



Femmes influentes
dans le monde
hellénistique
et à Rome

III^e SIÈCLE AVANT J.-C. -
I^{er} SIÈCLE APRÈS J.-C.

Sous la direction de
Anne Bielman Sánchez,
Isabelle Cogitore et Anne Kolb

elug

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Anne Bielman Sánchez, Isabelle Cogitore et Anne Kolb (dir.)

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DES PRINCES

Collection dirigée par Isabelle Cogitore

La question du Prince intéressait traditionnellement les historiens. Avec la mort des idéologies, la chute du Mur de Berlin et le regain d'intérêt pour la rhétorique, elle redevient un problème littéraire : il s'agit de retrouver, d'analyser, pour ainsi dire de l'intérieur, une représentation de la politique telle qu'on la vivait avant la Révolution. Avec l'école des Annales, les historiens ont redécouvert que les désirs comptent autant que les réalités, les mots et la gestuelle qui les accompagne autant que les faits. Un programme de travail s'ensuit : regarder tous ces écrits que sont éloges, entrées, adresses de toute sorte comme des textes à part entière. Ils parlent d'amour, amour du prince pour ses sujets et des sujets pour leur prince, selon un jeu subtil, dont le concept d'oppression ne rend pas compte. Trouver des angles d'attaque, des outils critiques adaptés, voire de nouvelles méthodes de travail, dans certains cas éditer des textes qui le méritent, tel est le propos de la collection.

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**FEMMES INFLUENTES DANS LE
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(III^e SIÈCLE AV. J.-C. - I^{er} SIÈCLE APR. J.-C.)

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CHAPITRE II

REPRESENTATION AND
AGENCY OF ROYAL WOMEN IN
HELLENISTIC DYNASTIC CRISES
THE CASE OF BERENIKE
AND LAODIKE

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Résumé

Au III^e siècle, les Séleucides connaissent la première crise dynastique importante de leur histoire. Cette crise trouve son origine dans la mort d'Antiochos II et provoque la Troisième Guerre de Syrie, qui oppose Séleucos II au roi lagide Ptolémée III. La soudaine vacance du pouvoir créée par la mort d'Antiochos II conduit les sources antiques à tourner leur attention vers les membres « secondaires » de la famille royale (la *basileia*) et à s'intéresser à la mécanique du pouvoir monarchique séleucide. Or, les sources antiques accordent un rôle central dans ces événements aux deux veuves d'Antiochos II, Laodice et Bérénice. Grâce à cet intérêt pour les membres féminins de la *basileia*, nous disposons d'informations sur le rôle de la *basilissa* en l'absence de représentants mâles de la dynastie, et sur l'action de la reine, mère du nouveau roi.

Essentiellement basée sur les sources historiographiques antiques, cette contribution revisite les témoignages relatifs à Laodice et à Bérénice, les veuves d'Antiochos II, dans le but de clarifier le rôle des femmes de la maison royale séleucide autant que le permet la documentation littéraire. Tout en répondant à d'importantes questions sur l'action féminine dans le domaine militaire et diplomatique, cette étude relance le débat sur la royauté séleucide en démontrant que les femmes séleucides n'étaient ni des « femmes de l'ombre » ni des « pions » mais qu'elles avaient une identité politique propre, complexe, et qu'elles jouaient un rôle clé dans l'administration politique et économique du royaume séleucide, ainsi que dans la diplomatie hellénistique.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Even though almost all of the surviving information on the events of 246-245 concerns the two wives of Antiochos II, there is disagreement among the sources about the reconstruction of the circumstances of the Third Syrian War. Most of the ancient sources are inclined to be hostile towards Laodike, who is considered responsible for the crisis of 246: she is accused of murdering her husband Antiochos II in order to facilitate access to the throne for her children. This tradition is present with minor differences in Pliny the Elder, Solinos, and Valerius Maximus,¹ as well as in Appian, whose account has even more details displaying hostility towards Laodike.² This anti-Laodikean matrix portrays the queen as a paradigm of Hellenistic female moral corruption³ and has been recently traced to an anecdote from book 12 of the *Histories* of Phylarchos preserved by Athenaios.⁴ The episode concerns the events following the death of Antiochos II, and stresses the cruelty and impiety of the queen, who is explicitly accused of murdering her husband out of her own thirst for power.⁵ The account reflects Phylarchos' moral condemnation of Hellenistic monarchs,⁶ as well as the interest of the historian in female personalities.⁷ His style was, indeed, negatively defined as “γυναικῶδες” by Polybios⁸ probably also due to his female portrayals.

1. Plin., *nat.*, 7,53; Sol., 1,80; Val. Max., 9,10, ext. 1, and 9,14, ext. 1.

2. Appian's passage has original details that increase the dramatic atmosphere of the text: *e. g.* the jealousy of Laodike, poison as the means of killing Antiochos II. Some are proved false, such as the murder of Laodike by the already dead Ptolemy II. Differing from Appian's positive attitude towards the early Seleukids, the author considers 246 as the starting point of the Seleukid collapse: Marasco, 1982, p. 150-151.

3. Pédech, 1989, p. 423-425; Savalli-Lestrade, 2003, p. 73-76; Mastrocinque, 1983, p. 44-45.

4. Goukowsky 2007, p. 164-167; Primo 2009, p. 123-124. *FGH* 81, F24 = Athen., 13,64 and 593b-e; Schepens, 2007, p. 239-261, and Zecchini, 2007, p. 19-28.

5. The negative judgment of ancient historiography towards Phylarchos builds on Polybios's criticism of the historian. Polybios and Phylarchos had opposite political and historiographical ideas. Phylarchos focused on the history of the Peloponnese in the 3rd century, and, in particular, on the fight between Aratos of Sicyon and Cleomenes of Sparta, but he supported and admired Cleomenes, while Polybios considered Aratos, leader of the Achaean League, as the hero of the conflict: Marincola, 2003, p. 285-315; Schepens, 2005, p. 141-164, and 2007, p. 241-243. On Phylarchos' tragic historiography: Walbank, 1960, p. 216-234.

6. A *leitmotiv* of Phylarchos' work is the *tryphē*, the lust for luxury (Ager, 2006, p. 165-186), as the cause of the corruption and ruin of institutions: Phylarchos praises the rejection of *tryphē* in Cleomenes' Sparta, while condemning the *tryphē* in Hellenistic monarchies (*FGH* 81, F20, 41, 44, 45 and 66): Stelluto, 1995, p. 63, and Schepens, 2007, p. 258-261. Hellenistic monarchies are considered as an *exemplum e contrario*, with the exception of the Ptolemies until Ptolemy III, maybe because Phylarchos used Ptolemaic sources: Zecchini, 1989, p. 83-86; Walbank, 2002, p. 53-69; Primo, 2009, p. 120.

7. Pédech, 1989, p. 476-487.

8. Plb., 2,56,9.

Phylarchos showed interest for the “psychology” of women and attempted to portray an emotional depth in positive and negative examples of women, such as his comparison of Laodike, the negative paradigm of women and wives, with Danae, loyal lover of the *stratēgos* of Ephesos.

