Edited by

DANA COOPER AND CLAIRE PHELAN

Motherhood in Antiquity

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Dana Cooper • Claire Phelan
Editors

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To Brenda Cooper, to all a mother, in every sense of the word.
In memory of Louise Hewlett, a beautiful and much-beloved child.

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List of Contributors

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Introduction

Dana Cooper and Claire Phelan

How does one assess the true role and place of mothers operating in societies long since past? In some instances, there is a complete absence of written records. Specialists across many disciplines—from anthropologists and historians, to religious scholars and sociologists—must look to unusual sources and depend upon shards of pottery, fragments of textiles, and the examination of gravesites to inform our limited understanding. In other instances, written texts provide direct evidence of the civilization under investigation. Yet these sources are often fragmentary in nature, or faulty in translation, leading to the possibility of flawed or incomplete interpretations. In addition, those in a position to record the operation of daily life were not writing for posterity, but for a specific, and inevitably male, audience; hence, such accounts most frequently describe the affairs and events of interest under the control of men. As a result, documents detailing the lives of everyday women are uncovered with far less regularity. After all, why record the mundane, the repetitive, the common lot shared by hundreds of thousands of mothers, sisters, aunts, and daughters? What could one write that was not already known to those living in that society?

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While much continues to elude our understanding, some general concepts appear to have remained steadfast. Class, ethnicity, and religion often defined, and frequently relegated, the role and duty of each person, but the common expectation that young women marry and produce children linked almost all civilizations. Because of the very rudimentary nature of this facet of community life, there appeared little reason to document it with any level of attention or detail. This elemental reality exists in stark contrast to the "Mommy-Bloggers" of today who will leave future historians overwhelmed with the minutia of family life in the early twenty-first century—details of family trips to the beach, and the difficulties associating with feeding, educating, and nurturing their offspring. How then can we "tell" the history of motherhood of the past? We should first recognize the common thread of humanity that emerges as a visceral bond between mother and child throughout time—regardless of society, era, or circumstance. While exceptions certainly exist, the majority of women worked hard to protect and provide for their sons and daughters. Some children, however, had immense importance to the state, and, as such, their upbringing had a bearing on the body politic, eliciting the exceptional documentation of their early lives.

In this volume, we offer the reader an interdisciplinary survey of motherhood in antiquity in which the contributors attempt to reconstruct the past through an evaluation of archeological sources and textual analysis. While this monograph is far from comprehensive, it does transcend the narrow geographical scope of other such examinations. Consequently, it enriches our cross-cultural understanding of the experience and practice of motherhood. To make sense of the range and breadth of this study, we have divided the chapters under three broad headings—Motherhood and Religion, Motherhood and Politics, and Motherhood and Identity.

Motherhood and Religion

To open the exploration of religion as it pertains to motherhood, Dvora Lederman-Daniely reviews the power of stories by focusing on women as presented in the Bible. Analyzing the influence of both Deborah and Miriam as forces of leadership and legacy in Israel, she relays the strength of these "Great Mothers" as warriors and path blazers as they challenged the existing and traditional definitions of motherhood. By offering an alternative and revolutionary version of motherhood, they offered a different identity for mothers to follow, by rejecting the institutionalized male-dominated culture, which existed in the ancient world.

June-Ann Greeley's evaluation of early Christianity comes to a similar conclusion. She finds that the rhetoric surrounding the *Virgin* Mary and the Holy *Mother* Church in the antique Roman period indicated a significant shift from the high value placed on sexual purity to the apparent devaluation in society when a woman transitioned to become a wife and mother. As married women and mothers converted to the Christian faith, they found themselves fluctuating between their physical and spiritual relationships even as men emerged as the epitome of ideal parenting with the advent of Christianity.

Lastly, Pascale Engelmajer argues that ancient Buddhism conceptualizes motherhood as a combination of activities related to nurturing and spiritual guidance as a means to salvation. Her analysis of two women, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the founder of an order of nuns, and Visākhā Migāramātā, a wealthy lay follower, reveals that their mothering extended beyond biological connections to everyone around them throughout their lives. Engelmajer concludes that the demanding experience and sacrifice of motherhood allows its followers to realize the Buddhist path within the boundaries of ancient Indian women's lives.

Motherhood and Politics

While religion continued to play a central role in communal life, political considerations often trumped spiritual concerns for those in positions of power. Alex McAuley assesses the centrality of royal mothers in Seleucid dynastic ideology. These women often exerted their influence over a remarkable swath of land via marriage to local vassals. This power could continue into widowhood and McAuley demonstrates that women such as Cleopatra Thea, an extraordinary example of ambition combined with ruthlessness, at times acted as kingmakers. These royal mothers frequently retained an exceptional allegiance to the aims and ambitions of their Seleucid families, regardless of the time spent in the realms of their husbands. Such ongoing loyalty ensured the continuation of a persuasive informal Seleucid presence, the influence of which could extend to the next generation.

While just as devoted, mothers of Roman leaders faced their own unique problems. Karl Baughman uses the relationship between Alexander Severus and his mother to demonstrate that the characteristics of masculinity proved essential qualities for any Roman ruler desiring loyalty and respect. As Baughman states, "to be Roman was to be a man," and

any intimation that a leader did not possess all of the merits ascribed to the Roman perception of manhood was to present an inevitably flawed prospect to those he led. Alexander's mother, Julia Mamaea, and his grandmother, Julia Maesa, determined that the boy's early life would be a study in those pursuits that would mark him as ideal in this respect. However, as Julia Mamaea's influence extended into Alexander's reign, his reputation suffered and many of the critics directed the blame toward his mother. This proved particularly the case in his role of emperor-general when his mother's influence worked to emasculate him in the eyes of the military. In essence, Julia Mamaea's purported power over her son worked to feminize him. This proved abhorrent, for a *Princep* to be so swayed by the counsel of his mother emasculated not only Alexander but also those he led.

In contrast to the negative connotations of motherhood connected to Julia Mamaea, Kendra Strand's chapter on motherhood and imperial rule in early Japan highlights the remarkable achievements of the legendary regent and empress Jingû. Noted for her political acumen, her position as a mother informed her decisions to secure the future of her son, Ôjin, and provided the inspiration for her success as a military strategist, most notably in her conquest of Silla, one of the three kingdoms of ancient Korea. Drawing from ancient and medieval texts, Strand chronicles the actions of a figure renowned for her remarkable abilities and virtues and demonstrates the role of pregnancy and motherhood in imperial succession of early Japan.

Motherhood and Identity

Just as ancient and medieval works draw a picture of life in early Japan, the rich textual and pictorial records of motherhood in ancient Egypt give researchers like Emily Teeter a wealth of documentation with which to work. Her engaging essay addresses the realities of becoming and being a mother in this period, how society viewed mothers within Egyptian society, and the expectations for mothers at this point in history. Her thorough investigation of motherhood in this era speaks to the formation of the identity of mothers by examining details regarding fertility and family planning, the duties and demands of motherhood, as well as the tradition of adoption and stories of mythical motherhood.

In Europe, the thoroughly provisioned graves of the Bronze Age present a surprising amount of detail about the lives, families, and mobility

patterns of individuals, particularly women, within this period. Despite an absence of written records, Katharina Rebay-Salisbury's analysis reveals the manner in which motherhood was conceptualized during the Bronze Age by identifying marriage patterns, the typical age of first offspring, and changes in social status based on the ever-evolving identity of an individual from woman to mother.

Moving to the east, Nilgün Anadolu-Okur examines motherhood in the crossroads of the ancient world. She contends that Anatolian women took a multi-cultural and multi-civilization view of motherhood and religion. As their lives were already shaped by many different cultures and political philosophies—from the Greeks, Romans, and Byzantines—the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul in the fifteenth century and subsequent adoption of Islam simply offered another perspective on an already wide-ranging approach to motherhood and religion.

Finally, Kathryn Hudson and John Henderson explore the concept of motherhood in ancient Mesoamerican communities and the process of identity at the individual and state levels. They examine the significance of steambaths as an important part of domestic life and their symbolic connection with motherhood as a key component of family and communal identity. Just as place worked to extend communities, motherhood served to connect with ancestors. Thus, motherhood functioned in a multitude of ways related to identity.

This anthology makes it clear that motherhood in antiquity was a complex concept. These essays provide an inclusive view of the circumstances under which motherhood has affected and been affected by politics, religion, and societies through many geographic locations and chronological periods. From the Bronze Age in Europe to imperial Japan, from Cleopatra to early Christianity, motherhood extends across boundaries and cultural norms in significant ways throughout history. Ongoing examinations of motherhood are critical to our individual and collective understanding of this elemental relationship that has held such sway in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

PART I

Motherhood and Religion

"I Arose a Mother in Israel": Motherhood as a Liberating Power in the Biblical Stories of Miriam and Deborah

Dvora Lederman-Daniely

Introduction

"The body … outlines our projects,"[1] wrote Simone de Beauvoir when explaining how the marginality of women was created. In most cases, femininity and motherhood are perceived as delineating projects that are located on the margins of the social and political order. It seems that the importance of the mother throughout history is apparent mainly in roles such as rocking the cradle of the future male leader, being the "neck" holding the "head" (which is mostly the man), serving as the means of production of the male genealogy, and forming battalions of soldiers or masses of religious followers. In the biblical texts, motherhood is usually presented as marginal compared with fatherhood, and mothers are portrayed as secondary in relation to the fathers.[2]

Nonetheless, research in this field has undermined this biased presentation and uncovered subversive and rebellious stories of the mothers, attesting to a fabric of forces and influence that was concealed and censored. In his study of biblical traditions, Martin Noth argued that female traditions were apparently removed from the hegemonic text, and that women must have had a lot more spiritual, cultural and social influence than the one

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described in the edited biblical text. Additional studies, such as the one conducted by Carol Meyer, dealing with women's life in ancient Israel, has illustrated, that women were much more central in ancient Israel's social, religious and cultural life than portrayed in the biblical text.[3]

This chapter will explore two female traditions—the stories of Deborah and Miriam, both prophetesses and poets, whose influence exceed well beyond the traditional maternal role. They represent a maternal-feminine force of leadership and salvation in Israel's legacy. These two figures are not depicted as perceiving their self-realization in pregnancy and childbirth, or in complying with the patriarchal code. They focus on being the "Great Mothers" of the nation—life savers, warriors, and trailblazers through their leadership and vision. My analysis will attempt to shed light on their motherhood as breaking beyond the traditional definition of that role, one that is defined as an institutional function of the male culture. I will present their motherhood as a women's culture, as defined by the historians and cultural researchers Edwin Ardner[4] and Gerda Lerner.[5] In addition, I will relate to motherhood as a female mode of being anchored in the female corporeality, as presented in the ideas of feminist researchers.[6]

The chapter argues that the women's culture, to which Miriam and Deborah belong by virtue of their sex and gender, creates a powerful leadership of unique characteristics. In this way, these women endow the concept of motherhood with a subversive and bold significance.

The first section of the chapter differentiates between motherhood as an institution, that is as a male culture, compared to motherhood as an experience, that is as a female culture. The second section is based on feminist theories asserting that motherhood lives as an alternative and concealed text, encrypted within the censoring and silencing spaces of the hegemonic text. Consequently, the stories of the ancient prophetesses Miriam and Deborah will be explored as speaking out from the motherland wilderness. Through this subversive sphere, they illuminate unforeseen facets of motherhood as a fierce force of leadership that brings the tide of change and transformation.

Motherhood as a men's Culture Versus Motherhood as a Women's Culture

According to Ardner and Lerner, in the patriarchal society, the feminine experience is supervised by the ruling group and any experience that is inconsistent with endocentric models is considered as an exception, and is

silenced and ignored. Therefore, women, as a silenced group, must regulate their forms of experience and language through the forms authorized by the dominant structure. Beyond this regulation, women have no choice but to direct their cultural language out of the authorized structures and into a "wilderness"[7]—the motherland. According to Elaine Showalter, this is an area unfamiliar to the well-versed and regulated male experiential world, and is considered as a cultural black hole, one in which what women say and experience is considered irrelevant to a meaningful definition of reality.[8]

The significance of such an observation is that women exist in a duality, and live "double lives." They are members of the general culture, but also take part in a women's culture.[9] Therefore, the feminine textual voice is a double voice that should be read as two alternative texts. One voice speaks in the language of the patriarchal culture, complying with patriarchal codes, and the other speaks in the language of the women's culture. This culture, as stated, relates to the social roles and behavior patterns typical and unique to women's lives and their experiences. In addition, from a more essentialist point of view, the feminine culture may also derive from an existence based on the female body—an existence that constitutes a world of unique relations, priorities and values.

Listening to the women's culture is described as being attentive to the signs and symbols of the Matria.[10] In contrast to the institutionalized and compulsory motherhood, whose definition is derived from the male order and its endocentric and phallocentric needs, the language and symbols of the Matria speak from the land of the female body—from its unique experience, the relationship that it establishes and its corporeal intelligence, as described by Rich.

Rich argues that the patriarchal motherhood speaks motherhood in the symbolic father language, thus alienating women from their bodies while diminishing the female powers.[11] Experiential motherhood, on the other hand, speaks a unique language faithful to the rhythms, movements, sensibilities and experiences of the motherland, and therefore enhances feminine powers and resources.

Another researcher that emphasized the female corporeality as forming a unique female mode of existence is Luce Irigaray.[12] She describes the female body as the generator of a maternal symbolic space. Contrary to the paternal order, based on the Darwinian principle, namely, the struggle against the environment and the other, Irigaray places the placental relation, originating from the female corporeal identity. The placenta,

she argues, is an intermediate space between the mother and fetus, where acceptance is derived from identification of the otherness. Irigaray argues that the uterine space is not a sphere of chaos as described by the male culture, but rather a space that is characterized by an order that respects separation while fostering the other inside the mother's body. The placenta's economy respects both sides—it actually embodies and reflects mechanisms of patience for the other. In other words, the maternal biology incorporates an ethical and economical alternative to the father's order.[13]

This physical subversion also appears in Cixous's writings. In her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," she refers to the subjective motherhood as touching the body and deriving from it. Such motherhood exists "outside the role,"[14] and it brings women closer to their senses and history. Like Irigaray, she sees the maternal body as nurturing the productive potential of life—"the maternal power gives you your power,"[15] she writes. She urges women to nourish themselves as reciprocal mothers, granting their "good milk" to each other and to the world.[16] She argues that the "good maternal milk" is not a force that preserves and replicates the practices of the external and policing order, but rather—"the mother that amends and nourishes is the power to take the wind out of the sails of the laws."[17]

Other researchers that regard the maternal order as a beneficent and rehabilitating alternative describe motherhood as a moral and relational elevation.[18] Motherhood constitutes a model of mutual growth from within the relationship, and not by isolation from the other, or at the expense of the other.

Taking these ideas further, Shadmi suggests the logic of the symbolic order of the mother as being economically, culturally and politically transformative.[19] She sees motherhood as an ideological horizon, and therefore, motherhood is perceived as a site of great significance and power.[20] Shadmi argues that motherhood is not merely a compassionate ideal that preserves an existing order, but an active agent of growth, responsibility and intensification—the power source of resistance to the patriarchal institutions. Its core produces a critical stance against political violence and repressive social institutions, and generates an alternative space in the public sphere, where women create practices of resistance.

In conclusion, it can be said that once motherhood is freed from the enslaving and subjugating patriarchy and from the order of the father, it becomes a potentially powerful liberating force for women. It transforms

into an unconquered sphere, which is the site of growth, intensification, power and competence that carries the message of change not only in the private sphere but in the public sphere as well.

The Legacy of the Matria in the Biblical Text

When referring to the ideas of feminist literature researchers,[21] Keren argues that the maternal-female text is characterized by a cover story, whose visible surface conceals a subversive layer underneath.[22] This subversive text seeks to raise the forgotten feminine legacy from the bottom of the abyss—the legacy of the mother: "And so, while the man makes his journey into the center of the earth to slay dragons, the woman makes her journey into the depths of the feminine memory in an effort to trace what has been lost and forgotten, in order to revive the ancient Mother Goddess—the female creative power."[23]

Inspired by Gilbert,[24] Keren argues that the motherland (Matria) is buried under the fatherland (Patria), and the feminine attempt to recover it is an attempt to reinstate the forgotten mother—the great womb, the matrix of life—the attempt to connect and feed on maternal substances, whose memory has been lost.[25]

The attempt to reinstate the forgotten mother and to restore the nourishing resources of the "Matria" as an ancient spiritual heritage is essential to the revival of our own aspects, torn into shreds. Myths of the uniting Great Mother—like Isis patching and uniting the dismembered body of Osiris—are the stories of resuscitation and revival of the dismembered female psyche. Estes argues that such mythological and legendary stories passed on from one generation to another are the curing and patching "healing spells" of the feminine soul split as a result of past and present physical, mental and spiritual patriarchal conquest.[26]

Ginzburg describes such stories as those that are passed on from mother to daughter, while the mother acts as a double agent.[27] On the one hand, she imparts the male culture and traditional values, fostering compliance and optimal adaptation to male expectations and order. But in addition, she secretly equips her daughter with another dimension of existence. This dimension gives her a subversive force for keeping the flame of the heritage of the mother, which undermines that of the father.

The question that arises is whether the biblical mothers—the ancient creators who managed to include their compositions in the canon—have planted for their daughters—their female listeners and readers, "healing

spells" from the Matria—seeds of rebellion and encrypted channels that will enable healing and mending of the feminine spirit and identity.

To try and answer this question, I will rely on the assumptions of Keren and Estes that the female quest for the heritage of the mother is the search for the voices of the great prophetesses of our culture. I will therefore refer in this chapter to the stories of two great prophetesses and poets in biblical culture—Deborah and Miriam. I will examine whether these stories also contain, beyond the necessary ingredients of preservation and bequeathing the existing order, the rebellious characteristics of the mother "outside the role"—the one who speaks through the space of resistance to the existing male order, and perhaps even offers an alternative vision.

Miriam the Prophetess: A Great Mother, Savior and Subversive Leader

The canonical text depicts Miriam as the sister of Moses (who, together with her mother, saved his life), as the one to accompany, under Moses' leadership, the Song of the Sea following the miracle of salvation, and as a gossipy and malevolent woman that is punished and ultimately inflicted with the degrading punishment of leprosy.

However, the text contains various contradictions regarding this depiction, suggesting that she was a memorable, powerful and influential leader, etched in the memory and heritage of the nation. As previously mentioned, when one searches for the "Matria"—the feminine story of the motherland, one has to listen to the alternative, double, subterranean voices camouflaged in the text.

First of all, Miriam's epithet is "Miriam the prophetess"—a name that according to the prophet Micha, positions her as Moses' equal in the proximity to God.[28] Second, the image of Miriam was preserved in the Jewish tradition as the well of vitality—a magic well that accompanies the people of Israel in the desert. Being a symbol of the well for the people of Israel undergoing a journey in the desert points to her critical importance to the essentiality of the people's survival and faith.

The water is a life-giving element and it represent the female-maternal element in the symbolism of the ancient world—the Great Mother, childbirth and the universal womb.[29] In most events where Miriam appears, it is in the context of water—she waits on the banks of the river (the river banks symbolize the womb and childbirth in Ancient Near Eastern stories),[30] and in addition, she joins Moses in the Song of the Sea.

The image of the well as a uterus signifies in ancient cultures a high spiritual capacity that generates transformative formation. According to Yalom, the images of nourishment and providing water—the "container," "well" and "vase" are connected with the archetype of the "holy breast."[31] This image can also be found in the Egyptian culture, from which the people of Israel arrived. The Egyptian goddess, Isis, is a symbol of spiritual female powers of fortitude and inspiration. She is documented in ancient sculptures as Pharaoh's nursing mother. The Pharaohs were depicted breastfeeding from her breasts at their birth, coronation or death—all the moments that require exalted divine intervention toward spiritual transcendence and transformation from one spiritual level to another.[32] Therefore, the fact that Miriam is etched in the heritage as a thirst-quenching well demonstrates her importance in the people's tradition as a great nourishing mother on the people's journey toward renewed birth and into freedom.

But, is Miriam, the Great Mother, merely a traditional maternal symbol of compassion and obedience? Attention to the women's culture flickering and vibrating in the text reveals that Miriam as the "Great Mother" of the people leaving Egypt is a trailblazer and groundbreaking leader.

First, Pardes argues that Miriam's depiction as a well that travels alongside the people of Israel involves a subversive undertone.[33] This depiction of Miriam as an itinerant well may suggest the female equivalent of the pillars of fire and cloud that, according to the hegemonic biblical tradition, accompanied the congregation of Israel to guide and protect them. Opposite the pillar stands Miriam's watery well. In other words, Pardes consider the female-maternal model of the mother, provided by Miriam, an alternative model to the order of the Father presented by Moses. In addition, researchers who have studied the "preliminary" story that precedes the story of salvation—the story of the midwives saving the lives of the babies in spite of Pharaoh's death decree, have identified in the text an alternative subversive maternal sphere. They described the story as shedding light on the female-midwifery sphere, which is being revealed as a site of feminine revolutionary power, described by Cixous and Shadmi as the liberated and liberating spheres of motherhood.

According to Lederman-Daniely, while the male fathers—the God of Israel and Pharaoh—fight each other for power and control, trying to prove who is mightier, there emerges another power structure—a maternal-female one by nature.[34] Raveh also illustrates how the story clearly shows a female force and depicts a powerful feminine awakening.[35]

In addition, Benaya argues that at a time in which the male element is weakened and enslaved and the male chain of continuity is ceased, there is a chance for women to show their power.[36] And indeed, it is possible to see how expressions of female activism are multiplying in the text. The midwives choose to disobey a royal decree and save the male babies. They offer an alternative to the killing spree waged by the fathers and offer a commitment to the nurturing of life. In addition, Miriam and her mother, Yocheved, act together to offer the horizon of hope and revival, as they save the baby Moses. They come up with a plan and pursue the act of rescue initiated by the midwives. The female action and cooperation continue, as Pharaoh's daughter understands that Moses is a Hebrew boy (i.e. an enemy that she is supposed to kill based on the male principle) and chooses the female-maternal principle. She takes pity on the baby and wants to revive him, while disobeying her father's decree. Both she and her servants form a female reviving partnership with the daughters of Israel. These expressions of feminine activism illustrate a maternal symbolic order that nurtures life and growth, as described by Irigaray and Rich. They also exemplify a female alliance that is committed to mutual nourishment by the "good maternal milk," as described by Cixous.

Although the hegemonic voice creates a notion that the women are motivated by instinctive maternal emotions, anchored in the private sphere, the feminist perspective may illuminate the actions of the women as a public revolutionary political act, launching the revolution of freedom. This act manifests a sphere of alternative vision and power embodied in the liberated maternal sphere, which sets women free from the institutional paternal outline, as was previously presented. Pardes argues that the female insistence on the alternative of revival, despite the long life of servitude that enslaves the mind, reflects a national and spiritual vision of birth.[37] This alternative holds the power and courage to imagine a different future without slavery and tyranny, transforming the birth of the oppressed into an event of national significance.

The principle of commitment to life, as opposed to the principle of violence and killing, also follows the story of salvation to the next step—the Song of the Sea. Miriam is portrayed as the leader of the "cheerleaders," who respond with tambourines and dances in a chorus to the singing of the sole male leader. However, as Lederman-Daniely indicates in her essay, the language of ancient cultural symbols of the Matria teeming beneath the cover story suggests that Miriam was the dominant leader of the miracle of the crossing of the sea.[38] According to the patria—the canonical

male story—at the time of the miracle, when the sea is divided to allow the People of Israel to escape their Egyptian pursuers, Moses is ordered to: "Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it" (Exodus 14, 16). The two images of the raised staff and stretched hand are connected to the male image and they are the symbol of the miraculous male power that accompanies the people of Israel. The miracle of the sea illustrates and confirms, therefore, the fearsome power of the hegemonic male order.

But then, following the conquest-centered male display, Miriam and the other women take center stage for a brief moment with a parallel, female story—"Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing" (Exodus 15:20). Miriam, as the Great Mother and leader, emerges through the language of ancient symbolism as leading a female vision for the people being liberated, holding a tambourine. According to this "wild" untamed and non-subjugated language, the tambourine and the female dance is connected to the earth element, which symbolizes mystical powers, the sounding of an ancient and primordial voice and the reverberation of the rhythm of the universe.[39] If we examine the images of the tambourine and Miriam singing and dancing, we will invoke the archetypal image, which was studied by Estes, of the "woman who knows" or the "wise old woman," the "woman of the river beneath the river," the one that "lived on drumming, singing and dancing."[40] The "woman who knows" symbolized the activation of a powerful and all-embracing force of resurrection, transformation, and resuscitation.

Estes' findings regarding the archetypical meaning of the tambourine and the female dance and song reinforce the notion that Miriam's song and dances have a fierce spiritual and leadership significance. The tambourine combined with song and dance creates a chant of creation that is perceived as breaking through barriers, generating changes in the physical and the consciousness and strengthening spiritual power.[41] One can therefore conclude that Miriam's dance was most significant in the re-birth of the nation from life of slavery through the agonizing life in the desert.

After the Song of the Sea Miriam disappears, until the demeaning scene, in which, following her accusation against Moses, that he is not the sole leader, and her insistence that she was chosen by God for leadership as well, she is severely punished.[42]

Miriam's tradition that is uncovered when being attentive to women's culture reveals, therefore, a symbolic maternal order rooted in the non-

subjugated female corporeality as described by Rich and Irigaray. Her ancient story presents motherhood as a courageous power of leadership that offers an alternative vision of birth and commitment to life.

Deborah the Prophetess: A Judge, Spiritual Leader, and a Warrior Inspired by the Goddess Mother

Deborah the Prophetess is a female figure that breaks all gender limits and boundaries, not only those characterizing ancient patriarchal societies but also gender limitations that typify the enlightened world of gender equality in the current millennium. Skidmore-Hess describes her as a charismatic leader, of spiritual and judicial authority, a military strategist and warrior.[43] She is the active figure that directs and guides in matters of security and spirituality. She is the one to guide Barak, the army commander characterized by vacillation, indecision and an absence of valor, and in need of guidance and mentoring from his leader, Deborah. According to Skidmore-Hess, her epithet "Eshet lapidot" in Hebrew (wrongly translated into "the wife of Lappidoth" in the English version of the Bible), signifies her qualities as a leader—she guides and leads like a burning torch ("lapid" in Hebrew), filled with power, courage and bravery. The image of fire may also indicate her spiritual power and proximity to holiness.[44]

Deborah's depiction is unique because although she is characterized as a "man" in terms of her social roles, her words, language and the nature of her poetry, have maternal characteristics. First, her name has a special significance in the culture of the ancient Near East. The image of the bee (Deborah in Hebrew) symbolized the Goddess—the female aspect of the monarchy. Lawler argues that the worship of Demeter and Persephone was related to the bee.[45] The priestesses of the goddess Demeter were called "bees" and the goddess herself was called "The Bee." Artemis was identified with the bee and her high priestess was called "bee keeper." According to Haarhoff, images of bees as sublime royal emblems were found in Crete and Egypt.[46] The bees were the symbol of divine wisdom. Bees are found in Roman and Greek myths as they feed kings with royal honey, thus saving their lives. Bees are found in Sumerian, Babylonian and Egyptian myths, as well. Honey, the unique creation of the bees, is considered as royal honey—a symbol of prosperity and abundance. Honey can be also found in the Bible, as the symbol of the holy land, promised by God to His people, as the land of milk and honey. Traditional Jewish folk tales, like the tale of King Solomon, Queen of Sheba and the bee, indicate

that the bee was associated with clairvoyance. In the Hebrew folk tale, the bee is the one guiding King Solomon—perceived as the wisest man who ever lived—to find the right answer in the test of wisdom performed by the Queen of Sheba. This traditional folk tale is indicative of the ancient mythological connection between the wisdom of the Queen Mother, and the Bee.

Along with the insinuations that Deborah was perceived in Israel as the equivalent of the Queen Mother, the biblical depiction that Deborah "dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah" (Judges 4:5), adds additional hints to her mythological essence as a Great Mother. Sitting under the tree is one of the signs of the cult of the Goddess Mother.[47] Also, Spronk relates to the depiction of Deborah sitting under the "Tree of Deborah" as the link between her and the wet nurse of Jacob—the father of the tribes of Israel.[48] The figure of the wet nurse or nursing mother in ancient mythology does not merely provide a service or fill a role. Archeological findings of pictures and sculptures of goddesses nursing kings in various spiritual initiation stages attest to the symbolic-spiritual-mystic importance of the patriarch nursing figure. In addition, Margalith refers in his study to the discovery of a figurine of a Goddess in kibbutz Revadim in the south of Israel that holds suckling babies in her arms.[49]

The image of the wise and judging Deborah the prophetess sitting under Deborah's tree merges with the image of Deborah, the wet nurse, and they both join the image of the torch ("Lapid"), shining bright and leading the way, as her name in Hebrew—"Eshet Lapidot" signifies. This fusion of images creates an intensified image of a Mother Goddess, a leader that guides and protects her people.

It should be noted that the Song of Deborah is a paean to heroines and female leaders. She places the mother in center stage, even when she talks about the mother of the enemy. Her song relates to female experiences that are "blind spots" in the male definition of culture and experience, such as maternal bereavement, the mother's agonizing wait for her son to return from war and the custom of raping the women of the enemy as an act of conquest in a war.

The description of Sisera's mother (the mother of the enemy fighting Israel) waiting for her son and the excuses of her maids that he is allegedly busy in raping the wombs of the conquered women were perceived as a song of derision and mockery. Yet, it can be interpreted differently, in view of Dijk-Hemmes' argument that the biblical female text should be read as a double text—the obedient and the subversive.[50] Bearing in mind

the symbolic content of Deborah as "Israel's Great Mother," we can see her words as turning a critical spotlight on the male culture that demeans women's wombs as an act of violent occupation. As previously stated, the womb is the ancient symbol of the Great Mother and her mythic power. It is highly likely that Deborah raises here—under the radar of the hegemonic censorship—a critical voice against the practice of debasing and raping women during the male occupation wars.

As can be seen, Deborah does represent a mother figure, yet she reflects another facet, different from the ideal image of the soft all-enveloping mother. The symbol of the bee (Deborah in Hebrew) as her name, signifies another aspect of the ancient image of the Mother Goddess—the combative aspect, since the bee stings in times of danger. This can be indicative of a deviation from the traditional institutional role of the passive and soft mother, and suggest the subversive and rebellious nature of her motherhood.

This form of motherhood is gradually revealed when we allow a double reading and listening to the flickering and flashing sounds of the wild and non-disciplined Matria. The opening sentence: "Awake, awake, Deborah" (Judges 5:12) supposedly telling of the judge Deborah's awakening to the act of salvation, may be interpreted in light of the above, as a wakeup call for a religious-maternal revolution. "Until that I Deborah arose, that I arose ['Shakamti' יתמקש] a mother in Israel" (Judges 12:7), she declares. She presents herself as the Mother of Israel, and at the same statement, she announces the restoration of motherhood ("Shakamti" in Hebrew means healing and mending).

Taking into account, as described, the symbolism of her name, the symbolism of her sitting under the tree, and her statement of a "new God" (Judges 5:8), chosen by the people, as she says in her song, it is possible that the awakening call "Awake, awake, Deborah" (Judges 5:12) suggests a vision of restoring the religion of the mothers. The fact that researchers have identified the Song of Deborah as one of the oldest biblical texts,[51] may support this hypothesis, and it is possible that during the formation of the religion of Israel, when the consolidation and formation processes were of a liminal nature, there was an option for a monotheistic mother worship.

It is then possible to identify that the ancient tradition of Deborah outlines her motherhood as stemming out of the female intelligence, as described by Rich, while it nourishes with her maternal "honey" a message

and tidings of restoration, healing, revival and re-birth, as described by Cixous, Estes and Keren. Deborah's maternal tiding is a national, political and theological vision, as described by Shadmi.

Deborah the prophetess, therefore, represents a cultural representation of the image of the "Great Mother," the possessor of powerful leadership, autonomy, sovereignty and supreme authority. Her ancient story reveals a critical voice heralding a vision of change and transformation. In the male hegemonic sphere of the biblical text in which women usually played a minor, obedient and secondary role, she creates, in Shadmi's terms, a liberating motherhood—an alternative sphere of maternal territory that opposes institutional violence and gender-based oppression.

Conclusion

"The body outlines our projects"—this quote by Simone de Beauvoir opens this chapter, relating to the maternal body as seemingly delineating immobilizing routine, class oppression and exploitation, loss of subjectivity and gender subjugation. The differentiation presented throughout this chapter between motherhood as an institution according to a male culture and the motherhood that defied and broke away from this definition, made it clear that the maternal body and culture might outline challenging, liberating and revolutionary projects in the lives of women, as well as the society and culture they live in.

The founding stories of the two ancient biblical prophetesses that unfold a dominant feminine, sovereign, and powerful culture in the ancient Near Eastern traditions demonstrate that motherhood, free of patriarchal designations, is not a new invention of the post-modern new millennium. It has already existed even if masked and encrypted, in ancient biblical texts, in traditions of the female leaders, who were "Great Mothers" for their people—wise women, spiritual mentors, female commanding officers, warriors, saviors and revolutionary trailblazers. The existence of these traditions as cultural-religious texts indicate that alongside patriarchal perceptions that gradually took over, other complex, meaningful and significant perceptions were prevalent, perceptions regarding motherhood and its effect as a decisive leadership force.

Unfortunately, the maternal power and female vision that were the heart and soul of these traditions were apparently overpowered by the patriarchal order, as their stories have been diminished and blurred. What

remains from Miriam the prophetess, is a pale shadow of the might of her leadership, as opposed to the incredibly prominent hegemony of Moses as a leader and savior in the Israeli canonical tradition. Deborah's tradition has undergone a process of reduction in the various interpretations that were formed. For example, her epithet "Eshet Lapidot (torch)" was explained by referring to her as a woman who spins wicks to be lit in the Temple, and her name was explained as "buzzing" as a bee like a typical female chatterbox. This was apparently done so as not to legitimize women's pursuit of spiritual and political leadership positions.

As stated, Estes claims that ancient feminine stories passed on from one generation to another are the curing and nursing "healing spells" for the female soul, torn as a result of past and present patriarchal occupation.[52] The female role models—the great prophetesses of our civilization—serve as restorative and healing inspiration for feminine liberation and growth. Estes clarifies that women's encounter with the Great Mothers of their culture intuitively creates a "knock" on a profound emotional-spiritual door. This knock is a kind of a tune that opens and reveals forgotten and faded worlds:

> She lived in the past and we call her to come to us. She is from the future goes back in time, and she brings us closer again to an old memory banned from the laws of culture. We know her in our bones, yearn for her and know that she belongs to us, as we to her. … She is the matter from which we are made, and she is our true home. … When life is frightening, fragmented or pressed into a corner, the old story, the figure of the old prophetess, the woman who knows, shows us the way out, carving for us big wide doors in walls that were sealed until then.[53]

Once women restore in their lives the image of their culture's Great Mother as a Great visionary leader, she gives them powers to fight and struggle with all their might to preserve her. When women renew their relationships with her, they gain her return into their lives, as a gifted and internal observer, who brings a renewed vision. From the immense historical-cultural spaces of the Ancient World, the Great Mothers and prophetesses Deborah and Miriam, bestow upon us the gift of the "horizon of becoming"[54]—an inspirational and visionary path, unfolding a wide array of possibilities. They remind us what we are, where we come from, what world-creating powers we possess and what groundbreaking leaders we can become.

Notes

1. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Tel Aviv: Bavel, 2001), 62.
2. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist Subversions of Biblical Narratives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).
3. Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
4. Edwin Ardner, "Belief and the Problem of Woman," in *Perceiving Women*, ed. Shirley Ardner (New York: Halsted Press, 1978), 1–27.
5. Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds its Past: Placing Women in History* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1979).
6. See Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton and Company, 1995); Helen Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *Learning Feminism: Fundamental Articles and Documents in Feminist Thought*, eds. Dalith Baum et al. (Tel-Aviv: Kibbutz Hameuchad Press, 2006), 134–154; Luce Irigaray, "When our Lips Speak Together," in *The Sex Which is Not One* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 205–219.
7. Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory,* ed. Elaine Showalter (London: Virago Press, 1986), 267.
8. Ardner, "Belief and the Problem of Woman."
9. Showalter, "Feminist Criticism," 267.
10. See Sandra Gilbert, "From Patria to Matria: Elizabeth Barrete Browning's Risorgimento," *Publication of the Modern Language Association of America* 99, no. 2 (1984): 194–211.
11. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born,* 43.
12. Luce Irigaray, "When Our Lips Speak Together."
13. Luce Irigaray, "The Maternal Order," in *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference,* trans. Hilla Karas (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2004), 36–44.
14. Ibid., 140.
15. Ibid., 141.
16. Ibid., 140.
17. Ibid.
18. Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of*

Peace (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1989); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003).

19. Erella Shadmi, *Mother's Way* (Tel Aviv: Resling Publishing, 2015), 15.
20. Shadmi, *Mother's Way*, 21.
21. Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988); Annis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981).
22. Nitza Keren, *Like a Sheet in the Hand of the Embrioderess: Women Writers and the Hegemonic Text* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2010).
23. Ibid., 83.
24. Gilbert, "From Patria to Matria."
25. Keren, *Like a Sheet*, 82–122.
26. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Woman Who Run with Wolves* (Tel-Aviv: Modan, 1997).
27. Ruth Ginzburg, "Be My Mother: Mothers and Daughters in Literary Fiction," in *Motherhood*, ed. Emilia Perroni (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2009), 125.
28. The Book of Micah says: "For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Micah 6:4). According to Micah, God considers Miriam as a messenger equivalent to Moses and Aaron in the process of the Exodus.
29. Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991); Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: an Analysis of the Archetype (*Princeton N.J: Princeton University Press, 1991).
30. Joshua A. Berman, *Created Equal: How the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought* (Tel-Aviv: Chemed, 2013), 230.
31. Marilyn Yalom, *The History of the Breast* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Betan, 1999).
32. Ibid., 21.
33. Pardes, *Countertraditions*, 64.
34. Dvora Lederman Daniely, "Revealing Miriam's Prophecy," *Feminist Theology*, 2016 (forthcoming).

35. Inbar Raveh, "They Let the Children Live: The Midwives at a Political Crossroads," *Nashim: A Journal of Women's Studies and Gender Issues* 24 (2013): 11–26.
36. Yafa Benaya, "Leadership as a Source of Life: Yocheved and Miriam," in *A-Mythical: Social Justice and Gender in Jewish Sources*, eds. Henriette Dahan Kalev, Dafna Horev-Betzalel, Eli Bareket and Avigdor Shinan (Tel Aviv: Chemed Books, 2011), 43–56.
37. Ilana Pardes, *The Biography of Ancient Israel: National Narratives in the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 26.
38. Dvora Lederman Daniely, "Revealing Miriam's Prophecy."
39. Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Woman Who Run with Wolves* (Tel-Aviv: Modan, 1997).
40. Ibid., 26.
41. Ibid., 148.
42. Critical reference to the argument according to which Miriam spoke ill and gossiped and therefore punished, can be found in an essay by Dvora Lederman-Daniely "Revealing Miriam's Prophecy."
43. Daniel Skidmore-Hess and Candy Skidmore-Hess, "Dousing the Fiery Woman: The Diminishing of the Prophetess Deborah," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 31, no. 1 (2012): 1–17.
44. See the research by Mircea Eliade, *Myth, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faith and Archaic Realities* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965), 146 regarding the significance of heat and fire in the ancient religious perception, as typifying holy messengers and servants of God, on whom the divine inspiration lies.
45. Lillian Lawler, "Bee Dances and the 'Sacred Bees'," *The Classical Weekly* 47 (7) (1954): 103–106.
46. Thomas Haarhoff, "The Bees of Virgil," *Greece & Rome* 7, no. 2 (1960): 155–170.
47. Susan Ackerman, "The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112 (1993): 385–401; Baruch Margalit, "God and His Asherah," *Beit Mikra: Journal for the Study of the Bible and Its World*, booklet D 143 (40): 376–391.
48. Klaas Spronk, "Deborah, a Prophetess: The Meaning and Background of Judges 4:4–5," in *The Elusive Prophet: The Prophet as a Historical Person, Literary Character, and Anonymous Artist*, ed. Johannes DeMoor (London: Brill, 2001), 236.

49. Nude female figures decorated with snakes and accompanied by animals with horns and tree branches were the symbols of the goddess in the ancient Near East.
50. Van Dijk Hemmes, "Traces."
51. See Skidmore-Hess, "Dousing the Fiery Woman."
52. Estes, *Woman*, 17.
53. Ibid., 32.
54. Luce Irigaray, *Sex and Genealogies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 61.

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Models of Devotion?: The Rhetoric of Ambivalence and Admonition in Late Antique and Early Christian Discourse on Women and Motherhood

June-Ann Greeley

The early Christian era, which for the purposes of this chapter will cover the chronological period from the second through the fifth centuries (C.E.), was a time fraught with cultural and social as well as religious changes. The emergence of Christianity in the Roman Empire as a religious construct during the first century (C.E.) was not simply a matter of reformulated faith tenets or a recasting of religious practices and behaviors; rather, Christianity encouraged a pervasive transformation of personal as well as public values and identities, a transformation which was admittedly, at times, easily articulated and universalized, but, in other instances, sorely vexed and partisan. The new faith that had reached out from a corner of the empire and had found its way into the range of imperial territories persistently interrogated the customary values of classical and polytheistic societies with teachings that spoke in a taxonomy largely

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unfamiliar or, at least, irrelevant to those cultures. New conceptions of eschatology, soteriology, and even human anthropology rivaled the established mores of mystery cultism, local mythos and philosophical demonstrability, and upended conventional norms of meaning and association. Christian rhetoric, moreover, displayed a marked tendency to move narration from the common and the general to the individual and the intimate, as well as to invite sentiment and mystery in ordinary modes of discourse. Yet, it is also true that early Christianity sought some degree of resolution with the traditions of the societies in which it found itself and gradually made some effort to adapt, where possible, to civic conventions, yet always within the context of its own paradox of spiritual exclusivity and social inclusivity. This complication between the old with the new and the tension in early Christian society to evolve an authentic culture, discrete from its late antique rival, can be observed in many aspects of public and private life but perhaps nowhere as deliberately and as vexingly as in the status and function of women, notably in terms of female sexuality and the condition of motherhood. This chapter will address those tensions by exploring in early Christian writings the manifest ambiguity about women in their community and the nature, purpose, and to a degree even signification, of motherhood. Christian writers freely appropriated the language of "mother" and "motherhood" in their teachings and other compositions but complicated those seemingly irrefutable concepts with dissonant tenets: the notion of "motherhood" as a spiritual as well as physical condition of being; an institutional premium on the maternal "consecration" of children, especially daughters, to lives of devout virginity and separation from normal family matters; admonitions about the horrors of childbirth and thus a realignment of the concepts of "birth" and "mother"; and the increasing use in the western Church of the appellation "Holy Mother" in reference to the universal Church, indicating a new concept of maternal care which was one of guidance to salvation as opposed to the nurturance of physical and emotional needs. In the end, it will be clear that Christian rhetoric and the Christian narrative afforded women (or men, for that matter) no clear resolution about how best early Christian women were to negotiate the roles of both faithful Christians and familial mothers or about the ideal typology of Christian motherhood except to broaden (and muddle) the narrative to include new points of reference for the concept of motherhood.

However, it is critical to state the obvious. As in most matters relating to women until the early modern era, men authorized the narratives about

all facets of life, including all matters relating to women: all documents and texts about women were written by men and likely primarily for men so that this chapter must rely on material about women that is based on male perception and thus masculinist "understanding" of motherhood. How much of the material can be confidently ascribed to the actual feelings and attitudes of women themselves remain a vexing question and is difficult, if not nearly impossible, to ascertain. As a result, the chapter must argue that most of the male commentary about motherhood was inherently biased and deliberately designed to wrest the significance of birth from women and apply it to male-dominated constituencies, thus assuming to themselves the dominion over birth and motherhood.

Early Christian Culture and Women

The historical narrative of the movement from the polytheistic and cultic society of the Roman Empire in late antiquity to the increasing infusion of a Christian presence within that same society, and the tensions such coexistence aroused, is beyond the scope of this chapter and has been, in any event, more ably and thoroughly recounted by esteemed scholars elsewhere.[1] However, it is fair to assert that women were essential to the growth and spread of Christianity throughout Roman Empire for there is ample evidence of women of all classes, but especially upper-class Roman matrons, converting to Christianity in significant numbers. Their numbers must have been significant for in 370 C.E., the emperor Valentinian demanded from Pope Damasus I that his missionaries stop preaching to women since the number of female converts were continuing to expand and women were clearly outnumbering men in the Christian communities as they left the more traditional communities.[2] Such a situation might not seem to be very important except that historical data indicate that in ancient Rome, men tended to outnumber women in the general population and within most local communities.[3] While it is difficult to determine the actual causes for the gender disparity, there is some indication that men outnumbered women because of maternal (and infant) mortality during the duration of pregnancy and such cultural biases and practices as abortion (causing the death of many women) and, more insidiously, female infanticide, both of which practices were outlawed in Christian communities.[4] Women of the empire, old and young, wealthy and poor, were drawn to the new faith and while it is rather facile to attribute a single reason for the multitude of female conversion in the early centuries of Christianity,

it does seem likely that women in general approved Christian injunctions against abortion and especially female infanticide as well as other dimensions that participation in the new faith offered: greater personal freedom and new modes of expression; reconsidered self-identity; excited persuasion by the radicalism of some of the Christian teachings; a sense of restructured power and place in general society, and an interrogation of social and philosophical mores. Women were thus persuaded to convert but such conversion did not seem to be a mere matter of transposing affiliations or redesigning cultic behaviors; rather, in many cases, there was for women, notably wives and mothers (which were concomitant identities in ancient Roman society), a genuine reframing of the human condition, a recalibration of female identity. Two contrasting Roman epitaphs for women from the fourth century C.E. offer a sense of the rhetorical transposition of women in early Christianity.[5] The first is an excerpted section from an epitaph for a Roman matron, Aconia Fabia Paulina, and articulates the traditional late antique understanding of women. Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, her husband, first "speaks" and extols the many virtues of Paulina, his wife of 40 years:

> *Paulina, conscious of truth and chastity, devoted to the temples and friend of the divinities, who put her husband before herself, and Rome before her husband, proper, faithful, … helpful to her family gods … by the alliance of our marriage, … you helped your husband, loved him, honored him.*

Paulina then "speaks" on the back of the monument:

> *My parents' distinction did nothing greater for me than that I even seemed worthy of my husband … all glory and honor is my husband's name, Agorius … you as pious initiate conceal in the secrecy of your mind what was revealed in the sacred mysteries … you kindly include as colleague in the rites your wife … my husband … you take me into the temples and devote me as the servant of the gods … though unknown, I am known to all. For with you as a husband, how could I not be pleasing? Roman mothers seek an example from me and think their offspring handsome if they are like yours … now … I your wife waste away in sorrow: I would have been happy, if the gods had given me a husband who had survived me.*[6]

It is worth noting that the full epitaph suggests that Agorius died before Paulina and so the text on the tomb might have been commissioned by her or, at the very least, been made known to her for her approval and thus

allows the reader to consider the epitaph as voicing some actual dimension of a late antique woman's understanding of herself as woman, wife and mother. The text is clear that Paulina is before anything else a wife to Agorius and *through him* admitted to the mysteries of the state and family cults; however, given that such recollections are on the tomb, it is obvious that late antique women were also respected for their engagement in religious and cultic practices. Yet, Paulina articulates her identity chiefly through her husband, her affiliation with him: indeed, she not only humbled herself before the image and memory of her husband and accord him all expected superiority but also presented herself to other Roman mothers as a model but only in the context as the mother of her husband's children and even then only in the context of the affinity of their children to her children as her husband's offspring ("if they are like yours"). As Gillian Clark has thoroughly noted, Roman women were expected to marry (and be eager to marry) and a primary reason for the marriage was to produce children: marriage and procreation were deemed the natural order of existence for all women, regardless of class or social status.[7] Thus, it should not be surprising that Paulina would address her husband as the more esteemed mediator of her life experiences and define her role as mother as another example of his inestimable gifts to her: as Paulina's statements attest, she is more properly her husband's wife than her children's mother and with his death, her life becomes empty of meaning.

From almost the exact same time (380s C.E.) and place (Rome), a second epitaph for a woman provides a perspective on female identity and relational experience that is quite distinct from that of Paulina, although some similarities might be apparent as well. The inscription is for a Christian woman named Theodora

> *who lived twenty-one years, seven months, twenty-three days, lies in this double grave, in peace …*
> … she prepared for herself a path to the stars, and she now lives blissfully in the halls of Christ.
> She withstood the course of the world, thinking only of heavenly things.
> She, the best keeper of the law and the best teacher of the faith, devoted her superior spirit through all time to the Holy alone.
> Thus, she lives now like a queen, in the sweet scents of Paradise …
> And she waits for God, through whom she desires to be elevated to the uppermost airs.
> *In this hill she has laid down her body, leaving what is mortal behind, and her husband, Evarcius, has erected her tomb with devotion.*[8]

As the first line of the epitaph indicates, Theodora was 21 when she died, an age that by contemporary standards might seem quite young but in the fourth century was within the range of life expectancy of women.[9] Childbirth was one of the leading causes of death for women of all classes: compellingly, "up to the age of marriage and motherhood, Roman females were as likely to survive as males … childbirth was a mortal risk" and infant mortality itself remained at about 20 percent for many generations.[10] Thus, it is possible that the young Theodora died in childbirth and was laid to rest in the "double grave" (*bisomnum*) that was erected for her and her husband.

