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PYRRHOS, ROYAL SELF-PRESENTATION, AND THE NATURE OF THE HELLENISTIC EPEIROTE STATE*

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Résumé. – Cet article examine comment deux dédicaces de Pyrrhos d'Épire en 274 av. J.-C. ont été soigneusement adaptées aux contextes politiques et historiques locaux, montrant comment les dirigeants hellénistiques pouvaient adapter leur auto-présentation aux discours locaux du pouvoir même dans des régions qui partageaient largement leurs origines culturelles. Il remet également en question certaines implications pour l'étude de l'État épirote hellénistique.

Abstract. – This article examines how two dedications by Pyrrhos of Epeiros in 274 BC were carefully fashioned to suit local political and historical contexts, showing how Hellenistic rulers could adapt their self-presentation to local discourses of power even in regions that broadly shared their cultural backgrounds. It also discusses some implications for study of the Hellenistic Epeirote state

Mots-clés. – Pyrrhos, Épire, royauté hellénistique.

Keywords. – Pyrrhos, Epeiros, Hellenistic kingship.

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This article examines how two dedications made by Pyrrhos of Epeiros to commemorate his victory over Antigonos Gonatas in 274 presented his achievement in markedly different ways.¹ By analysing how Pyrrhos' dedications were adapted to the contemporary political landscapes of their locales, I will suggest that the well-studied tendency of Hellenistic rulers to adapt their self-presentation to local discourses of power could be as important and granular a mode of royal presentation in areas where the cultural distance between king and subject was small (such as Epeiros and Macedon) as in those areas where this distance was larger (such as Egypt or many Seleukid territories). I will also consider some important implications which arise for the nature of the Hellenistic Epeirote state.

PYRRHOS AND ANTIGONOS IN 274

In spring 274, Pyrrhos king of Epeiros marched on Macedonia with an army of 8,000 infantry and 500 cavalry.² Short of money following his Italian adventures, he hoped to maintain his forces with Macedonian plunder. Antigonos Gonatas, son of Demetrios Poliorketes, had only recently gained control of Macedonia following his victory near Lysimacheia in late 277.³ That Gonatas had not had long to secure the loyalty of the Macedonians, combined with Pyrrhos' well-attested charisma, explains why towns in Upper Macedonia and two thousand Macedonian troops went over to Pyrrhos.⁴ Encouraged, Pyrrhos pressed on, and met Antigonos' army at a place Plutarch calls 'the narrows' (τὰ στενὰ), doubtless a mountain pass somewhere in Upper Macedonia.⁵ Antigonos suffered a crushing defeat: according to Plutarch, his army was thrown into confusion, his rearguard of Gallic mercenaries was cut apart, his elephants surrendered, and finally his demoralised phalanx joined Pyrrhos. Antigonos fled eastward to Thessalonike, and Pyrrhos gained most of Macedonia.

1. All dates BC.

2. Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, XXVI 2-7; Justin XXV 3. Discussion: P. LÉVÊQUE, *Pyrrhos*, Paris 1957, p. 561-563; N. G. L. HAMMOND, F. W. WALBANK, *A History of Macedonia Volume III: 336-167 B.C.*, Oxford 1988, p. 259-263; R. LANE FOX, "The Reigns of Antigonos Gonatas and Demetrius II" in R. LANE FOX ed., *Brill's Companion to Ancient Macedon: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon, 650 BC – 300 AD*, Leiden, Boston 2011, p. 495-519 at p. 503-504; C. J. KING, *Ancient Macedonia*, London, New York 2017, p. 236-237.

3. Battle of Lysimacheia: Justin XXV 1.1-2.7; Diog. Laert. II 141-142. Victory here gained Antigonos sufficient support to be acclaimed king in Macedonia: Memnon F1 8.8; Paus. I 16.2; R. LANE FOX, *op. cit.* 2011, p. 500-502.

4. Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, XXVI 3. Pyrrhos' dash and youth was said to remind the Macedonians of Alexander the Great and this formed a key element of his appeal: Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, VIII 1-2, *Demetrios* XLI 3; A. B. BOSWORTH, *The Legacy of Alexander: Politics, Warfare, and Propaganda under the Successors*, Oxford 2002, p. 253-255.

5. The exact location is disputed: see N. G. L. HAMMOND, F. W. WALBANK, *op. cit.*, 1988, p. 261-262; R. LANE FOX, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 503.

To commemorate this victory, Pyrrhos dedicated two groups of shields, each accompanied by an inscription: one in Dodona in Epeiros and one in a sanctuary of Athena Itonia in Thessaly.⁶ The differences between these two dedications point towards Pyrrhos' goals at the time, and highlight how Hellenistic monarchs adapted their political messaging to local circumstances even in areas where there was little to no cultural distance between king and local community.

Pyrrhos' Thessalian dedication also throws light on the nature of the contemporary Epeirote state. In this dedication, Pyrrhos calls himself 'the Molossian'. The Molossians were a prominent ethnos in the region of Epeiros, and Pyrrhos' royal house, the Aiakids, had ruled them for centuries. But from the late fourth century the Molossians were only one group in a larger Aiakid-led Epeirote state. Therefore in Thessaly in 274 one might have expected Pyrrhos to call himself 'Epeirote'. However, Pyrrhos' choice to call himself Molossian may represent an attempt to co-opt for his own purposes existing good relations between the Molossians and some Thessalian communities. The complex of relationships between Pyrrhos, the Molossians, and Thessalians which emerges from the evidence leads us to a better understanding both of the early Hellenistic Epeirote state, and of how Hellenistic monarchs could turn the 'social relations' between Greek communities to their own advantage.

THE DEDICATION AT DODONA

The Macedonian shields captured in the battle with Antigonos were dedicated to Zeus at Dodona in Epeiros. Pausanias records the accompanying inscription:⁷

Αἶδε ποτ' Ἀσίδα γαῖαν ἐπόρθησαν πολύχρυσον,
αἶδε καὶ Ἑλλασιν<ν> δουλοσύναν ἔπορον.
νῦν δὲ Διὸς ναῶ ποτὶ κίονας ὀρφανὰ κείται
τὰς μεγαλαυχίῳ σκύλα Μακεδονίας.

"These once sacked Asia rich in gold; these also bestowed slavery on the Greeks. Now they lie neglected by the pillars of the temple of Zeus, spoils of boastful Macedonia."

If Pyrrhos' goal at this time was to conquer Macedonia, this dedication seems ill-advised: its message was unlikely to win round the Macedonians. Plutarch says Pyrrhos 'hoped for something more' after Macedonian soldiers and cities started to join him.⁸ Walbank argued that Pyrrhos' prior success in Macedon made another attempt at the Macedonian throne a

6. Paus. I 13.2-3; P. LÉVÊQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 565-568. Other possible dedications of spoils from this battle: M. LAUNY, *Recherches sur les armées hellénistiques*, Paris 1949-1950, I 500 n. 2; M. M. MARKLE, "A Shield Monument from Veria and the Chronology of Macedonian Shield Types", *Hesperia* 68, 1999, p. 219-254.

7. Paus. I 13.3.

8. Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, XXVI 3: "ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ πόλεις ἐλάμβανε συχνὰς καὶ στρατιῶται δισχίλοι μετέστησαν ὡς αὐτόν, ἐλπίσας τι πλεόν".

tempting prospect.⁹ But, as mentioned, Plutarch says the invasion was initially geared towards plunder, not territorial conquest. Pyrrhos' actions after victory over Antigonos suggest a lack of concern for securing Macedon permanently. He alienated the Macedonians by not punishing the Gallic garrison he had installed at Aigai after they plundered the royal tombs. But even before this Plutarch says he treated the city's population harshly, while Diodoros says Pyrrhos' Gallic troops plundered the tombs after Pyrrhos had already sacked the city.¹⁰ Pyrrhos soon left Macedonian affairs in the hands of his son Ptolemy: he evidently did not consider securing Macedonia a high enough priority to personally oversee.¹¹ Alongside the Dodona dedication, we would have to believe that Pyrrhos was quite incompetent if he did all this while intending to hold Macedon. Appeals to the irrationality of Pyrrhos' character cannot satisfactorily explain his actions.¹² Alongside other evidence, Pyrrhos' Dodona dedication suggests we should view his actions not as a failed attempt to conquer Macedonia, but as a profitable predatory adventure.¹³

Turning to the dedication's inscription, reference to past Macedonian glories elevated Pyrrhos' successes by highlighting the reputation of his defeated foes. The Macedonian conquest of Asia is placed firmly in the past and Macedonia is called boastful, implying that Macedonian achievements had now been eclipsed by their defeat. Sending Macedonian spoils to Dodona was shrewd: many of Pyrrhos' subjects would have remembered the 20-year domination of Epeirote affairs by Kassandros from 317, and would have welcomed messages of Macedonian humiliation.¹⁴

Calling the Macedonians enslavers of Greeks also painted Pyrrhos as avenger of these past wrongs. Such sentiments could serve Pyrrhos well in challenging Macedonian hegemony on the Greek mainland. Portraying oneself as the defender of Greek freedom was a useful

9. N. G. L. HAMMOND, F. W. WALBANK, *op. cit.*, p. 259. Pyrrhos had previously invaded Macedon (twice) in 289-288, once briefly on his own then as part of a coalition of kings against Demetrios Poliorketes, and proved popular with the Macedonians: Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, X-XI; *Demetrios*, XLIII-XLIV. The chronology of these events is complex: see discussion in P. WHEATLEY, "The Lifespan of Demetrius Poliorketes", *Historia* 46, 1997, p. 19-27, esp. 21 n. 13.

10. Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, XXVI 6; Diod. Sic. XXII 12.

11. Justin XXV 3.6-8; P. LÉVÊQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 569-571.

12. N. G. L. HAMMOND, F. W. WALBANK, *op. cit.* 1988, p. 263, where Walbank questions the relevance of applying rational analysis to the aims of volatile Pyrrhos.

13. Importance of predatory warfare: M. M. AUSTIN, "Hellenistic Kings, War and the Economy", *CQ* 36, 1986, p. 450-466.

14. On how Macedonian domination engendered a regional sense of community in Molossia and Epeiros, see E. A. MEYER, *The Inscriptions of Dodona and a New History of Molossia*, Stuttgart 2013, esp. p. 72-79 and p. 122-127.

option to any enemy of the king of Macedon.¹⁵ Dodona's oracle attracted visitors from all over the Greek world, ensuring Pyrrhos' portrayal of his defence of Greek freedom would reach a broad audience.¹⁶

Dodona was the most important regional centre in Epeiros, and commemorating military success here would reassure Pyrrhos' own subjects that he could still lead them to glory. Epeirotes had quite recently driven out kings with whom they were dissatisfied, including Pyrrhos' own father Aiakides in 317 and Pyrrhos himself in 302, and Pyrrhos' withdrawal from Italy must have damaged his reputation.¹⁷ However, unlike in the Thessalian dedication (see below), neither Pyrrhos nor Antigonos is named, and the events which led to the capture of these shields are left unspecified. Emphasis is instead placed more generally on the reputation and crimes of the Macedonians, and their despoliation. Overt self-glorification by Pyrrhos in an inscription calling the Macedonians boastful would perhaps have been self-defeating. But focusing on Macedonian defeat, rather than Pyrrhos' victory, perhaps implied that the victory belonged to all opponents of Macedon. Calling the Macedonians enslavers of the Greeks helped lend the victory a panhellenic flavour, further inviting the reader to see Macedonian defeat as a victory for all Greeks. Therefore the inscription blurs the specifics of events in 274 to present a more general message of humiliation inflicted on powerful enemies of the Greeks. Given contemporary Epeirote animosity toward Macedonians, and more general Hellenic animosity toward Macedonian domination, it is not surprising that Pyrrhos thought this presentation would be most effective in Dodona, a sanctuary with both regional importance and panhellenic reach.

In spite of Pyrrhos' absence from the inscription, there can have been little doubt whose reputation the dedication burnished. Locals were probably only too happy to tie the monument to Pyrrhos if asked by an uncertain visitor. The dedication at Dodona was certainly a glorification to a home crowd of a significant military victory. But more noteworthy is how Pyrrhos held back from overt self-aggrandisement and focused on celebrating Macedonian defeat, in an attempt to present himself to Dodona's broad audience as a defender of Greek freedom.

15. In 315 Antigonos Monophthalmos, denouncing his rival Kassandros (Diod. Sic. XIX 61-62.2), declared that the Greeks should be 'free, autonomous, and exempt from garrisons' (εἶναι δὲ καὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἅπαντας ἐλευθέρους, ἀφρουρήτους, αὐτονόμους) in an attempt to win general support among the Greek cities. After this, declaring oneself a champion of Greek freedom became almost a required stance for Hellenistic kings: S. DMITRIEV, *The Greek Slogan of Freedom and Early Roman Politics in Greece*, Oxford 2011, p. 112-141.

16. Lead question tablets excavated at Dodona show that travellers came from across the Greek world: E. LHÔTE, *Les Lamelles oraculaires de Dodone*, Geneva 2006; S. DAKARIS, J. VOKOTOPOULOU, A. P. CHRISTIDIS, *Τα Χρηστήρια Ἐλάσματα τῆς Δωδώνης τῶν ἀνασκαφῶν Δ. Εὐαγγελίδη*, Athens 2013.

17. Aiakides driven out: Diod. Sic. XIX 36.3-4; Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, II 1. Pyrrhos' 302 expulsion: Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, IV 1. The Epeirotes even killed a king, Alketas II, with his sons c.311 because of his harsh rule: Diod. Sic. XIX 89.3; Paus. I 11.5. For discussion: E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 123-125.

THE DEDICATION IN THESSALY

While the Macedonian shields went to Dodona, Pyrrhos dedicated captured Gallic shields in a temple of Itonian Athena in Thessaly. Pausanias and Plutarch record the accompanying inscription:¹⁸

Τοὺς θυρεοὺς ὁ Μολοσσὸς Ἰτωνίδι δῶρον Ἀθάνᾳ
 Πύρρος ἀπὸ θρασέων ἐκρέμασεν Γαλατᾶν,
 πάντα τὸν Ἀντιγόνου καθελὼν στρατόν· οὐ μέγα θαῦμα·
 αἰχμηταὶ καὶ νῦν καὶ πάρος Αἰακίδαι.

“These shields, now suspended here as a gift to Athena Itonis, Pyrrhos the Molossian took from valiant Gauls, after defeating the entire army of Antigonos; which is no great wonder; for now, as well as in olden time, the Aiakidai are brave spearmen.” (trans. Perrin).

As Tarn recognised, this dedication should be linked to Pyrrhos’ interest in Thessaly.¹⁹ Thessaly had been effectively Macedonian territory since the reign of Philip II. Though Macedonian control may have broken down during the Gallic invasions (see below), the absence of Thessalian delegates on the Amphiktyonic Council from (at least) 277/6 suggests that Gonatas reasserted Antigonid control here around the time he gained Macedon itself.²⁰ But following Antigonos’ defeat, Pyrrhos could entertain Thessalian ambitions. Various elements of the dedication and the inscription worked in concert to help enhance Pyrrhos’ prestige in Thessaly: this is a dense piece of political communication.²¹

First, the location. Pausanias locates Pyrrhos’ dedication in a sanctuary of Athena Itonia ‘between Pherai and Larissa’.²² This cannot be the sanctuary of Athena Itonia in southwestern Thessaly at modern Philia Karditsis which served as a meeting place and centre of display

18. Paus. I 13.2; Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, XXVI 5. Also at Diod. Sic. XXII 11.1; Anth. Pal. 6.130, attributed to Leonidas of Tarentum (fl. mid-3rd century); A. S. F. GOW, D. L. PAGE, *The Greek Anthology: Hellenistic Epigrams*, Cambridge 1965, II. p. 392-393; J. CLACK, *Asclepiades of Samos and Leonidas of Tarentum: The Poems*, Wauconda Ill. 1999, p. 178-179.

19. W.W. TARN, *Antigonos Gonatas*, Oxford 1913, p. 265.

20. There are Thessalian delegates recorded for 279/8 or 278/7 (*CID* IV 12) but none in 277/6 (*CID* IV 14) and we know of no more until Nikostratos son of Anaxippos of Larissa in 186/5 (*CID* IV 106, dating to 184/3). This has been linked to the growing dominance of the Amphiktyony by the Aitolians, the reintegration of Thessaly into a Macedonian sphere of influence early in the 270s by Antigonos Gonatas, and the poor relations between Gonatas and the Aitolians: N. G. L. HAMMOND, F. W. WALBANK, *op. cit.*, p. 269; P. LEFÈVRE, *L’Amphictionie pyléo-delphique: histoire et institutions*, Athens-Paris 1998, p. 27-28; P. SÁNCHEZ, *L’Amphictionie des Pyles et de Delphes*, Stuttgart 2001, p. 291-5, who emphasises that the impetus for the exclusion of states under Macedonian domination from the Amphiktyony must have come from Gonatas, not the Aitolians, and that evidence for this arrangement is poor outside of the reign of Gonatas. Macedonian overlordship did not dissolve all common Thessalian organisation, as third century inscriptions attest to some ability of ‘the Thessalians’ to act together as an organised community: R. PARKER, “The Thessalian Olympia”, *ZPE* 177, 2011, p. 111-118.

