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2 Political Marriage in Antiquity

Introduction

According to an ancient description of a kind of utopian society, located in the realm of the Indian ruler Sopeithes (4th century BC) west of the Hydaspes (Jhelum), physical qualities counted the most: “So they plan their marriages without regard to dower or any other consideration, but consider only beauty and physical excellence.”¹ This image of an “ideal” society is thought to originate from a Greek writer of the 4th century BC: Onesikritos (ca. early 4th century BC – ca. late 4th century/early 3rd century BC), an admiral of Alexander III of Macedonia (356 – 323 BC).² Onesikritos and his co-members of the Greek and Macedonian elites will have perceived the local marriage patterns in Sopeithes’ realm as very remote from their own practices, even as an inversion. In their view, it was another element of the literary tales about India as an *alter orbis* at the edge of the world imagined as a land of marvels, strange peoples, and peculiar customs such as this marriage practice.

Throughout antiquity, marriage in leading circles was a matter of politics and social and/or economic status, not of beauty of body or soul or of love and affection.³ Marriage was crucial to the establishment, consolidation, and ex-

1 Diod. 17.91.6–7. Trans. C. Bradford Welles. Also see Curt. 9.1.26–27; Strab. 15.1.30.

2 Onesikritos, *BNJ* 134 F 21.

3 On ancient marriage policy (a) of early Greek tyrants: Loretana De Libero, *Die archaische Tyrannis* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996), 393, 405–406; (b) in the Persian royal house: Maria Brosius, *Women in Ancient Persia (559–331 B.C.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 35–82, 189–190; (c) in Classical Athens: Cheryl A. Cox, *Household Interests: Property, Marriage Strategies, and Family Dynamics in Ancient Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Elke Hartmann, “Heirat und Bürgerstatus in Athen,” in *Frauenwelten in der Antike: Geschlechterordnung und weibliche Lebenspraxis*, eds. Thomas Späth and Beate Wagner-Hasel (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 16–31; (d) in Argead Macedonia: Elizabeth D. Carney, “Marriage Policy,” in *Lexicon of Argead Makedonia*, eds. Waldemar Heckel, Johannes Heinrichs, Sabine Müller and Frances Pownall (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2020), 331–335; (e) in Hellenistic times: Jakob Seibert, *Historische Beiträge zu den dynastischen Verbindungen in hellenistischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1967); Daniel Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death: The Hellenistic Dynasties* (London: Duckworth, 1999); Sheila Ager, “Symbol and Ceremony: Royal Weddings in the Hellenistic Age,” in *The Hellenistic Court*, eds. Andrew Erskine, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, and Shane Wallace (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2017), 165–188; (f) in Rome: Christiane Kunst, “Eheallianzen und Ehealltag in Rom,” in *Frauenwelten in der Antike: Geschlechterordnung und weibliche Leben-*

pansion of socio-political networks. Hence, potential spouses were chosen in accordance with politically useful factors: their families' political standing and influence, wealth and possessions, and symbolic capital such as reputation, wealth, interpersonal connections, and genealogical prestige. Marriages were either matters of alliances or means of access to and control of wealth, privileges, political influence, heritage, or sources of legitimacy.

The parties involved may or may not have had long-term goals in mind. However, a marital bond was essentially a matter of political usefulness at the moment of the marriage. Its value depended on situational, changeable power constellations and could fade away when the tides of politics turned. Thus, some political marriages could remain important and endure till death, whereas others were ephemeral and substituted by new, more profitable marriages. In general, both parties involved in a political marriage expected to profit the most from it in the situation when it was planned.

This paper analyzes different examples of political marriage in antiquity and discusses their aims and motivations. After some general remarks about the various reasons for political marriages that can be found in the extant evidence, selected examples from ancient Persia, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome will be discussed. These cases illustrate the most frequent motivations and circumstances of political marriages in antiquity: seizure of power, war, conquest, pacification, legitimization, and consolidation. Thereby, the categories can overlap. Due to the limited nature of our extant evidence, the focus of the paper is necessarily on ancient leading circles, especially ruling houses; our sources, in particular the literary ones, tend to focus on male members of the elites and to mention their wives (and the reason for the marriages) only *en passant*.

Some General Remarks on Marriage Patterns, Aims, and Motivations

Political marriages in ancient leading circles served various ends that can be categorized according to matters of alliance, control, legitimization, heritage,

spraxis, eds. Thomas Späth and Beate Wagner-Hasel (Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 32–52; Francesca Cenerini, *Dive e donne. Mogli, madri, figlie e sorelle degli imperatori romani da Augusto a Commodo* (Imola: Angeli Editore, 2009); Francesca Cenerini, “Il matrimonio con un’Augusta: forma di legittimazione?” in *Femmes influentes dans le monde hellénistique et à Rome, III^e siècle avant J.-C. – I^{er} siècle après J.-C.*, eds. Anne Bielman Sánchez, Isabelle Cogitore and Anne Kolb (Grenoble: UGA Éditions, 2016), 119–142.

and finances. Often, these categories do not exclude each other but overlap. On the basis of the extant evidence, one can make some generalizations about ancient political marriages and discern the following reasons divided into the categories of diplomacy, social advancement, financial advancement, legitimization, and familial politics.

a) Diplomacy:

- to prepare a new alliance,
- to revive, intensify, or cement existing alliances,
- to solve a conflict or end a war/initiate peace,
- to win allies against a common enemy,
- to counter a military threat,
- to pacify a conquered region/defeated family or ethnic group,
- to integrate oneself into a family/elite/ethnic group,

b) Social advancement:

- to expand one's political influence and/or social prestige,
- to inscribe oneself in the spouse's genealogy,
- to increase the number of one's followers,
- to take control over a family, its possessions, privileges, followers, and claims,
- to ensure the loyalty and gratefulness of the members of the spouse's family,
- to prevent rivals from marrying into a specific family and lay claims to their possessions, privileges, followers, and claims and thus surpass them,

c) Financial advancement:

- to inherit wealth and solve one's financial problems and control sources of wealth,
- to keep property within a certain circle and prevent heritage from being split,

d) Legitimization:

- to justify one's political, social, and/or economic position,
- to reproduce legitimate heirs and provide them with a promising future,

e) Familial politics:

- to tie a specific member of the spouse's family closer to oneself,
- to take care of an otherwise unprotected female member of a family who lacks male relatives.

Most of the marriages about which we have information in our ancient literary sources seemed to function as marriage alliances. They were understood to establish or confirm *philia* relationships that were regarded as reciprocal. In con-

sequence, in ancient leading circles, it was not love and marriage but alliance and marriage that went together like a horse and carriage.

Polygamy, practiced as a royal privilege in some ancient dynasties (i.e., Egypt, Persia, Parthia, Argead Macedonia), was a strategy to increase the number of marriage alliances (as well as to secure a sufficient number of candidates for the succession and distinguish the polygamous rulers from their leading circles).⁴ However, in the eyes of monogamous Greek and Roman writers who tended to misunderstand the motivation of polygamous marriage policy, polygamy was perceived as an indicator of cultural difference.⁵ While not universally seen as a symptom of decadence, it could occasionally be misjudged as a symptom of the rulers' lack of moderation and loss of morals.⁶ In fact, royal polygamy was often a sign of the respective ruler's territorial expansion, wide-spanning networks, and diplomatic efforts. Of course, polygamy was not always but at least occasionally proof of a capable and well-connected politician.

