

# The Antigonids and the Ruler Cult: Global and Local Perspectives?<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Demetrius Poliorketes is considered by modern scholars the true founder of ruler cult. In particular the Athenians attributed him several divine honors between 307 and 290 BC. The ancient authors in general consider these honors in a negative perspective, while offering words of appreciation about an ideal sovereignty intended as a glorious form of servitude and embodied in Antigonos Gonatas, Demetrius Poliorketes' son and heir. An analysis of the epigraphic evidences referring to this king leads to the conclusion that Antigonos Gonatas did not officially encourage the worship towards himself.

Keywords: Hellenism – ruler cult – Antigonids - Demetrius Poliorketes – Antigonos Gonatas.

Modern scholars consider Demetrius Poliorketes the true founder of ruler cult due to the impressively vast literary tradition on the divine honours bestowed upon this historical figure, especially by Athens, between the late fourth and the early third century BC<sup>2</sup>. As evidenced also in modern bibliography, these honours seem to climax in the celebration of Poliorketes as *deus praesens* in the well-known ithyphallus dedicated to him by the Athenians around 290<sup>3</sup>.

Documentation is however pervaded by a tone that is strongly hostile to the granting of such honours. Furthermore, despite the fact that it has been handed down to us through Roman Imperial writers like Diodorus, Plutarch and Athenaeus, the tradition reflects a tendency contemporary to the age of the Diadochi, since these same authors refer, often explicitly, to a 'real opposition literature flourished in Athens in the age of Demetrius'<sup>4</sup>, a literature which includes very different protagonists: Demochares the orator, Pheidippides the playwright, Philochorus the Atthidographer, as well as Duris of Samos, the still Hellenocentric historian.

Along the lines of what is documented, at least three moments can be identified in which concentrate the honours granted to Demetrius by Athens, namely 307/6, 302 and 290<sup>5</sup>.

In 307/6, the Athenians, recently 'set free' from the autocratic rule of Demetrius Phalereus, bestow a series of honours upon Demetrius and his father Antigonos Monophthalmus, about which we are informed via Diodorus and Plutarch<sup>6</sup>.

Although both historians describe the honours granted to Demetrius by the Athenians, Diodorus merely lists them in a dry and formal tone, indicating that they had been decreed upon the proposal of Stratocles<sup>7</sup>, whereas Plutarch introduces the list remarking that by the extravagance of their expressions of homage, the Athenians had rendered odious and obnoxious Demetrius, who had hitherto behaved as a munificent benefactor<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> All dates are BC, unless otherwise stated. English translations are from Loeb Classical Library editions.

<sup>2</sup> For a *status quaestionis*, see Mari 2009, 87-112, in particular 98-102; Landucci Gattinoni 2014, 71-84 (from this text originate the herein cited contents about Demetrius Poliorketes).

<sup>3</sup> On the ithyphallus, in particular, see Palumbo Stracca 2000, 503-512; Dunand 2002, 69-80; Chaniotis 2011, 157-195; Holton 2014, 370-390.

<sup>4</sup> Mari 2009, 99.

<sup>5</sup> On the relationship between Demetrius and Athens, see Kuhn 2006, 265-282.

<sup>6</sup> See Plut. *Demetr.* 10, 2-12, 2; Diod. XX 46, 2-3. On these passages, see Landucci Gattinoni 2014, with previous bibliography.

<sup>7</sup> On the biography of this historical figure, cf. the sources now collected in PAA 15. 2006, n. 837635.

<sup>8</sup> Plut. *Demetr.* 10, 2.

Plutarch also emphasises the 'religious' feature of the honours bestowed upon Antigonus and Demetrius, so as to make explicit the 'deification' of these figures on the part of the city. They were given the appellation of saviour-gods and a priest was elected for their cult, who was to be considered the new eponym of Athens; their figures were woven into the sacred robe dedicated to Athena, alongside those of the Olympian gods; an altar was built where Demetrius had alighted from his chariot; furthermore, it was conceded that whenever Demetrius visited the city he should be received with the honours paid to Demeter and Dionysus; and Demetrius, as saviour-god, was also applied to for an oracle on the opportunity of an offer to the temple at Delphi.

Plutarch brands as blasphemous the decisions made by the Athenians. He describes three natural disasters occurring shortly after the arrival of Demetrius, and points to them as signs of divine displeasure for the sacrilege committed by those who had deified a living sovereign<sup>9</sup>. Firstly, Athena's sacred robe, on which, along with the figures of Zeus and Athena, were woven those of Demetrius and Antigonus, was torn apart by a sudden gust of wind during the procession for its delivery to the goddess; then, all around the altar dedicated to the two Diadochi sprouted hemlock, a poisonous plant generally rather rare in Attica; lastly, in the Dionysiac celebrations, the traditional procession had to be omitted due to out-of-season severely cold weather that, moreover, blasted vines, fig-trees and most of the grain in the blade.

According to Plutarch, Pheidippides the comic poet, impressed by these events, seems to have affirmed that the natural disasters were caused by those who, like Stratocles, had intended to decree divine honours in favour of a living sovereign, thus contributing to the ruin of the people. This reference to Pheidippides is interesting as it shows that in Athens, around 307/6, at least a part of the public opinion was convinced that bestowing the gods' own honours upon living men was not only a form of tribute towards a benefactor, as Demetrius Poliorketes could be considered, but constituted a most grave sacrilege and an insult to the ancient gods<sup>10</sup>.

Later, in 302, according to Diodorus and Plutarch<sup>11</sup>, the initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries was one of the highlights of Demetrius Poliorketes' stay in Athens, where he had been called for the second time as the city was again being threatened by Cassander. Both sources agree that the Athenians modified the traditional customs to meet the demands of Demetrius, who in one month wanted to pass through all the grades of initiation, from the lowest to the highest, a process normally accomplished in over a full calendar year.