21. W. W. TARN, *op. cit.*; P. LÉVÊQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 565-567.

22. Paus. I 13.2.

for the Thessalian *koinon* from at least the post-Flaminian period.²³ A common solution is to think that Pausanias erred and meant the sanctuary near Philia.²⁴ But as Mili has recently discussed, the cult of Athena Itonis was reasonably widespread by this period, especially in central Greece, and the existence of a sanctuary of Athena Itonis between Pherai and Larissa in the early third century is perfectly plausible.²⁵ A sanctuary on a route between two of Thessaly's most important cities would have attracted many visitors, making it a better place than most for Pyrrhos' dedication to be seen by many Thessalians. Given that Gonatas' power base in Thessaly was centred on his father's foundation Demetrias, a dedication in eastern Thessaly would also have been a more direct challenge to Antigonos' control of Thessaly than a monument at the Philia sanctuary.

Why did Pyrrhos dedicate Gallic shields in Thessaly? Perhaps it made sense to emphasise victory over Gauls rather than Macedonians in Thessaly, even though Gallic troops had only formed the rearguard of Antigonos' defeated army. Years of Macedonian overlordship had doubtless created pro-Macedonian parties within many Thessalian communities, making celebrating victory over Macedonians a riskier affair in Thessaly than in Epeiros. But there were other advantages to stressing victory specifically over Gauls in Thessaly. A Gallic invasion of central Greece had only recently been turned back by a Greek coalition defending Delphi in winter 279/8. Our sources differ on the role of Thessalian communities in the invasion, and different communities doubtless engaged with the invading forces differently.²⁶ But the passage of a large army of (to Greek eyes) barbarians through central Greece must have been remembered locally as a highly traumatic event.²⁷ Moreover, the Gallic invasion established Gauls as the new archetypal barbarian for the Hellenistic age, enemies of fearsome

23. A. TZIAFALIAS, B. HELLY, "Deux décrets inédits de Larissa", *BCH* 128/129, 2004-2005, p. 377-420, at p. 396-399; R. PARKER, *op. cit.*, p. 115; M. MILI, *Religion and Society in Ancient Thessaly*, Oxford 2015, p. 227-233.

24. R. PARKER, *op. cit.*, p. 115 n. 29; D. GRANINGER, *Cult and Koinon in Hellenistic Thessaly*, Leiden-Boston 2011, p. 52-54. P. LÉVÊQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 566-567 suggested that Pausanias meant Larisa Kremaste in Phthiotic Achaia, making the site of Pyrrhos' dedication Itonos in Phthiotic Achaia, but this seems an unlikely reading.

25. M. MILI, *op. cit.*, p. 229-233. D. GRANINGER, *op. cit.*, p. 43-86 argues that several sanctuaries of Athena Itonis in Thessaly, not just the one at Philia, had a pan-Thessalian role at various points. Though the evidence is inconclusive, this is a useful reminder that we should not project backward the arrangements of Hellenistic *koina* onto earlier periods when regional dynamics may well have been more fluid.

26. Just. XXIV 7.2 relates that Thessalians had joined with the army of Brennos, but following the battle before Delphi (XXIV 8.15) has the peoples along the army's retreat route (which included Thessaly) attack the survivors. Paus. X 23.13 has the Thessalians harry the defeated Gauls as they retreat north from Delphi.

27. Paus. X 19.12 has the Greeks hear of the terrible acts being suffered by the Thessalians during the second Gallic invasion, and later (X 22.2) relates the wanton brutality the invaders inflicted upon the Kallieans. While these accounts doubtless exaggerated the cruelty of the invaders for ideological purposes, there can be no doubt that the criss-crossing of central Greece by a large army intent on plunder was highly disruptive for local communities.

number and skill whose defeat could be equated with the defence of Greek culture.²⁸ This made victory over Gallic troops particularly worth celebrating by rulers hoping to win over Greek communities.²⁹ Therefore, by highlighting in a Thessalian sanctuary his defeat of Gallic troops, Pyrrhos hoped to take advantage of the recent local experience of Gallic invasion and of more general associations to enhance his own prestige locally.

The foregrounding of Pyrrhos' Aiakid heritage was also targeted specifically at Thessalians, and represents an attempt to take advantage of the mythic connections between Epeiros and Thessaly. By the early third century, multiple traditions linked Thessaly and northwest Greece.³⁰ Many related to Neoptolemos, son of Achilles, from whom Pyrrhos claimed descent.³¹ The *Nostoi* have Neoptolemos travelling to Molossia before settling in Phthia.³² Pindar knew similar stories. The sixth Paian notes Neoptolemos' arrival in Molossia and its proximity to Mt Tomaros.³³ In the fourth Nemean, he describes Neoptolemos ruling in Apeiros, from Dodona to the Ionian Sea.³⁴ In the seventh Nemean, he says that Neoptolemos

28. S. MITCHELL, "The Galatians: Representation and Reality" in A. ERSKINE ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Oxford 2003, p. 280-293.

29. Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, XXVI 5 says that Pyrrhos himself thought this achievement over the Gauls brought him the most glory (ὁ δὲ Πύρρος ἐν εὐτυχίῃσιν τοσούτοις μέγιστον αὐτῷ πρὸς δόξαν οἰόμενος διαπεπράχθαι τὸ περὶ τοὺς Γαλάτας). This suggests that Pyrrhos himself more broadly advertised his defeat of Gauls as particularly worth celebrating, since Plutarch is here probably drawing upon an encomiastic account of the king's career written by his court historian Proxenos: B. RAYNOR, "Alexander I of Molossia and the Creation of Apeiros", *Chiron* 47, 2017, p. 243-270.

30. Diverse factors doubtless led to sustained interaction and familiarity over a long period between communities in Thessaly and Epeiros. A combination of geographical factors led to Epeirote populations interacting more with Illyrian, Macedonian, and Thessalian populations to north and east than with coastal Greeks to south and west: J. K. DAVIES, "A Wholly Non-Aristotelian Universe: The Molossians as Ethnos, State, and Monarchy" in R. BROCK, S. HODKINSON, *Alternatives to Athens: Varieties of Political Organization and Community in Ancient Greece*, Oxford 2000, p. 234-58, at p. 234-236. Similar social and economic lives configured by transhumant pastoralism on either side of the Pindos mountain range as an important mode of economic production and community organisation may also have engendered familiarity and regular exchange between Epeirote and (western) Thessalian communities: on pastoralism in Epeiros, a useful summary in P. CABANES, "L'Épire et l'Illyrie méridionale", *REG* 102, 1989, p. 146-59, at p. 152-155. However, this article is not the place for a full elaboration of all Thessalian-Epeirote connections and their historical development. Here I will focus on the mythological traditions which informed Pyrrhos' self-representation in his dedication in Thessaly, as well as (below) particular forms of Molossian-Thessalian connection which can be concretely identified in the epigraphic record at this time and were (I will argue) also relevant to Pyrrhos in this context.

31. Aiakid genealogy and Neoptolemos: N. G. CROSS, *Epirus. A Study in Greek constitutional development*, Cambridge 1932, p. 100-102; S. FUNKE, *Aiakidenmythos und epeirosches Königtum. Der Weg einer hellenischen Monarchie*, Stuttgart 2000, p. 23-101.

32. Proclus in A. BERNABÉ ed., *Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum. Testimonia et Fragmenta Pars I*, Leipzig 1987, p. 95.

