

Laodikai and the Goddess Nikephoros

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Citer ce document / Cite this document :

Iossif Panagiotis, Lorber Catharine. Laodikai and the Goddess Nikephoros. In: L'antiquité classique, Tome 76, 2007. pp. 63-88;

doi : 10.3406/antiq.2007.2618

http://www.persee.fr/doc/antiq_0770-2817_2007_num_76_1_2618

Document généré le 25/01/2017

Résumé

Les Laodices et la déesse Nicéphore.

L'article traite de l'identité de la divinité Nicéphore sur les bronzes d'Antiochos IV provenant des différents ateliers séleucides. À travers un processus de comparaisons iconographiques - notamment avec les empreintes de sceaux - et religieuses - le rôle assumé par Aphrodite dans le cadre du culte des reines hellénistiques -, l'étude examine la possibilité d'une représentation d'une reine séleucide sous les traits de la déesse Nicéphore. Deux possibilités sont considérées : Laodice III, la mère d'Antiochos IV, et Laodice IV, son épouse-sœur. Les documents iconographiques et les témoignages religieux favorisent une identification avec la reine-mère. La circulation orientale de ces monnaies permet d'examiner la possibilité d'une identification de la Nicéphore à Nanaia/Nāna, déesse assimilée à Aphrodite et à Artémis. Les bronzes à la Nicéphore démontrent la complexité de la lecture de l'iconographie royale séleucide, destinée à des milieux ciblés et des contextes culturels différents.

Abstract

Panayotis Iossif, Catharine Lorber, Laodikai and the goddess Nikephoros.

Bronze coins of Antiochos IV shows a goddess Nicephorus who shares in the king's epiphany. She is a rare form of Aphrodite, previously associated in the deification of two Hellenistic queens, including the Seleukid Stratonike. The older cult of Aphrodite Nikephoros at Argos characterized her as a matrimonial deity. Her presence on coins or seals of scattered Seleukid cities suggests the establishment of a state cult for a female relation of Antiochos IV, either his wife, Laodike IV, or his mother, Laodike III. The former was the first Seleukid queen portrayed on coinage ; the visual evidence supports the theory that she was the daughter of Antiochos III and married her three brothers in succession. Laodike III had already been the object of an ephemeral (?) state cult ordained by Antiochos III and was worshipped as Aphrodite Laodike in a city cult of Iasos. In the east, the Nikephoros was probably understood as the Sumerian goddess Nanaia/Nanā, assimilated to Aphrodite and Artemis.

Laodikai and the Goddess Nikephoros*

The celestial attributes of Antiochos IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) are a *topos* of Seleukid numismatic iconography. Yet there has been little discussion of the enigmatic goddess Nikephoros who appears on the bronze coins of three mints and who, at the eastern Seleukid capital of Seleukeia on the Tigris, is associated with the king's godhead. Signs of a shared epiphany suggest that the Nikephoros is a new goddess, and the official dissemination of her image in scattered cities led us to suspect a connection to the feminine side of the Seleukid royal cult. In the following pages we examine the evidence for the worship of Seleukid queens, the possible recipients of cult in the reign of Antiochos IV, the identity of the Nikephoros herself, and the significance of her attributes.

1. Epigraphic testimonia for the cult of Laodike III

In spring of 193 B.C., the Seleukid king Antiochos III ordained the worship of his wife, Laodike III, announcing that high priestesses should be established in the same places where his own high priests were appointed.¹ The high priestesses were to wear golden crowns bearing images of the queen and their names were to be inscribed in contracts immediately after the names of the high priests of the king and his ancestors. These details indicate that the cult of the queen was equal in dignity to the cult of the king and his ancestors, separate and yet closely associated with it. We assume that these cults were targeted at Antiochos' Greek subjects.

Inscriptions recording the *prostagma* have been found at Eriza, Phrygia; at Kermanshah, on the route from Seleukeia on the Tigris to Ekbatana; and at Laodikeia (Nihavend) in western Media, on the crossroads joining Kermanshah, Ekbatana, Susa, and Baktria.² These obscure and far-flung locations may not be a mere accident of

* The authors thank Claus Ambos for his help and precious advice on topics concerning Mesopotamian religion and astronomical diaries. We are also grateful to Petr Veselý for offering valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper; to Renee Kovacs, Hermann Hunger, and Farhad Assar for helping us with the translation of Babylonian documents; and to John Ma for his suggestions. Any remaining errors of interpretation are entirely our responsibility.

¹ L. ROBERT, "Inscriptions séleucides de Phrygie et d'Iran", *Hellenica* VII (1949), p. 5-26.

² Eriza: C.B. WELLES, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period*, London, 1934, n° 36/37 (there dated spring 204 B.C.), with earlier literature; M. HOLLEAUX and L. ROBERT, "Nouvelles remarques sur l'édit d'Eriza", *BCH* LIV (1930), p. 245-257; M. HOLLEAUX, *Études d'épigraphie et d'histoire grecques* II, Paris, 1928, p. 166-170; J. MA, *Antiochos III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, Oxford, 1999, p. 354-356. Laodikeia: L. ROBERT, *l.c.* (n. 1). Kermanshah: ID., "Encore une inscription grecque de l'Iran", *CRAI* (1967), p. 283-294.

survival. Both Phrygia and Media were little hellenized, with only a few Greek settlements among a native population. Unrest in central Asia Minor after the suppression of the usurper Achaïos apparently inspired the foundation of military colonies in Lydia and Phrygia.³ And two of the three sites where copies of the *prostagma* have been found, Eriza and Kermanshah (ancient name unknown), were both *phylakai*, military zones created to control unrest and/or to protect the borders of the kingdom.

The high priestess appointed for the satrapy of Karia was Berenike, daughter of Ptolemy son of Lysimachos, the semi-independent dynast of Telmessos, whom Antiochos claimed as a kinsman. The appointment of Berenike illustrates one of the purposes of the royal cult, to cement the loyalty of powerful dynasts and high officials in the border regions of the kingdom, by flattering them with honors and involving them in public displays of devotion to the king and his family. The satrapy of Karia represented new territory, won by Zeuxis in the campaigns of 203-201 and 197. The king himself had conquered Telmessos in 197, and though he had left Ptolemy in possession of his estates, Antiochos had assumed control over the city and had founded a military colony on its territory.⁴ At the time he issued his *prostagma* establishing the worship of Laodike III, he was already being solicited by the Aitolians to invade Europe and “liberate Greece.”⁵ Very likely one of his unstated motives in founding the cult was a concern to stabilize provinces that might prove disloyal when next he was distracted by a military campaign.

The high priestess of Queen Laodike for the satrapy of Media was herself a Laodike. Louis Robert identified her as the king’s daughter of that name, who was married to her brother Antiochos, the heir designate.⁶ Her appointment, unlike that of Berenike, was not meant to mollify the ambitions of a particular magnate or official. And yet the two inscriptions naming her were erected in places of exquisite strategic importance, one controlling the road from Media to Babylonia, the other the route to Susiana and Persis – all places that had been caught up in the revolt of Molon.

Although the *prostagma* clearly refers to the appointment of high priests throughout the kingdom, we nevertheless suspect that these state cults were not established in every satrapy. Robert believed that the high priestesses were of royal blood

³ JOSEPHUS, *Antiquitates Judaicae* XII, 147-153. The authenticity of the royal letter preserved in this passage has been questioned by J.-D. GAUGER, *Beiträge zur jüdischen Apologetik: Untersuchungen zur Authentizität von Urkunden bei Flavius Josephus und im I. Makkabäerbuch*, Cologne, 1977 (*Bonner Biblische Beiträge*, 49), p. 23-151, and defended by Ph. GAUTHIER, *Nouvelles inscriptions de Sardes II*, Paris/Geneva, 1989 (*Hautes Études du Monde gréco-romain*, 15), p. 41-42. MA, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 267, notes that the anomalies could be explained if the letter were written by the young coregent Antiochos the Son during the eastern campaign of Antiochos III.

⁴ LIVY, XXXVII, 56, 4; M. SEGRÈ, “Iscrizioni di Licia. I Tolemeo di Telmessos”, *Clara Rhodos* 9 (1938), p. 181-208.

⁵ LIVY, XXXV, 12.

⁶ ROBERT, *l.c.* (n. 1), p. 18. See ID., “Addenda au tome VII”, *Hellenica* VIII (1950), p. 73-75, for the conclusion that Laodike was high priestess of her mother for the province of Media, not for the Upper Satrapies altogether.

(hence the claim of kinship between Antiochos and Ptolemy of Telmessos).⁷ If Robert was correct, there may not have been enough female relations of the king to furnish every province with a high priestess, since most Seleucid women were involved in state marriages to neighboring kings.⁸ Neither the eponymous priesthood of Antiochos and his ancestors nor that of Laodike is named in surviving Akkadian documents of 193/2.⁹ What is more surprising, these royal eponymous priesthoods are absent as well from the Greek legal acts, even those originating from the areas where the cult of Laodike was instituted.¹⁰ We have the impression that Antiochos III did not greatly exert himself to promote these state cults.

2. How many Laodikai?

We can identify probable likenesses of Laodike III and Laodike, her daughter and the supposed high priestess of her cult. Both appear in jugate portraits on clay seal impressions from Seleukeia on the Tigris. The two seal impressions are securely dated by associated stamps on the bullae, the first to S.E.B. 97 (215/4 B.C.) (Fig. 1), the second to S.E.B. 105 (207/6 B.C.) (Fig. 2).¹¹ On the earlier impression, the foreground is occupied by the draped bust of a young male with a short, upturned nose, wearing a laurel wreath, headband, or perhaps a cap; in the background is a larger female head, diademed, with a pronounced aquiline nose and sagging flesh beneath her chin. At this date, 215/4, the male child can only be Antiochos the Son, eldest son

⁷ ROBERT, *l.c.* (n. 1).

⁸ Three other daughters of Antiochos III, Kleopatra, Antiochis, and Nysa, were married to Ptolemy V of Egypt, Ariarathes IV of Kappadokia, and Pharnakes I of Pontos, respectively. Antiochos III gave his sister Antiochis to the Armenian king Xerxes. Of his three paternal aunts, Laodike and Stratonike were the wives of Mithradates II of Pontos and Ariarathes III of Kappadokia, respectively; the career of his third aunt, Apama, is not documented.

