter Maximinus on a 4th-century monument records his death in the *refugium*, the place to which such performers who received fatal wounds in the arena were taken; this piece of information shows that the theatre was still in use in the 4th century and was able to accommodate Roman spectacles.¹⁷⁰

165. E.g. in Miletus there were two musicians from Macedonia, the flute-player Cleinias son of Poseidonius and the harpist (*ψάλλτης*) Nikolaos son of Andriscus (*CIG* 2868, Diod. Sic. 32.15.5); Stefanis (1988) no. 1421. Carminius, who is described as giving great pleasure with his songs on a funerary stele from Caesarea in Mauretania, may have been a Thessalonian (*SEG* 33:850, 2nd/3rd c.); on the different interpretations of the epigram see Nigdelis (2006) 462–463.

166. The inscription also mentions his brother, a voice-trainer (*φωνασκός*), who accompanied him to competitions; Stefanis (1988) no. 1066, Nigdelis (2006) 447.

167. On dating and sculptural decoration see Stefanidou-Tiveriou (1993a) 1421–1425; three statues of Muses and a fragment of a fourth have only been found (AM 6681, 6682, 6683, 6129).

168. Velenis – Adam-Veleni (1997) 20–22.

169. Velenis – Adam-Veleni (1992) 249–262, Sear (2006) 420–421.

170. Thessalonike, Museum of Byzantine Culture BE 119; Nigdelis (2006) 239 n. 72. For *refugia* in amphitheatres of the Imperial period see Nigdelis (2006) 246–248; see also n. 108, where it is noted that the inscription is the latest available evidence of wild-beast fights in Thessalonike.

Theatrical and musical events were also held in other places, e.g. within the premises of the gymnasium, dating from the Hellenistic period,¹⁷¹ or the *balnaeum*, which may have been part of a larger *palaestra* complex in the Roman agora,¹⁷² or in the ceremonial halls where the members of private associations assembled.¹⁷³ Finally, the impressively large hippodrome, part of the Galerian palace complex, was one of the most important public buildings for popular assembles and entertainments from the 4th through the 7th century.¹⁷⁴

To recapitulate, Thessalonike stood out as a cultural centre of pan-Hellenic renown, home by birth or by choice of poets, musicians, actors, artists, philosophers and orators. The inscriptions, the coins, the theatrical buildings and the surviving dramatic monuments weave a rich picture of a cultural life that included local and *oecumenical* festivals that were celebrated with great splendour, providing a framework for, primarily, athletic contests and Roman spectacles but also for *thymelic* and scenic contests. At the same time, religious ceremonies and entertainments with performances by musicians, mimes, pantomimes, and other “paratheatrical” artists predominated throughout the Imperial period.

V. THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL EVENTS IN THE ROMAN COLONIES

At Philippi, after the founding of the Roman colony in the mid-1st century BC, the core events of any celebration were arena contests in honour of the emperor.¹⁷⁵ These were accompanied by shows organised by “paratheatrical” artists: two inscriptions show that troupes that gave performances in Latin were active in the area. A Latin inscription found south of the city’s Roman agora commemorates Marcus Numisius Valens, who was a *choragiaris*, that is, the person responsible for securing the stage equipment and actors’ gear for performances.¹⁷⁶ It may not be coincidental that this was the

171. For finds from the area connected with the cult of Fulvus and Cabirus see Touratsoglou (1988) 14–15, Vitti (1996) 54–59, 90–91.

172. For masks and figurines from the *balneum* see above n. 149.

173. On the meeting place of the members of a Dionysiac association see Nigdelis (2006) 118 n. 47.

174. Vickers (1972) 25–32, Vitti (1996) 79–82, Adam-Veleni (2010) 113–119.

175. See Farrington (2008) 16–19, Hellerman (2005) 67–70. For the Roman character of life in Philippi see Pilhofer (1995) 91–92. See also above p. 117.

