

APAMA AND STRATONIKE: MARRIAGE AND LEGITIMACY

David Engels, Université libre de Bruxelles
& Kyle Erickson, Trinity St. David, Lampeter

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the first two Seleukid Queens, Apama and Stratonike, played a pivotal role in the development of the dynastic mythology. The latter drew heavily on Near Eastern and Persian traditions, and the often stock role of the Queen may have been in fact filled by either of the two women. Nonetheless, both women played an important part in the development of Seleukid ideology. The first two sections study the evidence for Apama and Stratonike respectively and try to locate them into their family context, their ethnic affiliations and the political implications of these factors for their roles as royal consorts. The next two sections analyse Persian and other Oriental traditions that affected the creation of their queenly roles at the Seleukid court and in the imagination of later generations.

1. INTRODUCTION

The marital politics of the early Seleukid court began in a straight forward fashion, lacking the intrigue of the courts of either Alexander or his father Philip. Seleukos remained married to the bride that he had received from Alexander in the mass weddings at Susa, she even bore him a legitimate heir.¹ However, with his marriage to the daughter of Demetrios this stable family life could have been thrown into chaos. That this possible domestic crisis did not materialise and instead the potentially problematic wife helped stabilise the transfer of power demonstrates the skill with which Seleukos was able to manage his court. This paper argues that the development of this stable dynastic mythology needed to take into account both of the first two Seleukid queens, Apama and Stratonike, and that they may have had some part in shaping its construction. With two queens from very different backgrounds, one Sogdian and one Macedonian, ruling over an empire composed of Greeks, Syrians, Persians, Babylonians, and others, this dynastic mythology understandably developed on existing Near Eastern and Persian traditions which had long circulated around ruling families. Given the nature of these traditions it was often possible that the stock role of the ‘Queen’ may have been in fact filled by either of the two women. Nonetheless, both women played an important part in the shaping of Seleukid ideology. To analyse their roles and traditions this chapter is divided into two halves. The first deals with each queen in turn, Apama and Stratonike: it will be tried to locate them into

¹ Arr. 7.4.4–8 and 7.6.2; Diod. 17.107.6; Plut. *Alex.* 70.3; Just. 12.10.9 f.; Athen. 12.538b–540a.

their family contexts and their ethnic affiliations before specifying the political implications of these factors for their roles as royal consorts. The second half of the chapter looks at the traditional narratives into which the two women were incorporated. One section analyses the Persian tradition, while the other probes a variety of other Oriental and Greek traditions that affected the creation of their queenly roles at the Seleukid court.

II. APAMA

The conquest of the Upper Satrapies by Alexander the Great had been an act of military violence, relying on martial superiority and the legitimacy of spear-won territory. The long-term consolidation of Macedonian rule, however, could only be realised through political reconciliation and cultural fusion. This found concrete expression through the appointment of Iranian satraps like Phrasaortes,² Alexander's visit to the tomb of Kyros in 330,³ the introduction of Persian court practices like *proskynesis*,⁴ the presence of Persian nobles at his court,⁵ and the forced fusion of Macedonian soldiers and generals with Iranian wives at the mass wedding of Susa in 324.⁶ Alexander's death, much lamented by the Persian nobility,⁷ threatened the long-term stability of Greek domination over the Iranian plateau that he had tenuously forged. Peukestas, then satrap of Persia, maintained the fragile compromise established by Alexander, as he came to wear Median garments, learned to speak Persian, adopted Iranian customs and thus won the sympathies of the Persian nobility.⁸ By his careful politics of neutrality during most of the Diadoch wars, and his endeavours to reconcile the local aristocracy which respected traditional Achaimenid protocol,⁹ Peukestas managed to keep Persia out of the major conflicts that unfurled around it and became the leader of a coalition of Iranian satraps.¹⁰

But after extended manoeuvring between Eumenes and Antigonos, he was finally deposed by the latter in 315. The takeover of Babylonia by its former satrap Seleukos changed the whole situation again, as Seleukos drove a wedge

² Arr. 3.18.11; Curt. 5.6.11.

³ Diod. 17.73.1; Curt. 5.6.10–20; Strab. 15.3.7 ff.; Plut. *Alex.* 69.4–5.

⁴ Arr. 7.11; Plut. *Alex.* 45.

⁵ Arr. 6.30.1; 7.4.4; 7.6.1; 7.6.4–5; 7.11.8–9; Plut. *Alex.* 69.1–2; 70.3; 71.1; Diod. 17.67.1; 17.107.6; 17.108.1–3; Just. 12.10.9–10.

⁶ Arr. 7.4.4–8 and 7.6.2; Diod. 17.107.6; Plut. *Alex.* 70.3; Just. 12.10.9–10; Athen. 12.538b–540a.

⁷ Arr. 7.24.1–3; Diod. 17.116.2–4; 17.118.3; Plut. *Alex.* 73.7–74.1; Curt. 10.5.9; 10.5.16–25; Just. 13.1.5–6.

⁸ Arr. 6.30.2–3; 7.6.3; 7.23.3; Diod. 19.14.5.

⁹ Cf. the well-known feast organised by Peukestas before 316: Diod. 19.22.2–3; see Wiesehöfer 1994, 53–54 with literature and Boyce and Grenet 1993, 20–1. The possible identity of the altars erected by Peukestas with the inscriptions found at Persepolis has often been underlined; cf. Wiesehöfer 1994, 72–3.

¹⁰ Diod. 19.14.1–8.

into Antigonos' possessions. Unlike his enemy, the newcomer tried to respect local traditions, and thus attempted to win the sympathies of his new subjects.¹¹ During a decisive battle in Media against Nikanor, Antigonos' *strategos* of the Upper Satrapies,¹² in autumn 312, the Persian satrap Euagros fell, and his troops defected to Seleukos.¹³ Thus, after his victory over Nikanor, Seleukos could consider Persia his possession, and apparently occupied the entire territory without any further major struggle.¹⁴

By 309, Seleukos had already established his rule over the Achaimenid core-territories of Babylonia, Media and Persia and even managed to make peace with Antigonos, but the subsequent conquest of the Upper Satrapies proved more difficult. The extent to which Seleukos I was successful in this process of completing Alexander's dream of constructing and defining a Greek monarchy over Iranian territories was not only due to his political, military and diplomatic skills, but also to the incalculable help provided by his Iranian wife Apama and his son Antiochos I.¹⁵

One major political asset for Seleukos was the well-known fact that Alexander had married him to Apama during the mass wedding at Susa.¹⁶ The daughter of the Baktrian aristocrat Spitamenes,¹⁷ she was the only known bride from the North East of Alexander's Empire, except Alexander's own marriage to the Sogdian princess Roxane. However, the old supposition that Seleukos was the only Greek general to have kept his Iranian wife, whereas all others divorced them, is no longer sustainable. This hypothesis is based on no more than Arrian's suggestion of the Macedonian generals' dislike for their forced weddings¹⁸ and a single case of divorce specified in our sources.¹⁹ Yet Apama is the only Iranian wife still attested after Alexander's death and certainly the only one of all diadochs' wives to have borne the royal title,²⁰ and given birth to a son officially styled crown prince. By contrast, Alexander IV, Alexander the Great's son with Roxane, as well as Herakles, his son with Barsine, encountered substantial racial prejudice from the Macedonian soldiers.²¹ Of course it is unknown to what extent this union was due to love, to simple dynastic strategy, or to the fact that Apama

¹¹ Diod. 19.91.1–2; App. *Syr.* 54.274. Cf. in general Boiy 2004 and 2007.

¹² Diod. 19.92.3–5.

¹³ Diod. 19.2.4–5.

¹⁴ Grainger 1990a, 80–1; Wiesehöfer 1994, 56, but cf. also Mehl 1986, 134 f., dating the occupation of Persia to 307/6.

¹⁵ Concerning Apama, cf. in general Wilcken 1894; Holleaux, 1942; Macurdy 1932, 77–8; Robert 1984; and the relevant parts of the biographies on Seleukos I by Mehl 1986; Grainger 1990a, besides the papers of Almagor, Harders and Ramsey in this volume.

¹⁶ See in general Arr. 7.4.

¹⁷ Arr. *An.* 7.4.6: To Nearchos he gave the daughter of Barsine and Mentor; to Seleukos the daughter of Spitamenes the Baktrian.

¹⁸ Arr. 7.6.2.

¹⁹ Memnon *FGrH* 434 F 1 records that Krateros divorced his wife, a daughter of the last Achaimenid king, but took care to marry her to Dionysios, tyrant of Herakleia Beroia.

²⁰ Cf., e.g., *IDidyma* 480 = Austin 2006, 51.

²¹ Just. 13.2.9–10; Curt. 10.6.13–15.

had already given birth to Seleukos' son Antiochos in 324 and thus could not easily be dismissed. But it is beyond any doubt that Antiochos' Iranian lineage must have been considered a major asset in his and his father's politics of reconciliation, as he decided to ignore the memory of the numerous problems Alexander's offspring encountered and instead kept to his Iranian wife and his half-Iranian son.²²

Little is known about Apama herself or her origins. The historiographical debate often borders on fiction, as may be shown when examining two hypotheses proposed by W. W. Tarn.²³ First, Tarn argued that Apama might have been considered by some, at least in later times, as a natural daughter of Alexander,²⁴ not of Spitamenes. This version had been fabricated, according to Tarn, to endow Seleukid rule with the legitimacy of the great Macedonian conqueror, but one which is obviously erroneous when it comes to some basic points of chronology. Tarn infers his hypothesis from Livy, speaking of the curious onomastic strategy of a Megapolitan named Alexander:

Amynder had married Apama, daughter of a Megalopolitan, called Alexander, who, pretending to be descended from Alexander the Great, had given the names of Philip and Alexander to his two sons, and that of Apama to his daughter.²⁵

Similarly, Antiochos I of Kommagene claimed descent from Alexander through the Seleukids, a curious explanation, as there are no known dynastic links between the two houses.²⁶ Tarn tried to show that a genealogical link between Apama and Alexander might have been thought possible in the 2nd and 1st centuries, while also illustrating Apama's actual family connections. Considering the rarity of the name 'Apama', Tarn supposed that Spitamenes' daughter might have been a descendent of the only other attested person to have borne that name, a daughter of Artaxerxes II Mnemon, who married the satrap Pharnabazos.²⁷

It is of course unnecessary to underline how thin both hypotheses are, but it is important to note that in antiquity, knowledge about Apama was probably quite

²² See Harders this volume

²³ Cf. Tarn 1929, 139; Balty 1977, 109.

²⁴ Tarn 1951, 140.