Among the literary sources, there is also a complex and late tradition on the events of 246 connected to Porphyry of Tyre, and delivered by Jerome and Eusebios.⁹ Jerome’s *Commentary on Daniel* (11.6-9) preserves a fragment of Porphyry’s *Against the Christians*¹⁰ that shows similarities with Phylarchos’ tradition, although it is difficult to determine if such similarities should be ascribed to Porphyry’s work or to Jerome’s re-elaboration and additions.¹¹ Differently, the Armenian version of the *Chronicon* of Eusebios preserves part of Porphyry’s *Chronicon*¹² that delivers a Seleukid tradition on these events. The account ignores the existence of Berenike, as well as any Ptolemaic interference, and describes the succession from Antiochos II to Seleukos II as problem free, stressing the Seleukid bloodline continuity, as if to conceal any dynastic crisis. The survival of the Seleukid tradition in Porphyry is likely to be due to the eastern origin of Porphyry.¹³

In Pompeius Trogus¹⁴, there is only a brief reference to the war between Seleukos II and Ptolemy III, but in Justin’s epitome of Trogus¹⁵ we read another version of the events of 246-245.¹⁶ There is no mention of the murder of Antiochos II by Laodike, and the succession of Seleukos II to his father’s throne does not seem to be questioned, while the narrative focuses on Berenike and her brother Ptolemy III. In the *Epitome* there is indeed a detailed account of Berenike’s murder and of Ptolemy’s attempt to rescue

9. Millar, 2006, p. 331-350; Primo, 2009, p. 289-303.

10. *FGrH* 260, F43.1-28.

11. Moreschini, 1997, p. 175-195; Muscolino, 2009, p. 36-42; Magny, 2010, p. 515-555.

12. *FGrH* 260, F32.6-7; Schoene Euseb., *Chron.*, 1.249.29-251, 11 Karst.

13. Eusebios’ *Chronicon* is well informed on Eastern Mediterranean events and the author knows of several historians connected to the Seleukid court, other than Porphyry: Megasthenes, Berossos of Babylon and Timochares: Primo, 2009, p. 289-303.

14. Pomp. Trog., *prol.*, 27.

15. Just., 27.1-2.

16. On the long-debated relationship between the work of Trogus and its *Epitome* by Justin: most recently, Alonso-Núñez, 1992; Heckel & Yardley, 1997, p. 1-41; Heckel, Yardley & Wheatley, 2012, p. 1-8; Bearzot & Landucci, 2014-15. Through Justin’s rhetorical elaboration, it is still possible to read Trogus’ work and appreciate his use of sources. Trogus-Justin often delivers a version of events different, showing different details and approach, from other ancient sources. It is likely that Trogus read and employed Hellenistic sources, now mostly lost, while other historians did not, or not as much. After von Gutschmid, 1894, p. 17-217, suggested Timagenes of Alexandria as the sole source for Trogus, another six names of possible sources have been put forward: Hieronymos, Timaeos, Phylarchos, Douris, Polybios and Posidonios. On the sources of book 27: Seel, 1956, p. 113-117; Mastrocicque, 1983, p. 46-48; Richter, 1987, p. 129-134; Primo, 2009, p. 209-210.

his sister, whom he believed to be still alive when he left Alexandria;¹⁷ above all, Justin's account explicitly stresses the support Berenike and Ptolemy received from the cities of Syria. Since Polyaeos' narrative¹⁸ delivers the same information, it is possible to connect the two sources to the same ancient tradition,¹⁹ which also matches the account of the so-called Gurob papyrus²⁰.

The four-column Gurob papyrus was found in 1890, and has been published several times since.²¹ It is probably the official report of Ptolemy III's campaign in Syria in 246 for the Ptolemaic court in Alexandria, given that it is in Greek and has a biographical structure and propagandistic intent. Despite its anonymity, the author is commonly identified with Ptolemy III himself, since he is the head of the military campaign.²² The document provides details about the arrival and the entrance of the king of Egypt in Seleukia and Antioch in 246 to assist his sister Berenike, stressing the popularity of the king among the people of Syria, and stating that he was respectful of the local rituals, and honoured by all representatives of the local institutions. The enthusiasm of the cities of Syria for the Egyptian involvement is present in the papyrus, as it is in Justin and Polyaeos, who also highlight the support the king had from the region. Additionally, all three sources agree on Ptolemy

17. Goukowsky, 2007, p. 166. Justin also mentions the rage of Ptolemy when he discovered the death of his sister, as does Polybios at 5,58.10-11: unfortunately this is the only reference to these events in Polybios: Walbank, 1957; Vecchi, 1976, p. 121-127, suggests that Polybios used, directly or indirectly, the account preserved on the Papyrus Gurob *FGrH* 160 as a source.

18. Polyaeos., 8,50, s. v. "Laodike". Polyaeos might be the first author of *Stratēgēmata* concerning women: Schettino, 1998, p. 277-280.

19. Since this tradition was hostile towards Laodike, scholars had linked also Justin's and Polyaeos' accounts to Phylarchos' tradition, as Appian's and Valerius Maximus': in part. Walbank, 2002, p. 53-69; Primo, 2009, p. 209-210.

20. For the Gurob papyrus: *FGrH* 160 = P.Petrie II.45 and III.144. Mastrocinque, 1983, p. 47 had the "impression" that Justin's source comes from the same cultural environment as the Papyrus Gurob. On the similarities between the accounts of Trogus-Justin and Polyaeos on other events see recently Mecca, 2001, p. 199-222. Seel, 1960, p. 235, suggests Trogus directly depended on Polyaeos.

21. The most recent edition, with commentary and English translation, is Gambetti, 2013, based on Piejko, 1990, p. 13-27. Mahaffy, 1893, p. 145-149 published the first edition of columns I-III, while column IV was first published by Mahaffy & Smyly, 1905, p. 334-338 (P.Petrie II 45 and III 144). Other relevant editions and commentaries: Wilcken, 1897, p. 52; Wilcken & Mitteis, 1912, p. 1-7; Bilabel, 1922, p. 23-29; Roos, 1923, p. 262-278; Crönert, 1925, p. 439-460; Holleaux, 1942a p. 281-297, and 1942b, p. 297-310; *FGrH* 160; Vecchi, 1976, p. 121-127; Wilhelm, 2002, p. 458. Among English translations see in particular Bevan, 1927, p. 198-203; Austin, 2006, p. 220-221; Derow & Bagnall, 2004, p. 53-55. *FGrH* 160 was translated in French by Delorme, 1975, p. 121-124.

22. On the papyrus as source of information on the king: Bagnall, 1976, p. 42-44; Hauben, 1990a, p. 29-37; Zecchini, 1990, p. 213-232. On the Syrian campaign: Will, 1979, p. 252-253; Beyer-Rothhof, 1993, p. 40-48; Lehmann, 1998, p. 81-101; Huss, 2001, p. 338-352; Fauvellet-Aymar, 2009, p. 138-141; Grainger, 2010, p. 160-162. On the Ptolemies in the eastern Mediterranean: Hauben, 1990b, p. 119-139; Mueller, 2006, p. 50-51; Marquaille, 2008, p. 48-50.

setting out for Syria to aid his sister, and not to avenge her murder, since Berenike was, indeed, believed to be alive when the Egyptian army left Egypt.²³ Nevertheless, while Polyaeos and Justin refer to her murder, the papyrus, or the part we have of it, does not mention the death of Berenike.