⁹ The exhaustive study of three important *corpora* of Babylonian texts proves that there is no allusion to the eponymous priesthoods mentioned in the Greek *protagma* of 193. The three *corpora* are: A. J. SACHS and H. HUNGER, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia I*, Vienna, 1988; ID., *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts from Babylonia II*, Vienna, 1989; and G. DEL MONTE, *Testi della Babilonia Ellenistica*, I, *Testi Cronografici*, Pisa/Roma, 1997.

¹⁰ The most important document is the contract from Καρδάκων κώμη near Telmessos concluded in 193; see SEGRÈ, *l.c.* (n. 4), especially p. 190 B, and MA, *o.c.* (n. 2), p. 145, n. 140. Two important observations concerning this contract: a. The eponymous priesthoods of Nikanor, of the king and his ancestors, and of Queen Laodike are omitted; b. It is impossible to determine the *ethnic* origin of this community: if the Kardakes are a local population (which is possible in view of their qualification as κώμη), this could reinforce our assumption that the royal cult targeted the Greek subjects of the empire. This contract comes from the cradle of the local dynasty of Ptolemy, whose daughter Berenike is in charge of the cult of Queen Laodike. These omissions, and especially the omission of Berenike, daughter of the local dynast, could be indications of the Greek character of the royal Seleucid cult.

¹¹ A. INVERNIZZI (dir.), *Seleucia al Tigri. Le impronte di sigillo dagli Archivi. I. Sigilli ufficiali, ritratti*, Alexandria, 2004, p. 42, Se 26-28.



Fig. 1. Seal impression from Seleukeia on the Tigris; Se 27 (S-6089); courtesy of 'Centro Scavi Torino'®.

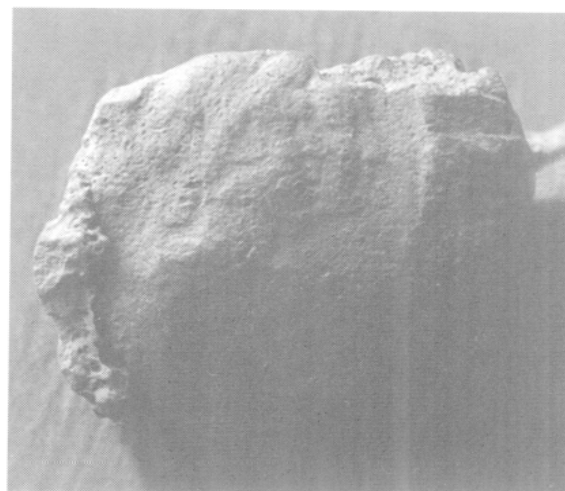


Fig. 2. Seal impression from Seleukeia on the Tigris; Se 28 (S7-3683); courtesy of 'Centro Scavi Torino'®.

of Antiochos III and Laodike III, born about 221¹² and thus six or seven years of age in this portrait. As for the associated female, Vito Messina has identified her as Laodike III, the boy's mother.¹³ This interpretation is somewhat problematic, since the relative positions of the two portraits would imply that the young prince took precedence over the queen, a ranking that, to the best of our knowledge, is without parallel. It is also a bit surprising that this prince would have been portrayed on an official seal prior to his elevation to a coregency in S.E.B. 102 (210/9 B.C.).¹⁴ Still, such a portrayal seems consistent with the practice of Antiochos III and Laodike III in approving and even encouraging the worship of their children in the royal cults of Sardes, Iasos, and Herakleia.¹⁵

¹² POLYBIUS, V, 55, 4.

¹³ Personal communication, 13 February 2006.

¹⁴ A.J. SACHS and D.J. WISEMAN, "A Babylonian King List of the Hellenistic Period", *Iraq* 16 (1954), rev. 2-7, p. 207. For the relation between Macedonian and local calendars, see E. GRZYBEK, *Du calendrier macédonien au calendrier ptolémaïque. Problèmes de chronologie hellénistique*, Basel, 1990, and R. HANNAH, *Greek and Roman Calendars: Constructions of Time in the Classical World*, London, 2005, p. 95-96. For the beginning of the Seleucid era and the use of the Babylonian calendar, see E.J. BICKERMAN, *Chronology of the Ancient World*, London, 1980², p. 71-72 and A.E. SAMUEL, *Greek and Roman Chronology. Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity*, Munich, 1972, p. 245-246. The beginning of the Seleucid era is to be dated to autumn of 312 B.C. for the Greeks and to spring of 311 B.C. for the Mesopotamian subjects of the empire.

¹⁵ SEG 39, 1284 (= MA, o.c. [n. 2], document 2); MA, o.c. (n. 2), document 20; *I. Iasos* 5 (= MA, o.c. [n. 2], document 27); OGIS 237 (= MA, o.c. [n. 2], document 28); SEG 37, 659 (= MA, o.c. [n. 2], document 31). MA, o.c. (n. 2), p. 287, notes the use of the "affective term" $\pi\alpha\iota\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha$ instead of the "more neutral" $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\alpha$ in his documents 2 and 20 and comments that "[t]hese examples help define Seleukid court usage and style, insisting on familial tenderness between members of the royal family".

The second seal impression shows the diademed head of a young man in the foreground and a female head in the background; due to the condition of the impression, it is impossible to determine whether the female head was originally diademed. The young king does not resemble Antiochos III, and at this date (207/6) can only be the coregent Antiochos the Son. Vito Messina again identifies the associated female as Laodike III. But she appears younger than the woman in the earlier seal impression and certainly lacks her assertive nose. We believe this is a different person, the only possible candidate being Laodike the Daughter, future wife of Antiochos the Son. She was evidently the eldest daughter of Antiochos III, born relatively early in her parents' marriage, making her at most fourteen or fifteen years old in this portrait. By this time she may already have been betrothed to her brother, though they did not actually marry until the winter of 196/5.¹⁶

Our recognition of a likeness of Laodike the Daughter in 207/6 affords an opportunity to reexamine whether she was identical with Laodike IV, wife to Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV, an hypothesis rarely challenged until recently.¹⁷ According to the calculation of H.H. Schmitt, Laodike IV would have been thirty-five to forty years old at the death of Seleukos IV in 175, and thirty-seven to forty-two when she presented Antiochos IV with his only son, the future Antiochos V Eupator. Schmitt's calculation assumed that Laodike IV was born between c. 215 and 210.¹⁸ The Seleukeia seal impression of 207/6 rules out the later of these dates, as its profile is clearly not that of a very young child, only three to four years old. Schmitt's earlier date, however, appears possible: if born in 215, Laodike the Daughter would have been eight or nine years old in 207/6. This seems consistent with the image on the seal impression, though considered strictly on its own it could portray a girl several years older. Renzo Lucherini estimated a still earlier birthdate of 219 or 221 for Laodike the Daughter. Assuming she married her three brothers in succession, she would have been forty-five or forty-seven at the death of Seleukos IV and forty-seven or forty-

¹⁶ APPIAN, *Syriaca*, 4; H.H. SCHMITT, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Antiochos' des Grossen und seiner Zeit*, Wiesbaden, 1964 (*Historia Einzelschrift*, 6), p. 23-24; R. LUCHERINI, "The children of Antiochos III", www.sfnag.com/miscellanea/children_of_antiochos_iii_ver4.pdf; the latter author calculates that Laodike, the eldest daughter of Antiochos III and Laodike III, was born around 221 or 219. On the young age of marriage for women in the Greek world, see A.M. VÉRILHAC and C. VIAL, *Le mariage grec du VI^e siècle av. J.-C. à l'époque d'Auguste*, Paris, 1998 (*BCH*, Suppl. 32), p. 214-218.

¹⁷ A. BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ, *Histoire des Séleucides*, Paris, 1913, p. 246, n. 1 (the author refers to the name of Queen Laodike as it appears in an inscription from Dyme); F. STÄHELIN, s.v. "Laodike", *RE* VI (1925), col. 707, n° 19; F. CUMONT, "Inscriptions grecques trouvées à Suse. II. Inscriptions de l'époque des Séleucides", *CRAI* (1931), p. 284-285; G. LE RIDER, "L'enfant-roi Antiochos et la reine Laodice", *BCH* 110 (1986), p. 412-415. On the other hand, O. MØRKHOLM considered it probable that there were two different Laodikai, the first the daughter of Antiochos III, the second the wife of Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV, see *Antiochos IV of Syria*, Gyldebrandt, 1966, p. 49 n. 44; Fr. WALBANK, "Monarchies and Monarchic Ideas", *CAH²* VII/1 (1984), p. 67, n. 16 – referring to A. Aymard's studies – expressed serious doubts about the possibility that Laodike the Daughter was the wife of both Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV.

¹⁸ SCHMITT, *o.c.* (n. 16), p. 33.

nine when she gave birth to Antiochos V.¹⁹ While healthy childbirth is not common past the age of forty-five, it is not an impossibility.

There is a serious obstacle to this hypothetical reconstruction of the career of Laodike the Daughter. The Babylonian astronomical diary for 181 records the death of Queen Laodike, wife of Seleukos IV, in the summer of the preceding year.²⁰ On the other hand, King Seleukos and Laodike are mentioned in a Susian inscription of 177/6, while a dedication from Dyme in Achaia establishes that the wife of Antiochos IV was also named Laodike.²¹ Finally, there are gold oktadrachms issued at Antioch on the Orontes in autumn 175, during the brief reign of Antiochos, son of Seleukos IV, which show that an adult queen was regent for the child-king (Fig. 3).²² To resolve the discrepancy, Lucherini hypothesizes a second wife of Seleukos IV who gave birth to his son Antiochos, subsequently married Antiochos IV, and bore the latter's only son, the future Antiochos V.²³ Lucherini offers no speculation as to the lineage of this supposed second wife. The hypothesis of a second marriage is consistent with the youthful appearance of the queen portrayed on the octadrachm (though we cannot discount the possibility that she was rejuvenated and idealized). Comparison of her profile with that on the Seleukeian seal impression of 207/6 reveals some remarkable similarities: the shapes of the nose, mouth, and chin are almost identical. Either we are seeing the same person, or two closely related women. If the testimony of *AD* n° -181 must be accepted, then we wonder if the widowed Seleukos IV may have married another of his sisters, who assumed the throne name Laodike.²⁴ So far, however, scholars from the classical field have not embraced the evidence of *AD* n° -181.²⁵

¹⁹ LUCHERINI, *l.c.* (n. 16), p. 3-5.

²⁰ SACHS and HUNGER, *o.c.* (n. 9), II, n° -181; DEL MONTE, *o.c.* (n. 9), p. 70, *AD* n° -181 *ES* 130.

