

Carney, Elizabeth Donnelly. *Eurydice and the Birth of Macedonian Power. Women in Antiquity*. Series editors Ronwie Ancona and Sarah Powerby. Oxford University Press, 2019.

One of the latest publications in the “Women in antiquity” series is dedicated to the first among queens that could conceivably be the subject of such an elaborate study. While not particularly interested in extolling the unquestionable merits of the separate publications and of the entire series, as a scholar of local and regional antiquity, I simply couldn’t ignore this singling out of the otherwise little known ancient Upper Macedonian region of Lynkos together with such an eligible bride. Elizabeth Donnelly Carney’s particular fascination with ancient Macedonian queens seems to have culminated with this meticulous study on daring Eurydice, following the pioneering ones on Olympias, Arsinoe and Berenice. Naturally, all dawns in history, including the birth of Macedonian power, pose immense challenges and therefore, if traceable at all, are usually kept for the dusk of historiography.

This small, but heavy volume begins with some acknowledgements where the distinguished author avows avoiding the elusive and yet compelling subject. Besides the editors of the series and of the corresponding field in OUP, Prof. Carney emphasizes the contribution of M. Andronikos’ school of archeology in Thessaloniki (Saatsoglou-Paliadeli, Kyriakos, Tourtas, Kottaridi). Many collea-

gues of theirs from the West helped her in significant and even decisive ways in the formation of her scholarly thought, together with her caring family. Working with history department colleagues and students was also pivotal for mastering the art of integrating material and political history.

After the short list of abbreviations comes a very neat chronology of events, starting with the birth of Eurydice somewhere in the end of the 5th century, and ending quickly with the death of her son Philip II and the enthronement of her grandson Alexander III. This is followed by a list of kings and a genealogy of the Argead dynasty in the era of Eurydice. A comprehensive map of the region is duly supplied just before the introduction.

The first thing that Prof. Carney notes in the introductory chapter is the simultaneous rise of Eurydice and of Macedonian power, through the vehicle of dynastic crisis. She was indeed the first, but certainly not the last Macedonian royal woman that acquired a notable role in public life worthy of such an examination. The element of the arbitrary in the survival of evidence, especially strong in terms of material about individual women, has been less hindering in some elite cases such as Enhedunna of Akkad, Plancia Magna of Perga

(Asia Minor) and Eurydice of Macedon. An account of Aeschines, a dedicatory inscription, the abuse of a portrait and maybe another statue, a description by Pausanias of the Phillipeion in Olympia and the preserved lower section, and perhaps also her tomb in Vergina are the chief testimonies, while some other, usually denigrating her in much later times, should be approached with caution and skepticism. Macedonian monarchy and history were anything but stable, so that always more questions remain open than are closed. Chronological problems and perhaps gender stereotyping have great bearing on such studies. Despite the comparative abundance of material, more reflection leads to more uncertainty and Eurydice's face blurs and fades away much like her namesake in the Orpheus tale, where modern controversies contribute as much as ancient ones. A short outline of Argead history follows, where Eurydice is acknowledged as the only remarkable woman of somewhat Penelopean character. Before considering Eurydice's role in the events, the author deemed it necessary to examine the nature and character of the Kingdom of Macedon, the problem of succession to the throne and the role of royal women there in general. The initial weakening role of the Upper Macedonian principalities had to be acknowledged here, at least for the period before they came into full Argead control in the age of Philip II. Surrounded by various, more or less similar lands and peoples, Macedon was nevertheless poised for power based on its natural wealth, of which the legendary timber proved particularly provocative for fo-

reign powers, primarily Athens. The standard IE triple role of the king (general, judge, priest) was exercised in a challenging environment of companion nobles and perhaps a limited number of commons too. Only male Argeads, sometimes of uncertain immediate origin, could claim the throne, while women like Eurydice could play a significant role in succession. It was usually the eldest son that would inherit the kingdom, but sometimes things got complicated when in the equation were introduced ambitious regents, interested foreign powers, various claimants, multiple sons of ruling age through polygamy, closeness of mother with son. Charges of bastardy and various slurs were usual in the efforts of denigrating families of rivals, and they were sometimes taken literally, especially by later authors. Various factors contributed to the influence and power of royal women, but their situation was always fluid, not institutionalized. Marriage alliances may have tempted the mother of a new king to pursue the interest of her kin further. They were probably quite active in public life, and if not priestesses, then certainly patronesses.