Diodorus and Plutarch report the same pieces of information, yet provide different commentaries on the events. Only Diodorus seems to justify the request of Demetrius, stating that the Athenians themselves were persuaded to change the ancient customs due to Poliorketes' numerous benefits. Differently, Plutarch is not only silent on the benefits received by the Athenians, but stresses instead that Demetrius' unprecedented request not to comply with the traditional schedule of the full initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries was contrary to the sacred laws of Athens.

Thus, in Plutarch, once again, we can hear the vivid echo of Athenian popular reaction that considered sacrilegious the innovations introduced by Demetrius in the chronological unfolding of the Eleusinian mysteries, one among the most important religious symbols of the city of Athens.

Finally, around 290, an ithyphallic hymn was sung in honour of Demetrius, by then king of Macedonia and once again master of Athens<sup>12</sup>, which, as mentioned above, celebrated Poliorketes as *deus praesens*. The hymn has been handed down to us through a famous passage in the *Deipnosophistae* by the renowned Athenaeus of Naucratis, who, *in primis*, copies a fragment by

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<sup>9</sup> Plut. *Demetr.* 12, 2-5.

<sup>10</sup> On this topic, see Erskine 2014, 579-597.

<sup>11</sup> Diod. XX 110; Plut. *Demetr.* 26.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Plut. *Demetr.* 39-40. The uncertain dating is due to the fact that, for the years subsequent to 302, we no longer have the support of Diodorus' chronology (302/1 concludes Book 20 of his *Library* and the following Books are unfortunately lost) and Plutarch's *Life of Demetrius* does not contain precise time information.

Demochares<sup>13</sup>, with a brief paraphrase of the contents of the hymn. Because in this paraphrase Demochares emphasises that the Athenians had welcomed Demetrius with processional dances and songs at the time of his return from Lefkada and Corcyra, we can date the event to the time of Poliorketes' return to Athens, after the expedition to Corcyra, during which he had married Agathocles' daughter Lanassa to whom the island belonged as dowry<sup>14</sup>.

Athenaeus is also keen on citing the text of the hymn in full, as he read it in Book 22 of Duris's *Histories*<sup>15</sup>:

This is what Demochares has to say about the Athenians' flattery. But Duris of Samos in Book XXII of his *History* <preserves> the ithyphallic hymn itself:

The greatest and most beloved gods  
are here in our city;  
for a timely opportunity brought <Demeter>  
and Demetrius here simultaneously!  
She comes to celebrate the sacred  
mysteries of Kore,  
while he is here beautiful, laughing and full of mirth,  
as befits a god.  
This is an awesome sight: all his friends surround him  
and he himself in their midst;  
it is as if his friends were stars,  
while he was the sun.  
Hail, child of Poseidon, most powerful  
of gods, and of Aphrodite!  
The other gods<sup>16</sup> are either far away,  
or deaf,  
or don't exist, or they pay us no attention.  
But you we see here,  
not made of wood or stone, but real.  
To you, then, we pray:  
first, that you create peace, beloved one:  
for this is within your power.  
And as for the Sphinx who controls not just Thebes,  
but all of Greece –  
It is an Aetolian who sits on the cliff,  
like the Sphinx of old,  
and snatches up all our forces and carries them off  
and I cannot resist her:  
for plundering one's neighbors is Aetolian behavior,  
and now the plundering goes even further –  
Punish her, please yourself! Otherwise,  
find some Oedipus,  
who will hurl this Sphinx from a crag  
or transform (†) her into a chaffinch.

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<sup>13</sup> Athen. VI 63 p. 253 b-c (=Demochares in *BNJ* 75 F 9)

<sup>14</sup> For this episode, cf. Plut. *Pyrrh.* 10, 6-7. On the relations between Demetrius and Agathocles, cf. Landucci Gattinoni 1999, 113-131; for a recent analysis of the relations between Athens and Demetrius in the first decade of the third century, cf. Thonemann 2005, 63-86, with extensive discussion of existing bibliography.

<sup>15</sup> Athen. VI 63-64 p. 253 d-f (=Duris in *BNJ* 76 F 13).

<sup>16</sup> On the different meaning of the passage, depending on whether you translate 'the other gods' or 'other gods', see Chaniotis 2011, 179-180.

This is what the Victors at Marathon sang, and not just in public, but in their own homes – the people who put to death the man who knelt before the Persian king and who slaughtered countless swarms of barbarians!

Based on Demochares' reference to Corcyra, in the ithyphallus-celebrated goddess, Demeter, some scholars have seen the hypostasis of Lanassa<sup>17</sup>, Demetrius' newly-wed bride, who had brought the large island of the Ionian Sea as dowry. In any case, the significant religious value of the song<sup>18</sup> is manifest: in it, the traditional gods are indeed surpassed by the new god, present in the flesh, «real» in the face of the needs of the Athenians, while «the other gods are either far away, or deaf, or do not exist, or they pay them no attention».

In the text preserved by Athenaeus, this strong religious value is directly connected with the risks posed by the Aetolian «sphinx» that seems to loom threateningly on the Athenians, who, therefore, pray Demetrius, the *deus praesens*, to protect them from possible attacks by the Aetolians, described as a people devoted to violence and raids<sup>19</sup>.

From an analysis of the tradition it seems thus evident that, in the complex and decades-long relations between Athens and Poliorketes, it was the political factors, besides the purely religious ones, that did count. In 307/6, Demetrius intended to stabilise his control over the Attic city, a control that he had just recently acquired with the expulsion of Demetrius Phalereus, Cassander's loyal lieutenant. In 302, Demetrius aimed at the consolidation of the alliance with Athens in view of the imminent and decisive battle against the coalition of Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus and Ptolemy, a battle that was indeed fought at Ipsos in the summer of 301. Finally, in 290, Poliorketes tried to involve Athens in his attempt to neutralise the emergence of the Aetolians, the rising star on the political and military horizon of urban Greece.