The papyrus clearly delivers a positive image of Ptolemy III as a pious and popular king and promotes the Ptolemaic intervention in Syria as a necessary act of fraternal devotion. The Ptolemaic promotional intent concerning the Syrian campaign of 246 is also reflected in the Adoulis inscription.²⁴ The document is a list of Ptolemy III's territories, divided among those he inherited, and those he conquered, such as all of the Seleukid areas he said he acquired in 246, (Kilikia, Pamphylia, and Ionia, as well as Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Susiana, Persia and Media, and all of the eastern lands as far as Bactria). The inscription also praises the king for having brought back from the campaign the Egyptian artifacts stolen in the past by the Persians, a *topos* in the propaganda of Egyptian kings.²⁵ The same praise of Ptolemy III for his Syrian campaign is, indeed, also present in the decree of Canopus,²⁶ which commends the king for returning the stolen Egyptian artifacts to the Egyptian temples they belong to (l. 6).²⁷ These two Egyptian documents testify to the Ptolemaic promotion of the Syrian campaign of 246, which aimed to celebrate the great result and the general military success of the expedition, and to give the impression, through a hyperbolic list of the conquered territories,²⁸ that Ptolemy easily conquered lands "until the end of the World".²⁹ That list of lands under Ptolemy's rule matches the accounts of Justin and Polyaeus, showing a connection between the accounts of the ancient authors and the 3rd century Ptolemaic cultural environment. Not only do the historians share details with the Ptolemaic tradition in the Gurob papyrus, such as the reason for the Egyptian campaign and the reaction to it in Syria, but they also present the same hyperbolic approach to the expedition as is found in the Canopus decree and the Adoulis inscription.³⁰

23. Bevan, 1927, p. 192-195, thinks in 246 Ptolemy III also invaded by land the North of Syria.

24. *OGIS* 54. Dittenberg published the inscription, which was found in the sixth century by Cosmas Indicopleustès (2.58-59) and has since been lost.

25. Winnicki, 1994, p. 149-190.

26. *OGIS* 56. Cf. Pfeiffer, 2004; Muccioli, 2013, p. 182-183, on the relevance in the document of the image of the king-benefactor.

27. *FGH* 260, F43.25-28.

28. The Babylonian sources prove this list of easily conquered lands to be partially a hyperbaton, since according to *BCHP* 11 the Egyptian Army had great trouble in conquering Babylonia. Del Monte, 1997, p. 46-48 and 231; Clancier, 2012, p. 9-31.

29. Bevan, 1927, p. 192-198; Strootman, 2010, p. 139-158.

30. The promotional exaggeration of the papyrus does not undo its reliability, since it is not likely the king would openly lie about his campaign to the people in Alexandria. On the literary production at the Ptolemaic court and on the possibility of Ptolemy of Megalopolis as a source for the historiographical tradition on Ptolemy III: Schepens, 1983, p. 351-368, and 2007, p. 239-261; Zecchini, 1990, p. 213-232; Bromberg, 2013.

BERENICE SYRA

The literary sources are favourable towards Berenike, the only exception being Porphyry who ignores her in the *Chronicon*. I presented the material as given by the sources, without necessarily accepting all of it uncritically, with the aim to highlight the consistency among diverse sources of Berenike's position in Antioch and Syria.

If in the anti-Laodikeian tradition Berenike is generally portrayed as a passive victim of the actions of Laodike, the re-elaboration of Porphyry's *Against the Christians* by Jerome provides some more details on the queen's role. Berenike was the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphos and his first wife Arsinoe I, daughter of Lysimachos of Thrace.³¹ In 253/252, when Ptolemies and Seleukids were not able to find a solution to the bloody and expensive Second Syrian War, Ptolemy II and Antiochos II agreed to a diplomatic solution of the conflict. Berenike played the pivotal role in this solution, since she went to Syria with a magnificent expedition to marry Antiochos II and become queen of Syria.³² According to Jerome, she brought with her to Antioch a huge dowry:³³ *"et infinita auri et argenti millia dotis nomine dedit unde φερνοφόρος... appellata est"*³⁴. The diplomatic role conferred upon the queen through this marriage is peculiar to the foreign politics of Ptolemy II, who "gave a dynastic dimension to his power",³⁵ Unfortunately, following her diplomatic marriage, there are no sources on Berenike between early 252 and 246. Conversely, Berenike's actions gain the sources' attention after her husband's death, in particular attracting the interest of the Egyptian tradition. According to Justin and Polyaeos³⁶, the queen was afraid that Laodike and Seleukos II posed a threat to her and her son's lives out of a desire to eliminate the Ptolemaic bloodline of Antiochos. According to Justin, she established herself in a suburb of Antioch, Daphne, and, as stated by Polyaeos, there she had her own personal guard of Galatian mercenaries. The authors underline the queen's organized support in the area, and that

31. Blümel, 1992, p. 127-133; Ameling, 2013, "Berenice [2]", *BNP*.

32. P.Cair.Zen. II 59251; App., *Syr.*, 65; Polyaeos., 8.50. On the wedding and on the nuptial escort: Ager, forthcoming.

33. According to the 3rd century Greek Egyptian documentary sources, the wife personally owned the dowry and could administer it for her whole life. At her death, the husband could acquire the dowry only if specified in the testament. Berenike was the owner of her great dowry Porphyry *FGrH* 260, F43.10-14; Dixon, 1985, p. 147-170; Vêrilhac & Vial, 1998, p. 133-135; Martinez-Sève, 2003, p. 690-706; Bielman Sánchez & Lenzo (*infra* chap. 6).

34. *FGrH* 260, F43.10-14. Grainger, 2010, p. 138 points out that Hölbl's suggestion (2001, p. 44) that Berenike's huge dowry represented a war indemnity in disguise is "quite unwarranted."

35. Marquaille, 2008, p. 49-50.

36. Just., 27.1.5-8; Polyaeos., 8.50.

“the cities of Asia” (*i. e.* Syria) defended her, to prove their loyalty to her – Ptolemaic – family. This local support was strong enough that it was not possible to defeat her by military means, and in order to eliminate Berenike, Seleukos II and Laodike had to resort to a plot. According to Justin and Polyaeos, after Berenike’s murder by Seleukid assassins, the cities of Syria called her brother Ptolemy for help and surrendered themselves to the Egyptian king upon his arrival.