²⁵ Liv. 35.47.5: *Amynder uxorem Apamam, filiam Alexandri cuiusdam Megalopolitani, habebat, qui se oriundum a magno Alexandro ferens filiis duobus Philippum atque Alexandrum et filiae Apamam nomina imposuerat.* Cf. similarly App. Syr. 13: τῶν τις Μακεδόνων Ἀλέξανδρος, ἐν Μεγάλῃ πόλει τραφεὶς καὶ τῆς αὐτόθι πολιτείας ἀξιωθεὶς, ἑτερατεύετο γένος Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τῷ Φιλίππου προσήκειν, γενομένους τέ οἱ παῖδας ὠνόμασεν, ἐς πίστιν ὧν ἐλογοποιεῖ, Φίλιππον τε καὶ Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ Ἀπάμαν, ἣν Ἀμυνάνδρῳ πρὸς γάμον ἠγγύησεν. (*A certain Macedonian, named Alexander, who had been educated at Megalopolis and admitted to citizenship there, pretended that he was a descendant of Alexander the Great, and to make people believe his fables he named his two sons Philip and Alexander and his daughter Apama.*)

²⁶ OGIS 388–401. For the Seleukid ancestors, see Saunders 1996, 306–55 and Strootman this volume.

²⁷ Plut. *Artax.* 27. The king had several daughters, and promised to give Apama in marriage to Pharnabazos, Rhodogune to Orontes, and Amestris to Teribazos.

limited, as is shown by these two aforementioned speculative associations. It is thus likely that the Seleukids might have consciously exaggerated Apama's rank, if we consider that the dynasty of Pontos tried to claim Kyros I and Dareios I as ancestors, whereas the Ariarathids of Kappadokia similarly claimed descent from Kyros I and the kings of Kommagene from Dareios I.²⁸ Aside from Tarn's speculations, unfortunately nothing more regarding Apama's ancestry is known. Nor do we have any more certainty about how the Seleukid house used the rumours about Apama, which certainly would have been circulating in the various regions of the Empire.

As with her ancestry, Apama's influence on her son is equally unknown to us except for some scarce indications. The fact that one of Seleukos' and Apama's daughters was also named Apama, and that one of Antiochos I's and one of Antiochos II's daughters bore the name as well,²⁹ shows the important and obviously positive place the Baktrian aristocrat's daughter occupied within the family's collective memory. Furthermore, at least three cities were named after her; the two most important being Apameia in the Syrian tetrapolis and Apameia twinned with Seleukeia across the Euphrates as Zeugma.³⁰ If Seleukos had merely tolerated Apama, her name would neither have been included in the dynasty's nomenclature in such a prominent fashion nor linked so closely with his own eponymous foundations.³¹

Her prominence can be further stressed, if one recalls Apama's active role in the relationship between Miletos and the royal court. This relationship is attested by two Didymaeon inscriptions which name her together with her son in 299, and both relate to a time when Seleukos dwelled in the East. They show her not only bearing the title of *basilissa*, but also participating autonomously in giving of gifts to the future dynastic god, Apollo from Didyma.³² Another dedication to Leto, Artemis, and Apollo at Delos emphasised her prominence within the Greek sphere as well.³³

Apama probably died in 299, which is both the year in which we last hear of her and when Seleukos married Stratonike. The date of Apama's death is a matter of considerable controversy, with a range of options having been proposed.³⁴ A conservative view of the marital relations of the Diadochs requires that Apama was either divorced or deceased when Antiochos married Stratonike in 299.³⁵ On the other hand, D. Ogden and others have argued that, like Philip II, many of the

²⁸ Painitschek 1986.

²⁹ Euseb. *Chron.* 1.249 Schoene; van der Spek and Finkel, *BCHP* 11, Text A 13.

³⁰ Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 15; Grainger 1990a, 75–7; Ogden 1999, 119. These were, of course, not the only cities named after Apama; for a complete list, see *RE*.

³¹ Müller 2013, 208.

³² *IDidyma* 479 (= *OGIS* 213) and 480.

³³ Müller 2013, 208.

³⁴ See Müller 2013, 208–9. For her survival, see Macurdy 1932, 78–9; Brosius 1996, 79. For her death in 299, see Heckel 2006, 39.

³⁵ Beloch 1912–1927, iv.2, 304; Holleaux 1923/1942, 1; Macurdy 1932, 78; Bickerman 1938, 28; Vatin 1970, 86 n. 2; Heckel 2006, 39; referenced but not endorsed Müller 2013, 208–9.

early Hellenistic courts were polygamous, and that it would have been unnecessary for Seleukos to divorce Apama before marrying Stratonike.³⁶ Another possibility is that Apama's prominence was eclipsed by Seleukos' marriage to the Macedonian Stratonike, only to return after Stratonike's removal to the east with Antiochos in 294.³⁷ There is no positive evidence for such a return after 294, so this hypothesis must remain pure speculation. To sum up, it seems much safer to suppose that the disappearance of Apama from the sparse historical record after 299, after her earlier prominence, strongly suggests that she died in that year or shortly thereafter.

One final area in which Apama may have had some lasting influence on the dynasty was her relationship with her son, the future king Antiochos. Did she teach Antiochos some Persian? Again, one might consider it probable, if one remembers the very dominant place of some royal consorts and queen mothers at the Macedonian as well as at the Achaimenid court.³⁸ Familiarity with the Persian language might also be suggested by the fact that a certain number of Seleukid princes received Iranian names, which they exchanged for dynastic names only if or when they assumed royal power.³⁹ The continuous, or at least frequent, marriages between Seleukid and Iranian noble and royal families enhance the probability of a durable Iranian cultural element at the Seleukid court. The Seleukid dynasty thus was, from its very beginning, equally Iranian as Macedonian,⁴⁰ a condition that was regularly perpetuated by marriages with other Iranian dynasties like the kings of Pontos,⁴¹ Kappadokia,⁴² Sophene⁴³ and, albeit

³⁶ Tarn 1929, 139; Brosius 1996, 79; Ogden 1999, 119–20; referenced but not endorsed Müller 2013, 208–9.

³⁷ Bielman Sánchez 2003, 46 followed by Schmitt 2005, 560; Müller 2009, 20 n. 15; Müller 2013, 209.

³⁸ Cf. Aisch. *Pers.* 155–6 and Athen. 556b; see also Demandt 1995, 118.

³⁹ Although this name may have come from his maternal grandfather, a son of Antiochos III seems to have been called Mithridates, but adopted later on the name of Antiochos (IV), as appears from *SEG* 37, 1987, 859 (A 1–4) (from 198/7) and Liv. 33.19.9, who also mentions a second son named Ardys. Cf. Holleaux 1912; Schmitt 1964, 23; Wörle 1988, 428–9; 451–2 and Mehl 2000, 18–26, who wonders to what degree the name *Mithridates* was still perceived as essentially Iranian at this time, given its popularity in the Pontic region. *Ardys* may be understood as *Arses* (*Aršū*), the name borne by three Achaimenid kings later on known as Artaxerxes (I, II and IV); cf. Briant 1996, Index s.v. Arses 1–3. The tradition of adopting a throne name with dynastic connotations is also known from Seleukos III, initially called Alexander according to Euseb. *Chron.* 1.253 Schoene = 119 Karst.

⁴⁰ Underlined by Bengtson 1951, 137.

⁴¹ Just. 38.5.3; Euseb. *Chron.* 1.251 Schoene; *Chron. Arm.* 118 Karst (Mithridates II marries Laodike, sister of Seleukos II); Polyb. 5.43; 74.5; 8.21.7. 22.11 (Antiochos III and Achaïos marry the two daughters of Mithridates II and Laodike); *OGIS* 771 (Pharnakes I and Nysa, perhaps a grand-daughter of Antiochos III). See also D'Agostini Forthcoming.

⁴² Diod. 31.19.6; Euseb. *Chron.* 1,251 Schoene; *Chron. Arm.* 118 Karst (Ariarathes III and Stratonike, daughter of Antiochos II); Diod. 31.19.7; App. *Syr.* 5.18; Zonar. 9.18.7 (Ariarathes IV and Antiochis, daughter of Antiochos' III).

⁴³ Polyb. 8.23; Johann. Antioch. F 53 (*FHG* IV p. 557) (Xerxes and Antiochis, sister of Antiochos III.).

involuntarily, Parthia.⁴⁴ Also further marriages with Eastern Iranian families are possible, but not yet firmly attested.⁴⁵

To sum up our knowledge about Apama, it is obvious that her ethnicity and the mixed ancestry of her son must have been important factors in the apparent acceptance of Seleukid rule in the Upper Satrapies, even if it is difficult or impossible to quantify their actual influence on the local aristocracy's loyalty. Unfortunately, nothing more of consequence is known about the queen, but there are some curious anecdotes concerning Stratonike, the second wife of Seleukos, which we might be tempted to associate in some way or other with Apama.

III. STRATONIKE

As was the case with the woman she replaced at Seleukos' side in 299, even though Stratonike entered the Seleukid house as a pawn in a larger political game, she nonetheless appears to have quickly established herself as a powerful force in her own right.⁴⁶ Stratonike was the daughter of Demetrios Poliorketes and Phila, who was herself the daughter of Alexander's regent in Macedon, Antipatros.⁴⁷ This distinguished descent gave Seleukos a solid connection to several prominent Macedonian families. The importance of the connection to Macedon for Seleukos is explicitly stressed in the speeches that accompanied Stratonike's subsequent marriage to Antiochos. Furthermore, Seleukos gave his daughter the name of Stratonike's mother, Phila, perhaps indicating that he sought to maintain the link to the well-respected wife of Antipatros and enhance his own claim to his homeland.

The marriage of Stratonike to Seleukos completed another reversal of fortune for King Demetrios, who only two years previously had been defeated by a coalition of other Hellenistic kings, led by Seleukos and Lysimachos, on the battlefield at Ipsos and subsequently driven out of Athens.⁴⁸ In marrying Demetrios' daughter and thus allying himself with his former enemy, Seleukos was doubtless thinking of the model provided by Ptolemy's support for him when he had been forced to flee his own satrapy in the face of Antigonos

⁴⁴ Just. 38.9–12; App. *Syr.* 67.356 (Demetrios II and Rhodogune; Phraates II and a daughter of Demetrios II).

⁴⁵ Cf. Schmitt 1964, 101; Wenghofer and Houle in this volume; Wenghofer Forthcoming.

⁴⁶ Cf. in general Mesk 1913; Gebhard 1931; Breebart 1967; Landucci 1978; Macurdy 1932, 78–82; Hillgruber 2010 and the literature cited below concerning the legend of the lovesick Antiochos.

⁴⁷ Plut. *Demetr.* 31 and 32.

⁴⁸ Plut. *Demetr.* 30–1; Diod. 21.1.4; For the relative strengths and weaknesses of his position, see Manni 1951, 41–3; Shear 1978, 72. Demetrios had remained in control of the largest of the successors' fleets, and their bases in Kypros, Tyre and Sidon, as well as Korinth. The League of Islanders had also remained loyal.

