

# THE HELLENIC IDENTITY OF ANCIENT MACEDONIA

Continued from previous edition



The above ancient Macedonian coin celebrates Phillip's B' victory at the Olympic Games, in the chariot race.

Note the Greek writing on the coin which gives us Phillip's name in the genitive case 'Phillipou', which defines possession, and is a unique characteristic of the Greek language.

On the subject of the ancient Olympic Games we know that only Greeks were allowed to participate.

What is perhaps not so widely known is that the games were part of the greatest religious festival in ancient Greece, that of Olympian Zeus. The reason why only Greeks were allowed to participate is that Zeus was a Greek god. Why would a Persian or an Egyptian participate in a religious festival dedicated to Zeus?

So this is another proof that the ancient Macedonians had the same gods as the other Greeks.

Phillip wasn't the first Macedonian to participate or win an Olympic victory. King Alexander A' won the foot race in the first half of the 5th century BC, after proving his Greek ancestry. The father of history Herodotos who was a cotemporary of Alexander A', tells us that he knew for a fact that the king's ancestors were Greeks.

King Archelaus A', 413-399 BC, not only won a chariot race in the Olympic Games, he also organized a religious festival with musical and athletic competitions, honoring Olympian Zeus and the Muses at Dion. Athletes and artists from all over Greece participated.

But it was not only the kings that participated and won in the ancient Olympic games.

For example we have Apollodoros of Macedon who won the foot race during the 1st century.

We also have a woman, Belestiche of Macedon, winning the two-foal chariot race. While women were not allowed in Olympia during the religious festival of Zeus, and therefore

were excluded from the games, they could participate as owners of horses, mules or foals, in the chariot races, since the winner was the owner of the animals, not the riders. We have a number of women Olympian victors, with first the Spartan princess Kynisca who won the four horse chariot race twice.

Neither were the ancient Olympics the only festival ancient Macedonians participated.

We must keep in mind that every athletic contest in ancient Greece was part of a greater religious festival.

Archon of Pella won events in both the Pythian Games, in honor of Apollo, and the Isthmian Games, in honor of Poseidon.

It is also important to understand the cultural background of these athletic contests. By participating in athletic events, athletes were imitating the ancient Greek heroes and Gods that introduced them. For example the stadium foot race was the distance that Hercules could run in one breath and was almost equal to 200 metres. The discus throwing was introduced by the god Apollo.

By doing so they were aspiring to become as close as possible to a hero or godlike status. This is why there was only one winner and no second or third places. The winner of an Olympic event was thought to have come as close to a godlike state as is humanly possible. It is not by chance that the Greek word for labor, 'athlos' and the word 'athlete' come from



the same source etymologically. It is not by chance that Hercules, the only hero that managed to earn the right to live amongst the gods of Olympus, is considered the founder of the ancient Olympic Games.

As we can see participating in the ancient Olympic Games required a conscious and deep understanding of the Greek way of life.

A selection of three ancient Macedonian coins.

The first thing we all notice is the Greek writing on all three.

The second thing we notice is the club of Hercules on the first coin, the image of Zeus on the second, and the image of Athena on the third.

Unshakeable proof as to the language and religion of the ancient Macedonians.



The above image belongs to Olympia, the mother of Alexander the Great. She was the daughter of King Neoptolemos, and their ancestry went back to the hero Achilles.

While her name is clearly Greek, the name of her father is also Greek, being the name of the son of Achilles.

She was initiated in the Kaveiria Mysteries with Phillip, Alexander the Great's father.

Famous for her sharp mind, she

was portrayed with snakes, a sign that she worshipped Dionysus, the snakes being one of his symbols. There are many images on ancient Greek pottery of Dionysus's female followers, the Maenads, carrying snakes.

It is a well known fact that Alexander slept with the Iliad under his pillow.

What is not so well known is that when he first landed in Asia Minor, he visited ancient Troy and took Achilles' shield, indicating that he considered his war against the Persians a continuation of the war of Troy, and asking for the protection of the great Greek hero who was his ancestor.

The below is the genealogy of the Hellenes as they knew it and accepted it. At the bottom line we find 'Macedon' being the grandson of 'Hellen'.

While we today may not give much credit to what we consider mythology, it is what the ancient Greeks believed about themselves, how they saw themselves that matters.

For the ancient Greeks myth was their history.

Perhaps the greatest philosopher of all times, Plato, in what is considered a sacred book, his dialogue 'Timaios', tells us that

'We should believe those who spoke before us, who were, as they said, descendants of gods and of course they knew very well their ancestors.

It is impossible therefore not to believe to the descendants of the gods'.

When Plato, the philosopher who accepted nothing without intense scrutiny, tells us to simply believe those who claim to be descendants of the gods, we understand how the ancient Greeks viewed myth.

To be continued in the next edition

## GENEALOGY OF HELLENES

