

The Introduction of Caranus into the Argead King List

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HERODOTUS, our earliest source for an Argead king list, claims that the first historically notable Argead monarch, Alexander I, was the seventh of his line (8.137); he records Alexander's predecessors as Perdiccas (the founder of the dynasty), Argaeus, Philip, Aeropus, Alcetas, and Amyntas.¹ Whatever the historical merit of Herodotus' information, it appears to be based upon an official fifth-century register of the Argead house, for Thucydides (2.100.2) offers testimony, compatible with that of Herodotus, that Alexander's son, Perdiccas II, was the eighth Argead king. Whether or not Thucydides received his information on this point independently of Herodotus is not of great importance.² As Thucydides himself indicates, he had experience and wide influence in the north Aegean as a commander of troops (4.104.4) and as a businessman (4.105.1). If Thucydides had access to a tradition that contradicted Herodotus' record, one would expect some mention of that fact in his account of the position of Perdiccas II in the dynastic reckoning at 2.100, a passage that exhibits considerable knowledge of the contemporary Argead realm. Wherever Thucydides obtained his information, the fact that it is consistent with Herodotus' suggests that the king list recorded above was well known. We can assume with relative certainty that by the mid-fifth century the Macedonians thought that the Argead house had been established by a Perdiccas, and that it extended through six generations before Alexander I.³

¹ For discussion of what little is known of these kings, see: F. Geyer, "Perdikkas (1)," *RE* 19.1 (1937) 590; J. Kaerst, "Argaios (1)," 2.1 (1895) 685; Geyer, "Philippos (6)," 19.2 (1938) 2265; Kaerst, "Aeropus (4)," 1.1 (1893) 679, "Alketas (1)," 1.2 (1894) 1514, and "Amyntas (10)," 1.2 (1894) 2006.

² E. N. Borza, "Athenians, Macedonians, and the Origins of the Macedonian Royal House," in *Studies in Attic Epigraphy, History, and Topography Presented to Eugene Vanderpool* (Princeton 1982) 7–13, argues that Thucydides' evidence for the Argead king list is not independent of Herodotus. This, however, is of little concern to us here since Borza admits (8f) that Herodotus is well informed on the family and affairs of Alexander I.

³ This conclusion has been accepted recently by both N. G. L. Hammond, *A History of Macedonia II* (London 1979) 4, and E. Badian, "Greeks and Macedonians," in

During the reign of Archelaus (*ca* 413–399) the Macedonian king list began to undergo revision. The earliest of these appears to be an intrusion into the historical list easily dismissed: in Euripides' *Archelaus*, an invented Archelaus, son of Temenus, was presented as the founder of the Macedonian line.⁴ Although the Argeads traced their origins to Temenus, it is obvious that Euripides' character was an interpolation meant to flatter the playwright's patron and devotee of Greek culture, the historical Archelaus.⁵ In light of Herodotus' evidence, it is virtually certain that the monarch of the late fifth century was the first of his name to be enrolled in the official record of the dynasty.

Soon after the beginning of the fourth century, however, there were permanent changes in the official record of the Argead kings, with Perdiccas' replacement as founder of the line by a Caranus. Justin (7.1.7f) reflects this change in reporting that Caranus was the father of Perdiccas. Satyrus (*FGrHist* 631F1) agrees with Justin that Caranus had founded the royal house, but adds two kings, Coenus and Tyrimmas, after Caranus and before Perdiccas. These names are not mentioned by Herodotus, Thucydides, and Euripides, but it seems certain that Caranus, at least, was firmly in place by the middle of the fourth century. Plutarch (*Alex.* 2.1) writes that all his sources for the biography of Alexander agreed that Caranus had founded the Argead line, just as all acknowledged Neoptolemus as the founder of the Aeacid dynasty in Epirus. Such unanimity suggests that Alexander himself accepted this version of his lineage. If this is so, why did the Argeads alter the official record of their dynasty between the times of Thucydides and Alexander? Further, why was Caranus introduced as the 'rediscovered' founder of the kingdom? Answers to these questions will not establish a definitive list of the early Argead kings, since the addition of Caranus can in no way be considered historical. Nevertheless, the implications of this change are valuable for under-

Macedonia and Greece in Late Classical and Early Hellenistic Times, edd. B. Barr-Sharrar and E. N. Borza (Washington 1982) 33–51. The official king list must have been in place by the time the ancestry of Alexander I was investigated to enable him to compete in the Olympic games (Hdt. 5.22). At that time, Alexander was accepted as a Greek whose ancestors had been Temenids from Argos. As Thucydides (2.99.3) also refers to the Macedonian kings as Temenidae, this again suggests that both he and Herodotus reflect the official Argead account of the early dynasty.