Another marriage strategy often practiced as a royal prerogative in ancient dynasties (Egypt, Persia, Ptolemies, Seleucids, Hellenistic Pontos) was endogamy, next-of-kin marriage in its different forms.⁷ Endogamy served to the end of the restriction of political influence, privilege, and property within a specific circle, status group, or family.⁸ Practiced in royal houses, it could contribute to dy-

4 Brosius, *Women*, 35; Sabine Müller, *Das hellenistische Königspaar in der medialen Repräsentation: Ptolemaios II. und Arsinoë II.* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2009), 21.

5 Dominique Lenfant, "Polygamy in Greek Views of the Persians," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 59 (2019): 15–37.

6 For instance, Plut. *Demetr.* 14.2–3; Ath. 13.557d; Plut. *Artax.* 23. Also see Brosius, *Women*, 35; Irene Madreiter, *Stereotypisierung – Idealisierung – Indifferenz: Formen der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Achaimeniden-Reich in der griechischen Persika-Literatur* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012), 92–93, 144–145, 161.

7 Paul John Frandsen, *Incestuous and Close-Kin Marriage in Ancient Egypt and Persia: An Examination of the Evidence* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2009); Sabine Müller, "Endogamy," in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, eds. Roger S. Bagnall, Kai Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine and Sabine R. Hübner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), accessed January 11, 2020, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah22094>; Sheila Ager, "Royal Brother-Sister Marriage, Ptolemaic and Otherwise," in *The Routledge Companion to Women and Monarchy in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, eds. Elizabeth D. Carney and Sabine Müller (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), 346–358. As for Argead Macedonia, it has been suggested that some Argead rulers married their predecessors' widows, often their own step-mothers, as tokens of legitimacy (Ogden, *Polygamy*, xix–xxi, 8–9). However, such a pattern of "step-mother marriages" is based on scholarly reconstruction of gaps of knowledge. In fact, there is no reliable proof that such a marriage pattern existed in the Argead house.

8 In Classical Athens, endogamy was part of heirship strategies to prevent the fragmentation of a family estate and the flow of political power out of an *oikos*: Cherly A. Cox, *Household Inter-*

nastic loyalty and avoid the risk of political entanglement produced by exogamy: any foreign political actor was denied the chance to lay claim to the throne through exogamous marriage.

As for the role of the bride, in the Persian, Graeco-Macedonian, and Roman worlds, it was the head of the respective house, thus usually her father (and in case of his death, her brother), who arranged the marriage.⁹ In scholarly works, not at least due to the scarcity of ancient evidence, there is a focus on women from royal houses in marriage alliances. Recent studies of royal women have shown that contrary to the traditional assumption, they were not always or necessarily passive pawns or merely tokens in an alliance. Some of them could act as agents of their dynasty and/or natal house, which they continued to represent, and play a role in diplomacy, representation, patronage, legitimization, succession policy, religious cult, or euergetism.¹⁰

Marriage and Political Rise

Archaic Athens is the setting of a prime early example of a marriage alliance for the sake of political control. The source is one of the most important ancient historiographers, Herodotos, the “father of history” (ca. 490/80 – 420s BC).¹¹ In the mid-6th century BC, an age in Greek history when tyranny as a constitution was in bloom, Athens was also governed by a tyrant, Peisistratos (ca. early 6th century – ca. 520s BC).¹² However, his opponents Lykourgos and Megakles,

ests: Property, Marriage Strategies, and Family Dynamics in Ancient Athens (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 132–136.

9 Brosius, *Women*, 35–82; Hartmann, “Heirat,” 17; Helen King, “Bound to Bleed. Artemis and Greek Women,” in *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World. Readings and Sources*, ed. Laura McClure (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 79; Carney, “Marriage Policy,” 334.

10 Elizabeth D. Carney and Sabine Müller, “Introduction to Thinking about Women and Monarchy in the Ancient World,” in *The Routledge Companion to Women and Monarchy in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, eds. Elizabeth D. Carney and Sabine Müller (London, New York: Routledge, 2020), 3–7. Carney, “Marriage Policy,” 334. On the traditional view, see Ogden, *Polygamy*, 155.

11 Cic. *leg.* 1.5.

12 On Peisistratos, see Helmut Berve, *Die Tyrannis bei den Griechen* (München: Beck, 1967), I, 47–63; II, 543–55; Brian M. Lavelle, “The Compleat Angler: Observations on the Rise of Peisistratos in Herodotos (1.59–64),” *Classical Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1991): 317–324; De Libero, *Tyrannis*, 41–134; Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, “The Tyranny of Peisistratos,” in *Peisistratos and the Tyranny: A Reappraisal of the Evidence*, ed. Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2000), 1–15; Brian M. Lavelle, *Fame, Money, and Power: The Rise of Peisistratos and ‘Democratic’ Tyranny at Athens* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 66–115.

a member of the noble Alkmeonidai (from which the famous politician Perikles (ca. 490s–429 BC) would descend), allied against him and expelled him from the city in ca. 561/60 or 560/59 BC.¹³ Shortly after, Megakles fell out with Lykourgos and reconciled with Peisistratos: “Megakles made proposals to Peisistratos asking if he were willing to marry his daughter and regain the tyranny on that condition.”¹⁴ Peisistratos agreed, established his second tyranny in Athens with Megakles’ help (in ca. 557/56 or 556/55 BC), and married the latter’s daughter. It was his third marriage. Herodotos terms their arrangement *homologie* (ὁμολογίη),¹⁵ the Ionian form of *homologia* (ὁμολογία), “agreement.” It is clear that Peisistratos’ profit was his re-establishment in power. However, the politician Megakles was not content with being only Peisistratos’ steppingstone. Apparently, he expected Peisistratos to grant the Alkmeonidai a future share in power: he wanted his male grandchildren, the future offspring of his daughter and Peisistratos, to succeed the latter as tyrants.¹⁶ Such a prospect would also have increased Megakles’ own standing in Athens. If this was part of the ὁμολογία, it would have meant a complete change of Peisistratos’ own ideas about succession policy, as Herodotos makes clear: “But since he had sons who were already young men and the Alkmeonidai were said to be accursed, he did not want to have children by his new bride and therefore had intercourse with her *ou kata nomon* (οὐ κατὰ νόμον [not in accordance with the rule/custom]).”¹⁷

The phrase οὐ κατὰ νόμον in the sense of avoiding the bride getting pregnant reflects that, according to the Greek view, procreation was of course a major aim of marriage to the end of ensuring the continuation of the house and thus was the “customary way” of being together with one’s wife.¹⁸ When he discovered that he had been tricked by Peisistratos, an insulted Megakles al-

13 Hdt. 1.60.1. Also see Berve, *Tyrannis*, I, 48. On the (uncertain) chronology see Peter J. Rhodes, “Pisistratid Chronology Again,” *Phoenix* 30 (1976): 219–233; Peter J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 198.