33. Pindar, *Paian*, VI 109.

34. Pindar, *Nem.*, IV 51-53.

ruled in Molossia briefly, and his *genos* always bore the honour from this.³⁵ Euripides' *Andromache* gives a different origin for Aiakid rule in Epeiros, and has been read by some scholars in the context of cooperation between Athenians, Molossians, and Thessalians early in the Peloponnesian War.³⁶ Euripides has Andromache and her son by Neoptolemos move west out of Thessaly following Neoptolemos' death, with the family's subsequent rule framed as a 'divinely sanctioned reward' for the Aiakid line.³⁷ Variants of these origin stories multiply as time goes on. In the third century Eratosthenes has Neoptolemos recognise the fulfilment of a prophecy by Helenos when he comes to Pambotis in Epeiros, and then move to Molossia, where he has Molossos by Andromache.³⁸ Pausanias tries to reconcile some conflicting versions circulating by the second century AD: he has the son of Achilles (whom he calls Pyrrhos) produce three sons with Andromache, with one (Molossos) providing an eponymous progenitor for the Molossians and another (Pielos) founding the royal line.³⁹ Variation did not prevent such stories from providing a shared and flexible heroic past to act as conceptual background around which communities could structure relations. By highlighting his connection to heroic kings in Thessaly, Pyrrhos perhaps suggested a stronger regional claim to power than the defeated Gonatas. It may also have been a particularly good moment to highlight this descent, as Neoptolemos, whose tomb was at Delphi, was later said to have helped the Greeks gain victory there in 279/8.⁴⁰ If stories of Neoptolemos' aid during the defence of Delphi developed quickly, or were perhaps encouraged by Pyrrhos himself, two elements of Pyrrhos' inscription (emphasising victory over Gauls and descent from Neoptolemos) would have both worked to take advantage of recent circumstances. At the very least, foregrounding the Aiakid genealogy highlighted Pyrrhos' personal connections with Thessaly based on descent from storied heroes. Such connections of kinship and shared history were powerful tools in interstate relations.⁴¹

35. Pindar, *Nem.*, VII 37-39. Pindar seems to indicate that he is a proxenos of the Molossian ruling house later in the ode, when he refers to trusting in his proxenia with them if any 'Achaians living above the Ionian Sea' are nearby and judging his tale: 64-65. If these Achaians were the royal house of Molossia, then this attests to their early claim to descent from heroes.

36. See discussion in W. ALLAN, *The Andromache and Euripidean Tragedy*, Oxford 2000, p. 149-160, where Allan argues that the resonances with contemporary politics should not dominate interpretations of the play's genesis and meaning.

37. Eur., *Andromache*, 1243-1249. Quote from W. ALLAN, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

38. Eratosthenes *FGrH* 241 F42.

39. Paus. I 11.1-2.

40. Paus. I 4.4. Although Pausanias here claims that Neoptolemos' tomb at Delphi did not receive cult honours until after his aid in the defence of Delphi, a cult of Neoptolemos at Delphi is attested in Pindar: B. CURRIE, *Pindar and the Cult of Heroes*, Oxford 2005, p. 296-307; see also P. LÉVÊQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 567 n. 2.

41. C. P. JONES, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, Cambridge Mass. 1999. It is worth noting that Pindar's 10th Pythian was written for the Aleuads of Larissa praising their Heraklid ancestry, while Hegemon *FGrH* 110 F 1 (3rd century?) called that family's founder, Aleuas, son of Thessalos. Therefore at least one leading family among the cities Pyrrhos was trying to woo appear to have emphasised their own heroic ancestry. Perhaps Pyrrhos chose to do the same because he judged local elites in Thessaly particularly receptive to such a strategy.

Other evidence suggests that Pyrrhos' attempt to utilise such stories of heroes was only one part of a wider interest in traditions which linked Thessaly and Epeiros. Some of these traditions had the Thessalians originate in northwest Greece.⁴² Herodotos claimed that the wall across the Thermopylae pass had first been built by the Phokians out of fear when the (later) Thessalians invaded Thessaly from Thesprotia.⁴³ Later, Strabo gives a more heroic version: descendants of Antiphos and Pheidippos, sons of Thessalos son of Herakles, invaded Thessaly from Ephyra in Thesprotia and named the land after their ancestor.⁴⁴ Other traditions gave specific Thessalian places and populations a past with Epeirote connections. The fact that many may derive from Kineas of Thessaly, who acted as an ambassador for Pyrrhos, and therefore may not substantially predate the early third century, is intriguing. One fragment of Kineas deals with the multiple sites called Ephyra, said to be the name both of a town in Thesprotia and a former name of Krannon in Thessaly (among others).⁴⁵ Another has the oracle of Zeus at Dodona originate in Thessaly.⁴⁶ Older stories linking Thessalian populations with the northwest suggest that Kineas may have been elaborating existing traditions rather than inventing them wholesale. For instance, the Perrhaibians were a Thessalian *perioikic* population living south of Mt Olympos, yet in the *Iliad*, Homer places them both around the foothills of Olympos ('lovely Titaessus') and near 'wintry Dodona'.⁴⁷ But Kineas' interest in the shared past of Thessaly and Epeiros suggests that a broad emphasis on shared background which went beyond the Aiakids may have underpinned Pyrrhos' attempts to woo Thessalian communities.

42. I. MALKIN, *The Returns of Odysseus. Colonization and Ethnicity*, Berkeley-London 1998, p. 120-155, gathers and analyses much evidence for the place of Epeiros in myth, including the suggestion that it was the original homeland of all Greeks (Aristotle *Mete.* 352a 33-34), but here I will focus on specifically Thessalian-Epeirote links.

43. Herod. VII 176.4, referring to Thessaly as 'the Aiolian land which [the Thessalians] now hold'. Thuc. I 12.3 also has the Thessalians as invaders, driving out the Boiotians sixty years after the fall of Troy, but he does not specify from where the Thessalians invaded.

44. Strabo IX 23.

45. Kineas *FGrH* 603 F1. See also Apollodoros *FGrH* 244 F179; Strabo VIII 3.5-6, who also collects Homeric testimony on Ephyra, renowned for its poisonous herbs. All these sources indicate that there was substantial disagreement over which of the multiple known Ephyrai was mentioned by Homer, presumably because all settlements with that name wished to claim the prestige associated with such an identification. Thucydides (I 46.4) knows an Ephyra in Thesprotia. That Ephyra in Strabo's (IX 23) story of Antiphos and Pheidippos was the two brothers' start point for the invasion of Thessaly (see above) was perhaps a late attempt to integrate traditions surrounding the Thessalian invasion and the existence of multiple places called Ephyra.

46. Kineas *FGrH* 603 F2. See also Souidas *FGrH* 602 F11; B. KOWALZIG, *Singing for the Gods: Performances of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece*, Oxford 2007, p. 343-349.

47. Homer, *Iliad*, II 748-755.

Some of these traditions linked Thessaly to Thesprotia, not Molossia.⁴⁸ Yet by Pyrrhos' reign Aiakid leadership extended to Thesprotia in some form as well.⁴⁹ This allowed Pyrrhos to use stories of Thessalian-Thesprotian connections in his efforts to increase his influence in Thessaly, an option not available to those of his royal forbears who ruled only Molossia. This suggests we should think of the benefits of territorial expansion for kings not only in terms of economic returns or the prestige attached to military success, but also of the benefits of adding the cultural resources of conquered regions, such as their place within shared mythologies, to the royal arsenal for use in interstate relations. Such shared pasts provided communities with useful connections in the shifting landscape of Greek interstate relations, and only became more important in the Hellenistic period.⁵⁰ This importance underlies Pyrrhos' attempts to take advantage of, or have individuals like Kineas formulate, such connections when seeking to increase his influence in Thessaly.

While the importance of shared mythology to Pyrrhos' self-presentation in his Thessalian dedication has long been recognised,⁵¹ Pyrrhos referring to himself as Molossian has received little attention, perhaps because at first glance it is unsurprising. The Aiakid house had ruled the Molossians since at least the fifth century.⁵² Although early evidence for Aiakid genealogies has them distinct from the Molossians they ruled (see above), later versions linked Aiakids and the Molossians more closely. An early third century dedication at Dodona from a Zakynthian proxenos of the Molossians extends Trojan descent from the house of Cassandra to all Molossians.⁵³ As mentioned above, an eponymous hero Molossos appears in some later versions of the royal genealogy as a son of Neoptolemos.⁵⁴ Aischines and Aristotle both referred to Alexander I (ruled c. 343/2 – 331/0), as 'the Molossian'.⁵⁵ Therefore it would be unsurprising if Pyrrhos thought of himself as Molossian.

48. Early traditions about links between Thessaly and Epeiros may have focused on Thesprotia because of Thesprotian control of Dodona before Molossian expansion in the mid-fourth century: E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 60-64.

49. The nature of Aiakid leadership and Molossian/Epeirote territorial control and expansion in the late Classical/early Hellenistic period is disputed and will be fully discussed later in this article.