⁴ Hyg. *Fab.* 219; for discussion see Hammond (*supra* n.3) 5, and Badian (*supra* n.3) 34, 45 and n.12.

⁵ On the favor bestowed upon Euripides by Archelaus, see Plut. *Mor.* 177A. Hammond (*supra* n.3) 5 and 11, and Badian (*supra* n.3) 45 n.12, both reject the historicity of the early Archelaus.

standing how the Argeads used the past to justify the political realities of their present.

Hammond attributes to Theopompus the widespread popularization of the king list that included Caranus.⁶ This imputation, however, does not explain why the change occurred in the first place, and it overlooks the fact that the revisions could not have gained acceptance without the support of subsequent Macedonian kings. Hammond believes that dynastic revisions became acceptable to the Argeads after Euripides set the fashion, and that later monarchs learned from him how to make political points through manipulation of their heritage. Whether or not the Argeads would have needed Euripides to teach them such a lesson is debatable. But even if we accept this point, it is unclear how the addition of Caranus (let alone the other two kings) would enhance the prestige of the royal house or its individual monarchs. The name Caranus brought with it no important set of associations especially beneficial to the Argeads either at home or abroad.

As Hammond indicates, the word *κάρανος* ('lord', see *infra*) would in the early fourth century have conjured up images of leadership, and indeed the word had recently been used as an honorific title in a Persian context.⁷ But a name that appealed to authority in a somewhat generic fashion, or had been broadcast by the Persians, would not have brought such immediate and positive benefits to the Argeads as to justify its use as the name of a newly-recognized dynastic founder. Hammond, I think, misses the point of the altered list because he is convinced that the adoption of Caranus must have occurred during the reign of Archelaus. He bases this assumption on a reported Delphic oracle ordering Caranus to leave Peloponnesian Argos and settle by the Haliacmon River at the place where he first sees goats grazing.⁸ Hammond argues that such a response must have been offered before the removal of the capital of Macedonia from Aegae to Pella, which almost certainly occurred late in the reign of Archelaus. But the oracle need not be read in this way, as Badian has already pointed out: Aegae did not lose all its importance after the royal residence shifted to Pella. Indeed, it remained a religious center

⁶ *Supra* n.3: 11f.

⁷ Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.3 records that Cyrus was sent to Asia Minor as *κάρανος* to mobilize the military resources of the Persian king. This title/office may have established Cyrus as overlord of the region, but it is difficult to see what benefit the Argeads would have derived from the precedent.

⁸ *Supra* n.3: 7ff. See also H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle I* (Oxford 1956) 63. I am not here concerned with the historicity of this oracle or its variations, such as that which pertained to Perdiccas' foundation of the realm (Diod. 7.16, obviously drafted according to the older Argead tradition).

of some importance throughout the rest of the Argead period: as the burial site for all Argead kings until the reign of Alexander III, Aegae was the ancestral center of the kingdom, and its importance as the original Macedonian capital would not have been forgotten.⁹ Reference to Aegae in a dynastic foundation myth would not, therefore, have been out of place even after Pella had replaced Aegae as the administrative center of the realm.

Badian's suggestions concerning the importance of Caranus are, however, no more persuasive than Hammond's. In arguing that the Greeks, with few exceptions, continued throughout the classical period to view the Macedonians and their kings as barbarians, Badian sees the adoption of Caranus as an attempt, probably by Archelaus, to increase the prestige of the Argead house and to improve the case for its southern origin by deriving its founder directly from Argos.¹⁰ Badian further suggests that the addition of names to the official king list around 400 B.C. was intended to push back the founding of the dynasty to the time of Midas and thus gain the enhanced dignity of a more ancient heritage.¹¹ But such a desire to associate the origin of the dynasty with the time of Midas is by no means certain, especially as the number of kings added to the official list is unknown.