176. Pilhofer (2009) no. 287.

site of a Roman building complex that included baths and a *palaestra*, to the east of which stood a small amphitheatre with seven tiers of seats.¹⁷⁷

More information is furnished by the Latin epigram (*CIL* III.7343) on a 1st-century sarcophagus from Drama commemorating Titus Uttiedius Venerianus, a local official who was the leader of a troupe of Latin mimes (*archimimus latinus*) for 37 years and a *promisthota* for 18 years;¹⁷⁸ this term may denote that he was responsible for the hiring of performers for shows. It is probable that he was officially charged with maintaining a troupe of “para-theatrical” artists to perform in shows held in the colony; besides, the organisation of mime actors into troupes was a necessary consequence of the economic conditions of their funding.¹⁷⁹ His office is one of the few pieces of evidence showing that mimes could occupy an important social position. Other references to *promisthotae* from the environs of Serres reveal that the hiring of performers for shows was a common practice at the time.¹⁸⁰

The extensive use of the renovated theatre (fig. 6),¹⁸¹ however, suggests, as do the inscriptions, that traditional religious festivals continued to be celebrated. An honorific dedication made by votaries of Serapis in the 3rd century (*BCH* 59:140.41) mentions two officers of his cult, both called Quintus Flavius Hermadio, of whom the father was *gymnasiarch* and *high priest*, while his son served as *agonothetes* of the *Great Asclepieia*.¹⁸² These games must have been organised by the association of votaries of the Egyptian god. It is probable, in the context of the syncretism of that age, that Serapis was

177. The *palaestra* was built in the 2nd century; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki – Bakirtzis (2003) 44–48.

178. See Pilhofer (2009) no. 476. On the term “archimime” see Maxwell (1993) 24; see also p. 182, where the official position that Uttiedius held in the colony is discussed.

179. As Hellerman (2005) 106 notes, “such an official connection would be exceptional, perhaps necessitated by the difficulty of assembling a Latin troupe on an occasional basis in the colony”. For the commercial character of mimic theatre and its organisation into small troupes see Maxwell (1993) 76–78.

180. Two *promisthotae* dedicate a statue to a veteran (Samsaris, *Bas-Strymon* 9); see also Pilhofer (2009) no. 713. Cf. an epitaph of Spondon, a pantomime, erected by Repentinus, a *promisthota* (*SEG* 33:466, Larisa, 1st c. BC).

181. See above p. 118.

182. Those honouring Quintus Flavius Hermadio the younger are worshippers of Serapis, as shown by a second inscription (*BCH* 59:140.40), where his father is honoured as a “benefactor” of their association; see also Pilhofer (2009) nos 307, 311. The *Great Asclepieia* must have been a regularly occurring festival celebrated with scenic and *thymelic* contests, like e.g. the *penteteric Great Asclepieia* at Cos, in which many Macedonian cities took part. For the use of the term “great” for *penteteric* festivals see Karl (1975) 84–85.

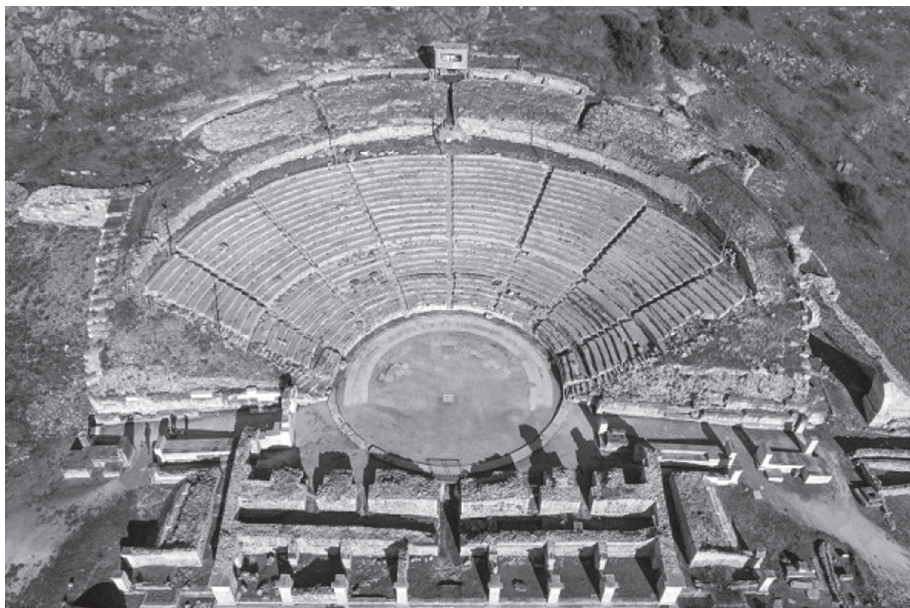


Fig. 6. The theatre of Philippi. Photo by Achilleas Savvopoulos (Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports)

identified with Asclepius or venerated along with him as a god of healing;¹⁸³ consequently, the *agonothetes* of the *Great Asclepieia* was a member of the association of Serapis, and the *Great Asclepieia* were celebrations analogous to the *Sarapeia* held in other parts of the Greek world, which included musical and possibly scenic contests.¹⁸⁴