Consistently the Gurob papyrus presents Antioch as Berenike’s stronghold in 2.46 and confirms the support of the city to Ptolemy. Additionally, the document provides information on Berenike’s status in Antioch and her agency after Antiochos’ death and before Ptolemy’s arrival in Syria. After the description of the surrender of an unidentified city to the Ptolemaic forces,³⁷ the papyrus reports that Berenike sent a fleet of 15 ships³⁸ to the navarchs Pythagoras and Aristocles³⁹ with orders to sail toward Soloi in Kilikia (1.24-2.1).⁴⁰ The expedition had to seize the treasure (1500? talents) of the citadel, in order to take it from the satrap Aribazos, who was supposed to deliver it to Laodike’s front in Ephesos. With the help of the local garrison, the navarchs made an agreement with the people of Soloi, took possession of the treasure and brought it to Seleukeia. Aribazos was captured, but succeeded in escaping and reached the pass of the Tauros Mountains; there he was recaptured and beheaded by the local population, who brought his head to Berenike in Antioch.

In the Gurob papyrus the leader of the whole operation is explicitly Berenike: she had a fleet anchored in Seleukeia,⁴¹ where the ships brought the captured treasure from Soloi and from Laodike; she is also the recipient

37. Perhaps Apamea on the Orontes: Gambetti, 2013. On administration of Syria: Cohen, 2006; Capdetrey, 2007.

38. The number is uncertain.

39. Pythagoras can be identified: Gisinger, 1963, “Pythagoras (10)”, *RE*, coll. 302-304. Aristocles is otherwise unknown even if he might be mentioned in P.Ptol. 15186. The papyrus mentions them also at col. II, l. 10. It is not known if they were Egyptian navarchs or Seleukid navarchs loyal to Berenike. Roos 1923, p. 262, suggests they were Ptolemy’s navarchs in Cyprus under the command of Lysimachos, brother of Ptolemy III. On the contrary, Bagnall, 1976, p. 42-44, proves there was no Ptolemaic fleet in Cyprus until Ptolemy VIII. 40. Soloi was the main port of Kilikia and was a strategic holding, as is evident since Alexander the Great’s campaign. During the first half of the 3rd century, the city fluctuated between Ptolemaic to Seleukid control: Capdetrey, 2007, p. 243-245; Virgilio, 2011, p. 211-223.

41. There are two different reconstructions of l. 24-25, but all of them agree to read that the sister sent the ships. I accept Piejko 1990, p. 13-27, editing: Col. II, l. 24 “[καὶ Ἀριστοκλῆς εἰσέπλευσαν,] ἰε’ σκάφη τῆς ἀδελφῆς πρὸς αὐτοῦς [l. 25 διαπεψυαμένης, εἰς μὲν Μάγαρσο]ν (?) προθύμως”. Different was the integration by Jacoby, *FGrH* 160: l. 24 “[.....] ἰε (?) σκάφη τῆς ἀδελφῆς πρὸς αὐτοῦς Jacoby”; “[καὶ Ἀριστοκλῆς] Holleaux; “λαβόντες ἰε:” Wilcken; “[ἔχοντες πέντε] Holleaux; “[ἔτοιμάσαντες] ἰε” Roos. Col. II, l. 1 (25) “διαπεψυαμένης εἰς (?) τὸ]ν προθύμως” Jacoby; “εἰς [πλεῖν ὠρημα]ν” Holleaux; “εἰς Κιλικίαν ἤλθο]ν” Roos.

of Aribazos' head, delivered to her by the people of the Tauros Mountains as a sign of loyalty. Even if after Antiochos' death, she might have momentarily found herself in a weakened position, Berenike had recovered control before the arrival of her brother, and from the capital Antioch and its port Seleukeia had organized her defence and dispatched her attack against Laodike's front.⁴² Berenike's front also extended beyond the capitals of Syria, since the queen had the support of the garrison of Soloi, who surrendered the city to Berenike's fleet, although Aribazos, the satrap of Kilikia, remained loyal to Laodike. Additionally, the effective and quick contact between the people of the Tauros Mountain, Soloi, and Antioch, suggests that the lands and the communication routes at the southeast of the Tauros were indeed under the control of her supporters.

Possibly connected to this moment of Berenike's rule in Syria and Southern Anatolia is an honorific inscription on a marble base by the people of Samos that consecrates - a statue of - the queen to Hera⁴³. The *basilissa* Berenike is oddly mentioned: “Βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου | τοῦ Πτολεμαίου Σωτήρο[ς] | θυγατέρα Βασιλισσαν Βερενίκην ὁ δῆμος ὁ Σαμι[ων] | Ἡρηι”.⁴⁴ In the absence of any reference to the Seleukids, Berenike is honoured as a Ptolemaic queen, daughter, and granddaughter of Ptolemaic kings. The inscription could therefore be dated prior to 253, or to 246, in the months between Antiochos II's death and the arrival of Ptolemy III, also absent from the text.

An inscription from Kildara in Karia, a city close to Mylasa and to the Seleukid controlled area, also mentions Berenike as representative of Ptolemaic authority over Southern Anatolia. The document⁴⁵ is a letter to the people from the Ptolemaic governor Tlepolemos⁴⁶ who acknowledged the honours that in 246 Kildara conferred upon three royal representatives: “King Ptolemy, his sister Queen Berenike and King Antiochos, son of King Antiochos and Queen Berenike.”⁴⁷ In the honorary formulae Berenike always bears the title of queen with the explicit mention of sister, and is mentioned right after her brother, but before her son, Antiochos, who also bore the title of *basileus*, as did his Ptolemaic uncle. Writing to Tlepolemos

42. Bouché-Leclercq, 1913, p. 99; Ehling, 2003, p. 304-313.

43. The association of Berenike with the Samian deity Hera might follow the example of the former Ptolemaic queen Arsinoe II: Carney, 2013, p. 72-79.

44. *SEG* 1, 369; Kotsidu 2000 no. 178 [E].

45. First published by Blümel, 1992, p. 127-133 (see text); Gauthier, *BE*, 1994, 528; *SEG* 42, 994; *SEG* 46, 1413; *SEG* 48, 1336. See also Kobes, 1995, p. 1-6; Lehmann, 1998, p. 81-101.

46. Tlepolemos was member of the Alexandrian élites, Olympic winner and priest of Alexander the Great's cult 247-245; Virgilio, 2003 p. 110-112.