Eurydice's marriage and the role of her husband Amyntas is the subject of the second chapter. The death of Archelaos threw the kingdom in dynastic chaos, from which emerged the resourceful Amyntas III, albeit not as much as his famous descendants Philip and Alexander. Not much news from Macedon reached the rest of the Greek world, leading to few preserved sources that produce a "historiographical nightmare" according to Borza. The chief extant narrative

source being Diodorus Siculus, himself heavily depending on Ephorus, one is forced to collect more fragments and crumbs from Justin, Xenophon, Isocrates etc. Few relevant inscriptions survive from the period, but coinage testifies to some stability. Various scholars have tried to make sense out of the chaos of the sources, ending up with differing chronologies and genealogies for both Amyntas and Eurydice. The historical restoration can benefit from recognizing patterns, such as the Argead descent for pretendents to the throne, and this is exactly what Prof. Carney is trying to do here. According to Diodorus, Archelaus was succeeded by Orestes, who was then killed by his guardian Aeropos. He in turn died soon from illness and was succeeded by his son Pausanias, who perished just after a year's rule by the hand of Amyntas III. The confusion about this one's father is resolved by inscriptions (SIG 135, 157) that confirm Diodorus' Arrhabaeus. Further genealogical breakthrough might sometimes be achieved on the basis of naming patterns, but it isn't the case here. The details of dynastic intrigue remain enigmatic. What is clear is that, though gradually and by involving multiple foreign powers, Amyntas finally managed to pull it off. He had first fled the Illyrian invasion and recovered his realm with Thessalian help only after a one-year rule of some Argaeus. He may have later fled another, which ultimately led him to a war with Olynth, with Spartan help. For the rest of his reign, he switched between Thessalian potentates and successfully courted Athens and Sparta. He further acted as regional arbiter and joined the congress

of the Hellenes. No matter his own weaknesses and those of Macedon at that time, Philip would indeed never have had the chance if it weren't for his dad's remarkable survival skills.

Turning to Amynta III's marriages, two, possibly even three, Prof. Carney notes the chronological uncertainty, but states that succession favors an earlier date for that with Eurydice, not Gygaea, as usually considered. Naming habits weren't followed through here and are of no help. The only other Gygaea known was also an Argead sister of Alexander I, so that an incestuous union shouldn't be excluded here, making the privileging of Eurydice's sons easily understandable. Prof. Carney, however, doesn't introduce such a possibility, but assumes that there was something rather special about Eurydice and her connections, if Gygaea's sons weren't significantly younger. Another thorny issue about Eurydice is her identity. She was the granddaughter of the Lynkestian ruler Arrhabaeus, who was allegedly of the dynasty of the Bacchiades from Corinth, i. e. an Upper-Macedonian with heroic descent. The trouble is rather with determining her father's family and ethnic stock. Strabo tells us his name, Sirras, but it remains unclear, having all the sources in mind, how Illyrian he may have been. Carney justly declares the irrelevance of the episode of Attalos' insult to Olympias for this issue. She recognizes the probability that Eurydice was at least partly Illyrian, and that "Illyrian" was but a construct of the "Other", albeit not endorsing such an interpretation for "Macedonian" and declaring that it was likely a Greek dialect. Closing the wes-

tern front towards Illyria and Lynkos with this marriage obviously didn't help the Molossians, nor later Macedonian kings, which is to be reflected upon further. Naturally, after her husband's death, Eurydice was promoting the interests of her offspring as opposed to that of Gygaea, of Argead, but less consequential extraction in the circumstances. Her "symbolic capital" was put to use after the murder of her first son and king after Amyntas, Alexander II. Some pretty hostile tradition preserved in Justin and elsewhere only may testify to a sour battle of succession (amphimetric?).

