ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΜΕΙΖΟΝΟΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ

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Summary :

Macedonian king (319-239 BC), architect of the restoration of the Macedonian state. He was virtually the first Antigonid to transfer the locus of political power from Asia Minor to Macedonia. Before ascending to the throne (277 BC) he had cooperated with notables of Asia Minor. He possibly made a campaign in Caria in 268 BC and he renewed the Aegean maritime policy of his ancestors, Antigonus I Monophthalmos and Demetrius I Poliorcetes.

Date and Place of Birth

319 BC, possibly at Gonnoi in Thessaly

Date and Place of Death

239 BC

Main Role

King

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1. Birth - descent - education

Antigonus Gonatas was born in 319 BC, according to one version of his story, in the city of Gonnoi in Thessaly and died in 239 BC.[1] He was the first-born son of Demetrius Poliorcetes, son of Antigonus Monophthalmos, Alexander the Great's general and later governor of Phrygia by the Hellespont, and Phila, daughter of Antipater, governor of Macedonia. He was also related to all the contemporary prominent monarchs. He was brother-in-law and son-in-law of Seleucus I Nicator, brother-in-law of Antiochus I Soter, nephew of Ptolemy I Soter, Pyrrhus, Lysimachus and Cassander, and cousin of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Any information we possess on his education originates from later sporadic references, since the period 301-221 BC is not illuminated by any systematic literary source. Euphantus of Olynthus was among his teachers – he had also composed a treatise on state governance.[2] Antigonus' stay in Athens proved formative: there he associated with eminent philosophers of the time, like Cleanthes, Menedemus, Bion, Timon of Phlius, Perseus, Arcesilaus and, especially, the Stoic Zeno.[3] Zeno influenced his political behaviour, although the two men often disagreed.[4]

2. Gonatas' supremacy in Greece

His first political-military presence is obviously related with the siege of Athens by Demetrius I Poliorcetes in 294/293 BC, and the elevation of the young Antigonus to governor of Boeotia. Soon afterwards he assumed command of the few Antigonid possessions in Greece, due to his father's hurried departure for Asia Minor (288 BC). After the death of Demetrius he received the royal title, in 284/283 BC, albeit as a "king without a kingdom".[5] Gonatas' final establishment on the Macedonian throne, which for long was the bone of contention between the would-be continuators of the Argead/Temenid dynasty, can be dated to somewhere between the final repulsion of the Celtic invaders at Lysimachia in 277/276 BC and the death of Pyrrhus, his Epirote opponent, in 272 BC. By making Pella his capital and cultivating the Temenid era traditions, Gonatas obviously gave priority to the stabilization of the Macedonian state before laying claims to the lands further south.

His overall strategy may be understood as an extension of the Argead Phillip II's Greek policy, as well as a productive and realistic adjustment of the Aegean policy implemented –with Asia Minor as their basis– by his ancestors Antigonus

Monophthalmos and Demetrios Poliorcetes. In order to become international players, the Antigonids needed to control continental Greece, so their opponents, the Seleucids in the East and, mainly, the Ptolemies of Egypt took measures to undermine the Antigonid dominance in mainland Greece. For instance, soon after Gonatas managed to come to friendly terms with the Seleucid Antiochus I following the 278 BC peace, and in view of their possible cooperation against Ptolemy II[6] (it is thought possible that Gonatas was present in Caria in 268 BC),[7] the Greek cities joined forces against the Antigonids in that same year, incited by Ptolemy. The Chremonidean War ended with the final subjugation of Athens to Macedonian rule in 262/261 BC.[8]

It appears that the control of the Antigonid power-bases in Greece was organized mainly through a network of personal acquaintances. It is indicative that the enticement for the proposed but not carried out marriage of Antigonus' son, Demetrius II, with Stratonice, daughter of Alexander, tyrant of Corinth, in 246 BC was the return of Corinth to Antigonid control; this incident reveals one of the mechanisms for securing indirect control over the key locations in the Macedonian realm. Apparently, shortly before (or soon after) the end of the Chremonidean War, the Antigonid fleet won its first important victory over the Ptolemaic Navy, close to the island of Cos (sometime between 262/261 and 255 BC); this victory allowed Gonatas to renew the Aegean policy introduced by his ancestors Antigonus Monophthalmos and Demetrius I Poliorcetes.[9]