47. A, l. 5-10, and C, l. 2-7: “τὰ τοῦ βασιλέως Πτολ[ε]μαίου πράγματα καὶ τῆς ἀδελφῆς/ αὐτοῦ Βασιλίσσης Βερ[ε]νίκης καὶ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου/ τοῦ ἐγ βασιλέως Ἀντ[ι]όχου καὶ βασιλίσσης Βερενίκης”. The formula recurs with minor variations at C, l. 2-6, and at D, l. 10-14.

and adapting its political status to the new international scenario,⁴⁸ Kildara gave its support to the royal siblings Ptolemy III and Berenike, along with her son Antiochos, and sided with the Ptolemaic front.⁴⁹

The material evidence confirms the literary tradition that Berenike's support was rooted on a local level and extended beyond the capitals Antioch and Seleukia to include Syria, Kilikia, and part of Karia. The queen would have built such extensive support between 253 and 246 not only by virtue of the wealthy dowry she brought from Alexandria, but also by the local political connections of her Ptolemaic family. This might be carefully reflected in an Athenaios' anecdote on Berenike's contact with her Ptolemaic family: while she was in Antioch, Ptolemy II is said to have sent to his daughter some water of the Nile, as a reminder of her Ptolemaic origins, (2.45c). More explicit evidence, despite its propagandistic intent, of the double identity of the queen is the great welcome Ptolemy III was said to have received on his arrival in Syria: according to the Gurob papyrus, Seleukia and Antioch, the Seleukid capitals, decreed royal honours in favour of the Ptolemaic king. Specifically in Seleukia, Ptolemy received homage from priests, magistrates and citizens, officials and troops (col. II, l. 16-24); later he accepted the sacrifice and the honours the city had voted to bestow on him.⁵⁰ On his ship Ptolemy III then met satraps, generals, and military commanders, and subsequently in Antioch received new honours from the representatives of the institutions of the city⁵¹ (col. III, ll 1-16). Rather than exclusively on the support based on Ptolemy III's political influence and on the fear of the Egyptian army of the king, these royal honours were likely building on Berenike's support, as a result of her activity during the years in Antioch. The sources are indeed consistent in delivering evidence on Berenike's diplomatic agency of *basilissa* who entered the Seleukid dynasty, while keeping her connection to her Egyptian blood, stressing her double identity of Ptolemaic princess and Seleukid queen.

There is disagreement among the sources concerning the time and the circumstances of Berenike's death. Contrary to what the literary sources state, according to the last lines of the Gurob papyrus, Berenike was still alive when Ptolemy arrived: after receiving the great welcome from the cities, he finally went to visit his sister, and only after that he met with the local authorities to discuss the pressing matters (col. IV, l. 9). The absence of little Antiochos and the non-appearance of Berenike's personal name in the Gurob papyrus have induced scholars to question its reliability concerning

48. This choice might have been based on a previous agreement, since, according to Gauthier (*BE* 1994, 528), the city already used to pay a tribute to the dynasty.

49. Kobes, 1995, p. 1-6, suggests Milasa also sided with the Ptolemies.

50. On the political debate in Antioch before the arrival of Ptolemy III: Huss, 2001, p. 344.

51. This is the most ancient surviving description of rituals for a Hellenistic king: Chaniotis, 2003, p. 431-445, and Iossif, Chankowski & Lorber, 2011.

Berenike's meeting with Ptolemy III, judging the account to be inaccurate and vague.⁵² Nevertheless these two peculiarities of the account could offer meaningful insight on the forces active in Syria in 246/45. The absence of the little⁵³ *basileus* Antiochos⁵⁴ is certainly, but not exclusively, related to his premature death. If according to the historiographical sources the child seemed to have died before his mother, during a first attempt to kill the queen, it is odd that Ptolemy III does not consider it relevant to mention his nephew in his official report, contrary to what Polyaeos (8.50) states. Yet, from an ideological point of view, Antiochos, dead or alive, should have been fundamental to support the Ptolemaic claim to interfere in the Seleukid dynastic succession. Conversely, the only Seleukid royal authority mentioned in the papyrus is Berenike, so as to reiterate that the king Ptolemy had come to Seleukia and Antioch on behalf of his sister. If the royal position of Berenike in Syria was well enough established to support her brother's intervention, the absence of Antiochos from the document suggests that the authority of the queen extended beyond the mere regency for her son, and that Berenike had her own political identity as a *basilissa*. Moreover, in order to stress the blood relation between Ptolemy III and Berenike, the papyrus, instead of using the title of queen or the name of Berenike, broadly exploits the appellation of "Sister." This appellation is added to Ptolemaic royal titles from the wedding of Arsinoe II with her brother Ptolemy II, and its employment in the first half of the 3rd century at the Ptolemaic court is one of the most significant innovations in the sphere of Hellenistic dynastic policy and propaganda.⁵⁵ The appellation of "Sister" became part of the royal title, as did in some cases the epithet *Philadelphos*, and it was a political signature of the Ptolemaic dynasty, which had found a solid and clear solution to the ambiguities of Hellenistic dynastic succession. From an international policy point of view, the use of the title "Sister" in an official military report written from the king of Egypt for his court cannot be dismissed as mistake

52. Several solutions have been suggested to this inconsistency: Bevan (1927, p. 189-203), followed by Jacoby (*FGrH* 160), and recently Beyer-Rotthof, 1993, p. 31-32, suggested the sister mentioned in the papyrus was Berenike II, wife of Ptolemy, while Ehling, 2003, p. 311-312, indicates that Berenike was alive when Ptolemy left Antioch for the Mesopotamian campaign. The solution most broadly accepted is that of Holleaux (1942a, p. 281-297; 1942b, p. 297-310), based on Polyaeos: Berenike was murdered shortly before the arrival of her brother, but Ptolemy and the Ptolemaic supporters deliberately concealed the death: Will, 1979, p. 248-254; Hauben, 1990a, p. 29-30; Piejko, 1990, p. 13-27; Huss, 2001, p. 338-344; Martinez-Sève, 2003, p. 690-706; Grainger, 2010, p. 160. On the murder see also Bouché-Leclercq 1913, p. 92-100; Lehmann, 1998, p. 81-101; Ogdén, 1999, p. 128-130; Savalli-Lestrade, 2003, p. 65-82; Goukowsky 2007, p. 166; Ameling, 2013, "Berenice [2]", *BNP*, On Polyaeos' reliability and the genres of the *Stratēgēmata*: Thompson, 1958.VI, p. 762-763; Mastrocinque, 1983, p. 43-44.

53. App., *Syr.*, 65.

54. Will, 1979, p. 251: "du petit roi, pas un mot".

55. Carney, 2011, p. 206-208; Muccioli, 2013, p. 204-220.

or imprecision. Calling the queen of Syria “Sister”, Ptolemy III is reaffirming the status of Berenike in a political environment where the title of “Sister” could be intended as either synonym or intensifier of *Queen*.

The royal style in the Gurob papyrus is also reflected in the aforementioned Kildara inscription. In fact, Berenike is mentioned three times as “Sister” and “Queen”, and the titles of Ptolemy III and Berenike are in a prominent position. Conversely, the little king Antiochos, although named, is mentioned only after his mother, and his title shows (minor) inconsistencies with regard to the formulae concerning his dynastic descent. Even if the first time Kildara addresses Antiochos as “the son of king Antiochos and queen Berenike”, the second time the emphasis is clearly on Berenike’s descent, literally “the son of her, King Antiochos, that of King Antiochos” (D, l. 12-13: “καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς βασιλέα Ἀντίοχον τὸν ἐγ βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου”). The little king Antiochos is honoured mainly as a descendant of the queen who is in a prominent dynastic position, while Antiochos II plays a secondary role in the picture, as husband and father. According to the dynastic image promoted by the Ptolemaic supporters, Ptolemy III and the queen Berenike were the intended protagonists of Ptolemaic politics in Syria, as well as in Karia, as the new ruling royal couple.⁵⁶

The visibility of Berenike in ancient literary and material sources should not be surprising to modern scholars, and should be seen as motivated by her real political relevance rather than by mere Hellenistic penchant for gossip. Such relevance is not only a passive display of the Ptolemaic kings’ interests in Syria, but is also, and mainly, the consequence of Berenike’s active role and influence in the national and international, dynastic and diplomatic Ptolemaic and Seleukid politics between 253 and 246. Consequently, even if in the actual state of our evidence it is not possible to establish with certainty the circumstances of Berenike’s death, it is likely that Ptolemy III considered it convenient to dissemble with respect to the death of his sister in order to retain the political advantage given by the diplomatic position of the queen.