Chapter III is dedicated to the rule of Eurydice's sons Alexander II, Perdiccas III and Philip II. The first two, though trying desperately, didn't manage to outshine their father. Alexander II may have first pacified the Illyrians with bribery, but soon tricked the endangered Aleuads and had to face a Theban punitive expedition. One of the terms of the peace agreement with Pelopidas was to turn over Philip as a hostage to the newly emerged Greek superpower. In the version of Plutarch, Pelopidas was simply helping Alexander and his challenger Ptolemy resolve their differences and took Philip with 30 other sons of distinguished Macedonians as a guarantee. This, however, didn't last and very soon Ptolemy killed Alexander, according to some later sources with the assistance of Eurydice, whom he married (this only in scholiast of Aeschines, see next chapter). The cause may have been a rapidly eroding base of support. Trying to make sense of the contradictory sources, Prof. Carney argues for an

unsuccessful attempt of some Pausanias to take the throne, prevented by the Athenian general Iphicrates upon Eurydice's request, and for a subsequent attempt of Ptolemy to rule on his own, which caused a new intervention of Pelopidas and forced him to accept the regency alone. There are indeed no coins minted with his name. Before or after taking the throne, Perdiccas III seems to have eliminated Ptolemy, and his brother Philip returned from Thebes. Cooperation with Thebes continued, Athens interests in the north were tackled and finances were improved through selling timber and doubling harbor fees. Although this strengthened the army, it wasn't enough for Bardylis' hordes. The terrible defeat including the fall of Perdiccas III heavily destabilized the region and the court. Regent or not, the youngest brother Philip would understandably preserve his nephew from Perdiccas, Amyntas, even after having sons of his own. Marrying his daughter Cynnane to him is perhaps the first confirmed case of flagrant incest in the Argead dynasty, but was certainly not an exception and it is unclear why the author decided not to delve in this aspect of Macedonian (only courtly?) culture. But she is right to note that the chaos of the age and the ensuing series of victories introduced and confirmed Philip as the only serious pretender to the throne. First dealing with some old new contenders, later he may have had to kill one and expel the other two of Gygaea's sons to insure his position. Bribery and military reform went hand in hand with an imperialistic marriage policy (eventually seven wives!). What followed was an un-

precedented expansion of Macedonian land and influence in all directions, by both arms and diplomacy, which culminated in the famous defeat of the united Greeks at Chaeronea in 338. Archaeological evidence demonstrates the conspicuous public role of Eurydice in the Argaeid kingdom, precisely in Philip's age of wealth.

Chapter 4 focuses on the relationship between Eurydice and her sons, but actually deals with the controversies about her life in this period. The only two sources representing her as an adulteress even plotting to kill her husband and pass rule on her lover and son-in-law are Justin and Suda (s. v. Karanos). The obvious propaganda in Justin continues with the claim that she avenged the deaths of both of her older sons. A corroboration comes into play only for the death of Alexander II by the unknown scholiast of Aeschines, who claims that she even married Ptolemy. While other sources speak of a male plot, Eurydice's picture as an advocate of her sons seems more convincing and has prevailed in scholarship. Prof. Carney subsequently delves into the questions of Ptolemy's identity and of the possible marriage with Eurydice in an exemplary case of scholarly speculation, which may indeed be unavoidable in such publications, but is definitely boring and unpleasant even to the informed reader. Iphicrates' intervention in her land on her children's behalf when Pausanias returned to rule revives the interest. It is followed by acknowledging the role that some fourth-century Macedonian court gossiping played in some of the extant sources on the queen mo-

ther. This chapter ends with shaping Eurydice's active role, be it positive or negative, within the *philia*-networks in the court itself and in international relations, which wasn't considered inappropriate in the case of a royal mother protecting her family.