Also, the cult of Dionysus was widespread throughout the broader region during the entire Imperial period, its chief centres being the oracle of the god on Mount Pangaion and his sanctuary in Drama.¹⁸⁵ Although there are no surviving references to festivals or performances in his honour, we do have evidence for mystery and commemorative rituals such as the *Rosalia*, organised by the voluntary associations that sprang up in the Roman

183. On the connection between Serapis and Asclepius see Burkert (1987) 15–16. For the sanctuary of the Egyptian “healing” gods at Philippi and the conflation of their cult with that of Asclepius see Tsochos (2004) 84–87.

184. Most known were the scenic and *thymelic* contests in Tanagra (Boeotia) of the 1st century BC (*IG* VII 540).

185. Dionysus was already being worshipped by Thracians at the oracle on Mount Pangaion in the 5th century BC, and in Drama from the 4th century BC to the end of the Imperial age; see Pilhofer (1995) 100–101, (2009) nos 499, 500, 501a–d.

colonies, whose membership was largely Roman but also included Greek devotees of the god.¹⁸⁶

Similarly, in the Roman colony of Dion the activity of the voluntary associations was linked to a variety of cultic celebrations.¹⁸⁷ A *paean* found in the sanctuary of Asclepius (Oikonomos, *Epigraphai* 4) is evidence that at least hymns and music recitals were at the heart of events in honour of the gods.¹⁸⁸

Furthermore, an association dedicated to the cult of Zeus *Hypsistos* may have been responsible for organising a Roman festival: according to a votive inscription dating from the first half of the 3rd century, a member of the association, a slave named Arura, assumed the duties of *agoranomos* during the *Nonae Capratinae*.¹⁸⁹ As we know from literary sources, this annual festival was celebrated with sacrifices and banquets and with the re-enactment of a battle that the Romans had won thanks to the decisive contribution of the servant girls (Plut. *Cam.* 33.7, Macrobian 1.11.36-40).¹⁹⁰

The office of *agoranomos*, with the same meaning, is also found in a group of votive inscriptions from the sanctuary of Dionysus: one dedicant

186. Many inscriptions from Drama, Doxato, and areas near the oracle on Mount Pangaion are dedicated to Dionysus or commemorate a priest or initiates of his cult. Specifically for a Latin inscription from Doxato mentioning the Dionysiac mysteries see Pilhofer (1995) 105–107 and (2009) no. 439; see also Tsochos (2005) 74 on a building connected with the cult of Dionysus (in his Roman guise as *Liber Pater*) in the Roman agora of the city. On the *Rosalia* at Philippi see Pilhofer (1995) 103–104 and (2009) nos 524–525. For similar inscriptions from Serres and other parts of Macedonia see Nigdelis (2006) 144, Pilhofer (2009) 597, Kokkinia (1999) 204–221. According to Nigdelis (2010) 32–33, the *Rosalia* became attached to the cult of Dionysus because it had evolved into a mystery cult that promised a pleasant life after death.

187. There is no evidence as to when the *Olympian* festival stopped being celebrated at Dion. Nor do we know for how long the association honouring the Muses and Dionysus (the *Μουσῳῖσται*), mentioned at the 2nd century BC, remained active; see Giannou (2016) 72–73.

188. The sanctuary of Asclepius was in the area close to the Hellenistic theatre, as was the case in many other Greek cities. For the increased importance of the cult of Asclepius at Dion in the Imperial age see Pantermalis (1977) 336–337, Pingiatoglou (2005) 428–431 and (2008) 578.

189. Arura dedicated a statue of an eagle to the local sanctuary of Zeus *Hypsistos*, after she had served as *agoranomos* (Dion AM 8715). On the association in honour of Zeus *Hypsistos* and the duties of *agoranomoi* appointed for festivals see Adak (2015) 79–80, Nigdelis (2016) 670–672 with bibliography.