LAODIKE

Laodike was descended from Achaios the Elder, a local dynast of Greco-Macedonian origins, who during the reigns of Antiochos I and Antiochos II established his power in Karia and Lydia and secured marriage ties in the

56. Lehmann, 1998, p. 100. On women’s empowerment and pairing in cult see Carney 2011, p. 208. Llewellyn-Jones & Winder, 2011, p. 247-269, suggest Ptolemy III’s plan was to add Syria to the Ptolemaic kingdom, marrying his sister Berenike and continuing “the important socio-religious policy invented by their father.” As Ptolemy II did with Arsinoe I, Ptolemy III would have intended to reject his first wife: in fact, Berenike II and Ptolemy III are not attested as a royal couple in 246, but only after 244/243; Hauben, 2011, p. 357-388. Nevertheless, it might not have been necessary that siblings co-ruling implied marriage.

area: Laodike's sister was Antiochis, mother of Attalos I, and her brother was Alexander, satrap of Sardis.⁵⁷ Laodike was likely married to Antiochos II circa 267/266, when he was connected to the throne as co-ruler with his father Antiochos I. In 253, when Antiochos II decided to marry Berenike, Laodike moved with her children to Asia Minor, close to her fatherland. Building on Anatolian⁵⁸ and Babylonian⁵⁹ epigraphic documents – sale contracts of lands, donations and bestowing of honours – Ramsey (forthcoming) has recently shown “Laodike's role as buyer and giver, itself a rarity in the evidence for Seleucid queens, and specifically her participation in the euergetism⁶⁰ of making over royal land to a city in order to incur a return of goodwill and political support from its inhabitants”. Laodike between 253 and 246, after the second marriage of Antiochos II, is shown in the material evidence as interacting with the institutions throughout the kingdom as a representative of the Seleukids; she also was benefitting from an economic independence and administrative support of her *οικονομῶν*.⁶¹ The queen was consistently given visibility in the official documents and the correspondence between the king Antiochos II and the cities of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, contributing to the promotion of a stable image of the family and the succession. Nevertheless, it is still to be ascertained to what extent Laodike's visibility actually matched the political influence, if not authority of the queen.

Laodike is perceived by the ancient sources as the protagonist of the 246 crisis. This is already shown by the name of Laodikean War given to the Third Syrian War: the name appears in a long inscription from the 2nd century, found upon the wall of the temple of Athena Polias in Priene.⁶² The document reports the decision of Rhodian judges over an ongoing dispute between Priene and Samos regarding some land on the border connected to the wheat supply of Samos.⁶³ Even if the line mentioning τὸν Λαοδίκειον πόλεμον is in an incomplete part of the document, it is possible to understand that the people of Samos wrote Antiochos II thinking that the people of Priene were violating Lysimachos' decision. Since the dispute was not resolved under Antiochos II, during the Laodikean War a royal

57. D'Agostini, 2013, p. 87-106. *FGrH* 260, F32.6-8; Str., 13.4.2; Polyæn., 8.50; *IK Laodikeia am Lykos*, 1.

58. *I. Didyma*, 492; Virgilio, 2003, p. 152-155 and 268-272.

59. AD II 245A - ES 66 Ro. l. 12-13; Finkel & van der Spek, 2013, “*BCHP* 11, *Related texts*”; Lehmann, 1892, p. 330-332; Kuhrt, 1996, p. 51-52; Del Monte, 1997, p. 43-45.

60. On euergetism and donation of lands as Hellenistic political instruments: Corsaro, 2001, p. 227-261; Briant, 2006, p. 336-342.

61. On Laodike between 253-246 in Asia Minor and Babylonia: Sherwin-White & Kuhrt, 1993, p. 128-129; Kuhrt, 1996 p. 51-52; Del Monte, 1997, p. 43-45; Virgilio, 2003, p. 152-155 and 268-272; Martinez-Sève, 2003, p. 703-704; D'Agostini, 2013a, p. 7-44; Ramsey, forthcoming.

62. *I. Priene* 37, l. 132-137. See also *I. Priene* 38, 40 and 41.

63. Magnosto, 2008, p. 132-132.

officer, the *epistatēs* Simon, was appointed to solve the problem. Already Bevan⁶⁴ associated these lines to the Third Syrian War, showing that at least from the early 2nd century in the Anatolian environment the war of 246 was perceived as centred on Laodike.⁶⁵ It is likely that after 246, Samos underwent a period of tension between pro-Seleukid and pro-Ptolemaic parties and remained at first under Seleukid influence and then later came under Ptolemaic control.⁶⁶ The adoption of the name of Laodikeian war might be due to the area being one of the zones of the most interest in the first phases of the war between the two queens. Samos is, in fact, in front of Ephesos, a city documented by the evidence as Laodike's headquarter.

According to Porphyry, in Jerome and Eusebios,⁶⁷ in 246 Antiochos II joined his first wife and children in Asia Minor and died in Ephesos. The Gurob papyrus also confirms Laodike's presence in Ephesos in 246 after her husband's death, since the satrap of Kilikia was expected to send to Ephesos, Laodike's front, the treasure of Soloi, before Berenike's fleet seized it: "ὄντα ἄφ' [ἀργυρίου] (τάλαντα), [ἃ διε]νοεῖτο μὲν | (l. 30) Ἀριβάζος, ὁ ἐν Κίλι(κί)αι στρατ[ηγός], ἀποστέλλειν | εἰς Ἐφεσον τοῖς περὶ τὴν Λαοδίκεν."⁶⁸ In the Ptolemaic document the Seleukid satrap Aribazos was explicitly answering to the queen and her front: Laodike was able to access and move the kingdom's resources as she considered more appropriate. Consistently, Phylarchos' fragment⁶⁹ also suggests that at the first stage of the war Laodike acted as Seleukid administrative and political representative in Ephesos and in Asia Minor. Following Antiochos II's death Laodike was in the Ephesos area pretending to find an agreement with the military governor of the city Sophron, in order to eliminate him and take control of the area. According to the anecdote, Sophron was informed of Laodike's plot to kill him by his lover Danae, and was able to escape, while Danae was killed by Laodike.⁷⁰ Even if the focus of the passage is the bravery of Danae and it has an anecdotal approach, the context of the episode is reconcilable with the other accounts stating that Laodike established a power position in Ephesos in 246. Additionally, since Sophron⁷¹ is also mentioned in a later inscription as the governor of the entire region, not only of Ephesos,⁷² his role was pivotal

64. Bevan, 1927, p. 181-189.

65. Beloch, 1912-1927, vol. 4.1, p. 674-675; Will, 1979, p. 248-253.

66. Magnetto, 2008, p. 131-132.

67. *FGrH* 260, F43.14-15 and F32.6.