²¹ *SEG* 7, 2; *OGIS*, 252.

²² LE RIDER, *l.c.* (n. 17), p. 409-417.

²³ LUCHERINI, *l.c.* (n. 16), p. 8.

²⁴ LUCHERINI, *l.c.* (n. 16), p. 9-10, examines the possibility that Antiochos III had one or more daughters besides Laodike, Kleopatra, Antiochis, and Nysa, but without reaching a definite conclusion. This possibility remains highly suggestive since it allows the simultaneous existence of daughter(s) not mentioned in the sources and a second marriage of Seleukos IV to a second sister.

²⁵ A. BIELMAN-SANCHEZ, "Réflexions sur les reines attalides et séleucides," in Fr. PROST (ed.), *L'Orient méditerranéen de la mort d'Alexandre aux campagnes de Pompée. Cités et royaumes à l'époque hellénistique*. Rennes, 2003, p. 54-55; I. SAVALLI-LESTRADE, "La place des reines à la cour et dans le royaume à l'époque hellénistique", in R. FREI-STOLBA et al. (eds.), *Les femmes antiques entre sphère privée et sphère publique. Actes du Diplôme d'Études Avancées, Universités de Lausanne et Neuchâtel, 2000-2002*, Bern, 2003, p. 65, n. 27: Savalli-Lestrade considers that the queen receiving the ambassador from Miletos between 175-164 is Laodike IV, spouse of Antiochos IV. An interesting demonstration of the attitude of scholars from the classical field towards the Babylonian documents can be seen in I. SAVALLI-LESTRADE, "Le mogli di Seleuco IV e di Antioco IV", *Studi ellenistici* 16 (2005), p. 193-200, where the author considers the astronomical diary referring to the death of Laodike IV in 182 B.C., but concludes in accordance with her previous (2003) study (p. 200): "Molto dipende dal



Fig. 3. Gold *oktadrachm* from Antioch on the Orontes; from HOUGHTON, o.c. (n. 29), n° 91.

The inconsistency between the Greek and Babylonian sources relating to the death of Laodike IV is a difficult problem. We are not qualified to judge Hermann Hunger's reading or restitutions of *AD* n° -181, which are approved by the Assyriologists we consulted. In the actual state of the evidence, we tend to consider the available Greek sources as more reliable. *SEG* 7, 2, a lacunose manumission act from Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa), does seem to establish that Laodike IV was still alive in S.E. 136 (177/6 B.C.).²⁶ The restitutions proposed by L. Robert cannot be questioned, especially if we compare this inscription to another manumission act from Susa, which tends to confirm the existence of the word βασιλίσσης after the name Laodike (*SEG* 7, 17, l. 7-8). The latter inscription is dated to 130 S.E. (= 183 B.C.), one year before the supposed death of Laodike IV. The same dedicatory formula is used in *SEG* 7, 2, five to six years after the queen's supposed death. We believe that if the queen was dead and replaced by a new one, the dedicatory formula would have changed, even if the new queen adopted the same dynastic name. Furthermore, the Seleukids, even if they practiced polygamy, appointed only one queen for the whole duration of a reign. Two examples from the Ptolemaic dynasty can help our reflection: When Arsinoë II died, her brother and husband Ptolemy II didn't replace her name in the royal inscriptions but reinforced her status by organizing an individual cult for her worship. And when Ptolemy VIII took a second wife by marrying his niece Kleopatra III, his two queens were distinguished as Kleopatra the Sister (Kleopatra II) and Kleopatra the Wife (Kleopatra III). It seems very unlikely that Seleukos IV replaced his dead queen with a new one who had the same name, received honors using the same dedicatory formulas, and was depicted with the same physical features. New documents – Greek or Babylonian – may help us to resolve this *question épineuse*.

valore attribuito ai testi babilonesi". The author offers a suggestion proposed by Philippe Gauthier, unfortunately without any bibliographical reference: for the French scholar the astronomical diary referred to "unfounded rumours" and not to any "facts". This scepticism is probably unjustified, as the phrases "I heard..." and "That month it was heard in Babylon..." are common in the astronomical diaries, see A. KUHN, "The Seleucid Kings and Babylonia," in P. BILDE *et al.* (eds.), *Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship*, Aarhus, 1996, p. 53.

²⁶ L. ROBERT, "Sur les affranchissements de Suse", *RPh* (1936), p. 137-152 (= *Hellenica* VII, 1949, p. 25-29).

Another numismatic representation has been claimed for Laodike IV. Oliver D. Hoover drew attention to the veiled female bust that appears on bronzes with an elephant head reverse, issued by Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV at Antioch and Ptolemaïs (Ake) (Fig. 4).²⁷ Hoover's identification of this veiled bust as a royal portrait was based on an erroneous reading of an example from Ptolemaïs; he mistook the fragmentary monogram behind the head for the tip of a lotus scepter.²⁸ Nonetheless the hypothesis of a royal portrait remains persuasive, not least because the head is diademed as well as veiled. This diademed, veiled female was of significance to both Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV. On examples of good style, especially the bronzes of Seleukos IV, the facial features are quite similar to those seen on the oktadrachm – a rather delicate nose, full cheeks, small mouth with soft lips, rounded chin. There are differences, to be sure: on the oktadrachm, the hair is rolled both above and below the diadem, adding height to the coiffure, and the veil is worn far back on the head, covering only the chignon. These details do not necessarily preclude an identification of Laodike IV on the bronzes: the coin portraits of a later Seleukid queen, Kleopatra Thea, also show two different coiffures and two different positions of the veil.²⁹ Admittedly, these images of Kleopatra Thea are separated by a quarter of a century, whereas the oktadrachms of Laodike IV are essentially contemporary with the bronzes bearing her presumed portrait.

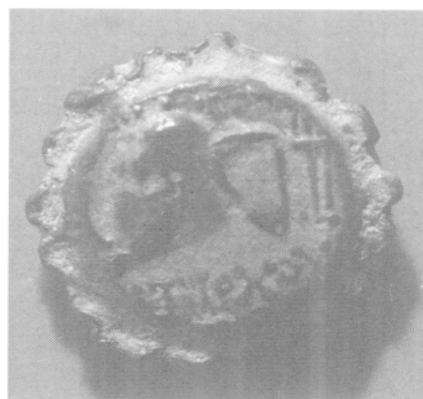


Fig. 4: Bronze coin from Antioch on the Orontes; courtesy Oliver D. Hoover, *ANS*[®].

²⁷ O.D. HOOVER, "Laodice IV on the Bronze Coinages of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV", *AJN* 14 (2002), p. 81-87. The mints of these bronzes were identified as Antioch and Seleukeia-Pieria by O. MÖRKHOLM, "Some Western Seleucid Mints", *INJ* 3 (1965-66), p. 10-11. The involvement of a third mint, Ptolemaïs (Ake), is suggested by A. HOUGHTON and A. SPAER, *Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum Israel I. The Arnold Spaer Collection of Seleucid Coins*, Jerusalem, 1998, n° 1102-1107. For the attribution to Antioch and Ptolemaïs only, see A. HOUGHTON, C. LORBER, and O.D. HOOVER, *Seleucid Coins*, Part 2 (forthcoming).

²⁸ HOOVER, *loc. cit.* (n. 27), p. 82-83 and pl. 18, 10.

²⁹ A. HOUGHTON, *Coinage of the Seleucid Empire*, New York, 1983 (*ACNAC*, 4), n° 408, struck on the occasion of Kleopatra's marriage to Alexander I Balas in 150, and n° 803, struck during her brief sole reign at Ptolemaïs (Ake) in 126.

Hoover considered and rejected another hypothesis, namely that the bronzes might depict Laodike III, mother of Seleukos IV and Antiochos IV.³⁰ His reasons were the youthful appearance of the veiled personage and the fact that there is no example of a queen mother portrayed on Seleukid coinage, except in the role of regent (Laodike IV) or coregent (Kleopatra Thea). While the seal impression of 215/4 somewhat vitiates the latter argument, it provides another that we find compelling: the seal impression has shown us that Laodike III had a strong, aquiline nose, a feature that is simply not in evidence on the bronzes.

It is extremely important to note that the bronzes depicting Laodike IV exhibit multiple control links to the other Antiochene bronzes of Seleukos IV, implying that they were produced over the same period of time. There is nothing to suggest that this entire coinage should be dated after summer 182, with the corollary that Antioch issued no bronze coins between the accession of Seleukos IV in 187 and his supposed remarriage after the death of his queen. On the contrary, the portrait on these bronzes argues powerfully for a single queen throughout the reign of Seleukos IV, as well as for her marriage to Antiochos IV.

The visual evidence at our disposal thus supports the long-established view that Laodike, the daughter of Antiochos III and Laodike III, married three of her brothers in succession and reigned as Laodike IV.

3. The goddess Nikephoros on coinage of Antiochos IV

The veiled female bust disappeared from the bronze coinage of Antiochos IV c. 173/2, but very shortly afterward he introduced a new and even more enigmatic female figure to his coinage. We refer to the goddess Nikephoros, who seems to be intimately connected with the king's epiphany as a solar god.³¹ She was the featured reverse type of two different series of bronze coins at Seleukeia on the Tigris, of a single bronze issue at Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa), and of bronze coins of an uncertain western mint in Koile Syria, perhaps Samaria.

a) In the latter 170s the mint of Seleukeia on the Tigris, which for decades had specialized in small bronze coins only, introduced a reformed bronze coinage in three denominations.³² The smallest coin of this series (Seleukeia Series 1) was the standard bronze denomination of Seleukeia, and the two larger denominations were its double and quadruple. On the largest denomination (Fig. 5), the goddess is seated left on a high-backed throne, holding a small figure of Nike. A six-pointed star appears above the Nikephoros' head, and she wears a broad stephane of a type normally associated

³⁰ HOOVER, *l.c.* (n. 27), p. 83.

³¹ See P. IOSSIF and C. LORBER, "Celestial Imagery on the Eastern Coinage of Antiochos IV", forthcoming.

³² HOUGHTON, *o.c.* (n. 29) n° 989; G. LE RIDER, *Suse sous les Séleucides et les Parthes: les trouvailles monétaires et l'histoire de la ville*, Paris, 1965 (*Mémoires de la Mission archéologique en Iran*, 38), p. 139, pl. XXVI, E and H, and n° 306.



Fig. 5. Bronze coin from Seleukeia on the Tigris; from HOUGHTON, o.c. (n. 29), n° 989.