50. C. P. JONES, *op. cit.*, p. 50-65.

51. W. W. TARN, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

52. A Molossian king Admetus appears as part of Thucydides' colourful account of Themistocles' flight: Thuc. 1.136-7. Tharyps, whose reign ended around the end of the fifth century, is the first historically visible Aiakid: N. G. L. HAMMOND, *Epirus. The Geography, the Ancient Remains, the History and the Topography of Epirus and Adjacent Areas*, Oxford 1967, p. 508; E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 115-116. S. FUNKE, *op. cit.*, p. 104-117 argues for Aiakid rule in Molossia since at least the 7th century BC based on the early literary references discussed here.

53. P. M. FRASER, "Agathon and Cassandra (*IG IX.1² 4.1750*)", *JHS* 123, 2003, p. 26-40.

54. Though to Eratosthenes (*FGrH* 241 F42) he is still an ancestor of the royal house only, not the Molossians themselves: E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 74, n. 204.

55. Aisch. 3.242; Aristotle frg. 614 (Rose).

Yet this aspect of Pyrrhos' self-presentation was probably more than a straightforward expression of ethnic identity. We must consider Pyrrhos' decision to call himself Molossian in light of two contemporary political phenomena: Molossian-Thessalian relations and Molossia's integration into a larger Epeirote state. Given these contexts, Pyrrhos calling himself Molossian probably represents an attempt to co-opt existing good relations between the Molossians and some Thessalian communities. This suggests that the exercise of some freedom in external relations by the Molossians, instead of representing a challenge to the king's authority, could create opportunities for Pyrrhos to exploit in the international arena. This has important implications for how we conceptualise the monarchic state and its prerogatives in late Classical and Hellenistic northern Greece.

MOLOSSIAN-THESSALIAN CONNECTIONS AND ROYAL OPPORTUNITIES

By at least the late fourth century, the Molossians were awarding honours to foreign benefactors. Our most complete relevant surviving text is a bronze plaque found in the sanctuary of Zeus at Dodona.⁵⁶ It records the Molossians awarding a number of honours to one Lagetas, son of Lagetas, a benefactor from Pherai in Thessaly:

Θεός. Λαγέται Λαγέτα Θεσσαλῶι Φε-
 ραίῳι Μολοσσοῖ ἐδωκαν εὐεργέται ἐόν-
 τι καὶ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκγόνοις προξενίαν, πολι-
 4 τείαν, ἔνκτασιν, ἀτέλειαν καὶ ἐντέλει-
 αν καὶ ἀσυλίαν καὶ ἀσφάλειαν καὶ αὐ-
 τοῖς καὶ χρήμασι[ν] πολέμου καὶ εἰρήνα-
 8 ς, προστατέοντ[ο]ς Λυσανία Ὀμφαλος, γρά-
 μματιστᾶ [Δο]κίμου Ὀμφαλος, ἱερομνα-
 μονευ[ό]ντων [Λαφύ]ργα. [Ὀμφα]λος, Φιλίππου
 Γενοα[ί]ου [. . . . 10] Ὀνοπέρου, Σί-
 12 μου Λ[. 15] Ἀρχτάνος, Ἀνα-
 ξάν[δ]ρου 12]ο λυκκα Ὀρραί-
 τα Λε[. 16] Μ]ενεδάμου
 Πείαλ[ος ἐπὶ βασιλέος Νεοππολέ]μου Ἀλεξά-
 νδρου.

"God. To Lagetas (son) of Lagetas, Thessalian from Pherai, being a benefactor, the Molossoi gave both to him and to his descendants proxenia, citizenship, the right to own land, exemption from taxes and the right to pay taxes that citizens pay, and asyilia and security for themselves and properties, in war and peace. When Lysanias Omphals was prostatas, when

56. D. E. EVANGELIDIS, "ΕΠΕΙΡΩΤΙΚΑΙ ΕΡΕΥΝΑΙ. 1. Η ΑΝΑΣΚΑΦΗ ΤΗΣ ΔΩΔΩΝΗΣ 1935", *Epeirotika Chronika* 10, 1935, p. 192-264, at p. 245-247; N. G. L. HAMMOND, *op. cit.*, p. 564-565; P. CABANES, *L'Épire de la mort de Pyrrhos à la conquête romaine (272-167 av. J. C.)*, Paris-Besançon 1976, p. 539 no. 3; E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 79-80. The text and translation here are Meyer's.

[Do]kimos Omphals was secretary, when [Laphy]rgas [Ompha]ls, Philippos Genoa[io]s, [.] Onopernos, Simos L[.] Ar]ktan, Anaxan[dros]olykkas Horraitas, Le[.], Menedamos Peial[s] were sacred remembrancers. [In the kingship of Neoptole]mos (son) of Alexander.”

Here the Molossians, capable of undertaking collective decision-making and in possession of a number of magistrates (prostatas, secretary, ‘sacred remembrancers’), expressed their gratitude to Lagetas, presumably an important Pheraian. The profusion of honours is noteworthy. Perhaps Lagetas had been particularly generous, or perhaps the Molossians accorded particular importance to developing links with Pherai or in Thessaly. The honours are laid out in surprising detail. Mili noted that in Hellenistic Thessaly honorific inscriptions are similarly expansive. She attributed it to a need for clarity in the region given the differing conceptions of citizenship at work.⁵⁷ Possibly the Molossians thought it best to be similarly clear about the rights granted to Lagetas to avoid misunderstandings. The Molossians may also have adapted the inscription’s format to what Lagetas was used to from Thessaly, again reflecting the importance the Molossians attached to developing this relationship.

Evangelidis, Fraser, and Meyer all dated the letter forms to the end of the fourth century: Fraser noted how close they were to *SGDI* 1336, dated to king Neoptolemos II.⁵⁸ Neoptolemos’ two periods of sole reign in Epeiros were 317-312 and 302-297, and the restored dating formula at the end of the Lagetas inscription would require a date within one of these windows.⁵⁹ Hammond was the first to restore Neoptolemos, and Meyer’s recent study of the stone confirmed the reading of –μου in line 14.⁶⁰ This would make the Lagetas text the earliest of eight inscriptions recording the Molossians granting privileges to outsiders dated by Meyer c. 300-232. Four more fragmentary texts from the same period may also record the Molossians granting privileges to members of nearby communities.⁶¹ Most of these texts are far less informative than the Lagetas inscription, and we should exercise caution in drawing conclusions from this small and fragmentary evidence base. Yet given the small amount of surviving epigraphic evidence from the region for the fourth and third centuries (leaving aside the many votive plaques from Dodona),⁶² these surviving inscriptions probably represent a

57. M. MILI, *op. cit.*, p. 71-79.

58. D. E. EVANGELIDIS, *op. cit.*, p. 247; P. M. FRASER, “A Bronze from Dodona”, *JHS* 74, 1954, p. 56-58; E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 79-80.

59. The chronology of Molossian succession and joint rule in this period is complex: see J.-N. CORVISIER, “La Succession royale Molosse” in P. CABANES ed., *L’Illyrie méridionale et l’Épire dans l’Antiquité III. Actes du III^e colloque international de Chantilly (16-19 octobre 1996)*, Paris 2001, p. 395-401.

60. N. G. L. HAMMOND, *op. cit.*, p. 564-565; E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

61. E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 100-101.

62. E. LHÔTE, *Les Lamelles oraculaires de Dodone*, Geneva 2006; S. DAKARIS, J. VOKOTPOULOU, A. P. CHRISTIDIS, *Ta Χρηστήρια Ἑλάσματα της Δωδώνης των ἀνασκαφών Δ. Ευαγγελίδη*, 2 volumes, Athens 2013.

small fraction of the total number of such texts which originally recorded the Molossians granting privileges to foreigners. Furthermore, this fraction covers a significant time period (c. 300-232), and records various privileges (*politeia* and *proxenia* are most popular) being granted to individuals from a number of communities close to Molossia (plus, further away, the Akragantines of Sicily). It is safe to conclude that awarding privileges to foreigners, sometimes in return for benefaction, was an important way in which the Molossians built relationships with nearby peoples from the late fourth century. The Lagetas inscription indicates that this included at least one community of Thessaly.⁶³

This suggests an important context for Pyrrhos calling himself ‘the Molossian’ in the dedication at the temple of Athena Itonia in Thessaly. The Lagetas inscription suggests that by 274 the Molossians had established good relations with some Thessalian communities via elite individuals. While Pyrrhos highlighting his Aiakid heritage recalled inter-regional connections in the mythical past, Pyrrhos portraying himself as ‘Molossian’ was perhaps directed toward these more recent inter-regional connections. If he portrayed himself as part of or party to existing good relations between the Molossians and some Thessalians, it could further help him increase his influence in the region. Pyrrhos would then be attempting to co-opt networks of inter-community relations for his own political purposes. This gives us deeper insight into the ways in which Pyrrhos, and potentially other Hellenistic kings, could seek to expand their spheres of influence.

