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A COMPANION TO ANCIENT MACEDONIA

Edited by
Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington
Hellenistic and Roman Art, 221 BC–AD 337

Rachel Kousser

1 Introduction: Approaches to Macedonian Art under the Roman Empire

Macedonia in the late third century BC was a wealthy and artistically vibrant region of the Hellenistic world. It possessed luxurious palaces, architecturally sophisticated theaters, impressive temples, and grandiose tombs for the warrior elite and the royal family. Without a major source of marble, its cities nonetheless contained numerous examples of high-quality marble sculpture, and its metalworking – in bronze, silver, and above all, gold – was unsurpassed. Macedonia’s distinctive painted tombs attest to its artists’ command of the most up-to-date techniques in drawing and coloration, for instance foreshortening and chiaroscuro.1 Also, while some areas retained their traditional rural character, the region had by now a number of well-appointed cities: Pella, the royal capital, Dium, the religious center, the important port of Thessalonica, and the royal foundations of Philippoi and Cassandra. In sum, Macedonia possessed a visual culture commensurate with its political importance as one of the major Hellenistic monarchies. It shared some common artistic features with rival empires (for example its descriptive and beautifully detailed ruler portraits on coins), while at the same time retaining certain distinctive visual forms and stylistic predilections of its own, such as a disjunction between the decorative facade of a building and its internal structure.

By the early fourth century AD Macedonia looked very different.2 It had by that time been part of the Roman Empire for some 500 years, and it possessed many of the characteristic appurtenances of Roman civilization: technologically sophisticated bath buildings, amphitheaters for gladiatorial games, luxury villas and imperial portraits. Several of Macedonia’s cities had attained the highest status possible for a Roman town, that of colony, and all of its free inhabitants were Roman citizens after the passage of the Constitutio Antoniniana of AD 212 (a law promulgated by Caracalla that gave Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire). Its largest city, Thessalonica, had become an important seat of provincial administration and an imperial residence in the late third to early fourth centuries under the Tetrarch Galerius, who endowed it with an ornate triumphal arch, a palace and a hippodrome for chariot racing. And while it had long hosted one of the earliest Christian communities in Europe – visited by Saint Paul in about AD 50 – it would soon possess as well an array of Christian churches, with complex architectural plans and lavish mosaics.3

What explains this transformation of Macedonian art during the Hellenistic and Roman periods? As the preceding paragraphs suggest, it was an extensive and thoroughgoing process in the region, which had significant implications for its inhabitants’ lived experience. Also, given Macedonia’s influential role – as the first of the great Hellenistic empires to fall to Rome, then as an important point of contact between the Greek East and Latin West, and finally as a major center of the Late Empire – it is significant as well for the broader development of Roman and Late Antique art.

In recent decades, scholars have paid considerable attention to cultural transformations such as those outlined here, asking questions such as: How did they happen? Who was involved? What nonetheless remained unchanged, and why?4 When these questions were first extensively examined beginning in the 1970s, scholars tended to focus on what was termed ‘Romanization’, that is, the adoption of Roman cultural practices by conquered peoples. Some, for instance M. Bénabou, saw this as a conscious strategy formulated by the Romans, intended by them to facilitate imperial rule, and imposed by force if necessary.5 At the same time, Bénabou characterized adherence to prior local customs (for example, traditional religion) as a form of cultural ‘resistance’ to Rome. Other scholars have argued for a much less intentional and programmatic development. In their view, Romanization was less a conscious strategy promulgated by imperial administrators than a spontaneous process initiated by aspiring local elites: as Brunt put it, ‘Provinciales Romanizèrent themselves’.6

1 On the Christian monuments of Thessalonica, see E. Koukoutsidou, N. Kolaidou and A. Tourta, Wandering in Byzantine Thessaloniki (Athens 1997); for the Late Antique era in Macedonia more generally, see C.S. Snively, chapter 26.


3 Bénabou, ‘Résistance et romanisation en Afrique du Nord’.

4 Brunt, ‘Romanization of the Local Ruling Classes’, p. 162.

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More recently, scholars have questioned the ‘Romanization vs. resistance’ model and have aimed for a more nuanced, locally specific descriptions of the transformations wrought by Roman conquest. They have stressed provincials’ active and selective response to imperial paradigms, and have emphasized occasions where Roman and local practices were combined to form a new synthesis. This new model, often termed ‘hybridization’ or ‘creolization’, seems particularly appropriate to Macedonia. After all, it is clear that Roman conquest had a transformative effect on Macedonian art, but it did not replace the pre-existing visual culture with a purely Roman one. Instead, Macedonian art of the Hellenistic and Roman eras remained visually distinctive, an intricately layered mixture of indigenous and imported features. Also, it incorporated elements not only from metropolitan Rome but also from nearby regions such as northern Turkey, the Balkans, and as far away as Egypt.

But while this ‘creolization’ model can usefully be applied to Macedonia as to other Roman provinces, it is important to keep in mind as well what made the region distinctive. Three factors are particularly significant: first, Macedonia’s historical position as the earliest major Hellenistic kingdom conquered by the Romans; second, the region’s geographical position as a critical intermediary between the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire; and third, its military and strategic position as a launching pad for the defense of the Danube provinces during the late Empire. These factors are worth noting because they help to explain the eclectic and cosmopolitan character of Macedonian visual culture, its experimental nature, and its influential role both in the development of Roman art during the Republic and in the formation of Late Antique art.