The Caranus myth as it appears in the Delphic oracle links the dynasty closely with a Heraclid emigration from Argos, as Badian has noted; yet in the aspect of the myth that concerns the origins of the Macedonian royal family, the name of the king has little importance. There is no internally significant reason why the name Perdiccas should not have appeared in the Delphic record instead of Caranus, except that by the time the oracle was rendered, Caranus was the accepted founder of the dynasty. If the name Caranus was invented to tie the Argeads closer to the Peloponnesian city of Argos, and thereby supplement the claim to Hellenic ancestry, one would expect the choice of a name with an established significance in the south and whose repetition would thus conjure up associations desired by the dynasty. That 'Caranus' could serve such a purpose becomes doubtful in the absence of a prominent mythological or historical predecessor of that name.¹²

Rather than persist in an attempt to understand the introduction of Caranus as a Macedonian effort to draw closer to the Greek world to

⁹ Badian (*supra* n.3) 45 n.14.

¹⁰ Badian (*supra* n.3) 34f.

¹¹ This Midas, of course, is the figure associated with Macedonia, well known in part because of his famous gardens (Hdt. 8.138).

¹² See U. Kahrstedt, "Karanos," *RE* 10.2 (1919) 1928.

the south, it would seem reasonable to remain in the north and examine the manipulation of royal ancestry as a product of domestic affairs. Given our dearth of evidence, the following arguments are beyond proof; I offer them, nevertheless, because they make sense of our limited sources and offer a realistic assessment of just how the Argeads justified their possession of the throne.

The word *κάρανος* means ‘chief’ or ‘lord’, but carries few associations that would appeal to a wide audience: we lack evidence that the name had a special significance among Greeks to the south, and we know of no Macedonian context that would enhance its introduction into the king list. Perhaps the logic of the choice of ‘Caranus’, therefore, lies in its very combination of relative neutrality with the suggestion of power. Its insertion into the king list might well have been motivated less by a desire to add prestige to the dynasty than to detract from the status of the previously accepted founder—that is, Perdiccas.

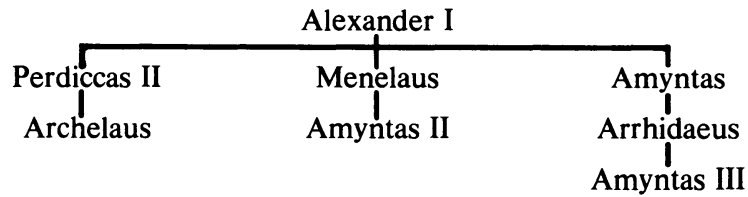
Why would such a change be desirable? The answer may lie in the first decade of the fourth century, after Archelaus had died (399) but only shortly after Euripides introduced an invented Archelaus into the king list as the first of the Argeads. Whatever the historical realities of Argead succession before Alexander I, it is clear that his son and grandson (Perdiccas II and the historical Archelaus) succeeded their fathers in turn as king. Although Perdiccas II faced difficulties in establishing himself on the throne, his reign, in the event, was a long one.¹³ His accession and that of Archelaus, therefore, reinforced the traditional pattern of dynastic succession as recorded by Herodotus (8.139.1), whereby the son of the reigning monarch succeeded the latter upon his death. After Archelaus died in 399, several kings quickly followed, one upon another. According to Hammond’s account of the order of succession through the 390’s (reflecting the order of Diodorus with one addition), the king list for this decade reads: Orestes (399–398), Aeropus (398–394), Amyntas II (394/3), Pausanias (394/3), and Amyntas III (393–369)—whose reign restored longevity, if not stability, to the Macedonian throne.¹⁴

We should note at once that neither Amyntas II nor Amyntas III was a direct descendant of Archelaus or his father, Perdiccas II. Amyntas II was the cousin of Archelaus, and of Archelaus’ generation; his father was Menelaus, whose father in turn was Alexander I. For his part, Amyntas III was the son of Arrhidaeus, the grandson of

¹³ Hammond (*supra* n.3) 103f.

¹⁴ Hammond (*supra* n.3) 167–72. See Diod. 14.37.6, 84.6, 89.2; 15.60.3.

