
The Role of Thessaly in Argead Foreign Policy and a Case of Invented Tradition

by Frances Pownall
University of Alberta
frances.pownall@ualberta.ca

ABSTRACT In antiquity, the Thessalians and the Macedonians, neighbors on the periphery of the Greek world, were perceived as primitive uncultured boors, whose political instability and proclivity to luxury left them open to collaboration with the Persians, the archetypal foreign enemy of the Greeks. As time went on, these stereotypes gradually shaded into hostile caricatures bearing little relation to reality, a process that heated up after Philip II of Macedon began to replace the Persians as a direct threat to the continued autonomy of the Greek poleis. In this contribution, I re-examine the role that the traditional Argead alliance with the Aleuads of Thessaly played in Philip's ultimate conquest of Greece, thereby contributing to the development of the unflattering stereotypes that they both shared. The close connection between Philip and the Aleuads is also responsible for the retrojection to his Argead predecessor, Archelaos, of an intervention in Thessaly actually waged by Philip's brother, Alexander II.

KEYWORDS Aleuads, Alexander I, Archelaos, Philip II, Thessaly.

The Thessalians and the Macedonians have generally suffered from the same tendency of external and often biased literary sources of reducing these closely-associated and culturally similar peoples located on the fringes of the Greek world to a series of unflattering stereotypes¹. The production of these hostile tropes accelerated once Philip II of Macedon parlayed traditional Argead influence among the Aleuadai of Larissa into an opportunity for direct intervention in Thessaly, which served as a springboard to his hegemony of Greece. In this contribution, I begin by examining the origin of the negative stereotypes shared by the Thessalians and the Macedonians. I will then demonstrate how Philip's forging of Thessalian connections was responsible for his startling military success, bringing to full fruition the foreign policy inaugurated by his Argead ancestors, Alexander I and Archelaos. I shall conclude with an explanation for the existence of a mysterious Thessalian intervention attributed to Archelaos.

¹ On negative stereotypes of Thessalians, see e.g., STAMATOPOULOU 2007; ASTON 2012; MILI 2015, esp. 258-299; POWNALL forthcoming b; of Macedonians, see e.g., MÜLLER 2016, 41-84; POWNALL 2020b. But it is important to note also that both the Thessalians and the Macedonians were not merely passive victims of hostile caricatures imposed on them by outsiders, but simultaneously played an active role in the ongoing creation of their own invented pasts; cf. ASTON 2017 (Thessalians) and MÜLLER 2020 (Macedonians).

From the earliest times, there was already a close connection between Macedonia and Thessaly, its nearest neighbor to the south². This connection between the Macedonians and the Thessalians is articulated in the mythological realm by the tradition transmitted in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (F 7 MOST) that Makedon³, the eponymous ancestor of the Macedonians, was the brother of Magne, the eponymous ancestor of the Magnetes, identified in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* as a Thessalian people (Hom. *Il.* 2.756-59). Both the Macedonians and the Thessalians lived in regions that the other Greeks considered remote, primeval, and other-worldly⁴. Their peripheral location was the impetus for the creation of a stereotype that they were provincial and intellectually impoverished, lacking the *paideia* of their Greek neighbors to the south⁵. The perception that they were cultural philistines is reinforced by the related stereotype that both Macedon and Thessaly suffered from chronic political instability arising from their antiquated and backwards constitutional systems⁶, and their alleged tendency to spend their time hosting decadent symposia rather than attending to proper governance⁷. Both the Thessalians and the Macedonians are commonly depicted in hostile non-native sources as luxury-loving gluttons who lacked *sophrosyne*⁸, that most cardinal of Greek virtues. It is likely that a major factor contributing to their negative portrayal was the collaboration of both the Macedonians and the Thessalians with the Persians during Xerxes' invasion of Greece. There was a pervasive perception that their desire for luxury and hedonistic pleasure softened them to the point that they not only willingly submitted to foreign invaders, but actually invited them in, as Kritias (for example) alleges in the case of the Thessalians:

“The Thessalians are generally agreed to have been the most extravagant Greeks when it came to their clothing and their life-style. This is why they convinced the Persians to invade Greece, because they were eager to adopt their luxurious and expensive habits. Kritias in his *Constitution of the Thessalians* describes their extravagance” (trans. OLSON)⁹.

² GRANINGER 2010, 309-310 and n. 15.

³ The Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (*Ehoiai*) is generally thought to date from the late seventh to sometime in the sixth century, although there is no consensus as to whether it is earlier or later in that range; for an overview of the evidence and the various positions, see ORMAND 2014, 3-4 and n. 5. Whatever its precise date may have been, the *Catalogue* certainly reflects much older traditional material; cf. MOST 2018, liii-lix.

⁴ POWNALL forthcoming b.

⁵ Thessalians: Alcm. F 16 CAMPBELL; Ar. *V.* 1265-74 (with BAKOLA 2005); Pl. *Cri.* 54a; for the persistence of this stereotype even in modern scholarship, see e.g. WESTLAKE 1935, 45-46. For the stereotypical portrayal of Macedonians in Greek comedy as uneducated hillbillies, see MÜLLER 2022. Socrates is alleged to have refused the patronage of the leading families of both Krannon and Larissa, as well as Archelaos of Macedon (D.L. 2.25; cf. Arist. *Rh.* 2.1398a24; D.Chr. *Or.* 13.30), a tradition alluding presumably to this pervasive stereotype; cf. Pl. *Cri.* 54a and *Men.* 70b (with POWNALL 2009, 239-241).