Fig. 6. Bronze coin from Seleukeia on the Tigris; from LE RIDER, o.c. (n. 32), p. 139, pl. xxvi, H.

Fig. 7. Bronze coin from Seleukeia on the Tigris; from LE RIDER, o.c. (n. 32), n° 306.2.

with Hera or Aphrodite, its rear half covered by a veil.³³ A scepter lies at an oblique angle in the background, apparently propped against the throne. On the middle denomination (Fig. 6), the type is identical except that the star is absent. It is this particular representation of the goddess Nikephoros that is famously replicated in a clay impression from an official seal of Orchoi.³⁴ On the smallest denomination (Fig. 7), the goddess has the same attributes as on the middle denomination, but she sits on a low throne with rounded back and lion's leg, probably ornamented with a star on the side. All three denominations display the king's cult title Theos Epiphanes, which on western bronzes is associated with a new type of royal portrait showing Antiochos with rays emanating from his hair. The epithet Theos Epiphanes does not occur on any other coinage of Seleukeia on the Tigris, and indeed does not appear

³³ V. PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *L'Aphrodite grecque. Contribution à l'étude de ses cultes et de sa personnalité dans le panthéon archaïque et classique*, Liège/Athens, 1994 (*Kernos*, suppl. 4), p. 137-138, argues that this kind of headgear, usually qualified as a *polos* in modern bibliography, could be connected with Aphrodite Ourania, but that it shouldn't be taken as a defining attribute of this particular aspect of the goddess.

³⁴ M. ROSTOVITZEF, "Seleucid Babylonia. Bullae and Seals of Clay with Greek Inscriptions", *YCS* 3 (1932), p. 38, Bulla 48, pl. vii, 8. Rostovtzeff noted the similarity to the coin types but identified the subject as Tyche. Cf. also G. LINDSTRÖM, *Uruk. Siegelabdrücke auf hellenistischen Tonbullen und Tontafeln*, Mainz, 2003, p. 46-47, Fig. 60. Lindström does not propose a precise identification of the goddess Nikephoros and refers to the "impossibility of identifying the goddess because of the unusual combination of attributes".

elsewhere in the east with the exception of a single drachm emission of Ekbatana.³⁵ (In addition Theos alone is found on Ekbatana tetradrachms and another drachm.)³⁶ The goddess Nikephoros reverse type is connected to the epiphany of Antiochos IV not only by his *epiklesis*, but also by the identical stars that appear above the heads of both king and goddess on the largest denomination of this Seleukeian bronze series.

b) Contemporaneously, Seleukeia on the Eulaios (Susa) produced a bronze issue corresponding to the smallest denomination of Seleukeia on the Tigris and employing the same reverse type.³⁷ In this case the star is definitely present on the throne, but the legend simply names King Antiochos. His portrait on the obverse does not involve celestial imagery; instead he wears an elephant headdress.³⁸

c) At a slightly later date Seleukeia on the Tigris replaced its three bronze denominations with another reformed bronze coinage (Seleukeia Series 2), this time comprising four denominations, of which the three largest bore obverse marks of value (Fig. 8).³⁹ These coins are extremely common and have been found in numbers in the Seleukeia excavations (as well as in the Susa excavations and in the region of Tehran)⁴⁰; in contrast, the first goddess Nikephoros bronzes are scarce and are not represented among the Seleukeia excavation coins.⁴¹ At least one overstrike has been recorded,⁴² suggesting that the earlier goddess Nikephoros bronzes were withdrawn and restruck to produce the *chalkous*, *dichalkon*, and *tetrachalkon* of the denominated series. On these coins Antiochos IV is portrayed with a radiate diadem, but the reverse legend no longer advertises his cult epithet. The goddess Nikephoros is depicted much as she was on the middle denomination of the earlier coinage, seated left on a high-backed throne and holding a figure of Nike. She now wears a polos instead of the earlier broad stephane, and the veil is placed farther back on her head, behind the polos. The scepter is usually omitted from the design except on the most

³⁵ LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 330, B20, pl. lxiv, 7-8.

³⁶ LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 328, Aa, and p. 329, B14; HOUGHTON, *o.c.* (n. 27), n° 1211-1212.

³⁷ LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), n° 59.

³⁸ Antiochos IV was also portrayed in an elephant headdress on a clay seal impression found at Warka (ancient Orchoi), see LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), pl. lxxiv, 28, and LINDSTRÖM, *o.c.* (n. 34), p. 34-35, pl. 94-1 and 112-1. The elephant headdress should be considered as the symbol of the Alexander-like king, in the general perspective of the *imitatio Alexandri*. We cannot agree with LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 30), p. 309-311, that the elephant headdress expressed the king's interest in Indian trade.

³⁹ LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 140, pl. xxvi, K and L, M-O, with n° 307; HOUGHTON, *o.c.* (n. 29), n° 986.

⁴⁰ Susa excavations: LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), n° 307. Tehran: ID., "Monnaies de bronze séleucides en Iran", *RN* (1972), p. 260-263.

⁴¹ Four specimens of the smallest denomination were found in the Susa excavations: LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), n° 306. In addition, collectors have acquired examples of the smallest and middle denominations in Tehran, and the largest denomination has appeared on the markets of Beirut and Akko.

⁴² G. MACDONALD, *Catalogue of Greek Coins in the Hunterian Collection* III, Glasgow, 1905, p. 43, 15.

carefully executed *tetrachalka*. Most notably, the goddess has a new attribute, a large bird standing left before her feet.

d) The second Seleukeian bronze series apparently served as the model for a western coinage comprising bronze *chalkoi* with obverse marks of value, as well as a few unmarked *hemichalka*.⁴³ The types are those of Seleukeia Series 2, but the treatment of the goddess' headdress is inconsistent. Some coins appear to show a turreted crown, others a coiffure with tufts of hair atop the head, and still others a bare head. In addition, the western coinage is distinguished from that of Seleukeia Series 2 by style, fabric, and provenance. Nearly a hundred specimens have been reported from public and private collections in Israel and from excavations in Israel and the West Bank, with the highest concentration of excavation coins centered on Samaria.⁴⁴



Fig. 8: Bronze coin from Seleucia on the Tigris; from HOUGHTON, o.c. (n. 29), n° 984.



Fig. 9: Bronze coin from Tripolis; from HOUGHTON and SPAER, o.c. (n. 27), n° 1169.

4. Identity of the goddess Nikephoros

The intimate link between the goddess Nikephoros and the epiphany of Antiochos IV is demonstrated by their shared star, by the introduction of the king's title Theos Epiphanes in association with the goddess, by the later pairing of the goddess with his radiate portrait, and perhaps also by the fact that the goddess, through her principal attribute, was a visual representation of his final epithet, Nike-

⁴³ HOUGHTON and SPAER, o.c. (n. 27), n° 1168-1181.

⁴⁴ D. BARAG, "The Mint of Antiochos IV in Jerusalem: Numismatic Evidence on the Prelude to the Maccabean Revolt", in D. BARAG (ed.), *Studies in Memory of Leo Mildenberg*, *INJ* 14 (2000-2002), p. 61-64. Barag attributed these coins to Jerusalem. He rejected Samaria as the mint because it is mentioned only once during the reign of Antiochos IV. HOUGHTON, LORBER and HOOVER, o.c. (n. 27), favor Samaria because of the recorded provenances and the presence there of a Macedonian military colony.

phoros.⁴⁵ It would seem, then, that she was revealed as a sort of tutelary deity to the king, with a simultaneous epiphany signaled by the shared star.

We have asked ourselves whether the new goddess could be the king's wife, Laodike IV. There is no clear evidence that this queen was ever the object of a royal cult. *SEG* 7, 2, the lacunose manumission act from Susa dated 177/6 B.C., was restored by its first editor, B. Haussoullier, as a civic edict naming a high priestess of three Laodikai – Laodike, wife of King Seleukos, Laodike the elder, mother of Seleukos, and Laodike the younger, his daughter.⁴⁶ This reading was refuted by Louis Robert, who argued that the inscription was a manumission decree concluding, like other Susian decrees of emancipation, with a formula “for the health” or “for the safety” of the royal family, and that only two Laodikai were invoked in this formula: the queen-mother (Laodike III) and the queen-spouse of Seleukos IV (Laodike IV).⁴⁷ An issue of bronze coins of Tripolis, dated S.E. 147 (167/6 B.C.), portrays the radiate Antiochos with his queen in the background (Fig. 9).⁴⁸ The jugate portrait may perhaps imply that her status, like the king's, was divine, but she has no divine attributes. Still, the portrait puts Antiochos in the foreground, showing that he exceeded the queen in honor. While the king's precedence is altogether to be expected, it does not support the hypothesis that the queen could have been elevated as his divine guardian. (By comparison, see the marriage tetradrachms of Alexander I Balas and Kleopatra Thea, where Kleopatra occupies the position of honor in the foreground and is associated with special attributes – kalathos and cornucopiae – that imply her assimilation to Tyche, or perhaps already reflect her *epiklesis* Thea Eueteria.⁴⁹)

Another, perhaps more likely candidate for a cult is the king's mother, Laodike III. For one thing, this would be more in line with Babylonian tradition: the very few royal women mentioned in Mesopotamian inscriptions were the mothers of kings,

⁴⁵ IOSSIF and LORBER, *l.c.* (n. 31), argue that the star that appears above the king's head was a symbol of his epiphany, equivalent to the inscription of his *epiklesis* and conveying the same meaning, particularly to his illiterate or non-Greek-speaking subjects. Interestingly, the geographic distribution of mints employing the star-above-head motif is much the same as that of mints depicting the goddess Nikephoros: Phoenicia, Koile Syria, and Babylonia.

⁴⁶ *SEG* 7, 2, l. 9-14 with previous literature.

⁴⁷ ROBERT, *o.c.* (n. 26), p. 26-28. It is very surprising that a recent study on the topic ignored Robert's restitutions: D.T. POTTS (dir.), *The Archaeology of Elam. Formation and Transformation of an Ancient Iranian State*, Cambridge, 1998, p. 364.

⁴⁸ HOUGHTON and SPAER, *o.c.* (n. 27), n° 1068-1069. Because of the poor artistic quality of these coins, we have not cited them in our analyses of the portraiture of the two Laodikai. The female head on n° 1068 is youthful in appearance and consistent with the likenesses of Laodike IV on the seal impression from Seleukeia on the Tigris, on the gold oktadrachms of Antioch, and on the veiled female bust/elephant head bronze coins. But the features of Antiochos IV on the same coin are unrecognizable. N° 1069, in contrast, bears an identifiable portrait of the king, but that of Laodike is not clear.