This said, we should also note that the literary tradition tends to emphasise (and condemn) the servility of Athenian politicians in the face of Demetrius's excessive power, describing the honours bestowed upon him as the poisonous fruit of the sycophancy of the Athenians by then oblivious to the glorious history of the city, as implicitly stated in the comment closing the quotation from the ithyphallus for Demetrius in Athenaeus's excerpt:

This is what the Victors at Marathon sang, and not just in public, but in their own homes – the people who put to death the man who knelt before the Persian king, and who slaughtered countless swarms of barbarians! (Athen. VI 64 p. 253 f [= Duris in *BNJ* 76 F 13])<sup>20</sup>

The above mentioned tradition, however, does not limit itself to a political reading of the facts, as it also makes reference to the 'religious issue', strongly emphasising the blasphemy of both those who offered and those who received honours, and transforming Poliorketes into a relevant negative paradigm. This paradigm was officially 'encoded' by Plutarch, who, in the parallel between the Macedonian Demetrius and the Roman Mark Antony, shows us two *deterrent* lives, i.e. two models not to be *imitated*, but to *beware of*<sup>21</sup>:

and though I do not think that the perverting of some to secure the setting right of others is very humane, or a good civil policy, still, when men have led reckless lives, and have become conspicuous, in the exercise of power or in great undertakings, for badness, perhaps it will not be much amiss for me to introduce a pair or two of them into my biographies, though not that I may merely divert and amuse my readers by giving variety to my writing. (...) So, I think, we also shall be more eager to

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Ehrenberg 1935, 279-295, in particular 285; Manni 1953, 94 and note 94 (very doubtful); Wehrli 1968, 177.

<sup>18</sup> Ehrenberg 1935, 279-295; Manni 1953, 93-95; Landucci Gattinoni 1981, 115-123; Palumbo Stracca 2000, 503-512.

<sup>19</sup> On the relations between Demetrius and the Aetolians, on which a recent epigraphic find has shed new light (Lefèvre 1998, 109-141), cf. Landucci Gattinoni 2004, 105-130, with extensive discussion of bibliography.

<sup>20</sup> This comment is usually attributed by scholars to Duris of Samos, but recently has been attributed to Athenaeus by Baron 2011, 86-110.

<sup>21</sup> For this expression, cf. Andrei 1989, 37.

observe and imitate the better lives if we are not left without narratives of the blameworthy and the bad. This book will therefore contain the Lives of Demetrius the City-Besieger and Antony the Emperor, men who bore most ample testimony to the truth of Plato's saying that great natures exhibit great vices also, as well as great virtues. (Plut. *Demetr.* 1, 5-7)

Thus, after centuries, the figure of Demetrius was still characterised by the heavily negative traits it had been assigned in early Hellenistic literature (unfortunately lost), in which the role and *status* of the sovereigns vying for Alexander's legacy must have been vastly debated.

In fact, while the surviving fragments of this literary corpus launch scathing attacks against the 'deification' of Demetrius, they also offer words of appreciation about an 'ideal' βασιλεία intended as 'a glorious form of servitude' (ἔνδοξος δουλεία) in which the sovereigns are transformed into selfless and tireless 'benefactors' (εὐεργέται) of their subjects. The expression ἔνδοξος δουλεία is attributed to Antigonus Gonatas by Aelian in a famous aphorism<sup>22</sup> that seems to echo the theme of a 'philanthropic' monarchy of a Stoic nature to which, according to modern scholars<sup>23</sup>, Gonatas wanted to relate after the 'behavioural' excesses of his father Demetrius so diffusely exposed in Plutarch's biography of Poliorketes<sup>24</sup>.

The 'honourable service' praised by Aelian even becomes a burden heavy to bear in another 'famous saying', in which concrete reference is made to the diadem, *the* symbol of sovereignty and as such frequently immortalised in the iconography of rulers<sup>25</sup>. According to Stobaeus<sup>26</sup>, Antigonus thus addressed an old woman who called him blessed by fate:

if you knew all the troubles that clung to this rag (showing her the diadem), you would never stoop to pick it up if it lay on a dunghill.

If Stobaeus limits himself to few yet vivid words to emphasise Antigonus' detachment from power, Aelian introduces the aforementioned aphorism with a broader reflection on the figure of the king, whom he describes as 'popular and lenient' and characterised by mildness and humanity<sup>27</sup>, and concludes the passage so as to draw an even more positive – if possible – representation of Antigonus:

Antigonus's remark to his son is very mild and humane. A person who thinks otherwise seems to me not to know what makes a king or a politician, but to have lived instead under tyranny.<sup>28</sup>

In this atmosphere of rarefied composure, Antigonus emerges as the paradigm of the philosopher-king, always intent upon his duties, utterly indifferent (or even hostile) to outward forms of sovereignty, and very far from the stereotype of the autocrat vested with an 'absolutely irresponsible' power typical of many Hellenistic monarchs. The behaviour of the latter is generally ferociously censured by Polybius, who affirms without mincing words that 'it was the nature of

<sup>22</sup> Aelian. *VH* II 20: ὁ Ἀντίγονος οὗτος ὁρῶν τὸν υἱὸν τοῖς ὑπὲρ τοῖς χρώμενον βιαιότερόν τε καὶ θρασύτερον “οὐκ οἶσθα”, εἶπεν, “ὦ παῖ, τὴν βασιλείαν ἡμῶν ἔνδοξον εἶναι δουλείαν;” In general on Aelianus as a historical source, cf. most recently Prandi 2005, who at pages 73 and 110 recalls the aphorism generally attributed to Antigonus Gonatas.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Cioccolo 1990, 135-190; Virgilio 2003a, 303-330, in particular 327-329 (cf. also Virgilio 2003b, 67-69).

<sup>24</sup> On these remarks, cf. Landucci Gattinoni 2011, 89-105; Landucci Gattinoni 2014.