⁶ Thessaly: X. *HG* 1.22.24; Pl. *Cri.* 53d; Isoc. *Ep.* 2.20. Similarly, non-Macedonian sources tended to misunderstand or even deliberately misrepresent the causes of political instability in Macedonia; see e.g. CARNEY 2019, 1-13.

⁷ See e.g. Pl. *Cri.* 53e; Theopomp. *BNJ* 115 F 49 (Thessaly); Theopomp. *BNJ* 115 F 27 and F 224-225; cf. D. 2.18-19 (Macedonia).

⁸ For a lengthy set of citations from Attic comedy illustrating Thessalian gluttony, see Ath. 10.418b-e; for illustrations of Macedonian gluttony, see MÜLLER 2022, 135-7.

⁹ DK 88 B 31 = *BNJ* 338A F 8 *ap.* Ath. 14.663a (passage cited again at 12.527b): ὅμολογοῦνται δ' οἱ Θετταλοὶ πολυτελέστατοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων γεγενῆσθαι περὶ τε τὰς ἐσθῆτας καὶ τὴν δίαιταν· ὅπερ αὐτοῖς αἴτιον ἐγένετο καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐπαγαγεῖν τοὺς Πέρσας, ἐξηλωκόσι τὴν τούτων τρυφὴν καὶ πολυτέλειαν. ιστορεῖ δὲ περὶ τῆς πολυτελείας αὐτῶν καὶ Κριτίας ἐν τῇ Πολιτείᾳ αὐτῶν.

Similar stereotypes also explain the ambiguity of Herodotos' account of Alexander I's alleged assassination of the Persian ambassadors at a magnificent banquet held to celebrate Macedonia's submission to Persia (Hdt. 5.17-22)¹⁰.

It is perhaps hardly surprising that the medism of the Thessalians and Macedonians ultimately combined with the trope that they were so rustic and uncouth as to be barely civilized and transformed them into barbarians themselves. For example, there is an anecdote in Athenaios (8.250a) on the authority of the Hellenistic historian Hegesandros (*FHG* 4.415, frg. 11) that the fourth-century citharode Stratonikos is said to have been questioned as to whether the Boiotians or the Thessalians were actually more barbaric (πότερα Βοιωτοὶ βαρβαρώτεροι τυγχάνουσιν ὅντες ἢ Θετταλοί). By the middle of the fourth century, the stereotype of the Thessalians as natural traitors (cf. D. 1.22) sharpened, when once again the political independence of the Greek city-states was threatened by a new group portrayed as barbarians, the Macedonians under Philip II. Theopompos (*BNJ* 115 F 162 *apud* Ath. 6.260b-c), for example, redeploys in a fourth-century context the old allegation that had been circulated in the fifth century by Kritias (and probably others as well) that the Thessalians' political disorder and desire for high living served as a lightning rod attracting foreign intervention:

“Because Philip knew that the Thessalians were licentious and decadent in their lifestyle, he prepared drinking parties for them and attempted to please them in every way by dancing, reveling, and submitting to every kind of licentious act... he won over most of the Thessalians who approached him more by drinking parties than by bribes”¹¹.

According to this tradition, which also reflects badly on the Macedonians by denying Philip any credit for military or diplomatic skill, the Thessalians' hedonism allowed them to be easily manipulated by Philip into requesting his military assistance, providing his army easy access into central Greece. This particular stereotype was especially influential, for unlike the Persian invasions, the Macedonian conquest turned out to be permanent, and the Thessalians were remembered thereafter as those whose submission to Philip resulted in the occupation of mainland Greece by a power strategically represented as foreign and uncivilized. Demosthenes notoriously commented on the alleged barbarism of Philip II in his *Third Philippic* (9.31):

“Not only is Philip not a Greek or even related to the Greeks, but he is not even a barbarian from somewhere that is reputable; instead he is a pest from Macedonia, a place where it has never been possible even to purchase a decent slave”¹².

Similar references to the “barbarism” of the Macedonians are prominent in the prolonged denunciation of Philip and his retinue extant from Theopompos' *Philippika*¹³.

¹⁰ On the deliberate ambiguity of Herodotos' narrative, see FEARN 2007.

¹¹ *BNJ* 115 F 162 *ap.* Ath. 6.260b-c: εἰδὼς ὁ Φίλιππος ἀκολάστους ὅντας καὶ περὶ τὸν βίον ἀσελγεῖς συνουσίας αὐτῶν κατεσκεύαζε καὶ πάντα τρόπον ἀρέσκειν αὐτοῖς ἐπειρᾶτο καὶ ὀρχούμενος καὶ κωμάζων καὶ πᾶσαν ἀκολασίαν ὑπομένων... πλείους τε τῶν Θετταλῶν τῶν αὐτῶν πλησιασάντων ἦρει μᾶλλον ἐν ταῖς συνουσίαις ἢ ταῖς δωρεαῖς.