⁴⁹ A. HOUGHTON, “The Double Portrait Coins of Alexander I Balas and Cleopatra Thea”, *SNR* 67 (1988), p. 85-93. Houghton attributed this marriage issue to Seleucia in Pieria, but in HOUGHTON, LORBER and HOOVER, *o.c.* (n. 27), he and his coauthors propose its reattribution to Ptolemaïs (Ake), site of the royal wedding.

perhaps commemorated for their “role in maintaining the dynastic succession.”⁵⁰ We have already described the foundation of Laodike’s cult in 193, though we questioned its geographic extent and can cite no documents attesting to the perpetuation of her worship. The afore-mentioned Susian inscription proves that the Queen-Mother was still alive in 177/6. Assuming she was at least fifteen years of age when she gave birth to her first child in 221, she would have been sixty or older in the year of the inscription. By happy chance, we have a probable likeness of her in her old age, on a clay seal impression from Orchoi (Fig. 10).⁵¹ This object has no archaeological or chronological context. Gunvar Lindström identified the veiled female head as a portrait of Laodike IV. However the image, with its aquiline nose and strongly receding cheek, presents a striking resemblance to Laodike III as portrayed on the seal impression of 215/4 from Seleukeia on the Tigris. We have no record concerning the death of Laodike III, but given her likely age in 177/6, there is a reasonable chance that she died in the next few years. The sudden appearance of the goddess Nikephoros, marked as an epiphany by the star above her head, may reflect new honors accorded the Queen-Mother in her old age, or her entry among the (other) gods at the time of her death.⁵²



Fig. 10: Seal impression from Orchoi; from LINDSTRÖM, o.c. (n. 34), p. 32, pl. 277-1.

While this proposed identification of the goddess Nikephoros may seem adventurous, an investigation of her attributes will show that it is not unsupported. Her principal attribute, Nike, was ordinarily an adjunct of Zeus and Athena. But one other deity could be associated with Nike – Aphrodite, the very goddess with whom

⁵⁰ A. KUERT and S. SHERWIN-WHITE, “Aspects of Seleucid Royal Ideology: The Cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa”, *JHS* 111 (1991), p. 84; the three mothers mentioned are Sammuramat (Semiramis), mother of Adadnirari III (810-783), Naqī’a-Zakûtu, mother of Esarhaddon (681-669), and Adda’guppi, mother of Nabonidus (556-530). The authors remark that in two of these cases the sons mounted the throne under “extraordinary circumstances”.

⁵¹ LINDSTRÖM, o.c. (n. 34), p. 32, pl. 277-1.

⁵² *OGIS*, 308, 4 describes the Attalid queen Apollonis as μεθέστηκεν εἰς θεοῦς upon her death. In our eastern context, it may be relevant that only three royal women were mentioned in pre-Seleucid foundation inscriptions from Mesopotamia, all of them the mothers of reigning kings (see n. 50). It is important to stipulate that these mothers of kings were not deified.

Laodike III was identified in her civic cult at Iasos.⁵³ While usually understood as a goddess of love and fertility, Aphrodite had a bellicose aspect that was far more pronounced in the eastern goddesses from whom she derived, such as the Sumerian Inanna, the Akkadian Ištar, or the Phoenician Astarte.⁵⁴ To use Walter Burkert's words: "Aphrodite has clear but complex connections with the East."⁵⁵ In the Greek world there survived a few old cults of a warlike Aphrodite: she was worshipped as Aphrodite Areia at Sparta, as Aphrodite Strategis on Paros, and as Aphrodite Strateia at Mylasa.⁵⁶ Representations associated with these cults usually showed the goddess armed, as did her cult figures at Corinth and at Kythera, but a statue at Argos portrayed an Aphrodite Nikephoros.⁵⁷

⁵³ The existence of Aphrodite Nikephoros is noted by O. ZOLOTNIKOVA, "A Female Divinity in the Religious Policy of Antiochus IV through the Greek Religious Iconography", *NAC* 26 (1997), p. 265-267, but she concludes that it was probably a development of the type of Aphrodite crowned by Eros and in any case not an influence on the coinage of Antiochos IV.

⁵⁴ For Astarte, see C. BONNET, *Astarté. Dossier documentaire et perspective historiques*, Rome, 1996, *passim*. For the Oriental origins of Aphrodite, in particular the role of Cyprus in her transformation into a Greek dualistic divinity involving maternal and warlike aspects, see S.L. BUDIN, *The Origin of Aphrodite*, Bethesda, 2003, p. 273-282.

⁵⁵ W. BURKERT, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis. Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture*, Cambridge, MA/London, 2004, p. 32.

⁵⁶ PAUSANIAS, III, 17, 5; Ph. LE BAS, *Inscriptions grecques et latines recueillies en Grèce par la Commission de Morée V. Îles de la mer Égée*. Paris, 1839, 2062; *CIG* 3137, 2693. On the military and warrior aspect of Aphrodite in Sparta, see PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *o.c.* (n. 33), p. 193-216, in particular p. 208 where the author clearly prefers the warrior and military character of the epithet *Areia* and points out that the *epiklesis* does not imply that the goddess becomes a warrior-goddess but that she expresses her action in a war context. This is also the case for the *xoanon* of the goddess in Kythera where she is worshipped as *Ourania*, *eadem*, p. 222-224. There is also an *Aphrodite Stratagis* from Acarnania (*IG*, IX² 1.2, 256) but she is not identified as a warrior goddess. For the military implications of the goddess in general, see PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *o.c.* (n. 33), p. 450-454 and especially G. PIRONTI, "Aphrodite dans le domaine d'Arès. Éléments pour un dialogue entre mythe et culte", *Kernos* 18 (2005), p. 167-185, in particular p. 172-184 where the military character and implications of the goddess are considered in the context of the Greek polytheism, free from questions of Oriental origins. The Italian scholar has assembled a relatively complete *dossier* of connections of the goddess to war (p. 175-178), and there is no need to repeat the evidence here. For a different methodological approach of Aphrodite – warrior-goddess based not only on the literal evidence but also on the archaeological and iconographic patterns, cf. I. SOLIMA, "Era, Artemide e Afrodite in Magna Grecia e in Grecia. Dee armate o dee belliche?", *MEFRA* 110/1 (1998), p. 381-417, in particular p. 402-416.

⁵⁷ The cult statue of Aphrodite atop the Acrocorinth was armed (PAUSANIAS, II, 5, 1). On the military and warrior aspect of Aphrodite in Corinth, see PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *o.c.* (n. 33), p. 93-127, in particular p. 109 (it is worth noting here that Pausanias does not use the term *hoplismene* as the *epiklesis* of the goddess, but as an adjective referring to her cult statue). At Kythera there was an armed wooden image of Aphrodite Ourania (PAUSANIAS, III, 23, 1). The Aphrodite Nikephoros of Argos is mentioned by PAUSANIAS, II, 19, 6 and the goddess is also honored in association with Ares (PAUSANIAS, II, 25, 1).

Of particular relevance to our inquiry is the cult of Aphrodite Stratonikis at Smyrna. This cult is known from two inscriptions dating from the Seleukid occupation of the city.

The first inscription is the famous “Oxford stone,”⁵⁸ a decree of Smyrna concerning the treaty between the inhabitants of Smyrna and those of Magnesia near Mt. Sipylos. The document is to be dated between 246 and 240, under the reign of Seleukos II.⁵⁹ An important passage (l. 9-10) refers to the establishment of the cult of the king’s father Antiochos II (Theos) and of his grandmother Stratonike, who is also qualified as “Goddess” (Thea). The use of Theos to qualify Antiochos II is not surprising⁶⁰; it is more surprising that Queen Stratonike is the subject of a divine cult in Smyrna. The form of the cult (*great honors*) paid to the Seleukid queen-goddess (and to Antiochos II) is to be connected with the cult established for Aphrodite Stratonikis mentioned in lines 11 (“sanctuary of Aphrodite Stratonikis”), 70 (“I swear by Zeus... Aphrodite Stratonikis...”), and 83 (“consecrate [the stelae of the agreement] in the sanctuary of Aphrodite Stratonikis”). In conclusion, the decree informs us about the existence of a sanctuary dedicated to Aphrodite Stratonikis, which is the principal sanctuary of the city⁶¹; Queen Stratonike is honored by a cult in Smyrna and the oath is taken in the name of a series of gods including this local divinity. The association between Aphrodite and Queen Stratonike follows the well-known pattern of the *synnaos theos*: the queen is honored as a goddess in the city and her cult is associated with the cult of Aphrodite.⁶²

The second inscription is a decree from Delphoi concerning the granting of sanctity and inviolability to the temple of Aphrodite Stratonikis.⁶³ This decree is also to be dated to the reign of Seleukos II. These two documents leave no doubt about the association or assimilation of Queen Stratonike with the principal divinity of Smyrna.

⁵⁸ *OGIS*, 229 = *I. Magnesia am Sipylos*, 1. For the latest edition of the Smyrna inscription and the previous bibliography, see H. KOTSIDU, *TIMH KAI ΔΟΞΑ. Ehrungen für hellenistische Herrscher im griechischen Mutterland und in Kleinasien unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der archäologischen Denkmäler*, Berlin, 2000, p. 330-333, n° 231 (E1). For an English translation of the inscription, see M.M. AUSTIN, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest. A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*, Cambridge, 1981, n° 182.

⁵⁹ For KOTSIDU, *o.c.* (n. 58), p. 332 the decree is to be dated 242 B.C.

⁶⁰ Theos is the regular *epiklesis* of Antiochos II as proved by the following inscriptions: *OGIS*, 226 = KOTSIDU, *o.c.* (n. 58), n° 272 (E); *OGIS*, 233, 3; *OGIS*, 245, 14 and 37; *OGIS*, 246, 5.

⁶¹ This conclusion is supported by two factors: a) The temple where the Magnesians are to consecrate the *sympoliteia* decree is the temple of Artemis Leukophruene, the patron divinity of the city; so it is legitimate to consider that the Smyrnians should have consecrated the decree in the sanctuary of the patron divinity of their city; b) AELIUS ARISTIDES, 17, 10 K describes her temple as being the principal sanctuary of the city.

⁶² For the notion of *synnaos theos* in general, see A.D. NOCK, “Synnaos theos”. *HSCP* 41 (1930), p. 1-62 (the author doesn’t mention any Seleucid case of *synnaos* cult); B. SCHMIDT-DOUNAS, “Statuen hellenistischer Könige als Synnaoi Theoi”, *Egnatia* 4 (1993/1994), p. 71-141.