190. On a comprehensive discussion see Nigdelis (2016) 667–668.

must have been a member of an association of votaries of Dionysus (as *Liber Pater*) who was appointed to that office by the association at the festival in honour of the god;¹⁹¹ other dedicants appear to have been the official *agoranomoi* of the colony, who were in charge of overseeing the celebration in collaboration with the religious association.¹⁹² If this interpretation is correct, it means that a Dionysiac festival was held at Dion under the responsibility of a local association of devotees, which could elect a special officer (an *agoranomos*) to be responsible for organising it.¹⁹³

The hypothesis that performances in honour of Dionysus were held in Dion is strengthened by the wealth of depictions of the god in public and private buildings right through Late Antiquity.¹⁹⁴ The most outstanding of these is the mosaic in the “Villa of Dionysus”, a building with rooms for cultic observances and banqueting halls: the god is depicted wreathed, on a chariot, with a drinking horn in his right hand and a thyrsus twined with ribbons in the left. This central scene is framed by six panels featuring theatrical masks, five of which have their mouth closed; they must represent pantomimes, a specialty befitting the place.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, a few surviving statuettes and masks attest to the theatrical life of Dion; for example, it is very interesting that among the grave offerings for a child were a tragic mask, a pantomime mask and a figurine of a mime: the tragic mask depicts Hercules with lion-skin; the mask of a young man wearing an ivy wreath has a closed mouth; the figure of a standing man with protuberant features and disproportionately large phallus is rendered as mime.¹⁹⁶

Other finds, from Dion and from the environs of Philippi, concern two musical instruments that accompanied both symposia and Roman

191. The Greek inscription mentions that Primio of Folvia was appointed *agoranomos* by the association at the festival in honour of the god (*Διονύσιον καὶ τῷ θιάσῳ*: *ArchEph* [1948] Chr. 36.4); Nigdelis (2016) 676. On a similar inscription from Beroia see above p. 118.

192. On the relevant inscriptions see Nigdelis (2016) 675–677, Jaccottet (2003) nos 14–17.

193. Nigdelis (2016) 677.

194. E.g. on statues of Dionysus from the building complex of the great baths and the “Villa of Dionysus” see Pantermalis (1997) 39, 91; on table supports with the god (Dion AM 19, 179, 3924) see Stefanidou-Tiveriou (1993b) nos 4, 12, 29.

195. Only the mask of the aged Satyr corresponds to a known dramatic type; the others may represent Papposilenus, Ariadne, a young Satyr, Dionysus, and the king Lycurgus. For the description of the mosaic see Pantermalis (1988) 181–188 and (1997) 51–60. The place reserved for the cult of Dionysus (with the mosaic scene and the statue of the god) was connected to the patio to the south of the banqueting hall; see Pantermalis (1977) 331–333.

196. Dion AM Π30, Π24, Π27–29. Similar flat masks of Silenus wearing an ivy wreath are preserved from Beroia and Thessalonike; see above n. 78 and 149.

spectacles. A Roman-era inscription from Paleochori (west of Philippi) mentions the singer Nicaea, who accompanied herself on the *kithara* or the *nabla*.¹⁹⁷ A funerary relief at Dion was dedicated to another *nabla*-player by her husband, as evidenced by the Latin inscription: depicted on it is the *nabla* (also called *nablum* or *nablium*), an instrument of the *psaltery* family (that is, a stringed instrument that was played with the fingers, without a *plectrum*).¹⁹⁸ The opinions of the ancient writers were divided with respect to this instrument: the parodist Sopater pointed out that it had “a guttural sound” (*λαρυγγόφωνος*) and that it was “not melodious” (*οὐκ εὐμελής*), while the comic poet Philemon found it a pleasant accompaniment to symposia (Athen. 4.175c-d).¹⁹⁹

Another rare instrument, of monumental dimensions, came to light at Dion: the *hydraulis* (or *hydraulos*).²⁰⁰ The sound it produced, by means of hydraulic pressure forcing air through a set of pipes, was considered very agreeable (*πάν τι ἡδὺς καὶ τερπνός*, Athen. 4.174a-b); the water-organ rapidly became part of festival celebrations, although not of the competitive programme, as recorded in an inscription of 90 BC, when a water-organist, Antipater of Crete, greatly impressed his audience with a performance at Delphi (*SIG* 737). The great advantage of the *hydraulis*, namely that it could produce a very loud sound, played a decisive role in its adoption for use in the amphitheatre and hippodrome: as we know from other regions, gladiatorial combats to the death were fought to the accompaniment of the *hydraulis*, which was reinforced at moments of particular dramatic intensity by other loud instruments, such as the trumpet and the horn.²⁰¹

The rich scenic activity at Dion was supported by the city’s theatre buildings. The Hellenistic theatre seems to have been renovated during the reign of Philip V, while a Roman phase is also discernible, but without

197. *Miss. arch. Mac.* 28.10; Stefanis (1988) no. 1806.