¹² D. 9.31: ἀλλ' οὐχ ὑπὲρ Φιλίππου καὶ ὃν ἐκεῖνος πράττει νῦν, οὐχ οὕτως ἔχουσιν, οὐ μόνον οὐχ Ἔλληνος ὅντος οὐδὲ προσήκοντος οὐδὲν τοῖς Ἔλλησιν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ βαρβάρου ἐντεῦθεν ὅθεν καλὸν εἰπεῖν, ἀλλ' ὀλέθρου Μακεδόνος, ὅθεν οὐδ' ἀνδράποδον σπουδαῖον οὐδὲν ἦν πρότερον πρίασθαι.

¹³ Theopomp. *BNJ* 115 F 224-225 (cf. POWNALL 2005, 264-265).

No doubt the cultural affinities between the two sets of horse-rearing elites on the fringes of the Greek world who competed with one another in an archaic, indeed almost Homeric, fashion for visible symbols of wealth and status served to crystallize the development of these virtually identical stereotypes¹⁴. Stereotypes aside, there was significant Thessalian influence upon Macedonia, not just culturally, but in the political and military realms as well¹⁵. In the Archaic Period, Thessaly was a powerful force, dominating the political landscape and expanding south into central Greece, where they played a dominant role in the Delphic Amphiktyony¹⁶. This military dominance suggests significant co-operation among elites in the various Thessalian poleis¹⁷, as well the ability to capitalize on bonds of *xenia* with aristocrats elsewhere¹⁸. There are many references in ancient literature to the patronage of literary giants such as the lyric poet Simonides and the epinician poets Bakchylides and Pindar by elite Thessalian families, attesting to their enormous personal wealth and their desire to display their personal prestige and cultural capital to the Greek world at large¹⁹. It is probably no coincidence that both Bakchylides and Pindar enjoyed the hospitality of Alexander I as well, with the similar mandate of showcasing Argead power and Macedonian high culture as well as affirming his Greek credentials²⁰.

By the fifth century, however, the strong central organization of the Thessalians seems to have become eroded due to the increasing antagonism between the elite families²¹, leaving the region vulnerable to intervention by outside powers, culminating in the Spartan commander Brasidas' march through the region unopposed en route to his ally Perdikkas II in Macedonia in 424 (Thuc. 4.78-79). In the early decades of the fourth century, Thessaly enjoyed a brief but powerful renaissance under Jason of Pherai. After gaining control of all of Thessaly and unifying it under his hegemony, Jason began to operate as a power broker in the affairs of central Greece, successfully negotiating the withdrawal of the Spartan forces after the Theban victory at Leuktra (X. HG 6.4.20-25). He also entered into an alliance with Amyntas III of Macedon²², which was somewhat of a diplomatic coup because the Argeads were traditionally allies of the Aleuads of Larissa²³, Pherai's most powerful rival (cf. X. HG 2.3.4; D.S. 14.82.5). Jason was beginning to extend his military power outside of Thessaly, occupying key locations in central Greece, including the route to Thermopylai²⁴. He was even planning a campaign against Persia, according to both Xenophon (*HG* 6.1.12), in a speech attributed to Jason himself but actually related to the Spartans by the Thessalian

¹⁴ Cf. ASTON 2012; POWNALL forthcoming b.

¹⁵ GRANINGER 2010; SPRAWSKI 2020.

¹⁶ On seventh- and sixth-century Thessalian prominence, see e.g. HELLY 1995, esp. 131-191; MCINERNEY 1999, 173-178; HALL 2002, 139-154; SÁNCHEZ 2001, 42-43; STAMATOPOULOU 2007 (focusing particularly upon the archaeological evidence); SCOTT 2014, 71-82. For caveats on the historicity of the pervasive tradition of archaic Thessalian military dominance, see SPRAWSKI 2009 and ASTON 2012, esp. 268.

¹⁷ ARCHIBALD 2000; cf. MORGAN 2003, 22-24.

¹⁸ So STAMATOPOULOU 2007, 318-319.

¹⁹ SPRAWSKI 1999, 55-56; STAMATOPOULOU 2007, 327-328; POWNALL 2009, 238-239; on the stereotype of dangerous Thessalian hospitality, see ASTON 2012.

²⁰ On the goals of literary patronage by the Argead monarchs, see POWNALL 2017; 2020d; 2020e.

²¹ E.g. SPRAWSKI 1999, 24-48; STAMATOPOULOU 2007, 337-339.

²² Diodorus (15.60.2) says so explicitly, and an alliance appears to be assumed in Xenophon (*HG* 6.1.11); cf. SPRAWSKI 1999, 98-99 and GRANINGER 2010, 312.

²³ SPRAWSKI 2005; GRANINGER 2010, 309-313; PAL 2020.

²⁴ X. HG 6.4.27; D.S. 15.57.2; cf. SPRAWSKI 1999, 97-98.