⁶³ *OGIS*, 228 = *Inscriptions de Delphes* III, 153 = KOTSIDU, *o.c.* (n. 58), n° 88 (E).

K. Rigsby has expressed the opinion that the divine *epiklesis* did not refer to the associated cult of Aphrodite and the deified queen, but his arguments are not conclusive. He asserts that the similarity between the *epiklesis* and the name of the queen is merely “a happy accident.”⁶⁴ But he fails to prove that the cult of an Aphrodite Stratonikis antedated the Seleukid occupation of the city and the cult offered to the Seleukid queen.⁶⁵ In the actual state of our documentation, we believe that there is no need to question the association or assimilation of the queen with Aphrodite. In fact, the association of Hellenistic queens with Aphrodite was a very common phenomenon. Apart from the numerous associations of the Ptolemaic queens with the divinity of love, one later Seleukid case can help us to understand the weakness of Rigsby’s thesis: it is the association of Queen Laodike III with Aphrodite in Iasos through the creation of a priesthood of “Queen Aphrodite Laodike.”⁶⁶ The document dates to c. 196 B.C., which means a few months after the Seleukid takeover of the city, and is to be understood in the context of the “municipal” royal cult. This phenomenon, totally misunderstood by Rigsby, can respond to his objection about the rapidity of the adoption of Aphrodite Stratonikis by the Smyrnians. The American scholar asks “whether a goddess so new and artificial (*sic*) might become the patron divinity of a Greek city and then quickly be honored with inviolability.”⁶⁷ We believe that the case of Laodike in Iasos clearly indicates that the creation, adoption, and integration of the ruler’s cult into the framework of the civic cults is a phenomenon that took place very quickly and dramatically influenced the civic structure (“creating memory,” in the words of John Ma).

The cult statue of Aphrodite Stratonikis was depicted on the second largest denomination of Smyrna’s bronze coinage, in four variants.⁶⁸ All show the goddess wearing a polos or tall stephane and holding a wreath-bearing Nike in her left hand. In the earliest, most artistic variant the statue is shown from the side, facing right; Aphrodite’s left foot is advanced, set on a low platform; she rests her left arm on a low column; and a scepter stands between her and the column.⁶⁹ In a second, minor variant the column and scepter are omitted.⁷⁰ The third variant shows the statue from the front, with the column to the viewer’s right, and the scepter now transferred to the opposite side or omitted.⁷¹ In the final variant (Fig. 11), a large, standing bird is added to the preceding composition, in the field to the right of the column.⁷² Thus the cult of

⁶⁴ K. RIGSBY, *Asyilia. Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World*, Berkeley/London, 1996, p. 95-99.

⁶⁵ RIGSBY, *o.c.* (n. 64), p. 98.

⁶⁶ MA, *o.c.* (n. 2), n° 26, l. 80, with the improvements by M. NAFISSI, “L’iscrizione di Laodice (Ivlasos 4). Revisione del testo e nuove osservazioni”, *PP* 56 (2001), p. 101-146.

⁶⁷ RIGSBY, *o.c.* (n. 64), p. 97.

⁶⁸ J.G. MILNE, “The autonomous coinage of Smyrna, Section II”, *NC* 1927, p. 1-107, and “Section III”, *NC* (1928), p. 131-171, Type M.

⁶⁹ MILNE, *l.c.* (n. 68), “Section II,” pl. I, 92, 98, 109; pl. II, 121, 125, 147, 163, 178; pl. III, 231, 266; pl. IV, 275, 295, 305, 316, 320.

⁷⁰ MILNE, *l.c.* (n. 68), “Section II,” pl. III, 202, 248.

⁷¹ MILNE, *l.c.* (n. 68), “Section II,” pl. III, 343, 350; *Id.*, “Section III,” pl. 360.

⁷² MILNE, *l.c.* (n. 68), “Section III,” pl. VIII, 362, 382, 385, 407, 410.

Aphrodite Stratonikis at Smyrna provides a precedent not only for assimilating a Seleukid queen to Aphrodite, but also for depicting the resulting syncretic deity as a Nikephoros with whom a bird might be associated.⁷³



Fig. 11. Bronze coin from Smyrna; from MILNE, l.c. (n. 68), n° 410.

Fig. 12. Silver tetradrachm from Amastris (photo: Cathy Lorber^{*}).

Fig. 13. Silver tetradrachm from Amastris (photo: Cathy Lorber^{*}).

There is one further third-century example associating a Hellenistic queen with Aphrodite Nikephoros. Amastris, a niece of the Great King Dareios III, was successively married to Krateros; to Dionysios, tyrant of Herakleia Bithyniae; and briefly to

⁷³ The appearance of the bird on the autonomous coinage of Smyrna is a good argument against the thesis of LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 291-292, who identified the bird on the second Seleukian bronze series of Antiochos IV as an eagle. He considered it a cryptic symbol of Zeus as *synnaos theos* of the goddess Nikephoros. In this he followed L. ROBERT, *La déesse de Hiérapolis Kastabala*, Paris, 1964, p. 96-99, in particular p. 98: Robert traced the development of the bronze coinage of Castabala, where quasi-municipal issues with the portrait of Antiochos IV and an eagle reverse gave way to municipal issues showing the local goddess Perasia enthroned, with an eagle beneath her seat. For Robert, the discreet presence of the eagle is evidence that Antiochos IV introduced the cult of Olympian Zeus into the temple of Perasia. Both Robert and Le Rider were inspired by the conviction that Antiochos IV promoted the cult of Zeus Olympios. This "politique jovienne" is an illusion with respect to the eastern part of the Seleucid empire, where depictions of the chief god of the Olympian pantheon are extremely rare: a royal bronze coinage perhaps from Susa, depicting Zeus Ammon on the obverse and Nike in biga on the reverse, is the only reference to Zeus in the east (LE RIDER, *o.c.* [n. 32], n° 62 and p. 67); the majority of types remains connected to the cult of Apollo.

Lysimachos (c. 302-c. 300).⁷⁴ After her repudiation by Lysimachos, she founded the city of Amastris in Paphlagonia.⁷⁵ The city issued a compact coinage of Persic-weight staters, featuring a young head in a laureate Phrygian bonnet on the obverse and an enthroned Aphrodite on the reverse.⁷⁶ The first series (Fig. 12), issued in the name of Queen Amastris, shows Aphrodite veiled, holding a wreath-bearing Eros, with a radiate head of Helios before the face of the goddess, perhaps identifying her as Aphrodite Ourania⁷⁷; a scepter is propped against the throne. A second series, still in the queen's name, adds a polos beneath Aphrodite's veil, replaces the Eros with a wreath-bearing Nike, and eliminates the head of Helios; the scepter, now lotus-tipped, is cradled in the goddess' left elbow. After the death of Queen Amastris c. 284,⁷⁸ the city itself was named as the issuing authority. A star was soon added to the Persian headdress on the obverse, and the identity of the goddess on the reverse was assured by the addition of a rose or rose bud in left field (Fig. 13). The iconography of these coins clearly associates Queen Amastris with Aphrodite Nikephoros and may even imply her assimilation to the goddess. We would understand the symbolism better were the obverse type not so obscure. Of the interpretations that have been offered, the most acceptable are that the head is that of Mithras, in which case the star would advertise his celestial qualities, or that the head is a portrait of Queen Amastris herself, in which case the star might mark her apotheosis, her entry among the gods. In any case, the reverse type, like that of Smyrna's bronzes, represents an actual cult statue, depicted centuries later on bronzes of the Antonine period.⁷⁹ The early coins of Amastris also demonstrate that astral symbols were associated with the figure of Aphrodite Nikephoros in a Persian milieu, where many presumably saw the great Iranian goddess Anāhita behind the Greek iconography. It is quite possible that such images and ideas were translated to the Seleukid court by Laodike III, a Pontic princess who also claimed descent from the royal Achaemenids (as well as from the Seleukids), and who grew up in proximity to Paphlagonian Amastris.

5. Attributes of the Nikephoros: Nike

Depictions of Aphrodite Nikephoros are scarce, and it cannot be accidental that two of them represent Hellenistic queens associated with or assimilated to Aphrodite.⁸⁰ While some cult images of Aphrodite evoked her bellicose nature and her eastern equivalents, the Nike should be understood as something more than a symbol of military victory. Seleukos I had associated Nike with the image of the deified

⁷⁴ MEMNON, 434 F 4.4 and 434 F 5.4 Jacoby; STRABO, XII, 3, 10; DIODORUS, XX, 109, 6.

⁷⁵ PLINY, *NH* VI, 5; MEMNON, 434 F 4.9 Jacoby; STRABO, XII, 3, 10.

⁷⁶ F. DE CALLATAÏ, "Le premier monnayage de la cité d'Amastris (Paphlagonie)", *SNR* 83 (2004), p. 57-80, provides a die study and analysis.

⁷⁷ F. IMHOOF-BLUMER, *Monnaies grecques*, Paris/Leipzig, 1883, p. 229.

⁷⁸ MEMNON, 434 F 5.3 Jacoby.

⁷⁹ DE CALLATAÏ, *l.c.* (n. 76), pl. 11, C.

⁸⁰ A. DELIVORRIAS, s.v. "Aphrodite", *LIMC* II/2 (1984), illustrates only two examples of Aphrodite Nikephoros, n° 332a-b (the bronze coins of Smyrna showing Aphrodite Stratonikis) and n° 817 (a stater of Amastris).

Alexander on anepigraphic gold darics and double darics issued at Babylon, Susa, and Ekbatana.⁸¹ In this pairing, Nike symbolized Alexander's final triumph, his transcendence of earthly life and his attainment of immortality among the gods. That these coins were struck on the Persic weight standard implies that the intended recipients were native Babylonians and the Iranians of Elymais and Media – the latter sharing the culture of the Persian ruling class at Amastris. The same images were repeated on contemporary bronze coins of Susa and Ekbatana.⁸² Because of their early date (c. 300-298), these bronzes were probably not yet acceptable to the native populations of the east and so carried their message of triumphant immortality to Macedonian and Greek soldiers and colonists.