Yet, apart from that very brief reference to her age and, in the final line of the epitaph, to her husband Evarcius, there is little else in the inscription about the daily life Theodora led with her family, quite in contrast to the long, familiar description that identified Paulina. Indeed, casual observation does not even contextualize Theodora as a wife until that final line of the inscribed text with an almost parenthetical mention of "her husband" and instead, Theodora is recognized almost exclusively for her spiritual life and metaphysical sanctity which has enabled her to defy the death of the body and continue to live "blissfully" forever in an eternal abode.[11] It is true that Paulina was also described as having lived a pious and devout life, yet the text is quite insistent that she was primarily an adjunct to her husband's spiritual authority and religious practice: for example, Agotius "kindly" permitted Paulina to be as a "colleague" in the religious responsibilities and was also willing to guide her into the temples and sacred sites for the prescribed rituals. Theodora, on the other hand, was honored for her religious autonomy and conscientious commitment: she had lived publicly as much as a teacher and an "initiate" in her Christian faith as Agorius had been in his cultic affiliations. As the epitaph avers, Theodora "prepared *for herself* a path to the stars" and "withstood the course of the world" (emphasis mine) and so embodied the virtuous Christian, male or female, who freely chooses and independently perseveres a life devoted to the Christian faith, despite mortal temptations and worldly values. Theodora's life as a wife and even possibly as a mother seems to have been quite irrelevant to the funereal commemoration: what was celebrated was not her obedient compliance with the traditional roles (always) prescribed to women but the courageous ardor of her faith that to some degree challenged social customs for women. In spite of any earthly obstacles, Theodora "kept the law" and "taught the faith" and was true "to the Holy alone," and was therefore celebrated as a devout

and righteous woman. Now, those were characteristics with which Paulina was also associated but there are significant distinctions between the two modes of female piety, and perhaps in no single dimension more than in the context of motivation and inspiration. According to their epitaphs, Paulina performed religious rituals and engaged in cult practices to benefit Rome and to please her husband and family, including her children; Theodora, on the other hand, was inspired not by any satisfaction on earth but by the promise of a glorious afterlife in Paradise, in the "uppermost airs" of celestial bliss. There was no finality in death for Theodora as there was for Paulina, and while Christians did not dismiss earthly existence altogether, clearly they regarded mortal life as a kind of trial in preparation for the authentic life that defied the death of the body.

Woman, Wife and Mother in Early Christian Culture

Women in early Christianity were thus extolled for their own commitment to their faith and adherence to its teachings. However, personal salvation alone was not sufficient for the spiritual obligation of the convicted Christian and thus Christian women were also notably (and properly) active in the conversion of others, particularly family members, to Christianity. Gregory of Naziansus (ca. 330–390 C.E.) extolled the several distinctions of his beloved sister Gorgonia in an oration on the first anniversary of her death, and among her primary virtues he praised was not only her personal devotion to her faith but notably her successful conversion of her husband, children and grandchildren to Christianity.[12] He explained that

> the most beautiful and noble of [Gorgonia's] actions was to convince her husband of her (Christian) views, gaining not an unreasonable master but a good fellow servant. Not only that, she also made the fruit of her body, her children and her children's children, the fruit of her spirit, and dedicated to God, instead of her single soul, her whole family and household.[13]

Gregory was clearly pleased that his sister was able to convince her husband to convert to the familial faith and he adroitly remarked also that such conversion meant for Gorgonia a welcome shift in the conjugal relationship: her husband was now a "fellow servant" and not (no longer, perhaps?) an "unreasonable master." Within that context, moreover,

Gregory was then eager to address the truly prodigious accomplishment of his sister with her children and grandchildren in their dedication to God. He speaks of her fertility as the physical reality of bearing children but also as the metaphysical wonder of giving birth "in the spirit": just as the children (and thereafter grandchildren) of Gorgonia were the physical "fruits" of her body, their conversion and subsequent dedication to the Christian faith were the "fruits" of her spirit. Gorgonia was, of course, the biological mother to her children but she was also the mother of their faithful souls, having dedicated not simply herself but her "whole family and household" to God.

Yet, it was often the case that spousal and maternal efforts at conversion occurred within a culture of censure and antagonism. Justin Martyr offers a compelling example of the familial tensions many early Christian women had to endure as they found themselves caught between faithful enthusiasm for the new faith and angry resistance from family members, especially husbands, who expected obedience and submission from their wives, especially in matters of personal behavior and moral propriety. He tells of one woman who

> lived with an intemperate husband, she herself having once been intemperate. But when she came to the knowledge of the teachings of Christ, she became sober-minded and tried to persuade her husband in like manner to be temperate, bringing forward the teachings (of Christianity), … but he, continuing in the same extravagances, alienated his wife from him by his deeds … she, considering it wicked to live any longer as a wife with a husband who sought in every way means of pleasure contrary to the law of nature and in violation of what is right, wished to be divorced from him … when she had separated from him since he had refused to alter his ways, (he) brought an accusation against her, declaring that she was a Christian.[14]

In the second century C.E., an accusation of practicing the Christian faith could still invoke social, as well as legal, condemnation and yet the account suggests that the temporal situation mattered little to the (indeed, unnamed) woman as long as she was able to remain faithful to her religious convictions. It is worth noting that Justin Martyr had little compunction about featuring a woman as a model of moral rectitude and temperate virtue in this account and indeed, women figured prominently in early Christian texts, often in contrast to contemporaneous, non-Christian literature. As one scholar has noted,

> personal consciousness and the small details of private life are not prominent in classical literature … (b)ut Christianity, with its emphasis on the inner person, the spiritual, … brought the private sphere to the fore. With this emphasis new classes received attention, in particular women, classic dwellers in the private sphere.[15]

In the person of the converted Christian woman, Justin Martyr offers a new example of the classical virtues of fortitude, honor and loyalty: she bravely remained steadfast in her faith and, for the sake of her own dignity and personal integrity, was more willing to honor her personal convictions than the marital conventions of her society. What led to her decision to separate herself from her husband and end their marriage was not so much his opposition to conversion as his refusal to amend at all his behavior ("change his ways") in his public and private life: that is to say, conversion was not simply a matter of engaging in public displays of religious attendance or ritual practices but an authentic recalibration of perception and outlook, an interior transformation that mediated habits of being. As her husband resisted her imprecations and continued "in the same extravagances," conditions became untenable for the woman, for while intermarriage (between non-Christians and Christians) itself was not a matter of great alarm in the early centuries of Christianity, the moral rectitude of a Christian household was a paramount concern. Divorce, even if it meant incurring the wrath of her husband and jeopardizing her freedom, was her only recourse.

However, in contrast to the Christian wife who might decide, albeit reluctantly, to discontinue the religious persuasion of a spouse, the Christian mother regarded the spiritual well-being and moral health of her children as her imperative responsibility and so ardently worked for their participation in a shared Christian faith, regardless of any external (or domestic) consequences.[16] Examples of epitaphs on family tombs erected by Christian women from the third and fourth centuries often expressed dedications to family members, especially children:

> Aurelia Julia for her father … and her mother, Beroneikiane, and for my sweetest child Severus and Moundane (my) daughter-in-law, in memory. Christians.

> … Aurelia Domna for her husband, Meles … and for their children Kyrillos and Alexandros and Istratonikes and Eythycheianes and Tationos and Alexandria and Auxanon and Kyriakes … Christians for Christians.[17]

The identification of the Christian faith of the family, including the children, seemed to be of importance for the women who dedicated the burial sites since what had been true for women of classical Greece and Rome persisted for women in early Christianity: that is, as women were associated with birth and thus with the mysteriously procreative forces of the cosmos, so also were women naturally aligned with death, the cessation of life and generation.[18] Yet unlike their pagan peers, Christians did not regard death as possessing a difficult irrevocability and doom; rather, Christians regarded death as a kind of liminal condition that afforded the immortal souls passage from the material world into an eternal afterlife. The event of death itself was only for the dissolution of the physical body. Such defiant belief stripped death of its power to contaminate and to terrify and grateful Christian mothers (and wives) constructed burial sites with dignified inscriptions as testimony to their faith.

In the early centuries of Christianity, there was no shortage of advice for mothers from men about their natural obligation to care for the spiritual welfare of their children, in terms both of actual conversion and preservation of the Christian faith. As St. Jerome explained in a letter to his dear friend and patron, the Roman matron Laeta, "people are not born Christians, but become Christians."[19] Christian mothers were particularly tasked with the responsibility of nurturing their children in the Christian faith but Jerome's letter to Laeta reveals the ambiguous bind into which Christian mothers were persuaded? compelled? during the early Christian centuries. In the same letter, Jerome praised Laeta for having "consecrated" her infant daughter Paula to Christ and reminded her that, in so doing, she has "exchanged the fertility that causes sorrow for children who will live forever."[20] As previously noted, pregnancy and childbirth were always perilous conditions for women and Jerome acknowledged that harsh reality when he referred to "the fertility that causes sorrow." Yet, he also seemed to suggest that, regardless of what should eventually transpire for her daughter, her consecration to God will ensure that she will never truly die, even should her physical body fail. It is a fond hope but then, almost immediately thereafter in the letter, Jerome assured Laeta that "having given your first-born to the Lord, you will produce sons." This curious statement clarifies the emotional as well as the ethical dilemma that early Christian mothers realized, often from the counsel of their male spiritual teachers: with the text as written, Jerome was intimating that Laeta should *sacrifice* her daughter out of the charity of her heart and for the glorious preservation of both her and her daughter's souls,

as well as for the perpetuation of the Christian faith. However, Jerome complicated his instruction as well as his intention for he urged Laeta to act not solely for spiritual efficacy but also for the reward of *sons*. It is true that Jerome did not explicitly reference sex but only birth order in his allusion to the bequest of "the first-born for the Lord" but it is striking that he assured Laeta that in her bequeathing of her daughter Paula to the consecrated life, she (Laeta) would be rewarded with future children and not just children but specifically with *sons*. Jerome makes no mention that those later children, her sons, must also be consecrated to the Christian faith, although as a Christian mother she would be responsible for raising them in the teachings and practices of the faith. Thus, in early Christianity, maternal regard, at least in some circumstances, involved the sacrifice of children, usually daughters, for the sake of their own souls and for the benefit of the Christian community.

In addition, the bequest of her daughter was total: as Jerome instructed Laeta in the same letter, after the infant has been weaned,

> let her be brought up in the monastery by virgins, let her learn not to swear and consider it a sacrilege to lie, let he be ignorant of the world and let her live like an angel, let her be in the flesh but not of the flesh, and let her suppose that everybody is like her. In this way (not to mention other advantages) you will be released from the difficulties of looking after her and the risks involved in protecting her. It is better for you to long for her when she is far away than to worry about every little thing.[21]

It is impossible to read this section of the letter without perceiving the harsh critique of the mother and the arrogant assumption Jerome expressed in his explanation to the mother how she could best manage the loss of her child. Jerome insisted that baby Paula be transferred from Laeta initially to the care of her grandmother (who once a widow had dedicated herself to a holy life) and later settled into the cloistered, consecrated life of a "monastery of virgins" and so he obviously did not consider Laeta sufficiently endowed with the depth of conviction, the capacity for self-abnegation and the reservoir of self-control to sustain her own daughter in the consecrated life. It must have been a toxic collision between instinct and authority for Jerome then admonished Laeta with a description of the appropriate discernment of a genuine Christian mother. He chided her that

> (i)f it were only possible for you to see your mother-in-law and your sister-in-law and to observe the great souls inhabiting their spare frames. … I have no doubt that you would go to them even before your daughter and would exchange God's first decree, 'Go forth and multiply,' for his second law of the Gospel. You would be less concerned for what your other children want and you would rather offer yourself to God.[22]

The commentary is a brazen presumption of the proper comportment of a Christian mother and the constitution of a "great soul" and yet it is intriguing to consider whether Jerome himself perceived the bewildering paradox his instruction was creating for Laeta and other Christian mothers for, as his letter indicates, he remained somewhat ambivalent (as did much of the male-dominated ecclesial order at that time) about the meaning and function of biological motherhood in Christianity. He did assure Laeta that, should she abide by the pledge of her daughter's consecration, she would enjoy the reward of many sons, and with that assurance, Jerome seemed to regard a mother nurturing her sons as an important benefit both for the mother, Laeta, her family and the Christian community. Logically, the Christian faith could not survive without individuals to populate its communities and so faithful Christian families were indeed an important source of support for the expanding religion. Moreover, within those families, mothers had a fundamental obligation, as has been noted, to endorse and guide their young children in spiritual and devotional matters. Thus, Jerome and others had to concede that conventional motherhood was a valuable resource for the Christian society.

Yet maternal behavior disturbed Jerome. From his perspective, Laeta's conduct, while evocative of the manner of all devoted mothers, "worrying about every little thing" and challenging whatever "risks" confronted her family in order to care for her children, was not at all praiseworthy and was, rather, a cause for dismay. Throughout the letter, Jerome betrayed his own internal conflict about motherhood, (female) sexuality and the proper Christian life, for while he encouraged Laeta to be a mother to many sons, he then denounced her for any tenderness or regard she might have for her children. A true Christian, he fumed, would be less concerned with her children's desires and be more willing to "offer herself" completely to God by repudiating human affiliations and corporeal instincts. In fact, Jerome even intimated that the affection Laeta displayed to her daughter was actually threatening to her daughter's spiritual well-being for the relational bond between mother and daughter might impede the spiritual

maturation of her daughter, and so he urged that Paula be removed from her care.[23] He, therefore, insisted that Paula be removed from the care of her mother and live instead with her widowed grandmother, Eustochium, who had dedicated herself to the ascetic Christian ideal. There, little Paula would become her grandmother's companion and "heiress to her holiness in the future."[24]

There are other instances in other letters in which Jerome asserted the primacy of the "family" of faith over the biological family, the spirit over the body, and the necessity to modify the concept—as well as the reach—of motherhood if individuals were to realize for themselves the saving grace of God as well as the path of salvation for others. Truly, while his might have been one of the more pretentious and prolix voices to disavow the popular principles of human relationships, he actually articulated the ideas and exposed the tensions of ambiguity that were prevalent within the early Christian community.[25] For Jerome and some of the leading Church fathers of the early Christian era, the concept of motherhood waivered uneasily between the customary ideals of parental care and affection and a notion of motherhood that was divorced from any biological affiliation and was rather conceived as a spiritual condition of nurturance and guidance in the Christian faith. More to the point, any person, including conceivably celibate and unmarried men, who were utterly dedicated to the truth and legitimacy of the teachings of Christianity, could assume the role of (spiritual) mother.

The resistance to conventional (biological) motherhood should not be completely surprising since it has been well-documented that the vigorous prevalence of Neoplatonic philosophy in both Christian and non-Christian communities of the late antique era engendered a deep aversion to the human body and an apparent discomfort with unapologetic materiality.[26] Male writers of the time freely expressed their abhorrence of all manner of physicality, especially physicality of a sexual nature, and human pregnancy—the most obvious manifestation of female sexuality—seemed to be particularly odious to the early Christian teachers and they freely shared their revulsion with female correspondents. In his letter to Laeta, Jerome described pregnant women "with their swelling stomachs" as "revolting" to behold.[27] A few generations later, Avitus, Bishop of Vienne in southern Gaul, wrote a poem "of consolation" for his sister Fuscina that described, in part, the horrors of pregnancy and hardships of motherhood that as an avowed virgin of Christ she would be able to avoid.[28] Avitus recounts to

her the conditions of physical distress and emotional suffering which any pregnancy can cause:

> (w)hen ten months (*sic*) have brought continuous sickness and her stomach is heavy, swollen with the fully-formed fetus, the seeds which came from the father become a burden to the mother, inflicting unbearable pains as the uterus swells.
> For when, in the struggle of giving birth, the womb contracts, the woman alone pays the price, with such great physical danger …
> … it very often happens that with her groans she brings forth a dead child. Often the mother also dies at the same time.[29]

It is a distressing depiction of pregnancy. Avitus repeatedly describes the pregnant body as being "swollen" almost to the point of eruption, like a body that continues to bloat as it rots away after death. Pregnancy will offer nothing but sorrow, Avitus claims, for the sensations of heaviness, sickness and unrelenting pain it inflicts on the pregnant woman often become intensified by the real potential for death: the mother either "groans forth a dead child" or dies herself in giving birth. Women of the time were of course acquainted with many risks of being pregnant and of giving birth but Avitus heightens the agitation by imaging the mother giving birth (and this could very well have been common) alone and abandoned, isolated in her agony, and possibly suffering alone to die.

In a similar context, Ambrose of Milan, writing at the same time as Jerome, also wished to counsel *his* sister Marcellina on the vagaries of pregnancy and the perils of giving birth. He explained to her that

> (t)hough the noble woman boasts of her abundant offspring, yet the more she bears the more she endures. Let her count up the comforts of her children, but let her likewise count up the troubles. She marries and weeps. How many vows does she make with tears? She conceives, and her fruitfulness brings her trouble before offspring. She brings forth and is ill. How sweet a pledge which begins with danger and ends in danger, which will cause pain before pleasure! It is purchased by perils, and is not possessed at her own will.[30]

In stating that the pledge of childbirth "is not possessed at her own will," Ambrose implies that one of the more disconcerting aspects of pregnancy in their society is that it is often not a voluntary condition and that a married woman could not opt out of motherhood. Thus, the struggles and misery of pregnancy and then childbirth were but an amplification of that compulsory predicament, a predicament that, again, she would likely

have to negotiate on her own. Ambrose, like Avitus, wished to impress on his sister that motherhood, at least in its biological form, could yield little joy or pleasure but it would surely be a source of humiliation, loss and despair.

Yet, Avitus did not conclude his poem with only the physical dangers and material problems of pregnancy and childbirth; rather, after the section on the apparent liabilities of giving birth, he proceeded to warn his sister about an even more troubling consequence of childbirth and motherhood, a condition of *spiritual* torment and loss. Avitus describes the potential misfortunes that might befall the child and mother were they both to survive childbirth and wonders:

> What if the child raised and fed for a long time is snatched away by death, … and she loses everything that her joy promised …?
> *Much more serious than all these things is if envious death by chance snatches the young child away prematurely, before it has been washed in the heavenly waters, born only for the harsh fate of hell.*
> Such a child, when he ceases to be the son of his mother will be the son of perdition: then the grieving parents regret giving birth to this body which they brought forth only for the flames.[31]

In this section, Avitus clarifies what churchmen perceived to be the unquestionable challenge and primary responsibility of a Christian mother: the welfare of a child's soul must be a more pressing priority for his parents, especially the mother, than the welfare of the child's body. Avitus accepts that the loss of a child at childbirth or during infancy is naturally a tragic circumstance; however, that loss would be magnified in solemnity and urgency if the child were to die before he had been baptized ("washed in the heavenly waters"). It is an unthinkable condition, Avitus thunders, that an unbaptized child should endure "the harsh fate of hell," eternal damnation, because of the spiritual (and temporal) negligence of his mother and he thus insists that it would be better that a child were never born than risk becoming a "son of perdition" by dying without the sacramental cleansing of holy water.

The assertion that an infant or young child would suffer eternal damnation unless he had participated in the proper religious ritual might seem to a modern sensibility both outrageous and offensive, but it does verify the prerogative of the *spiritual* over the simply corporeal, in this case relative to the nurturance of children, in early Christian belief and cultural

effects. While Christian teaching conceded that biological motherhood was a necessity, albeit an unpleasant one, its more ardent rhetoric reframed the language of "mother" and maternal accountability from primarily a biological to a metaphysical condition of being.

That narrative shift, however, was not limited only to matters relevant to women since commentaries by religious leaders like Avitus and Ambrose, for example, that dislocated conventional discourse about familiar topics, like pregnancy and motherhood, were indicative of the more extensive Christian reorientation of individual values and general mores in late antique Roman Empire. Not only did Christian discourse reposition the private into the public and move the interior life and individual experience to the foreground of public discourse, but Christian teaching also re-contextualized human relationships and social roles. Within the community of Christendom, the poor and the disenfranchised and the outlier—and female—could make points of contact with the wealthy and the powerful and the familiar—and male—since Christianity mapped all humanity along the contours of transcendent and mortal boundaries.[32] To be human, in Christian terms, meant to be corporeal and finite and other than God, and manufactured distinctions of class, status and even gender would not be able (ideally, at least) override that essential human identity.

Early Christian thinkers, then, proposed a reality in which the visible and the material existed as a kind of threshold to the invisible and intangible, for the abiding presence of God and the truth of the Incarnation made possible the affiliation of the sacred transcendent with the profane quotidian. To be human was to dwell in the temporally real while acknowledging the source of meaning in the eternally real. Such teachings about layered realities and disembodied truths disseminated in different ways throughout the Christian society in late antique Rome but they particularly influenced ideas about language, words and meaning. Christian teachers of the time insisted on the malleability and fluidity of language: the redoubtable Augustine of Hippo was especially keen on the theory that words are more than linguistic ciphers or conventional markers. Rather, opined Augustine, words are understood to be *signs*, or things that signify more substantial meanings "hidden" beneath their evident forms.[33] Meaning does not just linger on the surface of things but can be discovered in multiple strata deeply embedded within each sign, influenced also by its context and the perspective of the apprehender of the word. As Augustine explained:

> signs (here, words) are literal when used to signify the things for which they were invented: as, for example, when we say *bovem* [ox], meaning the animal which we and all speakers of Latin call by that name. They are metaphorical when the actual things which we signify by the particular words are used to signify something else: when, for example, we say *bovem* and … also understand by that animal, the 'worker in the gospel,' which is what Scripture … means.[34]

For Augustine, language is both literal declaration (the animal that is named "the ox") and also veiled allusion (the hardy worker who *is like* an ox) so that a word can connote both its unembellished meaning and any hidden denotations on different occasions and in different contexts. However, such semantic elasticity does not then imply a revocation of truth but it does suggest that words need not always be wedded to a single interpretation, a single historical convention or a single cultural tradition.

Thus, it was perhaps inevitable that early Christian thinkers would extricate the word "mother" and the concept identified by the word "motherhood" from the explicit and literal (and commonly accepted) references and identify them instead with a range of possibilities, the most obvious one being the application of the appellation "mother" to the Church herself: Holy Mother Church.[35] The fact that early Christian teaching held, as has been noted, that the principal task of the Christian mother was to nurture the souls of her children, make them steadfast in the Christian faith and guide them in life along the path to salvation, made the identification of the Church as "mother" a rather logical judgment, even if the abstraction of the concept of motherhood from the human mothers in the Christian community to the ecclesial institution itself was rather dismissive of women. The Church was, in fact, the embodiment of the instruction, rituals, practices and behaviors that would best prepare the congregants for the kingdom of God: the Church was indeed the locus of birthing the faithful.

The rhetoric about "Holy Mother" Church could be quite intimate and emotional. St. Ambrose described the soothing refuge that the Church would be for Christian women pledged as virgins:

> secure this for the holy virgins, for whom the Church first provided such protection, who, anxious for the prosperity of her tender offspring, herself as a wall with breasts as many towers, increases her care for them, until, the fear of hostile attack being at an end, she obtains by the care of a mother's love peace for her vigorous children.[36]

Ambrose offers a vivid portrait of the Church as Mother, extending the abstracted concept of motherhood to the quite graphic image of the Church as a robust female whose breasts number as many towers, thus equating mother's milk with defensive fortification, sustenance (of faith) with protection (against evil). The Amazonian image was quite deliberate: Mother Church was armored with wisdom and truth to defend her children against persecution, treachery and lies just lurking outside. This metaphoric ideal of motherhood is dynamic, exuberant, combative and courageous, protective of the most "tender" of her children.

Yet, Mother Church could also be corrective, even punitive, in situations involving errant children. In the late fourth century, when he was still a priest at Hippo in North Africa, Augustine composed a psalm of nearly 300 lines that he wished to include in the public worship of his congregation: the psalm was a narrative of the Donatist heresy and the erroneous beliefs of its teaching.[37] However, the threat of a schism by those adhering to the Donatist cause perturbed Augustine even more than the nuances of theological squabbling for a schism meant the dissolution of the singularity of Mother Church. He ends the psalm, then, not with a reprimand against heterodox belief but with a lament by (and about) Mother Church:

> Listen, brothers, to what I say …
> What if Mother Church herself were to address you peacefully
> And say to you, "O my sons, why do you complain about your mother?
> I want to hear from you now the reasons why you have deserted me.
> You make accusations against your brothers: this hurts me deeply …
> I endured much with sorrow …
> … no one is forcing you to rebel against me in this way."[38]

It is an artful passage as Augustine addresses the company of Donatists in a tone that is more familial than adversarial, more fraternal than inimical. Indeed, the text reads like an elder brother chiding his wayward younger siblings: Augustine first admonishes them as less mature ("Listen, brothers, to what I say") because of their prior attempts to subvert the doctrinal authority of the Church, but in a bout of compassion he then appeals to their feelings of love and loyalty for that same Church which Augustine now identifies as their "Mother," the Church that fostered the faith and nourished holiness within each soul. Augustine asks them to imagine Mother Church speaking to them, blending her voice with the chorus of

aggrievement and lament, but her manner is the manner of a mother, not a judge. Thus, not unlike a "human" mother, Mother Church is imagined scolding *her* children ("O my sons, why do you complain …?") for their contentious beliefs ("why do you complain …?"), for their abandonment ("why have you deserted me …?") and for the sectarian acrimony that they have been encouraging that is dividing their family of faith. Yet, also like a mother, she does not condemn her children as much as she asks them to reflect on their actions and understand the consequences of what they have done. It is a simple scene, even coy in its modesty, but quite persuasive in its domesticity. It reduces the vast institution of the Church to a very personal and specifically parental scale, making the charge of emotional injury as a result of a "household" quarrel all the more acute: no one wants to disappoint his "mother." The rhetoric was skillfully honed and yet, for all of its quiet pathos, it perpetuated and even amplified the inherent ambivalence in the early Christian understanding of mother and motherhood. The religious authority and ecclesial leadership of the Church was, of course, almost entirely in the hands of male clerics and male scholars and male abbots who, by identifying the institution over which they enjoyed most jurisdiction as "Mother," assumed for themselves governance also over that which was intimately, specifically and uniquely female, the function of motherhood, and, in so doing, implied that women were, in a sense, redundant for the crucial task of safeguarding the souls and heartening the faith of those in their care. Those men abrogated from women within their very own communities their rightful claim to motherhood and, rather, applied it to the religious body which they administered or, more bluntly, to themselves. It is unlikely that a more unequivocal assault on the dignity—and identity—of Christian women could have existed.

Conclusion

There can be no convenient conclusion to this brief study. Early Christianity during the late antique Empire was still a work in progress, evolving its identity more and more firmly with each succeeding generation. However, it must be said that it was a culture and an institution beset by storms of conflicting understanding and troubled by bouts of real ambivalence and uncertainty, perhaps in no instance more vexingly than in matters related to women. Grounded in a Scriptural tradition that associated the troubles of pregnancy and the ache of childbirth with the divine curse of the Fall;

supported by a philosophical tradition that, paradoxically for an incarnational faith, abhorred physical existence and privileged immateriality and the metaphysical; scaffolded with teachings of corporeal asceticism and the rewards of physical purity that culminated in the glorification of virginity as the most appropriate modality of existence for Christians, certainly Christian women; infected by the prevalent male revulsion at the sight of the pregnant female body and with the act of childbirth itself; informed by the very real health risks that were always associated with pregnancy, childbirth and even early childhood, and, based on the moral injunction that asserted that maternal care must be directed more properly to the souls rather than to the bodies of those in a mother's care, the early Christian church struggled to incorporate the world of women and the specifics of women's lives in its male-dominated culture and thus was finally unable to explain conclusively what might be the meaning, the worth or even the necessity of (biological) motherhood in the emerging Christian civilization, apart from the obvious need for human beings to populate Christian communities and promote the faith through future generations.

However, what is most problematic in this entire discussion is the absence of women's voices expressing the female perception of mother and motherhood, the most female of all human conditions, so there can be no final assertion about the place and meaning of motherhood in early Christianity. There are no opportunities (at least not yet) to learn what early Christian women actually thought about the female body and its capacity to bear human life, about the condition of pregnancy and the appearance of pregnant bodies, and about the sundry emotions (as well as assorted physical complications) caused by childbirth. Yet, it is helpful to attend to the few female voices that are still extant, like the funereal epitaphs that were either actually written by women or composed for Christian women, likely with their acknowledgment: those texts offer a distinct perception and a different vantage point on women, motherhood, and the Christian faith. The epitaphs articulate great love for and pride in family, especially children, as well as steadfast devotion to the Christian faith, and so perhaps early Christian women contrived a way to negotiate between their spiritual and biological lives, or—and this is perhaps more possible—did not accede to the declarations of the male leadership in the Church that there was an inherent incongruity between the spiritual and the physical, as well as the virgin and the mother. Perhaps the early Christian women felt no need to constrain their lives as women, as wives and as mothers or to apologize for

their embodiment of their faith. It is near impossible to know: the voices of the women are largely silent to a modern audience.

Perhaps a comment from a son of early Christianity, grown to manhood and prominence at the time of his statement, about his (actual) mother might offer a very human perspective on this thorny cultural debate. As St. Augustine wrote of his mother, (later St.) Monica, upon her death:

> I shall not pass over what my soul may bring to birth (sic) concerning your servant, who brought me to birth both in her body so that I was born into the light of time, and in her heart so that I was born into the light of eternity. I speak not of her gifts to me but of your gifts to her.[39]

Notes

1. Please see the selected bibliography at the end of the essay for a listing of reliable historical studies of Late Antiquity and especially on the topic of Late Antique religion and early Christianity.
2. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Harper: San Francisco, 1996), 95.
3. Ibid., 97.
4. Details about the grim practice of female infanticide can be found in Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 48–50.
5. Source: Ross Shepard Kraemer, ed., *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 370–373.
6. Ibid., 371–372.
7. Clark, 13–15, 46.
8. Kraemer, 373.
9. The life expectancy of women in late antique/early Christian Rome was between 20 and 30 years. See Aline Rousselle, "Body Politics in Ancient Rome," in *A History of Women: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 298.
10. Ibid. On the dangers of childbirth, see also Clark, 81–82.
11. It seems worth mentioning that although this is but a single example of a Christian epitaph, its narrative content is not at all particular and is in fact in accord with early Christian tomb inscriptions. See Peter Brown, "Relics and Social Status in the Age of Gregory

of Tours," in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1982), 224.

12. Patricia Cox Miller, ed., *Women in Early Christianity: Translations from Greek Texts* (Catholic University of American Press, 2005), 276.
13. Ibid., 278.
14. Justin Martyr, "Second Apology 2," in Kraemer, 66.
15. Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), 149.
16. Monique Alexandre, "Early Christian Women" in *A History of Women*, 442–444.
17. Kraemer, 161–62.
18. On women and death, see Louise Bruit Zaidman, "Pandora's Daughters and Rituals in Grecian Cities," in *A History of Women*, 368–369.
19. Jerome, Letter 107 "To Laeta," in *Lives of Roman Christian Women*, trans. and ed. by Carolinne White (Penguin Books, 2010), 151–52.
20. Ibid., 153.
21. Ibid., 162.
22. Ibid.
23. As an interesting aside about maternal care: the fourth-century Christian poet Prudentius wrote an extended hymn about a third-century Spanish martyr, Eulalia of Merida, who was said to have been no more than 14 when she was killed during an extended period of imperial persecution of Christians. The hymn documents the passionate belief of the young girl and her frantic desire to challenge the leaders of the oppression of Christians. One early verse describes her life at home and her mother's frantic efforts to stem her daughter's ardor for martyrdom: *But her mother in her loving care arranged/for the spirited virgin to be concealed at home/ in a remote rural area, far from the city,/to prevent the wild girl, …/ from rushing to pay the price of martyrdom…* Perhaps Jerome was more correct about the strength of maternal love to prevail over spiritual impulse than even he realized! For the poem by Prudentius, see Carolinne White, trans., *Early Christian Latin Poets* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 93.
24. Jerome, Letter 107 "To Laeta," 162.

25. Some examples can be found in Kate Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 68–72; Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 67–70. For a more encompassing and quite thoughtful analysis of the paradoxical turn in early Christian rhetoric, see Cameron, 155f.
26. This topic has been amply covered by a brace of significant scholars: for example, see R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48f.; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), ch. 1 *passim*, and Wayne A. Meeks, *The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), ch. 8, *passim*.
27. Jerome, Letter 107 "To Laeta," 160.
28. Carolinne White, *Early Christian Latin Poets,* pp. 157–158.
29. White, "Avitus," l. 173–182. One hastens to add that the classical tradition also viewed pregnancy as a condition fraught with vexations and problems: see Yurie Hong, "Collaboration and Conflict: Discourses on Maternity in Hippocratic Gynecology and Embryology," ch. 4 in *Mothering and Motherhood in Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. by Lauren Hackworth Petersen and Patricia Salzman-Mitchell (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2012), esp. 71–74.
30. Ambrose of Milan, "Concerning Virginity," Book I. 6 at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/34071.htm.
31. White, "Avitus," l. 186–195. Emphasis mine.
32. See Cameron, 186–188. Also: Peter Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 51; Markus, 70–74.
33. Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, trans. by R. P. H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 30–33.
34. Ibid., 37–38.
35. For a full discussion of the theological history of designating the Roman Catholic Church as "Holy Mother Church," see Joseph C. Plumpe, *Mater Ecclesia: An Inquiry into the Concept of the*

Church as Mother in Early Christianity Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1943). Also, available online, a recent dissertation on the same theme: http://etd.library.vanderbilt.edu/available/etd-03242011-105708/unrestricted/Text-Appendix-Bibliography.pdf.

36. Ambrose, "Concerning Virginity" 1. 9. 49 at http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/34071.htm.
37. White, "Augustine," 51–56.
38. White, "Augustine," 55–56, l. 259–66.
39. Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford: University Press, 2008), 166.

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Motherhood in the Ancient Indian Buddhist World: A Soteriological Path

Pascale Engelmajer

Buddhism is generally considered to have arisen around the sixth century B.C.E. in the northeast of India during a period of social, political, economic and religious change. Population growth was associated with urbanization and a shift from a largely pastoral to an agrarian society, as well as with the centralization of political and administrative power over larger territories. According to the Buddhist texts, 16 major, and many minor, such political and territorial entities existed at the time of the Buddha.[1] Local and long-distance trade also greatly increased over that period fostering the development of a cash currency economy.[2] The structure of Vedic society, characterized by socio-religious stratification into four classes (*vaṇṇa*) determined by birth, was challenged by the rise of a new class, the householders (*gahapati*), whose membership depended on economic status rather than birth, and who were the "owners and controllers of the primary means of production … [and] the backbone of the economy."[3] They were typically associated with agriculture and trade, and cut across *vaṇṇas*.[4] Scholars are inclined to see the emergence of heterodox traditions, such as Buddhism and Jainism, as associated with this wealthy, urbanized, landowning class that did not fit readily into the Vedic structure and, therefore, sought religious agency and autonomy in the

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teachings of the emerging sects.[5] This environment offered great potential for change and greater social and religious openness, which did benefit not only men of the new class but also women, the *gahapatinīs*. I.B. Horner, in her seminal account of women in early Buddhism, saw the Buddha as an early champion of women's rights and this period as a time when "the exclusive supremacy of man began to give way before the increasing emancipation of women."[6]

While one must be wary to use the texts of a tradition as historical sources, as Horner and many other scholars have done, it is possible, following Jonathan Walters, to use approaches that allow for at least recognizing issues important to the texts' composers and compilers and, further, to the socio-historical circumstances of the most ancient layers of those texts, when it is possible to identify them.[7] With this caveat in mind, this study of motherhood and mothering in ancient India will focus on the Pāli Buddhist texts, trusting that they reveal some aspects of the socio-historical and philosophical contexts of the earlier phase of the lengthy period during which they were produced, from around the sixth century B.C.E to the fifth century C.E. when it is believed that the Pāli canon as it is today was "closed."[8] In this light, it appears that although the Pāli texts recognized women's religious agency and autonomy, they did not directly challenge established norms, nor did they break away entirely from them. Pāli Buddhism, therefore, remained a patriarchal tradition and, accepting women's roles as a given, it transformed them into autonomous and meaningful soteriological paths, thereby providing women agency while not throwing the gauntlet at brahmanical society.

Before further examining these texts, an understanding of mothers, motherhood and mothering must be briefly outlined. At first sight, the Pāli texts seem to equate mothers with biological mothers, those who give birth to a child. But as we examine them further, mothers are clearly and unambiguously portrayed as those who perform certain activities, in particular, as will be discussed, activities related to nurturing and providing what can be called—borrowing part of Liz Wilson's phrase—spiritual "coaching."[9] This is comparable to Sara Ruddick's understanding of "mothers not [being] identified as a biological or legal relationship … but by the work they set out to do" which can be best described as the work of "mothering."[10] Such an understanding of mothers as those who engage in the activities of mothering thus informs the present reading of the Pāli texts.

In any case, it must be noted that women are a very minor concern for the compilers of the Pāli canon. Undeniably, most of the *suttas* were

intended for an audience of monks and were little concerned with lay life in general, and women in particular, except mostly as a source of alms, or as a threat to the renouncer's lifestyle. Female monastics are a very minor presence in the canon.[11] Unlike men, few women are characters with names and a personal story. In fact, most references to women are to generic female beings in lists and metaphors that describe the social world in which the Buddha and his followers live, and the most common, and important, female characters are lay women. By comparison, the most common male characters are monks.

What can be gathered from these lists and metaphors and from the few texts dedicated more specifically to women is that the Pāli texts provide continuity with the ancient Indian context in which women's social functions are restricted to their roles as wives and mothers. For example, an often cited excerpt to showcase the Buddha's egalitarian attitude that "a woman … may turn out better than a man" in fact explains that her potentially surpassing a man resides in fulfilling her functions of wife and mother by being a "devoted wife" (*patibbatā)* and producing a son. Indeed, these two roles are not only predominant in descriptions of women but they seem to constitute the essence of womanhood. A woman's destiny is inevitably that of a wife and mother, as emphasized when the Buddha highlights the five sufferings peculiar to women that are all related to women's social role as wives and their reproductive function. Women are said to suffer because they "go to live with [their] husband's family and [are] separated from [their] relatives [and] are made to serve a man."[12] Furthermore, they menstruate (*utunī*), they become pregnant (*gabbinī*) and they give birth (*paraṃ vijāyati*).[13]

The relative absence of systematic descriptions of women is even more acute in the case of mothers. While motherhood is the destiny of a woman, the nature and qualities of the role must be inferred from passing references and metaphors about mothers, and from descriptions of individual women referred to as mothers. This study examines two prominent women, Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī, the founder of the order of nuns, and Visākhā Migāramātā, a wealthy lay-follower, member of the new *gahapatinī* class discussed above. They are both important female characters in the tradition, praised as role models by the Buddha in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*: Mahāpajāpatī as chief among nuns of long-standing, and Visākhā as chief among those who support the *saṅgha* (the Buddhist monastic community).[14] As a testimony to their lasting importance, it is noteworthy that their stories are among the four life stories of prominent

disciples that novices learn about during their first year of study in contemporary Sri Lanka.[15] They are especially significant for my discussion of mothers in the Pāli texts, because they have both received the title of "mother" outside of the more common route of biological birth-giving. This allows us to isolate and highlight which activities are specifically associated with mothering in the Pāli texts. In this study, they are organized into two main sets: first, mothers provide nurture to their children and, second, they are shown to serve as a spiritual "coach." In order to discuss these, I will first examine how Mahāpajāpatī, through her care of the baby Bodhisatta, exemplifies nurture, showing how her role is echoed in various passages of the canon. Similarly, I will examine how Visākhā's title as Migāra's mother (*migāramātā*) epitomizes the mothering aspect of providing spiritual opportunities and inspiration. Furthermore, both Mahāpajāpatī and Visākhā, beyond the specific actions that warranted their title, accomplish both of these sets of activities in all aspects of their lives and effectively embody mothering as a spiritual path.

Mahāpajāpatī

Mahāpajāpatī is best known as the founder of the order of nuns, but it is her role as the Buddha's "milk-mother" that will be discussed here. The canonical account of the Buddha's life relates that his mother, Mahāmāyā, died seven days after giving birth to him, and that her sister, Mahāpajāpatī, who was also married to king Suddhodana, the Buddha's father, gave her own infant to a nurse, and nursed the new-born. She is described in several accounts as one who has "done much for the Buddha, who has taken care of him, nourished him, and given him milk, who gave him milk when his mother died."[16] The lengthy and repetitive phrase to describe what Mahāpajāpatī did for the baby Bodhisatta highlights the importance of her role in protecting and nourishing him after his mother's death. One can easily imagine the mourning sister vowing to protect and care for her sibling's child as if it were her very own, an image that would have been even more striking when maternal death was a much too common occurrence.[17]

Mahāpajāpatī's description focuses on her nourishing the baby Bodhisatta, in particular, her giving him her breastmilk. Her nursing is the action that constitutes the foundation of her mother status. While this status remains implicit in this *Anguttara* passage, it is stated explicitly and colorfully in the *Gotamī Apadāna*, which describes Mahāpajāpatī's last

days. In this last act of her life, Mahāpajāpatī, now a nun, and an arahant (a disciple of the Buddha who has attained the ultimate goal of nirvana), visits the Buddha to request his permission to attain *parinibbāna*—that is to die. As she approaches, she greets him by asserting his relationship to him crying out "well-gone one, I am your mother … it was I, O well-gone one, who reared you, flesh and bones … I suckled you with mother's milk."[18] The Buddha concurs, acknowledging that she has been his "wet-nurse all his life" and calling her "my mother."[19] However, this parent–child relationship is reversed as Mahāpajāpatī recognizes herself as the spiritual daughter of the Buddha, whom she hails as her spiritual father who nursed her with "Dhamma-milk." Reiko Ohnuma has understood this reversal as disparaging mothers and maternal milk, because maternal milk merely nourishes the body while Dhamma-milk nourishes spiritually and gives access to nirvana.[20] Yet, this fails to recognize the significance of using mothering as a reference for implementing spiritual guidance, a theme that will be examined below.

Maternal milk symbolizes the mother's nurturing function. To appreciate fully the significance of the repetitive description of Mahāpajāpatī as one "who has nourished [the Buddha], and given him milk, who gave him milk when his mother died" and the *Apadāna* dialogue between her and the Buddha, we must transport ourselves mentally to a time when no powdered breastmilk is available at the supermarket. To state the obvious: without maternal milk, a new-born does not survive—and while the birth mother gives life to a child, maternal milk permits this life to flourish. The implicit recognition of the mother's function—as one who nourishes—in the survival of all beings is made explicitly in a passage in which the Buddha stresses that, as beings have wandered through *saṃsāra* (the endless round of rebirths characterized by suffering), they have drunk a quantity of maternal milk that exceeds the amount of water contained in the four oceans.[21] While the passage's main point is that all beings have been at one time or another everyone else's mother, father, brother, sister, it also underscores that all beings have survived owing to the care and nurture of their mothers. As the figure of Mahāpajāpatī clearly conveys, mothering extends beyond birth-giving: the mother is not merely the one who gives life but the one who nurtures.

The only other passage in which this phrase is found in the canon is one of the few descriptions of parents that explains what parents do for their children in exactly the same terms: parents "do much for their children,

they take care of them, nourish them and show them the world."[22] One may wonder which came first: the description of the parents, which was then taken to characterize Mahāpajāpatī, or the contrary. In any case, it strongly suggests that the Pāli texts conceptualize parenting in large part as the role of the mother—doing much and caring for, and nourishing. The commentary on this passage also emphasizes that parents "feed and nourish" their children, again mentioning what is commonly considered to be "mother-work."[23] The commentary further notes, in a vivid image, that parents also take it upon themselves to preserve the life of their children, as they do not "seize them by the foot on the day of their birth, and drop them in the forest, or in a river, or from a cliff" but instead provide them with care and nurture.[24] These images emphasize how a child's life is entirely dependent on the goodwill and care of their parents, a trope that is crucial in distinguishing the status of Mahāpajāpatī as the Buddha's *de facto* mother.

Visākhā

Visākhā is always called Visākhā Migāramātā (Migāra's mother) in the Pāli texts. It is true that many women are called someone's mother in the canon, but Visākhā's status is the only one, as far as I can tell, that is explained by connecting it to the spiritual guidance she provided to an individual who was not her child: she is called "Migāra's mother" thanks to the crucial role she played in the conversion of her father-in-law, Migāra, and his subsequent spiritual attainments. In the canonical texts, several suttas show Visākhā as a devoted follower of the Buddha who engages him in discussion about the results of meritorious actions, especially those related to women.[25] She also often appears in the Vinaya, the canonical texts focused on monastic discipline, requesting permission to provide various requisites for the monks and nuns. The commentaries relate that Visākhā was the daughter of Dhanañjaya, a rich merchant of Bhaddiya, follower of the Buddha, who married Puṇṇavaddhana, the son of Migāra, a rich merchant of Sāvatthi. The descriptions of her involvement with the wedding preparations show her as an unusually intelligent, articulate, and efficient 16-year old, who manages complex situations and a large number of people thoughtfully and effectively.[26]

However, issues arise when she arrives at her new family's residence, because her father-in-law is a follower of the Nigaṇṭhas, a group of ascetics who live entirely naked. She refuses to attend to them, in part because

she is repulsed by their nakedness. Matters finally come to a head when Migāra ignores a Buddhist monk who stops at his house during his alms-round. Visākhā, who is fanning him while he is eating, realizes that Migāra does not wish to make an offering, and enjoins the monk to leave, remarking that her father-in-law "eats stale fare."[27] Migāra is offended by her remark and, spurred on by the Nigaṇṭhas, he decides to send her back to her family's home. After lengthy proceedings, Migāra finally realizes that Visākhā is not at fault, and he accepts to let her worship the Buddha and the Buddhist *saṅgha*. During the Buddha's visit, Migāra, still incited by the Nigaṇṭhas, refuses to attend to him, and hides behind a curtain to hear the sermon. Despite his contrary attitude, upon hearing the Buddha speak, Migāra attains stream-entry (the first attainment that establishes a disciple irreversibly on the path to awakening) and becomes a follower of the Buddha. His gratitude is such that the commentary exclaims "he went forward, and taking in his mouth the breast of his daughter-in-law, he adopted her as his mother, saying, 'To-day henceforth you are my mother.' And thenceforth she was called Migāra's mother."[28] Turning to the Buddha, he adds "through my daughter-in-law, I have come to know of [the Buddhist path] and have obtained release from suffering … when my daughter-in-law came to my house, she came for my welfare and salvation."[29]

The basis for Visākhā's status as Migāra's mother is explicitly identified and, furthermore, validated, by Migāra suckling on Visākhā's breast—a rather incongruous image for a contemporary reader—but one that confirms the assumption made above that milk-giving is the mothering activity *par excellence*. Visākhā's story adds a dimension to mothering: that of providing spiritual opportunities, which is therefore tacitly equated to the nurturing and life-giving properties of the act of giving milk, a comparison that is made explicit in the *Gotamī Apadāna*, as discussed above. The commentary attributes Migāra's realization and attainment directly to Visākhā's mothering, and his statement that "she came for my welfare and salvation" further suggests intentionality on her part in arranging her father-in-law's encounter with the Buddha's teachings. The lengthy story that precedes this episode shows Visākhā to be perfectly in possession of herself, sagacious and astute in her answers to Migāra's accusations, and steadfast in her position. Of course, she is ensuring that she will be able to continue as a follower of the Buddha in her father-in-law's house, but it is also obvious that her goal is to convert Migāra "for his welfare and salvation"—a goal which he acknowledges gratefully.