Polydamas of Pharsalos, and Isokrates (5.119)²⁵. At the time of his assassination, Jason was preparing to preside over the Pythian festival at Delphi, possibly with the goal of gaining control of the sanctuary itself and recovering traditional Thessalian dominance over the Delphic Amphiktyony (X. *HG*. 6.4.30; cf. Ael. F 55 DOMINGO-FORASTÉ)²⁶.

Given the similar trajectories of their careers, Jason is often viewed as a precursor to Philip of Macedon. Certainly Jason's meteoric success in using his hegemony of Thessaly as a stepping stone to control of central Greece (with the eventual goal of a campaign against Persia) may well have served as an inspiration for Philip (although one wonders to what degree Philip's own achievements have contaminated the tradition on Jason in the desire to create a parallel between the two). It is significant that Philip seized virtually the earliest possible opportunity to exploit the endemic factionalism of the Thessalians by intervening in 358 on behalf of the traditional Argead ally²⁷, the Aleuads of Larissa, in their ongoing struggle with Jason's successors at Pherai²⁸. He cemented this alliance with a dynastic marriage to a Larissan woman, Philinna (generally assumed to be an Aleuad), who became the mother of the hapless Arrhidaios²⁹. More importantly, perhaps, Philip's alliance with the Aleuads triggered his intervention in the so-called Third Sacred War, a conflict that had originated when the Thebans used their influence on the Delphic Amphiktyony to bring charges against the Phokians, who were allied with the tyrants of Pherai; their Thessalian rivals, including the Aleuads, naturally, joined the Amphikytonic forces³⁰. Because the Phokians responded by seizing the sanctuary at Delphi and were able to draw upon its vast resources to hire a mercenary army, the Amphiktyons were getting the worst of it (D.S. 16.30-33; Just. 8.1.7-14). This was an opportune time for the Aleuads to call upon Philip to intervene with the newly-reformed Macedonian army³¹. Philip duly arrived in Thessaly to take on the tyrants of Pherai with some initial success, but then was defeated twice when Lykophron called in his own allies, the Phokians, with their large mercenary army (D.S. 16.35.1-2; Polyaen. 2.38.2). Philip returned to Thessaly the following year where he won a resounding victory over the Phokian army in the Battle of the Crocus Field, with the cavalry of his Thessalian allies proving the decisive factor in the battle (D.S. 15.35.5). On a military level, Philip's victory served as a stepping stone for the consolidation of his control of Thessaly, possibly symbolized by his marriage to

²⁵ Jason's Persian ambitions appear also in Valerius Maximus (9.10.ext.2); cf. TUPLIN 1993, 180-181; SPRAWSKI 1999, 127-132.

²⁶ TUPLIN 1993, 120 n. 53 and 211-213; and SPRAWSKI 1999, 118-127; but cf. SÁNCHEZ 2001, 164-166. Of course, whatever Jason's actual intentions may have been, they are now clouded by the parallel with Philip II's later actions in the settlement of the Third Sacred War, which resulted in his control over the Delphic Amphiktyony.

²⁷ Theopomp. *BNJ* 115 F 34; D.S. 16.14.1-2, with MARTIN 1982.

²⁸ Cf. ANSON 2020, 109: "It was certainly in Macedonia's interest to see that Thessaly did not unite under a powerful leader. Pherae was the state most likely to unite the region and Larissa was Pherae's most consistent opponent." On Philip's motives, see also SPRAWSKI 2005, 37-38; WORTHINGTON 2008, 35-37; POWNALL forthcoming a.

²⁹ On the marriage: Satyros (*ap.* Ath. 13.357c = F 25 SCHORN). Slurs on her allegedly low status (Just. 9.9.2 and 13.2.11; Plu. *Alex.* 77.5; Ath. 13.578a) almost certainly originate in hostile propaganda later directed at her son, the future Philip II Arrhidaios; so OGDEN 2023, 25-26; cf. CARNEY 2000, 61-62 and 2019, 11-12.

³⁰ On the origins and outbreak of the so-called Third Sacred War (the numbering of conflicts over Delphi is a modern convention; cf. POWNALL 1998); see BUCKLER 1989; SÁNCHEZ 2001, 173-199; WORTHINGTON 2008, 53-73; POWNALL 2020f.

³¹ Although Diodoros (16.35.1) only states that "the Thessalians" requested Philip's intervention, the fact that his campaign was against Lykophron of Pherai, the traditional enemy of the Aleuads, strongly implies that they were behind this request; cf. BUCKLER 1989, 58 and 63-64; GRANINGER 2010, 314; PAL 2020, 49.

Nikesipolis, the niece of Jason of Pherai (Steph. Byz. s.v. Θεσσαλονίκη)³². On an ideological level, the battle marks the point at which Philip seems to have recognized the extent to which he could capitalize on his new role as the defender of Apollon against the sacrilegious Phokians and their allies, which would ultimately offer him a legitimate entrance into mainstream Greek affairs³³. Philip's intervention on behalf of his Thessalian allies in the Third Sacred War resulted in his dominance over the Delphic Amphiktyony, confirming his status as a *bona fide* Greek as the head of a major panhellenic religious organization. Furthermore, his oversight of the subsequent peace negotiations established him as the major military power in a central Greece that had been severely weakened by the debilitating decade-long length of the conflict. In other words, Philip's Thessalian connections set in motion the series of events leading to the Macedonian victory at Chaironeia and therefore played a crucial factor in his ultimate hegemony of Greece.