<sup>25</sup> On the meaning and usage of the diadem, see the by now classical remarks by Smith 1989, 34-38; see also the papers in Lichtenberger *et al.* 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Stob. IV 8, 20: Ἀντίγονος πρὸς τινὰ μακαρίζουσιν αὐτὸν γραῦν “εἰ ἦδεις” ἔφη “ὦ μήτηρ, ὅσων κακῶν μεστόν ἐστι τοῦτ’ ὁ ῥάκος” δειξάς τὸ διάδημα “οὐκ ἂν ἐπὶ κοπρίας αὐτὸ κείμενον ἐβάστασας”.

<sup>27</sup> Aelian. *VH* II 20: Ἀντίγονόν φασιν τὸν βασιλέα δημοτικὸν καὶ πρᾶον γενέσθαι. καὶ ὅτ’ αὐτὸν εἰδέναι καὶ αὐτὰ ἕκαστα ἐξετάζειν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀνδρός, εἴσεται ἐτέρωθεν· εἰρήσεται δ’ οὖν αὐτοῦ καὶ πάνυ πρᾶον καὶ ἄτυφον ὁ μέλλων λέγειν.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*: καὶ τὰ μὲν τοῦ Ἀντιγόνου πρὸς τὸν παῖδα πάνυ ἡμέρως ἔχει καὶ φιλανθρώπως· ὅτ’ αὐτὸν δὲ οὐ δοκεῖ ταύτῃ, ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνός γε οὐ δοκεῖ μοι βασιλικὸν ἄνδρα εἰδέναι οὐδὲ πολιτικόν, τυραννικῶ δὲ συμβιβῶσαι μάλλον.

monarchy to hate equality, and to endeavour to have everybody, or at least as many as possible, subject and obedient'<sup>29</sup>.

The target of this particularly fierce attack is above all Philip V, the grandson of Antigonus Gonatas and a dangerous antagonist of the Romans between the end of the third and the beginning of the second century BC<sup>30</sup>; nor, however, are Polybius's hints at Gonatas friendlier, despite being few and rather synthetic, and always exclusively related to the history of the Achaean League before the age of Philip V<sup>31</sup>.

In any case, apart from the testimony of Polybius, in modern historical memory, Antigonus Gonatas embodies a model of sovereignty grounded in philosophy, and this especially since such a characterisation is the *fil rouge* of the well-known monograph by W.W. Tarn which, exactly 100 years after its publication, still is *the* essential reference work for anyone wishing to approach the reign of Antigonus II<sup>32</sup>. The two most famous (and quoted) chapters of Tarn's *Antigonus* are indeed those devoted, respectively, to the 'teachers' of the king and to the 'circle of intellectuals' gathered at the court of Pella<sup>33</sup>: the hypothesis of a dependence of Gonatas' political activity on a philosophical framework was considered so concrete by Tarn as to lead him to compare Antigonus II with the Emperor Marcus Aurelius<sup>34</sup>, the philosopher-emperor *par excellence*<sup>35</sup>.

In the scanty historiographical corpus available, Plutarch's information about Antigonus is really important. The former is particularly intent on outlining the 'moral' behaviours of the sovereign in the various phases of his life. In his *Life of Demetrius*, in particular, Plutarch enhances Antigonus' family background, and especially his mother Phila's, daughter of Antipater, whom he seems to consider essential to shaping a positive image of the personality of her son in order to overshadow the negative sides of the personality of his father, Demetrius Poliorketes<sup>36</sup>.

In the tradition, Phila is Antipater's best daughter, so much so that, when describing Demetrius' accession to the throne of Macedonia after his elimination of Cassander's heirs<sup>37</sup>, Plutarch explicitly states that the Macedonians turned in favour of Poliorketes as he was the husband of Phila and they still held in high regard the moderation of her father, the elder Antipater, whose legacy could be continued by the young Antigonus, Phila's son to Demetrius, whom the latter officially considered his heir<sup>38</sup>.

The positive hints at the moderation of the elder Antipater seem to have to be read as a praise of the old-Macedonian features of his personality which passed down to his grandson

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<sup>29</sup> Polyb. XXI 22, 8 : (sc. οἱ Ῥόδιοι ἔφασαν) φύσει γὰρ πᾶσαν μοναρχίαν τὸ μὲν ἴσον ἐχθαίρειν, ζητεῖν δὲ πάντα, εἰ δὲ μή γ' ὥς πλείστους, ὑπηκόους εἶναι σφίσι καὶ πειθαρχεῖν. For an analysis of the terminology used by Polybius to describe the tyrannical regimes, cf. Levy 1996, 43-54.

<sup>30</sup> On Polybius and Philip V, see most recently D'Agostini 2011, 99-121.

<sup>31</sup> It is noteworthy that while tracing a brief history of the relations between the Greeks and the Macedonians, twice (albeit in different contexts) does Polybius cite, in a single reference about early Hellenism, the names of Cassander, Demetrius and Antigonus Gonatas, in far from praising tones: cf. Polyb. II 41, 10 (κατὰ δὲ τοὺς ὑστέρους μὲν τῶν κατ' Ἀλέξανδρον καιρῶν [...] εἰς τοιαύτην διαφορὰν καὶ καχεξίαν ἐνέπεσον, καὶ μάλιστα διὰ τῶν ἐκ Μακεδονίας βασιλέων, ἐν ᾗ συνέβη πάσας τὰς πόλεις χωρισθεῖσας ἀφ' αὐτῶν ἐναντίως τὸ συμφέρον ἄγειν ἀλλήλαις. ἐξ οὗ συνέπεσε τὰς μὲν ἐμφρούρους αὐτῶν γενέσθαι διὰ τε Δημητρίου καὶ Κασσάνδρου καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα δι' Ἀντιγόνου τοῦ Γονατᾶ, τὰς δὲ καὶ τυραννεῖσθαι· πλείστους γὰρ δὴ μονάρχους οὗτος ἐμφυτεύσαι δοκεῖ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι); IX 29, 5 (τὰ γε μὴν Κασσάνδρῳ καὶ Δημητρίῳ πεπραγμένα, σὺν δὲ τοῦτοις Ἀντιγόνῳ τῷ Γονατᾷ, τίς οὐκ οἶδε; διὰ γὰρ τὸ προσφάτως αὐτὰ γεγονέναι τελέως ἐναργῆ συμβαίνει τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτῶν ὑπάρχειν).