In evaluating the evidence for Macedonian art of the Late Hellenistic and Roman eras, it is important to note two factors that have biased the preserved archaeological record. The first concerns the historical experience of Macedonia in the second and first centuries BC. During this period, Macedonian rulers fought a series of wars with Rome largely on Macedonian soil. What was not destroyed in the wars was then largely looted, with extraordinary thoroughness, by the Romans. Following this, Macedonia in the late Republic was again a major theater of war; it formed the refuge first of Pompey against Caesar, and then of Caesar’s assassins Brutus and Cassius against Octavian and Mark Antony. In consequence of this troubled history, the Late Hellenistic and Republican material record in Macedonia is very limited although inscriptions, literary texts, and a few high-quality preserved artworks suggest its original importance. The evidence for the Roman imperial era is by contrast better preserved; Roman Macedonia was raided, especially in the Late Antique period, but it was never subject to looting on the scale of the Roman conquest.

A second factor biasing the preserved evidence for Hellenistic and Roman Macedonian art is the region’s natural resources. Macedonia is extraordinarily rich in metals, especially precious metals, while relatively poor in the quintessential classical architectural and sculptural material of marble. Rare preserved remains of metal-working suggest the considerable achievements of Macedonian art in this medium but mostly—since metal was valuable and could be re-used—it has been lost. Marble by contrast has survived in greater quantities, but was used only in a rather limited way in architecture; sculpture, especially of the Hellenistic era, tended to be small-scale, since the material had to be imported. We have consequently to imagine a much richer sculptural production in metal than is now preserved and at the same time to adjust our expectations for architecture, due to the cost of transport, large-scale marble temples were necessarily extremely rare in Macedonia.

With these biases in mind the preserved archaeological record of Macedonia becomes easier to understand. We have limited but impressive remains from the Late Hellenistic era: coins, a few sculpted works in marble and bronze, and the last of the great series of painted Macedonian tombs. These remains need to be supplemented with inscriptions (describing for example the erection of now-lost statues in bronze) as well as literary accounts of the triumphs of various Roman generals for a full picture of the cultural production of the period. For the Provincia Macedonia, the evidence is richer. For sculpture, we have a full range: imperial and private portraits, votives, funerary reliefs and cult statues. In architecture—made largely of bricks and mortar and thus both durable and hard to re-use—we have baths and theaters, villas and palaces, fora and temples. Painting is, as always, less well preserved, but there exists an impressive series of mosaics primarily from domestic contexts and some small-scale painted tombs from the third century AD onward help fill out the picture. In all, we have a rich and varied visual record for the Roman imperial era and a limited but suggestive one for Late Hellenistic/Republican Macedonia.

A few words concerning the definition of ‘Macedonian art’ are also necessary. The boundaries of Macedonia fluctuated considerably during the Hellenistic and Roman eras so that a definition based on them will inevitably be somewhat arbitrary. At the same time, Macedonia had as well an influence on art well outside its borders, for example through commissions of its monarchs in southern Greece, and through emulations of its art in Rome and Italy. I have consequently chosen to define my subject rather broadly, including not only works created in Macedonia by Macedonians but also monuments commissioned by Macedonians but set up elsewhere, as well as those created within the region for Roman as well as local patrons. This broad definition seems to me best in order to do justice to the full scope and influence of Macedonian art.

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5 For example, Woolf, Reconstructing Roman.
6 Webster, ‘Creolizing the Roman Provinces’.
7 See below, n. 45 (Turkey and the Balkans) and n. 56 (Egypt).
8 For the evidence and its biases more generally, see P.J. Rhodes, chapter 2 and K. Dahmen, chapter 3.
9 For the history of Macedonia in this period, see A.M. Eckstein, chapter 12 and J. Vanderspool, chapter 13.
10 On Late Antique Macedonia, see C.S. Snively, chapter 26.
11 On Macedonia’s natural resources, see C.G. Thomas, chapter 4.
2 The End of the Macedonian Monarchy and the Origins of the Province Macedonia

In the second to first centuries BC, the Romans imitated, appropriated, and selectively adapted Macedonian visual culture, especially the court art of the Antigonid monarchy. There is scant evidence, however, for the reverse, that is, for the Romanization of Macedonia at this time. The Romans’ enthusiasm for Macedonian art was fueled by close contact between the two regions, initially through their wars, which occupied much of the first half of the second century BC, and then through the complex process of incorporating Macedonia into the Roman Empire. From the Macedonians, the Romans learned new modes of self-presentation for their leaders and for wealthy private citizens; they gained models for victory monuments and the ritual celebrations surrounding them, and they saw in the palaces of the Antigonid kings, attractive precedents for an elegant and luxurious way of life.

The Macedonians by contrast did not choose to emulate the styles of their Roman antagonists and overlords. They largely adhered to traditional forms in depicting the gods, adorning the living and burying the dead. For their part, the Romans made few alterations in Macedonian material culture at this time. The most significant exception is the construction of the Via Egnatia, the central route that connected the eastern and western halves of the Roman Empire and was supported by military camps and Roman administrative posts along its length. The history of Macedonian art in the second and first centuries BC, then, centers on the monuments of the last Antigonid kings, Roman emulations and appropriations of them, and a conservative Macedonian visual culture coupled with a few high-profile Roman interventions such as roads and army bases.

Let us begin with one of the best preserved and most influential of these Antigonid commissions, a coin of Philip V, who was king from 221 to 179 (plate 22).14 It is the first coin portrait of a Macedonian ruler since that of Demetrius Poliorcetes in the early third century BC – Philip’s immediate predecessors had preferred to decorate their emissions with the images of gods – and this fact on its own testifies to the king’s determination to break with the past and to present a more aggressive, charismatic image of himself. That image is, moreover, distinctly different from those of other rulers of the time.15 It boasts none of the tokens of divinity popular with Hellenistic monarchs, and it depicts Philip as a mature bearded male rather than as a clean-shaven youth. This is quite striking; we have portraits of over 50 different Hellenistic rulers, of whom only four are depicted with beards.16 Since Philip came to the throne at a youthful 17, his numismatic image was not necessarily an accurate transcription of his actual appearance. Instead, it may perhaps have been intended to emphasize his maturity at a time when young monarchs were particularly vulnerable to attack.