The second victory over the Ptolemaic fleet off Andros in 246/245 BC was more important, as it confirmed the achievement of Macedonian goals in mainland Greece and the Aegean. Thus, the "elderly"[10] Gonatas saw the prevalence of a status quo in the Aegean favourable to him; having managed to secure control over Corinth, Piraeus, Chalcis and Demetrias he could finally restrict Ptolemaic control over the Aegean. It is also possible that Gonatas was involved in the Third Syrian (Laodicean) War, fought between the new kings of the Seleucid and the Egyptian kingdoms, Seleucus II and Ptolemy III respectively.[11] Until his death, which occurred under unidentified circumstances in 239 BC at the age of eighty, Gonatas was busy securing his dominion over Greece. The capture of Corinth by the politician Aratus of Sicyon in 243 BC was a major loss for the Antigonid possessions, while shortly before his death the Macedonian king had signed a peace treaty with the Achaean League.[12]

3. Securing dynastic succession

Like his grandfather, Antigonus Monophthalmos, Gonatas was married only once, and late in life. With his wife Phila (and niece), daughter of Seleucus I, Antigonus fathered his only legal heir to the throne, Demetrius II. However, Alcyoneus, the son he had begotten earlier with an Athenian hetaira, was also treated favourably. By making Demetrius II co-king towards the end of his reign, he promptly secured the succession of the Antigonid dynasty, which in the period under consideration was by no means guaranteed. In the Macedonian region, he sought to revive the intellectual vigour of Phillip II's court, and attracted a host of historians (like Hieronymus of Cardia), poets (Aratus of Soloi), and philosophers to Pella.[13] He became legendary for his love of feasts and his generosity, traits which shed some light on the human dimension of the intellectual king.[14]

4. Assessment

In attempting to retrace Antigonus Gonatas' personality we are forced to differentiate between contemporary and later judgements on his person. His military genius is indicated by the victorious outcome of important battles, like his personal victory over the Celtic invaders in Thracian Lysimachia and the two naval victories over the mighty Ptolemaic

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fleet near Cos and Andros. His leadership and mental fortitude in the field of battle is echoed in the reply he delivered upon being informed about the superior number of the Ptolemaic ships on the eve of the naval battle of Andros: "… how many ships do you think my personal presence is worth?". He replied with wit and readiness when challenged by his adversaries. When, probably during a period when the conflict between them was becoming more intense, Patroclus, the commander of the Ptolemaic fleet sent him a fish and some figs (symbols of prosperity and financial decline respectively) as gifts, Gonatas poignantly interpreted this move as an open challenge by his opponents to establish a thalassocracy in the Aegean.[15]

In consolidating the Antigonid dynasty he sought to carefully promote it as a continuation of its predecessors, the Temenid/Argeads and he missed no opportunity to express his devotion to them,[16] as when, for example, he covered the royal tombs of Vergina after the Celtic incursions, or when he erected a stoa to house the statues of his ancestors in Delos after the naval battle of Cos. On the basis of his monetary policy we can also argue that Gonatas promoted his international political standing via two notions, the Macedonians' contribution in the struggle to save Greece from the Celtic invaders in 279 BC, and their claims to an Aegean thalassocracy. By organizing celebrations in pan-Hellenic sanctuaries, like the Antigoneia and the Stratoniceia and the Paneia and Soteria in Delos later (following the naval battle of Andros), as well as by connecting the iconography of his personal coinage with the history of two other pan-Hellenic sanctuaries (Delphi and Delos), the Macedonian king sought to underscore his piety and his Greek identity.