68. *FGrH* 160, col. II, l. 6-7 [= l. 30-31].

69. *FGrH* 81, F24.

70. Canfora, 2001, III, p. 1518-1519.

71. Sophron had been mistaken for Opron (Pomp. Trog., *prol.*, 27): Mueller, *FGrH* III 710. Will, 1979, p. 369-370, rejected such interpretation. On Sophron as governor of Ephesos and Lydia and its contacts with the Ptolemies: Crampa, 1969, p. 13-14; Oikonomides, 1984, p. 151-152; Kobes, 1995, p. 1-6.

72. *I. Labraunda*, 13.

for the control of Asia Minor. Therefore, it is likely that at the opening of the Third Syrian War, since Laodike could not afford to lose Ephesos, nor to mistrust the governor of the region, in eliminating Sophron, she acted politically to reinforce her position and Seleukid support in Anatolia.

Moreover, even considering Phylarchos' bias, the anecdote provides information on Laodike's network and resources: Danae is said to have been a female companion of Laodike, and was aware of the queen's political plans to take control of the city. Laodike could therefore have had female friends (*hetairai*) in her court, probably women from influential families of the realm, or blood relative of the queen, as the king had his male friends (who were originally called *hetairoi* of the king).⁷³

Even if according to the Seleukid traditions⁷⁴ Antiochos II appointed Seleukos successor right before his death,⁷⁵ the anecdotal tradition says Laodike employed a plot to place her son on the throne: she dissimulated the death of Antiochos and replaced her dead husband with a doppelganger who nominated Seleukos II as king.⁷⁶ The doppelganger-addition that considers Laodike to be behind the succession, is consistent with the literary interest in depicting Laodike as an example of the evil nature of Hellenistic monarchy: Laodike is a "black widow" who is driven to killing the innocents by a thirst for power, Antiochos first, and Berenike and her son later. In the accounts of the Ptolemaic deaths information can be found on Laodike's influence outside her Anatolian fatherland. Valerius Maximus⁷⁷ and Porphyry in Jerome⁷⁸ describe the murder with similar details: Laodike first killed the son of Berenike, and later the queen, with the help of two representatives of the ruling class of Antioch,⁷⁹ *Icadioni* and *Genn<a>eo/Caeneum*. These accounts are also similar to the Egyptian tradition delivered by Justin⁸⁰: Berenike having known that assassins had been sent after her and her son, closed herself in Daphne, but was killed through a plot. Although enriched

73. Strootman, 2014, p. 118, see also p. 111-160. The presence of women in the court of the queen is also suggested by the role and relevance of the high priestesses of the kingdom's ruler cult for Laodike III, who were appointed throughout the kingdom in 193; Widmer, 2008, p. 63-92; Iossif, 2014, p. 129-148. Athenaios' anecdote of Queen Laodike and Danae is in the section relative to "good prostitutes", but is likely the result of a later interpretation of the episode.

74. Porphyry/Euseb., *FGrH* 260, F32.6.

75. On the succession Antiochos II-Seleukos II: see above and Seleukos' letter to Miletos, *OGIS* I 227, l. 1-6 (*I. Didyma*, 493 and RC 22); Virgilio, 2003, p. 93-94.

76. Plin., *nat.*, 7.53; Val. Max., 9.10, ext. 1, and 9.14, ext. 1; Solin., 1.80; Porphyry/Jerome, *FGrH* 260, F43.17-18.

77. Val. Max., 9.10, ext. 1.

78. *FGrH* 260, F43.16-18.

79. According to Martinez-Sève, 2003, p. 704, they are the royal *epistates* and the military commander of Antioch. Icadion might be the Seleukid satrap of the Persian Gulf: Roueché & Sherwin-White, 1985, p. 1-39.

80. Just., 27.1.4-7.

with narrative *topoi*, the most detailed account of the murder is Polyaeus, according to whom Berenike's murder required several attempts⁸¹: in the first attempt, assassins within the court murdered the child, while the queen survived and was then granted a guard. Berenike was under surveillance and therefore difficult to reach, but for her courtiers and her doctor Aristarchos, who eventually murdered her. It is certainly difficult for modern scholars to define which details of these accounts to trust and which are the product of later additions.⁸² Nevertheless, all of the traditions agree that Laodike had a network of support outside of Asia Minor, in Antioch, a city that was officially under Ptolemaic control. In the capital, Laodike had the loyalty not only of infiltrated killers and emissaries, but also of representatives of the elite, people among those who decreed and organized the great welcome to Ptolemy III.

The collaboration of Laodike with her son Seleucos II reported by the literary sources can be corroborated by two epigraphic fragments from Ilium. These two fragments, even if damaged, appear to belong to the same document, which around 246-244⁸³ conferred honours upon several representatives of the Seleukid royal family. There are indeed mentions of *basileus* Seleukos,⁸⁴ and of a *stratēgos*, and a *basilissa*, whose names are now lost.⁸⁵ Despite the fragmentary state of the document, it is clear it addressed the Seleukid *basileia* through its most prominent representatives: the king, the queen and the general. Piejko⁸⁶ edited and published these inscriptions, suggesting that the general was Alexander, the satrap of Sardis and brother of Laodike,⁸⁷ and that the queen was Laodike mother of Seleukos, rather than his wife. Caution is needed in the identification of the *basilissa*:⁸⁸ on the one hand there is no other surviving record of Laodike bearing the title of *basilissa* after 253, while on the other hand Seleukos II's wife, Laodike, also a descendent of Achaios' family, likely married the king later than 245.⁸⁹ Regardless, at line 15 of *I. Ilium* 36 the queen is mentioned together with "kings", who might represent the pair Seleukos II and Antiochos II or the pair Seleukos II and Antiochos Hierax, as to reaffirm that King Seleukos II was honoured together with the queen and other members of the dynasty, as part of the Seleukid *basileia*.

A similar situation is portrayed by the Babylonian documents. In the Babylonian Astronomical Diaries (AD) of 246, in the month of Nisannu

81. Polyaeus, 8.50.

82. Mastrocinque, 1983, p. 43-44.

83. Piejko, 1991, p. 111-138.

84. *SEG* 41, 1048 = *I. Ilium*, 35, l. 7-9.

85. *SEG* 41, 1049 = *I. Ilium*, 36, l. 5-16.

86. 1991, p. 111-138. Piejko links them to *I. Ilium*, 31, 38 and 62; *SEG* 41, 1050-1052.

