Greek Tragedy and Macedonia Although the ancient Macedonians had no independent dramatic tradition of their own, from the late fifth century onwards successive Macedonian kings began to sponsor Greek theater productions and professionals with real enthusiasm. Indeed, their patronage was crucial to the post-classical development of the ancient theater into a more international performance.

Macedonia in Greek tragedy Down to the middle of the fourth century, Macedon remained an unstable and weak realm, a remote kingdom of unrealized potential on the northern frontier of the Hellenic world. It is perhaps understandable that this out-of-the-way region is only occasionally represented in surviving Greek tragedies, and features on the traditional "tragic map" only indistinctly. For example, we see the AXIUS River and the surrounding territory (home to Paeonians in Hom. *Il.* 2.849 and 21.141) noted in the report of the MESSENGER in AESCHYLUS' *PERSIANS*, with the BARBARIANS passing through the "land of the Macedonians" and over the STRYMON RIVER as they make good their escape east (*Pers.* 492–4). The Strymon is used again to mark the eastern boundary of the Greek world in AESCHYLUS' *SUPPLIANTS*, with the ARGIVE king, PELASGUS, laying claim to a wide realm that includes the PELOPONNESE, Epirus, and Macedonia (*Supp.* 254–9). In each play, Macedonia is but one stop-off point in the long, far-ranging journey speeches that AESCHYLUS often presents. Of a slightly different nature to these plain references, however, is the extended evocation we find in EURIPIDES' *BACCHAE*. In the second *STASIMON* of that play, we have a developed sequence where the CHORUS imagines DIONYSUS' journey from distant lands, finally arriving in THEBES by way of the deep woods of OLYMPUS, blessed PIERIA, and the swift-flowing Axius (*Bacch.* 560–75, cf. 410–11).

Many have linked the particular ALLUSIONS to Macedonia in the *Bacchae* to EURIPIDES' stay in the kingdom in the final decade of the fifth century (Dodds 1944/1960: xxxix–xl; Easterling 1994: 77–8). The Hellenistic *Life of Euripides* has it that the tragedian left ATHENS for THESSALY, and "from there went to spend some time with Archelaus in Macedonia" (Kannicht *TrGF* vol. 5.1 T1 Ia.20). Archelaus was king of Macedon from 413 to 399 BCE, and although the information found in the biographical tradition is often unreliable, that Euripides at least visited the Macedonian royal court was firmly believed in antiquity (see, e.g., Arist. *Pol.* 1311b 30–4; Plut. *Mor.* 177b). Further, before his death in 406, Euripides composed a tragedy called *Archelaus*, probably as a commission piece for his royal patron. Thirty-seven fragments survive from the play, though unfortunately they tend to present general aphorisms only and a satisfying reconstruction is difficult. Prominent among the key themes that we can identify is the intention to establish a place for the Macedonian royal house within the panhellenic myth; two lengthy fragments survive from *Archelaus*' PROLOGUE, which establish a mythical "Archelaus" as the founder of the Macedonian royal line and also as a descendant of Heracles (Kannicht *TrGF* vol. 5.1 F 228, 228a). In exploring this lineage, Euripides returns to a subject he had considered previously in other lost tragedies; the *Temenus* and/or the *Temenidae* also detailed how the Heraclids were restored to the Peloponnese, and fragments also mention a mythical Archelaus (prompting the suggestion that these works together perhaps formed a "Macedonian TRILOGY": Zielinski 1925: 236; Scullion 2006). Given the intriguing material, and the possible links between Athenian playwright and foreign patron, it is frustrating that we know so little about these works (see also FRAGMENTARY AND LOST PLAYS).

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Theater in Macedonia The actual site for the first performance of the *Archelaus* is also a matter for speculation, although, given the content, the play was presumably commissioned for performance in Macedonia. Perhaps the most likely site is Aegae (Vergina); the closing scenes of the *Archelaus* anticipate the founding of this royal city, which remained an important ritual center into the Hellenistic period. There are also the remains of a small court theater at Aegae, though these date to the early years of the fourth century. Another possible site worth considering is Dion, the religious center of Macedonia, where Archelaus instituted an "Olympia," a festival held in honor of Zeus and the Muses which included dramatic competitions (as well as athletic and musical contests; Diod. Sic. 17.16.3–4). There are the remains of a small performance space at Dion also, again built later in the fourth century. Ultimately, it is impossible to choose confidently between Aegae and Dion as the site for the first performance of the *Archelaus*; however, the development of new theaters in these locations does point to a considerable commitment to dramatic performance. It was only in the second half of the fourth century that theaters became part of the monumental architecture found in most Greek cities, so the Macedonian construction of these permanent theaters (and also that at Philippi, which dates to after 340) testifies to their own sustained and serious interest in drama.

Macedonian patrons These permanent theaters were important sites for performance, but they were not the only setting for Greek drama in Macedonia. Certainly, the celebrations of the Olympia at Dion were significant festive assemblies, where successive kings sponsored lavish productions for a wide audience; as Philip II did in 347 after the capture of Olynthus (Diod. Sic. 16.55.1), and Alexander the Great before he set off on his Asian campaign in 334 (Arr. *Anab.* 1.11.1; Diod. Sic. 17.16.3–4). Dramatic performances were indeed staged as part of large festivals, but the key context for theater in Macedonia seems to have been the sympotic space in which the royal court and an extended aristocracy entertained. This was the elite that accepted Euripides into its ranks during the reign of Archelaus, who also offered patronage to a variety of artists from all over the Greek world. Notables such as the celebrated Athenian playwright Agathon (Pl. *Symp.* 172c; Ael. *VH* 13.4; cf. Ar. *Ran.* 83–5), the epic poet Choerilus of Samos, and the DITHYRAMBIC poet Timotheus of Miletus journeyed north as the Macedonians pushed to establish their court as a center for Hellenic culture. And the scattered literary accounts of the activity of these artists present them offering performances and songs to, and enjoying the companionship of, an enthusiastic but select set (Borza 1993: 237–44).