Finally, although, as we have mentioned above, his 'Hellenic hegemony' largely relied on his personal relations, it appears that we are not entitled to characterize him as a pro-tyrant monarch; his later characterization as an 'implanter of monarchs' by Polybius rather reflects Greek resentment of Macedonian rule during the subsequent periods.[17] The outcomes of his adroit political manoeuvres had already become apparent by the end of his long reign. The weakened and leaderless Macedonia of the period of the Celtic invasions had been reformed becoming a tenacious political power, equivalent to its other Hellenistic counterparts; the Temenid legacy found a worthy successor in this new dynasty, whose members were united by genuine solidarity and devotion.

Antigonus Gonatas' main biographer, W.W. Tarn, describes him as a philosopher-king who sought to reign by implementing the basic principles of Stoic philosophy and considered kingship to be a "glorious slavery".[18] Although in reality his kingship obviously rested on a more realistic basis, his strong personality indubitably paved the way for the advancement of the Macedonian kingdom and allowed the hazarding of certain retrogressive overtures from the Greek realm to that of Asia Minor.

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1. Brown, E.L., "Antigonus surnamed Gonatas", in Bowersock, G.W. – Burkert, W. – Putnam, M.C.J. (eds.), *Arktouros: Hellenic Studies Presented to Bernard M.W. Knox* (Berlin 1979), pp. 299-307. On Gonatas' possible origin from the Gonnoi of Thessaly, see Euseb. I.237 (Schoene).

2. Diog. Laert. 2.110.

3. It is possible that he had developed friendships with many of these philosophers after his accession to the throne. See Gabbert, J.J., *Antigonus II Gonatas. A Political Biography* (London 1997), p. 5.

4. For instance, Zeno complained that Antigonus Gonatas brought with him his rowdy to his house. See Diog. Laert. 7.13. The two men also disagreed on philosophical issues, as over the significance of wealth. See Diog. Laert. 7.36.

5. Chambers, M.B., "The First Regnal Year of Antigonos Gonatas", *AJPh 75* (1954), p. 392ff.

6. Buraselis, K., *Das Hellenistische Makedonien und die Agais, Forschungen zur Politik des Kassandros und der drei Antigoniden im Agaischen Meer und im Westkleinasien* (Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte, Heft 73, München 1982), p. 116, note 32.

7. On the basis of an inscription from Caunus, dated to the 15th year of Antigonus' reign (*c.* 268 BC). See Frei, P.-Marek, C., "Die karisch-griechische Bilingue von Kaunos: eine zweisprachige Staatsurkunde des 4. Jahrhunderts v.Chr.", *Kadmos* 36.1 (1997), pp. 1-89.

8. On the Chremonidean War see Heinen, H., *Untersuchungen zur Politischen Geschichte Athens im 3. Jahrhundert v.Chr.* (München 1979), pp. 119, 133-139, 170-179; Hammond, N.G.L. - Walbank, F.W., *A History of Macedonia²* 3 (Oxford 1988), pp. 267-280.

9. Ath. 5.209e, 8.334a=FGrHist 81 F 1; Plut., *Pel.* 2.4, *Mor.* 545b, 183c, see Heinen, H., *Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte Athens im 3. Jahrhundert v.Chr.* (München 1979), pp. 191-192. The naval battle of Cos is dated between 262/261 and 255BC: Walbank, F.W., "Antigonus Gonatas: The Naval Situation (261-251 B.C.)", in Hammond, N.G.L. - Walbank, F.W., *A History of Macedonia²* 3 (Oxford 1988), pp. 291-293; Hammond, N.G.L., "Appendix 4: The battles of Cos and Andros", ibid., pp. 595-600; Reger, G., "The date of the battle of Kos", *AJAH* 10 (1985) [1993], pp. 155-177, compare Buraselis, K., *Das hellenistische Makedonien und die Ägäis. Forschungen zur Politik des Kassandros und der drei Antigoniden im ägäischen Meer und im Westkleinasien* (Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte, Heft 73, München 1982), pp. 141-144, 146-151, 162.

10. For the appellation 'the elderly', see Plut., *Pel.* 2; Hammond, N.G.L. - Walbank, F., *A History of Macedonia²* 3 (Oxford 1988), pp. 313, note 6.