14 Hdt. 1.60.2.

15 Hdt. 1.61.1.

16 Herodotos fails to mention the name of Megakles’ daughter. Apparently, it was Koisyra (Schol. Aristoph. *Nub.* 48): Berve, *Tyrannis*, II, 545.

17 Hdt. 1.61.2.

18 See Hartmann, “Heirat,” 22; King, “Bound to Bleed,” 80. Writing in the 2nd-century AD Roman Empire, the Greek moral philosopher Plutarch advises men who want to become fathers of notable offspring to abstain from random cohabitation with courtesans and concubines: only children of a well-born, honorable father *and* mother (which implies a marriage) have the chance to become distinguished persons (*Mor.* 1a-b).

lied himself with Peisistratos' enemies and drove him into his second exile in ca. 556/55 BC.¹⁹

The scabrous part about Peisistratos' sexual trickery looks suspiciously like an exaggeration that contributes to the portrayal of the tyrant as a cunning trickster.²⁰ It is better not to be taken literally. While Herodotos' audience may have enjoyed the punchline that birth control ruined the Peisistratid-Alkmeonid cooperation, there is no need for any "unusual" sexual practices to explain why Megakles was disappointed by the outcome of the alliance. The marriage produced no future grandchildren for him and Peisistratos carried on supporting his three sons from his first marriage with an Athenian wife, among them Hippias and Hipparchos.²¹ He did not want to endanger their future succession by siring a half-Alkmeonid son.

The marital bond had served Peisistratos well in order to seize power in Athens again, but it lost its political value and even turned into an obstacle as soon as his new father-in-law's ideas about succession policy collided with his own plans. Peisistratos was not willing to sacrifice his sons' future for the sake of the alliance that soon dissolved. As a result, he had to flee with his sons but came back in ca. 546/45 BC to establish his third tyranny by military force. After his death in ca. 528/27 BC, Hippias and Hipparchos succeeded him.²²

Peisistratos' marriage alliance with the Alkmeonidai illustrates that, although one party had long-term goals in mind, the political constellations and calculations of the moment took priority. The value of the marriage was a matter of the politics of the day and faded when the interests of the parties involved collided. The example also shows that while the reproduction of legitimate heirs was a highly important factor of political marriages, not every ancient political marriage was intended to produce children.

Another example of marriage connected with the seizure of power is provided by the marriage policy of the Persian king Dareios I, founder of the Achaemenid dynasty (reg. 522/21–486 BC). Due to his need to legitimize and consolidate his rule, he concluded marriage alliances on a particularly wide scale that was

¹⁹ Hdt. 1.61.1–2; *Ath. Pol.* 15.1.

²⁰ Berve, *Tyrannis*, I, 48–50; Lavelle, "Compleat Angler," 318; Carolyn Dewald, "Humour and Danger in Herodotus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, eds. Carolyn Dewald and John Marincola (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 151; an Athenian story of political humor. Peisistratos seems to have used the curse as a pretext.

²¹ *Ath. Pol.* 17.3.

²² *Ath. Pol.* 18.1; Thuc. 1.20.2; 6.55.1–3. Also see Berve, *Tyrannis*, I, 63–77; II, 554–60.

not repeated by his successors.²³ The political circumstances of his accession after the end of the Teispid dynasty of the Persian Empire's founder Kyros II (reg. ca. 559–530 BC) shed light on the background of Dareios' marriage policy.

Dareios paved his way to the throne by overthrowing the reigning king in a palace coup. The prime source for the events, the Behistun inscription, was commissioned by Dareios himself and reflected his propaganda. According to his version, he overthrew an evil usurper named Gaumata, who had pretended to be Kyros II's (already dead) son Bardiya.²⁴ This Bardiya would have been next in line to the throne after his childless brother Kambyses II (reg. 530–522 BC) had died in 522 BC. According to Dareios, he killed a "false" Bardiya and restored the kingship to his family, claiming that he belonged to the house of Kyros II.²⁵ However, it is controversial if his version can be trusted.²⁶ The circumstance that in 522/21 BC, various parts of the empire including the central regions of Persis, Media, and Babylonia revolted against Dareios' accession, seems to indicate that he had some problems with his legitimacy. His marriage policy may also hint at this. After Dareios had put down the revolts, he married *all* the remaining Teispid royal women: Kyros II's daughters Atossa and Artystone, Bardiya's daughter Parmys, and the Persian noble Otanes' daughter Phaidymie, the widow of the two previous kings.²⁷ To quote Sancisi-Weerdenburg: "It looks as if he wanted to leave no loose ends."²⁸

23 On Dareios I, see Josef Wiesehöfer, *Das antike Persien von 550 v. Chr. bis 650 n. Chr.* (Düsseldorf/Zürich: Artemis & Winkler, 1993), 33–43; Brosius, *Women*, 47–64, 194; Pierre Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), 119–173; Maria Brosius, *The Persians: An Introduction* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 15–25.

24 DB §§ 11–13.

25 DB §§ 3–4.

26 Wiesehöfer, *Das antike Persien*, 33–43; Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 113–127; Robert Rollinger, "Ein besonderes historisches Problem: Die Thronbesteigung des Dareios und die Frage seiner Legitimität," in *Pracht und Prunk der Großkönige*, ed. Historisches Museum der Pfalz Speyer (Darmstadt: WBG, 2006), 43; Brosius, *Persians*, 15–18; Amélie Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 135–140; Bruno Jacobs, "'Kyros der große König, der Achämenide': Zum verwandtschaftlichen Verhältnis und zur politischen und kulturellen Kontinuität zwischen Kyros dem Großen und Dareios I.," in *Herodotus and the Persian Empire*, eds. Robert Rollinger, Brigitte Truschnegg and Reinhold Bichler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 635–663. Dareios may have been a remote relative of Kyros.

27 Hdt. 3.88.2–3. Also see Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 138.

28 Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Exit Atossa: Images of Women in Greek Historiography on Persia," in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, eds. Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (Detroit: Croom Helm, 1983), 24.

Dareios' polygamous marriages served various political ends. The marital bond with the female descendants of the founder-figure Kyros II and the widows of Kambyzes II and Bardiya increased Dareios' royal prestige and helped him to create an illusion of political continuity and to cover up the impression that he himself may have been a usurper. In addition, by tying all the Teispid women to himself, Dareios prevented rivals from marrying them, claiming the throne, or producing sons descending from Kyros' line who could raise claims.

Brosius characterizes Dareios' marriages as a complex arrangement designed to eliminate the danger of rivals to the throne and secure the loyalty of the most important Persian nobles.²⁹ As for the latter aspect, the families of his supporters Otanes and Gobryas were tied to Dareios by double marriage alliances: Otanes and Gobryas were simultaneously Dareios' fathers-in-law and brothers-in-law.³⁰ The endogamy went on: Gobryas' son Mardonios, Dareios' nephew, was married to a daughter of Dareios. The case of Mardonios, who became his and Xerxes' foremost general, shows that such interfamilial marriages served to create reliable, loyal next-of-kin candidates for the highest military and political offices.³¹

Dareios' marriage to his niece Phratagoune is interpreted by Herodotos, according to his Greek view, as a measure to concentrate family wealth since she was his brother's only child.³² It may also have served to strengthen and unite the family core. In sum, due to the problems associated with his accession, Dareios' marriage policy illustrated a major effort to use marital bonds to the end of securing his position, legitimating his seizure of power, establishing links to the Teispid past, uniting his family, and excluding rivals from the outside. Perhaps it was a lesson he had learned by considering how he himself had ascended the throne.