Monophthalmos' forces.⁴⁹ Both sides stood to benefit from the match: for Demetrios, this marriage gave him a new powerful ally in the east to help him reassert his influence in mainland Greece and Macedon. For Seleukos, the marriage provided an opportunity to gain the upper hand against his former allies: Lysimachos to his north-west, and Ptolemy, who had joined Seleukos and Lysimachos in opposing Antigonos and Demetrios, in the south.

The spoils of their joint victory brought new areas of conflict to Lysimachos, Ptolemy and Seleukos. Ptolemy had established his control over Koile-Syria (although he abandoned it shortly before the battle took place)⁵⁰, but the territory was attributed to Seleukos after the battle of Ipsos, thus creating the basis for conflicts that would not be resolved until the dissolution of the Seleukid monarchy.⁵¹ As for Lysimachos and Seleukos, the two main victors, they now had to govern adjacent territories (with the division running perhaps along the Halys River)⁵² and could thus develop new territorial ambitions. As these new arrangements soon required a concurrent shuffling of alliances, Demetrios became, once more, a valuable partner. He had already proven himself a worthy and resilient opponent, and his control of the Greek islands and his footholds in the Mainland which he had managed to retain provided the opportunity to resist both Ptolemaic and Lysimachean claims, all the while doing little to threaten Seleukos' immediate interests in Asia, the Levant or the Upper Satrapies. However, his control of footholds around Syria and the conquest of Kilikia, achieved when on his way to marry Stratonike to Seleukos,⁵³ could have posed a significant threat to Seleukos' newly won territory in Syria.

The alliance with Demetrios through marriage to Stratonike thus offered several advantages to Seleukos. He not only stabilised the northern frontier of his new Syrian territories, but also gained a levy in order to oppose Ptolemaic and Lysimachean interests in the Aegean world, as shown by his increased advertisement of his interest in the 'freedom' of the Greek cities of Asia Minor.⁵⁴ The marriage also served as a counter to the marriage alliance formed between Lysimachos and Ptolemy, with Lysimachos marrying Arsinoë, the daughter of Ptolemy and Berenike.⁵⁵ It thus appears that Seleukos intended to use this marriage and resulting alliance to counter the rapprochement of his former allies. Given the longstanding hostility between the two, it is perhaps not surprising that

⁴⁹ Diod. 19.55; App. *Syr.* 53. For an account of Seleukos' removal from Babylon, see Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 10; Grainger 1990a, 31–51; Mehl 1986, 52–5. For the chronology, see Boiy 2007.

⁵⁰ Polyb. 67.8 Plut. *Demetr.* 30; App. *Syr.* 55; Diod. 21.1.5; see now Grainger 2010, 33–5.

⁵¹ Diod. 21.1.4; See Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 14; see now Grainger 2010.

⁵² Lund 1992, 80–1.

⁵³ Plut. *Demetr.* 31; Manni 1951, 46.

⁵⁴ For the use of 'Freedom of the Greeks' as a tool of Hellenistic propaganda, see now Wallace 2011. See also Lund 1992, 89–90; Manni 1951, 44.

⁵⁵ Plut. *Demetr.* 31; Just. 15.4.24; see Lund 1992, 88; Ogden 1999, 59. Bennett 2013 dates Arsinoë's marriage before 298 on the basis of the ages of her children with Lysimachos at their deaths in 282.

a marriage between the houses of Seleukos and Demetrios was not the solution initially desired by either side.⁵⁶ Yet Demetrios appears to have been unsuccessful in finding a more suitable match for his daughter; in fact, he may even first have attempted to tie himself to the Ptolemaic house, because Stratonike dedicated a statue for the Ptolemaic King and Queen in Hierapolis/Bambyke.⁵⁷ It is not entirely clear that this undated inscription and dedication occurred after Ipsos, but it must date before the marriage either of Arsinoë to Lysimachos, or of Stratonike to Seleukos – both circa 299. Because the period before Ipsos saw increasing hostility between Ptolemy and Demetrios, this must have made a marriage alliance improbable. If the dedication therefore took place between 301 and 299, it would suggest an effort at reconciliation by Demetrios towards Ptolemy. But the marriage alliance between Lysimachos and Ptolemy deprived both Demetrios and Seleukos of other options and forced them into arranging a political marriage of convenience.

In the early period of this alliance between Demetrios and Seleukos, everything seems to have gone according to plan: Demetrios focused less on expanding his base in Kilikia at Seleukos' expense, and instead resisted Ptolemaic incursions elsewhere. But as with all early Hellenistic alliances and marriages, a stable relationship between the two kings did not develop beyond some short-term advantages. As soon as Seleukos consolidated his own power in his new territories, including the foundation of the cities of the Syrian tetrapolis with many of the citizens drawn from the recent foundation Antigoneia,⁵⁸ he began to move against Demetrios once more. That this break between the two did not come even earlier appears to be the result of Demetrios' decision to focus on resisting Ptolemy. At the same time, Seleukos, whose new Syrian territories were encircled by Demetrios' main body of strength (Kypros, Kilikia, Tyre and Sidon), preferred to focus on the consolidation of Syria before risking a new war. The friendly exchange at the wedding perhaps engendered some frail measure of trust between the two kings, whereas Stratonike may have continued to retain some influence with her father and was able to persuade both sides to put aside their hostilities until other matters were settled.

Stratonike not only appears to have played a key role in determining Demetrios' aims in this period and giving Seleukos some years of relative peace, but she was also critically important in Seleukos' attempts to consolidate his new territories formerly held by Demetrios and his father, transferring the loyalty of the inhabitants away from the Antigonid house and toward her new family.⁵⁹ However, the lack of an attested city foundation bearing her name in Syria at this time may be an additional indicator of the general unease Seleukos might have felt towards the former soldiers of Antigonos and Demetrios who had settled in

⁵⁶ Manni 1952, 43–4.

⁵⁷ See Ferrario 1962; *OGIS* 14: Βασιλισσαν Ἀρσινόην βασιλέως / Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Βερενίκης / Στρατονίκη βασιλέως Δημητρίου.

⁵⁸ Diod. 20.47.5–6; See Grainger 1990b, 37–9; Cohen 1978, 16–7; Downey 1961, 56–66.

⁵⁹ See Mitchell 2015 for the argument that the Macedonian settlers in Asia Minor were already settled by the time Seleukos took control of the region.

the region.⁶⁰ Only after the cities had grown to a significant size and the populations had shifted their loyalty to the king who had granted them new lands,⁶¹ did he dare to invade Demetrios' strongholds in Kilikia. It is possible that his marriage to Stratonike had allowed the men to transfer their allegiance across parts of the combined house, but that naming a city after an Antigonid princess, despite her new role in the Seleukid house, was too strong a reminder of their previous loyalties.⁶²

A specific instance of Stratonike's influence may be seen at work in Hierapolis/Bambyke in Northern Syria. From the dedication discussed above, it appears that she had long-lasting connections to the region. In the early Seleukid period, the city was given a Greek name and was elevated to the status of a Greek polis.⁶³ If the change of civic status occurred under Seleukos I, then we probably should credit it to the stories about her activity at the sanctuary, as related to us by Lukian and discussed below. The patronage of a city or a temple fits well with the queen's role, despite the lack of cities named in her honour. Instead she may have extended her euergetism to help ease the transition of the soldiers who had served under her father and were now settled within Seleukos' new Syrian cities.⁶⁴

The honeymoon ended in 294, when Seleukos removed Demetrios' control over Kilikia⁶⁵ and, at the same time, married Stratonike to his son and sent them both to the Upper Satrapies to rule over the East.⁶⁶ Antiochos appears to have brought his new bride with him on his tours of the eastern provinces, befitting, as Ogden has argued, Seleukos' goal of establishing his son's legitimacy through marriage to his own wife⁶⁷ and it also moved Stratonike away from her father in order to prevent her undermining Seleukid power in favour of her father.⁶⁸ This move may have ended her influence over Seleukos and his policy, allowing for an open break between him and Demetrios. However, as Stratonike remained queen, it seems that Seleukos did not wish to completely break diplomatic relations with Demetrios and that by retaining his daughter future reconciliations remained

⁶⁰ Phila provides a useful precedent for her daughter's activity in promoting her new family's rule through, diplomatic work, sending support to her husband, and providing advice. See Wehrli 1964; Carney 2000, 165-9; Carney 2012, 312-3; Diod. 19.59.5, 20.93.4; Plut. Demetr. 22.1, 32.3.

⁶¹ However, this loyalty appears to have been conditional, if we understand the Syrian revolt implied by *OGIS* 219 = *Illion* 32 = Austin 2006 no. 139.

⁶² See McAuley Forthcoming and in this volume for the argument that married royal women retained some allegiance to their natal house.

⁶³ Grainger 1990a, 147.

⁶⁴ See *IDidyma* 480 for Apama's support of Milesian soldiers serving in her husband's army. The most likely area for this support is in her homeland. See Robert 1984.

⁶⁵ Plut. *Demetr.* 31; Manni 1951, 46.

⁶⁶ Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 25; Ogden 1999, 121-4; the date of accession, a long time debated, is now secured thanks to a cuneiform tablet dated to 18 November 294 (*BM* 109949).

⁶⁷ See Ogden 1999, xix for the principle of dynastic marriage as method by which to secure legitimacy.

⁶⁸ McAuley 2013.

possible. While Stratonike may have lost her influence over one Seleukid king as she was married to another, at the same time she must have gained some influence over her new husband.

Antiochos' and Stratonike's activities in the eastern part of the empire are largely shrouded in mystery, but, as Engels has argued, Antiochos was far from idle since he embarked on a large building programme and was active in securing the frontier.⁶⁹ There is some evidence to suggest that his new bride accompanied him for much of this period. We can perhaps identify Stratonike's presence with her new husband in the Upper Satrapies through the gold coinage minted in Susa and Baktria in c. 287. The two gold coin sets are of the same type, the obverse features the laureate head of Apollo facing right and the reverse features Artemis in an elephant *biga* facing left with the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΥ in exergue.⁷⁰

Figure 1: Houghton and Lorber 2002, no. 163. Collection of Arthur Houghton



Figure 2: Houghton and Lorber 2002, no. 257. Collection of Arthur Houghton



The reverse image of Artemis in the elephant *biga* is within the same design type as a large range of other coinage issued by Seleukos I celebrating the success of his elephants and thus his eastern campaigns. The appearance of Artemis is however unique to these coin types.⁷¹ This suggests the emphasis on the close links between the twin gods, Artemis and Apollo, depicted on the obverse and

⁶⁹ Engels forthcoming.

⁷⁰ Houghton and Lorber 2002, nos. 163 and 257.