The cult of Aphrodite Nikephoros in Argos provides further evidence that the notion of Nike is not only military but should be considered from different viewpoints. Pausanias describes the *xoanon* of the goddess, a dedication of Hypermnestra, in the sanctuary of Apollo Lykios and explains by an etiological myth the origin of the *epiklesis* Nikephoros: Hypermnestra was the only one of Danaus' daughters who disobeyed her father's command to kill her husband; in her trial, she was acquitted by the jury of Argives and to commemorate her victory she dedicated an image of Aphrodite Nikephoros.⁸³ Starting from Pausanias' etiological explanation of the *epiklesis* Nikephoros, Vincianne Pirenne-Delforge argues in favor of a matrimonial context for the dedication, especially because of the pronounced matrimonial character of the myth of the Danaides.⁸⁴ The presence of winged figures on the *lebes gamikoi* of the second half of the fifth century B.C. is another argument in favor of this interpretation. The *epiklesis* Nikephoros seems to be an exaltation of the virtues of marriage and matrimonial life.

We noted previously that the queen Laodike III was assimilated with Aphrodite in Iasos. It is important for our purpose to determine the particular character of this *artificial*, to use Kent Rigsby's words, divinity: the city of Iasos instituted a cult of the queen as Aphrodite Laodike. The field of action of the divinized queen is marriage: the city decreed that her cult consisted of sacrifices by newly married couples and processions of women of marriageable age. We are also informed from the letter that the queen addressed to the Iasians that among other benefactions she provided the dowries for the daughters of poor families.⁸⁵

These examples clearly demonstrate the matrimonial character of Aphrodite in their particular contexts. It may be significant that the other Hellenistic queens associated with Aphrodite Nikephoros had complicated marriage histories. Amastris was married three times, but there is no doubt that her marriage to Dionysios, the tyrant of Herakleia Bithyniae, was the most important because it was the longest, the one that produced successors, and the one that created the basis for her power after

⁸¹ A. HOUGHTON and C. LORBER, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue*, Part 1. *Seleucus I to Antiochus III*, Lancaster/New York, 2002, n° 101, 183, 219.

⁸² HOUGHTON and LORBER, *o.c.* (n. 81), n° 189, 222.

⁸³ PAUSANIAS, II, 19, 6.

⁸⁴ PIRENNE-DELFORGE, *o.c.* (n. 33), p. 153-154 and 452-453.

⁸⁵ MA, *o.c.* (n. 2), n° 26; NAFISSI, *l.c.* (n. 66).

Lysimachos divorced her. The Seleukids could hardly delegitimize Stratonike's marriage to Seleukos I, but her marriage to Antiochos I was clearly the "true" marriage, because it lasted longer and engendered the legitimate line of succession.⁸⁶ We don't know whether there was actually any propagandistic intent in these Aphrodite Nikephoros cults, or in that promoted by Antiochos IV. But it is easy enough to propose motives. Antiochos III took a second, younger wife during his invasion of Europe, and though it produced no rival line of claimants to the Seleukid throne, the children of Laodike III may nevertheless have been moved to assert the sacredness of her marriage. And if, on the other hand, it was Laodike IV who was associated in the cult of Aphrodite Nikephoros, her incestuous marriages to all three of her brothers, and her bearing of children to two of them, were acts that transgressed the laws of men but were permissible to deities.

6. Attributes of the Nikephoros: the bird

Just as the epiphany of Antiochos IV proceeded in two stages in the east, first a general epiphany, then the revelation of his nature as a solar deity, so too his goddess Nikephoros received a more specific identifying attribute in the second stage, the large bird that stands before her feet. On the denominated bronzes of Seleukeia Series 2, its distinctive features are a long neck; a large, straight beak; a relatively slight body; and moderately long legs. These are, generally speaking, the proportions of wading water birds such as herons and egrets.⁸⁷ On the western goddess Nikephoros *chalkoi*, the bird is more compact, but the small size and poor style of these coins compromise their value for iconographic study. Of all Greek goddesses, Aphrodite is the one most strongly associated with birds, including doves, sparrows, swans, and geese. Depictions of Aphrodite holding a bird are too numerous to cite. She is frequently shown riding on the back of a swan or goose.⁸⁸ Still closer to the Nikephoros of Antiochos IV are various representations of Aphrodite with a large bird or birds at her feet, which show that the theme persisted from the late sixth century into the fourth century.⁸⁹ The addition of the bird as an attribute of the Nikephoros both assured her identity and asserted her aspect as the goddess of fertility, while perhaps also suggesting the sky and thus invoking the third major aspect of Aphrodite, as Ourania.⁹⁰ All three of these aspects were also prominent on coinage struck for the

⁸⁶ For this major episode in the creation of the Seleukid royal identity, see A. MASTROCINQUE, *Manipolazione della storia in età ellenistica: I Seleucidi e Roma*, Roma, 1983, p. 11-38, in particular p. 12-15.

⁸⁷ Of bird species found today in Iraq, those that most closely resemble the coin images are the Squacco Heron and the Cattle Egret. Other possible candidates are the more gracile Western Reef Heron, Purple Heron, Goliath Heron, and White Stork, see R.F. PORTER, S. CHRISTIANSEN, and P. SCHIERMACKER-HANSEN, *Birds of the Middle East*, Princeton, 2004, p. 16-21.

⁸⁸ A. DELIVORRIAS, s.v. "Aphrodite", *LIMC* II/2 (1984), n° 903-946.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, nos. 63, 214, 317, 804, 806, 1343, 1490-1490a, 1514.

⁹⁰ Georges Le Rider offered a very different interpretation of the bird (n. 73 above).

Roman empresses, under the names Venus Victrix, Venus Genetrix, and Venus Caelestis.

7. Ancient Near Eastern precedents and equivalents

The bronze coinage of Seleukeia will have been used primarily by the native populations of the east, who would have seen these images with different eyes. Our written sources, both Greek and Babylonian, provide no evidence for the cult of Aphrodite in the east. And eastern images considered to be representations of Aphrodite rarely, if ever, involve birds.⁹¹ For the native Babylonians, the goddess Nikephoros and her bird may have evoked images from the ancient past of Mesopotamia. Two Sumerian statuettes survive showing a goddess seated on a “goose-throne,” in one instance with two large birds at the sides of the throne, in the other with a pair of large birds facing one another at her feet.⁹² A common theme on cylinder seals, especially those of Ur Dynasty III (c. 2000-1900), is a goddess enthroned with a large bird before her feet.⁹³ Representations of a goddess on a “goose-throne” continued in the Old Babylonian period (c. 1750-1550).⁹⁴ They then cease for more than a millennium, although the old images may have enjoyed a long currency due to the later use of early cylinder seals, necessitated by the rarity of stone in the region. That their memory somehow survived may perhaps be inferred from the revival of the goddess with bird motif in Seleucid and post-Hellenistic art.⁹⁵

The identity of the goddess on the “goose-throne” remains somewhat uncertain. Probably the strongest candidate is the Sumerian goddess Nanše, daughter of the water god Enki, worshipped at Eridu and Lagash. The goddess on the “goose-throne” has also been identified as the fertility goddess Bau/Baba, the “Lady of Abundance.”⁹⁶

⁹¹ Cf. M.-O. JENTEL, s.v. “Aphrodite in peripheria orientali”, *LIMC* II/2 (1984).

⁹² G. LEICK, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, London/New York, 1998, Fig. 6; A. PARROT, *Sumer, the Dawn of Art*. Translated from French by S. Gilbert and J. Emmons, New York, 1961, Fig. 328. Cf. A. DELIVORRIAS, s.v. “Aphrodite”, *LIMC* II/2 (1984), n° 790, a late sixth-century terracotta statuette from Tanagra showing Aphrodite seated on a swan throne.

⁹³ E. PORADA, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals in North American Collections. Collection of the J. Pierpont Morgan Library*, New York, 1948, n° 282, 284, 285; B. BUCHANAN, *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum I. Cylinder Seals*, Oxford, 1966, n° 421, 429; D. COLLON, *Seal Impressions. Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*, London, 1987, p. 37, n° 121.

⁹⁴ E.A. BRAUN-HOLZINGER, “Nanše. B. Archäologisch”, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 9 (1998-2001), p. 160-162.

⁹⁵ For a literary post-Hellenistic appearance of the theme, see AELIAN, *De natura animalium*, XII, 21 in the context of Gilgamesh’s birth; cf. W.F.M. HENKELMAN, “The birth of Gilgameš (Aelian *NA* XII.21). A case-study in literary receptivity”, in R. KRAUTKRAEMER, (ed.), *Tagungsband*, Halle/Saarbrücken, 2005.

⁹⁶ The Bau hymn (*KAR* III, 109 = *VAT* 9670) lists the epithets of the goddess at various cities and temples, see E. EBELING, *Quellen zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion*, 1918 (*Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, 23), p. 49-52. At Ehili, Bau was identified with Ištar.

She was the principal goddess of Lagash and King Gudea called himself the “Son of Bau.”⁹⁷

A third goddess of interest to our inquiry is Nanaia/Nanâ, a Sumerian goddess worshipped especially at Ur and Uruk. Although she was not depicted with birds in ancient Near Eastern art, her assimilation to other goddesses eventually created such an association in the Hellenistic period.⁹⁸ A hymn of the Isin-Larsa period (ca. 1950-1850) portrays her as essentially a goddess of wisdom and a great judge, with a special relationship to the deified king Išbi-Irra: she causes his holy attributes to grow, he makes her words become reality, while the naming of Nanâ as queen suggests a sacred marriage.⁹⁹ In a bilingual Sumerian-Akkadian hymn Nanâ is assimilated to the goddesses of various other cities, including Bau, but she is most prominently identified with Ištar, the goddess of erotic love, but also a war goddess, the Akkadian precursor and equivalent of Greek Aphrodite.¹⁰⁰ Later hymns associate Nanâ with the Assyrian kings Sargon II (721-705) and Ašurbanipal (668-626).¹⁰¹

This goddess is depicted on seal impressions found during the Italian excavations in Seleukeia on the Tigris (Fig. 14). Ariela Bollati distinguishes between three different syncretic types of Nanaia/Nanâ on the seals coming from the imperial capital: a) Nanaia-Artemis; b) Nanaia-Artemis-Athena; c) Nanaia-Artemis-Aphrodite.¹⁰² The last syncretic form is of particular interest for the better understanding of the Nikephoros coins: the goddess is depicted seated on a throne, holding a torch in her right hand and having the left arm behind the lower part of her back. The position

⁹⁷ H. FRANKFORT, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature*, Chicago, 1978, p. 300. The worship that Gudea devoted to the goddess is also proved by the fact that he reconstructed her temple in Lagash, see T. JACOBSEN “Mesopotamia”, in H. FRANKFORT *et al.* (eds.), *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*, Chicago, 1977, p. 123-219, in particular p. 156.