Spiritual "Coaching"

Providing spiritual "coaching" is clearly an aspect of mothering in the texts. In fact, a simile given by the Buddha provides a telling parallel to Visākhā's story. In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha compares Sāriputta, one of his two chief disciples to a mother (*janettī*–genitrix) because he "trains others for the fruit of stream-entry" (the same spiritual attainment obtained by Migāra) and because he "is able to announce, teach, describe, establish, reveal, expound, and exhibit the Four Noble Truths," the foundational truths proclaimed by the Buddha. On the one hand, Sāriputta is like a mother because he trains others to attain the first level of achievements and, on the other, because he can explain *and* embody the Four Noble Truths through his behavior. There are two implications for mothering: the first is that a mother trains her child to attain his or her spiritual potential. Indeed, the idea that mothers should encourage their children to develop the qualities of the Buddhist path is made evident in several places. The Buddha, in a passage of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, sees it as a maternal responsibility, when he advises that a mother who has an only child "implore" that child to follow the examples of his most accomplished disciples. This advice is given for mothers of sons *and* daughters and, in both cases, the Buddha suggests lay and monastic examples indicating that both paths are open to male and female children.[30] Mothers not only encourage their children to take up the Buddhist path, but they are also depicted as warning their monastic children against giving up the monastic life and returning to the householder's condition, or even to exert themselves to attain nirvana.[31] A whole poem of the *Therīgāthā* is such an exhortation from a mother to her son to "devote [himself] to the path … to [develop] insight, to put an end to suffering."[32]

But mothers go beyond merely encouraging their children to pursue the Middle Way. Like Visākhā, they act on others' behalf to set them on the path, or they even provide the initial spur that motivates their offspring to engage on the path. For example, in the story of Prince Bodhi, his mother and his nurse both took refuge for him (the formal affirmation of adhesion which requires a threefold repetition of the refuge declaration).[33] His mother did so the first time while he was still in her womb; his nurse, the second time while he was a small infant, so that by the time he meets the Buddha, he only needs to state the third iteration of the declaration to become his disciple.

The second implication of the Sāriputta simile is that a mother is herself a role model who has achieved spiritual realization. This is clearly the case

with Visākhā. Even if she does not encourage him directly, her actions lead to Migāra's conversion, and she is herself spiritually realized. We learn from the commentary in fact that she attained stream-entry at the age of seven while listening to the Buddha.[34] Furthermore, as mentioned above, she is considered by the Buddha to be one of the chief lay donors and a trustworthy role model.

Another suggestion that mothers as spiritual coaches are role models who are themselves spiritually accomplished lies in the customary "stories of the past" in which the Buddha connects the present status of his most prominent monastic and lay followers, as well as that of his relatives, to a formal vow they have made in a former life. The Buddha's birth mother, Māyā, is a striking instance. In a previous birth told in the *Vessantara Jātaka*, she is said to have wished to become the mother of the future Buddha.[35] While the well-known account of the Buddha's mother focuses on his choice being based on her moral perfection, the stories of her previous births highlights that the choice was not one-sided, and that Māyā is not a mere "fetal container" without personality, but rather a woman who made the conscious choice to become the perfect mother to the future Buddha. This decision required her to fulfill "the perfections for a hundred thousand æons and [to observe] the five moral vows … from birth."[36] In order to be this perfect mother, she had to develop the qualities of the Buddhist path (the perfections) and, in her life as Māyā, to observe the five lay precepts without ever breaking them. Both Mahāpajāpatī and Visākhā also made a vow in a previous life to attain their present status, and they also had to develop the qualities of the Buddhist path to achieve their goal. The tradition, despite its strong androcentric focus, weaves in elements that clearly call attention to another side of the story, one in which women in general, and mothers in particular, have autonomy and agency. Furthermore, their path as mothers is not different from, or antithetical to, their path as Buddhist followers. In fact, mothering can be a means to the fulfillment of the Buddhist path.

The Mothering Path

The mothering activities of Mahāpajāpatī and Visākhā are not limited to the actions that earned them the title of mothers, but they extend throughout their life until they attain nirvana. Furthermore, although they each earned their "title" as a result of an action that characterizes a specific aspect of mothering, Mahāpajāpatī for her nurturing of the Buddha, and

Visākhā for the spiritual coaching she provided Migāra, they both engage in these two aspects of mothering covering its full range throughout their whole life. It is in this life-long continuation and expansion of mothering to all beings around them that they actualize the Buddhist path.

Mahāpajāpatī, needless to say, is the founder of the order of nuns. After king Suddhodana, her husband—and the Buddha's father—had died, she asked the Buddha to allow women to be ordained as nuns. Despite his refusal, she, along with her retinue of 500 women, shaved her head and put on the ochre robes of the monastic order, and walked to the town where the Buddha had gone, to reiterate her request. Her insistence (and the mediation of Ānanda, the Buddha's attendant) finally convinced the Buddha to open the order to women.[37] As discussed earlier, in contrast to the dominant socio-religious milieu, Buddhism recognized women's spiritual autonomy and agency, but until Mahāpajāpatī's request, they remained circumscribed within the domestic sphere. In the same way as Visākhā opened the Buddhist path to Migāra, Mahāpajāpatī unlocked the monastic path to all women. She continued to be an indefatigable advocate for women as the leader of the nuns' order. In all her activities, she cared for others as a mother: she protected and nurtured their physical and spiritual wellbeing when she appealed to the Buddha to allow the nuns to bathe.[38] She also asked him that they be instructed in the Dhamma regularly, and especially, that they be relieved from performing domestic duties for the monks, so that they could focus on their pursuit of nirvana.[39] Besides ensuring the nuns' access to the teachings, she pursued her own spiritual development, therefore providing a worthy role model that was publicly legitimized by the Buddha, in the *Gotamī Apadāna*, where he enjoined her to display her supernatural powers as a proof of her spiritual realization to those who doubted women's spiritual ability.[40] In this text, her motivation was clearly recognized by the nuns who hailed her as one who was compassionate (*anukampikā*) to all women, and thanks to whom they achieved spiritual realization.[41] Further, the spiritual coaching aspect of her mothering was demonstrated as she provided spiritual guidance to, and consoled, those who mourned her imminent passing calling them "children" or "son" and encouraging them to "free [themselves] from Māra's snares" and to realize the impermanent nature of all things.[42]

Like Mahāpajāpatī, Visākhā extends her mothering activities beyond her biological children, and beyond her role in Migāra's conversion.

Already, as a young 16-year-old bride, she organizes and manages the wedding arrangements for a great number of people, including the royal family.[43] Furthermore, upon arriving at her husband's family's house, she even attends to a mare having a difficult delivery.[44] Throughout her life, she supports the Buddhist monastic community, buying land and having a magnificent monastery (Migāra's Mother's Monastery—*migāramātupāsāda*) built for the Buddha. She also makes various gifts to the Buddha himself or to the monks and nuns, and is instrumental in obtaining permission for them to be ordained during the rainy season, which was not allowed until after her intervention. Significantly, Visākhā is well known for requesting eight wishes from the Buddha allowing her to provide various items to monks and nuns during her entire lifetime: food for monks arriving to, and departing from, her monastery, food for the sick and those caring for the sick, medicine for the sick, bathing cloth for the nuns and, for both the monks and nuns, robes for the rainy season, and a constant supply of rice-milk. The Buddha asks her to explain her motivation for giving such gifts to the sangha, and the detailed and systematic explanations she gives for each gift further confirm the thoughtfulness and kindness she had already demonstrated when handling the conflict with her father-in-law. She cares for the monastic community's physical and spiritual well-being, and she is also protective of their standing in the community, explaining, for example, the request for the nuns' bathing-cloths to stop local women from taunting them.[45] Most importantly, Visākhā ends her explanation claiming that she benefits too because when she brings to mind the positive impact of her gifts on the monks and nuns, she is delighted and joyful, which results in a calm and composed body and a contemplative mind, and that this brings about "growth as to the [understanding] of the sense-organs, growth as to the powers, growth as to the factors of enlightenment."[46] Without entirely ignoring the self-serving intent of this passage (from the perspective of the monastic composer/compiler), it is still noteworthy that Visākhā's mothering activities vis-à-vis the Buddha and his community, by reproducing a common description of the stages of the path, is clearly recognized as conducive to nirvana. The tradition also recognizes the mothering nature of her activities in her "story of the past": Visākhā's vow was to care for the Buddha and the monastic community and be in the "position of a mother" (*mātuṭṭhāne*).[47] This further highlights that the performance of these activities constitutes mothering.

The Buddhist Path

In the individual sections on Mahāpajāpatī and Visākhā, two sets of activities, nurture and spiritual coaching, that appear as defining activities of mothering in the Pāli canon were identified, since, as these two women's stories showed, those who engage in them earn the status of mothers. How are these activities, and their implementation in these two characters' lives, related to the Buddhist path? How are the mothering activities and those of the spiritual path similar? As argued throughout this chapter, it appears that, in fact, the activities and properties of mothering are not different from those of the path, and that the tradition indirectly recognizes their similarities in several ways.

The Buddhist path is commonly referred to in the Pāli canon as the Noble Eightfold Path.[48] Naturally, the detailed and systematic accounts of the process of attaining awakening are central to the canon, and there are many different descriptions of how nirvana is achieved, or of the qualities of one who has attained nirvana, but these can only remotely be compared to mothering activities. However, another way of thinking of the Buddhist path is to consider the qualities that characterize a Buddha's actions, as these are the virtues to develop in order to attain awakening. Unlike ordinary human beings who act out of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*mohā*) as well as generosity (*alobha*), loving-kindness (*adosa*) and wisdom (*amohā*), a Buddha's actions can only be motivated by generosity, wisdom and loving-kindness because he has entirely eradicated the three negative motivations.

Generosity is usually described as the action of giving to the Buddha or a member of the sangha, but narratives in the canon, such as those of the *Jātaka*, which describes how the Bodhisatta perfected the virtues of a Buddha during countless lifetimes, emphasize selfless giving for the sake of another's wellbeing.

Mahāpajāpatī's generosity is manifested in her nurturing of the baby Bodhisatta, and later when she appears in a sutta making an offering of robes to the Buddha.[49] Unquestionably, her request for women to be ordained, which she did out compassion, is an act of great generosity as, in the Buddhist context, there is no higher gift than that of the Dhamma.[50] Finally, when she becomes a nun, she renounces the world, achieving what the commentary describes as the chief characteristic of generosity, that of relinquishing.[51] Visākhā's generosity, on the other hand, is evident from her being acclaimed by the Buddha as his chief female donor in

the *Anguttara*. The commentary to the *Dhammapada*, when recounting her life story, exclaims "no other woman in the world gave away so much money as this woman" and mentions countless instances in which Visākhā gives generously.[52] She gives away the gifts that she has received for her wedding, distributing them according to need.[53] She gives away the precious wedding *parure* that took four months to make and used up enormous amount of resources.[54] She is said to have given food to monks every day, and to have built various buildings for the *sangha*, including the Migāramātupāsāda mentioned above.[55] Significantly, as she explains when she requests her famous eight wishes from the Buddha, her giving is motivated by two aims: the welfare of those to whom she gives, especially allowing the monks and nuns to focus on their spiritual development rather than be hindered by physical and material needs, and her own spiritual development.[56]

It is harder to find explicit textual accounts of their development of wisdom. Fundamentally, wisdom implies being able to discern what is conducive to the end of suffering (i.e. nirvana), and that applies for oneself and others as well.[57] In this light, the narratives about Mahāpajāpatī and Visākhā undeniably show that they have developed wisdom and are seeking to develop it further. Beyond their obvious worldly wisdom, which Visākhā in particular displays throughout her interactions with Migāra's envoys and Migāra himself, they both seek to develop their own understanding of the Dhamma and to help others achieve the same goal. They request teachings from the Buddha, for themselves and for others: as discussed above, Mahāpajāpatī requests teachings for herself and the nuns, and Visākhā ensures that Migāra hears the Buddha's sermon, and she also appears in several suttas receiving teachings from him. Furthermore, their acts of giving show wisdom, because they are based on what is conducive to awakening, and this is particularly true of their giving of the Dhamma, Mahāpajāpatī to all women, and Visākhā to Migāra. It is further demonstrated in their specific requests, such as that made by Mahāpajāpatī for the nuns to be released from the domestic duties they performed for monks, or that of Visākhā that ordination be allowed at all times.

Finally, the quality of the path that is most easily related to mothering is that of loving-kindness. Loving-kindness is the basis of action for the welfare of others, and it is said that one who is "determined to [fulfil the path] abides in loving-kindness."[58] Loving-kindness is intimately related to compassion as one is the foundation for the other, because

"when one delights in providing the welfare and happiness of other beings with an unbounded heart [loving-kindness], the desire to remove their affliction and suffering [compassion] becomes powerful and firmly rooted."[59] Compassion is described as "the first of all qualities issuing in Buddhahood" and is best defined as the desire to alleviate or remove the suffering of others.[60]

It is clear that all actions undertaken by Mahāpajāpatī and Visākhā are motivated by loving-kindness and compassion. This is explicitly stated by the beneficiaries of those actions: the nuns who were able to enter the monastic path thanks to Mahāpajāpatī praise her as one who is compassionate (*anukampikā*), and Migāra recognizes Visākhā as the one who introduced him to the path for his "welfare and salvation." But the virtues of loving-kindness and compassion extend our discussion of the path to encompass all those who undertake mothering and point to the most important relationship between mothering and the Buddhist path. As alluded to earlier, mothers are unimportant in the Pāli canon, and there are no systematic description of what mothering might entail. On the other hand, there are a few metaphors that compare virtues of the path to those of mothering. Loving-kindness and compassion are such virtues. Most times, the metaphors are not very detailed, which suggests that the audience is presumed to be familiar with mothering activities and their intrinsic qualities so that through them, they (monks in the majority of cases) will intuitively understand the virtues of the path that the metaphors seek to explain. A mother is often described as one who has compassion (*anukampati*) or is full of compassion (*hitānukampin*).[61] In a list comparing different kinds of wives, compassion is what characterizes the wife who is like a mother, suggesting that this is a defining characteristic of mothering, just as milk-giving is in the case of Mahāpajāpatī. Compassion is the basis of action for a Buddha and, in fact, the Buddha is said to act out of compassion using the same term that is used to describe mothers. The Buddha's actions, such as accepting gifts from his followers, or visiting them, are said to be done "out of compassion" (*anukampaṃ upādāya*).[62] Most importantly, compassion is the virtue that motivates his teaching: he teaches because he "is compassionate (*anukampako*), for the welfare [of beings], he teaches the Dhamma out of compassion."[63] Through this crucial concept, the texts establish a direct parallel between mothering and the activities of the Buddha.

Mothering as the Actualization of the Path

This parallel is most forcefully expressed in a well-known sutta, the *Mettā Sutta*, which is still recited or used in various forms today by Buddhists all over the world. It describes how one should develop loving-kindness (*mettā*),

> Just as a mother would protect with her life her own son, her only son, so one should cultivate an unbounded mind towards all beings,
>
> and loving-kindness towards all the world. One should cultivate an unbounded mind, above and below, and across, without obstruction, without enmity, without rivalry.[64]

In this text, the love of a mother for her child is the reference to explain loving-kindness, one of the three foundational qualities of the Buddha's actions. A mother's love is "unbounded," it does not differentiate between her wellbeing and that of her child to the extent that she would give her life to protect his. This image is so evocative and extreme that it encompasses all lesser actions. It brings to mind many scenarios from tragic accidents in which a mother gives her life for that of her child, to more ordinary experiences, such as when a mother makes sure that the food she provides is healthy and appetizing. The text enjoins to extend this kind of love to every being in the world and therefore to treat every being in this way; it suggests that mothering is the embodiment of loving-kindness, and must therefore be emulated in order to develop this virtue.[65]

Reiko Ohnuma argues that this kind of metaphor, where mother love serves as the reference for a Buddhist virtue, cannot be seen as a positive account of mothers, because they contrast mother love with the loving-kindness of a Buddha. Mother's love is particularistic, whereas the Buddha's love is universal.[66] However, viewing this comparison as an opposition where mother love is particularistic and *mettā* universal, worldly versus spiritual, attachment versus non-attachment, or a hierarchy in which mother love is inferior to *mettā*, is another example of what Karen Derris calls the "unthought" of viewing motherhood as an obstacle to spiritual realization.[67] Further challenging this "unthought," it becomes clear that the metaphor is an accurate explanation of what one must do to develop *mettā*. In fact, motherhood serves as a model for the process of developing *mettā*. *Mettā* as infinite and unchanging is a concept that exists only at an idealistic level,

and as an ideal, it is necessarily universal. In this, Ohnuma is right; where her interpretation can be refined is that the actualization of the ideal of *mettā* necessarily happens within the confines of *saṃsāra*, and *saṃsāra* is necessarily particularistic. Thus, to use Clifford Geertz's expression, motherhood is not only a "model of" the practice of *mettā*, but it is a "model for" its concrete implementation: each instance of *mettā* happens in a particular context between particular individuals.[68] Or to put it another way, infinite, unbounded loving-kindness can only exist in the world through its particularistic instances and manifestations. When this is considered, we realize that the metaphor is not implying that mother love is a pale substitute for *mettā* and that it needs to be transcended, as Ohnuma suggests, but rather that it is exactly what *mettā* truly is: putting another human being's welfare and wellbeing above one's own, even at the cost of one's life.

The implication of these metaphors and parallels between mothering activities and the foundational virtues of the Buddhist path are immense. Mothering *is* the development of those virtues on a day-to-day, time after time basis. Such a conclusion is possible only if we can move beyond the androcentric focus of the Buddhist sources as well as our own academic biases. It is true that the Pāli texts' patriarchal attitude marginalizes and disparages women's experience in general, and mothers' experience in particular, but they also undeniably open the door to women's spiritual autonomy and agency.[69] Focusing on the former inevitably prevents us from appreciating the latter. In addition, feminist scholarship so far has unconsciously assented to the proposition that motherhood is an obstacle to the Buddhist path, the attitude that Karen Derris calls an "unthought."[70] Recognizing the need to switch our focus from the androcentrism of the texts to their inclusive soteriology, and to challenge the scholarly "unthought" is crucial in order to offer a new perspective on how the mothering experience, to use Adrienne Rich's term, offered authentic opportunities for spiritual development for women, even within the patriarchal world of ancient Buddhism. In this light, the mothering experience can thus be seen no longer as an obstacle to spiritual growth, but as an experience of spiritual growth.

Notes

1. This chapter focuses on the Pāli canon and its commentaries for a discussion of mothers and mothering. Besides the convenient fact that it is my main area of study, the Pāli canon is also the only complete body of Buddhist texts in an Indian language that can be

dated accurately enough in its extant form (and for which there is a good body of translations in English). Accordingly, as Steven Collins has argued, it gives a good sense of the world in which they were composed and compiled (Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pali Imaginaire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1998), 58–59). This chapter will therefore use Pāli terms, except when the words have been assimilated into English in their Sanskrit form (nirvana, for example), in which case, diacritics will not be used. Furthermore, for convenience and best use of limited space, I will give existing translations and reference to the original text in the Pali Text Society (PTS) editions, which are readily available, should one wish to consult them.

2. Ellison Banks Findly, *Dāna, Giving and Getting in Pāli Buddhism* (Delhi: Motilal Barnasidass, 2003), 22.
3. Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 86.
4. Banks Findly, *Dāna*, 53–54.
5. See, for example, Ibid., 22–23. Also see Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett *The Sociology of Early Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2003), 13–36, which explains that it is possible to argue both that Buddhism could have been best suited to the emerging socio-economic order or that it was a reaction against its excesses.
6. I. B. Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism: Laywomen and Almswomen* (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1930), 2.
7. Jonathan Walters, "Suttas as History: Four Approaches to the *Sermon on the Noble Quest* (*Ariyapariyesanasutta*)," *History of Religions* 38, no. 3 (Feb., 1999): 247–284. Walters discusses four approaches to using religious texts as history and, in this particular case, the Pāli texts. He rejects approaches that use the textual sources as a window into their history, but advocates for interpreting the socio-historical and philosophical contexts of later readerships on the basis of "evidence" through the manuscript record, the "supplementation" of earlier fragments, and the existing commentaries.
8. Steven Collins, "On the Very Idea of the Pāli Canon," *Journal of the PTS* 15 (1990): 96.
9. Liz Wilson, "Mother as Character Coach," in *Family in Buddhism*, ed. Liz Wilson (Albany: SUNY, 2013).

10. Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), xi–xiv. For a discussion of motherhood as a patriarchal and oppressive institution opposed to the "experience of mothering," see the seminal work by Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976).
11. Pascale Engelmajer, *Women in Pāli Buddhism: Walking the Spiritual Path in Mutual Dependence* (London and New York, Critical Studies in Buddhism Series, Routledge, 2014), 92–94.
12. Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, vol. II (Oxford: PTS, 2002), 1287 (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* (hereafter S) IV 239).
13. Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, 1287 (S IV 239).
14. F. L. Woodward, trans., *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, vol. I (London: PTS, 1995), Mahāpajāpatī: 21 (*Anguttara Nikāya* (hereafter A) I 24); Visākhā: 24 (A I 26).
15. Jeffrey Samuels, *Attracting the Heart: Social Relations and the Aesthetics of Emotion in Sri Lankan Monastic Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 68.
16. E. Hare, trans., *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, vol. IV, (London: PTS: 1995), 183 (A IV 274), also at I. B. Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline (Cūllavagga)*, vol. V (Oxford: PTS, 1993), 352; Vinaya (hereafter Vin) II 252 and Bhikkhu Bodhi and Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 1102 (*Majjhima* (hereafter M) III 253).
17. Sadly it has remained much too common in many parts of the world.
18. Jonathan Walters, "Gotami's Story," in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald Lopez (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 121 (*Apadāna* 532).
19. Walters, Gotami, wet-nurse: 129 (*Apadāna* 537), mother 134 (*Apadāna* 541) and 137 (*Apadāna* 543).
20. Reiko Ohnuma, *Ties that Bind: Maternal Imagery and Discourse in Indian Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2013), 166.
21. Bodhi, *Connected Discourses*, 653 (S II 181).
22. Woodward, *Sayings* I, 115 (A I 132); *Sayings* II, 79 (A II 70).
23. M. Walleser, H. Kopp, eds., *Manorathapūraṇī* II (London: PTS, 1968), 122 (my translation).

24. Ibid.
25. For example, at Hare, *Sayings* IV, 174 (A IV 255), and 178 (A IV 267).
26. E. Burlingame, trans., *Buddhist Legends*, vol. II (Oxford: PTS, 1995), 59–84 (Dhammapada commentary (thereafter Dh-a) (I 384–420).
27. Burlingame, *Legends*, 71 (Dh-a I 402).
28. Burlingame, *Legends*, 75 (Dh-a I 406).
29. Burlingame, *Legends*, 75 (Dh-a I 407).
30. Bodhi, *Connected Discourses* I, 688 (S II 235 *ff.*).
31. Return to the lower life: Bodhi, *Connected Discourses* I, (S I 208); pursue nirvana: K. R. Norman, *Elders' Verses* II (*Therīgāthā*), 2nd ed. (Lancaster: PTS, 2007), 23 (*Therīgāthā* 206).
32. Norman, *Verses* II, 23 (*Therīgāthā* 206).
33. The refuge declaration states: "I go for refuge to the Buddha for the first time, I go for refuge to the Dharma for the first time, I go for refuge to the Sangha for the first time," repeated three times.
34. Burlingame, *Legends*, 60 (Dh-a I 385).
35. E. B. Cowel, ed., *The Jātaka or the Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, (London: PTS, 1957), 246–305 (*Jātaka* V 479 *ff.*).
36. Jayawickrama, N.A., trans., *The Story of Gotama Buddha (Jātaka-nidāna)* (Oxford: PTS, 2002), 66 (*Jātaka* I 49).
37. The narrative of Mahāpajāpatī's request is found in two places in the canon, in the *Anguttara Nikāya* and in the *Vinaya*; see Hare, *Sayings* IV, 181 *ff.* (A IV 274) and Horner *Discipline* V, 352 (Vin II 252).
38. Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline (Suttavibhaṅga)*, vol. III (Oxford: PTS, 1993), 250–251 (Vin V 261).
39. Instruction in the Dhamma: Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, 1120 (M III 270); Request to be relieved of domestic duties: Horner, *Discipline* Vol. II, 94–95 (Vin II 234). Note that, while the Buddha institutes a rule that nuns cannot perform domestic duties for the monks, they may still do so if they are relatives.
40. Walters, Gotami, 126 (*Apadāna* 535).
41. Walters, Gotami, 131 (*Apadāna* 538).
42. Walters, Gotami, for example, children 120 (*Apadāna* 531), son 125, (*Apadāna* 538).
43. Burlingame, *Legends*, 65 (Dh-a 392) and 70 (Dh-a I 399).
44. Burlingame, *Legends*, 70 (Dh-a I 399).

45. I. B. Horner, trans., *The Book of Discipline (Mahāvagga)*, vol. IV (Oxford: PTS, 1993), 413–420 (Vin I 289–293).
46. Horner, *Discipline* IV, 419 (Vin I 292).
47. Burlingame, *Legends*, 82–83 (Dh-a I 417–418).
48. Right view consists in seeing the Four Noble Truths (suffering, the origin of suffering, the end of suffering and the path to end suffering); right intention includes desirelessness, friendliness and compassion; right speech focuses on abstaining from harmful speech; right action requires abstaining from harming life, from taking what is not given, and from sexual misconduct; right livelihood is based on avoiding wrong speech and wrong action; right effort consists in cultivating wholesome mental states and abandoning unwholesome mental states; right mindfulness focuses on the nature of body, feeling, mind, and phenomena; and right concentration is the practice of the four meditative states.
49. Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, 1102–1106 (M III 253).
50. Peter Masefield, trans., *The Itivuttaka,* (Oxford: PTS, 2000), 83–84 (*Itivuttaka* 98).
51. Bhikkhu Bodhi, trans., *The Discourse on the All-Embracing Net of Views: The Brahmajāla Sutta and its Commentaries* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1978), 260.
52. Burlingame, *Legends*, 81 (Dh-a I 416).
53. Burlingame, *Legends*, 70 (Dh-a I 399).
54. Burlingame, *Legends*, 66 (Dh-a I 393).
55. Burlingame, *Legends*, 79 (Dh-a I 413 *ff.*).
56. Horner, *Discipline* IV, 417–419 (Vin I 291–293).
57. Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, 387 *ff.* (M I 292 *ff.*).
58. Bodhi, *Brahmajāla*, 259.
59. Bodhi, *Brahmajāla*, 284.
60. Bodhi, *Brahmajāla*, 284.
61. For example, Hare, *Sayings* IV, 58 (A IV 93).
62. For example, E. Hare, trans., *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, vol. III (London: PTS, 1995); accepting gift: 41 A III 49; visit: 127 (A III 167).
63. For example, Bodhi, *Middle Length Discourses*, 847 (M II 238).
64. K. R. Norman, trans., *The Group of Discourses* (*Suttanipāta*), 2nd ed. (Oxford: PTS, 2001), 19 (*Sutta-nipata* vss. 149–150).
65. A much later Sinhalese text discussed by Richard Gombrich extends the routine and specificity of mothering activities to the Buddha

through metaphoric language, and the universality of the Buddha's compassion becomes instantiated in his specific and individual manifestations of mothering ("Feminine Elements in Sinhalese Buddhism," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 16 (1972): 67–93).

66. Ohnuma, *Ties*, 49–50.
67. Karen Derris, "Interpreting Buddhist Representations of Motherhood and Mothering," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 30, no. 2 (2014): 65.
68. Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 95.
69. Wilson, "Character Coach," 179.
70. Derris, "Motherhood," 65.

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PART II

Motherhood and Politics

Mother Knows Best: Motherhood and Succession in the Seleucid Realm

Alex McAuley

On a hot afternoon in 121 B.C.E., a young king famous for his hooked nose returned to the palace, parched after having exercised under the Syrian sun. As he entered, his mother Cleopatra offered him a cup to quench his thirst.[1] According to Justin, a second-century C.E. Latin historian, the wine was mixed with poison: Cleopatra had been growing increasingly upset as her son seemed to be heeding her advice less and less over the past eight years, and just as she had done with his troublesome brother Seleucus eight years previously, she sought to take family matters back into her own hands by substituting him with someone more amenable.[2] The young king, Antiochus, was all too aware of his mother's sinister intent, and insisted that she drink from the cup first. When she demurred, he pressed further, and left with no other choice, Cleopatra raised the cup to her lips. "The queen," Justin concludes "was thus herself killed by the wicked poison which she had prepared for another."[3]

The irony of the mother's wiles being turned against her by a savvy son is patent in the famous tale of the death of Cleopatra Thea, but the device is meaningless without a well-established pattern of behavior. The young king—Antiochus VIII Grypus ("the hook-nosed")—was the last but not the first family member to have been either killed or steered by

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the resourceful queen, and Cleopatra Thea was by no means the only Seleucid woman to have exercised a great deal of influence over the affairs of the court and empire by virtue of her station as queen mother. After roughly two centuries of the dynasty's rule, by the high Hellenistic Period of the 120s B.C.E., the nefarious figure of the scheming Seleucid queen or princess had become something of a literary trope which would later be embellished by authors like Justin to scandalize or to entertain Roman audiences.[4] Yet as with the death of Cleopatra Thea, when we sand away the coats of artful embroidery and moralization of our ancient sources, it becomes evident that such powerful reputations are not entirely fictitious. The notoriety of Cleopatra Thea, as is the case with so many of her female relatives who proceeded and followed her in the Seleucid dynasty and its cadet branches, is ultimately a convincing testament to her prominence in the governance of the empire.

In this chapter, I argue that she and her sisters derive this prominence in no small part from the centrality of royal mothers in Seleucid dynastic ideology. As highly visible beacons of the dynasty's prestige, transmitters of its legitimacy and the arbiters of its paths of succession and inheritance, Seleucid royal mothers functioned as the central nodes of a dynastic network that spanned an area of nearly three million square kilometers at its height.[5] As such, they are fascinating instars of not only royal maternity but also royal femininity as a whole.

To grasp the nuance and diversity of their place in the mechanics of empire, we shall consider both "primary" Seleucid mothers—the reigning queens and queen mothers of the main dynasty—as well as those daughters and sisters who became queen mothers in the empire's client dynasties as the result of diplomatic marriages. In both center and periphery, we see the same ideology of royal maternity at work on different scales, without which the fabric of the empire itself would have quickly frayed. The pattern that emerges is a mix of tradition and innovation that is unique to the Seleucid Realm: elements of Achaemenid imperial ideology stand alongside the deep awareness of familial prestige so inherent to the aristocratic mindset of the Archaic Greek world, all of it expressed in a vocabulary of power common to the Macedonian dynasties. In the independent power of these queen mothers and the mechanisms employed in the perpetuation thereof, though, we find something distinctly Hellenistic, and thus the Seleucids were much more than just imitators of established convention. Before elaborating these points, however, we must set the stage on which

these mothers played such prominent roles, and examine the responses of ancient and modern critics to their performances.

A Sick Man to a Happy Family: The Seleucid Empire

The Seleucid empire is something of a dark horse in the Hellenistic tradition. Stretching from the eastern coast of modern-day Turkey down into the Levant and through the fertile crescent of Iran and Iraq to the foothills of the Hindu Kush in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, the vast empire carved out by Seleucus I after the death of Alexander the Great is equally remarkable for the expanse of its territory as it is for the diversity of its populace.[6] While their Antigonid and Ptolemaic counterparts generally grafted a layer of Macedonian monarchy onto the top of pre-existing Greek and Egyptian social structures, respectively, Seleucus and his progeny had a rather more complicated inheritance. The Seleucid realm encompassed myriad (and seemingly incompatible) traditions, ranging from the Greek civic sensibilities of Ionian cities and the universal monarchy of former Achaemenid territories to nomadic tribesmen in Bactria and Sogdiana. Holding them all in check under the influence of a largely Macedonian royal family became the principal challenge facing the dynasty, and necessitated the establishment of a new system of power capable of mitigating the heterogeneity of the empire. There was, in other words, no "one size fits all" approach to the administration of such a massive and pluralistic realm; local influence had to be exercised in response to local idiosyncrasies.[7] This delicate negotiation between center and periphery persisted throughout the roughly three centuries of the dynasty's history, from the Settlement of Triparadisus in 320 B.C.E. to the annexation of Syria as a Roman province by Pompey the Great in 63 B.C.E.

In spite of the length and breadth of the dynasty's rule, in the eyes of scholars both ancient and modern, it has paled in comparison to its perhaps more glamorous Antigonid and Ptolemaic contemporaries. The former's rule over the Greek Mainland and its clashes with Rome naturally preoccupied nineteenth- and twentieth-century European historians, while the latter's reputation for incest, intrigue, and excess made it an object of deviant fascination to antique and contemporary authors alike.[8] Prevailing characterizations of the Seleucid empire remained largely negative until the 1990s, marked by fatalistic pessimism as its gradual collapse necessitated the rise of Rome. Edwyn Bevan, writing in 1902, captures this sentiment perfectly: "the empire, a magnificent tour de force, had no

natural vitality. Its history from the moment it misses the founder's hand is one of decline. It was a 'sick man' from its birth."[9] Seleucid history thus becomes the inevitable erosion of the dynasty's power: bits of the empire were chipped away by war or infighting, and fragments of territory slipped gradually away from the grasp of kings who were increasingly desperate to maintain a dwindling inheritance. In their quest to do so, they reverted to ever more desperate means: in the reconstruction of Bikerman in 1938, the Seleucid shift away from central administration and toward rule via local client proxy was a sure sign of the empire's distress.

The principal culprits in much of this decline were clear: the dynasty's women. The earliest historians of the dynasty attributed no small measure of the blame for its demise to the nefarious influence of its female members. In so doing, they were taking many of our ancient sources (particularly from the Roman Period) at face value, eagerly repeating the accusations of conspiracy, infidelity and murder made by Diodorus, Justin or Porphyry that were leveled against women whom they too described as "utterly unscrupulous," "licentious" or "profligate."[10] In a perfect imitation of the Periclean ideal of female seclusion in Classical Athens, when all was well in the empire, its prominent women were passively obedient, but their interference in the male game of dynastic politics was taken as both a symptom and cause of Seleucid decline.[11] Certain women could even be specifically blamed for accelerating the dynasty's collapse: with the marriage of Cleopatra Thea, whom we have encountered above, to Alexander Balas, Bevan claims melodramatically that "destiny was introducing the Erinyes into the House of Seleucus."[12] After this marriage, the furies did their work well, as their ambitious scheming brought the dynasty to its knees only a few generations later—or so the old story went. Instances of Seleucid women ruling independently or exerting some measure of influence on succession or governance were thus taken as intrinsically disruptive, and their public prominence on the political stage as apt testament to the rot spreading through the body and soul of the empire. Ancient prejudices have readily been translated into modern historical conclusions.

Judgments of male Seleucids and the empire they governed have lightened in recent years and perspectives have shifted thanks in no small part to the work of Laurent Capdetrey, Rolf Strootman and David Engels.[13] The new model of the empire is one in which rule by client kings in diverse regions was a means of consolidating territory and ensuring continued control over it, not a panicked means by which to prevent its loss. A proto-feudalistic structure emerges in which vassal kings

loyal to the main dynasty rule over regions like Armenia, Cappadocia, Pontus, Bithynia, Parthia and Bactria with the blessing and authority of the Seleucid king.[14] The entire system was contingent on the continued recognition of Seleucid prestige and primacy, and the persistence of these client kingdoms well into the second century and beyond makes it clear that the dynasty remained powerful to ancient observers, if not modern.[15] Governance via local proxy helped to overcome the diversity of the empire: with such a scheme, Cappadocian kings continue to rule over Cappadocia, Parthians over Parthia and Bithynians over Bithynia, all as local representatives of the otherwise "foreign" Seleucids.[16] These client kings, for their part, benefitted immensely from Seleucid recognition as it solidified and enhanced their local rule. Eager to advertise their intimate connection with the vastly powerful house of Seleucus, these client dynasties and their courts quickly began to imitate the customs of their overlords as a means of further advertising their prestige.

As argued previously, the principal agents of this distinct brand of imperialism were these infamous Seleucid women.[17] Nearly, every instance in which the Seleucids recognized the fealty of a client dynasty coincides with the marriage of a Seleucid princess to the local vassal. These women were scions of their dynasty's prestige, their marriages sealed and embodied the pledges of loyalty between client and overlord, and their physical presence in these local courts was a powerful reminder of Seleucid pre-eminence. The empire quite literally became an extended family, bound as much by blood as by loyalty. These women have generally been viewed as passive diplomatic tokens—pieces of dynastic furniture, as it were—valued only for their utility in strategic marriages.[18] Once married, it was presumed that they lost all connections to their natal families, instead being transferred entirely into their husband's dynasty.[19] The endurance of this notion is remarkable: in 1938, Bikerman wrote that "Seleucid queens never appear on the political scene like the wives of the Ptolemies" echoing a very minimalist view of female influence put forward by Grace Harriet Macurdy in 1932. Nearly 70 years later, Anne Bielman-Sánchez wrote "men remained the masters of a game in which women were only passive paeans."[20]

The tide has begun to turn in recent years as many have noted not only the active influence of Seleucid royal women in the administration of the empire but also their persistent loyalty to the main dynasty even after decades of marriage in the court of one of its clients. Although by no means the equal of their royal male contemporaries, Kyra Nourse aptly writes that their influence "was no less real or significant for having been

derived from the authority of the king or dynasty as a whole."[21] Their prominence as bearers of legitimacy, guarantors of loyalty, and intercessors with the king is thus no longer a subordinate concession but a completely different form of influence. As we shall see by examining the careers of several notable Seleucids below, this influence was often contingent on their motherhood. They were not simply stand-ins for their male counterparts, for how could a king and son also be a mother?

Setting the Trend: Early Seleucid Queen Mothers

While the scholarly *opinio communis* has held that the power of Seleucid queen mothers tends to be a second-century phenomenon borne of dynastic instability, more recent inquiries have revealed that the ideological prominence of Seleucid queens dates to the earliest generations of the dynasty.[22] Subsequent Seleucids, like our Cleopatra Thea above, were able to wield such influence thanks to the precedent set by the first two prominent women of the dynasty. The public images of the first two Seleucid queens, the Bactrian Apama and the Macedonian Stratonice, have recently been the subject of such interest that the finer points need not be recapitulated here, save for an overview of their station in the early dynasty.[23]

When the founder of the dynasty, Seleucus I, sought to lay a more enduring claim on his conquests, he consciously privileged his immediate nuclear family rather than any one individual member as the source of legitimate succession for the fledgling empire.[24] Sovereignty, in the Seleucid realm, was a familial claim, not individual. Unlike his Ptolemaic and Antigonid contemporaries who chose to associate themselves with a favored son as heir, Seleucus quite literally carved the unity of his immediate family into the geography of his empire. Among his dozens of city foundations, we find numerous tributes to his wife Apama and his son Antiochus, as well as his own parents.[25] On either side of the Euphrates river, the king ordered the construction of two cities that together were meant to stand as a testament to the strength of his marriage: on the western bank, he built the city of Seleucia-Zeugma (*zeugma* meaning "yoke" in Greek, i.e. "marriage"), named after himself, while on the eastern bank opposite Zeugma, he founded the city of Apameia, named after his wife.[26] There is poetic imagery in the placement of each: Seleucus situated his own city to the west, embodying his Graeco-Macedonian heritage, while the city of his Bactrian wife accordingly sat on the Eastern side of the river.

The cities of Apama and Seleucus, and thus symbolically East and West, were united by a bridge of boats which was constructed to span the river.

Further to the West stood the Syrian Tetrapolis, a group of four city foundations designed to secure his control of Syria against the Ptolemies, whose situation and names again communicate the unity of his nuclear family while also reinforcing the dual (though synonymous) role of "wife" and "mother" of the first Seleucid queen.[27] Two of the cities, Antioch-on-the-Orontes and Laodicea-ad-Mare were named, respectively, after his own father and mother, Antiochus and Laodice. The remaining two were again a testament to his marriage: Seleucia-in-Pieria stood as a harbor and naval base providing access to the Aegean, while another Apameia was a prominent fortress on the frontier with Ptolemaic territory to the south. Together, the two protected the Seleucid realm by land and by sea. The name of these cities also has another resonance: his son by Apama was also named Antiochus, thus the second reading of this geographical formation is as a manifestation of the next generation's strength as well: Seleucus the father, Apama the mother and Antiochus the son, all standing as a group of interdependent city foundations. The fourth city, Laodice, remains as a tribute to the founding king's mother.

In these Seleucid city foundations, which were so critical to securing and defending this fledgling and diverse realm, we witness the ideological prominence attached to the queen who is memorialized as both wife and mother. The dynasty presents itself as an artificially narrowed nuclear family which I have elsewhere labeled the "reigning triad." Despite the presence of other children in the family, since its first generation, the dynasty places only three members in the public spotlight: the king/father, the queen/mother and the heir/son. The mother figure, in this case Apama, is the lynchpin of the entire structure: without her union to the reigning king as wife and also to the future heir as mother, the system of legitimate succession collapses. Maternity is equally definitive of succession as paternity, again unlike their dynastic contemporaries.

This reigning triad was then reconfigured in the next generation of the family. The tale of the romance between Antiochus and his stepmother Stratonice has been the stuff of scandalous legend since Antiquity.[28] Stratonice, the young second wife of Seleucus I, was given by Seleucus as wife to his son Antiochus at the same time as he was named co-regent in the east and thus successor to the throne. The wife/mother figure again confirms the legitimacy of the male heir.

While the specifics of the situation were impossible for later Seleucids to imitate, the ideological prominence of the reigning triad remained. In the famous Antiochus I cylinder from Borsippa, when the king makes a dedication to the god Nabu in honor of the restoration of the temple he does so in the name of himself, his wife Stratonice and his son Seleucus—conspicuously omitting his other son Antiochus and daughters Apama and Stratonice. The closing lines of the dedication summarize this familial ideology perfectly: "may good [fate be] for Antiochus, king of [all] countries, king Seleucus, his son, [and] Stratonice, his consort, the queen, may their good [fate] be established by your command."[29] The empire thus becomes a family business, and without each of these three figures—father, mother and son—the public image of the dynasty collapses. In presenting themselves through the language of family unity and conjugal fidelity, the Seleucids were communicating in a grammar of power that would be both comprehensible and relatable to the diverse traditions of their subjects: instead of pinning their hopes on one specific mechanism of one specific group, they speak in rather more universal tones.

Steering the Path: Queen Mothers and Succession in the Main Dynasty

Given the visibility and prominence of these early Seleucid queens, it comes as little surprise that their successors would intervene with such panache in order to steer the paths of dynastic succession. The extensive support these queen mothers gained from within the royal court as well as in cities and regions throughout the empire speaks to their own awareness of their station, as well as the public recognition thereof. In 1999, Daniel Ogden proposed the notion that subsequent generations of the royal family were shaped by what he labels "amphimetric strife"—competition among women married to the same man over which of their children will be king's immediate successor. While Ogden is somewhat overeager in identifying cases of polygamy based on very slim evidence, nevertheless there are some clear instances of competition among rival wives of the same king.[30]

But there is more to the picture: the intervention of Seleucid queen mothers in the succession of the dynasty was not always targeted specifically toward the children of rival queen mothers, and neither was it always necessarily violent. As we shall see, there are many episodes in which

queen mothers privilege one of their children as heir over another, and these currents of favor ebb and flow over time as certain heirs or regents are replaced with more amenable candidates. This can also occur within a monogamous marriage and thus without rival maternal claims, and if anything the later history of the dynasty is shaped more by "amphipatric strife"—that is, competition among sons of the same woman by different husbands—than it is by strife among rival mothers alone. Polyandry, rather than polygamy, is the dominant pattern at work. We shall explore a few cases which illustrate the point.[31]

As early as the next generation of the dynasty presents one of the most infamous cases of maternal intervention in succession. Laodice, daughter of a noble family of Seleucid subordinates from Asia Minor, was married to Antiochus II before he ascended the throne in 261 B.C.E.[32] She and her two sons, Seleucus and Antiochus Hierax ("the hawk") enjoyed primacy in the royal family for the first decade of his rule, though their position was greatly menaced by the second marriage of Antiochus II to the young Ptolemaic princess Berenice Phernophorus ("the dowry bringer") as part of the peace that ended the Second Syrian War.[33] It was not until Berenice gave birth to a son in 246 B.C.E. that the seeds of maternal influence planted by the dynasty's first generation germinate. The rival wife now had produced a rival heir, compromising the previously guaranteed succession of Laodice's son Seleucus.[34] According to ancient sources, she acted dramatically in order to restore her son's place on the throne after the sudden death of Antiochus II.

Whether or not we should lend credence to ancient allegations that Laodice poisoned her errant husband before killing Berenice and her infant son has been a subject of great debate; regardless, even without the conspiratorial details Laodice's intervention in royal succession is abundantly clear. All of the ancient sources agree that Laodice acted because "she did not think her son was secure on the throne while the son of Berenice was alive," and that her son Seleucus gained his throne "with the encouragement of his mother Laodice, who should have prevented him from doing so."[35] Her intervention, of whatever shade it may have been, opened a tumultuous new chapter in the history of the empire: Ptolemy III invaded Syria under the pretense of either protecting or avenging the death of his sister Berenice, though the new king Seleucus II managed to repel the invasion after Ptolemy over-extended his advance. In her later career, there is perhaps the foreshadowing of Cleopatra Thea's machinations: when Antiochus Hierax, who had gained substantial support in Asia

Minor during the conflict against Ptolemy, went to war against his brother Seleucus II, Plutarch alleges that when he did so, he "had the support of his mother."[36]

While Laodice's unflinching support of her son Seleucus over Berenice's offspring is a clear case of Ogden's amphimetric strife, two generations later the opposite occurs: one queen mother becomes indispensable in legitimating two subsequent husbands (themselves also brothers) on the throne. In the intervening generation, though, we see further confirmation of Graeco-Roman attitudes toward female conduct. Laodice III, wife of Antiochus III, features prominently in the epigraphic records of her husband's reign and is frequently described as showing loyalty, love and affection toward her husband and the family as a whole.[37] It is striking that this Laodice, the epitome of domestic tranquility and conjugal harmony, barely appears in the literary sources save for at the time of her marriage. When all is perceived by ancient authors to be well and calm, "good" queens like Laodice III do not even merit mention, yet the agency of a queen like Laodice I is denigrated as female intrusion into what should be an exclusively male realm. Positive examples of royal maternity are passed over in silence, while negative examples are recounted in fantastical detail.

The ideology of the Seleucid-reigning triad presents itself quite clearly after the sudden assassination of Seleucus IV by his minister Heliodorus in 175 B.C.E. With the king dead, the throne vacant, and his son Demetrius I being held as a political hostage in Rome, the deceased monarch's brother, Antiochus IV, chose his moment to act.[38] With the support of Eumenes II of Pergamum, Antiochus swept through Syria, captured the city of Antioch, and killed the treacherous minister Heliodorus. Rather than simply establish himself on the throne, Antiochus instead promoted the image of the dynastic nuclear family as a means of legitimating his usurpation. He married his deceased brother's wife, Laodice (IV), simultaneously adopted her son by Seleucus IV as his own, and declared himself to be his co-regent.[39]

With this the reigning triad was restored: Antiochus IV replaced his deceased brother as the king/father in the reigning triad, while the continued presence of Laodice as queen/mother and the young child Antiochus as heir/son provided the impression of familial continuity. The new king was quick to advertise this, as the portrait of Laodice features prominently on his coinage.[40] Without his brother's wife and mother of his young child at his side, it is reasonable to surmise that his ascent to the throne would have been far more tumultuous. It was far easier to simply replace

his brother than rebuild the entire construct, and although Laodice's role in the maneuver seems largely passive, her ideological importance as queen/mother remains. She would prove to be the cornerstone around which Antiochus built his new path of succession: once Laodice had given Antiochus IV his own male heir, he quickly did away with his young nephew and instead named his son by her as his co-regent.[41] The queen mother, again, remained the constant amidst these dynastic shifts.

And now we return to the figure with whom we began: Cleopatra Thea. The woman who would later become the wife of three kings and the mother of four sons who would themselves go on to take the Seleucid throne was only a teenager of 15 years when she first crossed into Syria and was thrust onto the Seleucid stage.[42] Despite her youth, however, by the time of her first marriage in 151 B.C.E., she was preceded by nearly two centuries of female influence in Hellenistic *dynasteia* that had become increasingly normalized and institutionalized. Her career, though noteworthy, did not come out of nowhere. Since the beginning, she acted as a legitimator: as a daughter of Ptolemy VI, she was married to Alexander Balas, a man who was sent as a rival king to the then-unpopular Demetrius I by Seleucid enemies.[43] As a sign of his Ptolemaic support, Balas was given an army, money and above all, a royal bride.[44]

Although initially she was a token of her husband's Ptolemaic endorsement, when she became a mother, she began wielding the influence that would later make her so vilified in the eyes of Justin and other subsequent commentators. The decades of Seleucid history following her arrival in Syria are complex to the point that the details would overly detain us here, and so only a few telling episodes can be recounted. Cleopatra Thea's first husband and son were killed only five years after her marriage, and the widow, now 20, was married to the new king Demetrius II to legitimate his claim to the throne.[45] The pair then produced two children. Cleopatra, as Laodice before her, was an anchor of stability as queen mother, which counterbalanced the uncertainty plaguing the male side of the dynasty.[46] When her husband, Demetrius II, was captured while on campaign in Parthia, the queen realized that her and her children's fates were inextricably intertwined, and much of her maneuvering in the 130s is intended to secure the safety of her children. To protect them from rival claimants, in the spring of 138 B.C.E., she invited her husband's brother, Antiochus VII, to come to Seleucia-in-Pieria in order to marry her, and in so doing, take the now-vacant throne.[47] The queen mother, yet again, acts as the king-maker. When Demetrius suddenly returned to Syria after his long

captivity, she realized that her children were again in danger, and sent her son Antiochus (IX) to the Mysian city of Cyzicus near the Hellespont.