⁷¹ If the coins were linked to the entry of Antiochos into the satrapy perhaps this meant to be linked with Apollo and his wife, Stratonike, with Artemis.

reverse of this coinage. Since there appears to be as a close link between Apollo and Antiochos⁷² as there is between Zeus and Seleukos, the presence of Artemis could be seen as a symbol for Stratonike.⁷³ This would create a series of parallels: Seleukos/Zeus, Antiochos/Apollo, and Stratonike/Artemis. The first two reflect what we see for these two kings at the list of priests of Seleukid kings in Seleukeia in Pieria.⁷⁴ Additionally, it may be notable that the sister-wife ideology, though entirely fictional, appears to be evident later in the reign of Antiochos I.⁷⁵

As all of the Apollo/Artemis cointypes were produced on high value gold coinage, this suggests that it was issued in order to commemorate a significant event. While the type was similar to other Seleukid coinage, the shift from Athena to Artemis was clearly discernible and unique. The arrival of the new joint-King and Queen in the region to take up residence would have been a suitable moment for the issuing of the new coin type.⁷⁶ This advertisement of their new rule certainly falls in line with Seleukos' wedding speech which confirmed their new roles.⁷⁷

Stratonike, however, only appears sporadically for the rest of Antiochos' reign. The most significant evidence for her prominence after her and her new husband's appointment to the east comes from late in the reign of Antiochos I and is linked to the Borsippa Cylinder, deposited in 268 BC, in which she is named as both queen and principal wife.⁷⁸ After her unconventional marriage to Antiochos, she appears to have adopted the normal role of a royal woman by acting as mother to royal children and 'a supporter of their ambitions'.⁷⁹ The unique reference to her in the Borsippa Cylinder demonstrates that she remained strongly tied to her second husband.

Stratonike's significance appears only to have grown when her children aged and took the throne. Thus, by the reign of Seleukos II, Stratonike had been honoured with a cult in Smyrna.⁸⁰ As with most civic cults for Hellenistic rulers, it

⁷² For Babylon see Erickson 2011, for the conflation of Apollo and the image of the Persian King see Erickson and Wright 2011.

⁷³ This linking between Stratonike and Artemis might be extended further if we consider both her and Antiochos' relations with the gods at Borsippa, as Erickson 2011 has argued we can see not only a syncretism between Antiochos and Apollo but also between Antiochos and Nabû. Stratonike is unusually prominent in the foundation cylinder for the temple in Borsippa, a discussed below, and interestingly Strabo refers to the city as τὰ δὲ Βὸρσιππα ἱερὰ πόλις ἐστὶν Ἀρτέμιδος καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος (Strabo *Geogr.* 11.1.7).

⁷⁴ *OGIS* 245

⁷⁵ See *Illion* 32.19–25, which is dated to ca. 275 in Coşkun 2012, 61 n. 14.

⁷⁶ Kritt 1997, 106–8 argues for the production of the elephant *biga* coinage as part of Antiochos' activities after having been named joint king in 295/4. However, he credits some of Antiochos' actions as a response to a no longer tenable view of a revolt in Persis, see Engels 2013 for a rejection of the revolt in Persis.

⁷⁷ Plut. *Demetr.* 38.8–9.

⁷⁸ *BM* 36277 ii.26–27; Sherwin White 1991, 84.

⁷⁹ *BM* 36277 ii.26–27; Sherwin White 1991, 84.

⁸⁰ *OGIS* 228, 1–4: ἐπεὶ βασιλεὺς Σέλευκος βασιλέως / Αντιόχου ἀποστείλας γράμματα ποτὶ τὰν πόλιν ἀξιοῖ τό τε ἱερὸν τὸ τῆς Ἀφροδίτας τῆς Στρατονικίδος καὶ τὰν πόλιν τῶν Σμυρναίων/ ἱερὰν καὶ ἄσυλον εἶμεν. (Since King Seleukos son of King Antiochos sent a letter to the city

is likely that a series of benefactions preceded the establishment of the shrine. The most probable time period in which to place her dedications to Smyrna is after her husband's arrival in Asia Minor in 276.⁸¹ This coincides with the other cult inscriptions for her in Asia Minor, including joint honours for her and her husband at Teos⁸² and in the cult of the Ionian koinon.⁸³ Her activity would then coincide with that of her husband in the region.

It would be surprising, in light of the Syrian revolt mentioned in the Ilion decree,⁸⁴ if Stratonike did not have some role in attempting to re-establish loyalty to her husband amongst her father and grandfather's former troops as she was the only credible Antigonid available.⁸⁵ Depending on how the passage of Lukian's *De Dea Syria*, discussed below, is interpreted, she also may have continued her patronage of the temple of the Syrian goddess in Hierapolis.⁸⁶

Given this broad range of activities, surprisingly little hard evidence survives about Stratonike herself. Apart from being the passive object of Antiochos' desire and, for the most part, a political pawn in the games of her father and her first husband, she appears to have had some influence on early Seleukid policy and was honoured after her death by the cities of Asia Minor (and probably the Seleukids themselves) at least by the reign of her grandson Seleukos II. Her power in her first marriage was derived from her family connections, either ensuring an alliance with her father or attempting to win over the loyalty of his former troops. Her role in her second marriage is harder to determine, though she is referred to reverentially in the Borsippa Cylinder and as a goddess in her own right at Smyrna. Combined with the love story that preceded her marriage to Antiochos, this suggests that she held a significant degree of persuasive power over her husband. In one final way, her role appears to have paralleled the woman she replaced: her husband(s?) may have named a series of cities after her.⁸⁷

IV. STRATONIKE AND APAMA, LUKIAN AND FIRDAUSI

concerning the worthiness of the temple of Aphrodite Stratonikis and the city of Smyrna to be holy and inviolable), also see lines 10–12. See Coşkun 2015a and 2015b on the historical background and Rigsby 1996, 95–102 for discussion of *asylia* decrees in their Hellenistic context.

⁸¹ See Coşkun 2012, 59–61.

⁸² *ITeos* 95 = *CIG* 3075

⁸³ *OGIS* 222 = *IKlazomenai* 1.5 = *IErythrai* 504

⁸⁴ *OGIS* 219 = *Illion* 32 = Austin 2006, 139, dated to ca. 275 in Coşkun 2012, 61 n. 14.

⁸⁵ For what may have been expected of Stratonike with her father's and grandfather's troops, Apama's actions concerning Milesian troops in Baktria may serve as an important precedent and example. See Robert 1984; *IDidyma* 480 = *SEG* 26.1234 = *SEG* 34.1075 = *SEG* 4.442.

⁸⁶ *Luk. Syr. D.* 17–21.

⁸⁷ *App. Syr.* 57. Stratonikeia in Karia: *Strab.* 14.2.25; Cohen 1978, 15. Mitchell 2015 argues that the majority of settlements in Asia Minor were already founded before the Seleukids took over the area. It is also possible that Stratonikeias in Asia Minor may have been after Attalid Stratonikes.

Now that we have discussed the historical lives of the two most prominent women in the early Seleukid court; let us now turn to the legends and stories that grew up around them. The ultimate reasons as to why Seleukos decided suddenly to give his wife to his first son probably will have to remain unknown. Doubtless, there must be some link to Seleukos' abandonment of his alliance with Stratonike's father. The romantic story of Antiochos' consuming passion for his step-mother Stratonike⁸⁸ and of her apparently magnanimous transfer to Antiochos by Seleukos however is well-known, mostly through the popular version in Plutarch:⁸⁹

For it came to pass, as it would seem, that Antiochos fell in love with Stratonike, who was young, and was already mother of a little boy by Seleukos. Antiochos was distressed, and resorted to many means of fighting down his passion, but at last, condemning himself for his inordinate desires, for his incurable malady, and for the subjugation of his reason, he determined to seek a way of escape from life, and to destroy himself gradually by neglecting his person and abstaining from food, under pretence of having some disease. But Erasistratos, his physician, perceived quite easily that he was in love, and wishing to discover who was the object of his passion (a matter not so easy to decide), he would spend day after day in the young man's chamber, and if any of the beauties of the court came in, male or female, he would study the countenance of Antiochos, and watch those parts and movements of his person which nature has made to sympathize most with the inclinations of the soul. Accordingly, when anyone else came in, Antiochos showed no change; but whenever Stratonike came to see him, as she often did, either alone, or with Seleukos, lo, those tell-tale signs of which Sappho sings were all there in him,—stammering speech, fiery flushes, darkened vision, sudden sweats, irregular palpitations of the heart, and finally, as his soul was taken by storm, helplessness, stupor, and pallor. And besides all this, Erasistratos reasoned further that in all probability the king's son, had he loved any other woman, would not have persisted to the death in refusing to speak about it. He thought it a difficult matter to explain the case fully to Seleukos, but nevertheless, relying on the father's kindly feelings towards his son, he took the risk one day, and told him that love was the young man's trouble, a love that could neither be satisfied nor cured. The king was amazed, and asked why his son's love could not be satisfied. 'Because, indeed,' said Erasistratos, 'he is in love with my wife.' 'Then canst thou not, O Erasistratos,' said Seleukos, 'since thou art my son's friend, give him thy wife in addition to thy friendship, especially when thou seest that he is the only anchor of our storm-tossed house?' 'Thou art his father,' said Erasistratos, 'and yet thou wouldst not have done so if Antiochos had set his affections on Stratonike.' 'My friend,' said Seleukos, 'would that someone in heaven or on earth might speedily convert and turn his passion in this direction; since I would gladly let my kingdom also go, if I might keep Antiochos.' So spake Seleukos with deep emotion and many tears, whereupon Erasistratos clasped him by the hand and told him he had no need of Erasistratos; for as father, husband, and king, he was himself at the same time the best physician also for his household.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Cf. in general Funck 1974; Brodersen 1985, Fischer 1993 and the relevant chapters in biographies on Seleukos by Mehl 1986 and Grainger 1990a.

⁸⁹ A similar version of the story is told in App. *Syr.* 59–61. See Almagor in this volume for discussion of the tradition.