<sup>32</sup> Tarn 1913. Completely inadequate for a complete analysis of the figure of Antigonus II is the (too concise) monograph study by Gabbert 1997, which is especially useful in bibliographical terms compared to Tarn's monumental study.

<sup>33</sup> See Tarn 1913, 15-36 (The Teachers of Antigonus); 223-256 (Antigonus and His Circle).

<sup>34</sup> Tarn 1913, 4: "Antigonus Gonatas was the one monarch before Marcus Aurelius whom philosophy could definitely claim as her own, and to whom she could and did look to translate into fact what she envisaged as theory".

<sup>35</sup> These remarks are in Cioccio 1990, 136, note 4.

<sup>36</sup> On Phila, see Carney 2000, 165-169; Landucci Gattinoni 2003, 58-62; Heckel 2006, 207-208.

<sup>37</sup> On these issues, see Landucci Gattinoni 2003, 82-87.

<sup>38</sup> See Plut. *Demetr.* 37, 4.

Antigonus Gonatas, could grant that the latter be accepted as king also by the most conservative Macedonians who had been offended by the excesses typical of Poliorketes' *basileia*<sup>39</sup>.

Given the strongly pro-Gonatas tone of these passages from Plutarch, their source, who exalts the traditional moderation of Antipater while being direly hostile to his direct heirs, i.e. Cassander and his sons<sup>40</sup>, is to be identified as Hieronymus of Cardia, who, as well known, wrote his *History of the Diadochi* in old age at the court of Antigonus Gonatas, by then king of Macedonia, after having faithfully served the latter's ancestors, namely his grandfather Antigonus Monophthalmus and his father Demetrius Poliorketes<sup>41</sup>.

*Sic stantibus rebus*, it can be assumed that Hieronymus, a wise court historian, would voice the *desiderata* of the king who wanted to present himself to his subjects as the official heir to Antigonus' *clan* along his father's line, while, along his mother's line, he depicted himself as the one who, thanks to Phila's name and fame, preserved those features of 'Macedonianness' typical of the generation of Philip II and certainly shared by his maternal grandfather Antipater. Thus, among the objectives of Hieronymus' historiography one can include the wish to recompose (and transcend) in the figure of Gonatas the wrenching conflict that had opposed the Antipatrids to the Antigonids for decades, in the long-lasting and often bloody clash between Cassander, son of Antipater, and Demetrius, son of Antigonus. As king of Macedonia, Antigonus II endorsed what good had been done by his grandparents' generation, while the mistakes, excesses and crimes committed by the middle-generation family members, namely his father Demetrius and his maternal uncle Cassander, were permanently deleted: among this second generation, great emphasis was indeed granted only to the figure of Phila as the ideal daughter, wife and mother.

The building of the image of the philosopher-king seems to leave no room for ruler cult, which had been so largely encouraged by Demetrius Poliorketes: "for a long time ancient historians were almost unanimous in thinking that king Antigonus Gonatas of Macedon had never been worshipped, in contrast to most other kings at the time"<sup>42</sup>. In recent years, however, the *communis opinio* of scholars has been called into question based on epigraphic finds that seem to testify to the existence of a cult in honour of Gonatas on Athenian territory.

I am referring in particular to an inscription published in 1992 by Basil Petrakos<sup>43</sup>, easily datable to the third century on paleographical grounds. The document is a decree by which the inhabitants of the *deme* of Rhamnous grant ἰσόθεοι honours to a king Antigonus, who appears to be still alive, and renew sacrifices in his honour because of his benefits to the people of Athens. Antigonus is indeed defined, in the present tense, as the "saviour of the people" (σωτὴρ τοῦ δήμου, line 3) and the "benefactor of the Athenians" (εὐεργετῶν τὸν δῆμον τὸν Ἀθηναίων, lines 3-4) to be honoured in the Great Nemesis celebrated for the goddess Nemesis at the sanctuary of the same name in Rhamnous.

Despite the doubts expressed by Petrakos, who did not exclude a possible dating of the text to the age of Antigonus Doson, Christian Habicht<sup>44</sup> (correctly) identifies the cited sovereign as Antigonus Gonatas on the basis of a convincing comparison with another decree of the *deme* of Rhamnous, certainly dated to 236/5, the time of the so-called Demetrian War, when the Aetolian

<sup>39</sup> On Antigonus Gonatas' wish to distance himself from the 'theatrical excesses' of his father, see Virgilio 2003b, 67-68 (on Poliorketes' theatricality, see in particular the still entirely acceptable comments in Mastrocinque 1979, 260-276, and, most recently, in Thonemann 2005, 63-86).

<sup>40</sup> See Landucci Gattinoni 2003, 82-87.

<sup>41</sup> On Hieronymus' partisanship for Gonatas, see Paus. 1, 9,8; 13, 9; in this regard, see Landucci Gattinoni 1981/82, 13-26; along the same line is Panichi 2001, 155-166. For more recent remarks on Hieronymus, where it is reiterated what I have already argued, see Landucci Gattinoni 2010, 97-114, with extensive discussion of bibliography.