The penultimate chapter deals with Eurydice's public image during her lifetime. Her already established public role was strengthened through some meaningful dedications she made. She may not have been fully independent in doing this, but the only mention of her father through the patronymic has to say something. This is not an exception in Macedonian royal and even common practice, but still testifies to the political importance of marrying the daughter of Sirras. Her only dedication preserved only in literary form is found in Plutarch (*On the Education of Children*) and expresses her effort in learning letters later in life for the sake of her children's education. No matter who the actual recipients were, the Muses or the female citizens through an emendation, Plutarch praised the queen, but didn't say when and where this dedication was made and of what kind it was. It certainly portrays her as a caring mother and an exceptional woman. The other dedicatory inscriptions within a complex context were discovered during the excavations of the agora of Aegae, led by Chrysoula Saatsoglou-Paliadeli. They had been incised in two statue *podia*, the first found *in situ* in 1982, the other in a pit in 1990, both from c. 350. It seems that the *peplophoros* statue from the pit represented Eukleia, not "Eurudika", in a sanctuary that was actually primarily dedica-

ted to Zeus Meilichios. Borza has suggested that this cult in the heart of Macedon was related to that of Artemis Eukleia in Boeotia, due to Theban influence, while Mortensen argued for a connection with that of Corinth, through Eurydice's supposed Lynkestian, i. e. Bacchiad roots. According to Carney, a date in the 350s is most likely for an attempt to resolve the family kleos-problem, even without the role of priestess. A third inscription on a statue base was unearthed in Palatitsia, near Aegae, altered for re-use as a column base in the early Christian basilica there, so that the inscription is only partially preserved. It only has the name and the patronymic, definitely not a dedication, but belonging to a statue group similar to the one in the Philippeum in Olympia, though perhaps in a different assemblage.

Eurydice's public image after her death is the subject of the last, sixth chapter. Aeschines probably didn't mention her in the speech of 343 BC because she had recently died, which could be confirmed by the dating of her alleged tomb at Vergina. The "Tomb of Eurydice" was excavated by M. Andronikos in 1987. The Panathenaic vases in the pyre, with the name of the archon of 344/3, do not pose an insurmountable problem. Thorough looting contributed to the controversy about the identity of the defunct, but the characteristic barrel vault has played a role in affirming or denying the possibility of Philip II being buried in Tomb II of the Great Tumulus at Vergina. Prof. Carney gives a useful update to the discussion on this fascinating construction, which remains unpublished to this day. She describes the

tomb in detail, with its hidden barrel vault, the absence of wall decoration, the house-like pyre as part of the cremation custom, the various movable finds (fragments of a kline, monumental throne with elaborate decoration, open marble larnax, fragments of gold jewelry, alabastrine and terracotta vases, including Panathenaic, back wall as entrance in the underworld / interior "façade"). The tomb was looted again in 2002, when decorative heads of sphynxes and women from the "throne" were broken off and disappeared without a trace. Prof. Carney is rather doubtful that Eurydice was interred here and believes it is more likely that it was some later royal woman. She then describes the "Philippeum" in Olympia as a monument where Eurydice's memory was preserved with a statue, lost, but known from Pausanias and the reexamination and reconstruction of the surviving remains. It is again Pausanias that reports the moving of both female statues from the assemblage (Olympias and Eurydice) to the Heraeum. Finally, it was her name that kept her memory alive, being adopted by other royal women and maybe also in Orphic myth, not from it. This perhaps dynastic name was taken by Adea, the daughter of Cynanne and granddaughter of Philip II, maybe on the occasion of her marriage with Philip Arrhedeus. It may mean Persian influence, but there are two more examples of this phenomenon, that of Philip's Illyrian wife Audata and that of the last wife, Cleopatra, both pretty unlikely. Anyway, the Macedonian melodrama may have obscured even the key role of some female dynastic "workers". Carney appropriate-

ly ends the last chapter by invoking the irresistible comparison with Penelope. An insidious disappointment does, however, await all natural haters of endnotes immediately after, but it cannot even throw a shadow over Carney's jewel of

microhistory. For such an end is actually a new beginning, and it can only crown this monumental monograph with the implicit call for further research by further scholarly generations.

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