Macedonian patronage would again draw artists north during the reign of Philip II; most notably, however, this king welcomed a number of famous Greek actors to the kingdom. Men of such eminence as Aristodemus of Metapontum (to whom the king was "well-disposed" because of his artistry, see Aeschin. 2.15–19), Neoptolemus of Scyros (Dem. 5.6), Satyrus the comic actor (Dem. 19.193–5), and Thessalus were all received at court (indeed, Thessalus was also an associate of Alexander the Great, see Plut. *Alex.* 10.2–3). While Philip was quick to exploit the license granted to actors to travel freely throughout the Greek world (often using expert players to conduct his diplomatic business, see Dem. 19.315), the king's preference for performers over poets also highlights and contributes to two crucial developments in ancient drama. First, Philip's patronage was a factor in the emerging importance of the star actor in the fourth century. In addition, command shows for this Macedonian court were increasingly more *ad hoc* performances than part of established religious festivals. Indeed, Neoptolemus' recital of an unknown tragic ode at a Macedonian state banquet (part of the grand wedding celebrations held at Aegae in 336) is the earliest example we have of an actor performing in a private context (Diod. Sic. 16.92; see also ORIGINS AND

History of Greek Tragedy). Given that so much in this ancient kingdom centered on the figure of the king (and, from the reign of Philip, on the royal family), the lines between private and public often tended to be blurred; consequently, it is striking to see how adeptly Greek dramatic performers (and their performances) adapted in the Macedonian setting, adding color to diverse personal and common celebrations.

The development of a mixed festive culture became even more marked during the rule of Alexander the Great; a reign that, again, worked hard to articulate high cultural ideals even throughout the Asian campaign (see Trittle 2009: 122–9 on "Alexander's artistic entourage"). There is the example of the elaborate celebration held in the Phoenician city of Tyre in the summer of 331, where Alexander summoned Greek performers to join him and take part in the "dithyrambic choruses and tragedies" he organized as part of a festival to mark early successes (Plut. *Alex.* 29). And in the final year of the expedition, there were two further spectaculars where theater performances were staged as part of celebrations that were more extravagant (on a scale previously unmatched), and somewhat more secular (commemorating recent Macedonian achievements), than was customary. In the spring of 324, Alexander celebrated a five-day wedding feast at Susa, where the tragic performances of Thessalus, Athenodorus, and Aristocritus (and the comic actors Lycon, Phormion, and Ariston) were among a wide variety of international entertainments provided for the 9,000 guests (see Ath. 537d–540a; as at Aegae in 336, dramatic performances at Susa were again part of the royal wedding celebrations). Later, in the autumn of 324, Alexander paused again (this time in Ecbatana) to arrange a special festival in honor of Dionysus. The local satrap summoned some 3,000 performers from Greece to provide various entertainments for Alexander's troops in an "impromptu" celebration (Arr. *Anab.* 7.14.10; Diod. Sic. 17.110). Plutarch tells us that Alexander busied himself with theatrical productions here (Plut. *Alex.* 72), specifically with the production of a special dramatic piece called the *Agén* ("The Leader"), written and performed especially for the occasion (fragments of this "little satyric drama" are preserved in Ath. 586d, 595d–596b). Again, the court of this Macedonian king displays a thorough working knowledge of Greek drama, and a particularly high regard for the tragedies of Euripides. (For examples of Alexander and/or his companions trading lines from ancient tragedies, see Plut. *Alex.* 8.3, 10.4, 51.5, 53.2; *Mor.* 182e; Arr. *Anab.* 6.13.5, 7.16.6; and especially Ath. 537d; although see the warning in Mossman [1988: 89] on the use of literary quotations by Plutarch and other sources).

In spite of its fierce reputation, the Macedonian court in the late fifth and fourth centuries was a most important setting for ancient drama, providing a welcoming and appreciative audience for a variety of Greek theater professionals. That so many artists of note were willing to accept the benefaction of successive Macedonian kings certainly helped boost the kingdom's panhellenic reputation, and this royal support did endure. Although the evidence is meager, there are scattered signs that highlight the enduring importance of drama locally even after Alexander: for example, we can point to the continuing celebration of the Olympia at Dion (Hatzopoulos 1996: vol. 2, 57, details an inscription recording its celebration in the time of Cassander), to the construction of further theaters in new foundations such as Pella (mentioned in a late fourth-century context in Plut. *Mor.* 1096b), and even to the emergence of the first eminent Macedonian playwright, Posidippus Comicus (from Cassandreia, who won four victories at the City Dionysia in Athens at the start of the third century; see Olson 2007: 416). Beyond the kingdom, Macedonian patronage was a significant factor in the development of both a more flexible form and a more varied context for ancient drama, where performances could be detached from the

established festival setting and presented as key parts of sundry celebrations. Certainly by the late fourth century, there was a wider demand for drama throughout (and even outside) the Greek world. Key to this expansion was the fact that those Macedonian generals who carved their own kingdoms from Alexander's empire would also give "dramatic entertainments a central place within the social life of the court" (Csapo 2010a: 178). Macedonian patrons, even beyond Macedonia, did much to reshape the theatrical performance that would continue long after the classical age.

See also Ancient Greek Theaters; Economic History of Greek Theater; Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Century

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