The final decade of her life witnesses the full realization of her potential power as queen mother. Following the death of her former husband Demetrius II in 126/5 B.C.E., her son Seleucus (V) declared himself king and attempted to take the reins of the empire. Appian (*Syr.* 69) recounts that "straightaway when Seleucus had taken the diadem after his father Demetrius, his mother shot him with an arrow and killed him." The summary of book sixty of Livy puts the reasons for this rather bluntly: "Cleopatra killed her husband Demetrius and then her son Seleucus, [as she was] indignant because with his father having been killed he took the diadem without having been told to do so."[48] The upstart Seleucus V was replaced with his more malleable brother Antiochus VIII Grypus, whom Cleopatra would also try to kill in turn, though he proved to be more wary of his mother than his predecessor.

Cleopatra's murder of Seleucus V is one of the less subtle instances of maternal intervention in Seleucid succession, but again it is not entirely without precedent. The roots of Cleopatra's ideological prominence extend as far back as Apama, and her sensitivity to courtly politics as well as her willingness to take the figurative gloves off in the pursuit of her children's interests are both echoes of Laodice I. Other women would follow in her footsteps in the last generations of the dynasty, most notably the antagonistic pair of her fellow Cleopatrae—Cleopatra Selene and Tryphaena.[49] While maternal influence was certainly a deciding factor in the closing years of the dynasty's history, as indeed it had been since the earliest decades of the empire's foundation. But there is one further observation to be made: in the career of Cleopatra Thea it is noteworthy that she goes from being a largely passive symbol of legitimation as a young wife to a highly active player in the game of dynastic politics once she became a mother. Maternity, perhaps more so than just royal femininity, either catalyzed or enabled her prominence. As seen, she is not the only Seleucid woman to have done so, and we shall find many others in the far-flung corners of the empire as we turn our attention toward the "secondary" women of the dynasty.

All the Other Queens: Secondary Seleucid Women

Even though they have garnered the lion's share of scholarly attention, the queen mothers of the main house were not the only women in the family. While they did not figure so prominently as their counterparts in

the reigning triad of the dynasty, the daughters, sisters and cousins who comprised the rest of the Seleucid family had an equally pivotal role to play in the maintenance of the empire.[50] In their careers, we see precisely the same public visibility, ideology prominence and maternal involvement as their better-known relatives, though manifested in the smaller courts of the Seleucid dynasty's client kingdoms. To these vassal kings, imitation of the Seleucids was an advertisement of their own connection to the vastly powerful main dynasty, and it should perhaps come as little surprise that as they copied Seleucid language, coinage and institutions, that they would also replicate the prominence of its queen mothers.[51] We shall take a few examples from vastly difference corners of the empire: Cyrene in North Africa, Cappadocia in Anatolia and Bactria in modern-day Afghanistan; the common thread of maternal influence that runs through these disparate regions is at once testament to its ubiquity and its ability to overcome latent ethnic and cultural divisions in the empire.

Apama of Cyrene, our first case study, is a fascinating character for a variety of reasons.[52] Scholars have generally presumed that women like her who were married to "foreign" potentates as a means of confirming diplomatic alliances were inherently passive figures, and lost most of their ancestral loyalty at marriage. The presumption that these women have little public role after their marriage is likewise prevalent, as is the notion that such diplomatic marriages are not commonplace until the middle of the dynasty's chronological trajectory. Apama speaks against this and so many other contemporary assumptions. A daughter of Antiochus I and likely his eldest child, in 275, she was married to Magas of Cyrene, a stepson of Ptolemy I who had been appointed governor of wealthy Cyrene but grew disaffected with Alexandria after his domineering stepbrother Ptolemy II Philadelphus took the throne.[53] Antiochus took note of Magas' unhappiness, and reached out to the disenchanted governor with the offer of an alliance sealed by marriage to one of his daughters. Magas accepted, and Apama arrived in Cyrene as the embodiment of his new source of support.

Although initially passive, Apama made herself into an active player in the Hellenistic game of thrones after her husband's death in 250. Magas' revolt against his erstwhile stepbrother failed, and over the following two decades Alexandria and Cyrene were gradually reconciled. Magas' daughter Berenice was betrothed to Philadelphus' son, the future Ptolemy III, as a symbol of the restored unity between the two kingdoms.[54] Apama would not have approved of this development: a Ptolemaic husband for her daughter would mean that Cyrene would be transferred to the enemies of her natal family, and thus after two decades, her own marriage

would be useless. Following Magas' death, the widowed queen mother consolidated her support in Cyrene and broke off her daughter's engagement to Ptolemy, replacing him instead with the Antigonid Demetrius "the Fair," a choice which eminently served the contemporary interests of the Seleucids at the expense of their Ptolemaic rivals. Justin would later recount that Apama, not Berenice, became the object of Demetrius' desire, and that he had a scandalous affair with his sinister mother-in-law.[55] Such debaucherous fluff testifies more to her political clout than her romantic proclivities. After popular opinion turned against Demetrius, he was murdered by a pro-Ptolemaic Cyrenaean faction who rallied around Berenice, and in the end, she would go on to marry her original Ptolemaic fiancé.[56] Although Apama's intervention failed, the episode is nonetheless revelatory. Even after three decades in Cyrene, she remained closely interested in the affairs of her natal house, and was willing to do whatever was necessary to serve her family's interests. She used the means at her disposal: thanks to the same prominence enjoyed by the queen mothers of her native family, she herself exercised this potential in this distant, though not entirely dissimilar, realm of Cyrene. Like Cleopatra, though she was initially a passive figure given away in marriage, she became conspicuously active once she became a mother. Given that she is not the only Seleucid queen to do so, it would seem that her maternal status granted her a great deal of potential influence in the dynasty, and the demands of her personal situation led her to wield it.

From Cyrene, we head north-east to the fairy chimneys of Cappadocia in central Turkey. The region had been brought into the imperial fold with the marriage of a Seleucid princess to Ariarathes in around 250 B.C.E., whose family declared themselves kings and ruled with the blessing of Antiochus II.[57] The arrangement between the two houses was renewed two generations later with the marriage of another Seleucid princess, Antiochis, to Ariarathes IV at some point between 210 and 196 B.C.E. Diodorus weaves a very strange tale of Antiochis' manipulation of her husband, claiming that the "utterly unscrupulous" women foisted two false sons on her husband, only to later give birth a legitimate son and exile the two pretenders to Rome and Ionia, respectively.[58] The total lack of detail and incredibility of the story make it seem like yet another literary episode of female perversion of power. As with Apama, when we strip away the shocking details, it is clear that Antiochis is attempting to guide the succession of the Cappadocian kingdom by replacing older heirs with a younger favorite. Given that Cappadocia's loyalty to the Seleucids at

the time was decidedly wavering, it would make sense that Antiochis was trying to ensure that the region stayed loyal to her natal family by arranging for her most amenable son to take the throne. As queen mother, she intervened in the realm in which she had the most influence: succession.

Turning our gaze far east to the alluvial plains and rocky foothills of the Hindu Kush in Bactria, we find the same ideological primary of royal maternity expressed by rather different means. Precious little evidence survives about the massive Greco-Bactrian kingdom that ruled over much of modern Afghanistan for over a century and a half, though coins provide a few glimmers of light in the prevailing darkness. As Richard Wenghofer and Del John Houle have recently proposed, the numismatic finds along with our scraps of literary evidence for the Greco-Bactrian dynasties suggest that these Greek rulers would have been related to the Seleucids, likely by the marriage of a princess, since the reign of Antiochus II. "It was through marriage ties," they write, "that the Seleukids were able to transform rebellious satraps into loyal Seleukid vassals."[59]

Advertisement of Seleucid ties—again predicated on Seleucid descent on the maternal side—is a phenomenon that transcends a specific dynasty in the region. After Eucratides I overthrew the last of the Euthydemid dynasty in 170 B.C.E., to quote Wenghofer and Houle again, "the new dynasty appears to have continued the practice of legitimizing its rule in Bactria by emphasizing its ties to the Seleukid house."[60] A gold commemorative medal minted by the new king has his portrait on the obverse, and the reverse features a double portrait of an older king and queen along with the legend "of Heliocles and Laodice." Laodice is a patently Seleucid name that was regularly transmitted matrilineally by families into which a Seleucid princess married, and it is striking in this instance that it is Eucratides' mother, not his father, who is wearing the royal diadem.[61] He thus justifies his claim to the throne through his maternal descent, not his paternal roots. His father's accomplishments may have made him a figure of local military authority and prowess, but only his mother could make him truly *royal*.

Conclusions

Igitur domi militiaeque identici mores colebantur, to paraphrase the words of Sallust: "thus at home and abroad the same customs were fostered."[62] The dynamics of royal maternity among the secondary women of the Seleucid dynasty need little analysis because they are precisely the same

as what we have encountered in the main house. The role and prominence of mothers operated on the macro- and micro-cosmic levels of the dynasty; the influence over succession and legitimacy wielded over the entire empire by "main" queens like Laodice I and Cleopatra Thea is identical to that of Apama of Cyrene or Antiochis of Cappadocia in their smaller client dynasties. In both contexts, royal women went from being largely passive daughters or sisters given away in marriage to active and influential players in the dynastic arena once they became mothers. Three principle vectors of influence came to these women with this status of mother, which can be identified in both the micro- and macro-dynastic levels: beacons of dynastic prestige, transmitters of dynastic legitimacy and arbiters of dynastic succession.

Having established the "what," by means of conclusion, the question of "why" begs to be addressed. Where did the Seleucids find the inspiration for such prominence of royal maternity? In implementing such customs throughout the empire, were they merely imitating their near-eastern predecessors in the interest of convenience, or was something else at work?[63] There is something unmistakably Achaemenid in the Seleucid tendency to exalt the mother of the reigning king above other contemporary royal women, particularly when succession had been decided.[64] The courtly clout of royal women, especially the queen mother, is also part and parcel of the Achaemenid tradition, though by no means unique to it. The Seleucid method of ensuring the loyalty of client proxies by marriage, however, seems to be a Persian inheritance in strategy if not attitude: having a subordinate marry someone of such vaunted status as the king's daughter would have been an unconscionable degradation to the Great King, though the Seleucids had no such qualms.[65] The sheer number of Achaemenid royal women and their organization into the king's *harem* likewise disqualifies the Persians as being the sole source of Seleucid inspiration.

The complex web of marriage and interrelation that comprises the Seleucid empire calls to mind the dynastic practices of the Assyrian kings, who like the Seleucids married royal daughters to domestic nobles and foreign potentates.[66] While the Assyrians tended to express legitimacy in terms of matrilineal descent, the Seleucids lacked their complex system of primary and secondary wives along with royal concubines. The family, in our Hellenistic case, was a much smaller group than in the Ancient Near East. Interestingly, the role of the queen mother as the arbiter of succession figures prominently in the Judaic tradition, especially in the House of

David, though with a few exceptions the Seleucids do not place the same emphasis on levirate marriage as we find in Deuteronomy.[67] The Seleucids, it appears, were well aware of the diverse traditions of the territories that fell under their sway, though they did not simply imitate one outright.

What of their own background? It follows logically that the Seleucids' native Macedonia informed their attitudes toward marriage, maternity and succession, though perhaps not to the degree that one may expect. The Argead dynasty of Philip II and Alexander is a messy place, marked by dynastic infighting, assassination of rival claimants, uncertain royal prerogatives, and regular polygamy. As has been extensively studied, the vagaries of Macedonian *dynasteia* created the potential for royal women—especially royal mothers—to hold a great deal of sway over the court. How much of this potential was realized depended on the individual queen mother.[68] But the Argead model is also somewhat inapplicable to the Seleucid realm: Macedonia was a comparatively small corner of northern Greece whose political geography was vastly different from the Seleucid empire. The Seleucid family, too, was a very different place: they lack the Argead penchant for polygamy and clan infighting, and thus amphimetric strife is less of a determining factor. To compound the issue, perhaps too much stock is put on the final two generations of the dynasty whose tumult is often taken as paradigmatic. The last and perhaps most enticing source of inspiration is an unlikely candidate: Archaic Greece. As analyzed by Lynette Mitchell, we find the same visibility in political affairs, confident intervention in dynastic matters, and enduring familial loyalty among the elite aristocratic women of the Archaic Greek world as we do among the Seleucids.[69] To quote Mitchell, "Macedonian *basileia*, where women played an intrinsic role in the business of ruling, was not as unique as is often supposed."[70]

Yet in a sense, the Seleucid dynasty is at once all of these precedents, and none of them. The number of potential influences on Seleucid dynastic thought and practice are too great, and our ability to attribute one aspect or another too imprecise. Instead, it is more helpful to look at maternity in the Seleucid realm in the same way as we consider the dynasty's ideology as a whole: a mix of tradition in innovation, guided as much by awareness of precedent as it was by the exigencies of the political realities in the fragmented remains of Alexander's empire. They were neither purely western nor eastern, but in their consistency of status, we find compelling evidence for the consistency of the dynasty itself. Whether in the palace of the main

dynasty or in its diverse territories, just like Cleopatra Thea, Seleucid royal mothers all drank from the same cup.

Notes

1. My thanks go to the editors of this volume for their kind invitation to contribute, as well as their editorial guidance. This chapter is heavily indebted to the members of the Seleucid Study Group for their insight over several years, as well as to my colleagues Prof. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (Cardiff) and Franco De Angelis (UBC). All translations from Greek and Latin texts are my own, as are any translations of secondary material in German, French or Italian.
2. On the death of Seleucus see App.*Syr.* 69, Liv.*Per.*60, and notes *infra*.
3. The tale is recounted by Justin 39.2.7-9. For Cleopatra Thea more generally, see J.E.G Whitehorne, *Cleopatras* (London: Routledge, 2001), 150–163, and Kay Ehling, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der späten Seleukiden (164-63 v. Chr.): Vom Tode des Antiochos IV. Bis zur Einrichtung der Provinz Syria unter Pompeius* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2007), 178–200.
4. For a more detailed discussion of the literary reception of women like Cleopatra Thea, see Alex McAuley, "Once a Seleucid, Always a Seleucid: Seleucid Princesses and their Nuptial Courts" in *Hellenistic Court Society*, ed. Andrew Erskine, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, and Shane Wallace (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, forthcoming); Altay Coskun, "Laodike I, Berenike Phernophoros, Dynastic Murders, and the Outbreak of the Third Syrian War (253–246 BC)," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Altay Coskun and Alex McAuley, 107–134; and Monica D'Agostini, "La strutturazione del potere seleucidico in Anatolia: il caso di Acheo il Vecchio e Alessandro di Sardi." *Erga/Logoi* 1 (2013): 87–106.
5. On the structure of the empire see David Engels, "Middle Eastern 'Feudalism' and Seleucid Dissolution," in *Seleucid Dissolution: The Sinking of the Anchor*, ed. Kyle Erickson and Gillian Ramsey (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2011); Rolf Strootman, "Hellenistic Court Society: The Seleukid Imperial Court under Antiochos the Great, 223–187 BCE," in *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and empires*, ed. Jeroen Duindam, Tulay Artan, and Metin

Kunt, (Leiden: Brill, 2011); and Laurent Capdetrey, *Le pouvoir séleucide: Territoire, administration, et finances d'un royaume hellénistique, 312–129 Avant J.-C.* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires De Rennes, 2007), 130–133.

6. The principal authorities on Seleucid history generally are Edwyn Robert Bevan, *The House of Seleucus* (London: E Arnold, 1902); Auguste Boché-Leclercq, *Histoire des Séleucides: 323-64 Avant J.-C.* (Paris: Leroux, 1913–1914); E. Bikerman, *Institutions des séleucides* (Paris: Éditions de Boccard 1938); Susan M. Sherwin-White and Amélie Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A New Approach to the Seleucid empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and more recently Capdetrey, *Le pouvoir séleucide*; John D. Grainger, *The Syrian Wars* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); and Paul J. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).
7. See the forthcoming edited volume by Erickson on the first half-century of the empire's rule.
8. Admittedly the proliferation of Ptolemaic history is in no small part due to the abundance of epigraphic evidence, while the Antigonids are mentioned extensively in Roman sources. On the Ptolemies see, for instance, J. P. Mahaffy, *The empire of the Ptolemies* (London: Macmillan, 1895); Auguste Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire des Lagides* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1903); Günther Hölbl, *Geschichte des Ptolemäerreiches: Politik, Ideologie und religiöse Kultur von Alexander dem grossen bis zur römischen Eroberung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buschgesellschaft, 1994); Werner Huß, *Ägypten in hellenistischer Zeit: 332-30 v. Chr (*München: C. H. Beck, 2001); Michel Chauveau, *Egypt in the Age of Cleopatra: History and Society under the Ptolemies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Edwyn Robert Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy: A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1927), etc. On Ptolemaic women, see Elizabeth Donnelly Carney, *Arsinoë of Egypt and Macedon: A Royal Life* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013); Dee L. Clayman, *Berenice II and the Golden Age of Ptolemaic Egypt* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014); Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*; and Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990).

Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington, *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) provides an extensive overview of Macedonian scholarship.

9. Bevan, *The House of Seleucus*, 1:76, followed by Bikerman, *Institutions Des Séleucides.*
10. "Utterly unscrupulous": Diodorus 31.19.7 on Antiochis of Cappadocia; "licentious": Justin 26.3 on Apama of Cyrene; "profilgate": Gillis 1807, 604 on Apama of Cyrene. The influence of contemporary Roman politics on perceptions of the Hellenistic Period is patent. For a full overview of the historiography of Seleucid royal women, see Altay Coskun and Alex McAuley, eds., *Seleukid Royal Women: Creation, Representation and Distortion of Hellenistic Queenship in the Seleukid empire*. Historia Einzelschriften 240 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016).
11. Pericles on women: Thuc. 2.45.2, also Xen. *Oec*. 10.10-13. For an overview of women in Classical Athens, see Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea, Wales: Classical Press of Wales, 2003) and Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken, 1994) more generally.
12. Bevan, *The House of Seleucus*, 2:212, 255–270. See also Grace Harriet Macurdy, "Queen Eurydice and the Evidence for Woman Power in Early Macedonia," *The American Journal of Philology* 48, no. 3 (1927): 6–7 and Grace Harriet Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens: A Study of Woman-power in Macedonia, Seleucid Syria, and Ptolemaic Egypt* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), 91–102. Whitehorne, *Cleopatras* seems to slip towards this line of reasoning, and Alfred R. Bellinger, *The End of the Seleucids* (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1949) narrates the collapse of the dynasty. More recently, see Adrian Dumitru, "Kleopatra Selene: A Look at the Moon and Her Bright Side," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Coskun and McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016) and Ehling, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der späten Seleukiden.*
13. Capdetrey, *Le pouvoir séleucide*, 122–59, 283–94; Rolf Strootman, "Queen of Kings: Cleopatra VII and the Donations of Alexandria," in *Kingdoms and Principalities in the Roman Near East*, ed. Ted Kaizer and Margherita Facella (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2010); Strootman, "Hellenistic Court Society; and Engels, "Middle Eastern 'Feudalism' and Seleucid Dissolution."

14. Capdetrey, *Le pouvoir séleucide*, 130–133 describes more of a tributary structure while Engels, "Middle Eastern 'Feudalism' and Seleucid Dissolution" and Strootman, "Hellenistic Court Society" advance a feudalistic model. All of this coincides with the use of city-foundations as a consolidating tactic, as described in Getzel M. Cohen, *The Seleucid Colonies: Studies in Founding, Administration and Organization* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1978); John D. Grainger, *The Cities of Seleukid, Syria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); and Omar Coloru, "The Language of the *Oikos* and the Language of Power in the Seleucid Kingdom," in *Families in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Ray Laurence and Agneta Strömberg (New York: Continuum, 2013). Engels, "Middle Eastern 'Feudalism' and Seleucid Dissolution," on page 22 describes this process as the "feudalisation" of the empire.
15. As Engels, "Middle Eastern 'Feudalism' and Seleucid Dissolution" notes, the settlements of Antiochus III between 212–205 in Armenia, Parthia (Pol.10.27-31, Justin 41.5.7), Bactria (Pol.11.34.3-6) and Indian (Pol.11.39.11ff) are all instances of this feudal structure being put into place when the empire is expanding, not contracting.
16. See Kyle Erickson, ed., *War Within the Family* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, forthcoming) for more detailed case studies of this phenomenon throughout the empire.
17. McAuley, "Once a Seleucid, Always a Seleucid" as well as the case studies of Bactria (Richard Wenghofer and Del John Houle, "Marriage Diplomacy and the Political Role of Royal Women in the Seleukid Far East," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Coskun and McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016)), Pontus (D'Agostini, "La strutturazione del potere seleucidico in Anatolia" and D'Agostini, "The multicultural ties of the Mithridatids: Sources, Tradition, and Promotional Image of the Dynasty of Pontus in the 4th–3rd centuries BC." *Aevum* 90 (forthcoming): 175–187, and Cyrene (Alex Mcauley, "Princess and Tigress: Apama of Kyrene," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Coskun and McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016).
18. The furniture metaphor is used by Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 1514 to describe Cleopatra Thea's first marriage, as well as Daniel Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death: The Hellenistic Dynasties* (London: Duckworth with the Classical Press of Wales, 1999),

155. Coskun, "Laodike I, Berenike Phernophoros, Dynastic Murders, and the Outbreak of the Third Syrian War (253–246 BC)" describes in great detail the manipulation of the memory of Laodike I, a fascinating case study.

19. Elizabeth Donnelly Carney, "Being Royal and Female in the Early Hellenistic Period," in *Creating a Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine and Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2011), 201 notes our tendency to underestimate the enduring connections of these women to their houses of birth, and I defer to her review of the scholarship.
20. Bikerman, *Institutions Des Séleucides*, 26–27; Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, i, 6–7, 94–102; Anne Bielman Sánchez. "Régner au féminin. Réflexions sur les reines attalides et séleucides," in *L'Orient méditerranéen de la mort d'Alexandre aux campagnes de Pompée*, ed. François Prost (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003), 47.
21. Kyra L. Nourse, "Women and the Early Development of Royal Power in the Hellenistic East," (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 273, echoing the conclusions in Elizabeth Donnelly Carney, "'What's in a Name?': The emergence of a Title for Royal Women in the Hellenistic Period," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah Pomeroy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) and Elizabeth Donnelly Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000).
22. Notably D'Agostini, "La strutturazione del potere seleucidico in Anatolia"; Ann-Cathrin Harders, "The Making of a Queen—Seleukos Nikator and his Wives," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Coskun and McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016); David Engels and Kyle Erickson, "Apama and Stratonike: Marriage and Legitimacy," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Altay Coskun and Alex McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016); Gillian Ramsey, "The Diplomacy of Seleukid Women: Apama and Stratonike," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Coskun and McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016); and Eran Almagor, "Seleukid Love and Power: Stratonike I," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Coskun and McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016).
23. See the relevant chapters in Coskun and McAuley, eds., *Seleukid Royal Women*.

24. The notion of a simplified nuclear family was introduced in Carney, "Being Royal," 205 and elaborated on in Alex, McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids: Seleucid Marriage, Succession, and Descent Revisited." (M.Sc Diss., University of Edinburgh. 2011), 18–36.
25. Grainger, *The Cities of Seleukid, Syria* and Cohen, *The Seleucid Colonies* on the imperial dynamics of Seleucid city foundations, and Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) and Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East from Armenia and Mesopotamia to Bactria and India*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013) for a detailed inventory. Also, see Pierre Briant, ed., *La transition entre l'empire achéménide et les royaumes hellénistiques (vers 350-300 Av. J.-C.)* (Paris: De Boccard, 2006).
26. Pliny, *HN* 5.21; Strabo 16.749; App.*Mith.*114; Plin. *HN* 5.82; as well as Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa* and Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in the East from Armenia and Mesopotamia to Bactria and India*.
27. Strabo 16.2.3-6 on the city foundations, discussed Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis*, 23–24; Nourse, "Women and the Early Development of Royal Power in the Hellenistic East," 227–233; and Grainger, *The Cities of Seleukid, Syria*.
28. I refer the reader to the 2016 chapters by Engels & Erickson, Harders, and Almagor, all in Coskun and McAuley, eds., *Seleukid Royal Women*. For the ancient tradition, see App.*Syr*59–61, Plut.*Dem.*38, Lucian *DDS* 17–18.
29. Lines 24–29 of the cylinder, translated by Van der Spek and Stol, elaborated on in; Susan M. Sherwin-White and Amélie Kuhrt, "Aspects of Seleucid Royal Ideology: The Cylinder of Antiochus I from Borsippa" *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 111 (1991): 71–102.
30. Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death*, ix–xxxiv.
31. A phenomenon to which Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death*, 149–159 alludes, and discussed in Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*. See also the accounts of Ehling, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der späten Seleukiden*; Bellinger, *The End of the Seleucids*, and Bevan, *The House of Seleucus*.

32. In the following I adhere to the conventional reconstruction of death of Antiochus II, the intervention of Laodice, and the invasion of Ptolemy. The reader should note that Coskun, "Laodike I, Berenike Phernophoros, Dynastic Murders, and the Outbreak of the Third Syrian War (253–246 BC)" proposes a vastly different reconstruction of the chronology and causality of this, with extensive references. On Laodice, see Eusebius 1.251 and relevant entries in Alex McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids," The Genealogy of the Seleucids, January 1, 2014, accessed April 22, 2016. http://seleucid-genealogy.com/Home.html.
33. Porphyry F43; Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 82–83, and McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids," s.v. "Antiochus II" for the full ancient citations. See also Grainger, *The Syrian Wars*, 156–157 and Nourse, "Women and the Early Development of Royal Power in the Hellenistic East," 262–270.
34. Berenice's son is attested at App.*Syr.*65 and Por. F43.
35. Polyaenus 8.50; Just.27.1.1 for the two ancient quotations. See also App.*Syr.*65 for the episode, as well as Porphyry F43 and the Gourob Papyrus.
36. Plut.*De.Frat.Amore* 486a. See again Coskun, "Laodike I, Berenike Phernophoros, Dynastic Murders, and the Outbreak of the Third Syrian War (253–246 BC)" for an alternative reconstruction.
37. For the nuances of Laodice's epigraphical presence, see the exhaustive discussion and catalogue provided in John Ma, *Antiochus III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). A sampling of decrees involving Laodice is provided by Austin[2] nos. 191 and 198, with discussion.
38. See relevant entries in McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids" for ancient references.
39. Peter Franz Mittag, *Antiochos IV. Epiphanes: Eine politische Biographie* (Berlin: Akademie, 2006) is the most up-to-date biography of Antiochus IV, updating the study of coinage in Otto Mørkholm, *Studies in the Coinage of Antiochus IV of Syria* (København: Kommissioaer: Munksgaard, 1963). Unlike most scholars, I do not identify Laodice who was wife of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV in succession as being one and the same as Laodice their sister. Please refer to McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids," s.v. 'Seleucus IV' for the full rationale and bibliography.

40. The veiled portrait of Laodice appears on several coin series of Antiochus IV (e.g. Arthur Houghton, Catherine Lorber, and Oliver D. Hoover, *Seleucid Coins: A Comprehensive Catalogue. Seleucus IV through Antiochus XIII.* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2008), no. 113 and Oliver D. Hoover, *A Handbook of Syrian Coins. Royal and Civic Issues. Fourth to First Centuries BC* (New York: American Numismatic Society, 2009), no. 685 with the legend "of King Antiochus" on the reverse. The veil in Laodice's portrait clearly indicates that she is a married woman and mother, and she appears to be wearing a royal diadem. See Oliver D. Hoover, "Two Seleucid Notes: II. Laodice IV on the Bronze Coinage of Seleucus IV and Antiochus IV," *American Journal of Numismatics* 14 (2002): 81–87 for further discussion.
41. Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.–A.D. 45* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), 20–21; Georges Le Rider, "L'enfant-roi Antiochos et la reine Laodice," *Bulletin De Correspondance Hellénique* 110, no. 1 (1986): 412.
42. Borrowing the formulation found in Bellinger, *The End of the Seleucids.*
43. For an extensive discussion of the Greco-Roman and Egyptian sources for her life and career, see Chris Bennett, "Ptolemaic Dynasty," Ptolemaic Dynasty Genealogy, January 01, 2011, accessed April 23, 2016, http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Egypt/ptolemies/genealogy.htm, s.v. "Cleopatra Thea" and Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 150–162.
44. For her marriage to Balas, see App.*Syr.*67, Justin 35.2.3–4, Josephus, *AJ* 13.109–110.
45. Diod. 32.31; Jos.*AJ.* 13.108; Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 151. See also McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids," s.v. 'Demetrius II.'
46. On the couple's children, see Jos.*AJ.*13.10.1; App.*Syr.*68; Macurdy, *Hellenistic Queens*, 96–99; Whitehorne, *Cleopatras*, 151–155.
47. McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids," s.v. 'Antiochus VII'; Jos.*AJ.* 13.222–223; App.*Syr.*68; Whitehorne, *Cleopatras,* 154.
48. Liv.*Per.*60, see also App.*Syr.* 69.
49. On Selene, see the detailed discussion in Dumitru, "Kleopatra Selene"; on Tryphaena, see Brett Bartlett, "The Fate of Kleopatra

Tryphaina, or: Poetic Justice in Justin," in *Seleukid Royal Women*, ed. Coskun and McAuley (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2016) with references.

50. See notes above.
51. Further case studies of the *imitatio seleucidi* are found in Erickson, ed., *War Within the Family*.
52. See my full discussion in Mcauley, "Princess and Tigress," and my discussion of "secondary" royal women in McAuley, "Once a Seleucid, Always a Seleucid."
53. Paus. 1.7.1-3 for her marriage and Magas in Cyrene. On her career and Cyrene generally, see André Laronde, *Cyrène et la Libye Hellénistique = Libykai Historikai: de l'époque républicaine au principat d'Auguste* (Paris: Editions du centre de la recherche scientifique, 1987); Roger S. Bagnall, *The Administration of the Ptoolemaic Possessions outside Egypt* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 26–27; and Francois Chamoux, "Le roi Magas," *Revue Historique* 216 (1956): 27; Bevan, *The House of Seleucus* 1:147; Grainger, *The Syrian Wars*, 81–91.
54. Justin 26.3.1-3, the political context is discussed in Laronde, *Cyrène et la Libye hellénistique,* 379–382 and Grainger, *The Syrian Wars*, 146–150.
55. Justin 26.3.1-7 for the affair, and my comments on the tradition in Mcauley, "Princess and Tigress,"183–187.
56. See Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and Stephanie Winder, "A Key to Berenike's Lock? The Hathoric Model of Queenship in early Ptolemaic Egypt," in *Creating a Hellenistic World*, ed. Andrew Erskine and Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2011) on the circumstances of her marriage to Ptolemy III.
57. Diod.31.19.1-6 on these marriage connections, also Bevan, *The House of Seleucus*, 2:57–59; Grainger *The Syrian Wars*, 131; Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis*, 187.
58. Diod.31.19.7, Bevan, *The House of Seleucus,* 2:57; Ma, *Antiochus III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, 92–93. On the kingdom generally, see Raymond Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow: Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 20–28.
59. Wenghofer and Houle, "Marriage Diplomacy and the Political Role of Royal Women in the Seleukid Far East," 195 and ff.
60. Ibid., 204.

61. See Ibid., 205 ns. 76 and 77 for a full discussion of the medallion.
62. Adapting Sallust, *BC* 9.1: "*Igitur domi militiaeque boni mores colebantur.*"
63. For a full discussion of possible dynastic precedents, see McAuley, "The Genealogy of the Seleucids," 9–17.
64. Maria Brosius, *Women in Ancient Persia, 559–331 BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 35, 60–62 on royal women in the court, and more recently Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *King and Court in Ancient Persia* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 2013), 96–122.
65. Brosius, *Women in Ancient Persia,* 80–81 and Llewellyn-Jones, *King and Court in Ancient Persia*, 96–122.
66. Sarah C. Melville, "Neo-Assyrian Royal Women and Male Identity: Status as a Social Tool," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 1 (2004): especially 41–42, 47–48, and 53–57.
67. Deuteronomy 25:5–10; Genesis 38, and Millar. Burrows, "Levirate Marriage in Israel," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 59, no. 1 (1940): 23–46. On Hellenistic parallels see Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death*, 67–102 and Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, 16–23.
68. On the royal women of the Argeads, see Elizabeth Donnelly Carney, "Women and *Basileia*: Legitimacy and Female Political Action in Macedonia," *Classical Journal* 90, no. 4 (1995): 367–83; Macurdy, "Queen Eurydice"; Ogden, *Polygamy, Prostitutes and Death*, 1–5; Nourse, "Women and the Early Development of Royal Power in the Hellenistic East," 67–71.
69. Lynette G. Mitchell, "The Women of Ruling Families in Archaic and Classical Greece," *The Classical Quarterly* 62, no. 01 (2012): 6–10.
70. Ibid., 21. See also Carney, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia*, and Carney, "Being Royal."

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Mamaea's Little Man: Alexander Severus, His Mother, and the Germanic War

Karl E. Baughman

Introduction

By the time Alexander Severus assumed the throne in 222 at the age of 13, the Roman Empire had been led by 25 emperors over a period of almost two and half centuries. In that span, Romans had come to expect from their rulers certain virtues while also enduring many vices. Ancient historians often critiqued an imperial reign through a comparison to his immediate predecessor or successor, and Alexander Severus was no different. Who Alexander was and who he was not, what he did and why he did it, are questions all answered by comparing him first to his predecessor, Elagabalus, and in his last hours, to his successor, Maximinus Thrax. Between these comparisons, however, Alexander's relationship with his mother, Julia Mamaea, was at the center of his success and failure. Within the biographies of the emperor, the descriptions of his mother's actions and faults became the defining framework for the epitaph of Alexander Severus.

The histories first distinguished Alexander from his predecessor, Elagabalus, whose memory was maligned with descriptions of his femininity, tyranny, and base morality and praised this new reign as a return to stable masculine rule. Alexander's legacy was later tarnished in the narratives

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on account of his inability to break free from his mother's control, and so Alexander emerged as a poor imitation of masculinity in comparison to his successor, Maximinus Thrax. In an effort to demonstrate the importance of having a *princeps* who behaved as the ideal man, and who in turn was surrounded by ideal Roman women, historians like Herodian, Cassius Dio, and Zosimus used rhetoric that stressed the balance of masculine and feminine traits as intrinsic to the stability of the state and success of the emperor.[1] From Elagabalus to the Germanic War, Alexander's ultimate failure as an emperor was judged not on account of any nefarious deeds or incompetent policies, but because his mother directed all of his decisions, and he was either unable or unwilling to assert his own masculinity even when a situation such as war demanded it.[2]

The Rise and Fall of Alexander

Rome had a long history of warrior-emperors, but Alexander bore the burden of having both the blood and the name of one of Rome's more recent conquerors. Septimius Severus (hereafter Severus), who ruled 193–211, was married to Julia Domna, the sister of Julia Maesa, Alexander's grandmother. Famed for his victories over usurpers, Persia, and the British tribes, Severus took the names of "Parthicus" and "Britannicus" to further emphasize his military triumphs.[3] Although his son Caracalla shared the latter title with him, the martial exploits of the Severans did not continue. Those who followed Severus on the throne had fallen short, and Elagabalus, the purported yet unlikely illegitimate son of Caracalla, had only further deteriorated that image.

In addition to his Severan name, Alexander had the (mis)fortune of sharing a name with the renowned conqueror, Alexander the Great. The *Historia Augusta* spared no ink in attempting to create, albeit dubiously, a connection between the young emperor and the legendary warrior, going so far as even to change Alexander Severus' birthday to coincide with the day Alexander the Great died![4] By all measures, Alexander was to be the one who could return the Severan name to its previous level of manly courage, for it was a world of masculine expectation into which he emerged, and it would be the standard by which he would be judged.

In 221, Julia Maesa convinced her grandson Elagabalus to appoint his cousin Alexander as his Caesar and successor.[5] To distinguish Alexander from Elagabalus and connect him to his destiny, Herodian recounted that once appointed, Maesa and Mamaea placed him under the tutelage of

teachers who "trained him in the lessons of self-control, familiarizing him with wrestling schools and manly exercises [τοῖς ἀνδρῶν γυμνασίοις] … and a Greek and Roman education."[6] Almost immediately after this example, Herodian said that Elagabalus had become furious at what he saw as the corruption of his cousin, and "brought ridiculous charges against them [the teachers], that they were completely destroying his son by not allowing him to dance or lose control of himself, but teaching him prudence and manly arts [τὰ ἀνδρῶν διδάσκοντες]."[7] Even in clothing, Alexander demonstrated a triumph of Roman masculinity by declaring that "the imperial authority existed in manliness [*virtute*], not in decoration."[8] Very simply, Maesa and Mamaea were preparing Alexander to "act as Roman as possible"—for to be Roman was to be a man, and the embodiment of that would be in his future service as a soldier.[9]

Since Alexander was still so young when he took the throne, the role of his mother, Julia Mamaea was one of protector and the insurer of his ascendancy into manhood.[10] The historians portrayed the idea of women running the affairs of state through Alexander as a positive change from the reign of Elagabalus, and a return to a "rational and revered" government.[11] Elagabalus, who as emperor was defined by a rejection of all modesty, encouraged a reassertion of masculinity upon the throne, which in this case only came in the person of a boy under the influence of his mother and grandmother.

As time passed after Alexander's ascension, Julia Mamaea continued to wield power over her young son that, historians insinuate, trod a thin line between masculine and feminine—a line which became more delineated as he matured. Sources in both the Greek and Latin eventually diminished Alexander's status in relation to his mother's authority by referring to him as Alexander Mamaeae—"Mamaea's Alexander."[12] Although not an official title, the "son of Mamaea" demonstrated the subjection of Alexander to his mother's power.

Begun as the natural triumph of the noble and manly *princeps*, the last years of Alexander's reign took a dramatic turn according to the sources. The ultimate outcome of the reign of Alexander and his mother was succinctly given by Herodian:

> So such an end took Alexander (and his mother) after ruling fourteen years, which according to those he ruled, was blameless and without bloodshed. For murder and unjust cruelty were not part of his being, his inclination was toward humane and kind behavior. All in all, Alexander's reign would

> have been popular for its complete success, but for the blame he incurred through his mother's love of money and stinginess.[13]

The verdict was clear: Alexander's ruinous reign was not on account of himself, but rather because of his mother.[14] In order to understand why Alexander's legacy evolved to become so radically different from how it had begun, it is important to examine the role of the *princeps* as a soldier, and the rhetorical comparisons that historians made against Alexander to highlight that role.

The *Vita Militaris* and the First Man

The official title of the Roman Emperor was *princeps*, meaning "first man," and as such, he was the patron, protector, and father of all Romans, and the one to whom all men looked for an exemplar of masculinity. In Roman society, a manly life was a combination of both military and political experience.[15] The *vita militaris* (military life) was the ultimate expression of this understanding, and this connection of masculinity and the *vita militaris* is prominent in a variety of ancient sources.[16] For example, Ammianus Marcellinus bemoaned the fact that the Romans of his day had abandoned the military life (*vita militaris*) in favor of the effeminate life (*vita mollitiae*), and Cassius Dio imparted a speech by the female Celtic rebel leader, Boudicca, in which she condemned the luxury and effeminacy of the Romans and their emperor, Nero.[17] As demonstrated in the training that Maesa and Mamaea had ensured for Alexander, a life free from the soft living and comforts of an easy existence were necessary to mold a future Roman man. By encouraging Alexander in his role as man, Maesa and Mamaea personified ideal Roman women—supportive, feminine, and a proper balance to the masculinity of the *princeps*.[18] To accentuate the importance of this balance that Alexander embodied, the sources stressed that his education and upbringing were contrary to the lifestyle and behavior of his predecessor, Elagabalus.

Contra Elagabalus

The sources present the emperor Alexander as the converse to Elagabalus who was the successor to emperors like Nero and Commodus in all things base and unbecoming of a masculine leader. Elagabalus was the epitome of an emperor who had abandoned his masculinity, not only in action but in

attire as well. The ancient biographers emphasized that unlike Alexander, Elagabalus dressed as a woman in comparison.[19] From his clothing, to his anger at Alexander's training,[20] Elagabalus embodied the contrary to that which the Romans considered masculine, and rather than ruling as a manly *princeps*, surrounded and balanced by feminine women, Elagabalus was feminine in action, deed, and dress, and this demanded a return to the ideal Augustus had laid out for the first man of Rome.[21]

By the end of Elagabalus' reign, Alexander had been successfully cast as the masculine contrast to Elagabalus' lackluster military and political prowess. However, there was one incident when Elagabalus was remembered for exuding some masculinity. Cassius Dio wrote an account of the battle that brought on the end of Macrinus' reign and the beginning of Elagabalus'. Led by a eunuch named Gannys and the young Elagabalus, the forces under their command achieved victory through the reinforcement of gendered expectations. In his retelling, Dio records:

> Now in the battle Gannys made haste to occupy the pass in front of the village and skillfully positioned his troops, despite the fact he was without military experience and had lived in luxury. But fortune is of such great help in all things that it shows favor to the ignorant. However, his army made a weak fight, and if Maesa and Soaemias (for they were with the boy) had not leapt down from their chariots and into the fleeing men restraining them from further flight with their lamentations, and had not the boy drawing a sword, the one girded to his side, been seen by them on his horse about to charge the enemy in a maneuver that seemed divinely inspired, they would not have stood their ground. Even so, they would have turned back, if Macrinus had not fled after seeing them offer resistance.[22]

This account, which seems completely out of place for how Elagabalus is described in the rest of the narratives, is informative in demonstrating the rhetoric surrounding manhood and the *vita militaris* and deserves a closer examination.

The blatant distinction of masculine and feminine expectations embodied in the roles of mother and son during wartime is especially revealing in this story of Elagabalus. Neither man nor woman, the eunuch Gannys was unable to make anything but a weak fight, and even good fortune (τύχη) could not ascribe true manliness to someone whom the Romans regarded as "[u]nmanly both in a moral and anatomical sense."[23] When the Severan women leapt from their chariots and restrained the men through their weeping, the tide of battle finally turned in favor of Elagabalus. It was

not through what would have been an unnatural assertion of masculinity by Maesa and Soaemias that helped bring victory, but rather through the natural affirmation of their own femininity. The Severan women held back the soldiers with their tears—an expression of feminine emotion.[24] This was not manly courage (ἀνδρεῖα), but rather womanly persuasion. In complete contrast to how he would later be portrayed in the sources, Elagabalus, inspired by his mother and grandmother, mounted his horse and exuded a masculine courage (ἀνδρεῖα) as would be expected from the first man. In this instance, Dio attributed the victory of Elagabalus and his forces to the traditional assertion of gender roles within Roman society. It was not with reluctance that Dio recorded the actions of those at the battle, but rather this story conveyed precisely what Dio had intended—women as feminine and men as masculine bring order and stability to society.[25] The proper roles of the Severan women and Elagabalus were emphasized and praised, as the cowardice of Macrinus was scorned. Even the historian Edward Gibbon recognized the gendered nature of Dio's account:

> Antoninus [Elagabalus] himself, who, in the rest of his life, never acted like a man, in this important crisis of his fate approved himself a hero, mounted his horse, and, at the head of his rallied troops, charged sword in hand among the thickest of enemy; whilst the eunuch Gannys, whose occupations had been confined to female cares and the soft luxury of Asia, displayed the talents of an able and experienced general. … Macrinus might have obtained the victory, had he not betrayed his own cause by a shameful and precipitate flight. His cowardice served only to protract his life a few days, and to stamp deserved ignominy on his misfortunes.[26]

Here, for one brief moment of Elagabalus' performance in the spotlight, he stood out as the masculine representation of the *princeps*, the embodiment of first man, leading the army to victory against a usurper who had shown his true cowardly nature in the face of Roman manliness. In support of his role, the women with whom Elagabalus surrounded himself did not attempt to appropriate any traits of masculinity, which would have been interpreted as contrary to their nature as women, but rather they encouraged the men in the fight through their tears. This picture of Elagabalus as the masculine defender of Rome was fleeting, however, as even Dio referred to him almost immediately after as the "False Antoninus."[27] Only when Elagabalus, a man, acted in a masculine way, and his mother,

a woman, acted in a feminine way, did the tide of battle turn to result in a victory. It was this balance of nature that historians like Dio and Herodian believed was at the center of Roman stability and strength, and it was through this lens that they interpreted the reigns of both Elagabalus and Alexander.

Elagabalus' accomplishments as a masculine soldier-emperor were short-lived. His indulgence in things contrary to the *vita militaris* eventually aroused the anger of the soldiers, and through the political maneuvering of his grandmother, Julia Maesa, and aunt, Julia Mamaea, Elagabalus and his mother were assassinated in 222. With the training that Alexander had received, it would be the opportune time for Alexander to reassert the *vita militaris* and demonstrate the importance of a manly soldier-emperor.

Alexander as Soldier

As Alexander matured, his duties became more in tune with the traditional expectations of a masculine Roman emperor. In 230, the Roman Empire was invaded by Artaxerxes, King of the Persians. At this point when Alexander's masculine traits should have been most obvious—in a time of war—the domination of Mamaea over her son took on a negative connotation in the sources. Because of his education and upbringing, Alexander may have been able to position himself as an effective Roman general in the face of overwhelming enemies. However, Herodian painted Alexander as an emperor completely dominated by his mother during the time Rome needed an emperor-general.[28] Herodian explained that some within the army recognized the problems associated with having so strong a feminine influence over the first man, and thus sought to remove Alexander from authority and replace him with one of their own.[29]

The depiction by the Roman historians of Mamaea's domination over Alexander represents more than simple misogyny. They attributed the failure of Alexander's reign to an imbalance of nature; the inability of Alexander to fulfill his role as a soldier because of his mother. The Roman army had been successful in halting the bulk of the Persian invasion, but the war as a whole was not a complete Roman victory, although Alexander had taken the opportunity to celebrate a triumph.[30] Herodian's account demonstrates the uneasiness with which Romans accepted Mamaea's domination over her son. In his recounting of the Persian War, Herodian relayed a story of how Alexander abandoned a complete victory by failing to send in his army when it was most opportune to do so.[31] Herodian gave

two possible reasons for this, although both reasons are connected to the relationship between Alexander and his mother:

> But Alexander caused them to fall by not leading the army to invade, whether through fear, in order not to risk his life and limb for the Roman Empire, or his mother may have stopped him because of her womanly cowardice and excessive love for her son. She used to blunt his efforts to act bravely [ἀνδρεῖαν],[32] convincing him it was other people's job to risk their lives for him, and not his to get involved in the battle. It was this which destroyed the Roman army.[33]

This summation of Mamaea's influence over Alexander is starkly different from how she was portrayed earlier in Herodian's account as the purveyor of what was required for a proper masculine education.[34]

While fighting the Persians, Alexander had relocated armies from the Rhine and Danube regions to the east in order to bolster his forces against Persia. In 234, Germanic tribes took advantage of this strategy and forced Alexander to mount an expedition against them. Although arriving with an adequate force, Alexander sought to bribe the Germanic tribes into retreating, instead of engaging them in battle. Believing this action to be cowardly, many of the soldiers became further discontented with Alexander's rule.[35] The Germanic War is not covered in great detail, but what is known is very telling about the impact of the relationship between Alexander and his mother upon Alexander's role as a soldier. Herodian and Zosimus provide what is probably the more accurate portrayal of Alexander's relationship with the army, while the *Historia Augusta* reads like a very long eulogy by a man who has been paid quite handsomely for his services. The picture of the army as intensely loyal, yet unhappy with the strict discipline of Alexander as painted by the *Historia Augusta* is inconsistent with the numerous mutinies and ultimate murder of Alexander by the army that is described in every other source.[36] Despite these differences, however, even the *Historia Augusta* admits that although the war was an opportune time for Alexander to demonstrate the *vita militaris*, he instead continued to do "everything on the advice of his mother,"[37] and her advice may have been "to abandon the war against the Germans and return to the East to display her power."[38] In the end, some of the soldiers who had grown tired of Mamaea's influence, burst into their tent, and killed both Alexander and his mother.[39]

Historians such as Herodian and Aurelius Victor saw Alexander's own masculinity as unable to overcome the power Mamaea wielded over

him. Because of his failure to fully assert his own authority as first man, Alexander joined the ranks of feminized emperors like Nero, Commodus, and Elagabalus, and the soldiers instead chose Maximinus Thrax, who was "a fellow-soldier [συστρατιώτης] and camp-mate [σύσκηνος]"[40]—both terms are specifically associated with the *vita militaris*, and demonstrative of the camaraderie connected with the physical and emotional closeness shared by soldiers.[41] The proper distinction between what was appropriately masculine or feminine is demonstrated in how a man like Alexander, who for all intents and purposes was generally regarded as a masculine ruler, came to be despised as feminine because of his inability to remove himself from under the influence of his mother's power, and to exhibit the expected characteristics of a brave and manly soldier.