15 On monarchs’ portraiture, see Smith, Hellenistic Royal Portraits.

16 Smith, Hellenistic Royal Portraits, p. 46 n. 2.

In other ways, the coin portrait of Philip V is more closely aligned with those of his fellow rulers. He wears a diadem – the ribbon tied about his head that is the one invariable sign of Hellenistic kingship – and has the loosely curled medium-length hair typical of most monarchs after Alexander the Great. Philip’s eyes are large and deep-set and his nose is prominent, straight and narrow. His features overall give the impression of an energetic ruler, mature and formidable.

The Roman emulation of the Macedonian king’s image attests to its power in the visual culture of the time. This is particularly clear in the portrait of Philip V’s antagonist, the Roman general T. Quinctius Flamininus, reproduced on coins issued shortly after his defeat of the Antigonid monarch (see plate 23).17 On the coin, Flamininus appears very similar to Philip V: mature, with curly medium-length hair, a short beard, deep-set eyes, and a prominent nose. The connections are sufficiently striking that the artist must surely have known Philip V’s coin just as he knew the coins of Alexander the Great, whose image of Nike, goddess of victory, he used for the reverse.18 At the same time, this was not a simple case of copying but of adaptation for particular circumstances. On the reverse the coin artist substituted a palm branch, symbolizing victory on land, for the ship’s mast on Alexander’s coins. He also gave the Roman general his proper title in Latin by identifying him as T. Quinctius. And for the portrait of Flamininus on the obverse, we see numerous variations that alter our impression of the image as a whole. The diadem was omitted, of course, since Flamininus was not a king. The features, too, seem more “Roman” than those of Philip – the nose more prominent, almost beaky, the cheeks more hollow, the hair chaotic and beard scraggly.19 Overall, Flamininus looks older, less idealized, and more physically distinctive than Philip V; this is the more noteworthy since the Roman general was only about 30 at the time, and so appeared to the Greeks as a cultivated and handsome man (Plut., Flamininus 5.5–6).

The image of Flamininus is our first closely dated Roman portrait of a living individual and as such has an outsized importance for the history of art. Yet it implies already a clear and well-established idea of what a Roman portrait should be, one that emphasized a close almost unflattering physical descriptiveness even while emulating Hellenistic royal precedents.20 It was likely commissioned by Flamininus himself (as indicated by the use of Latin on the coin), but executed by a Greek artist (as suggested by the close resemblance to Philip V’s portraiture as well as the artist’s


18 Price, Coins of the Macedonians, pl. XL.00.

19 On images of Romans in the second century BC, see Smith, Hellenistic Royal Portraits, pp. 126–30.

20 Portraits from Delos, likely of Roman or Italian traders and dating to the period about 166–80 BC, have a similarly descriptive if not even more unflattering appearance, suggesting that Flamininus’ image was not a one-off image but rather expressed a consensus about how Romans should look; on the Delos portraits, see Smith, Hellenistic Royal Portraits, pp. 126–7.
apparent difficulty in forming Latin letters). The combination is emblematic for much of early Roman art, which brought together Greek artists and Roman patrons to create monuments stylistically anchored in the Greek past but expressing something very new and characteristically Roman—in this case, the aspirations of a Roman general to vie with the most charismatic Hellenistic rulers while still promoting his language, his military achievements, and his distinctive, almost homely, appearance.

Similar aspirations are expressed in the monument of Aemilius Paullus at Delphi, although here we have to do not with an emulation of Macedonian art but with the intentional and clearly advertised appropriation of it (see figure 25.1).

The monument was originally commissioned by Perseus shortly after he succeeded his father Philip V as ruler of Macedon in 178; it is known as Paullus’ monument due to the Roman general’s subsequent appropriation of it. In Perseus’ time, the monument seems to have formed part of a series of sculptures and inscriptions intended to highlight the Macedonians’ achievements set up within high-profile locations at the important Panhellenic sanctuary at Delphi. These included an inscription detailing Perseus’ proclamation of debt amnesty and other benefactions as well as others that reproduced letters and treaties of his illustrious ancestor Demetrius Poliorcetes.

These reminders of the power and benevolence of the Antigonid monarchs were to be accompanied by a gilded statue of Perseus set up near the Temple of Apollo (Plut., Aemilius Paullus 28.2), and thus in competition not only with the gilded statues of earlier Macedonian kings—Alexander I and Philip II were both commemorated in the sanctuary in this form—but also with nearby statues of Perseus’ fellow monarchs of the second century BC Prusias of Bithynia and Eumenes II of Pergamon. Perseus’ dedications at Delphi, then, seem intended to present him as the culmination of a long line of illustrious Macedonian rulers, as well as a formidable power within second century BC politics. Since the king himself visited the sanctuary to consult the Delphic oracle in 174, his personal involvement with these commissions seems likely, and it should be understood as part of his energetic attempt to improve the reputation of the Macedonian monarchy in the eyes of the Greeks.

21 The fact that Flamininus’ name on the coin is given in the genitive—as was typical for the individual responsible for the emission—constitutes additional evidence supporting his responsibility for the coin. Smith, Hellenistic Royal Portraits, p. 126, Attili, ‘Stater des T. Quinctius Flamininus’, pp. 21–5.
24 The substance of the treaties clearly dates them to the third century, but the letter forms are second century, indicating that these are copies made by Perseus of earlier inscriptions.
26 On the visit, see Livy 41.22.5–6.