<sup>42</sup> Habicht 1996, 131, who then quotes *verbatim* the opinion of some historians of the past. Among the most prominent scholars who deny the possibility of a cult for Antigonus, cf. Ferguson, 1911, 190; Tarn 1913, 250; Fraser 1958, 154; Sherwin White 1978, 116; Walbank 1984, 92. Recently, of the same opinion is also Green 1990, 143.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Petrakos 1992, 31-34 (= *SEG* 41, 1991, 75 = 42, 1992, 115 = 46, 1996, 159). On this decree, cf. also Petrakos 1999, n. 7, 11-13.

<sup>44</sup> Habicht 1996, 131-134.

League and the Achaean League sided against Demetrius II, son and heir of Antigonos Gonatas<sup>45</sup>. This second decree was put forward by the same Elpinicus son of Mnesippus who had proposed the decree in favour of Antigonos and was voted by the Rhamnousioi in honour of Dicearchus, an Athenian citizen who had a brilliant career in the service of Antigonos Gonatas as also of his son and successor, Demetrius II. As among the merits of Dicearchus is cited that he, at his own expenses, had provided for the victims intended for the sacrifices celebrated in the festivals to honour the goddess Nemesis and the king, it is clear that this second decree also confirms the existence of ruler cult for Antigonos at Rhamnous, forever and always in association with the cult of the goddess Nemesis who was worshipped in the main sanctuary of the *deme*<sup>46</sup>.

Habicht dates the decree in honour of Antigonos to about 255 when, he believes, Gonatas withdrew the garrison deployed at Rhamnous at the end of the Chremonidean War; differently, Ioanna Kralli rather inclines towards 245, the time of the defeat of Alexander, son of Craterus and nephew of Gonatas, who had rebelled against the power of his uncle<sup>47</sup>. According to the latter scholar, the end of the war against Alexander had indeed brought huge advantages to the Athenians in general, and to the Rhamnousioi in particular, who had been largely exposed to attacks by the ruler whose main stronghold was in Chalcis of Euboea.

In any case, Kralli, like Habicht, believes that the decree of Rhamnous is a sure proof of the existence of ruler cult for Antigonos Gonatas in Attica: freed from the fear of the raids conducted by Alexander, the Athenians in general and in particular the Rhamnousioi must have decreed divine honours for Antigonos "the saviour" like their ancestors had done in favour of Antigonos Monophthalmus and Demetrius Poliorketes in 307. The association between the divine honours in favour of Gonatas and the festivals for the goddess Nemesis, who, according to Pausanias<sup>48</sup>, at the time of Marathon had contributed, with her rage, to the victory of the Greeks over the Persians, raises the suggestive hypothesis that the Macedonian king could also be celebrated as the "saviour" of the Greeks for having defeated the Galatians at Lysimachia in 277, that is, the barbarians who, like the Persians two hundred years before, had again tried to invade Hellas<sup>49</sup>.

We do not have any information about the reaction of Gonatas to such honours, nor do we know if he did in any way encourage them. We do know, however, that the king directly intervened at Delos, in an Apollonian sanctuary that was certainly far more important and famous than the sanctuary of the goddess Nemesis at Rhamnous. We must then determine whether on that occasion Gonatas claimed a superhuman *status*, or only emphasised his belonging to a dynasty worthy of being remembered also in places embodying Panhellenic identity.

In the sanctuary of Delos indeed there are at least two proofs of the official presence of Antigonos II: the so-called *Portico of Antigonos*, a huge winged stoa bordering the north-eastern side of the sanctuary, and the so-called *Monument to the Progonoi*, an extended marble orthostate base ca. 21 metres long, situated in front of the stoa, on which stood about twenty bronze figures (now lost)<sup>50</sup>. On both monuments was a dedicatory inscription, reconstructed with reasonable confidence, albeit with heavy additions, thanks to the fragments recovered:

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<sup>45</sup>For this second decree, see the current edition in *ISE*, 25, 51-56. Most recently, cf. Petrakos 1999, n. 17, 22-25. Gonatas, in an unspecified moment of his reign, appointed Dicearchus as commander of the garrison located at Rhamnous, where there were also mercenaries under the command of his father Apollonius. Later, Dicearchus was appointed *strategos* of the garrison at Panactum, and his father *strategos* of the garrison at Eleusis. After Demetrius II's accession to the throne, Dicearchus was moved to the fortified town of Eretria in Euboea, while still maintaining some influence over Rhamnous, as attested indeed by the decree under examination.

<sup>46</sup> On the sanctuary of Nemesis, its history and its relations with Gonatas, cf. most recently Haake 2011, 109-127, with extensive discussion of previous bibliography.

<sup>47</sup> Kralli 2003, 61-66.

<sup>48</sup> Paus. I 33, 2-3.

<sup>49</sup> On this hypothesis, see Haake 2011, 120-121.

<sup>50</sup> The edition of reference for the description of both monuments is still the monograph study by Courby 1912; for a more recent description, see Bruneau - Ducat 1983<sup>3</sup>. See also Tarditi 1999, 57-62; for an accurate typological analysis, see Bringmann - von Steuben 1995, 190-193.



[βασιλεὺς Ἀντίγονος βασιλέως Δη]μητρίου Μακε[δὼν Ἀπόλλω]νι (on the architrave of the stoa<sup>51</sup>);  
[βασιλεὺς Ἀντίγονο]ς βασιλέως Δημητρίου Μα[κεδὼν] / [τοὺς ἐ]αυτοῦ προγόνους Ἀπόλλωνι, (on the base of the statues<sup>52</sup>).