The Final Hours of Alexander and His Mother

The last hours of Alexander's life highlight the distinction between the *vita militaris* and that of a boy under the control of his mother. The soldiers, who "appreciated the courage of Maximinus" in turn "made fun of Alexander for being under his mother's control" and for being cowardly (ἄνανδρος) in his conduct during war—literally, "not a man."[42] With Maximinus now proclaimed emperor by the soldiers, and the mutiny underway, Alexander first rushed from his tent, panic-stricken, weeping [δακρυρροέω], and trembling.[43] Alexander then fled back to his tent, where he clung to his mother, "weeping [ἀποδύρομαι] and accusing her for all that had happened."[44] Here, Herodian used the same connection between femininity and crying that Dio had in describing the lamentations of the Severan women in his account of the battle between Elagabalus and Macrinus.[45] In a similar fashion, Zosimus, too, used rhetoric that shrouded Alexander's actions in the language of womanly behavior. On account of his mother's power over him, Zosimus claimed Alexander had been changed "both mentally and physically," and had become devoted to a love of money.[46] This emphasis on avarice was a way to accentuate the difference between the bravery of a man, and the inherent greed of a woman—traits displayed by Mamaea in her desire to abandon the war against the Germanic tribes.[47] War made the man, yet Mamaea had blunted Alexander's efforts to act bravely, leaving him bereft of the qualities of a soldier and only able to display the shortcomings of a woman.[48] In his last hours, Herodian's Alexander appealed to the soldiers' sympathies and begged for their pity, rather than demonstrate the courage and

leadership of a general.[49] Witnessing the actions of Alexander, Herodian remarked that the soldiers urged each other to "leave behind their 'whiny sissy' and 'cowardly little boy enslaved to his mother' and to come over to a man who was brave and rational, always ready to be their fellow-soldier and skilled in warfare."[50] The soldiers made their choice, and a man controlled by his mother could never be the *princeps* who embodied the ideal of the *vita militaris*.

Conclusion

While Alexander never participated in any kind of perceived feminine form of sexual conduct, as did some of his predecessors, his mother's domination left him just as emasculated as emperors like Elagabalus in the eyes of the army—the embodiment of masculinity.[51] Alexander became servile to his mother's power long after he should have matured to become the dominant force in that relationship. Although the terms virile (rooted in the Latin *vir*—man) and servile (rooted in the Latin *servilis* or *servus*—of a slave) are usually connected to sexual relationships, they can nevertheless be applied to the relationship between Alexander and Mamaea.[52] Alexander allowed his mother to continue the pursuit of her power and pleasure at the expense of his own inherent right to rule independently as first man, and to assert his role as the virile authority.

Roman citizens were ruled by the free. The embodiment of the freest citizen of all was the *princeps*. To have a *princeps* who operated as the servile agent of another's pleasure or whim, was not only emasculating for the leader but also for those he led. Alexander operated as the passive agent of another's power and pleasure—his mother, Julia Mamaea. A truly free man, as embodied within the *princeps*, was not bound by any other's will. Mamaea's femininity benefited the reign of Alexander so long as it encouraged the expected qualities of the *vita militaris*—as it had during his initial training in "manly arts."[53] When Alexander was overthrown by the boorish Maximinus Thrax, the only explanation the ancient historians could give was that something pervasively unnatural had corrupted the young *princeps*.[54] Since Alexander himself had not done anything personally corrupt, historians explained his shortcomings by looking at those closest to him. Perhaps if Mamaea had encouraged her son into battle with feminine tears, as her mother and sister had done for Elagabalus, then Alexander could have led the charge against the Germans and entered the annals of history as the great manly *princeps* the soldiers so desperately desired.

Notes

1. For an excellent study on how ancient historians used rhetoric about women to comment on the rule of their male relatives, see: Julia Langford, *Maternal Megalomania*.
2. Hdn. 6.1.8-10; 6.5.8-9; SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 14.7; 60.1-2.
3. Cass. Dio 75-76; Hdn. 3; SHA, *Sev*.
4. SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 12–13.
5. Hdn. 5.7.1.
6. Hdn. 5.7.5.
7. Hdn. 5.7.6; I have rendered βακχεύεσθαι as "lose control of himself," although literally it meant to celebrate the mysteries of Bacchus, the god of wine and religious ecstasy.
8. SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 33.3.
9. Robert L. Cleve, "Severus Alexander and the Severan Women," 150. It should be noted, however, that Cleve fails to consider fully the underlying gendered tone of Herodian's wording.
10. Cass. Dio 80; Hdn. 5.2-3; 5.7.1-6.
11. Hdn. 6.1.1.
12. The Latin Alexander Mamaeae: SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 3.1; v.2; SHA, *Aurel.* 42.4; SHA, *Car.* 3.4; The Greek Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ μαμαίας: Cass. Dio *Fragment*. Literally translated as "Mamaea's Alexander," it is commonly translated as "son of Mamaea" as it would be translated in common usage when the son is connected to his father's name for the purpose of identification.
13. Hdn. 6.9.8.
14. See also SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 59.8; Aur. Vict., *Caes.* 24.4.
15. For further reading consult: Maud W. Gleason, "Elite Male Identity in the Roman Empire"; Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 37–55; Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness.*
16. For a nice summary of the connection between masculinity and the military life, see: Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 37ff & 275ff. For a more detailed study of military life and manly courage in earlier Roman history, see: Myles McDonnell, *Roman Manliness*, 12–71.
17. Amm. Marc. 31.5; Cass. Dio 62.6; This speech most likely reflected Dio Cassius' assessment of the emperor Elagabalus (r. 218–222) who reigned during Dio's own career.
18. Roman sources are replete with examples of women who embodied the ideal of femininity as a contrast to those who defied the

norm. A very small sampling of those who took upon themselves masculine qualities and were condemned for it, were: Fulvia (c.83–40 BCE); Livia (58 BCE–29 CE); Agrippina the Younger (15–59 CE); Epicharis (d.65 CE); Marcia (d.c.193 CE).

19. SHA, *Heliogab.* 23.3-5;26.1-2; *Alex. Sev.* 40-41; For more on the idea of cross-dressing and transvestitism and their connection to femininity, see: Anthony Corbeill, "Dining Deviants in Roman Political Invective"; Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 55–61.
20. Hdn. 5.7.6.
21. While I argue that the Romans envisioned political stability as masculine leadership bolstered by feminine support, an interesting view of the complete elimination of the feminine by the masculine for those in power (including women) in ancient Greece is argued very well by Jeremy McInerney, "Plutarch's Manly Women."
22. Cass. Dio 79.38.3-4; Mamaea does not figure prominently in this story, but she may have been present since she was part of the conspiracy to overthrow Macrinus which set out together from the camp shortly before, and is evident by the fact that Macrinus had the Senate condemn not only Elagabalus, his mother Julia Soaemias and grandmother Julia Maesa but also Alexander Severus and his mother Julia Mamaea (Cass. Dio 79.38.1); see also: Cleve, "Severus Alexander and the Severan Women," 102–103.
23. Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 35; For more on the Roman conception of masculinity in connection to eunuchs, see: Jane F. Gardner, "Sexing a Roman: Imperfect Men in Roman Law"; Walter Stevenson, "The Rise of Eunuchs in Greco-Roman Antiquity."
24. For more on the concepts of gender and emotional restraint, see: Peter R.L. Brown, *The Body and Society*, 12ff; John K. Evans, *War, Women, and Children in Ancient Rome*; Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome*; Hans van Wees, "A Brief History of Tears: Gender Differentiation in Archaic Greece."
25. Robert Cleve in his, "Severus Alexander and the Severan Women," 102, implies that Dio reluctantly recorded the actions of the women in the battle; however, I believe it is a purposeful rhetorical tool employed by Dio to emphasize the importance of gender roles and balance.
26. Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* Vol I, 160.
27. Cass. Dio, 80.

28. Hdn. 6.1.10.
29. Hdn. 6.8.3.
30. Hdn. 6.6.6; SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 55-57; Aur. Vic., *Caes.* 24.2; and Eutr., *Breviarium* 8.23 all describe the war as a complete Roman victory, however, archeology and Herodian's account demonstrate that while not unsuccessful, Alexander's war was not a stunning victory.
31. Hdn. 6.5.8.
32. A term which refers explicitly to a man.
33. Hdn. 6.5.8-9.
34. Hdn. 5.7.1-6.
35. Hdn. 6.7.9-10.
36. Cass. Dio 80.3-4; Zos., *Historia Nova* 1.11-13; Markus Handy, *Die Severer und das Heer*, 165. Handy remarks: "Ein Motiv für die starke Unzufriedenheit könnte vor allem in der Tatsache begründet sein, dass sich Alexander als miserabler Feldherr ohne jegliches Geschick erwies."
37. SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 60.2.
38. This is what SHA, *Alex. Sev.* 63.5 and *Maxim.* 7.5 claims is being falsely reported by "others," most notably, Herodian.
39. Hdn. 6.8.3-9.7; SHA *Alex. Sev.* 62.5-63.6.
40. Hdn. 6.8.4.
41. σύσκηνος is literally "one who lives in the same tent."
42. Hdn. 6.8.3: The term ἀνδρεῖα, a courage attributable only to a man, is used again for Maximinus to distinguish him from Alexander. The use of ἄνανδρος for Alexander is literally "not a man" when used for a man, and within the context of marriage is used only for a woman without a husband.
43. Hdn. 6.9.1: δακρυρροέω is literally "melting into tears."
44. Hdn. 6.9.6.
45. Cass. Dio 79.38.3-4: Dio used ὀδύρομαι and Herodian had used ἀποδύρομαι; earlier in Hdn. 6.9.1, Herodian used a different term, δακρυρροῶν, yet still as powerful in connecting Alexander's actions to that of a woman.
46. Zos., *Historia Nova* 1.12.
47. Hdn. 6.1.8, 6.9.4; Kelly Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman: Self-Preservation and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 80ff.
48. Hdn. 6.5.8-9.
49. Hdn.6.9.3.

50. Hdn. 6.9.5; Herodian used the same word here that he used originally to describe Alexander's reign as "rational" in 6.1.1: σώφρων (Note 11 above).
51. For example: Nero: Tac., *Ann.* 14.60; Commodus: SHA, *Comm.* 1.7, 5.11, 10.8-9; Elagabalus: SHA, *Heliogab.* 31.6.
52. For more on the relationship of these terms in the context of Roman sexuality, see: J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, 69–70 (for the definition of *verilitas*, related to this context); Angus McLaren, *A History of Impotence*, ch.1; Paul Veyne, "Homosexuality in Ancient Rome"; Jonathan Walters, "Invading the Roman Body: Manliness and Impenetrability in Roman Thought"; Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality.*
53. Hdn. 5.7.5-6.
54. The accounts of Maximinus' great size, strength, and appetite are detailed in SHA, *Maxim.* 4.1-3, 6.8-9 and Hdn. 6.8.1, 7.1.2.

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Jingû: Narratives of Motherhood and Imperial Rule in Early Japan

Kendra Strand

One of the oldest and most important pilgrimage sites in Japan today is the Sumiyoshi Shrine, located near present-day Osaka. The shrine complex is composed of five halls, each of which is dedicated to a different deity or *kami*. Two of these *kami* are said to have manifested as mortals in the third century C.E.: Jingû (r. 201–269) and Jingû's son and successor, Ôjin (r. 270–310).[1] For over a millennium, Jingû was widely recognized as the 15th legitimate sovereign of Japan, with some exceptions, but her status as sovereign was erased in the nineteenth century. Modern historical narratives increasingly deemphasized Jingû's status as a ruler, while emphasizing her roles of mother to Ôjin and of consort to Ôjin's father, Chûai (r. 192–200). This shift in documenting imperial succession in ancient Japan reflects a view that motherhood is incompatible with, or even detrimental to, political power.

Early narratives associated with Jingû's deification at Sumiyoshi Shrine tell a strikingly different story, however. Jingû figures prominently in the earliest extant Japanese mythohistorical records, dating from the eighth century. These are among the earliest extant texts concerned with recording historical matters, and feature poetry that has traditionally been attributed to a broad range of people, from sovereign to anonymous, and include

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names of those that can be identified as historical figures as well as those that are today regarded as mythological. The present study draws from such early texts as *Record of Ancient Matters* (*Kojiki* 712), *Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki* 720), and the *Collection of Ten Thousand Generations* (*Man'yôshû* ca. 760). In addition to this, there are notable interpretive histories written in the medieval era, including *The Future and the Past* (*Gukanshô*, Jien 1219) and *Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns* (*Jinnô shôtôki*, Kitabatake Chikafusa 1339), which exhibit a renewed interest in identifying the earliest processes of imperial succession. Such texts are notable in their identification of Jingû as the fifteenth sovereign of Japan, and for constructing a narrative of Jingû's succession from consort to sovereign.

While these ancient and medieval texts are far from reliable sources of history today, the historiography exhibited therein are representative of authoritative information current at the time, and as such offer valuable insights into how commentators in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries understood Jingû and her son Ôjin as an integral part of Japan's early imperial history in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Because Jingû is one of those figures about whom very little can be established outside of the earliest mythohistorical texts, it is more appropriate and practical to approach her as a legendary figure. Nonetheless, it is clear that historical texts of the premodern era treat her as a historical figure that ruled as sovereign. Keeping this in mind, an examination of early narratives about Jingû's life reveals how attitudes about her various roles as ruler, consort, military leader, mother, and eventually deity were established at different points in early Japan, and how these attitudes have subsequently shifted.

Of particular interest in tracking such narratives are a series of ancient poems about Jingû that use details about her motherhood not only to draw a link to the Sumiyoshi deity but also to underscore Jingû's legitimacy and efficacy as a ruler. The poems about various stages in Jingû's life depict her as a legitimate and effective ruler, a powerful military leader, and a successful advisor to her son. In so doing, the early poems unambiguously endow her with a divine legitimacy that affirms her role as political ruler. Moreover, the narratives have this effect not in spite of her motherhood, but on the very basis of motherhood as an essential part of Jingû's work as sovereign: first, by emphasizing her competence over Chûai; second, by safely prolonging her pregnancy rather than avoiding or terminating it; and finally, by ensuring the success of her son, Ôjin, through the skillful application of her military, political, and ritual power on his behalf as he comes of age and prepares to succeed the throne.

Jingû's Legitimacy as Sovereign

Before examining these poems, however, it is first necessary to consider the context within which imperial succession narratives treat Jingû's role in the transition from Chûai to Ôjin. The earliest moments that are described in the extant narratives of Jingu's life describe her role as consort to Chûai, who is recorded in the *Chronicles* and the *Ancient Matters* as the fourteenth sovereign of Japan, reigning from 192–200 C.E.

In the *Chronicles*, which relates the lineage and important life events of each of the sovereigns in order of their succession, Jingû is introduced in the section dedicated to Chûai. While Jingû is Chûai's third consort, her ancestry is traced over four generations to the sovereign Kaika (r. 158–198 B.C.E.), which provides her lineage while also demonstrating that any children she might have would be eligible for ascension to the throne.

Early on, when Chûai travels for military campaigns, Jingû begins to play an important role in his career. For example, in the spring of 193 C.E., the second year of Chûai's reign, he traveled to Tsuruga, in present-day Fukui prefecture on the western coast of Honshu. He established a temporary palace and from there, set out on various military campaigns to the south and west. After thus establishing himself in the region, he sent word for Jingû to join him at another temporary palace built at Toyora in Anato, in present-day Yamaguchi prefecture on the western-most tip of Honshu. It is during Jingû's journey by sea, before she reaches her destination, when her powerful influence begins to be apparent. Most notable is the moment when she sprinkles *sake* (liquor) over the water and in so doing facilitates a large and unexpected harvest of sea bream, a fish valued as a delicacy but that is also a sign of good fortune. Her arrival at the Toyora temporary palace is made all the more auspicious when she discovers a wish-fulfilling jewel in the bay as the ship is coming into port.

In the spring of 199 C.E., during the eighth year of his reign, Chûai progressed on toward Kyushu to continue his military campaign. On this leg of the journey, Chûai depends on a man named Kuma-wani, a representative from a local clan to act as a guide. This guide prepares the ship with a large branch of the sacred *sakaki* tree (L. *Cleyera japonica*) with its boughs hung with jewels, a mirror, and a sword, each of which is an important object in matters of ritual, and each a symbol of the throne. Kuma-wani also instructs Chûai on which *kami* to pray to in order to receive safe passage.

Jingû, who follows in a separate vessel, similarly encounters trouble along the way. However, according to the *Chronicles* narrative, a resolution is achieved through an entirely different approach:

> As the tide was out, [Jingû] was unable to go on. Then Kuma-wani … saw that the august ship made no progress, and he was afraid. He hastily made a fish-pond and a bird-pond, into which he collected all the fishes and birds. When the Empress saw these fishes and birds sporting, her anger was gradually appeased, and with the flowing tide she straightway anchored in the harbour of Oka.[2]

The guide, rushing back to help Jingû's progress, takes on a different role for her than he did with Chûai. Whereas the guide assisted Chûai by making ritual offerings and instructing Chûai in making prayers to the appropriate *kami* for navigating difficult waters, the guide facilitates Jingû's journey by appealing directly to her interest. The safety and ease of their journey are directly linked to Jingû's pleased response to her surroundings. This suggests that the actions of the guide, directed toward Jingû in this case, are parallel to his actions toward the *kami* in Chûai's case. From the large catch of sea bream, to the discovery of the wish-fulfilling jewel, to the movements of the tide, the *Chronicles* repeatedly point to a power in Jingû that appears to match the supernatural power of *kami*.

This description of Jingû gestures toward interpretations of her as a mortal incarnation of the Sumiyoshi deity. But her success is also linked to an astute sensitivity to *kami*, and an ability to appeal or respond to *kami* effectively. This is particularly apparent when her actions are compared to those of Chûai. Namely, Jingû consistently displays a confident independence in her decisions and behavior, while Chûai tends to rely upon the advice of a third party on how to interact effectively with the appropriate *kami* for support as needed.

This difference in sensitivity toward *kami* between the two royal figures is demonstrated repeatedly throughout Chûai's narrative in the *Chronicles*, but surfaces most noticeably in the final episode that describes Chûai's death. In the autumn of 199, having arrived in Kyushu in the spring of that year, Chûai began planning an attack on the Kumaso, a clan that occupied the southern region of Kyushu. In response to this, a certain deity is described as speaking through Jingû to dissuade Chûai from making such an attack. The *kami*, speaking with the voice of Jingû, warns Chûai that the Kumaso are too insignificant to be an object of serious

military strategy. Instead, the *kami* advises that Chûai direct his attention to the Kingdom of Silla, what is now the Korean peninsula. After describing Silla as a land of abundant riches, the *kami* assures Chûai's success in conquering it, with minimal bloodshed, so long as he worships the *kami* in an appropriate manner. This advice—here delivered through Jingû as a medium—fell on deaf ears:

> When [Chûai] heard the words … his mind was filled with doubt, and straightway ascending a high hill, he looked away into the distance. But far and wide there was the ocean, and he saw no land. Hereupon [Chûai] … said: "We have looked all around, and there is sea, and no land. Can there be a country in the Great Void? Who is the [*kami*] who cheats Us with vain illusions? Moreover, all the Emperors Our ancestors have worshiped the Gods of Heaven and Earth without exception, and none has been omitted."[3]

Above all, Chûai's response reflects a lack of sensitivity to the *kami's* message. He is reluctant to believe the existence of a place that he cannot see with his own eyes. What is more, the *kami* itself is apparently outside of Chûai's realm of understanding when he almost indignantly asserts that he is already honoring the *kami* sufficiently. Even when he is all but guaranteed success, Chûai relies instead upon his own eyes, experience, and judgment, all of which fall short of the wisdom imparted by the *kami*. Hearing this reaction, the *kami* then leaves Chûai with a warning that he will ultimately fail, and that Jingû's unborn child, instead, will be successful in conquering Silla. Despite this warning, Chûai pursues his original plans in Kyushu, and, as a result, dies of a sudden illness by the spring of the following year. In contrast to Chûai's obtuse response, Jingû functions as a medium, allowing the *kami* to literally occupy her and speak through her. By representing her thus, the *Chronicles* affords Jingû the greatest level of sensitivity toward the sacred that is possible for a mortal being.

The *Ancient Matters* text similarly introduces Jingû in the chapter devoted to Chûai, but it focuses primarily on the final scene of Jingû as an oracle. In the case of *Ancient Matters*, this was not a spontaneous possession, but rather in response to Chûai's chief minister who requested the oracle. Nonetheless, it was in response to Chûai's plans to attack Kumaso, and Chûai is likewise immediately dismissive of the advice to look instead to Silla. An important difference reflected in the *Ancient Matters* is that Chûai dies within moments of hearing the message of the *kami*. In a dramatic scene that has him playing a zither after his initial skeptical response,

his attendants notice that the sound of music abruptly stops and discover that Chûai has died on the spot. The suddenness of his death establishes an undeniable cause-and-effect relationship between Chûai's inattention to the oracle and the terrible consequence of that inattention.

A similar story is related in Jien's thirteenth-century historical treatise, *The Future and the Past*. However, an interesting point about this text is that Chûai is identified clearly from the very beginning as the first sovereign whose ascension to the throne did not conform to the pattern of direct succession from parent to child. Whereas the previous 12 mortal sovereigns were each the sons of the preceding sovereign, Chûai was the nephew of the thirteenth sovereign, Seimu (r. 131–190 C.E.), and the grandson of the twelfth sovereign, Keikô (r. 71–130 C.E.). Jien identifies this inconsistency in the otherwise direct father-to-son lineage as a sign of deterioration, which came about as the result of a convoluted succession, however slight. Regardless of whether she is formally acknowledged as sovereign, Jingû seamlessly supplanted Chûai's short-lived reign of only nine years and then, after 68 years of rule, passed this role on to her son, Ôjin. To frame the narrative of succession in such a way gives Jingû, who was of course succeeded by her son Ôjin, a restorative function in the imperial lineage.

Finally, the *Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns* follows the examples of its predecessors in alluding to Chûai's death as the result of his failure to attend properly to the gods as according to his role:

> When Chûai failed to act in accordance with the instructions of the *kami* and died at an early age, Jingû became much distressed. After the passage of seven days, she constructed a place of worship and entered into seclusion. Already pregnant with the child who was to become Emperor Ôjin, the empress was at this time possessed by a trio of deities … and was instructed in various matters.[4]

Yet again, the abrupt end to Chûai's life and reign reflects his insufficiency. Even as Chûai fails as ruler, his shortcomings ultimately work to highlight Jingû's skill. In such an explicit comparison, Jingû demonstrates the characteristics of a capable and proficient ruler. Her competence shows not only in her ability to secure the throne for her unborn son, but also in all her actions before his birth and coming of age, regardless of her connection to Chûai.

Each of the examples above shows that the final moments of Chûai's life and reign provide an extreme example of his inattentiveness, as well as

its deadly consequences. Against the foil of Chûai's hyperbolically negative example, Jingû's accomplishments are striking. As if to magnify her success, the various versions of her legend depict Jingû as a figure who is attentive and receptive to an extreme that counteracts Chûai's inattention. The auspicious results of her actions leading up to Chûai's death show that she is receptive to the advice and wishes of *kami*, and she is receptive of the very spirit of *kami*, by becoming a medium for its message.

It is clear that there is some variation in the legends about Jingû during her time as consort to Chûai. But what is most consistent is that Jingû's pregnancy is unfailingly announced during the oracle interaction, either before or after Chûai's death. This continues the pattern of contrasting Chûai and Jingû as extreme opposites: just as Chûai's unawareness had a dire consequence in the physical world, Jingû's receptivity had the positive but equally extreme physical result of a pregnancy. It also precludes any potential political instability that would otherwise follow in the wake of a sovereign's sudden and untimely death. Jingû's effectiveness as a ruler justifies her taking the role of sovereign after Chûai, to be sure. But it is the fact of her nascent motherhood that necessitates it. Because Jingû carries a future heir, her responsibility for the continued succession of kingly rule becomes all the more compelling. And rather than await the succession of this unborn heir with another interim successor, an act that would jeopardize the kingly post by introducing a competing family line, Jingû steps into this role herself.

While this part of the narrative justifies Jingû's transition to sovereign, it also emphasizes the transitory nature of her rule by effectively shifting the focus to her unborn son as the true object of success and effortless power. In many ways, this detracts from Jingû's reputation, and perhaps anticipates her ultimate removal from the list of rulers. It will nonetheless become clear that her work as sovereign and as a mother was instrumental in solidifying Ôjin's promising future and foundational for the apparent socio-political stability during the 70 years between Chûai's death and Ôjin's ascension to the throne.

Jingû's Tenure as Sovereign

The legendary stories representing Jingû's receptivity to the *kami* drew on the failure of her husband, then sovereign Chûai, in order to demonstrate her power and legitimacy as potential ruler. Even if the depiction of Jingû as an oracle appears in some cases to point to her femininity as the

basis for her comparatively greater understanding of the natural or the divine, the communicative power between mortals and *kami* in such early texts as the *Chronicles* and the *Ancient Matters* is not necessarily gendered. Instead, communication with the divine is consistently represented as taking place through poetic exchanges, supporting the notion that greater sensitivity to the will of the *kami*, and therefore greater success in one's earthly endeavors, is enjoyed by only the most accomplished poets. It is, in fact, the highly structured language of poetry—comprised of alternating lines of five and seven syllables, in many cases with conspicuous repetition of important words or phrases—that allow ideal communication in this world. Poetry acts as an idealized method of communication among people, and even among humans and other elements of the natural world, although the most powerful and striking results of this communication are those that provide access between mortals and the divine, as in the case of Jingû, as well as other sovereigns who enjoyed long and successful reigns.[5]

While Jingû's competence over Chûai is certain, her new position of power is characterized as a temporary one. In the *Chronicles*, Jingû decides to postpone not only the burial but also the announcement of Chûai's death. This is in part because the swift action is needed in order to fulfill the sacred command to attack Silla, but it also suggests that Jingû's activity as sovereign is unofficial and would not have been possible had Chûai's death been widely known.

Nonetheless, the succession of military and political steps that Jingû undertakes is rapid and uniformly triumphant. Upon directing a ritual in order to discover the precise reasons for Chûai's death, for example, she comes away with detailed information about the names and locations of all of the *kami* who had attempted to communicate with Chûai before her. This episode illustrates Jingû's competence in ritual matters, and it establishes the direct links between her and these deities that had come to define the sacred origins of the Sumiyoshi Shrine, which is associated with each of the *kami* named here, as well as with Jingû herself.

After regaining the favor of the *kami* that had been so displeased with her late husband, Jingû embarks upon a series of military campaigns throughout the island of Kyushu, in western Japan. Jingû shows no fear in physical confrontations, neither is she confounded by the plotting of her opponents. What is more, these military movements are apparently not a distraction for her as they had been for Chûai. Instead, each new stop facilitates Jingû's smooth progression westward through Kyushu, which positions her favorably for setting out upon the voyage to the Kingdom of Silla.

It is important to note, too, that each of Jingū's successive military victories is characterized as pacifying the land and creating an atmosphere of safety and prosperity for its residents. This is achieved in part by identifying the origins of certain place names with specific actions by Jingū, a narrative technique that is used for many other sovereigns discussed in the *Chronicles.* There are two episodes in particular that create an overtly beneficent link between Jingū and the regions she conquers. First, at Matsura, she stops at a small river island, where she constructs a fishing rod herself, pulling thread from her robes to use as fishing line, and using a grain of cooked rice as bait. Upon making a prayer for success in her mission to conquer Silla, she catches a remarkable fish. It is the fish's rarity that was associated with that place, and gradually became the name Matsura. Second, Jingū builds a rice field with her own hands, and again petitions the *kami* for assistance in removing an enormous rock: "Straightway there came thunder and lightning, and stamped that rock asunder, so that the water passed through. Therefore the men of the time called that channel the Channel of Sakuta [Sundered Field]."[6] In each of these episodes, Jingū's pregnancy becomes a symbol of fertility that is projected upon the landscape through which she moves. With the approval and support of the divine, she works the land in ways that are appropriate to support the livelihood of the local residents. Her work, with its positive and constructive results at every stop along the way, implies an influence beyond military domination. Just as she is pregnant with a future ruler, Jingū engages in pacifying the farthest reaches of what was considered "Japan" at the time, and even works to cultivate the land and water to increase its fertility.

Finally, before setting out to attack the Kingdom of Silla, Jingū makes one last stop at the Bay of Kashihi, off the northwestern coast of Kyushu. She declares her intent in a prayer, and asks for a sign from the *kami* to ensure her success. She prepares to bathe in the water of the bay, and prays, "If I am to be successful, let my hair part spontaneously into two."[7] When this too is fulfilled, she recognizes the sign, and knots her hair to preserve these bunches, resulting in what is, in fact, a masculine hairstyle. At this point, she addresses her ministers, saying that she intends to temporarily adopt the outward appearance of a man, and that she will call on the advice of the *kami* and that of the ministers. This is an important transition for Jingū. Up to this point, she has had consistently positive reinforcement from the *kami* for her actions, but in this case, it is Jingū who initiates the divine interaction by announcing the sign that she wishes to see. Further, by adopting the trappings of a male sovereign and addressing

her ministers directly to confirm their allegiance, Jingû appears to make her occupation of the kingly post more official. In telling these ministers that she will accept their council, she promises to assume full responsibility in the event of a failure, but at the same time creates a hierarchy in which they are subordinate advisors to her. As a result, she gains their support, and the party enjoys an auspicious beginning to their mission to conquer the Kingdom of Silla.

In fact, the entire mission is an enormous success. The voyage by sea is long and uncertain for the scouts who are sent ahead to search for land, but any dangers are quickly and resolutely averted with an appropriate offering or prayer to the *kami*. Jingû demonstrates, in turn, her tactical skill and her charisma in encouraging her army, as well as a certain wisdom in commanding her men to "Spare not the violent, slay not the submissive."[8] Ultimately, the ruler of Silla promptly declares fealty to Jingû, and so she enjoys a victory with virtually no bloodshed.

More important for the question at hand is that the voyage to Silla takes place roughly a year after the death of Chûai when the *kami* had first announced Jingû's pregnancy. This is addressed in the *Chronicles* as another step in the preparations that Jingû takes before departing, in order to ensure her victory in Silla:

> The time had now come for the Empress's delivery. So she took a stone which she inserted in her loins, and prayed, saying:—"Let my delivery be in this land on the day that I return after our enterprise is at an end." That stone is now on the road-side in the district of Ito.[9]

By "this land," Jingû refers both to the ground on which she stands, the island of Kyushu, and the land that she commands, the realm of "Japan" (Nihon) as it was then understood.[10] This statement emphasizes that she has just dominated and begun to cultivate a wide region of new conquests, which are now a part of the Japan over which she is currently acting sovereign. Her decision to prolong her pregnancy allows her to continue pursuing her own military and political plans before giving birth.

It may appear uncertain whether she wishes to postpone childbirth because it is a physical strain that would restrict her actions as a military leader, or because she desires her son and heir to be born in this land that he will one day rule, and under which deities she so relies upon for protection. In either case, Jingû was able to postpone her childbirth until she

returned home, triumphant and unscathed. According to the narrative of the *Chronicles*, this occurs almost immediately upon her return, and the place where she gives birth is thenceforth named Umi, or Birthing.[11] This is in effect a culmination of the practice of linking Jingû's actions to specific places in the realm through images of cultivation and fertility, as with Matsura and Sakuta, above.

In the roughly contemporaneous *Ancient Matters*, the basic events that are included in Jingû's narrative are parallel to those in the *Chronicles*, but the order in which they are introduced in each is slightly different. Most notably in the *Ancient Matters* text, Jingû is in Silla when she notices the first signs of labor, and so "straightaway she girdled her skirt with stones to calm her mighty womb"[12] before returning to Kyushu, and it is not until after giving birth that she cultivates the river for fishing at Matsura. Regardless, it is significant that both *Ancient Matters* and the *Chronicles* report her use of stones to postpone her labor. It is implied in the *Ancient Matters* text that there is a connection between the stones and her prayers to the *kami* of Sumiyoshi, the shrine with which Jingû is most closely associated. In the *Chronicles*, the stones are likewise invested with a supernatural power through Jingû's prayers, although the absence of a named deity locates the divine power more directly in Jingû in this case.[13]

Jingû's use of a "sacred stone" to delay her childbirth is also recorded in Kitabatake Chikafusa's medieval historical commentary, *Gods and Sovereigns*:

> While at sea, Empress Jingû obtained a sacred stone and by this means was able to delay the birth of her son, the future Emperor Ôjin, until her return to Kyushu. His future having been foreordained by the gods even before his birth, Ôjin became known as the emperor of the womb.[14]

The term that Chikafusa uses here, which appears in the passage above as a "sacred stone," is perhaps better translated as "wish-fulfilling jewel" (*nyoi no tama*).[15] This appears to be a reference to the object that Jingû is said to have acquired when she was originally traveling to join Chûai at his temporary palace at Toyora in western Honshu. In the *Chronicles*, this jewel that Jingû discovers appears to be distinct from the stones that she later uses to postpone her childbirth.[16] Chikafusa's interpretation of these stones as the wish-fulfilling jewel adds continuity to the arc of Jingû's narrative, but it also dilutes the power of Jingû's prayers to achieve her wishes,

crediting the power to an outside object instead. Chikafusa's attention to sovereign Ôjin as an "emperor of the womb" similarly directs the sacred power displayed in this story toward Ôjin, reinforcing Chikafusa's later commentary that "Jingû administered the country as regent from the year *kanoto-mi* [201, the year following Chûai's death] on."[17]

From the beginning of her narrative, Jingû's socio-political success was a result of her ability and willingness to communicate with the divine. This receptivity to the *kami*, as well as her efficacy in matters of ritual, is especially apparent during her time as the wife of Chûai, but continues throughout her entire legacy, from her time as an erstwhile sovereign, to the moment when sovereignty is officially transferred to her son and successor, Ôjin. Indeed it is during this period, from the death of her husband until her son's ascension to the throne, when it is most difficult to pin down details about Jingû's life. This is the portion of her legend in which the episodes describing her life become much more varied, as do the range of titles that are used to identify precisely what her role is at this moment in her life. That is, depending on the text, Jingû is as likely to be identified as a widowed consort, or as an expectant mother, as she is to be recognized as sovereign in the gap between these two men in her life.

Such an increased focus on Jingû's unborn child and its deceased father creates a strong sense of anticipation for the birth of the future sovereign Ôjin, and emphasizes the looming importance of Ôjin's role in the narrative of imperial rule for centuries to come. But it is undeniable that Jingû accomplishes a great deal in her own right before giving birth. In fact, her military and political success during this time between her husband's death and her son's birth is possible only because she makes the decision to safely prolong her pregnancy, thus taking control over the timing for her childbirth. It is this aspect of Jingû's legend that demonstrates how her newly revealed status as a mother is entirely compatible with her ability to rule. In addition to this, her pregnancy is arguably the reason that she is able to so seamlessly step into the role of sovereign after Chûai's death, however temporarily. By postponing the funerary rites for the former sovereign and refusing to announce either the death or her pregnancy, Jingû enjoys a freedom to act that would otherwise have been impossible, and she is rewarded with stunning success. In the meantime, she also secures her unborn son's safety and maintains his access to the throne, rather than allowing the kingly post to slip away to political rivals.

Securing Prince Homuda's Transition to Sovereign Ôjin

After Jingû gives birth to her son, whose childhood name is Homuda, the question of kingly succession begins to drive the narrative. As a result, Jingû's actions, as they are depicted in her legend, shift toward questions of resolving disputes over the throne. At this stage in her role as ruler and mother, her energy is devoted almost exclusively to facilitating Homuda's transition into his role as the future sovereign Ôjin.

Jingû, recently returned from Silla and with her infant in arms, now prepares to give her late husband Chûai a formal burial. She has his remains transported from the temporary palace at Toyora and returns by sea to the Imperial Palace. With these movements, all of the recent news becomes widely known: the death of Chûai, Jingû's domination of the Kingdom of Silla, and the birth of Prince Homuda. Two of Homuda's half-brothers, sons of Chûai by other consorts, plot to rebel against Jingû and her son upon hearing of this. One of the half-brothers, Prince Kagu-saka, is killed in a hunting expedition at the outset of his military response, which is an early omen. This does nothing to deter the half-brother Oshikuma, however, who carries on the rebellion. Jingû learns of this, and must pour every effort into defeating this rival. The armies of each side clash in various places throughout much of central Honshu in an extensive series of battles. Once Jingû's forces finally defeat the army of Oshikuma, his loss is commemorated by a poem in which he vows to kill himself by plunging into Lake Biwa. Jingû's victory is confirmed with two poems by Jingû's general who searches for and finds Oshikuma's body washed up on the shore.[18]

The narrative detailing Jingû's defense of her son's right to rule is told through a prose narrative that includes several poems that describe important moments in the chain of events. The poems in both the *Chronicles* (nos. 28–33) and *Ancient Matters* (nos. 38–46) are pivotal in marking Homuda's transition from child to adult, from threatened prince to firmly established sovereign. They reflect a broad range of points of view, from major statesmen involved, to the ill-fated half-brother Oshikuma, to Jingû herself.

Homuda undergoes purification after the conflict, and when he returns to the imperial court, Jingû holds a banquet in his honor. She offers him *sake* to drink in celebration of their victory, along with a poem that honors the role of the divine in brewing the fine liquor. Both the *Chronicles* and *Ancient Matters* explain that Takeshi Uchi no Sukune, a statesman and

elder who had served both Chûai and Jingû, accepts the *sake* in reply to Jingû. The man's song is celebratory and honors the ritual moment, his satisfaction in victory, and the simple pleasure of partaking in the fine drink.[19] He composes this poem on behalf of Homuda, who is characterized as still a child and dependent not only upon maternal guidance, but also on the education of his elders and future advisors.

Homuda did not formally ascend the throne until his mother's death in the 69th year of her rule, ostensibly at 100 years of age. After succeeding the throne, there is a moment in which sovereign Ôjin looks over his realm in a poem recorded in the *Ancient Matters* (no. 41):

> Once when the Emperor crossed over to the province of Chikatsu Ômi, he stood on Uji Fields and looked off toward Kazuno. He sang:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Chiba no* | Leafy Kazuno, |
> | *Kazuno o mireba* | Vinefields of the thousand leaves: |
> | *momochidaru* | Looking, I can see |
> | *yaniwa mo miyu* | Hundreds, thousands of houses— |
> | *kuni no ho mo miyu* | And I can see the summits of the land. |
>
> Ôjin[20]

This poem simultaneously initiates, justifies and proves his new position of power. In the poem, Ôjin stands at a specified point and looks far into the distance. The expanse of a plain suggests a broad view of the land, and establishes the resulting vista as a political entity, a realm, by making claim to all that is visible to him. There is even the suggestion that the poem extends this claim beyond what is humanly visible to the indefinite beyond. He also praises the beauty and fertility of the land, and the prosperity of its people, who are now his subjects. The prose introduction of the poem is also important in placing Ôjin precisely in an identifiable geographic location. The poem explicitly mentions looking at the land as a means of praising its fertility and the health of the population, a trope that was used extensively throughout Jingû's legend, especially early in her role as ruler.

The narrative of the succession of sovereign Ôjin and his ultimate success as depicted in the *Chronicles* and the *Ancient Matters* reflects the positive influence of Jingû. After celebrating his victory with Jingû and their supporters, and making the transition to sovereign Ôjin as he ascends the throne, he then goes on to take a wife and several consorts. This

equally important stage in his life is introduced as a visit to Chikatsu Ômi, when he met Yagawaehime, who would become one of his consorts. This is described in the final lines of his poem, excerpted here from *Ancient Matters* no. 42:

Awashishi omina	Ah, the woman that I met!
ka moga to	To have her thus,
waga mishi kora	The girl I saw—
kaku moga to	To have her so,
wa ga mishi ko ni	The girl I saw—whom now
utatake dani	In mounting pleasure
mukaioru kamo	I sit facing, with whom now
isoioru kamo	I company side by side!

Ôjin[21]

This poem is an indirect example of how the trope of looking also acts as a mode of marriage, or literally "taking a wife." This is not directly mentioned in the poem above, but it becomes a wedding-banquet song for the nuptials of Ôjin and his consort, Yagawaehime. Just as in the transition from prince to the sovereign, the poems become pivotal points in a narrative that creates a logical transition to the young ruler's marriage.

This emphasis on Ôjin's marriage is important for several reasons. The poem represents the first-person view of Ôjin as he declares his intention to take a wife, and the formality of its language provides the ritual component necessary to give weight and concrete meaning to such an intention. Further, the poetic language emphasizes the act of selecting a wife and consummating his marriage. Throughout the poem the act of viewing endows Ôjin as the sole agent in the act of literally taking a wife. But in its final lines, the poem depicts the union in terms of greater equality, in which bride and groom sit side by side, and facing each other. This suggests that a sovereign's wife plays an important part in ruling—not only in providing support and advice in matters of ritual, as Jingû did for Chûai, but also, like Jingû, in her potential to become a mother, and to perpetuate the sovereign line and succession to future heirs.

Jingû and the Sumiyoshi Shrine

Jingû and Ôjin have long been recognized as *kami* who had manifested as mortal imperial figures of the third and fourth centuries, and have deep ties to Sumiyoshi Shrine. The shrine, located in present-day Osaka, has

been an important sacred site and pilgrimage destination throughout the entire history of its name, written records of which begin with a *kami* called Suminoe from the time of the sovereign Nintoku (r. 313–399), the son of Ôjin. By the tenth century, there was a great diversity of deities enshrined at Sumiyoshi, including gods of poetry, warfare, and sea travel, each of which can be linked to Jingû's legend in some way. The main hall of the Sumiyoshi Shrine was built directly on the shore of what is now the Osaka Bay, facing the ocean. There are four additional halls, built in the same architectural style, and positioned in line to the south and behind the main hall, each of which is dedicated to a different deity. Of these, three are dedicated to male deities of the sea, the gods of the lowest, middle, and surface of the sea, respectively.[22] The fourth shrine houses Ôjin, who is deified as Hachiman, a god of war and eventual patron of the Minamoto clan. Jingû is enshrined in the main shrine of Sumiyoshi.

The legend of Jingû is important in its description of feminine power and the role of pregnancy and motherhood in an imperial succession of early Japan. The events of her legend are extraordinary, but our understanding of her place in history is heavily influenced by the equally legendary narratives of Chûai before her and Ôjin after her.[23] As Chûai's consort, Jingû became pregnant with the child that would become Ôjin. Because Chûai died before she even gave birth, she came to be viewed almost automatically as a regent, in the sense of passing the imperial line forward to the unborn child she carried. The diversity of narratives that continue to exist today, however, endows her with a divine legitimacy—one that is perhaps shared with Ôjin but that is by no means afforded to Chûai. Chûai's untimely death is the result of inattention to the *kami*, and Jingû's actions and the resulting favor of the *kami* legitimate her rule, even where matters of imperial succession may not have in successive generations. In this way, her roles as consort to Chûai and as a mother to Ôjin take on a rhetorical function in early narratives about her that ultimately legitimate her power and efficacy as a sovereign.

Notes

1. Because this study is concerned with how early texts represent the narratives of Jingû and her contemporaries, I use the traditional reign dates, which come primarily from the *Chronicles of Japan*. Keeping in mind that rulers such as Jingû play an important part in how assumptions about imperial rule and succession developed in

early Japan, I follow Joan Piggott (1997) in limiting the term "emperor" only to those who ruled under the appellation *tennô*, which did not come into use until well into the seventh century, although it was used anachronistically in the earliest texts. Likewise, I adopt Gina Barnes' (2007) use of the term "sovereign" in order to maintain gender neutrality whenever possible. In order to maintain accessibility and readability for a general audience, I use English translations that are readily available, and I include the Japanese terms only when they are a necessary part of the analysis in question.

2. Aston, trans., *Nihongi*, 220.
3. Ibid., 222.
4. Varley, trans., *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns*, 101–102.
5. Although poetic practice varied greatly in premodern Japanese literary history, its function as a powerful tool for communication was acknowledged throughout, if to varying degrees, but is most notably discussed in poetic theory from the tenth through the fifteenth centuries. For a discussion of poetry from the *Man'yôshû* era as a form of discourse, see Duthy, *Man'yôshû and the Imperial Imagination in Early Japan*, 215.
6. Aston, *Nihongi*, 227.
7. Ibid., 228.
8. Ibid., 229.
9. Ibid. This translation gives the impression that Jingû uses one stone to do this, but the lack of singular/plural identifiers in Japanese in fact allows for a greater ambiguity of interpretation. Indeed, the headnote to poem no. 813 in the *Collection of Ten Thousand Generations* clearly indicates two stones, including precise details about the size, weight and location of each. Other texts make similar reference to two stones, including the eighth-century *Chikuzen Gazetteer* (*Chikuzen no kuni fûdoki*).
10. Torquil Duthie points out that Jingû's return from the Korean peninsula "marks the legendary completion of the imperial realm of 'Nihon' … defined as a realm of 'all under heaven' ruled by the Yamato Heavenly Sovereigns that includes Korean kingdoms as tributary states" (*Man'yôshû and the Imperial Imagination*, 113).
11. Aston translates the place name Umi as "Birth" (Aston, *Nihongi*, 232). Gustav Heldt's translation of Umi as "Birthing" (Heldt, trans., *The Kojiki*, 114) better reflects the link between Jingû's

actions and the use of a name to designate precisely where this took place.

12. Heldt, *The Kojiki*, 114.
13. See note 9, above, for reasoning behind the interpretation of this as multiple stones in the *Chronicles*, despite Aston's translation of this as a single stone.
14. Varley, *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns*, 102.
15. Kidô, Tokieda, and Iwasa, eds., *NKBT*87: 78.
16. This is based on the edited text of the *Nihon shoki*, which uses the term "wish-fulfilling jewel" or *nyoi no tama* 如意玉 (Kojima, ed., *SNKBZ* 2: 406), and "stone" or *ishi* 石 (ibid., 427). The phrase I translate here as "wish-fulfilling jewel" appears in Aston's translation of the *Chronicles* as "*nyoi* pearl" (*Nihongi*, 219). Aston goes on to note that this object is a powerful symbol in early Japanese Buddhism, and also points out the anachronism of such a term in the construction of this legend (ibid., 219n2).
17. Varley, *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns*, 102. Here, "emperor of the womb" is *taichû no tennô*, and "regent" is *sesshô* (Kidô, Tokieda, and Iwasa, *NKBT* 87: 78).
18. Cranston, trans., *Gem Glistening Cup*, 77–78. This poem appears both in the *Chronicles* and *Ancient Matters*. The *Chronicles* also includes the poem that Jingû's general, Takeshi Uchi no Sukune, composes in response to this discovery.
19. Ibid., 27.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 28–29.
22. These gods are typically named together, and sometimes as a single unit, as in the phrase, "triple sea deity" (*sanjin*), and were enshrined throughout Japan, including locations in Kyushu and western Honshu, where much of Jingû's legend takes place.
23. Chikafusa, for example, identifies Jingû as the fifteenth sovereign in his records of the imperial succession. The sovereign who is recognized today, Kôbun, did not appear in Chikafusa's text. Kôbun appears in the earliest texts as Prince Ôtomo; his posthumous name Kôbun was not designated until 1870 (see Varley, 136n42).

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PART III

Motherhood and Identity

Earthly and Divine Mothers in Ancient Egypt

Emily Teeter

Earthly Mothers

Texts and representations are rich sources for our understanding of the concept, obligations and status of mothers in ancient Egypt. Images of a mother with her child appear at the very beginning of Egyptian history, such as an ivory statuette of a woman carrying a child on her shoulder dated to ca. 3300–2900 B.C.E, and a small faience figurine of a woman holding a child on her lap from about 3100 to 2900 B.C.E.[1] Intimate scenes of Queen Nefertiti caressing and kissing her daughters are known from the Amarna Period (ca. 1330 B.C.E.). The prominence of mothers is also attested by statues and by scenes in tombs that show a married man with his mother rather than his wife.[2]

The word for mother, *mwt*, like many Egyptian kinship terms, can be imprecise, for the same word can be used for mother, grandmother or, as in many households today, mother-in-law.[3] Mothers were expected to be "married," a status that in ancient Egypt was not regulated by the state, but conveyed the fact that the woman was in a stable relationship with and cohabitating with a man. Many mothers bore the title *nbt pr* "mistress of the house," an acknowledgment of her status within the household, but also a title that probably denoted that she owned property, or brought

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wealth into the family and thus had an independent financial stake in the union.[4]

As in so many other cultures, a woman accrued status through motherhood.