The next example illustrates the connections between marital bonds, *clientelae*, and political career in the late Roman Republic. It is about a prestigious and profitable marriage alliance of the Roman politician and general L. Corne-

²⁹ Brosius, *Women*, 61–62. The authenticity of Herodotos' account (3.84.2) that Dareios and his six Persian noble accomplices agreed before their palace coup that the future king would marry into one of their families is debated. See Wiesehöfer, *Das antike Persien*, 64; Brosius, *Women*, 51; Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 173, n. 3.

³⁰ Gobryas had already been Dareios' father-in-law before his accession (Hdt. 7.2.2).

³¹ Hdt. 7.5.1. Also see Brosius, *Women*, 61; Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 168–169, 267–268, 541–558.

³² Hdt. 7.224.2. This means that property was inherited through the male line, and in order to safeguard his brother's property, Dareios married her. Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 626, n. 5. However, Brosius points out that due to our lack of knowledge about Persian inheritance customs, we cannot be sure if this is true or an *interpretatio Graeca*. Brosius, *Women*, 61. See, however, Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 972.

lius Sulla (ca. 138–78 BC).³³ Sulla came from an old patrician family that, however, had not produced a consul for generations. Also, his father had known how to marry in a profitable way. He had solved his financial problems by his second marriage to a wealthy heiress, Sulla's stepmother, who left her fortune to her stepson so that he became moderately well off.³⁴

Of Sulla's five marriages, we know most about the third, which was of major political significance: in 88 BC, Sulla divorced his second wife Cloelia and married Caecilia Metella.³⁵ This was a respectable tie to the Metelli, one of the most influential houses in Roman politics in his time. Plutarch calls it a *gamos endoxotatos* (γάμος ἐνδοξότατος), a most illustrious marriage, and adds that many members of the Roman elite were indignant at it because they thought he was unworthy of the woman.³⁶ Since in the competitive atmosphere of the late Roman Republican leading circles, the familial background of a wife and her prestige were important parts of the symbolic capital of a politician, it is understandable that some nobles were envious of Sulla's marriage coup. The marital bond increased Sulla's prestige and followers. Furthermore, it testified to his own political rise. To quote Badian: "This was official recognition."³⁷ The marriage also emphasized Sulla's political stand: Caecilia Metella, the widow of the eminent politician M. Aemilius Scaurus, was the niece of Q. Caecilius Metellus Numidicus, the arch-enemy of Sulla's major opponent (and former patron) C. Marius.³⁸ Sulla probably owed his consulship in the same year to this alliance.³⁹ His colleague in consulship in 88 BC, Q. Pompeius Rufus, also formed part of the network—the circle of the Metelli and M. Aemilius Scaurus—in which Sulla had now been integrated through his marriage.⁴⁰

In 83 BC, Sulla used his stepdaughter Aemilia, Caecilia Metella's child from her previous marriage, in order to establish an alliance. Plutarch reports: "In the case of Pompeius Magnus, at least, wishing to establish relationship with him, he ordered him to divorce the wife he had, and then gave him in marriage Aemi-

33 On Sulla, see Ernst Badian, *Lucius Sulla: The Deadly Reformer* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1970); Karl Christ, *Sulla: Eine römische Karriere* (München: Beck, 2002); Arthur Keaveney, *Sulla, the Last Republican* (London/New York: Routledge, 1982); Federico Santangelo, *Sulla, the Elites, and the Empire: A Study of Roman Politics in Italy and the Greek East* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007).

34 Plut. *Sull.* 2.4.

35 Plut. *Sull.* 6.10–12, 33.3, 34.3, 37.2.

36 Plut. *Sull.* 6.10.

37 Badian, *Sulla*, 13.

38 Christ, *Sulla*, 199.

39 Plut. *Sull.* 6.5–6.

40 Badian, *Sulla*, 13, 20.

lia, daughter of Scaurus and his own wife Metella, whom he tore away from Manius Glabrio when she was with child by him.”⁴¹ This example illustrates the pragmatic and calculating attitude toward matrimony employed by the Roman leading circles; if a marriage lost its political value or if there was the option of another, more prestigious and profitable (in terms of either alliance, finances, or reproduction) marriage, divorce was the solution and pregnancy was no reason for not doing it.⁴² Thus, the fate of Aemilia was not unusual.

Marriage in Connection with War and Pacification

The following section is concerned with one dynasty, the Macedonian Argeads. Before its consolidation and rise under the reign of Philip II (reg. 360/59–336 BC), Argead Macedonia was constantly threatened and pressed hard by ambitious neighbors such as the Illyrians and Thracians and also by Athens, due to her aspirations regarding Northern Greece. Consequently, an Argead ruler had to prove himself a good warrior and know how to use marriage policy as another diplomatic strategy in order to protect his position and realm.

An early example dates to 429 BC when, with the spiritual support of the Athenians, the Thracian ruler Sitalkes (reg. ca. 430s–424 BC) invaded Argead Macedonia with a huge army, ravaged the country, and tried to overthrow the ruler Perdikkas II (reg. ca. 450–414/3 BC) and install the latter’s nephew Amyntas on the throne.⁴³ However, Sitalkes’ efforts were in vain: the Macedonians kept off in fortified places, while Perdikkas played cool and entered into negotiations with Sitalkes’ nephew Seuthes who acted as his uncle’s representative while the latter was on campaign. Perdikkas promised to give Seuthes his sister Stratonike in marriage and a large dowry. Seuthes accepted the offer; as a consequence, Sitalkes retreated from Macedonia.⁴⁴ The marital bond between the Argead and Odrysian houses signaled a return to friendly relations. Furthermore, Sitalkes also let down the Athenians, at that time Perdikkas’ enemies. Thus, the marriage of Stratonike was a strategy in an emergency situation to reconcile with the invader and make him shift alliances.

⁴¹ Plut. *Sull.* 33.3; Plut. *Pomp.* 9.2–3. Trans. Bernadotte Perrin. Also see Kunst, “Eheallianzen,” 33–34. However, Aemilia had a tragic end since she died in childbirth at Pompeius’ house.

⁴² Kunst, “Eheallianzen,” 40.

⁴³ Thuc. 2.95.1–2, 100.3; Diod. 12.50.4–6.

⁴⁴ Thuc. 2.101.5–6. Also see Sabine Müller, *Perdikkas II., Retter Makedoniens* (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2017), 155–164.