11. Buraselis, K., *Das hellenistische Makedonien und die Ägäis. Forschungen zur Politik des Kassandros und der drei Antigoniden im ägäischen Meer und im Westkleinasien* (Münchener Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte, Heft 73, München 1982), pp. 119-151, 170-179; Hammond, N.G.L. - Walbank, F.W., *A History Of Macedonia²* 3 (Oxford 1988), p. 306; Reger, G., *Regionalism and Change in the Economy of Independent Delos* (Berkeley - Los Angeles - Oxford 1996), pp. 18-19, 23-26, 41; Πασχίδη, Π., «Ποσειδώνες και Αντίγονοι. Παρατηρήσεις στη νομισματική μαρτυρία για τη ναυτική δύναμη του Αντιγόνου Γονατά και του Αντιγόνου Δώσωνα», *Αρχαιογνωσία* 9 (1998), pp. 233-257, esp. pp. 254-255; Panagopoulou, E., *Antigonos Gonatas: Coinage, Money and the Economy* (Diss. University of London 2000), pp. 187-189.

12. Plut., *Arat.* 33.

13. Tarn, W.W., *Antigonos Gonatas* (Oxford 1913), pp. 223-256.

14. For references to the feasts organized by Antigonus Gonatas see Diogenes Laertius 7.13. For an expensive banquet given in honour of his illegitimate son Alcyoneus see Diogenes Laertius 4.41. For his gifts to his friends see Diogenes Laertius 7.169.

15. This incident is cited in three versions: Plut., *Pel.* 2, cf. Plut., *Mor.* 183c, 545b; P. Haun. pp. 42-44; Hammond, N.G.L. – Walbank, F.W., *A History of Macedonia*^{2} 3 (Oxford 1988), pp. 587-595.

16. *Phylarch* in Ath. 8.334$^{\alpha}$ = *FGH* 81 F1; Buraselis, K., *Das Hellenistische Makedonien und die Ägäis, Forschungen zur Politik des Kassandros und der drei Antigoniden im Ägäischen Meer und im Westkleinasien*, Münchner Beiträge zur Papyrusforschung und Antiken Rechtsgeschichte, Heft 73 (Munich 1982), pp. 159ff. Walbank, F.W., "Sea-power and the Antigonids", in Adams, W.L. – Borza, E.N. (eds.), *Philip II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage* (Washington 1982), pp. 213-215.

17. Polyb. 2.41.10, 9.29.6; Gabbert, J.J., *The Greek hegemony of Antigonos Gonatas* (r. 283-239 B.C.) (Diss. University of Cincinnati 1982), pp. 247-259; Gabbert, J.J., *Antigonus II Gonatas, A Political Biography* (London 1997), pp. 33-44; Panagopoulou, K., *Antigonos Gonatas: Coinage, Money and the Economy* (Diss. University of London 2000), p. 5, note 18.

18. Ael. *NH* 2.20.

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Chronological Table

319 BC: Antigonus Gonatas is born

307 BC: Athens is liberated by Demetrius. Four-year War. Demetrius against Cassander

286 BC: Lysimachus and Pyrrhus invade Macedonia. An 'uprising' takes place in Athens

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283 BC: Demetrius Poliorcetes dies. Gonatas receives the royal title

280 BC: The Celts invade Macedonia. Thrace and Macedonia are ravaged

279 BC: The Celts attempt to invade Delphi but are repelled

277 BC: Gonatas defeats the Gauls in Lysimachia. He marries the daughter of Seleucus I, Phila

272 BC: Pyrrhus dies in Argos

268 BC: Gonatas is possibly active in Caria

268/267-261 BC: Chremonidean War, naval battle of Cos

252 BC: Alexander's, son of Craterus, insurrection at Corinth

246 BC: Gonatas recaptures Corinth

246/245 BC: Naval battle of Andros

243 BC: Aratus of Sicyon seizes Corinth

239 BC: Antigonus Gonatas dies