The role of "mother" ensured a woman more prominence, because as a mother, her name appeared in genealogies of her children linking her into the larger network of society. In accordance with the Egyptian custom of men and women having the same legal rights,[5] both mothers and fathers were both included in these genealogies. This was also the case in some administrative documents. The *Stato Civile* (census) at Deir el-Medina, the workmen's village of the New Kingdom (ca. 1400–1200 B.C.E.), frequently lists both the father and mother of each resident.[6]

Many texts describe the trust that was placed in one's mother. The Instruction of Ankhshheshonqy (fourth century B.C.E. or earlier) state "Open it [your heart] to your mother [rather than your wife] she is a woman of discretion."[7] An earlier text, Dua-khety, cautions "Do not speak falsehood against your mother."[8] Gratitude for one's mother was frequently expressed: "Thank god for your father and for your mother, who put you on the path of life."[9] One of the common phrases used to extol the virtues of an individual was "I was one loved by my father, praised by my mother." The Instruction of Ani (ca. 945 B.C.E.) elaborate:

> Double the food your mother gave you, Support her as she supported you; She had a heavy load in you. But she did not abandon you. When you were born after your months, She was yet yoked <to you>, Her breast in your mouth for three years. As you grew and your excrement disgusted, She was not disgusted, saying "What shall I do!" When she sent you to school, And you were taught to write, She kept watching over you daily, With bread and beer in her house.[10]

There was a sense of obligation to care for one's mother. Workers at Deir el-Medina took time off from work to care for an ill mother, or to bury their mother.[11] In return, a mother was expected to care for her children. One expression for having a child, literally "to make a human" (*iri m rmT*) not only means to bear a child,[12] but also refers to a mother's obligation to instill social values to make her offspring a good member of the community. A text warns a mother to treat all her children equally, although the reason seems a bit self-serving: "you do not know which one of them will be kind to you."[13] Another letter recounts a duty that mothers in all

cultures and in all time periods have experienced: sending presents to the children, one demanding son asking for "all she has with her."[14]

Becoming a Mother

Motherhood was the usual and desired state for married women. The Instruction of Ani (ca. 945 B.C.E.) council "Take a wife while you are young that she make a son for you; she should bear for you while you are youthful."[15] But fertility was not assured in ancient Egypt, and between what has been termed a "low fertility rate" and high infant mortality, there was much disappointment and heartbreak. Lacking clear evidence from Egypt, the infant mortality rate has been extrapolated from pre-industrial societies as 20% of all newborns dying in the first year while another 30% "would not have survived beyond the age of five."[16] This death rate is documented by cemeteries exclusively for children. At Deir el-Medina (New Kingdom Thebes), the burials of more than a hundred children were located together on a hillside. At Mostagedda, 42% of the 31 burials were infants and children, and similarly high percentages of child burials were noted at Gurob (50% of 276 burials) and Matmar (48% of 233 burials).[17]

Maternal death was also a problem. Women have been found buried with newborns at Kaw and Badari (Old Kingdom) and at Abu Roash (Middle Kingdom). Other examples are known from New Kingdom Saqqara, and also from intrusive burials in the tomb of Senenmut at Thebes of two approximately 30- to 40-year-old women, both whom apparently died in childbirth.[18] Status was not a guarantee of a safe birth; Queen Mutnodjemet (ca. 1295 B.C.E.) seems to have died in childbirth—the body assumed to be hers was found with the skeletal remains of a newborn. Her pelvis bore evidence of a series of prior difficult deliveries.[19] Princess Hehenhit (ca. 2000 B.C.E.) met a similar fate, because "she had a narrow pelvis and died shortly after delivery with a vesicovaginal fistula."[20] A study of female bodies from the cemetery at Gebelain shows that many of the women had a very narrow pelvis which would have made childbirth difficult.[21]

The desire to bear children, and perhaps an acknowledgment of the possible difficulties, is manifested in a great variety of objects related to fertility and ensuring a safe birth. Clay figurines of women, some shown on beds with children, occur from the Middle Kingdom through the Greco-Roman period (Fig. 1). Once interpreted as concubine figures for the dead because they were also found in men's tombs, their ubiquity has

Fig. 1 Group of female figurines. Medinet Habu, Luxor. Baked clay, pigment, ca. 945–715 B.C., OIM E14594, E14583, E14613. Photo D. 19439, Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

led to the more nuanced view of them being generalized symbols of fertility and that they conveyed the idea of birth, both literally for a woman trying to start or add to her family.[22] They also were thought to stimulate men sexually, and to be an allusion to rebirth in the afterlife. Their direct connection with promoting pregnancy is indicated by a few examples that are inscribed. One in Berlin bears the text "May your daughter Seh give birth," and another in the Louvre is inscribed "An offering which the king gives to the spirit (*ka*) of Khonsu; a child for Tita."[23]

Women could implore the gods for fertility. Foremost of the deities associated with birth (and rebirth) was Hathor, shown as a woman wearing a headdress of two lyre-shaped cow horns and a sun disk, as a woman with cow's ears, or as a cow.[24] A major center of her worship was the

complex of temples at Deir el-Bahri at Thebes, the best preserved being the memorial temple of Queen Hatshepsut (ca. 1473–1458 B.C.E.).[25] The birth of the queen was celebrated there, and in the Hathor chapel, the queen is shown being suckled by Hathor. Supplicants seeking fertility and health came to the temple to view the reliefs, pray, and to leave votive offerings in the form of female figurines and phalluses.[26] A hymn to Hathor contains the request "so that the goddess lets your wives bear sons and daughters, so that you may not be barren and you may not be impotent."[27]

One could also appeal to dead relatives for help in becoming pregnant. In Egypt, the separation of the realms of the living and the dead could be ill-defined, because the blessed dead dwelled in essentially a parallel world supplied by offerings left at their tomb. One could transcend the barrier of life and death through writing, and a number of documents are known. One of these "Letters to the Dead," written by a son to his deceased father and grandmother, asks for assistance in making his wife pregnant, asking "Moreover, let a healthy son be born to me, for you an able (effective) spirit."[28]

The ancient Egyptians had a very different understanding of the relative roles of the male and female in the creation of a child. The embryo was thought to be contributed in its entirety in the male's sperm, while the woman's role was to provide the womb where it was sheltered and developed until birth.[29] Thereafter, her role was to nurture the child. The dominant role of the male is reflected in references such as "he made her pregnant,"[30] "the male member to beget, the female womb to conceive,"[31] and the "daughter who I [the father] placed in your body."[32]

It is assumed that most females married and became pregnant shortly after reaching puberty. Egyptian medical texts contain several pregnancy tests. Papyrus Kahun (ca. 1900 B.C.E.) instructs a woman to put an onion in her vagina. If her breath smells, she will conceive. This is based on the belief that the oral cavity was connected with the reproductive organs.[33] The same papyrus suggests that if a woman urinated on grain and it did not germinate, she was not pregnant.[34]

Giving birth, at least for elite women, was associated with specially prepared spaces. New Kingdom sources (fifteenth to twelfth centuries B.C.E.) indicate that some women gave birth in a light-weight structure erected in the yard of the house.[35] In one text, a woman calls upon Hathor to "come to me Hathor, my mistress, in my fine pavilion, in this happy hour."[36] No actual remains of these birth arbors are known, but they are shown on

figured ostraca as being draped with convolvulus ivy, a plant associated with birth and rebirth, and equipped with special beds, some of which have legs in the form of the god Bes who protected women and children.[37]

Traditionally, woman gave birth squatting on bricks[38] or on a birthing stool. The rigors of childbirth were a trope in literature—a man likened his pain to "I was sitting on the (birthing) bricks like a pregnant woman and I called out for breath." In a literary work, the Satire on the Trades, a weaver complains that his work makes him "worse off than a woman; with knees against his chest, He cannot breath air."[39]

The pain and dangers of childbirth could be eased with amulets for which we have records of a man bartering and buying presumably for his wife (or daughter).[40] One spell to ease the pain of childbirth reads; "The wife of the man has cried for a statuette of a dwarf of clay: 'come, let someone betake himself to Hathor … let her amulet of health be fetched for you that she may cause the one in childbirth to give birth.'"[41] The "dwarf of clay" refers to the god Bes whose major role was the protection of women and children. He can be shown with a frame drum, flutes, or a harp, playing music to celebrate a birth.[42] Bes becomes increasingly prominent in the Late Period and Greco-Roman eras.

Another spell prevents the mother from hemorrhaging during birth (or perhaps from miscarrying):

> Spell for warding off hemorrhaging: Anubis has come forth to keep the Inundation from treading on what is pure—the land of Tait. Beware of what is in [it]! This spell is to be said over threads of the border of *yaat*-fabric with a knot made in it. To be applied inside the vagina.[43]

Here, hemorrhaging is equated with the "inundation" of the Nile. Tait, a goddess associated with weaving, is invoked to give more power to the fabric that is made into a tampon. Other magical spells specify knots which were thought to block evil.[44]

A spell for causing the placenta (known in Egyptian as "mother of a human" *mwt rmT*)[45] to be expelled calls upon the sun god Re to send Bes. The spell was to be recited fours time, probably by a midwife[46] who assumed the role of a deity: "Come down placenta, come down, come down! I am Horus who conjures in order that she who is giving birth becomes better than she was, as if she was already delivered. … Look, Hathor will lay her hand on her with an amulet of health! I am Horus who saves her!"[47]

Other goddesses associated with the protection of a woman giving birth are Taweret (also known by her Greek name Thoeris), shown with the swollen abdomen and breasts of a pregnant woman, the paws of a lion, a hippo head, and a crocodile tail, and Hekat, usually shown as a frog or a woman with a frog's head, a whose name literally means a "hundred thousand," a reference to fecundity. Literary tales relates that the "Seven Hathors" a group of goddesses who attended births and determined the fate of the child.[48]

Some men took an active part in the birth of their child as indicated by a letter that notes that the father was present for the birth: "It was when I [the husband] was in the house that you were born."[49] Attendance lists for the workmen in the village of Deir el-Medina indicate that men could be granted days off for the birth of their children: "[the workman] Ka-sa, his wife being in childbirth and he had three days off [work]."[50] Some men felt tremendous sympathy and empathy for the mother-to-be as indicated by a magical spell that refers to "the agonies of the husband and the wife in childbirth."[51] Another text from Deir el-Medina sounds very modern with its reference to a man being given gifts at the time his daughter was giving birth and a celebration at "the place of hard drinking"![52]

The well-being and protection of a new mother were ensured by magical and practical means. A literary tale that relates the birth of the kings of Dynasty 5 refers to a 14-day period of purification after birth that also included special care for both mother and child.[53] Another (non-literary) text relates that a servant had given birth and was nursing her son and orders that she should be provided with bread, meat, honey, oil, water and other foods.[54] Figured ostraca that represent a woman in a birth arbor show that she was equipped in special ways that allude to protection, but also to her status as a new mother. Her hair was arranged in a series of braids cascading from the top of her head, and she was equipped with a hand mirror, cosmetics and perfumes, all of which symbolically restored her role as a sexual being and her "potential fertility."[55]

Medical papyri contain recipes for producing milk, such as "grind the tips of papyrus plants and mix it with the milk of the mother of a newborn son," a remedy that was sure to make the baby "pass day and night in a healthy slumber."[56] Milk was stored in ceramic vessels in the form of a kneeling or seated woman holding her child.[57] Some show the woman with her hand to her breast. Small cups with pinched spouts have been identified as cups for feeding milk to infants.[58]

Other forms of defense were afforded by ivory wands that may have been used to draw a circle of protection around a woman and her child.[59] These wands are incised with images of animal deities called *aha* ("fighters") who carry long knives to defeat evil. A few have texts that make their use very clear: "We have come in order to protect the lady Meriseneb," or "Cut off the head of the enemy when he enters the chamber of the children whom the lady has born."[60] Others are inscribed "protection by day and night," or "words spoken by these protective figures: 'we have come to spread protection over this child.'"[61] This fear of malign forces attacking the newborn is also referred to in a magical protective spell to be recited by the mother that suggests that demons could come in the guise of a harmless visitor:

> Have you [the demon] come to kiss this child? I will not let you kiss it. Have you come to hush (it)? I will not let you hush it. Have you come to harm it? I will not let you harm it. Have you come to take it away? I will not let you take it away from me.[62]

There is no evidence for a strong preference for the birth of a boy over a girl,[63] which probably reflects the overall legal equality and perceived value of women in the society. A prayer to Hathor contains the phrase "So that the goddess lets your wife bear sons and daughters."[64] Other evidence for the general parity of the genders may be discerned in a list of people from Deir el-Medina who attended a "gift-giving" event held in conjunction with a drinking party in honor of Hathor. Eleven of the thirty women were specifically identified as a "mother," and the names of their children (which are gender specific through grammatical endings) were given. The women are listed in seemingly random order, without giving precedent to those with sons rather than daughters.[65]

Yet, parents-to-be, like parents anywhere and anytime in the world, were curious whether the baby would be a girl or a boy, and there were several methods to determine gender before birth. Papyrus Kahun (ca. 1900 B.C.E.) recommends examining the pregnant woman's face and abdomen. From the same papyrus comes the instruction: "You shall put wheat and barley into purses of cloth. The woman shall pass her water on it, every day. … If the wheat sprouts, she will bear a girl,"[66] or the variation of urinating on both barley and emmer. If barley germinated, the baby would be a boy; if the emmer, a girl.

A New Kingdom Papyrus refers to "a mother that has given birth and whose heart feels no distaste; she is constant in nursing her son and her

breast is in his mouth every day."[67] The comment "whose heart feels no distaste" is a telling comment that suggests that even in ancient days, some women may not have been receptive to breastfeeding. Indeed, wet nurses are known as early as the Old Kingdom (ca. 2400 B.C.E.). They were employed when the mother not able to nurse, but they were also a marker of status in an elite household, probably because the service could be viewed as a frivolous expense (assuming that the mother was able to nurse), and the nurse also allowed the lady of the house the freedom to resume her normal duties.[68] In the tomb of Pahri at el-Kab, three different nurses are shown, one for each daughter, staffing which is probably intended to reflect the elite financial status of the family.[69] A text from Deir el-Medina appears to concern a man who has been widowed employing a wet nurse for his daughters. The text includes a list of her compensation which was higher (equal to 30.2 *deben*) than that for the doctor who was granted the equivalent of 22 *deben*.[70] The text is also very interesting for the man swore an oath that he will not be separated from his daughters; "As Amen endures, as the Ruler … endures, my three daughters will not be taken from me, and I will not be taken from them."[71] A woman could advance the career of the family by acting as a wet nurse to an elite family. Teye, probably the wife of the future pharaoh Aye (ca. 1325 B.C.E.) was a nurse for the famous Nefertiti, and Baki, the wife of the soldier Amenemhab, is shown in their tomb suckling a prince.[72] According to the Instruction of Ani, children were weaned at about three years old.[73]

Family size can best be estimated from the workers' village at Deir el-Medina (ca. 1400–1200 B.C.E.) because the documentation has allowed very detailed genealogies to be developed.[74] These show that many families had between five and ten children which, considering the small size of the houses in the village, must have made for tight quarters and a noisy street scene.[75] Scenes of families, stelae with family groups and autobiographic texts also shed light on family size. Examples of these record a man with 12 children, a woman with five daughters, and another man with "at least six" children.[76]

The Egyptians had a very clear idea of the relationship between coitus and pregnancy. Medical papyri detail a variety of contraceptives and abortifacients.[77] The most common contraceptives are vaginal suppositories and barriers made of various (and sometimes repellant) substances, such as crocodile dung mixed with sour milk, honey and sodium carbonate.[78] Other recipes include fermented vegetable paste, which may have changed the acidity of the vagina, and a plant fiber tampon "soaked with crossed

acacia fruit, colocynth … and dates all mixed with honey."[79] Papyrus Ebers contains a recipe for "loosening a child" or "to draw out the blood of a woman,"[80] which may refer to inducing a miscarriage. This recipe is listed along with other more routine ones, suggesting that it was not considered to be secret or shameful. On a level of faith, it was believed that the god Seth produced miscarriages and abortions.[81]

The cessation of fertility at menopause was also understood. In a letter from king Ramesses II (ca. 1260 B.C.E.) to Hattushili, king of the Hittites, he writes that even the best doctor cannot restore the fertility of an older woman: "A fifty-year old! Never! She's sixty! Look, a woman of fifty is old, to say nothing of a sixty-year old!! One can't produce medicine to enable *her* to bear children!"[82]

Adoption was an accepted solution for those who were unable to bear a child. A letter refers to the scribe Nakhtemmut as having poor character; he is "not like a human being" because he has not caused his wife to become pregnant "like his fellow men. … And what is worse, he has not even adopted an orphan to remedy the situation."[83] Adoption in Egypt was not only a means to add to one's family, but legally, it was an accepted way to pass an inheritance of goods (or even high office) to someone who was not in the direct line of descent, and so in some cases, adoption had nothing to do with fertility.[84]

Elderly Mothers

As is the ideal in many cultures, children were obliged to respect, care for, and supply the needs of their aged mother. One stela (ca. 1100 B.C.E.) relates that a woman gave her daughter "all the acquisitions of her father" (presumably as an inheritance from the father) and that in return, the daughter promised to support her. In ancient Egypt, one of the most important aspects of "care" was to provide an appropriate burial. Many women were buried in a separate chamber of their husband's tomb, or even in the same burial chamber. Legal texts and letters refer to the economic issues of caring for an aged mother. In one text, a son, one of a number of siblings, was left to shoulder the entire economic burden of caring for and burying his mother. He later "laid claim" to a share of their property as recompense. Sometimes it went more smoothly—in another case, after a son buried his mother, he received her estate.[85] Generally, the child who bore the responsibility of burying a parent was given the title "eldest son" (regardless of their gender),[86] and that individual received a

larger share of the deceased's estate to compensate him or her for their expenses.

Legal Protection of and Economic Provisions for Mothers

Legal documents, of which many exist from ancient Egypt, provide detailed evidence for law pertaining to the rights and protection of mothers. Married women of the elite often brought a dowry from her parents into the marriage. That remained her own property, whereas goods and real estate acquired during the marriage became jointly-held property. If the marriage was dissolved, the woman took the amount of the dowry with her, or her husband had to reimburse her for its value, while the jointly-held property was usually divided, depending upon the cause of the divorce, one-third to the woman, two-thirds to the man.

Economic support of a woman and her children could be ensured by documents called *imyt-pr* ("that which is in the house"), a type of annuity.[87] A typical example, dating to the mid-fourth century B.C.E. (they originated several millennia earlier), states that a wife had given her husband 30 pieces of silver. As the annuity payment, he had to pay her 1.2 pieces of silver and 36 sacks of emmer annually. Important points of the agreement are that the man could not cancel the contract by returning the lump sum, and that the payments were to be paid to the woman "at whatever house she wishes," a reference to the possibility that if they divorced and lived separately, the ex-husband still had to make the annual payment—hence, an early form of alimony.[88]

Divine Mothers

The concept of a divine mother is most strongly stressed in connection with the divinity of the king. The ruler was considered to be the living Horus as well as the son of the sun god Re. As Horus, his mythical mother was Isis, while as the offspring of Re, he was most commonly associated with Hathor.[89] Until the early first millennium B.C.E., Hathor was the dominant mother figure associated with stimulating creation and rebirth of both the king and his subjects. As early as the Middle Kingdom (ca. 2100 B.C.E.), the king is shown being suckled by Hathor, transmitting divinity to the pharaoh.[90]

In the early first millennium B.C.E. and onward,[91] Isis supplanted Hathor as the archetypical divine mother. This explains the shared attributes of the goddesses—both wear a crown with lyre-shaped cow horns and a sun disk, the latter referring to the imperishable and eternally reborn sun. According to the myths concerning Isis, her husband Osiris was murdered by his brother Seth. Osiris's body was dismembered and scattered throughout Egypt. Isis gathered the pieces of his body and bound them together with linen, creating the first mummy. Isis, the Great of Magic, was then impregnated by her dead husband, resulting in the birth of their son Horus. This act of creating a new life after death was the foundation for the concept of rebirth in the afterlife. Isis was also renowned as a protector of children because she guarded Horus from the wrathful Seth, hiding him in the papyrus swamps of Khemmis.[92] The cult of Isis as a protective goddess with the power to cure the sick, especially the bite of snakes and the sting of scorpions, eventually spread throughout the Mediterranean world, and Isis holding Horus on her lap became a very common theme for amulets and figurines (Fig. 2).

In Egyptian cosmology, the dominant role of the male as the creator while the mother was the one who only received and nurtured the child (see above) is reflected in the New Kingdom scenes of the divine birth of pharaohs Hatshepsut (ca. 1450 B.C.E.) and Amunhotep III (ca. 1375 B.C.E.). In the temple of Hatshepsut, her birth was attributed to the union of the god Amun (or Amun Re) and the queen's mother Ahmose, the god claiming that Hatshepsut was "the daughter who I placed in your [Ahmose's] body." The newborn, whose creation is credited entirely to Amun Re, is shown as a miniature adult being fashioned on the potter's wheel of the god Khnum, negating the female's role in creation.[93]

This concept of the female as one who received the child and nurtured it rather than having an active role in its creation is also seen with the goddess Nut, whose body forming the vault of heaven, is shown on the ceilings of temples and tombs, her arms extended to reach the western horizon, her toes on the east. Nut swallowed the setting, or dying, sun at dusk, and gave birth to the life-giving sun each morning. But the sun merely passed through her body; she had no role in its creation.[94]

In other traditions, the female element was completely absent from the act of creation. There are many accounts of the original act of creation, but one relates that life originated from an undifferentiated primordial mass,

Fig. 2 Isis and her son Horus. Bronze, ca. 500 B.C., OIM E10682. Photo D. 19283, Courtesy of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago

called Nun (which is grammatically male). In another, the god Atum gave birth to the first two gendered pairs of deities, Shu (the male personification of air) and Tefnut (female, moisture) expelling them through an act variously described as masturbation, spitting, or sneezing. One text recalls "I acted as my own husband with my fist, I copulated with my hand."[95]

A later hymn to Amun Re (ca. 1336 B.C.E.) continues this idea of self-generation by a male god:

> There was no mother to him that she might have created his nature, no father of his to engender the one who said "It is I!" He fashioned the egg of himself all by himself.[96]

Other sections of this cycle of hymns also stress the power of the male to create life without a female partner: "God crafted himself. … He shaped his own Image, fashioned himself by himself. … Who mingled his seed with his own bodily form bringing his embryo into existence from the depths of the mystery."[97]

Conclusion

Women, in their role of mother, were very visible in ancient Egypt. Mothers are shown in temples, and in tombs, on ostraca and papyri and amulets, and they are represented by statuettes and figurines. Mothers are referred to in economic, legal, religious and literary texts. This prominence reflects the Egyptian desire to commemorate the regenerative power of mothers because the primary theme of Egyptian religion and culture was the continuing recreation of the cosmos, symbolized by the unending rebirth of the sun at dawn—the paradigm for eternal birth after death and hence the assurance of eternal life in the afterlife. Mothers were emblematic of creation and recreation.

Yet, ironically, women were believed to play a secondary role in the creation of new life. It was the male who implanted the child in the womb of the mother—the woman's role was to act as an incubator for the embryo, and thereafter to nurture the child. Yet, there was a certain equality in the act of creation, for women played a very visible and active role in sexually stimulating the male—an essential element in the act of creation. This carried over to the realm of the gods, where Isis was very prominent in her role as mother and nurturer, while Hathor was that in addition to expressing the less maternal values of overt sexuality expressed through drinking, dancing and music making.[98]

This role of earthly women and mothers as highly sexual beings is reflected in the way they are portrayed for much of Egyptian history—idealized, with long legs, slender bodies, narrow waists, large breasts, thick hair, eyes emphasized with dramatic eyeliner—all ideals of ancient Egyptian beauty.[99] The contours of a woman's body are often visible through her clothing, and near nudity was not uncommon as a means to display her seductive charms. This concept of a woman as a sexual being and a partner in creation (even if in a very different role than we imagine today) is emphasized by images of women—mothers, daughters and grandmothers, who in much of Egyptian art are shown identically with thick long hair, clad in flowing gowns that emphasize their breasts, small waist and hips.[100] This idealizing, and especially the near absence of the indication of age by physical appearance, emphasizes the idea that women of any age were considered to be part of the cycle of creation; they had to ability to stimulate the male, both human and divine, to an act of creation. Even mothers shown with a newborn child reflect this highly sexualized appearance, for some of the New Kingdom sources relate that the mother was

supplied with eye paint and a hand mirror, and was ideally on a decorated bed, her hair especially arranged to emphasize her enduring sexuality and her continuing ability to stimulate the act of creation, and by extension, recreation.

The prominence and visibility of women in their role as mothers and sexual beings are very appealing features of ancient Egyptian civilization. The omnipresence of women, along with the evidence for their legal rights, gives an impression of a vibrant, lusty society where men and women interacted on more equal footing than in many societies; a culture that valued mothers as essential partners in the society.

Notes

1. British Museum EA 32143 and Metropolitan Museum of Art 03.4.16 in Diana Craig Patch, *Dawn of Egyptian Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 107–109, 170. Brooklyn Museum 31.119, King Pepi II with his mother Ankhnes-Meryre II (ca. 2190 B.C.) is probably the inspiration for the innumerable late bronze statuettes of Isis holding her son Horus (see Fig. 2), a god with whom the living king was associated.
2. Copenhagen AEIN 123 of the Second Priest of Amun Ahmose and his mother; Cairo CG 42080, Thutmose IV with his mother (both in Cyril Aldred, *New Kingdom Art in Ancient Egypt during the Eighteenth Dynasty 1590 to 1315* B.C. (London: Alec Tiranti, 1951) pls. 40, 63); Giza mastaba G7140 Khufu-khaf with his mother (William S. Smith, *A History of Egyptian Sculpture and Painting in the Old Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), pl. 44b; Userhet with his mother and wife, in Norman de Garis Davies, *Two Ramesside Tombs at* Thebes (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1927), pls. i, ix, x; Mersyankh III shown with her mother, Dows Dunham and William K. Simpson, *The Mastaba of Queen Mersyankh III* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1974), pls. XI a-b, XVII a-b.
3. Jaana Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina: A Study of the Status and Roles of the Female Inhabitants in the Workmen's Community during the Ramesside Period* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor Het Nabije Oosten, 2001), 195.
4. Janet Johnson in *Mistress of the House, Mistress of Heaven; Women in Ancient Egypt* (eds.) Anne Capel and Glen Markoe (New York:

Hudson Hills Press, 1996), 184–185. This title is encountered exclusively in non-literary sources, such as on coffins, stelae, and reliefs, noted by Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 17–18.

5. See Johnson in Capel and Markoe, *Mistress of the House*, 175; Janet Johnson in *The Life of Meresamun: A Temple Singer in Ancient Egypt*, eds. Emily Teeter and Janet Johnson (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2009), 82–91.
6. Robert Demarée and Dominique Valbelle, *Les Registres de Recensement du Village de Deir El-Medineh (Le "StatoCivile")* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), noted by Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 195.
7. Miriam Lichtheim, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt, Volume. III: The Late Period* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: The University of California Press, 1980), 170.
8. After Gay Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt* (London: The British Museum, 1993), 107.
9. Robins, *Women*, 107.
10. Miriam Lichtheim, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt, Volume. II: The New Kingdom* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: The University of California Press, 1976), 141. For additional commentary, see A. G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 38.
11. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 195.
12. Ibid., 19.
13. Ankhsheshonqy in Lichtheim, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt III*, 169.
14. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 108.
15. Lichtheim, *Literature* II, 136.
16. Diane Craig Patch, cited in Gay Robins, "Women and Children in Peril: Pregnancy, Birth & Infant Mortality in Ancient Egypt," *KMT A Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt* 5:4 (Winter, 1994–1995): 27–28.
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18. Erika Feucht, *Das Kind im alten Ägypten* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 1995), 128–129.
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22. Robins, *Women*, 75–76.
23. Berlin 14517 in Geraldine Pinch, *Votive Offerings to Hathor* (Oxford: The Griffith Institute, 1994), 218; Louvre 8000 in Christine Desroches-Noblecourt, "'Concubines du mort' et mères de famille au Moyen Empire," *Bulletin de l'Institutfrançaisd'arche ologyorientale* 53 (1953): pl. V. For inscribed female figurines generally see Emily Teeter, *Baked Clay Figurines and Votive Beds from Medinet Habu* (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, 2010), 24, no. 43.
24. For a somewhat dated, but still valuable, discussion of Hathor in the context of African cattle cults and fertility, see Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion and the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 162–180.
25. For the cult of Hathor at the earlier temple of Mentuhotep (ca. 1995 B.C.), see Ellen Morris, "Paddle Dolls and Performance," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 103 (2011):71–103.
26. See Pinch, *Votive Offerings*, for this site and the full range of votives.
27. C. K. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth: Two Key Figures of the Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 40, 83.
28. Edward Wente, *Letters from Ancient Egypt* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 213.

    Note the emphasis upon the husband's role in fertility, and see further, below.
29. John Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 56; Ann M. Roth, "Mother Earth, Father Sky: Ancient Egyptian Beliefs about Conception and Fertility," in

Reading the Body, ed. Alison Rautman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2000), 189.

30. i*w.f dit iwr.s* in Papyrus DM 27 cited in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 171.
31. Hymn to Khonsu in Lichtheim, *Literature* III, 113.
32. In reference to the god Amun acting as divine father to Hatshepsut (see further, below), in James H. Breasted, *Records of Ancient Egypt, part 2* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906), § 198.
33. In the story, The Two Brothers, a woman became pregnant and bore a son as a result of swallowing a fragment of a persea tree that contained the youth Bata, and in the story of Horus and Seth, Seth (a male!) became pregnant after swallowing the semen of Horus, in Lichtheim, *Literature* III, 210, 220.
34. Translation from Jac Janssen and Rosalind Janssen, *Growing up in Ancient Egypt* (London: Rubicon Press, 1990), 2.
35. There are known as *imw nfr*. See Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 175.
36. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 40, from Joris Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 30.
37. See Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 178 for O. Gardiner 9, a receipt for a "decorated woman's bed," and a birth amulet.
38. Known as *dbt*. For an example of a birth brick excavated at Abydos, see Josef Wegner, "A decorated birth-brick from South Abydos," *Egyptian Archaeology* 21 (2002): 3–4. There were four bricks that were probably stacked in pairs.
39. Both cited in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 174.
40. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 175.
41. Borghouts, *Magical Texts*, no. 60.
42. These scenes also allude to Hathor who is likewise strongly associated with music and dance.
43. After Borghouts, *Magical Texts*, no. 31.
44. Jorge Ogdon, "Studies in Ancient Egyptian Magical Thought. III. Knots and Ties. Notes on ancient Ligatures," *Discussions in Egyptology* 7 (1987): 29–36; Willeke Wendrich, "Entangled, Connected or Protected? The power of knots and knotting in ancient Egypt," in *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic dreams and prophecy in ancient Egypt*, ed. Kasia Szpakowska (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 243–269.

45. Nunn, *Ancient Egyptian Medicine*, 47.
46. There is debate whether there were specialized midwives. See Paul Ghalioungui, *The Physicians of Ancient Egypt* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1983), 45 for the absence of the title in lists of medical practitioners, although they are attested in the literary text P. Westcar for which, see Miriam Lichtheim, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt, Volume I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1973), 220–221.
47. Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up*, 9.
48. The Seven Hathors were also appealed to in love charms to make one's intended "come after me like a cow after fodder; like a servant after her children; like a herdsman (after) his herd." McDowell, *Village Life*, 33.
49. Late Ramesside Letter 46, cited in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 173.
50. O. CGC 25517 in McDowell, *Village Life*, 35 and cited in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 172, 180–181.
51. Leiden Spell 31, in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 175.
52. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 180–181.
53. P. Westcar in Lichtheim, *Literature I*, 220–222.
54. Chicago OIM E16996, in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 179.
55. James Romano in Capel and Markoe, *Mistress of the House*, 70.
56. Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up*, 18–19.
57. These all date from Dynasties 18–19, but they are based on antecedents of the Predynastic period. For the early examples, see Patch, *Dawn of Egyptian* Art, 105–107. For later examples; Capel and Markoe, *Mistress of the House*, 61–62; Catherine Roehrig, ed. *Hatshepsut: From Queen to Pharaoh* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 233–238, and Janssen and Janssen *Growing Up*, 19.
58. James P. Allen, *The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005), 30–31; Adela Oppenhiem et al. eds., *Ancient Egypt Transformed: The Middle* Kingdom (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 202.
59. Maarten Raven, *Egyptian Magic—The Quest for Thoth's Book of Secrets* (Cairo/New York: American University of Cairo Press,

2012) 92, suggests that the wands were strictly amuletic and were not used to draw a protective circle.

60. Emily Teeter, *Religion and Ritual in Ancient Egypt* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 207, n. 26. See also Oppenhiem et al. eds., *The Middle Kingdom*, 199–200, and Allen, *Art of Medicine*, 28–30.
61. Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up*, 9.
62. Borghouts, *Magical Texts*, no. 65. These four threats have been equated with the four protective birth bricks. See Ann M. Roth and Catherine Roehrig, "Magical Bricks and the Bricks of Birth," *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 88 (2002): 121–140.
63. Contra Lynn Meskell, *Private Lives in New Kingdom Egypt* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 65, who takes the greater documentation of males over females as an indication of a desire for boys, while one should take into account males being more prominently represented in the social sphere.
64. Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, 83.
65. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 196.
66. Translation from Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up*, 2.
67. P. Lansing, in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 186. This is framed as a contrast to how the art of writing is superior compared to other pursuits!
68. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 186–187.
69. Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up*, 17–18.
70. P. Turin 1880 in McDowell, *Village Life*, 36; Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up*, 17, where it is suggested that the compensation for the wet nurse is higher because she may have nursed several children in the family.
71. McDowell, *Village Life*, 36. One of the few pieces of evidence for a "bachelor father" in ancient Egypt. Note also the man's devotion to his daughters, suggesting that they were as beloved as sons.
72. Theban tomb 85, in Janssen and Janssen, *Growing Up*, 123.
73. Lichtheim, *Literature* II, 141.
74. See the genealogical charts in Benedict Davies, *Who's Who at Deir el-Medina* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut vor Het Nabije Oosten, 1999). But see Robins, *Women*, 98–99 for the assertion that the families in the village were not as large as the genealogies suggest, because not all the children were in residence, some "moving away

in their teens," others living at family farms outside the village, an assertion that is difficult to substantiate.

75. Lara Weiss, *Religious Practice at Deir el-Medina* (Leiden/Leuven: Nederlands Instituut vor Het Nabije Oosten/Peeters, 2015), 12 has recently cast doubt upon the value of the often-cited *Stato Civile* ("census" of Deir el-Medina) as an indicator of family size.
76. Robins, *Women*, 97–98.
77. For a convenient compendium of this material, see Eugene Strouhal, Bretislav Vachala, and Hana Vymazalová, *The Medicine of the Ancient Egyptians: Surgery, Gynecology, Obstetrics, and Pediatrics* (Cairo: American University Press, 2014).
78. Watterson, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, 88–89.
79. P. Ebers and P. Kahun, in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 169.
80. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 169.
81. Robert Ritner, "A Uterine Amulet in the Collection of the Oriental Institute," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43:3 (1984): 209–221.
82. Cited in Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 207.
83. Toivari-Viitala, *Women at Deir el-Medina*, 170. This also points out that difficulty or the inability to bear a child did not mean that a couple would necessarily divorce—there were accepted alternative ways to have a family.
84. See Johnson in Capel and Markoe, "*Mistress of Heaven*," 183; Emily Teeter, "Celibacy and Adoption among God's Wives of Amun and Singers in the Temple of Amun," in *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente*, eds. Emily Teeter and John Larson (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1999), 405–415.
85. Schafik Allam, "Women as Owners of Immovables in Pharaonic Egypt," in *Women's Earliest records From Ancient Egypt and Western Asia*, ed. Barbara Lesko (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 129–131.
86. See Johnson in Teeter and Johnson, *Meresamun*, 87.
87. See Teeter and Johnson, *Meresamun*, 86–87; Johnson in Capel and Markoe, *Mistress of the House*, 180–83; Tom Logan, "The Jmit-pr Document: Form, Function and Significance," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 37 (2000): 49–73.
88. Oriental Institute E17481 in Johnson in Teeter and Johnson, *Meresamun,* 92–94. The agreement also provides financial protec-

tion for the women's children stating that they shall be heirs to their father's estate.

89. Hathor's name can be translated "House of Horus, " "house" being interpreted as "the uterine space which encloses the god" Horus (Lana Troy, *Patterns of Queenship in ancient Egyptian myth and history* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala, 1986), 55). Another royal epithet, "Golden Horus" alludes to the king's association with Hathor who was called "The Golden One."
90. Oppenheim, et al. eds., *Middle Kingdom*, 40.
91. Or even earlier, in the pre-Kushite Third Intermediate Period (ca. 770 B.C.) in Richard Fazzini, *The Iconography of Religions: Egypt Dynasty XXII–XXVI* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 11. In the first millennium, Isis assumed the main role of the goddess who transmits divinity through nursing the king or the divine child Horus ("Harpocrates").
92. Perhaps the origins of the Biblical story of Moses being sheltered in the bull rushes (Exodus 2:1–10), and in turn the inspiration for the story of Romulus and Remus being left by the Tiber. Isis as the protector of the child Horus was manifested in the popular cult of Horus-the-Child (Egyptian: *Hor-Pa-Khered* "Horus the Child"), or Harpocrates, the subject of innumerable bronze statues of the chubby child with crown and his finger to his mouth indicating his youth.
93. For the text, see Breasted, *Records of Ancient Egypt, part 2*, §198. For creation on the potter's wheel see Peter Dorman, "Creation on the Potter's Wheel at the Eastern Horizon of Heaven," in *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente*, eds. Emily Teeter and John Larson (Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 1999), 83–99. In Egyptian Greco-Roman tradition, it was thought that the bones of the child were contributed by the father, the flesh and tissue by the mother, based on the belief that semen originated in the father's bones.
94. As noted by Roth, "Father Earth, Mother Sky," 189. Nut played a similar role in the rebirth of the deceased. In the first millennium B.C., she is represented on the interior lid or floor of many coffins, so symbolically, the deceased, like the sun, was placed within the body of the goddess to be sheltered and born again at dawn.
95. P. Bremner-Rhind in James P. Allen, *Genesis in Ancient Egypt: The Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts* (New Haven:

Yale University, 1988), 28. This belief giving rise to the title for royal women "God's Hand" who were charged with stimulating the god to an act of (re)creation.

96. P. Leiden I 350 in John Foster, *Hymns, Prayers, and Songs: An Anthology of Ancient Egyptian Lyric Poetry* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 76.
97. Foster, *Hymns, Prayers, and Songs*, 72.
98. Among Hathor's epithets are "Lady of Song," and "Mistress of Drunkenness." See Helmut Brunner, "Trunkenheit," in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie, vol. VI*, eds. Wolfgang Helck and Eberhard Otto, cols. 773, 775 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986); Bleeker, *Hathor and Thoth*, pp. 51, 91.
99. Emily Teeter, "The Body in Ancient Egyptian Texts and Representations," *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrology* 37/1–4 (2000): 150–152, 158–160.
100. Deborah Sweeney, "Forever Young? The Representation of Older and Ageing Women in Ancient Egyptian Art," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 41 (2004): 67–84.

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Bronze Age Beginnings: The Conceptualization of Motherhood in Prehistoric Europe

Katharina Rebay-Salisbury

Introduction

Researching motherhood in prehistoric periods, for which, by definition, no literary sources exist, may seem like an impossible task, not least because of the danger of projecting recent interpretations onto the past to fill the gaping holes in our knowledge. In recent decades, however, a panoply of scientific methods have become available, which, in combination with thorough archaeological observations and interpretations, can give us new insights into individual identities and demographic characteristics of Bronze Age communities. To separate fact from fiction, we must turn to the archaeological evidence to illuminate gender relations and family structures.

The rich archaeological record of the Bronze Age includes thousands of graves, which are the primary sources to consider. They include both biological information of the deceased individuals and social information: the way bodies were treated after death, how they were placed and which material objects were chosen to accompany them, gives us insights into values and beliefs of the deep past. Men and women of the period were buried with grave goods that relate to age, gender, status and wealth, as

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well as individual characteristics, including metal dress fittings and jewelry, weaponry and tools as well as vessels of ceramic and bronze, intended as containers for perishable provisions for the afterlife.

The transition to parenthood was perhaps the most significant change of identity in past people's lives, and, because of its dramatic effect on the female body,[1] particularly for women. Gender archaeology[2] has brought many advances in understanding the social roles, status and lifecycle[3] of women, but has primarily focused on making women visible, investigating women's access to wealth and power or their work capacity beyond child-rearing. There is, however, a distinct lack of research into how women's lives changed through pregnancy, the event of childbirth and extended periods of childrearing, and how society responded to these changes.[4] Because motherhood is often understood as a natural and inevitable part of a woman's lifecycle, with all women going through the same stages of life, encompassing childhood, adolescence, marriage, childrearing and grandmotherhood, the variability of women's lives in the Bronze Age has not yet been fully explored.

The European Bronze Age

The Bronze Age covers roughly the second millennium B.C.E. in most of Europe, although the dating of the beginning and the end of the Bronze Age varies regionally. The beginning of the Aegean Bronze Age is dated to c. 3200 B.C.E.,[5] but most of continental Europe, including Britain, France, Iberia, Germany and neighboring countries suggest a beginning around 2200 B.C.E. and an end around 800 B.C.E.[6] The Scandinavian Bronze Age does not begin before 1800 B.C.E. and ends around 500 B.C.E. The common use of bronze, the defining characteristic of the Bronze Age, was a technical refinement of copper metallurgy rather than a radical innovation. Yet, the introduction of bronze economy coincided with, and may have triggered, important social changes.[7] The production of bronze required sourcing the raw materials copper and tin, found in disparate places in Europe, which gave rise to new long-distance exchange networks. Metallurgical knowledge was most likely in the hands of few and led to an increase in craft specialization. Bronze objects are suitable to accumulate and store as well as to display and distribute wealth. The Bronze Age is thus the period in which social stratification and differentiation became firmly established, and this is increasingly archaeologically visible, especially in funerary rites.

Burial in communal, megalithic tombs, which were common in Western Europe in earlier periods,[8] gave way to the interment of single bodies in individual graves at the beginning of the Bronze Age; this may be tied into a shift from an ideology of place and community to one of individual and personal display. Burial customs thus became formal and standardized, with age and gender as decisive factors for the way in which bodies were buried. Status expression through quality and quantity of grave goods and grave constructions became an increasing concern at the transition from the early to the Middle Bronze Age. Funerary rites changed from inhumation—with cremations as rare exceptions—to bi-ritual deposition under burial mounds in the Middle Bronze Age, to using cremation almost exclusively in the Late Bronze Age. The number of individuals included in cemeteries also varies throughout the periods, with groups of a few to perhaps several dozen graves most typical for the Early Bronze Age, to cemeteries of thousands of individuals in the Late Bronze Age. Yet, they are spread over several hundred years, which questions how representative even large cemeteries were for the demographics of Bronze Age communities. For many parts of Europe, there are not enough bodies in light of how many houses and settlements are found, suggesting that not all were buried in an archaeologically recognizable way.

The majority of Bronze Age people lived in small-scale settlements and single farmsteads,[9] practiced subsistence farming and animal husbandry, and crafted products like textiles and tools for use and exchange. If this sounds idyllic, there is also considerable evidence of conflict, violence and war,[10] for example through traces of injury and trauma on the human skeleton, and the presence of fortified settlements and weaponry. In fact, it is in the Bronze Age that, for the first time in European prehistory, we see the sword as a specialized weapon, solely designed for combat and no longer doubling as a tool. Axes, daggers and knives may be deadly as well, but they have other useful purposes besides fighting. Clearly, some people gained power and prestige at the expense of others.[11]

On the ladder of cultural evolution, the Bronze Age has often been characterized as being composed of chiefly societies,[12] somewhat more complex than tribes or bands, but less complex than states. In a chiefdom, status is ascribed rather than achieved, and the individuals' ranks are defined by their position in the kinship group. This places key importance on an individual's parents. High status individuals, expected to perform heroic deeds, are thought to simultaneously play ritual and religious roles.[13]

Archaeological evidence of the Bronze Age also includes traces of ritual practices. Most common are hoards, deposits of a small group of objects. Some appear personalized and resemble weapon or jewelry sets, whereas others comprise many similar artifacts; there are also hoards of raw materials and scrap metals, which lend themselves to profane interpretations. Hoards are frequently found in special, liminal places, for example peaks, watery contexts or boundaries between different landscapes and plots of land. A common explanation for the hoarding practice is that the goods were dedicated to gods.[14] It is unclear if bodies buried in unusual ways, such as in settlement pits,[15] may be evidence of human sacrifices; many alternative explanations are possible, too. Other evidence for Bronze Age religion is scarce. Outside the Mediterranean, figurative art representing objects, animals, humans and gods is often absent; exceptions include rock art from Scandinavia[16] and Alpine areas.[17] Stelae from Iberia embody mostly warriors.[18] Middle and Late Bronze Age iconography in Europe is limited to suns, birds and boats on metalwork, perhaps representing the journey of the sun (god?) through day and night, life and death.[19]

Bronze Age Women

Where are the women, and indeed the mothers, in a world full of shiny bronze armor and weapons, as the Bronze Age is often presented? Material evidence for Bronze Age occupations beyond subsistence points to metalworkers, warriors, priests and shamans.[20] The warrior identity[21] was certainly interlinked with male gender ideals, but there is no reason to assume metalworkers and ritual specialists were always male. The grave of an Early Bronze Age woman from Geitzendorf, Austria, for example, included a selection of stone tools employed in metal production, which suggests an identity as a craftswoman.[22]

Women's graves are by no means less well equipped than contemporary men's are. They include jewelry and dress items of bronze, bone, shell, amber and glass, often a combination of different materials with different, striking visual properties. Dress pins, common for both men and women, fastened garments. Textiles[23] in themselves had considerable value; their production from linen and wool was labor intensive, and in the Bronze Age, likely in the hands of women. Remnants of a striped fabric were found in an elaborate Early Bronze Age bronze headdress in Franzhausen, Austria, and textile fragments from the Middle Bronze Age salt mines of Hallstatt give a glimpse of the manifold colors, patterns and textures of

textiles. Most of the time, however, only bronze dress fittings, pins, fibulae, bronze rivets and the like, survive in graves. Jewelry includes diadems, rings around the head, possibly hair rings or rings fastened on scarves, necklaces, both solid and composed of spirals, pendants and beads, arm rings, belts and leg rings, finger- and toe rings.

Cemeteries provide an opportunity to study how the biological age of women buried in graves intersects with their dress, jewelry and other items.[24] At the Early Bronze Age site of Prag-Miškovice,[25] Czechia, for example, the graves with the most elaborate stone constructions were those of two young girls at the age of 5–8 and 8–12; they were buried with only a single bronze pin each. The burial equipment of two girls in their teens, aged 14–17 and 14–20, was almost identical and included a wide variety of materials. The women were buried with one ceramic vessel each, one bronze dress pin, some hair rings, some bronze spirals worn as necklaces and amber beads; one woman's jewelry further included maritime shells, whereas the other had a perforated ceramic disk under her right knee. At this cemetery, the morphological determination of sex, which is often undetermined in sub-adult individuals, was supplemented by ancient DNA analysis.

At the cemetery of Franzhausen, Austria, girls were buried with the full female costume from the age of about 14,[26] at Gemeinlebarn, Austria, there seemed to be a gradual enrichment with dress components, with bronze rings for girls, to caps for (married?) women.[27] Graves of girls and young women were among the richest in the cemetery (and therefore prime targets for grave re-opening and the removal of objects). It appears that in this age group, women were thought to have the most potential, perhaps as marriage partners and mothers, and their untimely death moved the community deeply. Older women, in contrast, are buried with fewer and less diverse artifacts, suggesting that after the conclusion of their reproductive years, women lost their social status. Conversely, it is equally possible that elderly women were valued as grandmothers and keepers of knowledge, but had passed their dress items and jewelry on to their children, for example at the occasion of marriage or the birth of a child. In any case, women seemed to lose their social visibility[28] in comparison to men as they reached higher ages.

Middle Bronze Age women's graves occasionally include objects of considerable weight and size, which appear impractical and even hinder body movement. An assemblage from Upflamör, Germany, for example, includes leg spirals that were linked by a chain; use-wear analysis suggests

they were worn in life, and do not only constitute the death costume.[29] In the later part of the Bronze Age, sets of ornaments are increasingly found separated from bodies and found as 'personalized' bronze hoards. A study of the interplay between graves and depositions in the Netherlands showed that ornament deposition in graves might relate to identity construction, while ornament deposition in hoards may be part of the deconstruction of identities. Both may have coincided with transitional points in the female lifecycle.[30]

Mothers

In order to investigate if and how women's social status changed when they became mothers, and whether social status increased with reproductive success, a comparison of how they were buried with markers of health and obstetric histories is useful. Pregnancy and childbirth are stress events that can leave physiological traces on female skeletons. The bones of the pelvis are joined by ligaments that, under pressure and hormonal influences, can cause bones to react and remodel. A preauricular groove develops where the pelvic bone joins the sacrum; the pubic symphysis may open up and calcify, giving rise to an extension of the pubic tubercle. These changes in the pelvis are indicators of whether a woman has given birth or not.[31]

The presence of such pelvic markers in an only 17- to 19-year-old woman buried in Stuttgart, Germany, around 1560 B.C.E., has led to the conclusion that she had already given birth. Her grave appeared isolated; she was placed on the left side with animal bone thought to be raw material for the production of artifacts.[32] A pilot study of selected parity features of skeletons from the Early Bronze Age site of Unterhautzenthal, Austria,[33] found preauricular grooves and extended tuberculum pubis in women of juvenile, adult and mature ages.