87. D'Agostini, 2013, p. 87-106.

88. On the title of *basilissa*, its meaning and employment: Carney, 2000, p. 225-228.

89. Plb., 4.51.1-4.

SE 66 (April 4 - May 3),⁹⁰ soon before Antiochos II's death, it is said that the children of Antiochos II and Laodike – Seleukos, Antiochos, and Apammu⁹¹ – were in the temple of Babylonia, the Esagila, to attend a ceremony, the Akitu, New Year, of 246.⁹² According to the same document, later in the year (Simānu SE 66, *i. e.* June 2 - July 1, 246), Seleukos was again in Babylon, likely with his mother Laodike, mentioned in the text, and they were granted a welcome with great celebrations by the city.⁹³ The visit was plausibly related to the lands on the shore of the Euphrates River that Laodike and her children had received from Antiochos II. Laodike and her children owned these lands and could sell and donate them to the cities and people of the area, as a later AD states they did:⁹⁴ through these sales and donations, Laodike was indeed able to reinforce her political connections and those of her dynasty with the Mesopotamian institutions.

Although after the death of Antiochos (Abu SE 66, July 31 - August 29, 246) there is no other mention of Laodike, the ADs refer to Seleukos II as the new king and heir of Antiochos,⁹⁵ implying that the Mesopotamian area was on Seleukos II and Laodike's side during the Third Syrian War. In particular, the AD do not mention any trouble in the death of Antiochos and his dynastic succession, and there is no reference to Berenike, her son, or Ptolemy III; this is consistent with the Seleukid official tradition on the events we read in Porphyry.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Ptolemy III and his campaign are indeed the focus of one of the Babylonian Royal Chronicles – historiographical documents on the events between the middle of the 2nd millennium and the 1st century B.C. Seleukos II Royal Chronicle (BM 34428 = *BCHP* 11) delivers the account of the long Ptolemaic siege of Babylon in 246/245 and stresses the hard opposition of the locals, loyal to Seleukos II, against the

90. 246 = year 66 of the Seleukid Era (SE).

91. *AD* II 245A - ES 66 Ro. l. 12-13. Sachs & Hunger, 1989, *AD* 245A; Del Monte, 1997, p. 46-47. The child of Antiochos II and Laodike does not appear anywhere else. Apammu was considered a son, but Finkel & van der Spek, 2013, "*BCHP* 11, *Related Texts*", argued that she was a daughter named Apama: Coloru, 2010, p. 273-280; Ramsey, forthcoming. 92. The New Year celebration in Babylon was the occasion for the ruling family to reaffirm the legitimacy of its rule and reiterate the continuity of government. Since the dynasty renewed the engagement with the institutions of Babylonia through celebrating the traditions of the city, it was fundamental for Antiochos' descendants to take part in the celebrations as Seleukid representatives: Capdetrey, 2007, p. 35-38. See also van der Spek, 1987, p. 57-74. 93. *AD* II 245B - ES 66 Ro. l. 3-5. Del Monte, 1997, p. 47-48; Finkel & van der Spek, 2013, "*BCHP* 11, *Related Texts*".

94. *Ed. prim.*, Lehmann, 1892, p. 330-332; Ramsey, forthcoming. See also: van der Spek, 1986, p. 11; Sherwin-White & Kuhrt, 1993, p. 128-129; Del Monte, 1997, p. 43-45; Virgilio, 2003, p. 154-155.

95. *AD* II 245A - ES 66 Vo. Antiochos II's death is also mentioned in the Babylonian Royal List BM 35603. *AD* II 245B - ES 66, inferior border.

96. *FGrH* 260, F 32.6-7. On the interruption of the AD in 246: Del Monte, 1997, p. 46-47; Debidour, 2003, p. 46-64.

Egyptians, depicted as enemies and invaders.⁹⁷ Van der Spek and Finkel⁹⁸ underline this aspect of the Chronicle:

It is apparent from all Babylonian documents that Seleucus was accepted as king from the start, that the Ptolemaic king was treated as a foreign invader, an enemy, his troops indicated as Hanaeans, which word probably had a negative connotation, as is made clear by the apposition “who did not fear the gods”. If it is true that Ptolemy was enthusiastically accepted in Seleucia in Pieria and Antioch on the Orontes, this certainly does not hold true for Babylon. The land grant of Laodice, Seleucus, and Antiochus Hierax during the reign of Antiochus II may have rallied Babylonian support.

The agency of Laodike in the Mesopotamian area, as a representative of the Seleukid dynasty, likely contributed to the support the young king Seleukos II had from Babylonia in 246. As in the Ilion inscriptions, also in the Mesopotamian documents the queen is an active part of the Seleukid *basileia*: in the middle 3rd century this is a nuclear family monarchy, where the core was a limited number of blood-related members, of both genders, playing diverse roles and exerting authority in different ways.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the analysis of the representation of queens in ancient sources, it has been possible to point out several features of the political role of Seleukid influential women. The crisis of 246 caused the first significant fracture in the Seleukid dynasty, allowing modern scholars to view inside the *basileia*.⁹⁹ The sudden power void left by the death of Antiochos II brought the “secondary” members of the *basileia* to the attention of the ancient sources, compelling them to inquire into the power-mechanics of the Seleukid monarchy. The resulting abundant evidence on the female members of the *basileia* provides information on the role of the *basilissa* in the absence of male representatives of the dynasty, as well as on the agency of the queen mother of the new king. If Berenike took military and political decisions, acting as a leader in Antioch, Laodike organized and enhanced the support of her son, eliminating possible threats to his power.

Royal women affected the succession to the throne, promoted alliances, and strengthened the connection between the ruling family and local institutions; but they could not operate without their financial resources and their political network. The documentary and literary evidence is unambiguous in attributing to Berenike monetary and military assets, while Anatolian and

97. Clancier, 2012, p. 9-31.

98. Van der Spek & Finkel, 2013, *BCHP* 11.

99. For a similar situation in Roman history with regard to Livia Julia see Fr. Cenerini (*infra* chap. 5).

Babylonian documents record Laodike as a landowner, assigning to the queen economic independence and her own officers. Moreover, the aforementioned episode of the treasure of Soloi suggests that, under certain circumstances, royal women could also access monetary deposits of the dynasty throughout the realm. Thanks to their assets, royal women built their own entourages of friends, courtiers, doctors, generals, and local administrators, constructing their own political and economic network throughout the kingdom and its institutions. The network of the female representatives of the dynasty appears to work according to two models: it can run parallel to that of the royal men or it can be intertwined with it. Laodike's network intertwines with that of Seleukos II and contributes to its strengthening, while Berenike's network appears to run parallel to that of her husband, Antiochos II. Nevertheless the two models do not appear to be exclusive, and the agency of the same queen could function in both ways at the same time.

Most relevant, the female network was connected to the family of origin of the royal women: Berenike exploited Ptolemaic connections throughout Syria and Southern Anatolia, while Laodike relied on her father Achaios the Elder's and her brother Alexander's authority in Asia Minor. In contrast to the male members of the royal family, women had an ambiguous position in the dynasty: they moved between different ethnic, national, and cultural backgrounds. Although such ambiguity could cause dynastic instability, it was also a source of enhancement for the *basileia*, conferring upon royal women the role of diplomatic assets in the dynasty: indeed, they were able to create new institutional connections within the kingdom, and open new international paths not immediately attainable by other representatives of the family.

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