Amyntas, and great-grandson of Alexander I. Thus, he was a cousin once removed of both Archelaus and of Amyntas II:



Both kings named Amyntas were Argeads, but were products of collateral branches of the family. The last common ancestor of Archelaus, Amyntas II, and Amyntas III was Alexander I. The generations separating Amyntas II and Amyntas III from this last royal ancestor almost certainly would have made their initial claims to the throne more difficult than for those who could boast a royal father. In the case of Amyntas III, moreover, it seems likely that the political obscurity of both his father and grandfather impeded all the more his rise to kingship.¹⁵

The rivalry between the three branches of the Argead family, each of which traced its ancestry to a different son of Alexander I, was intense in the 390's, and each undoubtedly found it necessary to justify itself in the strongest possible terms in claiming priority. Since ancestry provided ammunition in the propaganda campaigns that surely occurred during this period, advantages gained from a favorable interpretation of the king list would be attacked by the opposition. All the contending factions were Argeads whose blood was believed to run blue down through Alexander I, but both Amyntas II and Amyntas III might have found it expedient to diminish the importance of the accession of Perdiccas II over their own respective ancestors, Menelaus and Amyntas (Perdiccas' brothers). In a war of words, the descendants of Perdiccas II might well have noted the importance of the first Perdiccas as the founder of the Argead dynasty, and have used their forefather's namesake to justify a superior claim to royal authority. Such an argument need not have constituted their entire case, but any parallel drawn between the importance of Perdiccas I and Perdiccas II would have threatened the claims of Amyntas II and Amyntas III. If this state of affairs could be altered by interpolating as

¹⁵ An Athenian inscription detailing an alliance with Perdiccas II (*Staatsvertr.* 186; Hammond [*supra* n.3] 134–36) is relevant here. Although it is fragmentary, no reconstruction of its contents has yet offered the names of Amyntas III's father or grandfather for the lacunae. Since it lists members of the royal family and others in an apparent order of precedence (52–62), the absence of Amyntas III's ancestor implies their lack of importance.

founder a king with a strong but innocuous name like Caranus, then the priority of Perdikkas II might be challenged effectively without impairing the prestige of the entire family.

If this is correct, then the eventual victory of Amyntas III would have guaranteed the acceptance of Caranus, even if Amyntas had not actually invented this new founder. In addition, we can understand why Caranus had become so entrenched by the time of Alexander III, for the legitimacy of his branch of the family, too, would depend in part upon the acceptance of Caranus as the father of Perdikkas I.

Where this places the two additional kings mentioned by Satyrus, I cannot say. Their names—Coenus and Tyrimmas—do not give much hint of their propaganda value, and in any case they might have been added simply to emphasize the ‘demotion’ of Perdikkas I. Perhaps the reason they were not well known in antiquity is that later kings found little value in pressing for their institutionalization, since one interpolation was enough to deflate the importance of the first Perdikkas. Or perhaps few cared to flog the claims of Perdikkas II’s branch of the family after the successes of Philip II and Alexander the Great legitimated their branch in a practical way.

However one interprets the changes in the king list, that they occurred and gained official status indicates that the kings of the fourth century were concerned with the official record of early Macedonian history. Undoubtedly, this interest derived from a desire to strengthen their claim to authority by appealing to the past. This suggests that individual Argead kings hoped to enhance their status by glorifying their royal heritage as much as possible. Such a manipulation of the past would have been useful not only as each king struggled to establish himself as the effective leader of his realm, but also in the process of distinguishing the Argead house from the rest of Macedonian society and reserving for that house an exclusive right to the throne.¹⁶

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January, 1985

¹⁶ Such use of the past has a parallel in the foundation myth recorded by Herodotus (8.137–39), a topic I will address in another article. In addition, Amyntas III was the first king to introduce his ancestor Heracles directly on his coins: B. V. Head, *BMC Macedonia* (London 1879) 171f; H. Gaebler, *Die antiken Münzen von Makedonia und Paionia II* (Munich 1935) 159f; Hammond, (*supra* n.3) 171. There seems to be a pattern in this manipulation of ancestral heritage for propaganda and the introduction of Caranus.