The next example from Argead Macedonia illustrates how marriage could serve after a defeat to the end of taking precautions against another attack. In 393/92 BC, at the beginning of his reign, Amyntas III (reg. 394/3–370/69 BC) was expelled from his realm by the invading Illyrians, a traditional threat to Argead Macedonia.⁴⁵ Since the autonomous Upper Macedonian region of Lynkestis that controlled a route into Central Macedonia was the corridor of the Illyrians and the local Lynkestian dynasts were frequently hostile to the Argeads, Lynkestian involvement in the Illyrian invasion is possible. In ca. 390 BC, after his return, Amyntas married Eurydike, who was likely of Illyrian *and* Lynkestian descent.⁴⁶ Hence, Amyntas may have killed two birds with one stone by establishing ties to the Illyrian and Lynkestian elites in order to seal the peace and integrate himself into the ruling circles of his former opponents. In Eurydike's case, the political value of the marriage remained important since the Illyrians and Lynkestians did not cease to be sources of danger.⁴⁷ In addition, Amyntas' marriage to Eurydike produced three sons who succeeded him one after the other. The most important of them was Philip II, the Macedonian master of political marriage.

Polygamous marital bonds on an unprecedentedly wide scale were one of Philip's characteristic strategies to consolidate his conquests, appease defeated elites, and seal a peace or truce.⁴⁸ He married seven wives. Citing Satyros' *Life of Philip*, the 2nd-century AD writer Athenaios describes the way Philip concluded marriage alliances associated with his military campaigns and political ambitions:

But Philip always married in connection to a war (*kata polemon egame*, κατὰ πόλεμον ἐγάμε) ... Wishing to govern the Thessalians as well, he begat children by two Thessalian women ... And, in addition, he also gained the kingdom of the Molossians, having married Olympias, by whom had Alexander and Kleopatra. And when he conquered Thrace, Koth-

⁴⁵ Diod. 14.92.3.

⁴⁶ Plut. *Mor.* 14b; Suda s.v. Karanos κ 356 Adler; Strab. 7.7.8; Just. 7.4.4–5. Also see Elizabeth D. Carney, *Eurydice and the Birth of Macedonian Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 23–31.

⁴⁷ A female Argead's (flexible) symbolic capital consisted of the political and ancestral prestige of her natal family, the influence of her faction at court, her ability to give birth to a potential successor, and her personal ability to create useful personal connections.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth D. Carney, *Olympias, Mother of Alexander the Great* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 21; Müller, *Königspaar*, 18–21; Sabine Müller, "Philip II," in *Blackwell Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, eds. Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (Oxford/Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 169; Carney, "Marriage Policy," 332; Gerhard Wirth, "Philip II," in *Lexicon of Argead Macedonia*, eds. Waldemar Heckel, Johannes Heinrichs, Sabine Müller and Frances Pownall (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2020), 416.

las the king of the Thracians came over to him, bringing his daughter Meda and many gifts.⁴⁹

While this passage tends to simplify more complex matters, it confirms the ancient understanding of Philip's marriage as a political alliance and a tactical marriage. At the beginning of his reign, in the context of expelling the Illyrians from Upper Macedonia, Philip married Audata, a female member of the Illyrian ruling house.⁵⁰ The establishment of his control over the formerly autonomous Upper Macedonian regions was likely prompted by his marriage to an Upper Macedonian noble, Phila from Elimeia.⁵¹ In ca. 357 BC, Philip sealed an alliance with Epeiros' ruler Arrhybas by marrying the latter's niece Olympias.⁵² Philip's interventions in strategically important Thessaly that finally led to the establishment of Argead control over the region were sealed by two political marriages when Philip integrated himself into the leading houses of the two major Thessalian cities, Larisa and Pherai.⁵³ All of these marriages formed part of his efforts to secure the borders of his realm. The marital bond to Meda, the daughter of the Thracian local dynast, in the late 340s BC mirrors the expansionist success of Philip and the rapidly extending frontiers of his realm.⁵⁴ Philip's last marriage in 337 BC was to Kleopatra, a member of the most influential Macedonian clan at his court. Ancient claims that it was love are misleading and serve to illustrate Philip's (alleged) moral flaws.⁵⁵ In fact, it was another political marriage to the end of ensuring the loyalty of Kleopatra's clan to Philip's war against Persia. Significantly, Kleopatra's guardian Attalos and his father-in-law Parmenion commanded Philip's advance force sent out in 336 BC to secure Asia Minor's coast.⁵⁶ Thus, by conferring the honor on them to marry into their clan, Philip wanted to tighten the links to his two influential generals.

49 Ath. 13.557b-e. Trans. Elizabeth D. Carney.

50 Ath. 13.557c; Just. 9.8.1; Paus. 8.76; Elizabeth D. Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman: Gerald Peters Gallery, 2000), 57–58; Waldemar Heckel, *Who's Who in the Age of Alexander the Great* (Oxford: Wiley, 2006), 14.

51 Ath. 13.557c; Heckel, *Who's Who*, 129, 210.

52 Ath. 13.557c–d; Plut. *Alex.* 2.1; Carney, *Olympias*, 19–24; Heckel, *Who's Who*, 181; Elizabeth D. Carney, "An Exceptional Argead Couple: Philip II and Olympias," in *Power Couples in Antiquity: Transversal Perspectives*, ed. Anne Bielman Sánchez (London/New York: Routledge, 2019), 16–31.

53 Ath. 13.557c.

54 Ath. 13.557d; Carney, *Women*, 68; Heckel, *Who's Who*, 158.

55 Ath. 13.557d; Plut. *Alex.* 9.4.

56 Diod. 16.91.2, 93.9; 17.2.4; Just. 9.5.9; Sabine Müller, *Alexander der Große: Eroberung—Politik—Rezeption* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019), 62–63; Wirth, "Philip II," 420.

Comparable to Herodotos' account on Peisistratos that may have served the Alexander historiographers as a blueprint, Attalos is said to have had high hopes for his ward's future sons and insulted Philip's son Alexander, raised as the heir apparent.⁵⁷ However, Philip carried on supporting the future succession of Alexander. One strategy to strengthen his son's courtly faction was provided by marriage policy. Philip emphasized the importance of Alexander's maternal descent from the Epeirote house of Olympias by giving Alexander's full sister Kleopatra in marriage to Olympias' brother Alexander I of Epeiros (reg. 343/42–331 BC) and staged it as a huge and splendid festival intended to impress the spectators.⁵⁸

Comparably modestly, Alexander III "only" took three wives, each time in association with his campaigns and conquests in Asia. In 328/27 BC, his first marriage alliance was concluded in the context of his efforts to put down the fierce Baktrian-Sogdian resistance against the Macedonian rule. Alexander tried to weaken the circle of the leaders of the resistance by marrying Rhoxane, the daughter of one of them, the Baktrian noble Oxyartes. The strategy was successful: Oxyartes surrendered, and the marriage alliance helped to pave the way to the establishment of Macedonian control in the area (although it remained troubled).⁵⁹

In 324 BC in Susa, Alexander took two Achaimenid brides, the daughters of the Persian kings Artaxerxes III (reg. 359–338 BC) and Dareios III (reg. 338–330 BC). He also gave his most influential generals (such as Ptolemy) Persian wives and registered the liaisons of his soldiers with Asian women.⁶⁰ These so-called mass marriages, organized in accordance with the Persian ritual, served to integrate the Macedonians into the Persian power structures and family networks, thus neutralizing the threats of Persian interfamily connections throughout the empire. Since Alexander could not marry into *all* of the numerous, widespread influential Persian families, this Herculean task was divided among his officials. Alexander's own marriages at Susa were limited to the illus-

⁵⁷ Plut. *Alex.* 9.4–5; Ath. 13.557d–e; Just. 9.73–5.