⁹⁰ Plut. *Demetr.* 38: συνέβη γάρ, ὡς ἔοικε, τὸν Ἀντίοχον ἐρασθέντα τῆς Στρατονίκης νέας οὔσης, ἥδη δὲ παιδίον ἔχουσης ἐκ τοῦ Σελεύκου, διακείσθαι κακῶς καὶ πολλὰ ποιεῖν τῷ πάθει διαμαχόμενον, τέλος δ' ἑαυτοῦ καταγνόντα δεινῶν μὲν ἐπιθυμεῖν, ἀνήκεστα δὲ νοσεῖν, κεκρατῆσθαι δὲ τῷ λογισμῷ, τρόπον ἀπαλλαγῆς τοῦ βίου ζητεῖν καὶ παραλύειν ἄτρεμα καὶ

To confirm this transfer, Seleukos gave a public oration and presented the couple to the assembled army, referring, as supposed by Garnier and others, to the Macedonian tradition of the military assembly.⁹¹ This address culminated, according to Plutarch and Appian, in the following statement, which has been considered by E. Bickerman, M. Rostovtzeff, G. Downey and others as key to Seleukid ruler ideology:⁹²

It is fitting that all of you, who had advanced to such greatness of dominion and power under me since the time of Alexander, should cooperate with me in everything. The dearest to me, and well worthy to reign, are my grownup son and my wife. As they are young, I pray they may soon have children to be an ample guarantee to you of the permanency of the dynasty. I will join them in marriage in your presence and will send them to be sovereigns of the upper provinces now. And I charge you that none of the customs of the Persians and other nations is more worthy of observance than this one law, which is common to all of them, 'That what the king ordains is always right.'⁹³

θεραπείας ἀμελεία καὶ τροφῆς ἀποχῆ τὸ σῶμα, νοσεῖν τινα νόσον σκηπτόμενον. (3) Ἐρασίστρατον δὲ τὸν ἱατρὸν αἰσθέσθαι μὲν οὐ χαλεπῶς ἐρώντος αὐτοῦ, τὸ δ' οὐτινος ἐρᾷ δυστόπαστον ὄν ἐξανευρεῖν βουλόμενον ἀεὶ μὲν ἐν τῷ δωματίῳ διημερεύειν, εἰ δέ τις εἰσίοι τῶν ἐν ὥρᾳ μειρακίων ἢ γυναικῶν, ἐγκαθορᾷν τε τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ Ἀντιόχου καὶ τὰ συμπάσχειν μάλιστα τῇ ψυχῇ τρεπομένη πεφυκότα μέρη καὶ κινήματα τοῦ σώματος ἐπισκοπεῖν. ὡς οὖν τῶν μὲν ἄλλων εἰσιόντων ὁμοίως εἶχε, τῆς δὲ Στρατονίκης καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὴν καὶ μετὰ τοῦ Σελεύκου φοιτώσης πολλάκις ἐγένετο τὰ τῆς Σαυφουῶς ἐκεῖνα περὶ αὐτὸν πάντα, φωνῆς ἐπίσχεσις, ἐρύθημα πυρῶδες, ὕψεων ὑπολείψεις, ἰδρώτες ὄξει, ἀταξία καὶ θόρυβος ἐν τοῖς σφυγμοῖς, τέλος δὲ τῆς ψυχῆς κατὰ κράτος ἠττημένης ἀπορία καὶ θάμβος (5) καὶ ὠχρίασις, ἐπὶ τούτοις προσλογιζόμενον τὸν Ἐρασίστρατον κατὰ τὸ εἶκος, ὡς οὐκ ἂν ἐτέρας ἐρῶν βασιλέως υἱὸς ἐνεκαρτέρει τῷ σιωπᾷ μέχρι θανάτου, χαλεπὸν μὲν ἠγεῖσθαι τὸ φράσαι ταῦτα καὶ κατεπειν, οὐ μὴν ἄλλὰ πιστεύοντα τῇ πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν εὐνοίᾳ τοῦ Σελεύκου παρακινδυνεύσαι ποτε καὶ εἰπεῖν, ὡς ἔρωσ μὲν εἶη τοῦ νεανίσκου τὸ πάθος, ἔρωσ δ' ἀδύνατος καὶ ἀνίατος. (6) ἐκπλαγέντος δ' ἐκείνου καὶ πυθομένου πῶς ἀνίατος, "ὄτι νῆ Δία" φάναι τὸν Ἐρασίστρατον "ἐρᾷ τῆς ἐμῆς γυναικός." (7) "εἶτ' οὐκ ἂν" εἰπεῖν τὸν Σέλευκον "ἐπιδοίης Ἐρασίστρατε τῷ ἐμῷ παιδί φίλος ὢν τὸν γάμον, καὶ ταῦθ' ὄρων ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τούτῳ μόνῳ σαλεύοντας;" "οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν σύ" φάναι "τοῦτο πατήρ ὢν ἐποίησας, εἰ Στρατονίκης Ἀντίοχος (8) ἐπεθύμησε." καὶ τὸν Σέλευκον "εἶθε γὰρ ἐταῖρε" εἰπεῖν "ταχὺ μεταστρέψαι τις ἐπὶ ταῦτα καὶ μεταβάλοι θεῶν ἢ ἀνθρώπων τὸ πάθος· ὡς ἐμοὶ καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν ἀφεῖναι καλὸν Ἀντιόχου περιεχομένῳ." (9) ταῦτ' ἐμπαθῶς σφόδρα τοῦ Σελεύκου καὶ μετὰ πολλῶν δακρύων λέγοντος, ἐμβαλόντα τὴν δεξιὰν αὐτῷ τὸν Ἐρασίστρατον εἰπεῖν, ὡς οὐδὲν Ἐρασιστράτου δέοιτο· καὶ γὰρ πατήρ καὶ ἀνὴρ ὢν καὶ βασιλεὺς αὐτὸς ἅμα καὶ ἱατρὸς εἶη τῆς οἰκίας ἄριστος.

⁹¹ Granier 1931, 161 contra Breebaart 1967, 158.

⁹² Bickerman 1938, 11; Rostovtzeff 1927, 155–96; cf. also Downey 1941, 167 and Hillgruber 2010.

⁹³ App. Syr. 61: δίκαιοι δ' ἐστέ μοι πάντες ἐς πάντα συνεργεῖν, οἱ ἐς τοσοῦτον ἀρχῆς καὶ δυνάμεως ἠξήθητε ὑπ' ἐμοῦ μετὰ Ἀλέξανδρον. φίλτατοι δ' εἰσὶ μοι καὶ ἀρχῆς ἄξιοι τῶν τε παίδων ὁ τέλειος ἡδὴ καὶ ἡ γυνή. ἡδὴ δ' αὐτοῖς καὶ παῖδες ὡς νέοις γένοιτο ταχέως, καὶ πλεονες φύλακες ὑμῖν τῆς ἡγεμονίας εἶεν. ἀρμόζω σφίσιν ἀλλήλους ἐφ' ὑμῶν καὶ πέμψω βασιλέας εἶναι τῶν ἐθνῶν ἡδὴ τῶν ἄνω. καὶ οὐ Περσῶν ὑμῖν ἔθη καὶ ἐτέρων ἐθνῶν μᾶλλον ἢ τόνδε τὸν κοινὸν ἅπασιν ἐπιθήσω νόμον, ἀεὶ δίκαιον εἶναι τὸ πρὸς βασιλέως ὀριζόμενον. Cf. similarly Plut. Demetr. 38.11: πάνδημον εἰπεῖν, ὅτι βούλεται καὶ διεγνώκε τῶν ἄνω πάντων τόπων Ἀντιόχον ἀποδειξαι βασιλέα καὶ Στρατονίκην βασιλίδά, ἀλλήλοις συνοικοῦντας.

If we believe this tradition, Seleukos not only stressed Alexander's example and the importance of congruent interests among the ruled and the ruling, he also seems to have referred explicitly to Persian absolutism as a valuable and obliging tradition. In the process he justifies his own royal authority with the sentence: ἀεὶ δίκαιον εἶναι τὸ πρὸς βασιλέως ὀριζόμενον (that which the king ordains is always right). It remains unknown to what extent the core of this undoubtedly embellished speech, which had successively been traced back to Hieronymos of Kardia, Phylarchos, or Duris of Samos,⁹⁴ really relied on contemporary Seleukid historiography or whether it should be considered a simple rhetorical exercise based – perhaps – on vague memories. Brodersen has stressed some similarities with Herodotos' description of Kambyses' incest with his sister:⁹⁵ “[...] though they could discover no law which allowed brother to marry sister, there was undoubtedly a law which permitted the king of Persia to do what he pleased.”⁹⁶

Nevertheless, the idea that a king, as *logos empsychos*, is always right seems so topical that it would be an exaggeration to suppose that Seleukos' speech could only be understood through the allusion to Herodotos. We thus cannot exclude the possibility of the story ultimately going back to Seleukid propaganda and attempting to define early Seleukid sovereignty not only with reference to Greek, but also to Achaimenid royal ideology. There the king's absolute power is based on his special relationship to Ahura-Mazda, whose divine order is protected on earth by the Achaimenid rule. And similarly to Ahura Mazda representing truth and righteousness and his enemy fostering lies and evil-doing, the Achaimenid king is thought to be the ultimate defender of this world order and to derive his power from Ahura Mazda's heavenly light, the Khvarnah. This parallelisation between God and Great King implies that everyone who opposes the king also sins against Ahura Mazda's 'truth' and favours the 'lie'. Thus, usurpers become godless sinners, whereas the king's supporters are truly religious, as is shown in Dareios' Behistun inscription:

On this account Ahuramazda brought me help, and all the other gods, all that there are, because I was not wicked, nor was I a liar, nor was I a despot, neither I nor any of my family. I have ruled according to righteousness. Neither to the weak nor to the powerful did I do wrong. Whosoever helped my house, him I favoured; he who was hostile, him I destroyed.⁹⁷

οἶσθαι δὲ τὸν μὲν υἱὸν εἰθισμένον ἅπαντα πείθεσθαι καὶ κατήκοον ὄντα μηθὲν ἀντρεῖν αὐτῷ πρὸς τὸν γάμον· εἰ δ' ἡ γυνὴ τῷ μὴ νενομισμένῳ δυσκολαῖνοι, παρακαλεῖν τοὺς φίλους, ὅπως διδάσκωσιν αὐτὴν καὶ πείθωσι καλὰ καὶ δίκαια τὰ δοκοῦντα βασιλεῖ μετὰ τοῦ συμφέροντος ἡγεῖσθαι. It is worthwhile to note that for Plutarch, the reference to the king being always right is addressed to Stratonike and is not related to Persian customs.

⁹⁴ Critical discussion in Brodersen 1985, 464.

⁹⁵ Brodersen 1985, 467.

⁹⁶ Hdt. 3.31: φάμενοι νόμον οὐδένα ἐξευρίσκειν ὃς κελεύει ἀδελφεῆ συνοικεῖν ἀδελφεόν, ἄλλον μέντοι ἐξευρηκέναι νόμον, τῷ βασιλεύοντι Περσέων ἐξεῖναι ποιέειν τὸ ἄν βούληται.

⁹⁷ DB § 63.

While this tradition concerning kingly power may have come to Seleukos primarily through the Macedonian and Persian courts, it was a long-standing tradition in the Near East which may have helped ensure the acceptance of his commands.⁹⁸ Quite obviously, the reference to Iranian traditions in order to legitimate the new Seleukid dynasty did not cease with the death of Apama, but was also used to legitimate the new roles of Stratonike and Antiochos as governors of the Upper Satrapies. Apart from these rather explicit issues regarding Persian royal legitimacy, the story of Stratonike's marriage to Antiochos also shows some other references to Oriental elements. Funck thus has tried to show that the specific narrative of this anecdote bears striking similarities to the legends of Ishtar. He supposed that the anecdote has either been gradually deformed by a Babylonian audience following local traditions, or may even have been circulated by Seleukid officials in a manner consciously stylised to suit the realm's Near Eastern subjects.⁹⁹

This interpretation has nevertheless been severely criticised.¹⁰⁰ It has not yet been sufficiently stated, however, that the anecdote may not only refer to a Babylonian background, but also to Iranian traditions. There are clear similarities between the lesser known Iranian traditions and the story of the Seleukid eunuch Kombabos, attested in Lukian's *De Dea Syria*,¹⁰¹ where we also find a variant of the love story between Stratonike and Antiochos.