At the time of Perseus’ defeat by the Roman general Aemilius Paullus in 168, however, his project remained unfinished. Also, it was subsequently completed in a manner strikingly at odds with what the Macedonian king had intended. During a visit to Delphi shortly after his victory, Paullus ordered his own portrait set up upon the base intended for Perseus’ gilded statue since ‘it was only proper that the conquered should
give way to the conquerors."28 He had the original Greek dedication excised and a new one in Latin inscribed that proclaimed in a few succinct, blunt words Paulus' defeat of Perseus and appropriation of his monument.29

The Roman general was also likely responsible for other aspects of the work's final form. While the base of the monument was clearly commissioned by Perseus - as the still partly visible dedication in Greek arrests - Paulus probably added the 8-meter-tall pillar on which his statue stood as well as the relief sculptures which decorated it.28 These sculptures, running in a continuous frieze along all four sides of the pillar monument, seem to depict the Romans' decisive victory at Pydna in 168 in the war against Perseus. This is indicated not only by the Macedonians and Romans shown fighting on the relief (each with their characteristic shields, round for the Macedonians and oblong for the Romans) but also by the presence of a riderless horse (plate 24). According to literary sources the Battle of Pydna began when a runaway horse escaped from the Roman army lines and was pursued by both sides.28 The relief thus likely depicts this famous historical incident, thus giving an air of specificity and verisimilitude to what is otherwise a rather generic battle scene.

The pillar of Aemilius Paulus, like the coin of Flamininus, is a key monument within the history of Macedonian and Roman art. It demonstrates, first of all, Perseus' attempt to rehabilitate the kingdom of Macedonia in the memory of the Greeks by recalling the benefactions of his ancestors as well as his own achievements. Its subsequent appropriation by Paulus offered a different historical narrative, one centering on Roman military victories and the very prominent and explicit dishonoring of Antigonus memory. As such, Paulus' monument testifies to the importance of such works of art as political statements - no contemporary visitor to Delphi would be left in doubt as to who was now in charge - but also as sites for the creation and preservation of historical memory. Even some three centuries later, Plutarch knew that the monument had originally been intended for Perseus and then usurped by Paulus; he also knew the anecdote of the runaway horse, perhaps from seeing the monument during his time as a priest of the Temple of Apollo there.30 In this way, the pillar of Aemilius Paulus helped to keep memories of the Roman victory over Macedonia vivid and concrete long after the wars were over and the region had been integrated into the Roman Empire.

At the same time, the monument, and in particular its reliefs, had also a significance within the history of Roman art. The reliefs constitute the earliest preserved sculptures which depict a Roman historical narrative. Presumably executed by Greek artists using well-established visual formulas and in a typically Hellenistic style, the reliefs nonetheless included particularizing details (like the runaway horse) that anticipate the achievements of later Roman monuments such as the Ara Pacis, Trajan's Column and the Arch of Constantine.31 Thus, like the coin of Flamininus, the pillar of Aemilius Paulus documents the fundamental importance of Macedonia for the development of a key genre of Roman art.

In the years following the overthrow of the Antigonid monarchy, Macedonian court art became if anything even more important to aspiring Romans. Images from houses and villas in the Bay of Naples show how the Macedonian kings provided models for the ruling elite of Rome at least in their private lives. The Alexander Mosaic from the House of the Faun at Pompeii, the decoration of Room II from the villa at Boscoreale, and the extensive series of sculpted portrait busts from the Villa dei Papirii at Herculaneum offer high-quality Roman versions of major works of Macedonian state art.32 Also, the very form of the Late Republican Roman villa — with its elegant bedrooms and dining areas disposed around immense peristyle courtyards — is indebted to Macedonian precedents, namely the palaces of the Antigonid kings.2 The Romans became familiar with such palaces through military and administrative service in Macedonia;33 they had also the opportunity to appreciate Antigonid court art when it was paraded through the streets of Rome in the triumphs of generals like Aemilius Paulus (Plut., Aemilius Paulus 32.1–34.8).

In Italy, they recreated such artworks in order to suggest their military and political aspirations, as well as their knowledge of, and ability to afford, such impressive manifestations of Hellenistic culture.

While Roman art was developing rapidly in this period the visual culture of Macedonia itself remained largely conservative. In sanctuaries, statues of gods, for instance the Aphrodite Hydrolimpe at Dium, appear entirely in line with earlier Hellenistic precedents.35 In cities, characteristically Greek architectural forms such as temples, theaters, and gymnasias were maintained although few major new buildings

28 The story is preserved, with minor variants, in Polybius (20.10.2), Livy (45.27.7), and Plutarch (Aemilius Paulus 28.2); the quote is from Plutarch.


30 This is suggested by the different color of the marble used for the pillar (pure white) as opposed to the base (bluish) as well as the different system of dowels in each case (Jacquemin and Laroche, 'Notes sur trois piliers delphiques', pp. 207–12). In addition, the relief sculptures likely depict the Roman victory at the Battle of Pydna, which would make them appropriate for a monument commissioned by Paulus but not by Perseus.

31 Slightly different accounts of the incident are given in Livy (44.40.4–10, 41.3–5) and Plutarch (Aemilius Paulus 18.1). See also P. Christesen and S.C. Murray, chapter 21.


36 On Pella and its palace after the Roman conquest, see M. Lilliputi-Akamati, 'Recent Discoveries in Pella', in M. Stamatakopoulou and M. Yeroulis (eds.), Excavating Classical Culture: Recent Archaeological Discoveries in Greece (Oxford 2002), pp. 83–90. Romans certainly visited and made use of the Macedonian kings' palace; Aemilius Paulus, for example, gave his sons' Papirii's house (Plut., Aemilius Paulus 28.11), and made over the king's hunting grounds to his younger son Scipio Aemilianus (Polyb. 31.29.5).

were erected. As in cemeteries, we have no new ‘Macedonian tombs’ after about 150 but those that existed continued to be used; the tomb of Lyson and Callicles at Mieza, for example, was created at the end of the third century and eventually housed 19 members of 4 generations of the family. The overall impression given by the art of Hellenistic Macedonia after the fall of the kings is one of continuity. What changes is less the character than the quantity and quality of new monuments, which decline precipitously; this is comprehensible given the impoverishment of the region following the wars with Rome, the looting of the country after the fall of the monarchy, and then a series of rapacious Roman governors.