⁵⁸ Just. 7.6.3–4; Diod. 16.2.5–3.1; Müller, *Alexander*, 63–64; Carney, "Marriage Policy," 335.

⁵⁹ Arr. *An.* 4.19.4–5; Plut. *Alex.* 47.4; Plut. *Mor.* 332c, 338d; Curt. 8.4.24–26. Though the ancient sources claim that Alexander married Rhoxane for love, ending the rebellion was his motivation. Also see Carney, *Women*, 105–107; Heckel, *Who's Who*, 241–242; Marek Jan Olbrycht, "Macedonia and Persia," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, eds. Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 360; Müller, *Alexander*, 174–177.

⁶⁰ Arr. *An.* 7.4.4–8; Diod. 17.107.6; Brosius, *Women*, 77–78; Carney, *Women*, 108–113; Waldemar Heckel, *The Conquests of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 137–141; Olbrycht, "Macedonia," 360; Müller, *Alexander*, 198–201.

trious royal Achaimenid house. By marrying two of the remaining marriageable Achaimenid women himself and giving the third (another daughter of Dareios III) to his deserving general Hephaistion as a reward,⁶¹ Alexander left no loose ends for any potential pretender with high hopes of marrying into the Achaimenid house. Thus, marriage policy was central to his plans concerning the consolidation of his conquests. However, his early death in 323 BC and the subsequent wars of his generals interfered. Not much is heard of the Persian-Macedonian marital bonds afterward, partly due to the lack of interest of our Greek and Roman writers in the fate of the Persian women and maybe also partly due to some Macedonian bridegrooms' lack of interest in keeping their Persian wives.⁶²

Marriage and Legitimization

Kassandros (ca. 354–297 BC) was one of the Macedonian protagonists involved in the wars over Alexander's legacy. He fought for control over Macedonia and Greece. His marriage policy illustrates his urgent need to legitimize himself as a Macedonian ruler by profiting from his spouse's personal prestige. Compared to his rivals, Kassandros had to overcome a major disadvantage: unlike Polyperchon (ca. 390s/80s–after 301 BC) and Antigonos (ca. 382–301 BC), he had not participated in any of the battles of Alexander's Asian campaigns. He had stayed at home and failed in distinguishing himself in military matters. Hence, he could neither measure up to his opponents' military glory nor base his claims to rule parts of Alexander's empire on any achievement under Alexander's military command. Kassandros had to find another way to distinguish himself and justify his pose as the legitimate successor of the Argeads. His solution was marriage policy.

In 316 BC, he captured his opponent Olympias and her entourage at Pydna, among them Thessalonike, the daughter of Philip II and his Thessalian wife Nikesipolis. Since Thessalonike was still of marriageable age, Kassandros hurried to establish this prestigious link to the traditional Macedonian ruling house. He married Thessalonike immediately after the capture of Pydna.⁶³ The marriage

⁶¹ Arr. An. 7.4.5.

⁶² According to the traditional view, most of the bridegrooms hurried to get rid of their Persian wives after Alexander's death; Seleukos, who kept Apame, was an exception. Seibert, *Historische Beiträge*, 72. In the current debate, this is seen as an exaggeration based on meager evidence. Müller, *Alexander*, 201.

⁶³ Diod. 19.52.1–2; *Heidel. Epit.*, *FGrH* 155 F 2.4; Franca Landucci Gattinoni, *L'arte del potere: Vita e opera di Cassandro di Macedonia* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2003), 79–82; Franca Landucci Gat-

served as one of his strategies to style himself as Philip II's spiritual and "true" heir and create the illusion of political continuity (by abandoning Alexander, whom he was said to have disliked).⁶⁴ Kassandros might have hoped to become particularly popular with the Macedonians by triggering feelings of nostalgia and memories of Macedonia's rise to supremacy under Philip II.⁶⁵ The first-century BC historiographer Diodoros comments: "he began to embrace in his hopes the Macedonian *basileia*. For this reason he married Thessalonike, who was Philip's daughter and Alexander's half-sister, since he desired to establish a connection (*syngeneia*) with the royal house."⁶⁶ Diodoros also mentions that Kassandros' opponent Antigonos accused him of having forced this marriage upon the bride.⁶⁷ The authenticity of Antigonos' claim is a matter of scholarly dispute.⁶⁸ In any case, as a captive in the hands of the victor, Thessalonike had no chance to resist.⁶⁹ However, the marital bond endured. Thessalonike bore three sons to Kassandros and remained significant at his court—and his only wife; he chose not to practice polygamy. Apparently, her Argead prestige did not cease to be of legitimizing and ideological value. Her name was inscribed into the landscape for

tinoni, "Cassander's Wife and Heirs," in *Alexander and His Successors: Essays from the Antipodes*, eds. Pat Wheatley and Robert Hannah (Claremont: Regina Books, 2009), 260; Franca Landucci Gattinoni, "Cassander and the Legacy of Philip II and Alexander III in Diodorus," in *Philip II and Alexander the Great, Father and Son, Lives and Afterlives*, eds. Elizabeth D. Carney and Daniel Ogden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 113–114. On Thessalonike see further Elizabeth D. Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman: Gerald Peters Gallery, 2000), 155–159; Elizabeth D. Carney, "The Sisters of Alexander the Great: Royal Relicts," *Historia* 37 (1998): 385–392.

⁶⁴ Plut. *Alex.* 74.2–4; Landucci Gattinoni, *L'arte del potere*, 80–82; Carney, *Olympias*, 108; Landucci Gattinoni, "Cassander's Wife," 261–263; Landucci Gattinoni, "Cassander and the Legacy," 114, 116, 121. On Kassandros' propaganda see also Gerhard Wirth, "Alexander, Kassander und andere Zeitgenossen: Erwägungen zum Problem ihrer Selbstdarstellung," *Tyche* 4 (1989): 204–208. To the same end, Kassandros re-issued Philip's coins.

⁶⁵ Landucci Gattinoni, "Cassander and the Legacy," 114.

⁶⁶ Diod. 19.52.1–2. Trans. Russell M. Geer.

⁶⁷ Diod. 19.61.2.

⁶⁸ Carney, "Sisters," 388; Carney, *Women*, 156–157; Carney, *Olympias*, 70–87. She argues that it is plausible since Kassandros had Olympias killed, probably Thessalonike's foster-mother who had brought her up after Thessalonike's mother had died soon after her birth. This is accepted by Heckel, *Who's Who*, 265. However, Landucci Gattinoni argues that Thessalonike was also interested in marrying Kassandros since he guaranteed her a leading role for the first time. Landucci Gattinoni, "Cassander's Wife," 261–262.