First, a very brief summary of the tale in Lukian is in order. After introducing Stratonike by the familiar narrative of her transfer to Antiochos, Lukian relates how Kombabos castrates himself prior to taking the queen to oversee the construction of the temple at Hierapolis, which she had been repeatedly instructed to build by the goddess' appearance in her dreams. While doing so, she falls in love with Kombabos, and after failing to suppress her passion (in a wonderful reversal of the Antiochos love story), she imbibes heavily and approaches him. He then rejects her and discloses the proof of his actions. The king hears rumours of the goings on and recalls Kombabos to him. Kombabos returns and displays the material proof of the impossibility of his infidelity.

Of course, on one level, this legend is a literary fiction proposing a rather unconvincing aetiology of the castration of Syrian priests and a mockery of eunuchs at the eastern courts.¹⁰² On another level, it shows interesting similarities not only with the Stratonike-Antiochos tale, but also with other Near Eastern traditions like the legend of Joseph, Ishtar and Tammuz, demonstrating once more how the memory of the early Seleukids had been linked to local traditions in Syro-Mesopotamia.¹⁰³ Yet the story also has Iranian connotations: the future eunuch's

⁹⁸ For the ideology of lying as religious/political rebellion against the kings, see Pongratz-Leisten 2002.

⁹⁹ Funck 1974, 1313–4.

¹⁰⁰ Brodersen 1985.

¹⁰¹ Luc. *DDS* 18–25. See now in general Oden 1977, Dirven 1997; Lightfoot 2003; Andrade 2013, 288–313.

¹⁰² Lightfoot 2003, 384–5.

¹⁰³ Cf. Albright 1944, 34; Oden 1977, 38; Andrade 2013, 298.

name strongly resembles Kombaphis, the favorite eunuch of a pharaoh in an anecdote by Ktesias, which probably circulated at the contemporary Achaimenid court.¹⁰⁴ These connections reveal a strong Near Eastern and also Iranian element to the story, though we should not allow these long-standing traditions to obscure the role that Stratonike plays in the narrative.

But the strongest argument for an Iranian link is the near repetition of the Kombabos story in Firdausi's *Shahnameh*, which refers not to the first Seleukid king and his *philos*, but to the first Sasanian king Ardashir and his minister and *archimagos*. The lengthy story can be summarised as follows: Ardashir, after overthrowing Parthian rule, married the daughter of the last Parthian king Ardawan. After some time and an aborted attempt by the Arsakid princess to murder her new husband and re-establish the old dynasty, Ardashir, quite understandably, wants to separate himself from her and assigns his minister with this task. Seeing that she is pregnant with a possible successor to the crown, the minister decides to hide her in order to spare her potential son. Fearing that the king might accuse him of treason in later years, he decides on the following:

He went into his house and there cut off his testicles; he then cauterized the wound, applied a salve to it, and bound it up. Pallid and groaning with pain, he quickly put the testicles in salt and placed them in a round jeweller's box, which he immediately sealed. He came into the throne room, carrying the sealed box, and said, "I ask that the king entrust this to his treasurer." The date was written on the box, so that there could be no argument about when this had occurred.

Seven years after the child's birth, Ardashir learns of his minister's disobedience and possible adultery and condemns him to death. The story then continues as follows:

[...] The treasurer brought the box and handed it over. The king asked what was hidden under its seal, and the vizier answered, 'My own warm blood is there, and my shameful parts, cut cleanly from my body. You gave Ardavan's daughter into my keeping, saying that you wanted her to be a lifeless corpse. I didn't kill her, because she was pregnant, and I feared God's judgement on me if I did. I disobeyed your orders, but at the same time I castrated myself so that no one could speak evilly of me and soak me in a sea of infamy. Now your son Shapur is seven years old: no other king has had such a son, he resembles the moon in the heavens. I named him Shapur, and may the heavens smile on your good fortune. His mother is with him and has brought the young prince up.'¹⁰⁵

Although there are also similarities with other Indo-European legends about expelled and concealed heirs to the throne, as with Romulus and Remus or Kyros,¹⁰⁶ the detailed parallels with the story of Kombabos are too obvious to be ignored. As the legend is inseparably linked to the founding of Near Eastern royal dynasties through rulers like Seleukos or Ardashir, it has been supposed that the

¹⁰⁴ Ktes. *Pers.* § 19.

¹⁰⁵ Firdausi, *Shahnameh* (transl. Davis 1997, 557–8).

¹⁰⁶ Benveniste 1939.

Kombabos legend initially originated at the Achaimenid court.¹⁰⁷ In this case, it very likely would have centred on the new ruling house's legitimacy through its descent from the Median dynasty in a manner similar to the description of Parthian-Sasanian continuity as expressed by the *Shahname* (and to the forced marriages between the Parthian and the Seleukid houses). The legend about Kombabos and Stratonike would then attest the existence of a link between the (hypothetical) Achaimenid and the Sasanian version of this narrative motif, constituting an important piece of evidence for the popular acceptance the Hellenistic dynasty seems to have found.

But whereas the *Shahname* explicitly points to the dynastic link between the Arsakids and the Sasanians, the Kombabos-Stratonike legends seem only concerned with issues within the already established Seleukid court. It then seems surprising that the Kombabos version of this legend, obviously belonging to a Near Eastern dynastic environment, is only concerned with Stratonike, married to Seleukos for scarcely five years. A more likely protagonist would have been Apama, a Baktrian princess married for 25 years to Seleukos, mother of four children and, most importantly, mother of the crown prince. Though highly speculative, we could formulate the hypothesis that Lukian's account of the Kombabos legend might not represent an initial version of the story. Indeed, it seems possible that Lukian, who also narrates the story about Antiochos' love for Stratonike in the same text, may have contaminated the queen of the initial Kombabos story with the name of the queen mentioned in the Antiochos story; an easily understandable error as Lukian lived 450 years after the events and as Near Eastern narratives usually do not assign names, but only roles like 'king', 'queen' or 'minister'. In this case, we might equally suppose that a story about Kombabos' castration was also motivated by the queen's pregnancy, as in the Firdausi account, and that in some versions the exile was replaced by a long journey.

Should this supposition hold, a version of the Kombabos story, as it may have circulated in early Seleukid times as a popular actualisation of an Achaimenid narrative pattern, referred to Apama and not to Stratonike, and would have concerned her pregnancy with the future Antiochos I. In the *Shahname*, Ardashir's 'minister' protected the last Parthian king's daughter from execution and thus made it possible for Ardashir's son, Shapur, to survive and later be (rightly) considered as a legitimate Arsakid as well as Sassanid. If we accept the possibility that this same pattern was also followed in the (hypothetical) Kombabos story featuring the Baktrian princess Apama rather than Stratonike, then Apama would have been (somewhat incorrectly) associated with a branch of the Achaimenid dynasty. Under this perspective, the story probably explained how Kombabos protected the last Achaimenid princess Apama from Seleukos'

¹⁰⁷ See Briant 1996, 283: "Greffé sur des antécédents mésopotamiens, la légende de Kombabos n'est rien d'autre qu'une histoire de cour qui a été développée à l'époque achéménide."

wrath and thus assured the birth of Antiochos I, the Half-Iranian, Half-Macedonian prince¹⁰⁸ conciliating Macedonian and Iranian interests.

There is, however, a second way in which to interpret the relationship between the stories of Kombabos and Ardashir, which may tie the legend into a yet wider range of Seleukid ‘propaganda’ probably circulating around the early Seleukid court. Rather than Apama replacing Stratonike in any one ‘original version’, both women could be connected to these types of popular stories and legends which may have begun to circulate at the early Seleukid court. As with Apama, Stratonike plays an essential role in providing legitimate children and has a high profile both as queen and as queen mother. Thus both women would have played an essential role in the formation of dynastic identity, and both could be inserted into many of the familiar narratives.

In this respect, the stories about Stratonike and Apama are similar to the popular stories that grew up around Alexander.¹⁰⁹ The pregnancy/birth myth was common to Kyros, Antiochos (as we have suggested above) and Shapur; a similar story also exists outside the Persian tradition and is told of Sargon of Akkad.¹¹⁰ Alexander’s birth story in the *Romance* may also partially fall into this tradition, but only Nektanebo’s magic prevents Philip from rejecting the child. The shunning of a wife, son or advisor who must later be reintegrated into the royal court is another old story pattern that appears not only in Firdausi’s account of Ardashir and Sharpur but also in the *Ahiqar* Romance tradition.¹¹¹ The story

¹⁰⁸ Antiochos I seems to have been perfectly well aware of this, as attests the Borsippa cylinder; cf. Weissbach, 1911, 132–5; Sherwin-White 1991; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, 36–8. Dated to the 28 March 268, the cylinder mentions Antiochos I as well as his father as kings of Babylon (*šar bābili*), and uses furthermore the epithet ‘great king’ (*šarru rabu-ū*), ‘mighty king’ (*šarru dan-nu*), ‘king of the world’ (*šar kiššati*) and ‘king of lands’ (*šar mātāte*). The inscription, even if in the continuity of similar inscriptions from Achaimenid times as the Kyros cylinder (e. g., Frg. a, 20–21), goes back to typical Babylonian formulae and shows Antiochos’ attempts to guarantee ideological as well as institutional continuity and suggests indirectly how improbable it would have been if he should not have extended this policy towards his Iranian possessions. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Antiochos designed his father as ‘Macedonian’ (*si-lu-uk-ku šarri / ma-ak-ka-du-na-a-a*), following the Achaimenid formula of insisting on the Persian kings’ ethnic origins (Dandamayev 1976, 210–4; Sherwin-White 1991, 83), but avoids using this descriptions for himself, though he repeats his kingship (Borsippa Cylinder Col. I 4–5; cf. Briant (1994, 459–67). This particularity one might perhaps attribute to the general claim that the Seleukids have ‘gone native’, but which, in a more direct way, corresponds to Antiochos’ mixed origins. Concerning the use of ‘King of Kings’ and ‘Great King’ under the Seleukids, cf. Engels 2014.

¹⁰⁹ See Stoneman 2012. For the transmission of these birth legends into Firdausi, see Davis 1996.

¹¹⁰ Grenet 2003.