The absence of pelvic makers in a 50-year-old woman buried in the remnants of a burnt-down pithouse at Stillfried, Austria, on the other hand, led to the conclusion that she may have been infertile. Her death was almost certainly violent, as indicated by perimortal impression fractures on the back of the skull, and in contrast to the cremation rite prevalent at the time, she was placed or left in a settlement structure. Although fire had affected her body, it was not burnt in the usual way. Whether violent death, infertility and mode of deposition can indeed be causally tied together, as Emil Breitinger suggested,[34] remains unclear.

A further scientific method that may give insights as to whether and at what age a woman has first given birth is the microscopic analysis of tooth cementum. Tooth cementum annulation (TCA), or cementochronology, investigates thin sections of the teeth's roots. Acellular Extrinsic Fibers Cementum grows continuously and regularly at 2–3 μm per year in all teeth. One year includes a two-phase annual growth corresponding to a pair of alternating clear and dark lines. The estimated age at death is calculated by adding the age of tooth eruption to a count of the pairs of dark and light lines.[35] TCA is currently the most reliable method to estimate age at death, arriving at an accuracy of 2.5 years in modern samples with known biographical data.[36] It has further been shown that life-history events such as pregnancies, skeletal traumata and renal disease result in hypomineralized incremental lines, possibly due to their influence on calcium metabolism.[37] The position of these lines in the chronological sequence may not only reveal the age of the first pregnancy of a woman, but also the frequency of pregnancies and birth spacing.

Death During Pregnancy and Childbirth

Childbirth is risky, for both mothers and babies, and has certainly been recognized as a dangerous time of transition. Infant mortality[38] is estimated at c. 30%, sub-adult mortality at up to 50% for prehistoric periods.[39] Maternal mortality rates vary widely, in tandem with cultural and social factors such as the level of involvement of women in physical work before and after labor, access to food of high nutritional value, and the level of care provided by relatives and society. Beliefs about hygiene and childbirth may also play a part. Complications range from obstructed labor to hemorrhage and infection, and birth injuries may affect women's lives in the long term. The underlying cause of maternal mortality, however, is the social status of women: today, maternal and infant mortality is the result of factors such as poverty, access to healthcare and female participation in decision-making. Today, if nothing effective is done to avert death, about 1.5% of births result in the death of the mother.[40] Ten pregnancies during a woman's lifetime in the Bronze Age resulted in a 15% chance of dying of pregnancy and childbirth complications; this number fits well with palaeopathological studies of past populations.[41] The numbers alone suggest that everyone knew someone who had died in childbirth.[42]

Demographic evidence from the anthropological analysis of cemetery data frequently shows a peak in female mortality in early adulthood; nevertheless,

women buried with fetus in situ are relatively rare. Issues of fetal preservation and recovery do not suffice to account for the deficit of pregnant women in Iron Age societies[43]; it seems that the practice of separating fetus and mother after death and affording them separate treatments was widespread in antiquity (e.g. mentioned in the Talmud and Roman Law).

Nevertheless, a few Bronze Age burials of pregnant women inform us about the perils of childbirth. Further, the ages at which the mothers died lead to conclusions about when they were married and had their first pregnancies. The skeleton of a 16–20-year-old, for example, was found with the left femur of neonate in a cave, the Grotta del Re Tiberio, Italy (c. 2400–1700 B.C.E.).[44] Inside the rooms of the houses of an agricultural village at Cerro de las Viñas de Coy, Spain (c. 1500–1000 B.C.E.), the crouched inhumation of a 25–26-year-old woman was found with a full-term fetus. The baby was lying transversely with the right fetal arm protracted; the cause of death was almost certainly dystocia (a specific case of obstructed labor).[45] Fetuses and infants are often buried in settlement contexts rather than formal cemeteries; this case may demonstrate that the selection of burial place was based on the baby, not the mother.

At the cemetery of Franzhausen I, Austria (c. 2000–1600 B.C.E.),[46] which includes over 730 individuals, three pregnant women were documented. The youngest was 20–25 years old and buried in a crouched position, placed south–north on her right side, as was customary for women. The full-term fetus was placed directly north of her pelvis, suggesting a post-mortem coffin birth. The mother was deposited in a rather small grave pit. Grave goods include a bronze awl, flint tools, bone rings, mollusks and a set of pottery. The 30–40-year-old mother was placed in a similar way, with the full-term fetus head down within the pelvic area. The woman's grave had been reopened after burial and objects were removed from her head and chest area, which is not unusual in this cultural context. Upon excavation, her grave still included a bronze awl, a shell necklace, a dress pin with disc head, pottery and animal bones. Instead of the usual one, there were two bowls in the grave—one perhaps intended for the unborn child. The grave of a 40–60-year-old woman was also disturbed and only the lower legs were found in situ. Remains of a seven-month-old fetus to neonate were preserved by copper salts stemming from bronze grave goods. Hair rings and glass beads were found in the grave. At this site, mothers who died in childbirth were not treated differently to other women; grave goods that may be linked to their circumstances include

cutting devices[47] and objects that may be interpreted as amulets or charms, such as the beads.

After the prevailing burial rite changed to cremation, burials of women of reproductive age together with fetal or neonatal remains suggest that they were, in fact, mother and child. The fire of the funerary pyre and the subsequent recovery process, however, destroyed any physical relationship between the dead bodies, and the heat destroyed their DNA. The bodies could also have been cremated at separate times and deposited together.

The 16–18-year-old woman inhumed in an oak coffin under a burial mound at Egtved, Denmark (c. 1370 B.C.E.),[48] for example, was buried with the cremated remains of a 5–6-year-old child at her feet. The woman's clothes were well-preserved and included a loose bodice with sleeves and a short string skirt, leaving her waist bare. Contemporary bronze figurines and rock art depictions suggest a ritual role of people wearing such dress that involved some acrobatics or dancing. Isotope analysis of soft tissue revealed that the woman had traveled widely during her life. Although it is just about possible that the child buried at her feet was her own biological child, the age gap between the individuals is small—it would make her an unusually young mother. Unfortunately, at present there are no scientific methods available to test the genetic relationship of the two buried individuals.

Other examples of cremated women with fetal/neonatal remains include a late juvenile to early adult from Telgte-Raestrup, Germany,[49] and a 16–30-year-old as well as an adult from Zuchering, Germany.[50] Interesting are the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age (c. 1300–660 B.C.E.) urn burials from Cottbus-Alversleben, Germany.[51] In grave 166, a late adult to mature woman was buried in one urn, with some fetal/neonatal remains, whereas a second, smaller urn contained the remains of a perinatal individual. That they were buried in such a separated way suggest that, although likely cremated together, the fetus/neonate was perceived as a separate individual by the mourning community.

Marriage and Residential Patterns

The scarce evidence available seems to suggest that some women first gave birth in their late teens and early twenties. Both archaeological and isotopic data points to a patrilocal residential pattern in the Bronze Age, in which the women joined the husbands' communities after marriage; they often gave birth to and raised their children in a different community than

the one in which they grew up. This has considerable implications for reproductive success, as the maternal grandmother's presence has been demonstrated to be particularly beneficial for the survival of babies.[52]

Evidence for patrilocal residence patterns are, for example, female ornaments that are found at a considerable distance from their place of production; whereas most women likely married locally, some marriages took the women more than 150 km from their native community. Marriage networks spanned the whole of Germany in the Middle Bronze Age,[53] and likely contributed widely to elite relationships, diplomatic endeavors and politics. Nordic ornaments produced during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.E. were found along the common trading routes, the Rivers Oder and Vistula, south of the Elbe, throughout northern Germany and the Netherlands.[54]

A stable isotope of human remains[55] gives insights into diet and mobility, as human tissue records the isotopic signature of groundwater and foodstuff. In particular, strontium ($^{87}Sr/^{86}Sr$) and oxygen ($\delta^{18}O$) isotopes in the enamel of teeth that develop during childhood and adolescence can inform us about where people grew up and where they moved to, whether they were locals or foreigners in their place of burial. Matching the geographical background to isotopic signatures is not always easy, however, especially in geologically heterogeneous areas. Isotope analysis of late Neolithic collective graves in Switzerland and Germany suggest that taking women from outside the group has a long pedigree.[56] Further examples of cemeteries with a great isotopic variability, especially among the women, include the Early Bronze Age sites of Prag-Miškovice, Czechia[57] and Hainburg, Austria.[58] At Singen, Germany,[59] in contrast, there was no evidence for individual mobility, even though metal artifacts indicate long-distance trade and exchange.

Family Relations

Direct evidence for family relations frequently comes from rather tragic events, in which individuals died a violent death. The four multiple burials from Eulau, Germany (late Neolithic, c. 2600 B.C.E.),[60] produced the oldest evidence for a nuclear family so far. In Grave 99, a 35–50-year-old mother was buried holding her 4–5-year-old son in her arms; in the same grave, the 40–60-year-old father is placed holding their 8–9-year-old son. DNA testing confirmed that the woman and both children share the same mtDNA haplogroup, and the Y chromosome haplogroup of the man

corresponds to the boys. Grave 98 contained the remains of a 30–38-year-old woman with three children (an infant, a 4–5- and 7–9-year-old). The two older children were maternally related, but their mtDNA did not match the woman's. She was buried facing away from the children, but cradling the baby. The reconstruction of family relations via DNA was not successful in the two remaining graves, in which a 25–40-year-old man was found with two children (4–5 and 5–6) and a 25–30-year-old woman was found with a 4–5-year old. This case study is enormously important for understanding prehistoric family relations. It demonstrates that—at least in this community—biological relatedness was the basis of social kinship, and it further shows that the way people were buried together does indeed reflect family relationships.

Because of the individualized burial rite in the Early Bronze Age, however, double and multiple burials are rare. At Franzhausen I, for example, 716 grave pits were excavated, but only 12 held double and multiple interments or secondary burials.[61] The triple burial 599 included an 18–20-year-old man, placed on the left side with the head in the north, the usual placement for men. At his feet, two individuals were found lying on their right side, head south as customary for women; they were 14–16 and 12–14 years old.[62] Granted the normal gendered burial rites were followed correctly, what bound these persons together after death? Were they siblings? Did they die for the same reason, perhaps an infectious disease? Was the young man a newlywed with his two wives? Some of these questions may soon be answered if the DNA analysis returns interpretable results.

Grave 662 held two separate wooden coffins placed parallel; the persons within were placed on their left sides, with the head in the north, as men usually are. This is why at first both individuals were assumed to be men.[63] The anthropological analysis, however, showed that only the left individual, a 50–70-year-old buried with an axe, a neck ring, a dress pin and some food provisioning was male; the right individual placed in front of the old man was a 25–35-year-old woman. A dress pin, a bowl and animal bones were found with her body, but the upper body region was disturbed by grave robbing. The communal grave pit suggests that the individuals had some sort of relationship, perhaps a marital one or that of master and servant. That the woman was buried following male funerary placement tentatively suggests a subordinate role.

In the Late Bronze Age settlement of Stillfried, Austria, large storage pits were discovered that contained the skeletons of multiple people.[64]

Seven individuals were found in pit V1141 (c. 900 B.C.E.); there is no evidence of a violent death and their health status prior to death was good. The reason for their unusual death and deposition remains unclear; normally people were cremated after death and buried in urns in this community. The c. 45-year-old woman placed on her back at the bottom of the fill is especially striking, as she is staged as a mother. A six-year-old boy was placed close to her right, with one leg over her thigh; in turn, the woman's right hand is placed on his right thigh. A slightly older, an eight-year-old boy was laid on her left side. Directly over the mother, a 30-year-old man was placed in the center of the pit. Separated by a thin layer of soil, a woman of about 40 years was placed on top of the older woman. A nine-year-old girl seems to cower slightly isolated at the feet of the individuals, and the deposition of a three-year-old boy was last in the sequence; he appeared to have been thrown into the pit rather than carefully placed like the others.

Suggestions of how the individuals were related, based on heritable morphological traits, include one version in which the nine-year-old girl is the only child of the older woman, while the younger woman was the mother of the boys[65] and another version in which the older woman is the mother of all children.[66] In one version, the man had two wives, in another, the younger woman is assumed to be an aunt; both accept the man to be the father. Due to chemical treatment of the bones for preservation, DNA analysis has so far not returned any useful results.

This example highlights how little we know about what constituted a family in the Bronze Age. Did men have children with more than one woman at any one time? Was polygamy, or polyandry, an option? Was an age gap of 10–15 years significant for sexual partners? The only reliable piece of information seems to be an age gap of two to three years between siblings.

Sibling Spacing

Hunter-gatherers typically have three and a half to four years between children,[67] which is what we assume normal for prehistoric people before the Neolithic, that is the adoption of agriculture, animal husbandry and a sedentary lifestyle. Unrestricted breastfeeding seems to suppress ovulation and prevent further pregnancies, which is one way this child spacing is achieved: how exactly this mechanism works in detail is still under debate.

Mothers expend a lot of energy during pregnancy, breastfeeding and the time when infants have to be carried,[68] particularly in nomadic societies.

A sedentary lifestyle with a more steady supply of high-calorie foodstuff ensured by agriculture and animal husbandry enables shorter intervals between births and population growth.[69] In farming communities, siblings are born in quicker succession, leaving only two to three years between births. The physical toll of childbirth likely increased for mothers, and their social position might have changed significantly. No longer required to go out on gathering trips as much and remaining close to home, presumably with other women in the same situation, they may have suffered the consequences of confinement and control.

Childrearing practices likely changed, too, as children were spaced more closely. Early childrearing is incredibly labor intensive and frequently involves a number of people other than the mother. Taking care of children communally is one of the strategies to spread out the burden of bringing up babies. Older siblings make perfect babysitters, and both children and their mothers can be supported by their communities, sharing childcare and provisioning. At Unterhautzenthal, Austria, two children were laid to rest in an old storage pit[70]; although the grave does not include any objects, the children were placed on their sides, facing each other in an embrace. They were 2–2.5 and 6–7 years old at death. The placing suggests an emotional connection between the children, as siblings might have had.

Breastfeeding and Weaning

Bronze Age babies were almost certainly breastfed. Breastfeeding is an important part of the mother–child relationship and highly relevant for infant survival. It ensures optimal nutrition, avoids contaminated substitute food and enhances the babies' immune system by the transmission of maternal antibodies. However, cultural attitudes to breastfeeding and beliefs about the effects of breast milk vary widely, and at present, we cannot yet address if cross- and wet-nursing,[71] out of necessity or choice, took place in the Bronze Age. The duration of breastfeeding and the age of weaning, a process from the introduction of supplementary foods to the cessation of breastfeeding, is highly culturally contingent and can best be investigated by a combination of paleoanthropological methods and isotope analysis.

Weaning often represents a period of emotional and nutritional stress for the infant and coincides with a peak in childhood mortality. Stress may leave its mark on teeth in the form of enamel hypoplasias; their distribution can be related to the stage of the development of the tooth, which reveals when the hardship occurred.[72] Tracing infant diet through stable isotope ratios works on the basis that babies who are breastfed exclusively appear enriched in $\delta^{15}N$: this trophic level effect results from their position in the food chain above their mothers. $\delta^{18}O$ helps to trace water supply (breast milk vs. drinking water).[73] Bones of children who died young can be tested for their isotopic signature to see if they were still breastfed. Recent studies, however, have demonstrated that the interpretation of elevated nitrogen levels is not as straightforward as previously thought, as maternal health, illness and the microbiome may play a significant role.[74] It is, therefore, more fruitful to study the weaning process in individuals who survived the process. Analyzing samples from the dentin of adults provide fine-grained insights into the timing of weaning. Dentin does not remodel in the same way as bone and therefore reflects the diet at the time of tooth development. Gathering isotopic data at multiple points in time in relation to the growth of the individual leads to powerful insights into weaning practices.[75]

A study of Early Bronze Age infant feeding practices in Poland revealed that supplementary foods were introduced by the age of six months, and breastfeeding was discontinued around the age of three.[76] Similar results were obtained for the Bronze Age Mediterranean; these results fit well within the range of what is typical for societies before large-scale urbanization.[77] The substitution of animal milk for mother's milk would have been risky because of contamination and a mismatch of the nutritional value with the species-specific needs of the infant. From the Late Bronze Age, however, small vessels with a spout are frequently found in graves, which are interpreted as feeding vessels.[78] They occur in both adults' and children's graves, albeit with varying frequencies across different cemeteries. Sometimes, a religious function is presumed, for instance for libation rites.

Toys and Child-Specific Material Culture

It is surprisingly difficult to unambiguously identify child-specific material culture in the Bronze Age. Children's toys are difficult to recognize, as they resemble adult material culture; interpretations are frequently based on size, rarity and modern assumptions about the function of objects.

Unusual objects are further frequently linked to religious practices; differentiation between the trivial from the sacred is often impossible. In addition, prehistoric people may not have thought in these terms and applied different categorizations to their objects. Similarly, the world of adults was likely not separable and separated from that of children as it commonly occurs today.

It can safely be assumed that children learned about the world by engaging with their environment in play, as all children do. This does not necessitate specific objects used as toys; a potting mother would give children some clay to play with (e.g. a recent study of Bronze Age pottery from Sweden found the fingerprints of a c. nine-year-old).[79] The context of where such objects are found is crucial. Ceramic figurines of the Gârla Mare Culture in Middle to Late Bronze Age Romania, for example, are known from settlement contexts, but are also disproportionally found in graves that include children; they have been interpreted as dolls, toys and status symbols, as general evidence of a fertility cult, and, intriguingly, as substitute mothers for the buried children.[80]

Ceramic rattles are frequently found in Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age central Europe[81] and come in many different shapes, from spherical to bird-shaped. Designed to be held in the hand, their hollow body is filled with pebbles or ceramic balls to produce an acoustic effect when shook. The instruments appear in settlement contexts as well as in graves, and although they are more frequently associated with children in some cemeteries, their use is not exclusive to children. Interpretations have thus ranged from musical instruments to magical devices and amulets, from cult objects to children's toys. A particularly charming example from Ichstedt, Germany, was a bird-shaped rattle with a decorated back following contemporary Bronze Age decorative conventions and indicating the feathers of the bird. It was in fact found in the context of a Roman grave; it had been discovered and cherished in antiquity, many hundreds of years after its production.[82]

The size of artifacts in relation to its user is one criterion to judge whether children may have used it; but again, the miniaturization of objects can also be a sign of transforming the functional into the symbolic. Pendants represented miniature halberds in Early Bronze Age Wessex, England, and wheel pendants were common in Bronze Age Central Europe, for example, Slovakia and Austria.[83] Miniature weapons, razors and tools became common in Late Bronze Age cremation graves from Denmark,[84] replacing real-size grave goods with symbolic ones. Similar cultural phenomena are

known from Slovakia, Hungary and Bosnia, indicating far-reaching economic and ideological contacts.[85]

Whereas the presence of miniature ceramic vessels in graves is not a definite sign of a child's grave, the size of urns is adjusted to the age of the buried person in some Central European Late Bronze Age cemeteries, for example Cottbus Alvensleben-Kaserne, Germany, and Franzhausen-Kokoron, Austria.[86]

Conclusion: Motherhood in the Bronze Age

Although the survival of entire Bronze Age societies depended on bringing up children successfully, we still know little about motherhood in the Bronze Age. We have no direct evidence for how children were held and carried, or where they slept. No carrying devices such as baby slings were preserved that would enlighten if babies accompanied women on their everyday tasks; only later, early Iron Age sources suggest that even newborns were taken to workplaces such as underground salt mines.[87] Most of our evidence for prehistoric motherhood and child rearing comes from graves or evidence of tragic events. And yet, these are testimony to great love between mothers, fathers and their children, between siblings and among the Bronze Age communities as a whole.

Material culture in graves of women, whose age and gender are known, suggests that young woman were socially recognized from the age of about 14. If this age coincided with marriage and first motherhood is not yet entirely clear, but a number of women under 20 have been recognized as having died of the consequences of pregnancy and childbirth. Distribution patterns of female ornaments and isotope analyses point to patrilocal residential patterns. At least in some cases, babies were born and raised in communities foreign to the mother, without the help of the maternal grandmother. Babies were breastfed about two to three years, and children were spaced accordingly. Child-specific objects in the Bronze Age are elusive. A few figurines, rattles, feeding vessels, miniature vessels and miniature bronze items have been linked to children's graves. Most types, however, also played a role in adults' graves, and may be linked to ritual and religion.

New scientific analytical methods, such as isotope and DNA analyses, are expected to bring major advances in our understanding of individuals and their place in their communities in the near future. A better link between the reconstruction of women's biological life parameters,

including diet and reproductive histories, with other archaeological evidence, will give insights into the variety of past female lives. At present, only a few case studies, often widely separated in time and place, illuminate snapshots of motherhood in the Bronze Age. As more evidence becomes available, perhaps regional and temporal patterns of different reproductive strategies will emerge. Giving birth and caring for children—among the most significant events in any woman's life—need more focused attention in archaeological research.

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From Cybele to Artemis: Motherhood and Great Mothers of Ancient Anatolia

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"Anatolia" was the name given to Asia Minor by seafaring Greek islanders who transported oil, wine, glass, gold, and copper across the blue Aegean Sea that lay between two land masses, modern-day Greece and Turkey. It meant "the light," or "the land of the Sun that rises from the East." Because Asia Minor lay to the east of the Prime Meridian (the zero longitude), it sits closer to the east than to the west on a standard physical map, depending on the viewer's location. Compared to Europe and the Americas, Asia Minor is situated in the east. Geographically, it appears to be situated almost at the center of the East and the West. Invaded, dominated, and tussled over by different nations and civilizations throughout many centuries, Anatolia ultimately came to represent the conceptual divide between the East and the West. For travelers who arrived from the east, it seemed to be situated in the west; for those who arrived from the west, it was considered to be in the east. Once it was even believed to have contained a longitudinal vortex, which facilitated "time travel" between Asia and Europe.[1]

Historically, women in Anatolia turned their faces both to the East and the West as different nations who inhabited their land brought along their cultural traditions, modifying and replacing old customs with the new, or

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manipulating the status quo according to their own needs. Henceforth, practices of motherhood, development of female identity, and customs pertinent to womanhood, such as marriage, childbirth, labor, and family values were constantly transformed. Wars as well as natural disasters, such as earthquakes, altered women's lifestyles. Women's relationships with religion and religious practices, as well as their involvement with mystic forces and spirituality, also went through a transformation over the centuries. As Asia Minor lay on the route of colonial armies, crusaders, warring nations, refugees, and migrants since the tenth millennium B.C.E., it was exposed to pagan and shaman practices that merged with, or were taken over by, monotheistic religions. For instance, the Royal Road, built by the Persian emperor Darius, traversed Asia Minor in its entirety. The starting point was Ephesus, with stops in Sardis and Cappadocia. Then it turned south around Tigris and Euphrates, until it reached Susa in Persia. The road played a formidable role fostering international trade, cultural exchange, and an amalgamation of customs, besides facilitating the use of a remarkably speedy mail system for the standards of that era. According to Herodotus of Halicarnassus (484–425 B.C.E), who took a personal trip on the Royal Road, its distance was 14,040 *furlongs*, or 1755 miles. Apparently, he did not trust the mathematician Aristagoras of Miletus who claimed that the trip would take at least three months on foot. Having decided to test the distance himself he wrote: "That information I will now supply myself. At intervals all along the road are recognized stations, with excellent inns, and the road itself is safe to travel by, as it never leaves inhabited country."[2] When he reached Susa, Herodotus noted that the trip lasted three months and three days. In Susa, having observed the accomplishment of the Persian mounted couriers, he praised them as follows: "There is nothing in the world that travels faster than these Persian couriers. Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."[3]

The legacy of the Royal Road, with a total of 111 rest-stops, guarded gates and numerous bridge crossings, validates the thesis that a massive assembly of belief systems and cultural transfers were already in place between Asia Minor and the neighboring countries such as Syria, Babylon, and Persia by the time Herodotus completed his historic journey. Despite uncertain times and chaotic events that marked the era, what remained intact was the general reverence for motherhood and the mystique related with feminine identity. Women's power lay in giving birth, preferably to

sons, who were anticipated to run the country, lead the nation, rule the world, and dominate the universe.

The Women of the Land

Covering 783,562 square kilometers (302,535 square miles), Asia Minor consists of five main regions with geographical and epistemological characteristics that differ from one another. The Black Sea region lies in the north and occupies the northern coastal lands to the south of the Black Sea. The Mediterranean region contains a vast shoreline with fertile land, as well as the south central Taurus range of mountains inland. The Aegean region is made up of a narrower shoreline, but consists of several mountains, as well as a group of islands in the Aegean Sea. Thrace lies farther west, on Istanbul's European side, and along with the city's Anatolian side that runs adjacent to the Bosphorus and the Marmara Sea, they make up the region of Marmara and Thrace. Central Anatolia extends to the east and the southeast where two ancient rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris have sustained and nourished the Mesopotamian valley since ancient times. This region is considered part of the "Fertile Crescent," where numerous Anatolian civilizations have thrived and fallen, including the Hatti, Hittite, Akkad and Sumer from 4000 until 2100 B.C.E.

Over 1000 Sumerian cuneiform tablets that have been excavated in the Mesopotamian valley mention accomplishments of men rather than women, and subsequently women's real sphere of influence is almost invisible. However, we understand that women were allowed to buy and to sell houses, to act as witnesses and sponsors for others, and to be represented in court cases.[4] Certain laws were adopted by different nations and remained unchanged for hundreds of years. Hammurabi Codes mention 73 laws regulating marriage, sexual behavior, and adultery, for which the penalty was death. Apparently, upper-class women received better treatment than lower-class women and female slaves. Some were engaged in the wool trade, or the textile industry, and conducted negotiations with transport companies, that is, donkey drivers who would carry their goods to buyers in faraway places.[5] Despite socio-cultural and political differences from one region to another, women who lived in Anatolia left their stamp on numerous concepts. Their historic legacy of motherhood, and the circuitous ways Anatolian female identity was shaped over the centuries constitute the central focus of the investigation in this essay.

Much has been written about women's religious and secular practices of motherhood and development of female identity. Since antiquity, Anatolian women's relationship with religion and religious beliefs reveal characteristics of a multi-cultural, multi-civilizational outlook whose varying norms and traditions clearly manifest a multiplicity of perspectives. Beginning in 1071 A.D., Islam was adopted in many parts of Asia Minor following the foundation of the Anatolian Selçuklu Empire. However, even before the adoption of Islam, Anatolian women's lives were influenced and shaped by cultural and political ideology of the times throughout the rule of the Greeks, Ionians, Phrygians, Romans, and the Byzantine. Following the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul in 1453 A.D. socio-political life in Asia Minor was drastically changed under the Islamic law, although non-Muslims were allowed to practice their own traditions and religion as long as they paid taxes to the state.

Anatolian Great Mothers

Anatolian women's cultural and religious practices of motherhood reflect a variety of practices, mainly derived from a multi-ethnic legacy, throughout their preoccupation with life, society, and economy, not only as producers, but as consumers. The records about the origin of maternal lineage as a belief system and its veneration in Anatolia date back to 1600 B.C.E., which corresponds to the rise of the Hittites who lived in north-central and south-eastern Anatolia. They invented one of the earliest forms of an alphabet and writing system. Earlier, their ancestors the Hattis had established the first urban settlements on Anatolian soil.

In the prehistoric era, a large section of the inner plateaus in Asia Minor was known as the "Land of the Hattis," which covered a triangular area from Ankara and Sivas to Çorum and Kayseri. Their capital city was Hattuşaş (Boğazköy), not far from other Hatti cities such as Alacahöyük and Yazılıkaya, which were known as major cultural centers of the era. "Vurusemu" was the only female deity worshipped by Hattis among a group of male deities and this tradition remained in effect for centuries. Anatolian queens shared a resemblance to female deities with regard to their spheres of influence. The Hattis and the Hittites referred to their queen as "Tavannanna," and her power was equal to her husband's in governing the state. There is ample evidence that royal wives shared their husbands' power, or were granted equal power in leadership. A clay tablet about a land grant unearthed in Boğazköy evidenced that King Arnuvanda I and Tavannanna Asmunikal co-signed the document with their joint seals. Additionally, the Hittite queens

remained in power even after the king died, such as in the case of King Suppillulima's wife, who had to deal with mounting opposition against her rule. She had to suppress the rebellion instigated by her stepson, the Crown Prince Mursili II, and his young wife at the height of a major epidemic in her land. Her skills in averting the opposition led to the sudden death of the young bride. During the chaos that ensued, the crown prince suffered injuries and lost his ability. In July 2016 the first life-size statue of Cybele was discovered on top of a mountain in Ordu, Turkey. The goddess was sitting on a throne to speak for the rest of his life.[6]

Whether Hittite royal women were granted extraordinary power by their men or were influenced by the female deity worship in their native land is not very clear. Nonetheless, since the beginning of the New Stone Age, worshiping a principal female deity was observed as the tradition of the land. During the Bronze Age, the Hattis' female deity was called "Vurusemu." The Hurri nation referred to her as "Hepat." In the second millennium B.C.E., the Hittites named their female deity "the Sky Goddess of Arinna," and for the late Hittites she was known as "Kupaba."[7] By the time Phrygians worshipped her as "Cybele," (also "Kibele") she had been universalized and widely recognized as one of the descendants of the "Great Mother of the Gods." During a conflict, Romans took Cybele from her shrine in Pergamum, in consultation with the Greek oracle at Delphi. They were looking for ways to defeat Carthage and avoid a bad harvest and further calamity through famine. In July 2016 a life-size statue of Cybele was unearthed among the ruins of a Roman fortress on a mountain in Ordu, Turkey. She was seated on a throne. To Romans Cybele was *Magna Mater* (or "Mater Deum"), the "Great Mother," as well as *Magna Mater deorumIdaea*, "Great Idaean Mother of the Gods," equivalent to the Greek title *Meter TheonIdaia* "Mother of the Gods, from Mount Ida." Though Romans officially adopted Cybele's worship during a desperate war that lasted from 218 to 201 B.C.E., later they proclaimed that she was a deity once worshipped in Troy, seeking to establish their lineage to heroic Trojans, as did Julius Caesar.

In Mesopotamia, however, Sumerians worshipped "Inanna," who was called "Ishtar" by the Assyrians, a migrant people who arrived at the Sumerian land in a later era. For Babylonians she was known as "Venus," and Greeks equated, or likened her to Hera or Aphrodite. "The Great Lady of An" ruled the heavens and the sky. She was the "Great Grand Mother" who was associated with fertility, sexuality, war, wild animals, eroticism, and the hunt. She was the protectress of lions and the mountains where she roamed. The Hittite King Hattusili III (1275–1250 B.C.E.) imported

her worship to his court in Çorum and acknowledged her as the shining star of his power, as well as the governing principle of his rule on earth.

In his autobiography, which is the first example of its kind in human history, the Hittite King recalls his childhood and narrates how he was healed from a fatal illness through the divine intervention of the Goddess:

> I had a dream in which Ishtar appeared to me and instructed my father, King Mursili as follows: Hattusili does not have much time left; give him to Me, allow him to serve Me as a priest; he will recover soon. And Thus Ishtar entered my life, took my hand, and conquered my soul.[8]

After he had overthrown his nephew King Mursili III, he was heard declaring his unconditional allegiance to Ishtar: "I followed the order of the Great Mother Ishtar!" Ironically his marriage to Puduhepa, a former priestess at the Temple of Ishtar at the city of Lavazantias, proved to be a mistake because he ended up sharing his power and authority with her.

Some 200 texts and 15 letters unearthed at Hattuşaş say much about Puduhepa's reign as the Hittite Queen and the Chief Priestess. Her monarchy was marked with reforms and renovations as she conducted religious ceremonies and brought new arrangements to the annual rites of sacrifice in which she honored Ishtar. She ordered old texts to be copied and preserved; supervised the duties of the temple staff; and assisted widowed mothers to establish themselves, to earn a living, and to take care of their children by getting involved in the profitable dairy business. During her reign, young boys and girls who were orphaned were adopted either by their relatives, or the newly recruited temple staff. Her son Tudhaliyas IV was too young to rule, therefore she acted on his behalf as his regent in many judicial cases.[9]

Puduhepa gained prominence in international diplomacy because she was instrumental in concluding a 16-year war with the Kadesh Peace Treaty in 1259 B.C.E. The world's first peace treaty signed between two superpowers was originally recorded on a silver plate and gifted to the Egyptian Pharaoh by the Hittites. Though the silver plate has long disappeared, a hand-size clay fragment in cuneiform describes the historic arrangement:

> Reamasesa, the great king, the king of the country of Egypt, shall never attack the country of Hatti to take possession of a part (of this country). And Hattusili, the great king, the king of the country of Hatti, shall never attack the country of Egypt to take possession of a part (of that country).[10]

Today, a wall-size copy of the Kadesh Peace Treaty is on display inside the United Nations building in New York City. Puduhepa's second major accomplishment was eliminating ingrown hostilities by initiating dynastic marriages between the two nations. She convinced her daughter to marry Ramses II, who called the Hittite Queen his "sister" in a letter:

> The king of Egypt, the Great King, the son of the Sun, beloved of the God Amon, the First Great King, the king of the land of Egypt, will speak thus to the Great Queen Puduhepa of the Hatti land, my sister: Look! Ramses, beloved of the God Amon, the Great King of the land of Egypt is well. His houses, his sons, his armies, his horses, his chariots and the things in his country are (also) very well. May you Great Queen of Hatti land, my sister, also be well! May your houses, sons, horses and chariots and the things in your country (also) be well.[11]

Puduhepa was able to carry out almost all of her goals during her lifetime and she came to be respected as a female ruler who ultimately assumed divine power due to her close consort with neighboring states and their kings, particularly the Egyptian pharaoh. Throughout Anatolia, she was to be remembered as a woman of iron will who eventually earned ultimate sovereignty. Her greatest accomplishment for her nation was to radicalize the worship of Ishtar and establish its practice throughout the Hittite land. Ultimately, Puduhepa embodied the worship of the Great Mother and achieved a semi-goddess status, as suggested in her name. Evidently there is a strong phonetic resemblance between her name and the names of the two former Anatolian goddesses, namely "Kupuba," and "Hepat" from the Hatti and Hurri dynasty. As fate would have it, the timid daughter of a humble priest from Kizzuwatna (in ancient Cilicia, near Mersin, Turkey), had developed a strong desire to rule over the years.

The Great Round and Isis

Transference of god-like qualities to individuals, or possessing influence similar to that of gods and goddesses can be explained through a variety of analytical methods. However, my approach will be different from the usual ways of addressing the representative qualities, in order to illustrate the greater symbolism within the Great Mother.

Erich Neumann developed a structural analysis of the representation of "motherhood" within the primordial archetype, and asserted that

The Great Mother, or "The Great Round," as he named it, had three forms: the good, the terrible, and the good–bad mother. The consciousness of "uroboric totality" produced "united primordial parents from whom The Great Mother and the Great Father crystallized from."[12] The wholeness of the *uroboros*, the circular "snake biting its tail symbol of the psychic state of the beginning," initiated transitions and fluidity between the Archetypal Feminine and the Archetypal Masculine. The *uroboric* totality, as Neumann asserted, was the "most perfect example of the still undifferentiated primordial archetype," and had "a paradoxical and polyvalent character" which became evident once one attempted "to differentiate all the inexhaustible meanings contained in this symbol."[13] Neumann's assessment of the multi-faceted quality of the Great Mother explains, in part, the complexities of feminine worship in the ancient era, as the amalgamation of its negative and positive attributes led to a diversification in the consciousness of worship, and depended on both masculine and feminine qualities. For instance, the pre-Hellenic Gorgon, as Neumann asserted, clashed with the Egyptian Isis, who was loving and merciful, as well as the Hellenistic–Jewish–Christian Sophia who represented "wisdom," and like Isis she possessed qualities of sovereignty and permanency.

Gorgon, usually depicted with intertwined snakes circling in her hair and around her head, turned those who dared to look at her eyes into stone. She represented the "bad mother." Conversely, Isis was the archetype of the Great Mother, being powerful and affectionate. Her cult was worshipped by people of all ages, and both sexes, yet she was more attractive to women than men. Historian Sarah B. Pomeray argues that not only respectable women but prostitutes could identify with Isis as well because she had been a whore at one time.[14] However Isis specifically elevated women and Egyptian queens received equal, or even greater honor than the kings because of her example. Cleopatra and Arsinoë II considered themselves to be incarnations of Isis when women enjoyed relative emancipation from official prohibitions enforced by the Roman state.[15] While Isis set the model for many women, her role as the mother goddess served as a determinant of women's status in society. Only Mithras, a male god, rivaled Isis with his militancy and gained widespread popularity among soldiers as well as officers of the Roman army. Yet, his opposition amplified the femaleness of the cult of Isis and attracted more supporters.

Isis could heal the sick and resurrect the dead. She had assimilated contradictory qualities, and incorporated the powers of not only female

but male deities as well. Interestingly, she was identified with numerous Mediterranean goddesses including Astarte of Phoenicia, Fortuna, Athena, Aphrodite, Hestia, Hera, Demeter, and Artemis. She could dominate lightning, thunder, and winds. According to Plutarch, "she was the creator of day and light; fire and water, beginning and end, life and death," and she "divided earth from heaven."[16] Furthermore, she was worshipped as the inventor of alphabets and astronomy; she assigned languages to nations. On an ancient inscription commissioned by a Roman senator, in Capua, southern Italy, Isis was described as follows: "you who are one and all," (*tetibiuna quae esomniadea Isis.*).[17] Apparently the cult of Isis was transported to the Roman world by seafaring merchants, during their travels to Alexandria, who were impressed by the female deity's enormous influence and worship among sailors in the port city. The loyalty of men to the cult of Isis was startling. What can be said about men's yearning for protection and safety in a mother figure during a fearsome era in human history?

"The Great Round," as defined by Neumann, was at work when Plutarch described Isis as the indomitable individual goddess of the entire universe, with her paradoxical, polyvalent and flexible character, the initiator of transitions and fluidity between the Archetypal Feminine and the Archetypal Masculine. In her relationship with her brother–husband Osiris, Isis combined Egyptian antecedents with Greco-Roman elements once again. After Osiris was dismembered by his evil brother Set, god of darkness, Isis desperately searched for his body parts, and found all, except one. The only part that she could not find was Osiris's manhood. Soon the missing phallus in the central myth of the union between Isis and Osiris was replaced by an obelisk. Fortunately, Osiris was restored to life while Isis gave birth to their son, Horus. Remarkably, Osiris's restoration to life set a significant model for memorial configurations throughout the Hellenistic, Roman, and the Western worlds. Meanwhile, festivals and pageants depicting stages of sorrow and happiness for Isis were attended by female worshippers, for whom the initial loss and re-discovery of the loved one, a spouse, or a child, was celebrated by social gatherings, and dancing. Isis's popular portrayal in Egyptian hieroglyphics while nursing her baby parallels images of Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus in her arms. Both stories validate the existence of eternal bonds between mothers and their children.

In an age when there were more upper-class men than women, who were perceived as elusive beings, archetypes projected and assumed more

human qualities.[18] Despite men's opposition, women became individuals with multivalent charms, and played significant roles in the materialization of consciousness within archetypical belief systems that governed characteristics of femininity, including feminine worship and motherhood. This is the critical juncture where one has to begin examining the institutional and religious limitations placed on women, and forces working to limit the enormous power a woman possessed through her ability of birthing and nurturing. The re-configured reality of the "Great Mother" in modernity, as it had been observed in Asia Minor, is rarely about sovereignty, but subservience, though the private and domestic arena in which she once played a greater role should have received far more attention in academia.

Sociological and historical studies on Asia Minor reveal that "holy women worship" existed even before the advent of Islam, dating back to the ancient practice of female deity worship. The "Great Mother" tradition includes epistemological spheres of knowledge about Anatolian Mother Goddesses such as Kybele and Artemis, and shares similarities with the model set by the domain of earlier female rulers, such as the story of the Hittite Queen Puduhepa of the thirteenth century B.C.E. Her life's achievements as queen, goddess, priestess and a skillful diplomat resonate with female governance both in the physical and nether worlds. In this work I use "Anatolia" and "Asia Minor" interchangeably, since both names refer to the same region as explained in the previous section. Under different names, women—whether deities, saints, and goddesses—were locally renowned and venerated by the inhabitants of the land.

Origins of Female Worship in Anatolia

The earliest records about the origin of female deities date back to Mesopotamia, "the land between rivers." Sumerian clay tablets expose the predecessors of the Sumerians, a group of Semitic people, who migrated to Mesopotamia in the mid-sixth century B.C.E from the East.[19] Sometime during the fourth or third century, Sumerians invented cuneiform writing, and thus developed an advanced system of archiving by using reeds and sun baked clay tablets for the first time in human history.

Cuneiform had taken its name from reed instruments, called "styluses" that were used to leave carved impressions on wet clay tablets before they were laid out for drying in the sun. The impressions that were created by the stylus were wedge-shaped, thus the name "wedge-shaped" or "*cuneus*" in Latin (meaning "wedge") was given to the new writing sys-

tem. The influence of the Sumerian writing system in recording annals of ancient civilizations has to be noted as an extremely significant contribution, because it sheds light on practices of worship, daily life, and notable events during the early stages of our civilizational history.

By 1900 B.C.E., the Sumerians were fully absorbed by the Akkadians. However, their record-keeping habits served them well, because there is an abundance of information about Sumerian and Akkadian deities, Sumerian belief systems, their thoughts on sacred powers and aspects of the natural world, as well as lives of mythological figures and their interaction with mortals through these records. Two Sumerian words "*an*" and "*ki*" have symbolic meanings that explain the relationship, as well as the reciprocity, between the superhuman and the human. "*An*" meant "above" and it signified "the heaven" or "the sky," whereas "*ki*" meant "below" and signified "the earth."[20] "An" and "Ki" represented the sky and the earth, the dual forces that make up the universe. "An" was the thunderstorm, the thunder and lightning, god of the sky, whereas "Ki" was identified as the goddess of the earth who was represented by the annual flood of Tigris. She embodied the waters risen by the force of the wind and the thunder. Both deities were acclaimed as the most powerful among the rest of the natural forces. However, An was considered to be on a higher plane than Ki, who was "below." Even in its most primeval stage, the hierarchy between male and female deities was thus established. The dichotomy was continued throughout because Ningirsu, the male Sumerian deity who derived his power from thunderstorms, was later compared to a "lord," "master," and "warrior" in a prayer organized for his wellbeing. Prince Gudea who ruled the city of Lagash in the third millennium B.C.E. was heard seeking guidance of Nin:

> O my master Ningiursu, lord, who sends the awesome waters …
> Warrior whom none can challenge …
> O my master, your heart, the onrushing waters of a breach in a dike, not to be restrained,
> Warrior, your heart, remote like the heavens,
> How can I know it?[21]

In the Sumerian language, "*nin*," as part of a female deity's name, designated the gender of the deity, whereas "*en*" stood for male deities. Yet etymologically both had similar connotations in the sense of an "owner" or "manager."

Despite little information on practices of worship, in ancient Mesopotamia people's livelihood depended on agriculture, and thus it was only natural that gods and deities were worshipped on a daily basis, treated as members of the family, and honored as parents. Thus deities of fatherhood and motherhood gained importance and exerted their influence in Anatolia as early as the sixth millennium B.C.E. Sumerian and Akkadian texts mention more than three thousand deities, local as well as national figures, who were worshipped throughout the entire land. An, Enlil, Enki, Beletili, Ea, Sin, Ishtar, Ninurta, and Nergal were the primary deities of Sumerians. An, whose name was derived from the Sumerian word "*an,*" was the son of a remarkable couple, Anshar and Kishar, gods of earth and sky, and was married to Ki, who was the goddess of earth. An had fathered several gods, goddesses, and demons. In Uruk, his city of principal worship, and elsewhere, he was identified by his horned crown. God and goddess couples gave birth to many children who ruled the earth and the sky, and they varied by name from one region to another.

Although fatherhood signified power and authority, motherhood was most sacred among deities. Nammu, the goddess of the sea, had bestowed upon her son Enki the power of water, which was essential for fruits, plants, vegetation, productivity, creativity, and artistry in mixing clay with water. However, the chief female deity of Sumer was a celestial figure, named Inanna (or Ninanna), who was associated with the planet Venus, but actually known as the queen of heaven and earth. She was the goddess of love and youthfulness, and her Akkadian counterpart was Ishtar. Her Hebrew name was "Ashtoreth." In Greek culture, she was known as "Astarte" and her cult place was Uruk. She was depicted either naked or in robes, enveloped in a bundle of rays, extending from her back, holding reeds and an eight-pointed star in her hands.[22] Her mother was Ningal, "the great queen," and her father was Nanna, the moon-god. Among all the deities, the "mistress of the gods" was called "Beletili," a title used for the mother goddess or goddesses who were identified with numerous individual names. In Sumer, she was known as "Ninhursaga" or the "lady of the foothills," a reference to the range of mountains to the east of the Mesopotamian plains where gods were believed to reside. Her son Nergal was the god of the underworld, and he was able to administer the sun, drought, fever, and plague on earth. In addition to Sumerian gods, Babylonia and Assyria had their own family of gods. Marduk was the god of the city of Babylon, and the supreme deity in Babylonia. His emblem

was the pickax and the serpent-dragon. His wife was Sarpanit, whose name meant "silver gleaming." She gave birth to Nabu, who was the god of the planet Mercury and of wisdom, whose emblem was the stylus of the scribe.

The characteristics and personality traits of the deities and the excitement they caused among mortals inspired, frightened, healed, protected, and governed the daily life of human beings on earth. Reverence for matriarchy and motherhood was supreme because male deities, no matter how influential they were, needed a consort to survive and maintain their sovereignty. The close relationship between mythmaking and the daily lives of the people illustrates how religious thought, philosophical attributes, the creation of the universe, and the mysteries of birth and death actually needed clarification during a chaotic time period when humans felt helpless and extremely limited in knowing the secrets of the universe surrounding them. Actually, when men needed an explanation for their conduct, it was through oracles that they established their connection with gods and goddesses. It must have been the most troublesome era for humankind.

With the arrival of the first Greek-speaking people around 1600 B.C.E, Anatolian female worship began to resemble Greek female worship as it was observed in Cyprus and Rhodes, as well as in other Greek city-states along the Aegean, in addition to some parts of Syria and Mycenae.[23] Around the eleventh century, the Aegean coast came under the rule of the Ionians, who established a Greek civilization there. Androclus decided to build a new Ionian city for his people which led, during the excavations, to the discovery of a wooden statue. He interpreted it as a sign and decided to revive the worship of Artemis in the region. During the reign of Croesus, Artemis regained her former glory and the fame of her cult surpassed Ephesus, reaching Miletus, Priene, Magnesia, Smyrna, and Sardis.

After the Ionians, the Romans continued Greek traditions of female worship and of female deities. Alexander the Great arrived in Ephesus in 334 B.C.E and offered to re-build the temple, which was in disrepair. Yet, proud Ephesians refused his help: "It would befit a deity like you to build a temple to *another* deity."[24] Olympias, mother of Alexander, would have been extremely happy if she had heard the tribute paid to her son. Whereas Ephesians, who were adamantly loyal to their goddess, did not want anyone else to curtail her significance.

Artemis was depicted as a tall, slender female with several breast-like protrusions, resembling gourds (a fertility symbol) or bull testes adorning her chest. She wore her hair braided, and had sandals on her feet. In her apron or robe, she carried lions, rams and wild animals. In some depictions,

she carried a tall crown on her head, as well as a zodiac around her neck. Her worship continued until Constantine eliminated idol worship after adopting Christianity. His decision brought an end to the long-established consecration of Artemis (Greek), or Diana (Roman) in the Aegean region, such as in Ephesus, whose fame and influence among other Lydian city-states depended upon revenues from the sales of the small silver models of Artemis's shrine, with a tiny statue of the goddess inserted in the middle, and other services related to her veneration.

Artemis was the daughter of Zeus and Leto and the sister of Apollo; she was the goddess of the hunt, the chase, the protector of wild animals, and the moon as acknowledged both in the Greek and Roman versions. She had established a special bond with Ephesus, mainly due to her kinship with the legendary female patrons of the city. Her name was derived from many sources, including the Persian words "*art*, *arta, arte*" meaning "great, excellent, holy."[25] Hittites referred to the region around Ephesus as "Assuwa," meaning "the East," and were aware of the worship of Artemis there since the twelfth century B.C.E.