Two points deserve emphasis. By the Hellenistic period, such inter-community relationships as are represented by the Lagetas inscription were a well-established mode of interaction for Greek communities throughout the eastern Mediterranean. By exchanging delegations of *theoroi*, honouring foreign benefactors, arbitrating disputes, recognising mythical kinship, and taking part in a host of other exchanges, Greek communities built and sustained networks of ‘social relations’.⁶⁴ These networks remained important throughout the Hellenistic period, when most Greek communities sought avenues for interaction outside high politics, which had become a murderous high stakes game for kings and leagues. Hellenistic monarchs did not usually seek to disrupt these networks or prevent them from developing: there was no benefit to be had from restricting them and they posed no threat to royal authority.⁶⁵ But Pyrrhos’ Thessalian dedication also suggests that these networks could offer political opportunities for others to exploit. Perhaps kings viewed the vibrant networks of inter-state relations between

63. On Meyer’s reading, another text may honour one *euergetes* (possibly two) from Mondaia, raising the number of attested Thessalian communities recorded in the Molossian honorific inscriptions to two. Cabanes, however, read the text as honouring two *euergetai* from Naupaktos: P. CABANES, *op. cit.*, p. 536; E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 101-104.

64. A. GIOVANNINI, “Greek Cities and Greek Commonwealth” in A. BULLOCH *et al.* eds., *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*, Berkeley 1993, p. 265-286; J. MA, “Peer Polity Interaction in the Hellenistic Age”, *PastPres* 180, 2003, 9-39.

65. B. RAYNOR, “*Theorodokoi*, *asylia*, and the Macedonian Cities”, *GRBS* 56, 2016, p. 225-262.

the Greek communities of the Hellenistic world as potentially productive for royal policy. The use by *poleis* of royal correspondence for their own purposes has been well discussed, but kings may have had more to gain by cultivating sustained engagement with the political and social world of the post-Classical *polis* than has previously been recognised.

However, co-option of inter-community relationships was perhaps only open to some kings. By virtue of his family's long rule over the Molossians, Pyrrhos could portray himself as one of them, and thereby take advantage of connections which the Molossians had built in Thessaly. For most Hellenistic kings, this was not an option. A Seleukid or Ptolemaic monarch could adapt their self-fashioning to the different subject communities of their empires. But they could not draw upon a long history of association with their subject populations which would have allowed them the same level of identification as Pyrrhos had with the Molossians. Perhaps the co-option of connections their subjects had independently created was only possible for kings who could legitimately claim membership of one of their subject communities, like the royal houses of Molossia or Macedon, or for kings whose authority was grounded in an especially close relationship with a group and place, like the Attalids of Pergamon. But for such monarchs, the co-option of their subjects' own networks of relationships was potentially a potent mode of royal control.

MOLOSSIAN INDEPENDENCE AND THE NATURE OF THE EARLY HELLENISTIC EPEIROTE STATE

That the Molossians independently built relationships with foreign communities mediated by elite benefactors is perhaps surprising, given that by the early third century they were only one constituent part of a larger Epeirote state. That they could do so throws important light on the nature of that larger state. But as the existence of an Epeirote state at this time is disputed, a brief aside on the scholarly debate will be helpful.

A consensus on the development of the Epeirote state was established in the 1960s and 1970s, especially by the work of Nicholas Hammond and Pierre Cabanes.⁶⁶ They argued that in the Classical period Molossia was a monarchic state with strong federal institutions which limited the powers of the Aiakid royal family. Then in c. 330 Molossia absorbed several surrounding communities to form a regional federal state, called the 'Epeirote Alliance' or 'Epeirote Symmarchy' by scholars. This Aiakid-led state existed until the 230s, when the extinction of the royal line necessitated the creation c. 232 of an Epeirote *koinon* with fully fledged federal institutions.

66. Especially N. G. L. HAMMOND, *op. cit.*, and P. CABANES, *op. cit.* For an overview of Epeirote studies and bibliographical discussion: J. PICCININI, "Past and Present Scholarship on the Politeia of the Epirotes and a New Book on the History of Molossia", *L'Antiquité Classique* 84, 2015, p. 173-181.

Elizabeth Meyer challenged this narrative in a recent monograph.⁶⁷ Arguing for the redating and reinterpretation of much epigraphic evidence, Meyer (as part of a larger and compelling analysis of Molossian history) argued that no greater Epeirote state formed in the late fourth century: Molossia formed military alliances with several neighbouring communities, but did not absorb them or combine with them. While much in Meyer's monograph is convincing, especially her scepticism regarding the sophistication of Molossian institutions and their ability to restrict the king's powers, I disagree on the formation of an Epeirote state. As I have discussed fully elsewhere, there is much evidence for the Epeirotes (a group which includes the Molossians and other regional communities like the Chaonians and Thesprotians) acting together like a state under Aiakid leadership from the latter part of the fourth century.⁶⁸ In Diodoros' narrative, from c. 340 'the Epeirotes' replace 'the Molossians' as the group the Aiakids lead.⁶⁹ Coins 'of the Apeirotes' appear in the middle of the fourth century.⁷⁰ 'Apeiros' appoints Kleopatra, widow to Alexander I and sister to Alexander III of Macedon, as *theorodokos* for Nemea sometime c. 334-324.⁷¹ In Plutarch's biography, Pyrrhos consistently leads the Epeirotes and rules over Epeiros,⁷² while a captured Roman shield was dedicated at Dodona c. 279 by 'King Pyrrhos, the Epeirotes, and the Tarentines'.⁷³ Altogether the evidence for the existence of an Aiakid-led Epeirote state from the late fourth century is convincing. The most probable context for its emergence is as part of an expansionist policy of Alexander I (r. c. 342-334), an aggressive and ambitious king backed by Macedon.⁷⁴ This new state did not sweep away existing institutions and identities, as literary and epigraphic texts make it clear that the Molossians, Thesprotians, and Chaonians continued to possess their own institutions and coherent community identity in the third century.⁷⁵ These larger groups were themselves made up of many smaller communities whose ethnics continue to appear in the epigraphic record.⁷⁶ While retaining these local and regional identities, the inhabitants of Aiakid territories were now also 'Epeirote' citizens of a new Epeirote state. This was no great cognitive leap for communities used to a region with multiple nested tiers of political and social identities whose salience to individuals and groups could differ according to context and was subject to change by historical forces. The third century history of the region is difficult

67. E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*

68. B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2017.

69. P. R. FRANKE, *Alt-Epirus und das Königtum der Molosser*, Kallmünz 1955, p. 49.

70. P. R. FRANKE, *Die antiken Münzen von Epirus*, Wiesbaden 1961, p. 116-133. On the date: M. OIKONOMIDOU-KARAMESSINI, "Χάλκινο νόμισμα των Ηπειρωτών από τις ανασκαφές της αρχαίας Κασσώπης", *Epeirotika Chronika* 26, p. 39-42.

71. P. PERLMAN, *City and Sanctuary in Ancient Greece. The Theorodokia in the Peloponnese*, Göttingen 2000, Ep. Cat. 1, with discussion and bibliography. On the date: B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2017, p. 248 n. 23.

72. B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2017, p. 257-261.

73. *SGDI* 1368; *Syll.*³ 392.

74. B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2017, p. 255-257.

75. E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 72-112.

76. The named magistrates in the Lagetas inscription above are a typical example: implicitly part of the 'Molossoi' but bearing the ethnics of their own communities.

to reconstruct, but important elements must be the development of new articulations between community identities, and an increasing political salience to regional population groups of an 'Epeirote' group identity to the point where the creation of an Epeirote federal state after 232 with a formal inclusive regional structure seemed like a reasonable solution to the crisis of leadership faced after the extinction of the Aiakid line.⁷⁷

Multiple scholars dated the emergence of a greater Epeirote state to c. 330. Therefore when they studied texts recording independent action by the Molossians, including the Lagetas inscription, they dated them prior to c. 330 on historical grounds. They felt that Molossian independence in foreign relations was unlikely following the Molossians' integration into a larger state.⁷⁸ A key factor seems to have been a conception of the larger Epeirote state as strongly federal in character. A community within a federal state has its own political 'inside', where that community's decision-making determines its internal affairs. But they are also part of a 'federal inside', a political space shared between the communities who make up the federal state, where federal structures of government deal with matters deemed the province of the entire federal community. Politics conducted outside these spaces, with individuals or communities not part of the federal state, are foreign relations and are conducted by federal government on behalf of all constituents of the federal state. This simplified summary will not capture the complexities of the interrelations between different political spheres in any historical federal state.⁷⁹ But it usefully highlights the distinctions between internal, federal, and foreign affairs. For many scholars, Molossia within the Epeirote state could no more conduct independent foreign relations than could the state of Texas within the modern United States of America.