¹¹¹ The *Ahiqar* romance tradition (for which our earliest text comes from the excavations at Elephantine and dates to the 5th century BC) contains a similar story about the birth and the reintegration of an exiled child as well as a series of maxims. The story seems to have been known in Seleukid Babylon, see de Blois 1984, n. 12. For the transmission of this story into Greek prose fiction, see Marinčić 2003.

reappears in a Coptic tale of Alexander as well.¹¹² These stories in particular appear to have been part of a series of stories that were told at the Persian court,¹¹³ a tradition that the Sogdian Apama also may have brought into the Seleukid court. They can be connected for the most part to a longer Near Eastern/Iranian tradition, without excluding that some features were based on historical events, such as Stratonike's and Antiochos' wedding. At a later stage, such composite traditions could be re-absorbed by and re-transmitted to later Greek and Iranian storytellers.

Both Lukian's and Firdausi's narratives are comprised of two essential elements: the first (and for our purposes the least important) is the faithfulness of one of the royal *philoï*; the second is the infidelity of the royal consort, which threatened one of the most important of her functions, to provide legitimate children. In the *Shahnameh* the events that lead to calls for the banishment of the wife and the murder of her unborn child consist of her attempt to murder the king and re-establish her father's power. The break between the two different courts over the raising of the child and right to the throne fits much better with the stories concerning Kyros' birth out of a union between the Median princess Mandane and the Achaimenid king Kambyzes I.¹¹⁴ Both the Kyros episode and the Ardashir story narrate the birth of the first king produced from the union of two dynasties, as would be the case with Antiochos from the union of Seleukos and Apama, assuming that Apama could have been considered an Achaimenid.

The traditions surrounding the earliest case of a dynastic union could thus have been drawn on for the birth of Antiochos. Notwithstanding this possibility, a significant difference remains in the relationship between the two houses as it is Seleukos rather than Antiochos who established the new dynasty. Nevertheless, Antiochos' birth appears to suit the folk motif well enough to exclude the minor dynastic differences. However, if we consider the relationship between Stratonike's father and Seleukos, we may be able to identify a reason for the hostility between wife and husband which would fit better with the Ardashir narrative. It should be remembered, though, that the link between the Seleukid and the Antigonids was rarely emphasised publicly, whereas it is possible that Apama may have been transferred into the Achaimenid house, in order to shore up Seleukid ancestry in precisely this way. Perhaps, then, the 'original' story concerned Apama, but the scandal of Stratonike's marriages to both father and son and her strong personality as seen in the Borsippa Cylinder explain the gradual shift to the more dynastically problematic Stratonike. This would parallel the story in Lukian where there was not a clearly loving relationship between King and Queen, and the King fears the Queen's sexual appetite. In turn, this causes the problems for the King's *philos*. From Kombabos' actions, it seems apparent that the king's jealousy and the queen's impropriety are certainly grounds enough for fear. In the first case, we know of no evidence for either of the first two Seleukid queens to have attempted to remove their husband(s), but

¹¹² Stoneman 1992.

¹¹³ Stoneman 2012, 5–6.

¹¹⁴ See Hdt. 1.110–117.

Stratonike's connections to her father may have led to frictions between her and Seleukos.

V. STRATONIKE AND APHRODITE

One way in which Stratonike was usually presented was through a connection with the Goddess Aphrodite. This connection, it appears, also seems to have had some influence on the presentation of her as both an object of sexual desire through the lures of beauty and fertility as queen mother, but also as the embodiment of those qualities.¹¹⁵ We can find links to these desires in Stratonike's cult title at Smyrna¹¹⁶ and perhaps in the way she is described in the Borsippa Cylinder.¹¹⁷

The cylinder was deposited by Antiochos on the occasion of the re-foundation of the temple of Nabû in Borsippa. One of its most interesting non-Babylonian features is the reference to Stratonike as queen. Her titles and the appearance of a woman in an inscription of this type appear to be unique in both the Babylonian and Persian tradition. Although Babylonian queens do appear in the inscriptions set up by their children, they only appear in the role of the queen mother.¹¹⁸ In these cases, the queen mother is referenced in order to stress the succession and stability of the kingdom.¹¹⁹ They do not appear as queen in their own right, nor do they appear paired with their husbands as Stratonike does in the Borsippa Cylinder. This unique reference to Stratonike may reflect her prominence as the granddaughter of Antipater, the daughter of Phila and Demetrios Poliorketes as well as the wife to both Seleukos I and Antiochos I. Many of the stories surrounding Stratonike explicitly relate her marriage to Antiochos with the insurance of dynastic continuity and stability,¹²⁰ in this way Stratonike may be seen to replicate the role of the Babylonian queen mother. These factors may have influence the choice of her titles in the document, as Sherwin-White argued:

the specific choice of titles she bears in the cylinder: both *hīrtu* = 'principal wife' and *šarratu* = 'queen' are, in fact, limited in their use to designate female divinities in this period – a translation of 'divine consort' for the former and 'heavenly queen' for the latter might get close to rendering some of the nuances of meaning.¹²¹

It is for precisely this role as divine queen mother that Stratonike is honoured at Smyrna. In two decrees from the city she is defied in relation to her children: 'The

¹¹⁵ The story concerning Stratonike's pride in her hair, despite being bald, in Lukian's *Pro Imaginibus* (5–6) suggests her extreme pride in her appearance.

¹¹⁶ *OGIS* 229

¹¹⁷ *BM* 36277 ii.26–27; Sherwin White 1991, 84.

¹¹⁸ See Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1983, 22; Sherwin-White 1991, 83.

¹¹⁹ Sherwin-White 1991, 83–4.

¹²⁰ See Ogden 1999, 121–4.

¹²¹ Sherwin-White 1991, 84.

god Antiochos and the mother of his father the goddess Stratonike'.¹²² Both the Borsippa Cylinder and these decrees of Seleukos II, two generations later, stress the role of Stratonike as queen mother. This is an interesting contrast to how the courtesans and a wife of Demetrios were honoured, as none of these women who received a cult appear to have done so for their roles as mothers of legitimate children.¹²³ Neither did women in Ptolemaic cult at an early stage appear to receive worship for their role as the mother of the king, but rather for their role as royal consort.¹²⁴ Here it seems that the Seleukids differed from their Hellenistic rivals in promoting their wives and mothers as guarantors of dynastic stability in cultic terms.

It is not only the Stratonike in the role of queen mother that can be seen in the Borsippa Cylinder. P. Kosmin has recently argued that the translation of Stratonike's name into Akkadian, Aštartanikku, is built of two parts; the word for fornicating and the name of the Goddess Aštarte.¹²⁵ Thus he translates her name as 'Aštarte-fornicating' rather than just as an attempt to transliterate the name into Akkadian. Aštarte was originally a Syrian goddess whose Babylonian equivalent was Ishtar, and both goddesses were most commonly associated with the Greek goddess Aphrodite and were often royal consorts.¹²⁶ We can therefore assert that an identification of Stratonike with the goddess of love and sex, which is expressed in Greek framework, is also present in the Akkadian.

It is precisely this assimilation of Aphrodite to Stratonike that we find in her cult at Smyrna. By the reign of her grandson, Seleukos II, a shrine was dedicated to her in the city.¹²⁷ The cult of Stratonike at Smyrna was most likely tied to her benefactions to the city itself.¹²⁸ Not only is the parallel with the Borsippa Cylinder striking, but the association with Aphrodite is interesting, because it recalls the manner in which her father's courtesans and wife were honoured with cults associated with Aphrodite, as were many of the Ptolemaic queens when they received divine honours, as did Laodike the wife of Antiochos III.¹²⁹ A

¹²² θεὸν Ἀντίοχον καὶ τὴν μητέρα τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς θεὰν Στρατονίκην; *OGIS* 228, 229; *SIG* 575, 990.

¹²³ Ath. 253a–253b.

¹²⁴ Nor is the deification of Phila, Stratonike's mother, connected to her role as royal mother. Rather, she appears so honoured by 'flatterers' of Demetrios with the same titles as the courtesan Lamia: Ath. 254a. 105; Ath. 255c.

¹²⁵ Kosmin 2014, 187.

¹²⁶ This assimilation between the queen and Aphrodite would fit into a long Near Eastern tradition of Aphrodite (or deity whom the Greeks identified as Aphrodite) as consort of the king, see Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008, 499.

¹²⁷ *OGIS* 228, 1–4: ἐπεὶ βασιλεὺς Σέλευκος βασιλέως / Ἀντιόχου ἀποστείλας γράμματα ποτὶ τὰν πόλιν ἀξιῶν τό τε ἱερὸν τὸ τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας τᾶς Στρατονικίδος καὶ τὰν πόλιν τῶν Σμυρναίων/ ἱερὰν καὶ ἄσυλον εἶμεν (*Since King Seleukos son of King Antiochos sent a letter to the city concerning the worthiness of the temple of Aphrodite Stratonike and the city of Smyrna to be holy and inviolable*).

¹²⁸ *OGIS* 228, 1–4, 10–2.

¹²⁹ Ath. 253a–b. See Ogden 2009 for the courtesans; for Ptolemaic queens: Berenike, wife of Ptolemy Soter, is deified by Aphrodite (*Theokr. Id.* 17.50–3; also 15.106–8) there is also

comparison of this cult with those of Demetrios' courtesans and Ptolemaic queens, while quite interesting, would exceed the limitations of this paper, but it is nevertheless clear that royal women in the early Hellenistic period were often associated with Aphrodite.¹³⁰ The cultic honours which Stratonike received at Smyrna appear to be typical of these Aphrodite pairings; just as Berenike and Arsinoë II¹³¹ she was referred to as a goddess by her own name¹³² and as a pair with Aphrodite.¹³³ Seleukos II's support for his grandmother's sanctuary in Smyrna as holy and inviolable, as attested in his letter to Delphi, raises the question whether the goddess Stratonike was worshipped in a central dynastic cult, or whether her deification was specific to Smyrna. However, the parallels with the Borsippa Cylinder title, her association with marriage and sex in Hellenistic stories, and the use a similar pairing for other queens suggest a wider publication of her association with Aphrodite. It is clear from these two examples that Stratonike's significance relies on her role as sexual partner and thus mother,¹³⁴ a role that is also reflected in the tales of her sexuality in the literary tradition.

Now let us return to the story in Lukian. How should we connect Stratonike with the goddesses who provide the impetus in the other versions of these narratives? It may be possible to make the same connection that was made in Babylon and Smyrna, namely with the goddess of love. This is not without difficulties though, since the goddess of the temple which Stratonike was sent to build is identified as Hera by Lukian. In his narrative, there are two levels of causation for Kombabos' self-castration, the earthly political one (he fears he will be accused by the king) and the heavenly one:

Those in Hierapolis say that Hera was the willing cause of these matters, she knew full well that Kombabos was an upright man, but she wished to wreak her wrath on Stratonike for her unwillingness to undertake the building of the temple.

