

## Politicized Theater Under the Attalid Dynasty

This paper analyzes the role of Pergamon in the development of the politicized use of theater in the late Hellenistic period. I explore the ways in which the Attalid monarchs, especially Eumenes II and Attalos II (197-138 BCE) represented themselves and their rule through the theater, both within Attalid territory and to the Greek world at large. Evidence examined includes the relationship between Attalid monarchs and the Ionian Association of Dionysiac Artists, Attalid contributions to the changing landscape of festival culture in second century BCE Asia Minor, and the monuments dedicated near theaters at Athens and Delos: namely, the Stoa of Eumenes II at Athens and the statue of Philetairos in the Delian theater. I also consider the monarchs' personal self-representation, including the use of Dionysian images and their patronage of artists and scholars at court, as part of the close ties between Attalid political power and the theater.

Beginning with actors, I discuss the monarchs' patronage of a Pergamene branch of the Ionian Association of Dionysiac Artists and the actors' involvement in the royal priesthood, the Attalists, known from epigraphic evidence (Aneziri 2003). A key figure is Kraton, celebrity aulos-player and founder of the Attalists (Le Guen 2007). I then take a closer look at festival patterns in second-century Aeolis and Ionia and analyze Attalid sponsorship of and involvement in regional and extra-regional festivals, and the role of that cultural euergetism in their monarchic ideology (Chaniotis 1995). Related to their promotion of festival activities is their dedication of monuments abroad for festival use, particularly the Stoa of Eumenes next to the Theater of Dionysos in Athens, which could serve as a refuge in inclement weather and as a storage area for scenery. At Delos, Eumenes dedicated a statue of Philetairos, founder of the

Attalid dynasty, in front of the theater's *proskenion* (Fraisie & Moretti 2007); a Philetairaia festival took place at Delos as well. Like other Pergamene exports, Attalid monarchs used the theater to encode Greekness and claim cultural legitimacy, which could then be weaponized against competing empires.

Finally, the Attalids' own self-representation supports this reading of their relationship to and use of the theater. The dynasty claimed the patronage of Dionysos Kathegemon, an aspect of Dionysos particular to Pergamon, with the Dionysiac Artists also serving as priests, and this worship seems to have been partially assimilated to worship of the dynast himself (Chaniotis 2007). One of the buildings of the Basileia complex, in what has been interpreted as the royal residence, contains an altar niche, a statue of a dancer, and several examples of Dionysian imagery in the floor mosaics, including masks, ivy, and a parrot. The Attalids were not the only monarchs to adopt Dionysian elements: in the first century BCE, Ptolemy XII and Antony famously did similarly. But the Attalids were first, and the association between rulers and Dionysos may have become popularized due to their influence.

Bringing together these strands of evidence for the close relationship between Attalid cultural patronage and their monarchic ideology, I conclude that the Attalids played an instrumental role in the development of politicized theater, and that Pergamene influence can be recognized as a missing link between the democratic context of Classical Athens and the overtly political theatrics of Pompey and others at Rome.

### Works Cited

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