⁶⁹ On the fate of female captives in ancient warfare, see Kathy L. Gaca, "Girls, Women, and the Significance of Sexual Violence in Ancient Warfare," in *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones*, ed. Elizabeth Heineman (Philadelphia/Oxford: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 73–88.

eternity when he founded the city of Thessalonike in her honor, presumably soon after the marriage.⁷⁰

The following example from Severan Rome is a case of a failure of marriage policy: the arrangements did not have the desired effects regarding the impression made on the Roman recipients and the public image of the bridegroom. In 218 AD, the 14-year-old Varius Avitus Bassianus (204–222 AD), soon known as Elagabalus, was acclaimed emperor under the name Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Augustus.⁷¹ His accession was engineered by his grandmother Julia Maesa and her supporters such as the soldier P. Valerius Comazon.

Antoninus descended from an influential Syrian family from Emesa whose members had traditionally been priests of the main local deity Elagabalus.⁷² Also, the teenager had been groomed to be Elagabalus' high priest. His short reign was an unhappy experiment in emperorship; Antoninus was a manipulated youth, misguided and misused by his family as a political instrument. The idea of his clan to stress his priesthood of the god Elagabalus as the key factor of his legitimacy as Roman emperor (due to the youth's lack of any political or military deeds) proved to be unfortunate. The conservative Roman leading circles disliked an emperor who was first of all a high priest of a foreign deity. In addition, they disapproved of the god Elagabalus' translocation to Rome via his cult statue, integration in the Roman *pantheon*, and treatment as equal to Jupiter.⁷³

The marriage policy of Antoninus designed by the managing forces behind him mirrors the fruitless efforts to legitimize his position. Bertolazzi characterizes the marriages as a reflection of the differing views of Julia Maesa and Antoninus' mother Julia Soaemias: they "pushed him to alternately pursuing traditional and theocratic styles of rule."⁷⁴ In consequence, the marriage policy seems inconsistent.

⁷⁰ Diod. 19.52.1; Elizabeth D. Carney, "Eponymous Women: Royal Women and City Names," *The Ancient History Bulletin* 2 (1988): 136–137; Carney, *Women*, 207; Heckel, *Who's Who*, 265.

⁷¹ Dio 80.4.1–2, 80.21.2; Hdn. 5.5.1. On Antoninus' reign, see Leonardo De Arrizabalaga y Prado, *The Emperor Elagabalus: Fact or Fiction?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Martijn Icks, *The Crimes of Elagabalus: The Life and Legacy of Rome's Decadent Boy Emperor* (London: L.B. Tauris, 2011); Riccardo Bertolazzi, "Women in the Severan Dynasty," in *The Routledge Companion to Women and Monarchy in the Ancient Mediterranean World*, eds. Elizabeth D. Carney and Sabine Müller (London/New York: Routledge, 2020), 455–457.

⁷² Dio 79.30.2; HA *Heliog.* 1.5; De Arrizabalaga y Prado, *Emperor*, 6; Edward Lipinski, "Elaha Gabal d'Émèse dans son contexte historique," *Latomus* 70 (2011): 1081–11.

⁷³ Hdn. 5.3.5, 5.5.8, 5.6.6–9; Dio 80.11.1; HA *Heliog.* 1.6, 3.4. The decision to force the nobility to participate in the Emesan cultic services (Dio 80.11.1, Hdn. 5.5.7) by no means improved the situation.

⁷⁴ Bertolazzi, "Women," 456–57.

In 219 AD, Antoninus arrived in Rome and was married to Julia Cornelia Paula from an old distinguished Roman family: an attempt to make the Syrian priest-emperor compatible with Roman society.⁷⁵ However, in ca. 220 AD, he had to divorce her to marry Aquilia Severa, a Vestal Virgin (who actually had to live a chaste life).⁷⁶ Apparently, the marriage was intended to link the traditional Roman religious cults, represented by a priestess of Vesta, with the newly imported Syrian cult of Elagabalus, represented by Antoninus as Elagabalus' high priest.⁷⁷ Significantly, the sacral union seems to be connected to another *hieros gamos*: symbolically, the sun god Elagabalus was married to the Carthaginian moon goddess Urania, both represented by their cult statues.⁷⁸ The staging of this sacral bond is suggested to have symbolized cosmic harmony.⁷⁹ However, since Antoninus' marriage to the Vestal Virgin was an outright violation of Roman religious tradition, it did not produce any harmony but caused a scandal and increased his unpopularity.

His clan tried to revise its policy: Antoninus had to divorce Aquilia Severa and marry Annia Faustina, a descendant of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, whose memory was held in great esteem in Rome.⁸⁰ However, the attempt to tie the youth to a prestigious Roman ancestry could not turn the tide. The marriage policy took another chaotic turn when he divorced Annia Faustina and returned to the priestess of Vesta, abandoning ancestral legitimization in favor of sacral legitimization. It was a lost cause. Maesa and her faction dropped Antoninus; in order to keep control over the throne, they had already groomed his younger cousin for the royal role, the future Severus Alexander (208–235 AD).⁸¹ In 222 AD, 18-year-old Antoninus was murdered, his body was mutilated, and he fell victim to *damnatio memoriae*.⁸² The failure of the marriage policy designed for him was one of the multiple unfortunate political decisions his clan took for him and can be regarded as symptomatic.

⁷⁵ Icks, *Elagabalus*, 18.

⁷⁶ Dio 80.9.3.

⁷⁷ Icks, *Elagabalus*, 32.

⁷⁸ Dio 80.12.1–2; Hdn. 5.6.3–5.

⁷⁹ Martin Frey, *Untersuchungen zur Religion und zur Religionspolitik des Kaisers Elagabal* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989), 91–93; Icks, *Elagabalus*, 34.

⁸⁰ Icks, *Elagabalus*, 38; Bertolazzi, "Women," 457.

⁸¹ Dio 80.17.2–3 (Xiph.), 80.19.4 (Xiph.); Hdn. 5.7.1–5; HA *Heliog.* 10.1.

⁸² Dio 80.20.2 (Xiph.); HA *Heliog.* 16.5–17.4, 18.1, 33.7; Hdn. 5.8.8–9.

Marriage and Dynastic Unity

This last section is concerned with dynastic unity associated with next-of-kin marriage. An interesting example of a family sticking together through thick and thin is provided by the influential Persian house of Artabazos (satr. reg. 363/2–ca. 353/52 BC) from 4th-century BC Asia Minor. Artabazos was a member of a satrapal dynasty residing in Daskyleion. His parents were Pharnabazos (satr. reg. ca. 413–374/73/70 BC), the famous satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia, and Apame, the daughter of King Artaxerxes II (reg. 404–359/58 BC).⁸³ As a de-serving official, Pharnabazos had been honored by this marriage: it was a royal reward in order to ensure his continued loyalty to the Great King.⁸⁴

Artabazos married an (anonymous) woman from Rhodes. Reportedly, the marriage produced eleven sons and ten daughters, but it is considered that the Rhodian wife was the stepmother of some of them.⁸⁵ Besides the relevance of procreation and the importance of geo-strategical links to Rhodes, the major advantage of the marriage was the integration of the wife's two brothers into Artabazos' house: the mercenary generals Mentor and Memnon of Rhodes. They became most influential political figures in the Aegean and were focal persons of political networks linking Greek politicians and mercenary generals with the Persian court.⁸⁶ Artabazos could rely on them, even in times of trouble that were frequent in his life. Apparently a strongly united house, Mentor and Memnon tried to free their brother-in-law when the neighboring satrap of Lydia captured him at the end of the 360s BC.⁸⁷ In about 356/55 BC, Artabazos fell from grace with Artaxerxes III and went into revolt.⁸⁸ When he lost the struggle and had to flee in ca. 353/52 BC, Memnon, his sister, and the children shared his

83 Michael Weiskopf, *The So-Called "Great Satraps' Revolt"* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989), 54–55 with reference to Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.28 and IG II² 356. See Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 800–802, 805, 808, 810–812; Heckel, *Who's Who*, 55.