The monuments examined in this section demonstrate the complex dialogue between Macedonia and Rome in the first period of artistic contact between the two cultures. As noted above, this contact did not substantially alter the features of Hellenistic Macedonian art; it did, however, have profound effects on the visual culture of Republican Rome. What the Romans particularly responded to in Macedonian art were representations of power and authority: ruler portraits, victory monuments and palaces. These were well-established genres in Macedonia but less so in Rome so it is not surprising that the Romans found them attractive. The Macedonians by contrast clung to traditional styles and visual formulas, without the interest—or, perhaps, the economic wherewithal—required for a substantive artistic transformation. It is only with the accession of the first Roman emperor Augustus that this begins to change; this development deserves consideration next.

3 Macedonian Art in the Roman Empire

During the first three centuries AD, Macedonian art was radically altered. However, although the region was politically subordinate to Rome, its art did not simply echo that of the metropolis. Instead we see a range of options, from precise copies of Roman imperial portrait heads to divine statues in thoroughly Hellenic style to hybrid works combining features from Rome itself and from other eastern and western provinces together with local styles and visual formats. The result is a visual culture that has connections to those of other regions—above all, to the Danube provinces north of Macedonia, and Turkey and Syria to the east—but which remains distinctive. Macedonian art does not look quite like the art from anywhere else although it partakes of a recognizably Roman visual language. In this it is typical of Roman provincial art, which never coalesced into a homogeneous visual culture but remained instead a collection of interconnected but diversely inflected regional styles.

The second century AD grave stele of Onesium from the outskirts of Thessalonica offers a good example of Macedonia’s distinctive regional style and of the new patrons who encouraged it (plate 25). As the monument’s Greek inscription makes clear, Onesium was a slave—though evidently a well-off and highly successful one—who worked as manager for a large rural estate; his master, Aelius Menogenes, was likely an imperial freedman serving in the provincial administration. Onesium used the monument to commemorate his deceased wife, Neike, as well as himself and his still-living mother and daughter. The emphasis in the inscription is thus on the family as a whole (a source of particular pride for slaves, who had no legal right to marriage) as well as on Onesium’s vocation and his ties to high-ranking individuals in the Roman administration.

The visual format of the stele combines bust-length frontal portraits of Onesium, his wife and their daughter on top with smaller narrative scenes below and beneath them the inscription. The portraits depict the family with up-to-date Roman hairstyles of the later second century AD based on imperial prototypes. The facial features are rather generic and idealized, although Onesium’s age is alluded to through his lined forehead and hollow cheeks. But the overall impression given by the portraits is one of a wealthy, respectable and rather fashionable family of the Antonine era, whose close bonds are intimated through the physical proximity of their images.

Beneath the portraits, whose inspiration goes back to freedmen’s funerary monuments from Republican Italy, we have two scenes more closely connected to contemporary Roman artistic practice. On the left, we have a seated woman gazing at a standing female figure in the guise of Aphrodite; the pose and dress are based on a well-known image of the goddess of the late fifth century BC while the hairstyle is Antonine. Such representations of the deceased in the form of a divinity became increasingly popular in the second century AD. They offered an exalted, yet non-specific way to praise the virtues of the departed while also testifying to the patron’s cultivated knowledge of Greek art. In this case, commemoration in the guise of Aphrodite suggested the beauty and desirability of Onesium’s wife Neike; the form chosen was a statue type known as the Louvre-Frèjus Aphrodite, popular in the Roman period and seen also in a high-quality reproduction in the round from the sanctuary of the Egyptian gods in Thessalonica. The other scene shows Onesium himself reclining on a dining couch with an elaborate table laden with food before him and a
The decoration of the villa is likewise notable. It is characterized by a lavish use of marble – for columns in the courtyards, for wall and floor decoration, and above all for sculpture – which stands out in a city lacking easy access to good quarries, and where even the temples of the gods have few columns and small-scale cult statues. The villa’s sculptures included busts of imperial family members (Faustina Minor and Agrippina) as well as versions of well-known classical statue types: Nike, Dionysus, Hercules. And four marble statues of philosophers were found in the villa, their heads recarved in the third century AD, perhaps with portraits of the villa’s inhabitants. Just as the philosopher statues attested to the cultural aspirations of the villa owner, so too did the presence of a library with bookshelves, a rare component of eastern villas, but present in the best Italian models such as the Villa dei Papyri at Herculaneum. And ‘antique’ bronze furniture – several centuries old already when the villa was built, about AD 200 – suggests the owner’s pedigree and artistic sensibilities; this was also indicated by an immense and beautifully executed mosaic of the Triumph of Dionysus, which decorated a large banqueting hall within the complex. In all, the villa and its decoration demonstrate the wealth and artistic savoir faire of the Macedonian elite during the Roman empire as they adopted Italian villa culture and transformed it to suit their own, regionally distinctive, modes of life.