Also in recent years, scholars have insisted on the fact that the *Monument to the Progonoi* finds convincing parallels in similar "family" groups which, set in important sanctuary contexts, seem to have served a twofold purpose<sup>53</sup>, that is, to show the religious devotion of the donors as well as the wealth and prestige of the family to which they belonged. I am referring in particular to two famous monuments, both dated to the Thirties of the fourth century which constitute a fundamental precedent for what Gonatas intended, namely the *Philippeion* at Olympia – which, created by Philip II and, perhaps, completed by his son Alexander, represented, through chryselephantine statues, three generations of the Argead dynasty (Amyntas III, Philip II and Alexander III)<sup>54</sup> – and the *Daochos Monument* at Delphi – which celebrated as many as six generations of a rich and powerful family from Thessaly. The analysis of the preserved foot cuttings at the *Monument to the Progonoi* of Antigonos, as also at the *Daochos Monument*, seems to prove that the figure in the first position on the left of the base was taller than all the others: it has thus been assumed that it represented Apollo, the god explicitly mentioned in the dedicatory inscription, as if Gonatas wished to emphasise also visually, with the exceptional height of the statue, his reverence for one of the ancestral cults of Greece<sup>55</sup>.

The attention paid by Antigonos to the cults at Delos was also manifested in the institution, in 245, of two new festivals, the *Soteria* and the *Paneia*, in manners typical of the sanctuary: the founder (either the sovereign or a private citizen) made available a sum that bore his name, and the interests of which served, annually, to fund the celebration of the festivals and its votive offerings, usually one or more vessels (φιάλαι), which would perpetuate his memory and were regularly recorded in the annual reports, known to us from epigraphic finds<sup>56</sup>. Furthermore, starting in 253, in these reports Antigonos is mentioned as "donor" of the vases for the Delos festivals celebrated every four years to honour Apollo, Artemis and their mother Leto, a gift made ὑπὲρ βασιλίσσης Στρατονίκης<sup>57</sup>, an expression that is generally viewed as a funeral tribute towards Stratonice, the sister of Antigonos, first married to Seleucus I and then to Antiochus I. Gonatas' decision (certainly shared by his wife, Phila, born to Stratonice in her marriage to Seleucus) to honour Stratonice at Delos was justified by the fact that she had made numerous offerings to the sanctuary in the past, as duly recorded in the annual reports preserved via epigraphic finds<sup>58</sup>.

Apart from the debate of modern scholars on the reasons that may have led Gonatas to establish the *Soteria* and the *Paneia*<sup>59</sup> in 245, the above mentioned archaeological and epigraphic finds, definitely attributable to him, seem to prove beyond any reasonable doubt that the sovereign attended the sanctuary of Delos in manners typical of the classical tradition which nothing conceded to ruler cult.

<sup>51</sup> IG XI 4, 1095.

<sup>52</sup> IG XI 4, 1096.

<sup>53</sup> For a series of recent remarks on the 'family' groups in general and on the *Monument to the Progonoi* in particular, see most recently Krumeich 2007, 171 and notes 130 and 131, with extensive bibliography.

<sup>54</sup> Many recent studies are dedicated to this monument: see -most recently Schultz 2009, 125-193; Palagia 2010, 33-41.

<sup>55</sup> Krumeich 2007, 171.

<sup>56</sup> On the procedures for establishing religious festivals at Delos, see Bruneau 1970, 342 (on general rules); 559-563 (on the festivals instituted by Antigonos Gonatas). For the quotation from the *Soteria*, see ID 298 A, lines 85-86; 320 B, lines 85-86; for the *Paneia*, see ID 298 A, lines 87-88; 320 B, line 33. Reference bibliography in SEG 55, 2005 n.894.

<sup>57</sup> ~~IG~~ IG XI, 2, 287 B, lines 125-126 and 129; ID 298 A, line 83.

<sup>58</sup> See the long lists of votive gifts by Stratonice cited by Bruneau, 1970, 546-550, in which the queen appears alone or together with her daughter Phila, the wife of Antigonos II.

<sup>59</sup> In this regard, see most recently the exhaustive *status quaestionis* drawn in Champion 2007, 72-88.

The validity of this statement seems to be undermined by a recent hypothesis proposed by Andrew Meadows<sup>60</sup>, who dates a (famous) inscription at Delos (*IG* XI 4, 1036), known since the beginning of the twentieth century, to the period of the death of Antigonus Gonatas and the accession to the throne of his son Demetrius II. On the inscription is engraved a decree of the League of the Nesiotes which established festivals in honour of Demetrius (τὰ Δημητρίεια) to be celebrated in alternate years with the existing festivals for Antigonus (τὰ Ἀντιγόνεια). Thus, according to Meadows, around 239, a new festival had been added for the new king (Demetrius II) upon the death of the old (Antigonus Gonatas): this assumes the institution of ruler cult in favour of Antigonus at Delos, on the part of the Nesiotes, when the king was still alive.

The hypothesis by Meadows clashes with the *communis opinio* of modern scholars who, since the remarks by Félix Durrbach, first editor of the inscription<sup>61</sup>, have dated the text to the years when Antigonus Monophthalmus and Demetrius Poliorketes shared the royal title (306-302) because, in its final lines (45-46), it hints at the fact that the stele with the inscription must be placed *παρὰ τὸν βωμὸν τῶν βασιλέων*, thus assuming the coregency of the two honoured protagonists. As known, in the Antigonid dynasty there were two cases in which a Demetrius was the successor of an Antigonus (Antigonus Monophthalmus - Demetrius Poliorketes; Antigonus Gonatas - Demetrius II); the former pair has been taken as the case in point here, since only with regard to Monophthalmus and Poliorketes do literary and epigraphic sources attest a joint kingship<sup>62</sup>. On these bases, the decree has been considered the most ancient evidence of the existence of the League of the Nesiotes (or Cycladic Islanders), which “is generally assumed to have been founded by Antigonus in the second half of 314 or first half of 313, during a naval campaign led by his nephew and admiral Dioscurides. In the wake of that expedition, as it seems, the Islanders granted him cultic honours and a festival called *Antigoneia*. In 306 (after the battle off Salamis), or even before, in 307 (as Buraselis believes), similar accolades followed in honour of his son Demetrius (*Demetrieia*)”<sup>63</sup>.