198. Pantermalis (1998) 131–136; see also the detailed discussion by Vendries (2004) 469–502. According to West (1992) 77, it was “a Phoenician harp”.

199. Sopater, fr. 15 (K.–A.); Philemon, fr. 45 (K.–A.). Cf. Pollux 4.61; Hesychius (s.v. *νάβλα*) described it as a *kithara* or *psalterion* with unpleasant or throaty sound (*δόσηχον*). According to Nesselrath (2016) 36, Sopater’s sentence, *νάβλα λαρυγγόφωνος ἐκκεχόρωται*, “might have been spoken in the context of a dinner or symposium, telling someone that a great feast (accompanied by music) is not yet over”.

200. For the presentation of the find and its dating in the 1st century see Pantermalis (1995) 219. Ctesibius of Alexandria is credited with the invention of the *hydraulis* in the 3rd century BC (Athen. 4.174a–e).

201. See West (1992) 114–118, 380–381, with illustrations and epigraphic evidence.

great changes.²⁰² It was abandoned in the 2nd century, when a smaller, Roman-type theatre was built, outside the walls of the ancient city, right next to the sanctuary of Zeus. The position of the Roman theatre and the preservation of the proscenium suggest that it was probably used both for spectacles and religious ceremonies, while later the orchestra was converted into an arena.²⁰³ The colony's public life was enriched at the end of the 2nd century by a Roman odeum, which belongs to the building complex of the great baths as a place of entertainment for its patrons.²⁰⁴

In general terms, the celebrations that were predominant in Roman colonies like Dion and Philippi were Roman, but often in conjunction with local cultic rituals or festivals. The artistic activity of musicians and "para-theatrical" professionals continued to be vigorous, chiefly in the context of symposia and public entertainments.

VI. EPILOGUE

In the early centuries of Roman rule over the Macedonian kingdom, intellectual and cultural movement was limited, while the older administrative centres (Aigai and Pella) declined or were abandoned. In areas with a cultural tradition (e.g. Thessalonike, Thasos, Amphipolis), local and pan-Hellenic festivals honouring gods or prominent citizens continued to be held, with athletic and *musical* (*thymelic* and scenic) contests.

From the time of Augustus festivals multiplied: splendid games in honour of the Roman emperors were held, *oecumenical* in Beroia and Thessalonike, local in almost every part of the land. For the cult of the emperor the Romans adopted the model of the famous games of the Hellenistic period (with the addition of Roman spectacles, most notably gladiatorial combats and wild-beast hunts).

At the same time, in regions with a substantial Roman population (e.g. Philippi, Dion, Thessalonike), there were voluntary associations that organised religious ceremonies and festivals in accordance with Greek or Roman custom. There were also troupes of artists that gave commercial performances for the general public.

202. Karadedos (1986) 325–340.

203. Palaiokrassa (1985) 55–57, (2012) 98.

204. Pantermalis (1997) 39 dates the baths building to the end of the 2nd century, although the typology of the odeum suggests an earlier dating.

The theatrical and musical shows attested in Roman Macedonia do not differ from those found in all the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire: scenic and poetic contests were confined to a few major festivals, while music and dance performances were much more widely appreciated, as were shows by “paratheatrical” artists.

Various categories of musicians and actors (*encomium* writers, pantomimes and mimes, comics, conjurors, dancers, tightrope-walkers and acrobats) demonstrated their skill and provided entertainment at symposia and festivals, in private and public gatherings. The “paratheatrical” artists who had been excluded for centuries from publicly organised Greek festivals were now extremely popular, and some categories even ranked high in competition programmes.

The theatrical structures — the new theatres and odea that were built to meet the needs of the imperial cult and the old ones that continued to be used for performances (alongside the arena spectacles) — are evidence for the continuation of scenic activity, as well as tangible signs of the gradual Romanisation of the audiences. At the same time, many other places were also used for theatrical or musical shows, including the *thermae* and the gymnasium or *palaestra* complexes as well as stadia and hippodromes.

Finally, it should be noted that the history of the theatre in the Hellenic world seems to have been deeply interwoven with its political history: the sovereign people determined cultural activity so as to express, serve and extend its sovereignty. Perhaps it is no exaggeration to say that, if the birth of the ancient theatre bears the stamp of Athenian culture, its evolution was largely shaped by the policy of the Macedonian kings, which was later adopted, with adjustments considered necessary, by the Roman Empire.

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