In the public monuments of Macedonian cities, as in the private sphere of house and tomb, we see a transformation, but one that created a new hybrid culture rather than an exclusively Roman one. Two areas where this is particularly apparent are sanctuaries of the imperial cult and sites for gladiatorial games – two quintessentially Roman institutions reformed by the Macedonians for their own purposes. In terms of the imperial cult, many Macedonian cities set up temples and statues to the emperors, thus visibly demonstrating their loyalty to and enthusiasm for Roman rule. Yet the cult statues they commissioned look more swaggering Hellenistic monarchs or classical gods, rather than the sober togate images popular in Rome itself; their visual forms suggest a reinterpretation of the Roman emperor in terms familiar to the local audience. So, too, gladiatorial games were performed in several Macedonian cities. Their popularity is demonstrated by the many preserved grave monuments of gladiators as well as large numbers of inexpensive terracotta lamps that feature their images. Yet the games were rarely held in new purpose-built amphitheatres; they were

46 Pandermaus, Dion, pp. 87-90.
47 On the Villa dei Papi, see C. Mattusch, The Villa dei Papi at Herculaneum: Life and Afterlife of a Sculpture Collection (Berkeley and Los Angeles 2005).
48 A. Kankelblatt, Kaiserzeitliche Mosaike in Griechenland ( Bonn 1994), pp. 54-5.
took place instead in traditionally Greek theaters and stadia, retrofitted to accommodate the new entertainments. In this way, Macedonians incorporated into their public life some major aspects of Roman civilization but in a manner that integrated them with previous local customs.

At the same time, the public monuments of Macedonia took inspiration not only from Rome itself but also from regions throughout the empire. This is particularly well illustrated by the sanctuaries to the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis that are among the best-preserved and most elaborate shrines in many Macedonian cities. In their earliest forms, these sanctuaries go back to the third century BC and testify to the popularity of the tutelary deities of the Ptolemaic monarchy far beyond Egypt. The sanctuaries were however greatly elaborated in the Roman imperial era; at Dion, for example, the cult complex of Isis was completely rebuilt in the late second century AD while that of Thessalonica had an extensive renovation in the third. These sanctuaries, which featured imported Egyptian objects as well as Greek-style cult statues, attest to the continued ties between Macedonia and Egypt during the Roman Empire – this is not surprising given Thessalonica’s position as the largest and most important port in the Aegean and Alexandria’s as the great trading capital of the eastern Mediterranean.

Indeed, one might argue that Macedonian art under the Roman Empire was not so much Romanized as increasingly hybrid and cosmopolitan. Macedonia, after all, was a crossroads. In it, the Greek language was predominant but it was filled with Roman colonies and bordered Latin-speaking territories to the north and west. It stood along the Via Egnatia, a major route connecting Italy via the Adriatic Sea with the continent of Asia. Macedonia was also bisected by major north–south routes across the Balkan peninsula, which connected Rome’s borders along the Danube river with her core territory on the Mediterranean sea. And Macedonia’s ports, above all Thessalonica, hosted merchants from all over the empire, trading Italian wine, Spanish olive oil, Alexandrian glass and North African pottery for Macedonian silver, timber and tar. It is consequently not surprising that Macedonia’s art drew inspiration from the many and varied cultures contained within the Roman Empire; this was a natural concomitant of the region’s participation in the globally interconnected Roman world.

4 Macedonia in the Late Empire

During the centuries of the Pax Romana Macedonia benefited from the peace and prosperity guaranteed by Rome’s undisputed rule throughout the Mediterranean. Far from the borders of the Roman Empire, the region was wealthy, stable and culturally sophisticated; politically, however, it was something of a backwater, rarely visited by emperors and producing few senators or military leaders. By contrast, in the more troubled years of the late third to early fourth centuries AD Macedonia gained a new prominence due to its proximity to the Danube frontier, which was then under threat. With its ports on the Mediterranean and its stations along the Via Egnatia, the region was an ideal launching pad for military campaigns in the Balkan region.

This was officially recognized in the period of the Tetrarchy when Thessalonica became the regular residence of one of the four rulers of the era, C. Galerius Valerius Maximianus (in residence AD 298–303 and 308–311). Although the city was already a provincial capital, Thessalonica was substantially transformed in the time of Galerius. A large quarter of the city was appropriated for his needs in an area stretching from the sea to the descensus maximus, the main east–west road, and from the theater-stadium in the civic center to the east walls. There were established the new buildings considered necessary for an imperial residence: a palace, a temple for the imperial cult, a triumphal arch celebrating the emperor’s victories and a hippodrome. The preserved remains of these monuments are revealing; together with those of Galerius’ colleague Constantius Chlorus in Trier, they constitute the most extensive evidence available for the residence of a Tetrarchic ruler. At the same time, they anticipate the similar but more elaborate complex constructed shortly thereafter by the first Christian emperor, Constantine, when he moved the capital of the empire to Constantinople.

Also, while the founding of Constantinople necessarily detracted from the preeminence of Thessalonica, the latter nonetheless remained an important city and at times an imperial residence, for instance for Theodosius I in AD 379–80. It consequently played an important role in the formation of Late Antique art. What was most significant about the Late Antique monuments of Thessalonica was the manner in which they reflected, and indeed helped to construct, the image of the Roman emperor as an authoritarian monarch. The emperor now began to be presented as an absolute ruler, adorned with the trappings of monarchy – a jeweled diadem, an

61 Although their status as a ‘palace’ has been questioned, for example by N. Duval, ‘Hommage à Énar et Ingrid Dyggve: La théorie du palais du Bas-Empire et les fouilles de Thessalonique’, Antiquites Tardives 11 (2003), pp. 273–300, the buildings in Thessalonica certainly functioned at times as the residence of Galerius and should be evaluated as such; on this, see S. Curci, ‘Late-Antique Palaces: The Meaning of Urban Contact’, Ars Orientalis 23 (1993), pp. 67–90. The palace of Diocletian at Split is better preserved, but it was a residence built for the Tetrarch’s retirement and so differs in significant ways from the homes of current rulers, for instance in the absence of a hippodrome. On Tetrarchic architecture, see J.B. Ward-Perkins, Roman Imperial Architecture (London 1981), pp. 441–66.
62 On Constantinople and its architecture, see S. Bassett, The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople (Cambridge 2004).
the fleshly modeling of his cheeks and chin, but appearing very strongly in the harsh delineation of his hair, his cloak and his large all-seeing eyes. In this it is characteristic of much Tetrarchic portraiture, which is abstract in style, stern and militaristic in iconography.