According to Meadows, instead, an inscription of the Macedonian city of Berea (*EKM* 1.Beroia 45), published in 1950, with a manumission act dated to the twenty-seventh year of a king Demetrius (lines 1-3: *τύχη ἀγαθῇ. / βασιλεύοντος Δημητρίου ἑβδόμου καὶ εἰκοσ/τοῦ ἔτους ....*), would prove that also Antigonus Gonatas and Demetrius II shared a joint kingship, thus enabling the lowering of the decree of the Nesiotes to the age of Demetrius II (239-229). In Meadows’ view, in fact, Demetrius Poliorketes, who had become king in 306 and died in 284/3, could never reach the twenty-seventh year of his reign unlike Demetrius II, if one accepts the hypothesis that the latter ruled in a joint kingship with his father since the beginning of the fifties of the third century when he was in his early twenties. As a matter of fact, with respect to the exclusion of Poliorketes, Grzybek<sup>64</sup> had already solved the question *a priori* arguing that Demetrius’ regnal years could be counted from the death of Philip Arrhidaeus in 317/6 BC, as typical in Babylonian documents for his father Antigonus Monophthalmus<sup>65</sup>. With this calculation, the twenty-seventh year of Demetrius’ reign would correspond to 291/0, when he sat undisturbed on the throne of Macedonia, and would thus justify the dating of the manumission act in his name.

Furthermore, the hypothesis of a joint kingship between Antigonus Gonatas and his son Demetrius II is, in my view, undermined by a Cretan inscription (*IC* IV 167) that has been wholly overlooked by Meadows. It is the text of a treaty of alliance between the city of Gortyna and a king

<sup>60</sup> Meadows 2013, 19-38.

<sup>61</sup> *Editio princeps* in Durrbach 1904, n.1; historical analysis of the text, with dating to 306, in Durrbach 1907, 208-227.

<sup>62</sup> See, as well as many Athenian inscriptions, Diod. 20. 53. 2-4; Plut. *Demetr.* 18.1-4; App. *Syr.* 54; Iust. 15. 2. 10-15; for a critical synthesis of this event, see Will 1982<sup>2</sup>, 74-77; Billows 1990, 155-160; Landucci Gattinoni 2003, 124-125.

<sup>63</sup> Hauben 2010, 108. On the campaign of Dioscurides, see Diod. 19.62.9. Vast reflections on the founding of the League by Antigonus are in Buraselis 1982, 60-87, and Billows 1990, 217-30. The same opinion has been recently shared by Gallo 2009, 335-339, and Hauben 2010, 103-121.

<sup>64</sup> Grzybek 1993, 521-527.

<sup>65</sup> In this respect, see the conclusive findings presented in Boiy 2007, 84-89.

Demetrius, son of Antigonos, who is referred to as single sovereign ruler, in a moment that, for this reason, has to be considered subsequent to the death of his predecessor. Since the treaty is explicitly dated "to the third year of the reign of Demetrius" (lines 1-2: [ἀγαθῇ] τύχηι βασιλεύοντος Δημη[τρίου] / [τοῦ Ἀν]τιγόνου ἔτους τρίτου), the inscription cannot be attributed to the time of Demetrius Poliorketes, whose third year of reign, however computed, was certainly shared in a joint kingship with his father<sup>66</sup>. Therefore, the inscription must be dated to the time of Demetrius II. Yet, if the third year of the reign of Demetrius II was subsequent to the death of his father and predecessor, it is clear that to this king no "twenty-seventh year of reign" can be attributed, because he survived Gonatas for 10 years only, as he was on the throne from 239 until 229, the year of his death.

It is thus necessary:

- a) to accept the attribution to Poliorketes of the manumission act (*EKM* 1.Beroia 45), dated to the twenty-seventh year of the reign of a king Demetrius;
- b) to abandon the idea of a joint kingship between Antigonos Gonatas and Demetrius II, for which there is no evidence, either literary or epigraphic;
- c) to date to the time of Monophthalmus and Poliorketes the decree of the Islanders (*IG* XI 4, 1036) that instituted the festivals for Demetrius (τὰ Δημητρίεια), to be celebrated in alternate years with the existing festivals in honour of Antigonos (τὰ Αντιγόνεια), because the text assumes the existence of a joint kingship.

Hence, refuting Meadows' hypothesis of lowering the date of the above mentioned decree of the Islanders (*IG* XI 4, 1036), the *Antigoneia* that it mentions cannot be considered as the granting of ἰσόθεοι τιμαί to Gonatas. Therefore, the traditionalist attitude officially held at Delos by the sovereign remains confirmed, without "openings" to ruler cult.

With this in mind, if we assume the ἰσόθεοι τιμαί offered to Antigonos by the *deme* of Rhamnous<sup>67</sup> to be an autonomous local choice, without any official Macedonian input, we can then consider them a cult offered to the sovereign in a seemingly spontaneous manner, by a Greek *polis* wishing to win his sympathy and thus enhance the security of its territory and the welfare of its inhabitants<sup>68</sup>.

It is therefore no longer possible to say that Antigonos "was never worshipped by anybody", as William Tarn did in his book a century ago<sup>69</sup>, but seems however justified the opinion that Antigonos Gonatas did not officially encouraged the worship of himself: in fact, he attended the sanctuary at Delos in the traditional way, without conceding anything to ruler cult.

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<sup>66</sup> It is noteworthy that in her edition Guarducci dates the inscription to the second half of the third century on palaeographic grounds. Although the palaeographic criterion can never be regarded as conclusive, in this case, it seems to confirm what we concluded, starting from the contents of the text.

<sup>67</sup> Petrakos 1999, n. 7, 11-13.

<sup>68</sup> On this type of "spontaneous" cult present in many cities during the Hellenistic period there is ample modern bibliography: of particular importance remain the observations in Virgilio 2003b, 87-109; Domingo Gygax 2013, 45-60.

<sup>69</sup> Tarn 1913, 250.

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