Meyer dated the Molossian privilege granting inscriptions later, to c.300 - 232, mainly on the basis of letter forms.⁸⁰ Meyer did not think an Epeirote state existed in this period, so the issue of the Molossians being part of a larger state while establishing independent relations with foreign communities did not arise. However, I have argued that a larger Epeirote state did exist, perhaps from c. 340.⁸¹ If we accept the existence of such a state, should we reassess Meyer's dating? Or can we accept a late dating for these texts alongside the existence of an Epeirote state? In other words, can we accept that the Molossians could grant privileges to foreign benefactors while part of a larger state?⁸²

77. B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 1977, esp. p. 243-247, p. 257, p. 265-267.

78. P. R. FRANKE, *op. cit.* 1955, p. 40; P. LÉVÊQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 210; P. CABANES, *op. cit.*, p. 160-161.

79. For considerations of such issues in different contexts in Greek antiquity, see the contributions to H. BECK, P. FUNKE eds., *Federalism in Greek Antiquity*, Cambridge 2015.

80. E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 79-90.

81. B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2017, p. 246-257.

82. A situation already argued for by N. G. L. HAMMOND, *op. cit.*, p. 564-566.

In fact, there is good reason to doubt that the Molossians would have been unable to honour foreign benefactors while part of the early Hellenistic Epeirote state. Meyer's study convincingly argued for the strongly monarchic, not federal, character of pre-232 political life in the region. We should therefore be wary of applying principles derived from comparative study of federal states to pre-232 Epeiros. Moreover, recent work on Greek regional and federal political structures has stressed the inapplicability of rigid, monolithic approaches to Greek federalism, recognising the highly varied nature of intra-community political cooperation across time and space.⁸³ Furthermore, evidence from Hellenistic Macedon suggests that local Macedonian communities could independently develop certain kinds of relationships with foreign communities. Macedonian cities appear in *theorodokoi* lists from the late fourth century onwards, showing they participated in networks mediated by regular exchanges of *theoroi*.⁸⁴ At least four cities of Macedonia (Pella, Amphipolis, Kassandrea, and Philippi) recognised the inviolability of the Koan sanctuary of Asklepios in 242.⁸⁵ The texts recording this make it clear that, while 'king Antigonos' (Gonatas) also recognised the inviolability of the Koan Asklepios, the king's decision was not binding on the cities, each of which decided independently how to respond. Although the evidence is slight, it indicates that communities in Hellenistic Macedonia could independently form some relationships with foreign communities. Given the oft-noted similarities between Epeiros and Macedonia, it is entirely plausible that communities in Epeiros could act similarly.⁸⁶

There is also the current understanding of local autonomy in the wider Hellenistic world to consider. It is now axiomatic that in the kingdoms which emerged out of Alexander the Great's vast empire, many local communities enjoyed substantial quotidian autonomy.⁸⁷ The military preoccupations of kings, the vast distances involved, the relative smallness of court bureaucracies, and the need to retain the loyalty of communities when the prospect of rapid reactive military action was usually remote together gave many subject communities

83. H. BECK, "New Approaches to Federalism in Ancient Greece. Perceptions and Perspectives" in K. BURASELIS, K. ZOUMBOULAKIS eds., *The Idea of European Community in History. Conference Proceedings. II. Aspects of connecting poleis and ethne in Ancient Greece*, Athens 2003, p. 177-190; Introduction to H. BECK, P. FUNKE eds., *op. cit.* 2015.

84. M. B. HATZOPOULOS, *Macedonian Institutions under the Kings*, Athens 1996, I p. 472-486; B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2016, p. 233-253.

85. K. RIGSBY, *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*, Berkeley 1996, nos. 23, 25-7; *IG XII. 4* 220-221; B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2016, p. 253-262.

86. Macedonian/Epeirote similarities: N. G. L. HAMMOND, *op. cit.*, p. 539; M. B. HATZOPOULOS, *op. cit.*, I p. 492-495 (also discussing similarities with Thessaly); *Id.*, "Polis, Ethnos, and Kingship in Northern Greece" in K. BURASELIS, K. ZOUMBOULAKIS eds., *op. cit.*, p. 51-64.

87. J. MA, *Antiochos III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, Oxford 2002²; introduction to P. MARTZAVOU, N. PAPAZARKADAS, *Epigraphical Approaches to the Post-Classical Polis: Fourth Century BC to Second Century AD*, Oxford 2013.

of Hellenistic kings substantial freedom of action in their day-to-day lives. Given the commonalities in the rulership styles of different Hellenistic kings, we would need good reason to think that Epeirote kings differed from rather than emulated their rivals in this respect.⁸⁸

These observations suggest that we can accept Meyer's dating of the Molossian inscriptions alongside the existence of an early Hellenistic Epeirote state. There is no reason to think that communities within a larger Epeirote state would not have been able to take part in the networks of religious and diplomatic exchange which formed ordinary inter-community relations for Greeks in the Hellenistic period. That the Molossians began to establish such relationships with other communities from the late fourth century is, as Meyer astutely observes, testament to their increasing sense of self as a cohesive community on the international stage.⁸⁹ The critical point is that they did so while also part of a larger Epeirote state. The central authorities of the other Hellenistic kingdoms did not repress such relationships, as they did not interfere with the king's main concerns of revenue extraction and warfare. It seems the Aiakid monarchs of Epeiros did not do so either.

Considered alongside other evidence for Molossian and Epeirote activity under the Aiakid-led Epeirote state (c. 340-232), this conclusion suggests a need to consider anew the nature of that state. While the above evidence attests to Molossian participation in networks of inter-community 'social relations', there is little evidence that 'the Epeirotes' as a group did the same. Given the state of the evidence, we cannot be certain that they did not, but the absence is suggestive. In our evidence for the late fourth and third centuries, 'the Epeirotes' appear mainly as a community under arms. We see them being led to war by Aiakid kings, making a dedication alongside their king in commemoration of military success, or engaged in diplomatic negotiations surrounding military alliance.⁹⁰ While much of this evidence is late and often not directly focused on Epeirote affairs, overall we see a state whose activities were largely limited to the military sphere. Some countervailing evidence does not substantially alter this impression. The bronze coinage in the name of the Apeirotes, beginning c. 340 and mentioned above, does suggest at least a minimum level of Epeirote financial organisation and minting infrastructure. As also mentioned above, sometime c. 334-324, Kleopatra, wife then widow of the Molossian king Alexander I (died 331), was appointed *theorodokos* in 'Apeiros' for *theoroi* from the sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea.⁹¹ As the vast majority of toponyms

88. Commonalities in Hellenistic kingships: M. M. AUSTIN, "Hellenistic Kings, War, and the Economy", *CQ* 36, 1986, p. 450-466; J. MA, "Kings" in A. ERSKINE ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Oxford 2013, p. 177-195; R. STROOTMAN, *Courts and Elites in the Hellenistic Empires: The Near East after the Achaemenids, c. 330 to 30 BCE*, Cambridge 2014.

89. E. A. MEYER, *op. cit.*, p. 72-90.

90. Eg. being led to war: Diod. Sic. XIX 36.2-5, 88.1-4; Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, VII 5, 12.7, 13.6, 18.1. Dedication: *SGDI* 1368 (*Syll*³ 392). Alliance: Diod. Sic. XIX 36.5; *SGDI* 1336 which refers to "οἱ σύμμαχοι τῶν Ἀπειρωτῶν", 'the allies of the Apeirotes', although there is substantial dispute over this the meaning of this phrase: see B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2017, p. 264-265.