Nevertheless, Philip was not the first Argead ruler to concern himself with establishing legitimate Hellenic credentials as a means of expanding his influence into central Greece. Two of his Argead predecessors in particular can very much be seen as proto-Philips: Alexander I and Archelaos. As noted above, Alexander I commissioned the lyric poets Pindar and Bakchylides to construct and affirm his royal image in an acceptably Greek way, thus bolstering his claim to Hellenic ethnicity³⁴. Moreover, it is Alexander himself who is generally assumed to be the source of the foundation myth found in Herodotus (Hdt. 8.137-138; cf. 5.22) tracing Argead lineage back to Herakles through his descendant Temenos, the legendary founder of Argos, in order to participate in the Olympic Games (which were reserved for Greeks alone)³⁵. As was to be the case with Philip II later, Alexander's ostentatious piety to Apollon served to strengthen his affirmation to Greekness. Herodotus (8.121.2) mentions Alexander's consecration of a golden statue at Delphi, in the exactly the same location as a statue dedicated by the Greeks out of the spoil from Salamis. According to the alleged letter of Philip to the Athenians that is included in the Demosthenic corpus ([D.] 12.21), Alexander dedicated the golden statue at Delphi as the first-fruits from the Persians taken captive at Amphipolis during the Persian retreat from Greece. This invented tradition may represent Alexander's later rewriting of the Persian Wars to emphasize his benefactions to Greece during Xerxes' invasion by appropriating an action that Herodotus (9.89.4) attributes to the Thracians³⁶.

Furthermore, Thessaly played an important role in Alexander's foreign policy. Although Herodotus is silent on the precise relationship between Alexander and the

³² It is not clear when Philip's marriage to Nikesipolis took place. It may have occurred in his settlement of Thessaly in the aftermath of his victory in the Battle of the Crocus Field (D.S. 16.38.1); so HECKEL 2006, 179; WORTHINGTON 2008, 64-65; MÜLLER 2016, 254. On the other hand, it is also possible that Philip married Nikesipolis during his earlier intervention in Thessaly, around the same time as his marriage to Philinna of Larissa, as his *modus operandi* in Thessaly seems to have been to exploit existing regional animosities cf. Polyae. 2.19); CARNEY 2000, 60-61 (cf. OGDEN 2023, 19-20).

³³ On the crucial role of the Battle of the Crocus Field in Philip's ongoing elaboration of his ruling ideology, see POWNALL 1998; 2020c; forthcoming a.

³⁴ On Alexander's patronage of Greek literary and cultural figures, see POWNALL 2017, 215-218.

³⁵ E.g. MÜLLER 2020. For doubts on the attribution of the tradition of Argive ancestry to Alexander I (or even the Argeads at all), see SPRAWSKI 2021. For what it is worth, the Aleuads, like the Argeads, claimed Heraklid ancestry, and may even have anticipated their Macedonian *xenoi* in doing so, for Pindar (*Pyth.* 10.2-5) alludes to their legendary genealogy at the beginning of the fifth century.

³⁶ In the later Attic tradition ([D.] 13.24 and D. 23.200), Alexander I has become conflated with his son Perdikkas II (perhaps through the latter's notoriety in the Peloponnesian War he was a more familiar figure as a stand-in Macedonian to an Athenian audience); cf. MÜLLER 2017a, 42.

Aleuads during the Persian Wars, they had clearly been co-operating for some time already. The Aleuads and the Argeads (under Alexander's father Amyntas I) offered help to Hippias when he was expelled from Athens (Hdt. 5.94)³⁷, and both were conspicuously on the Persian side during Xerxes' invasion of Greece. According to Herodotus (7.172), the other Thessalians were keen to contribute to the Greek defense against the Persians precisely because the Aleuadai were collaborating with Xerxes (cf. Hdt. 7.130). But just as the Greeks were poised to defend the pass of Tempe in Thessaly against the invading Persian forces, Alexander sent a message to the Greek forces to abandon their position (Hdt. 7.173.3). His intervention resulted in the withdrawal of the Greek forces from Thessaly, which left the Thessalians no choice but to medize (Hdt. 7.174.1), thus playing into the hands of the Aleuadai. In other words, it was thanks to Alexander's intervention that the Aleuadai achieved their political goal, which if the Persians had been successful would have left them, as well as the Macedonians, in an excellent position to exploit their connection with the Persians to gain control of central Greece³⁸.

Following the unanticipated Greek victory in the Persian Wars, however, Alexander began to rewrite his own support of the Persians, particularly through the invented tradition of his assassination of the Persian ambassadors and the transformation of his role in wartime diplomacy into that of a double agent, secretly working on behalf of his fellow Greeks³⁹. His desire to portray his collaboration with the Persians as coerced rather than voluntary also explains why Alexander appears to have retrojected the marriage of his sister Gygaia to the prominent Persian Boubares (Hdt. 5.21.2; cf. 8.136.1), son of the influential Persian commander Megabazos, to a historical context in the reign of his father Amyntas, representing it as a ploy to ensure that his alleged murder of the Persian dignitaries escaped detection. It is far more likely that Alexander brokered this marriage soon after his accession as part of deliberate Argead dynastic strategy (cf. Just. 7.3.7-4.2)⁴⁰. It is likely that similar motivations induced Alexander to underplay his close connections with the Aleuads, apparently successfully, for the Macedonians faced no reprisals for their collaboration with the Persians⁴¹, unlike their Thessalian neighbours (Hdt. 6.72.1)⁴².