⁹⁸ LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 290-296 was the first to propose a possible connection between the seated goddess Nikephoros and Nanaia/Nanâ. He argued that the goddess Nikephoros herself could not be identified as Nanaia, but that she was later associated with Nanaia under the Parthians. His argument assumes that the goddess Nikephoros could be identified with a standing goddess, also wearing a polos, who appeared on other bronzes of Seleukeia on the Tigris (*ibidem*, n° 305). The polos is the only common feature shared by these two goddesses, who otherwise have different attributes. We believe the standing goddess is Agathe Tyche, a demotic deity unconnected with Aphrodite.

⁹⁹ W.W. HALLO, “New hymns to the king of Isin”, *BiOr* XXIII 5/6 (September-November 1966), p. 242-244.

¹⁰⁰ E. REINER, “A Sumero-Akkadian hymn of Nana”, *JNES* 33 (1974), p. 221-236.

¹⁰¹ For the edition of the hymn of Sargon II to Nanaia, see A. LIVINGSTONE (ed.), *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea. State Archives of Assyria* III, Helsinki, 1989, n° 4. Ašurbanipal refers to the return of the statue of Nanaia from Elam, a statue which had been “kidnapped” 1635 years before by the Elamite king Kutir-Naunte II, see *ibidem*, n° 5 and R. BORGER, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals. Die Prismenklassen A, B, C=K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften* (mit einem Beitrag von Andreas Fuchs), Wiesbaden, 1996, p. 57-58 and 242.

¹⁰² INVERNIZZI (dir.), *o.c.* (n. 11), p. 33-34.

of her legs is exactly the same as on the goddess Nikephoros representations (n° Na 3 of the catalogue). What is even more important is the presence of a bird in front of her right leg, occupying the same position as in the goddess Nikephoros depictions. This bird is identified by the editors of the Seleukeian seal impressions as a swan, the characteristic bird of Aphrodite, also associated with Artemis.¹⁰³ The path creating the complex syncretism between Nanaia/Nanâ and Aphrodite is of course their common association and identification with the goddess Ištar. The divine aspect advanced through this association seems to be the character of Ištar as goddess of love, the Aphrodite Ourania of the Greeks.



Fig. 14. Seal impression from Seleukeia on the Tigris; Na 3 (S6-11226); courtesy of 'Centro Scavi Torino'.

There is no possible doubt about the importance of Nanaia/Nanâ during the Seleukid period. Nanaia/Nanâ is identified as one of the principal divinities of Susa under the Seleukids and her sanctuary is known by an inscription (*SEG* 7, 22); in the manumission acts from Susa, the slaves are consecrated to Nanaia (*SEG* 7, 15; 18; 22; 24).¹⁰⁴ These documents clearly attest the close connection of Nanaia with the Seleukid royal couple and demonstrate the *dynastic* character of her cult.¹⁰⁵ The exceptional popularity of the goddess can also be demonstrated by the importance of her cult during the later periods: Parthian and Koushan.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Cf. INVERNIZZI (dir.), *o.c.* (n. 11), p. 34, n. 22 for the bibliographical references.

¹⁰⁴ The freed slave is consecrated to Apollo and Artemis Dattai in *SEG* 7, 17, cited earlier in another context: the *epiklesis* is also used in Daphne for Apollo and Artemis and demonstrates the diffusion of a royal religious network promoted by the king and his court. In both cases, Apollo and Artemis Dattai can be considered as *dynastic gods*. They form a group with other dynastic gods, as Zeus Olympios, Zeus Koryphaios, and Apollo in Daphne. Cf. *IGLS* 3.992 (*RC* 44); 3.1184; *SEG* 8.33; 8, 96.

¹⁰⁵ For the *hyper* dedications and the tripartite relation between the dedicator, the royal couple, and the dynastic gods, see P. IOSSIF, "La dimension publique des dédicaces « privées » du culte royal ptolémaïque", in V. DASEN and M. PIÉART (eds.), *Ἱδία καὶ δημοσία. Les cadres « privés » et « publics » de la religion grecque antique, Actes du IX^e colloque du Centre International d'Étude de la Religion Grecque Antique (CIERGA) tenu à Fribourg du 8 au 10 septembre 2003*, Liège, 2005 (*Kernos*, suppl. 15), p. 235-257.

¹⁰⁶ A. DELIVORRIAS, s.v. "Aphrodite", *LIMC* II/2 (1984), n° 865 and R. GÖBL, *Münzprägung des Kusanreiches*, Vienna, 1984, n° 35, 43, 54, 300, 777. Possible depictions of the same goddess can be identified on the reverse of bronzes struck at Susa during the Parthian

Nanâ had a special association with the Sekeukid house through her consort, the god Nabû. One of the principal documents of Seleukid Babylonia records the reconstruction of Ezida, the sanctuary of Nabû at Borsippa, by Antiochos I.¹⁰⁷ The traditional *Akitu* festival of Babylon, celebrated at the New Year, involved the travel of Nabû from Borsippa to Babylon via a special processional canal, accompanied by the king.¹⁰⁸ Seleukos III is known to have donated money for sacrifices performed in the *Akitu* celebration of 8 Nisannu S.E.B. 88 (224 B.C.).¹⁰⁹ Antiochos III participated personally in the *Akitu* festival of 8 Nisannu S.E.B. 107 (7 April 205 B.C.).¹¹⁰ The fragmentary evidence suggests that Nabû was viewed in Babylonia as the divine patron of the Seleukid kings. We presume that this association, confirmed and strengthened by Antiochos III, was still relevant in the reign of Antiochos IV. In fact, a source hostile to Antiochos IV reports that the king attempted to marry the goddess Nanaia, an *hieros gamos*.¹¹¹ We know from a later source that the king was married to the goddess Atargatis in Hierapolis of Syria.¹¹² Atargatis is identified with Nanaia/Nanâ, Ištar, Aphrodite, and Anāhita.

Conclusion

The goddess Nikephoros bronzes of Antiochos IV represent the first and probably the only appearance of Aphrodite on Seleukid royal coinage. We have demonstrated that the Nikephoros was a rare type of Aphrodite especially associated with Hellenistic queens. Given the precedents of Aphrodite Stratonikis and Aphrodite-Amastris, the Nikephoros should be understood as symbolizing or assimilating another queen, and her appearance in the reign of Antiochos IV signals the introduction of a new cult for one of the royal women of his court, either his wife, Laodike IV, or his mother, Laodike III. Since the cult for Stratonike was founded by her grandson, and that of Amastris probably by her sons, the precedents suggest that Laodike III is the more likely candidate.

occupation of the city: under Kamnaskires II Nikephoros c. 147 B.C., cf. LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 76, n° 89; under Arsakes Theopator Euergetes c. 91/0-78, cf. *ibidem*, p. 94, n° 157; under Sinatrukes c. 78/7-71/0, cf. *ibidem*, p. 96, n° 167; under Phraates II, c. 71/0-58, cf. *ibidem*, p. 97, n° 175.

¹⁰⁷ KUHRT and SHERWIN-WHITE, *l.c.* (n. 50), p. 72-85.

¹⁰⁸ S. SHERWIN-WHITE, "Ritual for a Seleucid king at Babylon?", *JHS* 103 (1983), p. 156-159.

¹⁰⁹ B. van der SPEK, preliminary publication of BCHP 12, online at http://www.livius.org/cg-cm/chronicles/bchp-seleucus_iii/seleucus_iii_01.html, where the reference to the ritual for King Seleukos and his sons is assumed to refer to a cult for the late Seleukos II. In earlier editions of this text, and in the commentary of SHERWIN-WHITE, *l.c.* (n. 108), the donor of the sacrifices is assumed to be Seleukos II.

¹¹⁰ SACHS and HUNGER, *AD* II (n. 9), p. 203, n° -204 C rev. 14-18.

¹¹¹ *II. Macc.* 1.13-17. Other authors who refer only to Antiochos' attempt to loot the temple of Nanaia attest to her assimilation to Aphrodite and Artemis: APPIAN, *Syriaca*, 66 (Aphrodite); DIODORUS, XXXI, 18a (Artemis); POLYBIUS, XXXI, 9 (Artemis); JOSEPHUS, *Antiquitates Judaicae* XII, 354 (Artemis).

¹¹² GRANNUS LICINIANUS, 28.

Georges Le Rider observed that the appearance of the goddess Nikephoros in four different cities – Seleukeia on the Tigris, Orchoi (on seal impressions), Susa, and an unidentified western mint – reflects “une initiative autant royale que municipale.”¹¹³ Previously, our only evidence for royal cult in Seleukeia on the Tigris pointed to a municipal cult.¹¹⁴ Now it is possible to suggest that Antiochos IV propagated a new *state* cult of Aphrodite-Laodike, honoring either his wife or his mother, much as his father had ordained the worship of Laodike III. In both cases the cult is attested in only a few scattered places, and there is no evidence for the long survival of either. For the earlier cult, it appears that security and stability were factors that determined the location of cult centers. This interpretation does not seem applicable to Seleukeia on the Tigris, Orchoi, or Susa, but it does provide a good, if somewhat speculative, explanation for the production of goddess Nikephoros bronzes in or near Judaea.

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¹¹³ LE RIDER, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 291.

¹¹⁴ We are informed of the existence of priest(s) of the king(s) in the city. One fragmentary inscription was reconstituted and interpreted in different ways, see R.H. McDOWELL, “Stamped and Inscribed objects from Seleucia on the Tigris”, *Univ. Mich. Stud., Human Series* 36 (1935), p. 258-261; R. MOUTERDE, “Stamped and Inscribed Objects from Seleucia on the Tigris”, *MUSJ* 19 (1931), p. 119-120; M.I. ROSTOVTZEFF, “Progonoi”, *JHS* 55 (1935), p. 59-66; C. HOPKINS, “A Stela from Seleucia on the Tigris”, *MUSJ* 37 (1961), p. 237-246; J. and L. ROBERT, *Bulletin Épigraphique* (1963), n° 293; P. VAN NUFFELEN, “Un culte royal municipal de Séleucie du Tigre à l’époque séleucide”, *EA* (2001), p. 85-87. Van Nuffelen points out the importance of the particle δέ in the fragmentary inscription as an indication of the existence of different priests for successive kings. In his view, the inscription attests to the cult of ancestors created by Antiochos III.