84 Xen. *Hell.* 5.1.28; Plut. *Artax.* 27.7; Nep. 9.2.1; Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 720; Brosius, *Women*, 78.

85 Diod. 16.52.3–4; Heckel, *Who's Who*, 55.

86 See Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 810–812, 841–842; Maxim Kholod, "Achaemenid Grants of Cities and Lands to Greeks: The Case of Mentor and Memnon of Rhodes," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 58 (2018): 177–197; Sabine Müller, "Argead Macedonia and the Aegean Sea," *Ricerche Ellenistiche* 1 (2019): 10–11, 15–17; Sabine Müller, "Memnon of Rhodos," in *Lexicon of Argead Macedonia*, eds. Waldemar Heckel, Johannes Heinrichs, Sabine Müller and Frances Pownall (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2020), 337–339.

87 Dem. 23.154–155; Julia Heskell, *The North Aegean Wars, 371–360 B.C.* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 119–121.

88 Diod. 16.22.1, 34.1; Polyain. 7.33.2. The background of the rebellion is unclear. See Kuhrt, *Persian Empire*, 662, n. 5.

exile in Macedonia.⁸⁹ Through the influence of Mentor, who helped to secure Artaxerxes III's conquest of Egypt, Artabazos was pardoned and allowed to return to Persia with his family in the late 340s BC.⁹⁰

His house was additionally unified by endogamy: first Mentor and then, after his death, his brother Memnon married Artabazos and their sister's daughter Barsine, thus their niece, and produced children with her.⁹¹ Under Dareios III, Artabazos and his male relatives enjoyed a high position.⁹² When the Macedonian invasion of Persia began and Dareios III organized the resistance, Artabazos, his eleven sons, his brothers-in-law, and his grandchild Thymondas played a central role. A firmly united house, the male members of the core family shared the same political stand and supported Dareios until his end became inevitable.⁹³ Their role in Persian politics was literally a family matter.

The last example also involves at least the image of a harmonious couple, of unity, peace, and mutual love in the family. In ca. 278 BC, Ptolemy II (reg. 283/82–246 BC) married his older full sister Arsinoë II. It was the first sibling marriage in the Ptolemaic house.⁹⁴ To understand Ptolemy II's decision, it is important to look at the problems he had had with his accession. His father, Ptolemy I, the founder of the Ptolemaic Empire, had taken efforts to secure Ptolemy II's succession and made it clear that he was his desired heir by making him his co-regent in 285 BC. However, when Ptolemy I died in 282/1 BC, Ptolemy II's succession as sole ruler was contested by his half-brothers.⁹⁵ While he overcame the intradynastic rivalry, he needed to legitimize his contested position. To this end, he stressed the ruling qualities of his specific family branch as a token of his legitimacy. This theme formed part of the carefully arranged public image of the inseparable loving royal couple, Ptolemy II and Arsinoë II.

Being a master of the theme of dynastic love, Ptolemy II styled her as the Brother-Loving Goddess (Arsinoë *Philadelphos*) and a part of the Sibling Gods (*Theoi Philadephoi*).⁹⁶ Thus, their family branch was glorified and the message circulated that the royal couple was able to convey double benefits. The siblings

⁸⁹ Diod. 16.52.3–4.

⁹⁰ Diod. 16.52.1–3; Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 706–707, 802.

⁹¹ Curt. 3.13.14; Carney, *Women*, 101.

⁹² Arr. An. 3.27.7; Briant, *L'empire Perse*, 718.

⁹³ Curt. 5.12.7–8; Stephen Ruzicka, "War in the Aegean, 333–331 B.C.: A Reconsideration," *Phoenix* 42 (1988): 131–151; Müller, "Aegean Sea," 15–18; Müller, *Alexander*, 107, 109, 111, 142.

⁹⁴ Ager, "Brother-Sister Marriage," 346; Elizabeth D. Carney, *Arsinoë of Egypt and Macedon. A Royal Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 82–85. On the uncertain date of the marriage, see Müller, *Königspaar*, 90.

⁹⁵ Paus. 1.6.6, 1.7.1; Müller, *Königspaar*, 105–111, 385.

⁹⁶ Müller, *Königspaar*, 139–382, 385–386; Carney, *Arsinoë*, 83–128.

represented a legitimate, safe, and just rule, promising their empire's inhabitants a good, wealthy life. This ideology was visualized by Arsinoë's unique attribute, a double cornucopia wrapped in the royal diadem. Related to abundance, thus echoing expectations concerning royal wealth and generosity, the *dikeras* contained cake and fruits. Ptolemy II is said to have been responsible for its creation as an iconographic code of the images of his sister-wife.⁹⁷ After her death in ca. 270 BC, he never married again (and died in 246 BC). The dead Arsinoë continued to play the role of his *basilissa* in his representation. According to this ideology, caring for the empire worked even better as, freed from her earthly being, she was now omnipresent.

However, dynastic representation was not the only reason why Ptolemy II chose to marry his full sister. The claims of his half-brothers to his throne had taught him the dangers of the polygamy that his father had practiced. Ptolemy II had learned his lesson well and tried to reverse the disadvantages polygamy had produced by restricting power within the immediate family through endogamy. Thus, he shut the gates and denied any outsider claims to the Ptolemaic throne. Furthermore, the marriage to his full sister served to have a trustworthy person at his side to assist him in securing the succession of one of his sons from his first (exogamous) marriage. Arsinoë II adopted her nephews and seems to have been a loyal confidante in whose support for the sake of his sons Ptolemy II could trust.⁹⁸

Conclusion

Among ancient elites, marriage policy formed part of the art of diplomacy. Marriages were a matter of alliances and networking, of financial profit, or of prestige and status. Love and affection were not among the reasons. Marital bonds were central to the strategies of influential ancient houses in order to establish, refresh, or intensify alliances, to gain, preserve, or limit influence, privileges, or wealth, to secure the family's continuation, or to legitimize a social position or political actions. Often, marriages occur in the context of a war, conquest, or another situation of political change. While one party involved or both may have had long-term goals in mind, political marriages, dependent on the unpredictable and changeable power constellations, were first of all made for the moment. Their value depended on political developments. Therefore, some mar-

⁹⁷ Ath. 11.497b-c; Müller, *Königspaar*, 373–380; Carney, *Arsinoë*, 114–115.

⁹⁸ Schol. *Theokr.* 17.128; Müller, *Königspaar*, 100–103.

riages were ephemeral while others endured. However, comparable to non-political marriages, at the moment of the wedding, nobody could tell if this bond would last.

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