Like his predecessor, Alexander I, and his eventual successor Philip II⁴³, Archelaos also was very concerned with reaffirming the Hellenic status of the Argeads as part of his shaping of Macedonian high culture⁴⁴. His extensive cultural policies were oriented deliberately and very publicly towards the Greek world. He reorganized the festival to Zeus at Dion at the foot of Mount Olympos, and added the cult of the Muses (D.S. 17.16.3; cf. Arr. *An.* 1.11.1). As Tomasz Mojsik has recently suggested, Archelaos may also have appropriated Macedonia as the birthplace of Orpheus, possibly in connection with his incorporation of the worship of the Muses at the Macedonian Olympic festival

³⁷ Herodotus identifies Hippias' supporters only as "Thessalians," but the close relationship of the Aleuads with both the Peisistratids and the Persians (cf. Hdt. 7.6.2) suggests that they were the ones responsible; cf. GRANINGER 2020, 310.

³⁸ Cf. GRANINGER 2020, 310.

³⁹ BORZA 1990, 98-131; BADIAN 1994; MÜLLER 2016, 105-140.

⁴⁰ On Alexander's marriage of Gygaia to Boubares, see e.g. HEINRICH 2020a, 33-34 and 2020b, 55-56.

⁴¹ HEINRICH 2020b, 58-59.

⁴² On Leotychidas' campaign to punish the Thessalians for medism, see YATES 2019, 116-117; cf. 104.

⁴³ On Archelaos as a precursor to Philip, see CHAPINAL-HERAS 2022.

⁴⁴ On the fresh and unique nature of Macedonian cultural identity (*i.e.*, Macedonian high culture was not simply a pale imitation of Greek models), see e.g. POWNALL 2017 and MOJSIK 2022, esp. 146-150; cf. BORZA 1990, 176-177 and CARNEY 2003.

(Orpheus' mother was the Muse Kalliope)⁴⁵. He also added to the cultural capital of the Argead monarchy by inviting to his court a veritable who's who of Greek artists and literary figures, many of whom were redefining generic conventions in new and exciting ways⁴⁶. The most famous recipient of Archelaos' patronage was Euripides, whom he commissioned to write a Macedonian trilogy that reworked the foundation legend of the Argeads. In the final play of the trilogy, the lost *Archelaos*, Euripides appears to have invented a mythical eponymous ancestor for his royal patron (a figure now attested only for the first time) who in obedience to the Delphic oracle followed a she-goat to Aigai and founded a capital there⁴⁷. The detailed elaboration of the legendary Archelaos' lineage from the Heraklid Temenos provided further ammunition simultaneously affirming the historical Archelaos' solidly Hellenic credentials and creating a distinct and innovative Macedonian cultural identity⁴⁸.

Like both Alexander I and (especially) Philip II, Archelaos was very concerned with the consolidation of his kingdom. Thucydides (2.100.1) notes with approval Archelaos' substantial and far-reaching improvements to Macedonia's infrastructure and the re-organization of the Macedonian army, concluding with the comment that he surpassed all eight of the previous kings (κρείσσονι ἡ ξύμπαντες οἱ ἄλλοι βασιλῆς ὡκτώ οἱ πρὸ αὐτοῦ γενόμενοι), high praise indeed from a contemporary Athenian. Archelaos gained an ally in the ongoing Argead struggle with the Lynkestians of Upper Macedonian, who had recently strengthened their position by allying with the Illyrians, by marrying his daughter to the ruler of Elimeia (Arist. *Pol.* 5.1311b). Like both Alexander and Philip, Archelaos showed himself adept at using diplomacy when it served his political and military purposes. Thus, he checks off the list of achievements of powerful and hellenizing Argead rulers who successfully consolidated their realms, solidified their military positions through the judicious use of dynastic marriage, extended Argead control outside of the traditional boundaries of Macedonia, employed ostentatious piety to further their political ends, and patronized Greek literary and intellectual luminaries to showcase their Hellenic credentials and construct a uniquely Macedonian cultural identity. In fact, the only item missing from Archelaos' pedigree is solid evidence for an intervention in Thessaly on behalf of the traditional Argead ally, the Aleuads, something that was crucial in terms of the expansionist foreign policy of Alexander I and (especially) Philip.