91. P. PERLMAN, *op. cit.*, Ep. Cat. 1.

used in extant *theorodokoi* lists can be identified as homonymous political communities, this shows the existence of an Epeirote state and suggests its participation in inter-community networks mediated by the exchange of *theoroi*.⁹² However, the presence of Kleopatra as *theorodokos* should give us pause. Given her prestige as wife or widow of the king and sister of Alexander III of Macedon, Kleopatra may have been representing herself as much as she was representing an Apeirote state. Ultimately, even in this context, the Epeirotes seem defined by Aiakid leadership. In sum, the early Hellenistic Epeirote state appears as chiefly a military organisation given coherence by the Aiakid monarchy.

On the other hand, c. 340-232 the Molossians appear acting as a group in a military capacity only as part of a larger Epeirote army, or acting independently once in 323 when regional cooperation was weak or had broken down.⁹³ This suggests some division of competencies between different levels of organisation within the early Hellenistic Epeirote state. For matters of high politics and war, the Epeirotes acted together as a regional group led by the Aiakid king. For other matters, including the quotidian exchanges of inter-community relations, the regional population groups (Molossians, Chaonians, Thesprotians, and others) acted independently. Perhaps this was a natural compromise between the increasing need to band together for mutual defence following the rise of Macedon and other large hegemonic powers, and the desire for individual communities in Epeiros, long in competition with each other and with differing senses of their positions in a wider network of Greek communities, to maintain a sense of differentiation and independence.⁹⁴ Such a compromise could be sustained while Aiakid kings acted as successful charismatic leaders around which to build a regional military machine. After the extinction of that line, survival required a fuller institutional elaboration of regional cooperation: so emerged the Epeirote *koinon* after 232.

The above sketch is preliminary, and is offered more as a stimulus toward further investigation than as a conclusion. But there is some support in our written sources. In relating the breaking up of an Epeirote army king Aiakides was leading in 317, Diodoros says (drawing on the well-informed contemporary Hieronymos of Kardia) “those of the Epeirotes who returned to their homelands” (οἱ δὲ χωρισθέντες τῶν Ἠπειρωτῶν εἰς τὰς πατρίδας) revolted against Aiakides. The plural τὰς πατρίδας is significant: we have Epeirotes together as an army under Aiakid leadership, yet with separate homelands. It is entirely possible that

92. B. RAYNOR, *op. cit.* 2017, p. 247-252.

93. Part of larger army: Plutarch, *Pyrrhos*, XIX 2, XXX 5. Independent action in Lamian War: Diod. Sic. XVIII 11.1, where notably Diodoros only mentions “those of the Molossians who were subject to Aryptaioi”, implying that not all Molossians were involved.

94. Z. ARCHIBALD, *Ancient Economies of the Northern Aegean: Fifth to First Centuries BC*, Oxford 2014, p. 85-128 argues the emergence of territorially extensive kingships in Classical Macedonia and Thrace was a regional response to the need to organise resources for mutual defence in large and topographically diverse areas after the traumatic experience of Persian occupation. Perhaps similar pressures stimulated new state solutions in 4th-3rd century Epeiros.

Diodoros' text does not reflect Hieronymos' original 4th century language, and I would not wish to press an argument based on interpreting the vocabulary of a text composed so much later than the times it relates. But Epeirotes acting as a group for military purposes then returning to multiple homelands would fit with the division of competencies in the Epeirote state I have suggested above. It is notable that my model only substantially differs from Meyer's reconstruction of Molossian history prior to 232 in its acceptance of the existence of a larger regional state. Meyer saw no Epeirote state in the early Hellenistic period but instead a series of enduring regional military alliances. But perhaps in practice the pre-232 Epeirote state was little more than a military apparatus lent coherence by Aiakid leadership. If so, it would not have differed substantially from many other institutionally rudimentary pre-modern monarchic states.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Pyrrhos' dedications following his victory in 274 show the care with which he adapted his political messaging to local conditions. At Dodona, he emphasised the defeat of the powerful Macedonians and downplayed his personal association with the victory. This framing would have been well received by Epeirotes and foreign Greek visitors to Dodona. In Thessaly, however, his own personal role and heroic ancestry was highlighted, as was the defeat of Gallic troops. Both were directly aimed at a Thessalian audience: Pyrrhos hoped that the Thessalians would respond well to both his association with the house of Achilles and to the defeat of Gauls. But in calling himself Molossian he also sought to take advantage of the connections which the Molossians had forged independently with leading Thessalians as part of that dynamic so vital to the life of Greek communities in the Hellenistic period: the creation and maintenance of ties of religious, political, and cultural exchange with Greeks living elsewhere. We cannot know whether any of these strategies were successful in winning over Thessalians. Pyrrhos' expansionary policies were cut short by his death fighting in the streets of Argos in the Peloponnese in 272, and longer-term Antigonid subjection of Thessaly was never seriously threatened. But the fact that Pyrrhos so carefully adapted his royal self-image to local conditions, as revealed in the contrast between the dedications at Dodona and in Thessaly, reflects the importance of the need for Hellenistic rulers to adapt to local discourses of power. This phenomenon has been easier to detect in the Hellenistic kingdoms which formed east of the Aegean in the wake of Alexander the Great's campaigns because of the divergence of local languages of power from a Greco-Macedonian political and cultural milieu. It is clear to see the need for such adaptation in new and expansive empires containing a large number of heterogeneous populations. But Pyrrhos' dedications in 274 show we should also be alive to the potential importance of such strategies for the relationship between ruler and (current or potential) subject communities in areas like mainland Greece where the cultural distance between king and community was smaller or non-existent.

Was such granular adaptation of royal self-fashioning to local conditions first a feature of the early Hellenistic period, bred out of the intense competition for influence and resources among the Diadochi? Does it have its roots in Alexander's adoption of various non-Macedonian expressions of rule? Do its roots lie earlier still? These are not mutually exclusive propositions, and the first two must be true to some extent. Pyrrhos' time at the courts of Demetrios Poliorketes and Ptolemy I before successfully securing the throne of Epeiros will have been a crash course for the young man in how to succeed (or not) in early Hellenistic high politics.⁹⁵ Ptolemy's position in Egypt will have exemplified the benefits to be had from adapting to local languages of power. However controversial his adoption of aspects of Persian court dress and ritual, Alexander's example of adaptation and concession toward the political class of conquered territories set the tone for his successors, though the courts of the later Hellenistic kings were solidly culturally and linguistically Greek. But what about earlier kings of Epeiros and Macedon? Comparison is difficult due to the smaller scale of territorial expansion under earlier kings: there were fewer opportunities for kings to experiment with adapting their image to local communities. Nor does the hostility of Greek sources toward earlier Epeirote and Macedonian territorial expansion help when trying to uncover the actual steps taken on the ground by kings to win over populations. But some evidence suggests that even in the mid-fourth century kings of northern Greece could skilfully adapt their dynastic messaging to very particular local conditions. Consider Philip II's Philippeion at Olympia. Located within the sacred precinct and close to the Pelopion supposedly founded by Herakles, its location was a reminder of Philip's heroic ancestry and of his own successes at the games. The chryselephantine, or chryselephantine-like, dynastic statue group inside projected an image of Philip's immediate family as godlike, a suggestion with particular resonance when made within the Altis. Altogether, this unusual monument at the heart of a great Greek shrine was a complex but clear statement of Macedonian power over the Greek world under Philip and his family.⁹⁶ Most crucially it was a statement made in the language of its location: its position, design, and materials were calculated to work particularly at Olympia. Granted, the Philippeion is a more ambiguous expression of dynastic image than Pyrrhos' dedication in Thessaly, and more potentially objectionable to the local audience. But it highlights the possibility that Hellenistic kings' tendency to express their rule in local discourses was not entirely something that grew out of the challenges faced by culturally Greek post-Alexander kings ruling over large and heterogeneous empires. It might owe a lot to modes of behaviour inherited from kingly style in northern Greece prior to Alexander's conquests. The extent to which Hellenistic kingship owed a debt to earlier styles of rule in northern Greece deserves more sustained attention.⁹⁷

95. For Pyrrhos' early career: P. LÉVÊQUE, *op. cit.*, p. 83-116.

96. E. CARNEY, *King and Court in Ancient Macedonia: Rivalry, Treason, and Conspiracy*, Swansea 2015, p. 61-90, with bibliography.

97. A potential direction already suggested by R. LANE FOX, "The First Hellenistic Man" in A. ERSKINE, L. LLEWELLYN-JONES eds., *Creating a Hellenistic World*, Swansea 2011, p. 1-29, which argues for the need to take seriously the 'Hellenistic' elements of the kingship styles of Alexander III and Philip II of Macedon.

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