While this passage does not equate Stratonike with the goddess, Lukian nearly does so in chapter 26 by telling that 'others give a divine interpretation to this matter, saying that Hera, being in love with Kombabos, suggested the act of

evidence of a joint shrine for Aphrodite-Berenike in the Fayum *PEnteux*. 13; Rowlandson 1998, 28–30. Berenike II, wife of Ptolemy III, dedicates her famous lock of hair (Kallim. *Aetia* 4: *Coma Berenices*; Catullus 66) at a temple of Arsinoë-Aphrodite, and is herself then connected with the god. See Gutzwiller 1992 and Clayman 2013, 97–104 for Berenike's connection with Aphrodite. The association between Seleukid royal women and Aphrodite is not exclusive to Stratonike either, Laodike, wife of Antiochos III, was honoured as Aphrodite-Laodike in Teos (*SEG* 41.1003).

¹³⁰ Carney 1994 provides a useful overview of the status of these women.

¹³¹ See Hunter 2003, 136–7 and above.

¹³² *OGIS* 229.9: θεὸν Αντίοχον καὶ τὴν μητέρα τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς θεὰν Στρατονίκην.

¹³³ *OGIS* 229.12: τὸ ἱερὸν τῆς Στρατονικίδος Αφροδίτης.

¹³⁴ This fits well with Carney's argument that the cults for these women were rooted in a desire for access to power (Carney 2000), a queen's power rested, in large part, in her ability to bear legitimate children, cf. Mirón Pérez 1996.

emasculatation to many men'. Here the pursuit of Kombabos by Stratonike in the mortal realm is paralleled by the pursuit of him by 'Hera' in the immortal sphere. Who is the goddess that Lukian calls 'Hera'? The temple under construction is usually considered to be that of Atargatis, a goddess who is often associated with Astarte/Ishtar. We can see parallels with the Ugartitic Aqhat epic, as suggested by W. F. Albright. According to the latter, Aqhat

aroused the passionate desire of the goddess Anath, because of his strength and beauty. Like Bitis and Joseph in Egypt, like Eshmun and Kombabos in Syria, like Gilgamesh in Babylonia, the chaste hero spurns the advances of the goddess of love and war. A more characteristic specimen of Near-Eastern mythology would be hard to find.¹³⁵

We can now understand how Stratonike begins to be established in the role of a traditional Near Eastern goddess, similar to the presentation of Attis/Kybele or Adonis/Aphrodite pairings,¹³⁶ a role that is already familiar from her representation in the Borsippa Cylinder.

Perhaps then, it is in light of the similarities between Aphrodite and Stratonike that we should attempt to understand the painting by Ktesikles which depicted her with a fisherman:

Ktesilochos, a student of Apelles, was famous for a burlesque picture depicting Jupiter with a mitra on his head giving birth to Liber, moaning amongst the goddesses of childbirth; Kleon for his Kadmos; and Ktesidemos, for his Storming of Oechaliae and his Laodamia; Ktesikles for the insult which he offered to Queen Stratonike. For, when he did not receive the expected honours from her, he painted her, romping with a fisherman, with whom, according to common rumour, she had fallen in love. After exhibiting this picture in the harbour at Ephesos, he at once set sail and escaped: the queen, however, would not allow of its removal, the likenesses of the two figures being so admirably expressed.¹³⁷

Kosmin has argued that we should read this narrative as "a misunderstanding of a cult painting that depicted the queen as Aphrodite and perhaps attempted to project Seleucid maritime sovereignty".¹³⁸ While this does not fit Pliny's version of the painting exactly, such an interpretation would help us explain Stratonike's refusal to have the picture removed, if we understand that the painting depicted herself as – or on par with – Aphrodite. This blurring of boundaries between mortals and immortals in paintings, recalls similar literary descriptions of

¹³⁵ Albright 1944, 34; Oden 1977, 38.

¹³⁶ Stratonike would take on the role of the goddess in these pairings with her paramour taking the role of Adonis/Attis. Cf. Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan 2008 for a similar parallel in Theokr. *Id.* 1.

¹³⁷ Plin. *NH* 35.140: *Ctesilochus, Apellis discipulus, petulanti pictura innotuit, Iove Liberum parturiente depicto mitrato et muliebriter ingemescente inter obstetricia dearum, Cleon Cadmo, Ctesidemus Oechaliae expugnatione, Laodamia, Ctesicles reginae Stratonices iniuria. nullo enim honore exceptus ab ea pinxit volutantem cum piscatore, quem reginam amare sermo erat, eamque tabulam in portu Ephesi proposuit, ipse velis raptus. regina tolli vetuit, utriusque similitudine mire expressa. Cratinus comoedos Athenis in pompeo pinxit; Eutychedes bigam: regit Victoria.*

¹³⁸ Kosmin 2014, 186.

Hellenistic paintings.¹³⁹ Even if we do not accept Kosmin's suggested link to maritime sovereignty, we need not necessarily reject the link to Aphrodite, who has an important association with fishermen in addition to her other maritime roles.¹⁴⁰

6. CONCLUSION

As we have seen, there are several literary narratives that arose about the first two Seleukid queens, hitherto all of which have been assigned to Stratonike during her marriage to Seleukos. While this may be the case for some (parts) of the stories, it seems unlikely that it is true for all of them. As our literary narratives come from later sources which may rely on now invisible contemporary material, it is quite possible that we have the conflation of a variety of different stories that were in circulation during the early Hellenistic period and were applied to one or both of the women. Before attempting to untangle the web of interpretations woven above, it may be useful to summarise what connections we have thus far drawn.

The most popular story recorded about either of the two women is the love story which features the intervention of the wise doctor, recorded in Plutarch, Appian, Valerius Maximus and Lukian. The second story in Lukian concerns the foundation myth for the castrated priests at Hierapolis/Bambyke. The final story is a marriage/birth myth of the Kyros type recorded in the *Shahnameh* for Shapur. All three of these stories share elements that are common to other literary traditions in the Near East and Iran. The question now arises to which of the two women the traditions should be connected originally.

The story preserved in Firdausi has the strongest references to the Achaimenid court and with the Iranian nobility. The popularity of this story type in Iran is clearly shown by the birth myth of Kyros.¹⁴¹ If the myth also shares remnants of a similar Seleukid legend, we should probably connect it with the Iranian elements in the Seleukid dynasty. If a similar story circulated in the Iranian parts of the empire, then it would make sense to highlight the Iranian heritage of Antiochos. In this case we would identify the king with Seleukos and his wife with Apama, who in the story was probably connected to the royal Achaimenid house. As Apama's only appearances in our sources portray her and her husband as jointly interested in the survival of the new house, it would be odd to see the negative portrayal present in the Ardashir story as suggesting that the motif would have circulated in the Seleukid court in a different manner. While the criteria for connecting this type of birth myth with the Apama-Seleukos pairing is largely based on her connections to the region and her potential for acting as a

¹³⁹ We can see the play between differing immortals in the opening of Achilles Tatios' *Leukippe and Kleitophon* 1.1–2.

¹⁴⁰ See Lytle 2006, 76 n. 98 on her association with fishermen; Demetriou 2003 for Aphrodite's seafaring connotations in Hellenistic cult and epigram.

¹⁴¹ As we see in Hdt. 1.110–7.

bridge between Iranian/Baktrian populations and the new Seleukid rulers, it is important to note that Stratonike spends over a decade in the east as queen. In this period, her perception as an outsider may have aroused some similar hostility to that which was raised against Shapur's mother in Firdausi.

The Lukianic story connected with the temple of the Syrian Goddess shares many of the same problems. On the one hand, Stratonike has an epigraphic connection to the site which Apama lacks. On the other hand, the five-year marriage between Stratonike and Seleukos gives little time for all of the attested activities: the birth of at least one child, with enough time spent supervising the building of the temple with Kombabos to pursue him, and then to be pursued by Antiochos long enough for him to fall seriously ill. If the story is not just a generic type which could have applied to any Near Eastern temple, but should be connected to the temple at Hierapolis, then we can raise similar objections concerning Apama's potential to be involved with the sanctuary. While the period of her marriage to Seleukos was much longer, her time in Syria was relatively limited, confined, it seems to the years between Seleukos taking control of the region in 301 and Apama's death in 299. One solution to the chronological problems between the two Lukianic narratives under discussion, the marriage and the castration stories, is to break the temporal links between the two and consider them as separate popular traditions. If we suppose that Antiochos is the king whose wife may be unfaithful, then we are not left with a similar chronological problem.

Stratonike was most likely present in the western Seleukid Empire from her husband's return from the east in 281 until her death in 253. This leaves at least twenty years for her to have founded the temple. Furthermore, while we have evidence for Antiochos' love for Stratonike, the same cannot be said to be true the other way round. It is clear from Plutarch's and Appian's versions of the wedding story that Stratonike had to be convinced to change husbands. While the significance of the forced change of husbands onto Stratonike may be to highlight her devotion to her (first) husband, it may also expose a real unwillingness to become the wife of Antiochos. However, the loyalty to her husband may have also been used to counteract any suspicion of a lack of chastity between her and Antiochos, just as his willingness to sacrifice himself rather than wrong his father does the same. To this end, if we take the painting reported in Pliny at face value, then we begin to have a pattern of Stratonike as a version of Aphrodite within the Seleukid court, able to conduct her own romantic relationships but also loyal to her husband(s).

Obviously, the first two Seleukid Queens, Apama and Stratonike, played a pivotal role in the development of a Seleukid dynastic mythology which drew heavily on Near Eastern and Iranian narrative traditions. The multiplicity of possible interpretations for these stories suggests that proposing a single origin would be ineffective, and that a different method of interpretation would be more productive. It seems thus much better to examine these narratives in the context of other popular stories and legends that developed around the same time. Indeed, these types of stories may have several different analytical grids, and their

numerous inner contradictions are not surprising, as they may have been generated from generations of collective retellings and consequently often lack a coherent logic. However, the different narratives related to Apama and Stratonike all clearly tie into at least two well-known folklore traditions – the birth of royal offspring, and marriage into a royal house.¹⁴² The queens' appearance in these traditions demonstrates the importance that the Seleukids and their subjects attached to the creation of dynastic legitimacy and continuity. Hence, the possible different analyses which have been sketched above all show how the traditions about the early Seleukids could have been mapped onto underlying popular narratives. This in turn would have more firmly established the dynasty within their territories as they took part in the traditional tales – a melding of cultural traditions, 'Greco-Macedonian' and 'Oriental', which was not accidental, but the result of a deliberate attempt to construct a new multi-ethnic empire.

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¹⁴² West 2007, 414–7. It is interesting to note that a more developed heroic legend pattern does not seem to have developed about the early Seleukids (West 2007, 427–8), despite the fact that stories about the Seleukids became integrated into the Near-Eastern story-telling web. In particular, there are none of the more fantastic elements, such as the search for the water of life, flying, or paradise. The only heroic motif is Seleukos' birth from Apollo. For Alexander legends as 'Hero' stories see, Anderson 2012.

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