Although there are some allusions in the sources to an intervention of Archelaos in Thessaly towards the end of his reign, the evidence is all very problematic, as Sabine Müller has recently demonstrated in her excellent and thorough examination of the Argeads⁴⁹. In particular, no explicit evidence is extant in the case of Archelaos for the traditional Argead connection with the Aleuads. There is a suggestion in a very tendentious passage of Aristotle's *Politics* (6.1311b) that Archelaos promised to restore Hellenokrates of Larissa (with whom he was allegedly having a romantic relationship, presumably at the Argead court) to his home in Thessaly, but did not follow through, prompting Hellonkrates to join in a cabal of conspirators who had private grievances against him. This passage is suspect because it seems to be influenced by the sensationalist accounts of Archelaos' accession and death that were circulating in

⁴⁵ MOJSIK 2022, conclusions summarized 135-150. As he observes (149): "The figure of Orpheus may have therefore served both to answer the accusations of barbarity and backwardness and to negotiate Macedonian cultural identity."

⁴⁶ POWNALL 2017, 219-221.

⁴⁷ For a reconstruction of the plot, see XANTHAKIS-KARAMOS 2012.

⁴⁸ POWNALL 2017 and 2020d; cf. MOLONEY 2014, 236-240.

⁴⁹ MÜLLER 2016, 184-186.

Athens in the fourth century. In Platon's *Gorgias* (471a-d), Gorgias' student Polos claims that Archelaos was the son of Perdikkas by a slave woman (cf. Ael. *VH* 12.43), and relates a lively account of how he usurped the throne by murdering his uncle Alketas (the rightful successor), his cousin Alexander (Alketas' son), and his own half-brother, a boy of seven whose name a scholiast preserves as Aeropos (Schol. Aristid. 46.120.2). This melodramatic account likely originates in contemporary Athenian propaganda aimed at the Argeads in general and Archelaos in particular, along with a willful misunderstanding of the Argead practice of polygamy⁵⁰. Furthermore, some of the sensationalistic details of Archelaos' allegedly bloodstained path to the Argead throne seem to have become conflated with the equally sensationalistic details of the chaos that followed his sudden death (D.S. 14.37.6-7)⁵¹. The pervasive tradition that Archelaos was assassinated by a conspiracy comprised of former lovers plays upon the familiar stereotype of Argead dynastic intrigue⁵², as well as the conventional association between homoeroticism and tyrannicide⁵³, both of which recur in the ancient accounts of the assassination of Philip II⁵⁴. For what it is worth, Diodoros (14.37.6) claims that Archelaos was killed in a hunting accident (albeit at the hands of a lover)⁵⁵.

No more helpful in determining a possible Archelaos-Aleuad connection is a tantalizing fragment from a speech purportedly composed by the late-fifth-century sophist Thrasymachos of Chalkedon *On Behalf of the People of Larissa* (DK 85 B 2 = LAKS—MOST D 18). The speaker, whose identity is unknown, ironically poses the question, parodying a line from Euripides' lost *Telephos*: “Shall we, who are Greeks, be slaves to Archelaos, who is a barbarian?” (Ἀρχελάῳ δουλεύσομεν ‘Ελληνες ὅντες βαρβάρω). As this is the only extract extant from this work, we do not know the context of this quotation, which became a stock formula.⁵⁶ Nor do we even know if it comes from a speech that was actually delivered or one that was composed purely as a rhetorical exercise, playing upon the stereotype that the Macedonians were uncivilized barbarians and the well-known association between the Aleuads of Larissa and the Argead kings⁵⁷.

The main reason that some argue that the vague reference in Thrasymachos is to a historical intervention of Archelaos in Thessaly is the existence of a rhetorical pamphlet found in a single Byzantine manuscript and attributed to the second-century orator Herodes Atticus⁵⁸. The speaker refers in vague terms to a purported historical event, Archelaos' alleged exploiting of factional strife to gain control of a Thessalian city (generally assumed to be Larissa on the basis of the Thrasymachos fragment) which he

⁵⁰ So MÜLLER 2016, 190-191; cf. POWNALL 2020a, 94.

⁵¹ According to Diodoros, Archelaos is succeeded by his son, Orestes, described as “still a boy” (παῖς ὄντος), who is in turn assassinated by his guardian, Aëropos (Orestes' uncle?). Cf. MÜLLER 2017b, 190-191.

⁵² [Pl.] *Alc.* 2.141d; Ar. *Pol.* 5.1311b; Plu. *Mor.* 768f; Ael. *VH* 8.9.

⁵³ CARNEY 1983; cf. POWNALL 2020a, 98.

⁵⁴ D.S. 16.93.3-94.1; Just. 9.6.4-9.7.9; Ar. *Pol.* 5.1311b; Plu. *Alex.* 10.5.

⁵⁵ Cf. however GREENWALT 2019 on the significance of the Macedonian royal hunt as a setting for regicide.

⁵⁶ HATZOPoulos 2011, 60.

⁵⁷ Cf. MÜLLER 2016, 184. HATZOPoulos 2011, 60 observes that Archelaos is the first Macedonian labelled a “barbarian,” presumably on the strength of his own military success.