Elsewhere in Thessalonica the same style and message were deployed to decorate public monuments. They appear for example in the large-scale triumphal Arch of Galerius, which was visible both to visitors to the palace (where it connected the imperial cult temple in the north with the reception rooms in the south) and to the inhabitants of Thessalonica more generally since it lay along the main route to the hippodrome.46 Four-sided and triple-bayed, the arch was blanketed with marble relief sculptures commemorating Galerius’ Persian campaigns. The scenes depicted included specific historical incidents such as Galerius’ capture of the Persian harem, as well as generic images of Roman victory and barbarian submission. Strikingly absent, however, were any images illustrating Galerius’ constitutional role, for instance him as consul or accompanied by Roman senators. The focus is instead upon the emperor as charismatic ruler, successful in battle and merciful in victory. His isolation from ordinary mortals, and his exaltation as emperor, could not be more completely stressed.

In architecture as in sculpture, Galerius’ status as authoritarian monarch was emphatically highlighted. This can be seen for example in the palace, where the emperor received high-ranking administrators, military officials, and ambassadors from abroad. Among the best-preserved spaces within the palace are two impressive reception rooms. One was a 100-meter-long apsed hall similar to that of Constantius Chlorus’ palace at Trier; the emperor likely stood at the far end, beneath the apse, as visitors advanced slowly and ceremoniously toward him.47 Such spaces, with their immense scale, tend to dwarf the viewer, for the effect is intimidating and overwhelming. Like the triumphal arch, the apsed reception hall provided a visual metaphor for the power of the absolute monarch, who had at his disposal the vast resources and architectural sophistication necessary for the creation of such spaces.

A second reception hall was smaller in scale but more complicated in its architectural structure and more luxurious in its preserved decoration (plate 28). It was an octagonal room, 30 meters in diameter, facing south to the Mediterranean and perhaps meant for the reception of overseas visitors.48 Likely crowned by a dome, it would have had the largest open interior span of any building in Thessalonica; in essence, it brought the advanced architecture of Rome (seen for example in the

48 Mayer, Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist, pp. 43–57.
50 Mayer, Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist, pp. 43–7.
Passage of an edict of toleration for Christianity – promulgated in the east by Galerius in AD 311 – and by later emperors’ support for the new religion.

Together with the graves, we have as well a few architecturally distinguished churches of the period although most date only from the late fourth century onward. But the cemetery church of Philippi, constructed about AD 300-50, attests to the early presence of ambitious Christian buildings in Macedonia; this is appropriate given the region’s history as the site of the first European converts to Christianity.8 A final transformation of the Late Antique era – perhaps the most visibly striking for the region’s inhabitants – was the construction or refurbishment of city walls.9 Allowed to lapse during the Pax Romana, civic defenses were now strengthened and enhanced in response to the new threats emanating from the northern frontier. Frequently following the circuit of earlier Hellenistic walls and in some cases, as at Dium, built directly on top of them, these new defenses signaled very clearly the changed conditions of the late empire: a return to the military instability of the Hellenistic era. What these transformations demonstrate is the continued vitality of Macedonian visual culture in the Late Antique era as well as its responsiveness to historical conditions; this indeed helped to ensure its lasting significance for the development of Byzantine art.10

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Apart from the monuments of Galerius, the field of later Hellenistic and Roman Macedonian art has not been the subject of much sustained, analytical study, although this is beginning to change. The course of excavations can be followed in the specialist journals Egnatia and To archeologiko Ergo sti Makedonias kai Thrake, along with brief mentions in Archeologike Ephemeris. For the Hellenistic period, the coins of Philip V and Perseus are discussed in M. Price, The Coins of the Macedonians (London 1974), while the ruler’s images and commissions are charted in H. Konídis, Time hei doun: Imerónia gia helleniástika Eirinheis sti praximatiostik Musterludh kai sti Kleinía usi botaderon Berückichtigung der archäologischen Denkmaler (Berlin 2000). For the later Macedonian tombs, the best analysis is that of S.G. Miller, The Tomb of Lycon and Kalikles: A Painted Macedonian Tomb (Mainz 1994), focusing on the tomb of Lycon and Gallician with but a broader discussion of the genre also.

For the Roman Imperial era, two recent exhibition catalogs emanating from the Thessalonica Archaeological Museum are especially significant: D.V. Grammenos and P. Adam-Veleci (eds.), Roman Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki 2002), focusing on the city of Thessalonica, and P. Adam-Veleci, E. Pouliak and K. Tsanavarri (eds.), Ancient Country Houses on Modern Roads (Thessalonika 2003), which covers Classical through Late Roman villas that came to light during construction of recent roads and train routes. Helpful as well is F. Papazoglou, Les villes de Macédoine à l’époque romaine (Athens 1988), which integrates archaeological with literary and

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75 The building is identified as a temple for imperial cult on the basis of coins issued shortly after Galerius’ death, which show a round domed building with the legend Memoriae Dori Maximi
76 On building techniques in the Greek East, see Ward-Perkins, Roman Imperial Architecture, pp. 273-8.
78 Gounaris and Gounari, Philippi, pp. 101-4. For examples in Thessalonica, see Konkoutidou, Kolioudou and Tourra, Wandering in Byzantine Theosuanki.
79 For example, Pandermics, Dium, pp. 14-16, Gounaris and Gounari, Philippi, pp. 21-6.
80 For Macedonia as it entered the Byzantine era, see C.S. Sinait, chapter 26.
epigraphic evidence to offer comprehensive entries on each of the cities of Roman Macedonia, and G. Despinis, T. Sefrsadou-Trenoux, and E. Voutiras (eds.), Catalogue of Sculpture in the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki (Thessalonica 1997). Also, M. Fasolo, La Via Egnatia I: Da Apollonia a Dyrrachium ad Herakleia Lynkestisae (Rome 2003), offers the first in a planned series of volumes on the course of the Via Egnatia, perhaps the single most significant Roman intervention in the Macedonian landscape.