⁵⁸ The text has been edited by ALBINI 1968, who accepts a second century AD date, but not the authorship of Herodes Atticus. The work has sometimes been attributed to the fifth-century oligarch, Kritias of Athens; see MOORE-RAYMOND 2019, “Doubtful Works”.

appears to have occupied in response to an appeal from the local elite (the Aleuadai?)⁵⁹. The speech contains some apparent references to the Hellenokrates passage in Aristotle, including Archelaos' alleged expansion into Thessalian land that the speaker hopes that he can be forced to restore (§6; cf. §10, 13) and a reference to Archelaos' holding of hostages (§33). There is also a possible allusion to the speech of Thrasymachos when the speaker anticipates an objection to his appeal for a Spartan alliance on the grounds that Archelaos, no matter what sort of neighbor he is, is still preferable to the Peloponnesians, concluding with the statement (§26): "Therefore it is better to be to experience *stasis* among ourselves than to be slaves to others" (ούκοῦν κρεῖσσον στασιάζειν πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς μᾶλλον ἢ δουλευειν ἐτέροις). The speaker refutes this objection again in Thrasymachean terms by arguing that the Thessalians should defend themselves against the one who wronged them (that is, Archelaos), show favor to their kin (i.e., their fellow Greeks), and become allies of the Greeks and enemies of the barbarians (§34). He concludes (§35-36) that his putative opponents have reached such a pitch of audacity that they argue that the people of Larissa should not become allies of the Greeks, but of the barbarians instead, and what is more of the most hated ones of all (τοῖς Ἐλλησι μὴ γίγνεσθαι συμμάχους, τοῖς δὲ βαρβάροις καὶ πρὸς τούτω τοῖς ἔχθροτάτοις).

This tendentious text is very problematic, not least in its inaccurate claim that the Macedonian king who through his Thessalian connections arranged safe passage for Brasidas and his army to attack the Athenian army at Amphipolis was Archelaos (§19), rather than Perdikkas II, as well as the anachronistic replacement of the Persians as the barbarian enemy *par excellence* with the Macedonians, which only became a *topos* once it became clear that Philip II represented a real threat to Greek autonomy⁶⁰. In my opinion, the most damning strike against the speech's authenticity is the fact that the events outlined are eerily reminiscent of a later campaign recorded by Diodoros (15.61.3-6), when Alexander II intervened in Thessaly at the request of the Aleuads in order to settle factional strife with their perennial foe, the tyrants of Pherai. But once Alexander gained control of Larissa with the Macedonian army (with the inside help of a fifth column), he did not restore the city, but instead continued to hold it himself with a garrison and occupied the city of Krannon as well. These events parallel the supposed historical context of the speech. Therefore it is hard to see this pamphlet as a reflection of actual events⁶¹, but rather as a rhetorical exercise of the Roman imperial period⁶². These rhetorical compositions generally contained a pastiche of often inaccurate information that was circulating by the second century AD on the classical past⁶³, cobbled together from earlier sources, in this case probably Thrasymachos' own possibly sophistic exercise as well as the *Constitution of the Thessalians* composed by Kritias⁶⁴, whose *oeuvre* Herodes Atticus was attempting to rescue from the oblivion into which it had fallen by his day and reintroduce into contemporary Greek literary circles (DK A 21 = BNJ 388A T 15). This problematic and almost certainly inauthentic

⁵⁹ The speaker refers to Archelaos' intervention in Thessalian *stasis* on behalf of the *oligoi* (§9-10), and also alludes to a local ally (presumably an Aleuad) who appears to have spoken on Archelaos' behalf (§16-17); cf. GAGARIN-WOODRUFF 1995, 270 n. 286.

⁶⁰ Cf. POWNALL 2020b.

⁶¹ As argued by e.g. WESTLAKE 1935, 50-59; SPRAWSKI 1999, 34-38; ROISMAN 2010, 155.

⁶² So e.g. GRANINGER 2010, 311; cf. MÜLLER 2016, 184-186.

⁶³ On the fictional nature of these exercises, see ANDERSON 1993, esp. 47-53; WHITMARSH 2013, 15; WEBB 2017.

⁶⁴ The only extant fragment explicitly attributed to this work is quoted above.

text is the only evidence anchoring Archelaos to an actual military intervention in Thessaly.

I would like to conclude with the suggestion that the tradition of Archelaos' intervention on behalf of the Aleuadai in Thessaly is an invented one that began to circulate after Philip II's conquest of Greece. Archelaos represents such an obvious parallel for Philip that his career had to match his illustrious successor in every way. Philip, who had proved himself a deft master of spin in his relationship with the Greek poleis from the very beginning⁶⁵, enticed prominent intellectuals to his court at Pella with the specific commission of rewriting his own role and that of his Argead predecessors in the consolidation of Macedonian power. In particular, he sought to legitimize his past military and diplomatic interventions in Greek affairs and lay the groundwork for future expansion through the deft deployment of carefully-chosen historical precedents⁶⁶. It was an obvious move to tap into the reputation of his illustrious predecessor, Archelaos, whom even Thucydides approved of, in order to justify his own Thessalian foreign policy that ultimately led to his conquest of Greece. Thus, the reassignment of a campaign actually waged by the ill-fated Alexander II made a neat completion to the parallel that Philip was trying to forge and was easily credible to the later tradition due to Archelaos' own expansionist policy and deliberate cultivation of the Greeks, as well as the traditional Argead friendship with the Aleuads of Thessaly.

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⁶⁵ See e.g. LANE FOX 2011 and POWNALL forthcoming a.

⁶⁶ POWNALL 2021, 244-47.

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