The Late Antique era is comparatively well studied. The best relatively recent overview of the Galerian monuments in Thessalonica is E. Mayes, Rom is dort, wo der Kaiser ist: Untersuchungen zu den Staatsdenkmälern des dezentralisierten Reiches von Diokletian bis zu Theodosius 2 (Mainz 2003), which needs however to be supplemented both by the more comprehensive J.-M. Spieser, Thessalonique et ses monuments du IVe au VIe siècle. Contribution à l'étude d'une ville Paléochrétienne (Athens 1984) and by P. Adam-Veleni, ‘History and Town-planning’, in D.V. Grammenos and P. Adam-Veleni (eds.), Roman Thessaloniki (Thessaloniki 2003), pp. 121–76, with information on new findings from rescue excavations. While less information is available for other cities, an outstanding but still useful discussion is that of P. Lemerle, Philippi et la Macédoine orientale à l’époque chrétienne et byzantine, recherches d’histoire et d’archéologie (Paris 1945) on Philippi, perhaps the most extensively preserved and visually impressive Late Antique Macedonian city outside the capital.
Plate 22 Silver tetradrachm of Philip V, portrait of Philip on the obverse and an archaic Athena on the reverse, late third century BC.

Plate 23 Gold stater of T. Quinctius Flamininus, portrait of Flamininus on the obverse and a Nike with palm branch on the reverse, about 196 BC.

Plate 24 Relief showing scene of riderless horse from the Battle of Pydna, monument of Aemilius Paulus, Delphi, about 167 BC.

Plate 25 Grave stele of Onesimus from the outskirts of Thessalonica, late second century AD, Thessaloniki Museum, inv. no. 1524.
Plate 26  View of Villa of Dionysus, Diurn, towards Mount Olympus, about AD 200

Plate 27  Small Arch of Galerius from the Residence of Galerius, Thessalonica, late third century AD, Thessaloniki Museum, inv. no. 2466
persuaded his companions (*batairoi*) to wear Iranian dress. This included the *kandys* cloaks and double chitons seen worn by mounted Macedonians; that is, *batairoi*, shown on the Alexander Sarcophagus. Moreover, the *batairoi’s* horses received ‘Persian’ trappings from the king (Diod. 17.77.5).

The reforms in Parthia (Parthyaia), followed by other novelties in Central Asia, at Susa and at Opis, demonstrate that Alexander formulated a comprehensive pro-Iranian policy that he implemented from 330 up to his death. His position on the Iranians, proclaimed in 330 and implemented in subsequent years, is in many ways reminiscent of that taken by Cyrus the Great and his successors toward the Medes. In the Achaemenid state, Medes had occupied a status almost equal to that of Persians. We know that Alexander revered Cyrus’ memory, and it is highly likely that his concept of equal right for Iranians was modeled after the pro-Median policies of Cyrus and his successors. Alexander, who imitated Cyrus the Great in many instances, was even called philo-Cyrus (*philokryos*, Strabo 11.11.4).

It was in Parthia-Hyrcania that Alexander introduced new rules in building his imperial administration and in the satraps’ status. After the death of Darius III, the satrap of Parthia and Hyrcania, Phraortes, surrendered to Alexander and was granted clemency. The new satrap was the Parthian Arminus, who had lived a long time at the court of Philip II as an émigré. His appointment came as no surprise, but what is surprising is that Alexander did not leave behind – unlike in Babylonia, Persia, and Media – any Macedonian holding an army in Parthia-Hyrcania. All he did was to attach to Arminus, a royal overseer (*episkopos*), Telephemos (Arr. 3.22.1). As it happens, it was Parthia that saw Alexander’s first foundation in Asia: Alexandria (Pliny, *Natural History* 6.113).

In Areia (on the Harirud river between Parthia, Bactria and Drangiana) Alexander approved the incumbent satrap Satibarzanes in 330, attaching to him Anaxippus as an overseer (*episkopos*) with 40 mounted javelin throwers (Arr. 3.25.1, Curt. 6.6.20). Without leaving behind any large garrison, the king marched on toward Bactria, knowing that Satibarzanes commanded a large force numbering thousands. The move proved a mistake in Areia (where a rebellion took a long time to quell), but it illustrates Alexander’s policy toward the satraps and their military forces at the time. Afterwards, even Satibarzanes’ successor as satrap, the Iranian governor Arsaces, was not burdened with a powerful garrison under a Macedonian commander to control his satrapy. It should be underscored that in Areia two of Alexander’s foundations, Heila and Alexandria, which were established in 330, were apparently intended to stabilize the new administration.

Meanwhile, Arminus, long an expatriate, was unable to govern Parthia-Hyrcania efficiently, causing Alexander to replace him in autumn 330 with the previous satrap, Phraortes (Arr. 3.28.4). His loyalty was assured by the inclusion of his two sons Sisines and Pharnabazus in the companion cavalry. In all his military missions,

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48 Diod. 17.77.5, Curt. 6.6.7, Justin 12.3.9. See also K. Dahmen, chapter 3.
50 But see Bosworth, 'Alexander and the Iranians', p. 20.