The reverence for Artemis as The Great Mother was cultivated for centuries while Ephesus grew to be the leading city of the Ionian confederate. Women were employed as painters, sculptors, artists, musicians, and tutors. Actually, Ephesus was one of the learning centers of the region, and women enjoyed freedom and equality during the reign of the Carians and the Lelegians through the end of the Ionian rule. King Croesus of Lydia had built the Temple of Artemis around 360 B.C.E. and adorned it with 127 columns, which made it one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world. During the Persian invasion, the city crumbled under an oppressive regime which limited freedoms, but was relieved with the conquest of Alexander the Great in 334 B.C.E., who offered to re-build the Temple of Artemis which had suffered heavy damages after consecutive fires and earthquakes. Ironically, the entire city was almost wiped out during the fire that occurred on the night Alexander was born, on July 20 or 21, in 356 B.C.E.

Queen Artemisia I of Halicarnassus should not be confused with the Mother Goddess, though her accomplishments in support of the Persian King Xerxes were no less legendary. She married the King of Halicarnassus in 500 B.C.E., and shortly after her husband's death she ascended to the throne. She was famed for her heroism as a naval officer, a strategic analyst, and commander of five ships fighting for the Persian King Xerxes dur-

ing the Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C.E. against the Greeks. According to Herodotus, Artemisia objected to a naval battle with Greeks:

> Because our enemies are much stronger than us in the sea, as men are to women. And why does he need to risk a naval battle? Athens for which he did undertake this expedition is his and the rest of Greece too. No man can stand against him and they who once resisted, were destroyed.[26]

Yet Xerxes was not the kind of man who would respect the opinion of a woman. As he watched her outstanding skills at sea from his throne on top of a hill, he was heard saying: "My men have become women, and my women men." Then he added: "O Zeus, surely you have formed women out of man's materials, and men out of woman's."[27] Ultimately, Xerxes lost the battle, and the Athenians offered a prize of 10,000 drachmas for the man who should take Artemisia alive, yet she was not captured, thanks to her ingenious plots, upsetting the Greek fleet. Herodotus admired her greatly and wrote how frustrated the Greeks were. They thought it was impossible for a woman to undertake such an expedition against great Athens.

Warrior-Mother Goddesses

Archetypal symbolism of the worship of the Great Mother in Ephesus calls forth further investigation toward the city's lesser known history. Originally, Ephesus was believed to be established by the Amazons, female warriors, who named it "Apasos," meaning "the city of the Great Mother." The double-axe was the symbol of their power and evident in other examples of Greek architecture, such as in the palace at Knossos, on the island of Crete. As Erich Neumann would agree, the holistic nature of the *uroboros* had produced Jupiterian tendencies in the Amazons, who had become warrior queens of Asia Minor, embodying not only feminine but masculine characteristics. During the archetypal transformation, it was believed that they had each sacrificed one breast, in a symbolic act of voluntary surrender, yet kept the other to facilitate nurturing and maintain duties of motherhood. In 1861, Johann Jakob Bachofen asserted that "humanity started out under the rule of womankind and only switched to patriarchy at the dawn of civilization."[28] In his view, the Amazons were not mythological women, but historical figures. However, despite his admiration for the earth-mother women-priestesses who once held immense

authority, Bachofen believed that the domination of men was a necessary step toward civilizational progress. Women "only know of the physical life," he wrote. "The triumph of patriarchy brings with it the liberation of the spirit from the manifestations of nature."[29]

The name "Amazones" was either derived from two Greek words "without" and "breasts," (*a—mazos*, or *mastos*), or from "*ama-zoosaie*" which meant "living together," or "a*ma-zoonais*," "with girdles." Whether Amazons cut or cauterized their right breasts "in order to have better bow control," explains not only their stamina but their place within the archetype of the "good mother," whose primary duty was preservation of life and defense of womanhood against the male-governed primeval world. However, I disagree with others who assert that the Amazons were "man-slayers." Besides defending themselves against violent men and leading independent lives, they were keen on propagating their race, and voluntarily entered pre-nuptial agreements with men. This is a common attribute they shared with, or set the model for contemporary women, and any arguments on freedom of choice.

Remarkably, both Homer and Plutarch mentioned the Amazons and included them in their works. During the siege of Troy, the Amazons fought alongside Trojans when Achilles killed the Amazonian queen Penthesilea in combat. Yet he later fell in love with her when her helmet fell off and exposed the beauty of her face. Another story mentions Hippolyta in a fight in which she engaged Hercules, and ended up being defeated when Hercules took away the magic girdle from the Amazon queen. In the mid-sixth century B.C.E.,the Amazons were defeated by Theseus in the Attic War, and they were thought to have disappeared from the annals of history. With the establishment of Athens the heroic era of the Amazons ended, but their legacy survived. Plutarch indicated that Amazons "were no trivial nor womanish enterprise for Theseus. For they would not have pitched their camp within the city, nor fought hand-to-hand battles in the neighborhood of the Pynx and the Museum, had they not mastered the surrounding country and approached the city with impunity."[30]

Centuries later, in his *Histories*, Herodotus stated that he searched for the Amazons and found their footsteps in Turkey's Black Sea region, at Themiscyra, (Terme), where they established a second capital, near the ancient city of Amissos, in modern-day Samsun. To this date, no one knows how and why Amazons migrated from the Aegean coast to the north, a distance of 1000 kilometers. Apparently, they were aware of

the Royal Road and may have followed it to reach the Black Sea region. Having established themselves at Amissos, they continued their expeditions to Persia in the east. It was also during their settlement at Amissos and Themsicyra that the Amazons became mothers. Procreation was celebrated as an annual event with men from a neighboring tribe called the Gargarians.[31] In the end, male babies were sent back to their fathers, while the girls were trained to become warriors. However, after a violent siege at the Battle of Thermodon, near the river of Themsicyra (Terme Çayı), the Amazons were captured as prisoners of war, and ended up being exiled to the northern Black Sea. Whether the ships that carried the Amazon captives ran aground near Scythia, or they overwhelmed the Greek crew on board after a mutiny, the Amazons saved themselves from destruction, and once again settled on the northern coast of the Black Sea. Over time, marriages and unions took place among local groups and a new nation known as the Sauromatians were born. In the early 1990s, archaeological excavations in a Russian town called Pokrovka near the Kazakhstan border revealed 150 grave sites that belonged to Sauromatians and their descendants, the Sarmatians. Remarkably, the women were buried with their weapons, including iron daggers, bows, and 40 bronze-tipped arrowheads. Some of the young females were bowlegged, evidently from constant horse riding. A majority of the women were extraordinarily tall for the standards of that era, averaging five feet six inches.[32] These discoveries attested to the truth that Sarmatian women were the descendants of Asia Minor's legendary warrior women who once founded famous cities such as Smyrna, Ephesus, Amissos in Samsun and Sinope on the mainland, in addition to Paphos in southwestern Cyprus. Even if their downfall was viewed as an indication of their ultimate weakening, or a stereotypical assumption about the "subservient nature of the female," one must remember that the demise of the Amazon women was brought by men, following a series of retributions resulting from their disobedience to male authority. Their uprising was generated by a heroic spirit, and they endured through women's traditionally recognized multi-dimensional characteristics such as leaders, warriors, wives, and mothers.

Divinized Women

Roman Emperor Constantine (280–337 A.D.) was the first Roman Emperor who allowed Christianity to grow in Asia Minor. His decision marked the final chapter in the worship of the Mother Goddess. However,

thanks to Constantine's deep reverence for his mother Helena, the members of the royal family, mothers, wives, and daughters, still maintained authority and continued the tradition of matriarchal influence during his reign. In a symbolic act he constituted or replaced the worship of Artemis/Ishtar/Cybele with that of Mary. It is not surprising that the first instance of resurrecting the Great Mother tradition after the advent of Christianity was materialized in the person of Virgin Mary.

Mortal Greek women never achieved divine status, although a few exceptional women became heroines as a result of their deeds, spiritual qualities, unusual deaths, or sacrifices for a good cause. Their burial grounds became shrines, as followers established cults, and during their visits they brought the dead women food offerings, wreaths, flowers, and votives. Women who wanted to marry or have children also visited these shrines with their offerings in expectation of fulfilling their dreams. Similar traditions exist in the history of Islam, and there have been many women who have been attributed special importance in Asia Minor through the centuries. In fact, one needs to review such stories to realize the depth of the transformative power embedded in various texts concerning women's roles as both mortals and immortals.

In 1453, the Byzantine era came to an end by the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul. Though elite women, or the Harem favorites who mothered sons for the Sultan, maintained respect and enjoyed power as mothers, they were not delegated official power as rulers of the state, or as warrior queens. After Christianity, women's lives faced demotion by another monotheistic religion. Under the influence of Islam, women's freedom and prominence in society was increasingly devalued as they were further confined indoors. Though Muslim society revered motherhood, it limited a woman's sphere of influence rather to her ability to give birth, particularly to a male child.

Outside the royal court and Harem, women in the Islamic world sustained their importance through their work as mythoformic figures such as "saints," "warriors," and cultural heroines. Having saintly qualities did not prevent them from getting married and experiencing motherhood while they continued to fulfill their domestic responsibilities. However, they were expected to maintain relatively fewer public roles and be less visible than men. Prophet Muhammed's first wife Khadijah was celebrated as a wise woman who proposed to her husband and married him, despite the age difference between the two. He was 25, and she was 40. She had been a wealthy merchant who had married twice previously. Following

her marriage to Muhammed, she came to be known as "al-Kubra" ("the Great") and "al-Tahira" ("the Pure") to Muslims.[33] She bore six children during her marriage and reportedly the couple had a good relationship, as he remained loyal to her and did not marry another woman during her life of around 65 years. After Khadijah, he married other women, all of whom were credited with the title "Umm al-Muminun" ("Mother of the Faithful"). However, his first wife Khadijah had a special place, as she was considered the "Mother of Islam."

In Islam, holiness was a title that was "earned" by women. Traditionally, Anatolian holy women were held in high opinion through meritorious acts. Dedication and commitment to a higher cause, bravery and heroism in war, loyalty to an authority, perseverance and faith in the face of adversity, as well as keeping a heightened sense of responsibility, were cited among characteristics of commendable behavior, and recognized as signs of "saintliness" or "holiness." Such qualities were applauded since antiquity, and titles were transferred from one generation to the other. Individual acts were also included within the scope of meritorious acts, such as being respectful toward one's parents and family members, serving and assisting the elderly, being pious, or having committed one's life to an act of extreme sacrifice in deliverance of hope for others. These women were usually recognized as members of the "suckling" genre who were capable of performing extraordinary acts, and celebrated for their skills in transforming their society.

In many parts of Anatolia, the towns and remote villages that were once settled or traveled by cultural heroines are still designated as "holy places." The miracles they have experienced or have demonstrated throughout their lives are narrated and passed over to young generations, since their stories are considered sufficient evidence for their holiness, or saintly behavior. These women received various titles such as "holy," "saint," "dervish," and "*eren*," while some of them were called "*veliyye*" in certain regions. Unfortunately, the English language does not sufficiently explain the difference between these terms, whereas for local people each term connotes a different meaning, depending on the history of the region where the genre originated.

End of The Great Mother Era

The Roman conquest in 129 B.C.E. elevated some of the trouble endured by citizens of Ephesus who continued to worship Artemis until 314 A.D., when the Council of Ancyra denounced the veneration of the Goddess

Artemis. In 324 A.D., Constantine declared Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. At Dydima, not far from Ephesus, his army attacked the Oracle of the God Apollo and tortured its pagan priests to death. Meanwhile, he ordered all non-Christians to be evicted from Mt. Athos. As a result, all local Hellenic temples were destroyed. In 326 A.D., following the instructions of his mother Helena, Constantine demolished the Temple of the God Asclepius in the city of Aigeai in Cilicia (a Mediterranean coastal city near Mersin, Turkey), and several temples of the Goddess Aphrodite in Jerusalem, Aphaca, Mambre, Phoenice, and Baalbek were also destroyed.[34]

However, it was Emperor Theodosius in 380 A.D. who sealed the fate of the Mother Goddess when he closed the temples, banned the worship of Artemis, and did not allow women to work as artists and teachers. In Constantinople, the Temple of the Goddess Aphrodite was turned into a brothel; the Temples of Sun and Artemis began to be used as stables.[35] By this time, the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was already plundered, and its stylish marble columns were either demolished or sold as construction material.

Perhaps not as striking as the devastation inflicted by Constantine's armies is the story of Saint Paul and his historic visit to Ephesus. Since the early days of Christianity, several missionaries including Paul traveled to Ephesus to convert local worshippers of Artemis. In 23 A.D., during one of his missionary trips Paul cautioned the crowd that "Gods made by human hands are not gods at all."[36] For many decades silver models of Artemis's temple were sold to travelers, as they generated lucrative business for the city's artisans. Demetrius, the silversmith, instigated a mass rebellion against Paul and Silas with the help of other merchants. They were afraid that Paul's plans would ruin their prosperity and hurt their livelihood. Most importantly, they were afraid that "the sanctity of the great goddess Artemis will cease to command respect; and then it will not be long before she who is being worshipped by all Asia and the civilized world is brought down from her divine preeminence."[37] The Biblical book of Acts refers to the incident as follows:

> About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business."[38]

As they marched in protest the men shouted, "Great is the Artemis of the Ephesians!"Paul was dragged to the marketplace and thrown in jail after being badly beaten. Eventually, he received some help and fled the city. Following the violent incident which nearly cost his life, Paul wrote seven letters, one of which was addressed to the Ephesians, reminding them about the "loss of their first love." Paul expected Ephesians to repent and accept the gospel.

After Jesus was crucified, Saint John secretly brought Mary to Ephesus and built a small house and a chapel on the slopes of the Bülbül Mountain, where she spent the last days of her life in seclusion. During her life, she was known for her influence on her son. Mara Kelly-Zukowski asserts that contrary to her popular image as a "humble, retiring, and passive woman" Mary was "the most radical woman in the Bible." In the modern era, the house and chapel of Mary overlooking Kuşadası and the town of Selçuk, where the majestic Temple of Artemis once stood, has been visited by thousands of pilgrims. The glorious era that was marked with heroic acts of gods and goddesses and their auspicious relationships with mortals ended a long time ago. However, Ephesus, the legendary city of the Great Mother, where the dawn of the archetypal feminine and the masculine first rose into prominence, still continues to be venerated with its sanctified shrine and the House of Mary, the Holiest Mother of Christians.

In light of these developments, it seems clear that in Asia Minor the manifestation of wide-ranging belief systems established on female worship and female deities were inherited, justifying the legacy of numerous civilizations that extended from the Hattis, Hittites, Sumerians, and Phyrigians, to Ionians, Carians, Greeks, Romans, and Ottomans. Womanhood in Anatolia was usually explained by the imperative of motherhood, in both a literal and metaphorical sense. However, practices and rites of motherhood varied greatly, as they were wrought by complex forces, concepts and practices including cultural exchanges, political developments, migrations, international disputes, natural disasters, and most importantly, through religious influences, which deified homogeny. Women did not enjoy greater freedoms than men, and they were gradually marginalized by male-governed socio-political and religious institutions of the era. Yet within the institutional confinements imposed upon their lives and labor in the name of "norms," they learned to maneuver, keep faith, and endure through the fruits of their labor, inborn talents, wisdom, and ingenuity.

I maintain that such an undercurrent of gender equality and liberation through the transcendence of male authority persisted throughout ancient eras. Yet rather than exhibiting uniformity and a specific identity, characteristics of Anatolian female worship were wide-ranging. Until after Alexander's conquests of the Aegean and Cilicia in 333 B.C.E., a strong Hellenization was not felt in Asia Minor. Nevertheless, its far-reaching effects became obvious in less than a decade. Consequently, cultural and etymological transformations took place in a region which was prone to foreign invasions, whereas the local population had no choice but obey the dominant power. After the Hellenic conquests, Greek names took over indigenous names and Anatolia's ancient history began to be overlooked. Women were duly marginalized, as in the case of the Amazon warriors. Despite all odds, including the limitations imposed upon them by monotheistic religions, women did not stop participating in society and continued to be influential in shaping the future of their children. In contemporary times, Anatolian mothers assert their will, in custom and practice, despite their lost glory in antiquity. They stand up for their rights, aim to raise good children, sons and daughters alike, who aspire to convey the legacy of the Great Mother into modernity through education and self-determination. Perhaps the dialectical opposition between the east and the west, tradition and modernity, is best explained through venerable deeds of Anatolian women whose stories await to be told throughout the millennium, and beyond.

Notes

1. For the description of the east-west dichotomy in Asia Minor, see Bozkurt Güvenç *Türk Kimliği* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi 1995), 55–56.
2. Herodotus, "The Royal Road," in *Histories*, Book 5: 43–49; 49–52; and 52–60. http://www.cartographyunchained.com/cghs1.html. Retrieved March 12, 2016.
3. Attributed to Herodotus, in *Histories* following his trip from Ephesus to Susa.
4. Jenifer Neils, *Women in the Ancient World* (Los Angeles, CA: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 25.
5. Ibid., 28.

6. Nilgun Anadolu-Okur, "The Demise of the Great Mother: Islam, Reform and Women's Emancipation in Turkey." *Gender Issues* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 6–29.
7. Ekrem Akurgal, *Anadolu Uygarlıkları* (İstanbul: Net TuristikYayinlar, 1987), 105.
8. Ibid., 87.
9. "Puduhepa," Julia Richardson, http://www.tawananna.com/archives/41. Retrieved March 13, 2016.
10. Joshua J. Mark, "The Battle of Kadesh and the First Peace Treaty," http://www.ancient.eu/article/78/. Retrieved March 13, 2016.
11. Letter from King Ramses II to Puduhepa, in *Women in Anatolia, 9000 Years of the History of the Anatolian Woman*, ed. Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture (İstanbul: Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture, 1993), 108.
12. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 18.
13. Ibid., 19.
14. Sarah B. Pomeray, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Shocken Books, 1975), 219.
15. Ibid., 225.
16. Ibid., 218. See also Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 372e-f, 382c.
17. Pomeray, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 218.
18. Ibid., 227.
19. Jack Finegan, *Myth and Mystery: An Introduction to the Pagan Religions of the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1989), 19.
20. Ibid., 22.
21. Thirkild Jacobsen, in EB 2.972. For Ningirsu, see also Jean Nougayrol, "NningirsuVanqueur de Zu" *RAAO* 45, no. 2 (1952): 87–97, esp. 87 n. 1.
22. Finegan, *Myth and Mystery*, 26.
23. Ibid., 155.
24. NaciKeskin, "Ephesus," (İstanbul: Keskin Publishing, 2003), 6.
25. "Artemis," in Charles Anthon, *A Classical Dictionary, containing an account of the principal proper names mentioned in ancient authors*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1855), 210.
26. Herodotus, *Histories,* Book 8: Urania (60). http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hh/hh8060.htm. Retrieved March 13, 2016.

27. Ibid.
28. Amanda Foreman, "The Amazon Women: Is There Any Truth Behind the Myth?" *Smithsonian Magazine,* April 2014. smithsonianmag.com/history/amazon-women-there-any-truth-behind-myth-180950188. Retrieved March 10, 2016.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. See "Otere" who made an agreement with the Gargarians (a tribe to the east of the Amazon settlement in Amisos in modern-day Samsun, Turkey) for an annual festival, when Amazon women mated with Gargarian men to have children. They kept the girls and returned the boys to the fathers. http://www.angelfire.com/psy/amazon/. Retrieved March 12, 2016.
32. Foreman, "The Amazon Women," *Smithsonian Magazine,* April 2014. Retrieved March 10, 2016.
33. "Khadijah bint Khuwaylid," https://wikiislam.net/wiki/Khadijah_bint_Khuwaylid. Retrieved March 20, 2016.
34. Vlasis Rassias, "Christian Persecutions Against Hellenes," in *Demolish Them* (Athens, Greece: AnichtiPoli Editions 2000). http://www.ysee.gr/index-eng. Retrieved March 13, 2016.
35. Ibid.
36. Acts 19:26.
37. Acts 19:27.
38. Acts 19:24.

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Motherhood, Personhood, Identity, and Place-Making in Ancient Mesoamerica

Kathryn M. Hudson and John S. Henderson

In ancient Mesoamerica, as in virtually all other times and places, motherhood was intimately bound up with personhood and with aspects of identity that develop in the context of households. But the meanings attached to motherhood in Mesoamerican thought were by no means limited to a domestic sphere. Motherhood was an important component in the construction of other kinds of identities, extending into many cultural domains and occurring at many levels. Its symbolic deployments took distinctive forms in ancient Mesoamerica. Rich ethnographic and ethnohistorical sources document an intimate association of motherhood and steambathing, which was a central focus of Mesoamerican domestic life. Specialized architectural installations that were dedicated to steambathing have been found in many Mesoamerican households and served as the venue for an array of hygienic, medicinal, and ritual activities involving women in late stages of pregnancy, new mothers, and infants. Steambaths, explicitly identified as symbolic wombs, are thus materialized manifestations of the conceptualization of motherhood. Steambathing is central to

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the development of individual personhood and to the formation of family and community identity.

Motherhood is also implicated—less obviously, but nonetheless centrally—in identities that transcend the community by virtue of the close conceptual connection between steambaths and caves. Like steambaths, caves are quintessentially places of origin, but their scope focuses on groups rather than individuals. The intensity with which these ideas are associated and the degree to which they are shared by recent Mesoamerican peoples, along with the distinctive architectural form of the steambath, provide the means for exploring meanings and symbolic functions of motherhood in earlier times, otherwise quite difficult to discern in material remains. Steambath and cave imagery, combined with the presence of elaborate steambaths in public spaces, indicate that, before the Spanish invasion eliminated indigenous political systems and marginalized their organizational principles, motherhood was not only an element in the formation of identities of social and political groupings within and beyond the community, but played a key role in place-making and in the legitimation of rulers.

Steambaths, Caves, Motherhood, and Identity

In Mesoamerica, the relationships between motherhood and domestic spaces entail far more than a simple connection of women with domestic activity spheres. Motherhood does, of course, have a domestic association. Most obviously, birth takes place in the house compound. The interaction between mothers—whatever their degree of engagement in non-domestic cultural spheres—and their children is likely to be concentrated in domestic spaces, particularly in the early stages of life. Steambaths, closely linked with motherhood, are at the core of domestic practice, but they also connect motherhood with larger social and conceptual spheres, especially in defining identities and community membership.

House and Household

The conceptual linkages of motherhood with the spatial and architectural focus of domestic life—the house—is unusually close for Mesoamericans. The house is not only the location of the actual birth event but, along with the hearth at its core, symbolically represents the site of rebirth (and transformations in general) in Mesoamerican myths.[1] In the Maya world, the

close connection is underlined by the near-homonymy of words meaning "house," and "mother" in many languages of the Mayan family.

	Mother	House	Source
Itza'	*na*	*nah*	Hofling 1991
Itzaj	*na7*	*naj*	Kaufman and Justeson 2003
Lakantun	*na7*	*naj*	Kaufman and Justeson 2003
Mopan	*na'*	*na'tzil*	Hofling 2011
Mopan	*na7*	*naj*	Kaufman and Justeson 2003
S. Lacandon	*na'*	*naj*	Hofling 2014
Tojol	*nan*	*na7-itx ~ naj*	Kaufman and Justeson 2003
Tuzanteco	*na:7*	*nha:h*	Kaufman and Justeson 2003
Tzeltal	*nan, nana7, na*na*	*na*	Kaufman and Justeson 2003
Yucatec	*na', naa'*	*na*	Barrera Vásquez 1995
Yukateko	*#naa*	*na*	Kaufman and Justeson 2003

Kaufman suggests that this homophony and the semantic association it implies have considerable historical depth, reconstructing **na7* as "mother" and **nhaah* as "house" for proto-Mayan.[2] The presence of an alternative form for "house"—related to the *otoch* of Yukateko[3]—in relatively free variation in many of these languages, combined with the presence of similar forms in other Mayan languages that lack this homophony,[4] further supports the proposition that this phonetic similarity represents a conscious association.

The steambath was central to household practice in Mesoamerica and provides the most vivid demonstration of the central place of motherhood in Mesoamerican domestic life. The core architectural feature of the steambath is a small and low chamber, often with benches that allow the user to recline (Fig. 1).

Steam is produced by throwing water onto stones heated in a separate firing area and brought into the chamber, or by throwing water directly against the common wall separating the chamber from the firing area. Entrances are small and low to slow the dissipation of the steam, and the windows—if they exist at all—are small and designed to be covered. Provision for draining the water produced as steam condenses may be as simple as a lowered section of floor that slopes toward the entrance, but sometimes it involves carefully constructed drain channels.

Ethnographic studies and historical accounts written soon after the Spanish invasion document the use of steambaths for personal hygiene, for relaxation, for socializing (including sexual liaisons), and—especially—

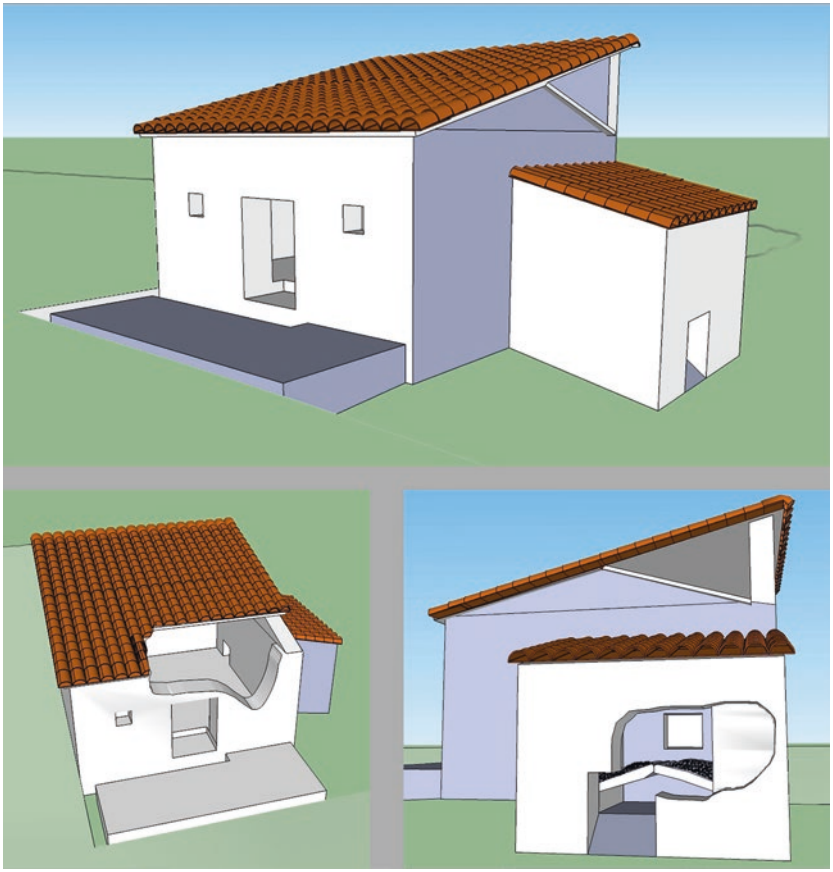

Fig. 1 Elaborate double-roofed steambath at Tepoztlan. Upper: sweat chamber, firing facility, and drainage; lower left: cutaway showing sweat chamber, opening to upper firing chamber and drainage; lower right: cutaway showing firing chamber and opening to sweat chamber. The fire is built in the lower section of the chamber and when the volcanic stones above are hot, water thrown on them from the sweat chamber produces steam. Drawing by John S. Henderson after Frank Cresson, "Maya and Mexican Sweat Houses," *American Anthropologist* 40, no. 1 (1938): Fig. 5.

for a wide variety of activities relating to fertility, pregnancy, and birth.[5] Therapeutic visits to steambaths are particularly important for women in the last weeks of pregnancy. Midwives and female relatives of the expectant mother prescribe a variety of pre-parturition therapies and rituals including cleansing, herbal treatments, and massaging the mother's abdomen; palpation to adjust the position of the fetus in anticipation of birth is a particularly common and important procedure. Birth itself sometimes takes place in the steambath, but more commonly it occurs elsewhere in the household compound. The steambath was also an important venue for activities following successful delivery, especially early life-cycle ceremonies.

Steambath activities and meanings extend beyond those that are directly related to childbirth, however, and also include fertility and reproduction more generally. Remedies for infertility are often part of steambath practices. Most of these involve the application of leaves, grass, or other plant parts—specific to the particular ritual or therapy—to the skin.

The steambath is often likened to a woman's body, with the steam chamber representing the womb, so steambath activities frequently enact both intercourse and birth. Sometimes the reference is explicitly to coitus itself, with the steam serving as metaphorical semen. This recalls the widespread use of steambaths as trysting places where married couples go to have intercourse in private. Alternatively, water flowing from the steam chamber relates to amniotic fluid and the birth event, so that a person emerging from the steam chamber is metaphorically born (again).

Its close association with birth connects the steambath with a cluster of meanings that revolve around the connections between individuals, their place of birth, and their community of socialization. The highland Maya Mam are articulate about the mechanisms through which the steambath connects a newborn to the local social group and about the implications of this linkage in later life. The placenta is buried in the floor of the steambath in the family compound, where it "lives," reinforcing the attachment of the newborn to the family group. If birth occurs away from home, the placenta is brought back and buried in the family steambath, which becomes "happy again" when the new child and family bathe there. Adults are expected to return to the natal steambath to perform rituals, particularly at key points in the life-cycle and at times of illness or other crisis. Before building a new steambath, individuals must perform a ceremony to break the tie with the natal steambath.[6] Steambath activities related to birth make the newborn's connection with the community manifest, and subsequent life-cycle ceremonies—which are preferentially performed in

Fig. 2 Doorway in form of feline mouth, the main temple, Malinalco. Photo by John S. Henderson

the natal steambath—reiterate the rootedness of individuals in the community where they were socialized. Motherhood thus serves as a focal element in the construction of personhood and identity at the scale of families and communities.

Steambath associations place women, and particularly their generative capacity, at the core of the very rich symbolic field of the house. As Bourdieu emphasized, the house is a critical venue for embodiment and the creation of habitus, providing material referents for basic cultural principles and thereby powerfully inculcating them in its occupants.[7] Mesoamerican houses are conceptualized as animate beings, with terms for body parts used for its features. "Mouth of house," for example, is a widely distributed metaphor for "door" and "head of house" or "head of hair" refer to "roof" in several Mayan languages.[8] Houses also participate in a range of complex and reciprocal metaphorical relationships in which they reflect—and are reflected in—many other cultural domains, most notably caves.[9] Precolumbian buildings had comparable symbolic relationships, reflected most obviously in doorways that represent the mouths of zoomorphic creatures (Figs. 2 and 3).[10]

Fig. 3 Doorway in form of reptile mouth, Structure 2, Chicanná. Photo by John S. Henderson

In the same way, steambaths are microcosms of houses as well as core features of them, and their features are also replicated in miniature in such structures as shrine sanctuaries.[11] They are metaphorically connected to the body, specifically the female body, in its reproductive capacity. At the core of this complex symbolic web—focal to the constitution of individual, family, and community identity—is motherhood.

Caves

The ametaphorical equation of steambaths with caves, which are widely conceptualized as the residences of ancestors and as places of origin,[12] extends the symbolic power of motherhood beyond a direct connection with fertility and birth and into the complementary domain of the constitution of social identities broader than those of the family and local community.

Caves and cave symbolism permeate Mesoamerican thought.[13] Caves are commonly interpreted as dangerous portals leading to an underworld realm populated by supernatural beings, many of them malign, but the connection between caves and death is not entirely negative since caves are also widely viewed as the abode of ancestors who protect and nurture their descendants.[14] Because ancestors and other supernaturals often dwell in caves, they are conceptualized as houses. Pugh's analysis of the logic of precolumbian urban patterns implies that caves within settlements were viewed as buildings.[15] They are also considered to be the source of new human souls as well as places where groups originated. Consequently, like steambaths, they are sometimes likened to wombs; Sahagún's informants compared caves to vaginas.[16] Caves are also associated with springs and believed to be the places where clouds form, so they are simultaneously framed in terms of fertility, serving as the generalized sources of rain and life-giving water.[17] Nahua and Otomí people of northern Veracruz undertake pilgrimages to a cave with a striking resemblance to a vagina and to the (phallic) sacred peak above it where they propitiate spirits of water, earth, and the sun for rain.[18] Caves and the underworld to which they connect are not simply places of death; they are also the sources of new life and life-giving substances.

Caves are quintessential places of origin in Mesoamerican thought. Chicomoztoc ("Seven Caves"), from which the ancestors of the Mexica emerged,[19] is the most familiar of many instances in which Mesoamerican myths and legendary histories trace the origin of groups to caves. The Codex Boturini (Tira de la Peregrinación), a pictorial account of the history of Mexica ancestors painted shortly after the Spanish invasion,[20] depicts the beginning of the migration on which Huitzilopochtli would guide his chosen people on their migration to the Valley of Mexico where they would fulfill the divinely mandated destiny of dominance.[21] He appears in a cave located within a place sign for Culhuacán, "place of ancestors," which referred not only to the city of that name in the Valley of Mexico but also to a place of origin that conferred legitimacy (probably reflecting the strategy of early Tenochtitlan kings of establishing noble status by marrying Culhuacán women of Toltec descent[22]).

Later episodes of the Mexica migration recounted by Diego Durán and other early Colonial historians feature steambaths in connection with the founding of cities and polities. After their expulsion from the city of Culhuacán in the Valley of Mexico, the Mexica rested at a place called Acatzintitlan and constructed a *temazcalli* (steambath) in which everyone

bathed. An unspecified "lewd happening" led to their departure from this place and, after more wandering through lakeshore swamps, the Mexica arrived at a town (later called Temazcaltitlan) and built another *temazcalli*. Shortly thereafter they discovered the eagle and cactus, Huitzilopochtli's sign for the location where Tenochtitlan was to be founded.[23] According to Tezozómoc,[24] flaming water flowed from a spring in a cave beneath the site, clearly indicating the equation of steambaths and caves. The main temple at Tenochtitlan—a sacred mountain dedicated jointly to Huitzilopochtli, patron of the Mexica, and to the rain god Tlaloc—was built (at least conceptually)—over a cave-steambath; several actual springs flowed nearby within the central sacred precinct.

The association of caves with ancestors, group origins, and the founding of towns points to their symbolic importance in relation to the formation of identities at scales beyond that of the community. The metaphorical identification of steambaths with caves connects motherhood with deep ancestry and thus with the establishment of ethnicity and other group identities. Direct linkage of steambaths with founding events implicates motherhood in the formation of sociopolitical identities that flow from affiliation with particular city-states.

Mothers and Kings in Ancient Mesoamerica

Colonial period documents suggest the association of motherhood, again via the meanings associated with steambaths, with the constitution of political power, a process that did not survive the Spanish invasion. They also hint strongly that the concepts of motherhood and steambath rituals were implicated in the accession of kings and in the legitimation of their authority. The language used to characterize the relationships between rulers and their subjects provide suggestive indirect evidence. Sahagún's informants describe proper rulers in the same terms as those used for maternal behavior: "[t]he good ruler [is] a protector; one who carries [his subjects] in his arms, … [h]ecarries [his subjects] in his cape; he bears them in his arms."[25] Precolumbian Maya representations of male rulers with costumes that incorporate long skirts and other elements most often seen as part of women's dress (Fig. 4) reflect a similar conception of rulers as embodying the qualities associated with both women and men.

Genital blood-letting, seemingly a special obligation of rulers, can be understood in similar terms as a way of fictively attributing menstruation, a distinctively female physiological feature, to male rulers.[26]

Fig. 4 Maya ruler wearing a hybrid costume with long beaded skirt usually worn by women and short jaguar skin kilt typical of male dress, Stela H, Copán. Photo by John S. Henderson

The widespread Mesoamerican pattern of reference to deities and figures of authority with terms that incorporate both female and male elements implies a similar notion: some categories of beings transcend ordinary gender identifications. Mesoamerican supernaturals were more like constellations of qualities than discrete, personified deities of the kind found in Greek and Roman pantheons and thus were not bound to the sex-based binary that characterized many ancient divinities. Among the myriad forms assumed by Aztec deities, who are among the best documented, were distinctly male and female aspects typically marked by the inclusion of *teuctli* ("lord") and *cihuatl* ("lady") in their names.[27] Ometeotl ("two deity" or "deity of duality"), a creator figure responsible for providing newborns with souls, was also referred to as Ometeuctli and Omecihuatl. The female aspect reflects the critical role of women as mothers in the production of life, while the male dimension may allude to the equally essential male contribution to conception.

Contemporary highland Maya people also make explicit reference to female and male roles or qualities in referring to leadership positions and to ancestors. Quiché ritual specialists and lineage leaders, who may be either men or women, are collectively referred to as *chuchkajaw*, which translates as "motherfathers."[28] Tzotzil ancestors and ritual advisers—statuses that, like their Quiché counterparts, may be held by both men and women—are described as *totilme7iletik*, a collective term meaning "fathermothers."[29] This pattern may be understood, in part, in terms of complementarity. Figures of authority and other special beings combine qualities usually associated with either women or men. Although most of the nuances of gender distinctions in Mesoamerica remain to be worked out, supernaturals and leaders clearly transcend typical gender roles or perhaps constitute a distinct, dual gender.[30]

The account of creation in the Popol Vuh, a compendium of Quiché history and myth recorded early in the Colonial period, suggests that this conflation of female and male qualities extends beyond gender complementarity in at least some contexts.[31] Creation is accomplished by supernaturals presented as male–female pairs and the language used to characterize them attributes the key creative roles to female beings, implying that the generative capacity of women—motherhood—is the critical dimension.

Some features of Mesoamerican symbolism and political organization suggest a more overt reflection of the symbolic importance of women and motherhood in the domain of authority and power. The sharing of supreme

political power in the Aztec state between the *tlatoani* ("speaker"), usually identified as a singular ruler, and the *cihuacoatl*, "serpent woman"[32] hints at a kind of dual rulership that was symbolically structured in terms of the importance of women and motherhood; it reflected a felt need for both male and female (maternal) elements in leadership positions. The woven mat was a pan-Mesoamerican symbol of legitimate authority at every scale, from family head to imperial ruler.[33] The Aztec *tlatoani* was customarily depicted as seated on a mat or plaited throne made from reeds, which served as another powerful symbol of political legitimacy.[34] The production of mats, like other kinds of weaving, was located squarely in the domain of women[35] and represents a major facet of their creative (motherly) capacity. The use of these mats as the literal foundation upon which rulers were seated implies that the institution of rulership was conceptually built on maternal endeavors and, arguably, on the symbolic significances of motherhood as a social and cultural category.

There is some indication that steambaths and their attendant symbolism were specifically associated with Aztec royalty. The Codex Magliabechiano, a description of Aztec beliefs and ritual practice written soon after the Spanish invasion, associates the steambath (Fig. 5) with Tezcatlipoca, who was the patron deity of royalty.

The primary logic for connecting Tezcatlipoca with steambaths and their perceived curative powers may be his capacity as an advocate for the sick, but the connection with kingship is clear.[36]

The process of investiture for Aztec kings began with a period of separation in which the prospective ruler was secluded in the central temple precinct and divested of his former social persona.[37] Purification through bathing was part of this process, but surviving accounts do not explicitly mention steambaths. The culmination of the next stage of the process, in which the new ruler was enthroned and garbed in symbols of royalty, was his emergence from the Yopico temple transformed into a new social and political person. Yopico's associations clearly indicate that it was conceptualized as a kind of symbolic cave associated with rituals involving bathing.[38] Since rebirth and reincorporation into the community are core functions of ethnographic steambathing, it was a symbolic steambath as well. Depictions of Yopico suggest a small structure with a low entrance, so it may have been a functional steambath.

Steambaths and most elements of the webs of meaning associated with them in ethnographic accounts and ethnohistorical sources can be traced deeper into Mesoamerican history by means of material remains and imagery.[39] Precolumbian evidence points more directly to public and political

Fig. 5 Steambath, Codex Magliabechiano, Folio 77r

dimensions of steambathing and the concept of motherhood that did not fully survive the demise of Mesoamerican states in the aftermath of the Spanish invasion. Steambaths in domestic contexts—including both elite residential complexes and royal palaces—suggest household functions comparable to those of recent steambaths. In contrast with the ethnographic situation, large and elaborate steambaths were also located in public spaces, ensuring that their use would have been, to some degree, public. That signals a distinct set of functions and meanings that extended beyond the domestic sphere; steambathing played a role in public life.

Steambaths at Palenque

Steambaths in elite residential compounds in the Late Classic Maya city of Palenque served aristocratic domestic needs.[40] The functions of a steambath in the main civic architectural complex in the heart of the city almost certainly extended beyond the domain of elite domestic practice into the sphere of public life.[41] Symbolic steambaths incorporated into the nearby temple complex celebrating the accession of Kan B'ahlam in the late

seventh century definitely did, in ways that suggest that kings wanted to be thought of as nurturing ancestral deities, in a sense presiding over the birth of public life itself.

Kan B'ahlam designed the lower Cross group to memorialize his royal descent and to connect himself with deities who are, in effect, his divine ancestors. Its structures—the Temple of the Sun, Temple of the Cross, and Temple of the Foliated Cross—were designed as symbolic steambaths.[42] Each houses an independent interior shrine (Fig. 6) such that the overall layout closely resembles the antechamber and steam chamber design of elaborate functional steambaths.

Though the shrines were not fitted with firing and drainage facilities, they appear to be the referents of the *pib na* ("oven house" or steambath) expression and other references to ovens and burning found in the associated hieroglyphic texts. These texts focus on (1) the births of deities, named as the owners of the steambaths, in the distant, mythic past, (2)

Fig. 6 Interior shrine (symbolic steambath) visible in the rear room, Temple of the Cross, Palenque. Photo by John S. Henderson

the special relationship of these deities to Kan B'ahlam, (3) Kan B'ahlam's designation as successor to the throne, and (4) his actual accession. The nuances of these texts remain obscure, but they can be read as characterizing the deities as Kan B'ahlam's "cherished ones" whom he nurtured.[43] The texts thus convey a complex reciprocal relationship involving descent as well as the same terms used for mother–child relationships; it is clear that Kan B'ahlam saw his legitimacy as based, at least in part, on his role as a kind of maternal figure responsible for the care of the gods.

Architectural decoration also connects the Cross group structures with caves. The roofs of the Cross group temples and steambath shrines feature gaping mouths of saurian beings. On the Temple of the Cross shrine roof, human figures emerge from quatrefoil motifs with jaw elements that likely represent caves conceptualized as the mouths of animate beings.[44] The quatrefoil motif—symbolically linked to caves, water, fertility, ancestors, and rulership—has a very long history in Mesoamerican imagery. It appears at La Blanca in Pacific Guatemala as early as the Middle Formative, and in the Late Formative Maya world it was used specifically to designate watery caves.[45] These elements echo the close connection of, caves, steambaths, and springs in post-invasion Mesoamerica.

Life cycle rituals central to Kan B'ahlam's political status were connected to, and perhaps took place in, the symbolic natal steambaths of his tutelary deities. He was situated in Palenque and its dynastic history by means of rituals that were connected to the symbolic steambaths of the Cross Group just as people are rooted in their communities by rituals that take place in functional steambaths. His political identity, like their social identities, was framed in the context of steambath practices; it was thus defined in relation to motherhood. For Maya kings, the construction of steambaths, functional or symbolic, was not simply elaboration of civic architecture. It connected them to divine patrons as well as human ancestors, and thereby rooted them, situating them in symbolic landscapes and dynastic histories in ways that powerfully legitimized their political pretensions.

Steambaths and Caves in Olmec Art

The same linkages of caves, steambaths, and motherhood constitute a central theme in the political art of Mesoamerica's first complex politically centralized societies during the early first millennium B.C.E. The imagery of public monumental art in the Olmec world clearly indicates that steambaths, and thus motherhood, were intimately related to both

the maintenance of elite status and the legitimation of power. Steambaths can be identified in Olmec style reliefs in the Central Mexican highlands as well as in three-dimensional stone sculpture at Gulf coast Olmec centers. Monumental representations of steambaths located in public space and depictions of richly dressed human figures associated with steambaths underscore a connection with community leaders and their pretensions to authority and power. Identifying these images as steambaths is not the conventional interpretation, but it does not necessarily invalidate other interpretations: Olmec political art, like its later Mesoamerican counterparts, employs polyvalent symbols. Orthodox interpretations are entirely compatible with the proposed steambath identification, since they invoke symbolic elements—caves, rain, and fertility—that fall squarely within the web of meanings that are associated with steambaths.

Among the most distinctive political sculptures in Gulf coast Olmec centers are the large, three-dimensional basalt compositions conventionally labeled tabletop altars (Fig. 7).[46]

Fig. 7 Altar 4, La Venta. Photo by John S. Henderson

They are rectangular in plan, with flat, slightly projecting tops. On the front face of several, a human figure projects from a recess as though emerging from an enclosure in the body of the sculpture. This enclosure is sometimes framed by elements representing facial features—mouth, fangs, eyes—indicating that the figure is emerging from the interior of an animate reptilian being. The emerging figure often holds in its arms a smaller figure (Fig. 8) that is infantile but stiff and that possesses such non-naturalistic features as a cleft head. Additional humans, often carrying infantile beings, are executed in low relief on the sides of some examples (Fig. 9).

Compositions with seated figures holding infantile beings also occur on a smaller scale as freestanding sculptures.[47] The ancient settings of these works are unknown, but altars were arrayed in public space in Gulf coast centers. At La Venta, altars were displayed in spacious plazas flanked by large platforms. Other monuments arrayed in the plazas—including stelae and a colossal head—depict rulers.[48] Monument 14 at San Lorenzo

Fig. 8 Altar 5, La Venta. Photo by John S. Henderson

Fig. 9 Detail of reliefs on side, Altar 5, La Venta. Photo by John S. Henderson

was located in front of the platform that closed off the north side of a large patio in the central sector of the site. A colossal head was set on the adjacent east platform, and the south platform contained a well that fed a stone-lined aqueduct.[49] An Olmec style image painted above the entrance to Oxtotitlán Cave in Guerrero makes it clear that the "altars" represent, and likely served as, thrones.[50] A richly costumed figure is shown seated on a stylized head with eye and fang elements; the facial features and the cave opening below are perfectly homologous to the zoomorphic faces of Gulf coast altars.[51]

The location of these monuments in civic architectural complexes, along with the labor required to import the stone and to carve and place the monuments, leaves no doubt of their importance in civic life. Their function as thrones connects them specifically to rulers. Some thrones were eventually re-carved, transformed into colossal heads, perhaps portraits of the kings who had sat upon them[52]; such intentional recycling may suggest a desire to perpetuate the symbolic significances of the thrones or transfer their connotations to the individual depicted by later carvings.

The Oxtotitlán imagery provides the strongest possible support for the orthodox interpretation of the recesses in the faces of thrones as representations of cave entrances.[53] The case for identifying thrones with steambaths is equally compelling and in no way inconsistent. Steambaths are closely linked to caves in later Mesoamerican thought, and the same meanings—origin, birth, fertility, motherhood, ancestors, springs, water—are attached to each. In form, these thrones are decidedly architectural. Like steambaths, they are low structures with restricted interiors and small entrances, about the height of a seated figure. In some contexts, caves were conceptualized as structures; like caves, steambaths are animate, so their entrances may be conceptualized as mouths. Figures shown emerging from throne recesses are arguably mothers, since the figures they carry and those in relief on throne sides refer directly to infants. This imagery suggests presentation of newborns to an audience, a practice that would fit perfectly with documented associations of steambaths and with the inferred political dimensions of the monuments.

In contrast with the emerging figures who carry them, the infantile creatures are stiff or flaccid (Fig. 8) and may have cleft heads and non-naturalistic facial features. Depicting newborns as though they are not (yet) fully human would be consistent with later Mesoamerican notions of infants as wild, still part of nature, needing to be brought into the human community through the medium of the steambath[54]; it also reflects the association of unborn infants and steambath-based ritual activities. Infants depicted on throne sides have swept-back cleft heads but they are animate and squirming (Fig. 9). The display of more human infants (by human adults with elaborate headgear—again likely their mothers) may refer to a later stage of the transformation to humanity and to the rituals that brought it about.

Tate's argument that sexuality and gestation are key themes within Olmec imagery highlights the prominence of infants—and, by extension, mothers—in the public art of early Mesoamerica.[55] Whether or not her identification of embryos and fetuses in Olmec monumental art is correct, her analysis leaves no doubt concerning the importance of infants and motherhood in Olmec civic life. Tate also identifies thrones as steambaths though she does not relate them to politics.[56] Her interpretations also lend strong support to the argument that steambath imagery served to legitimatize power by asserting that those who held it belonged to the community by virtue of birth and life-cycle rituals.

The figures emerging from the La Venta Altar 4 (Fig. 7) and San Lorenzo Monument 14 enclosures do not carry infants but instead hold ropes that extend to the sides of the monuments, connecting them to smaller figures carved in relief.[57] This composition has been described, unconvincingly, as a depiction of captor and prisoner; in light of the symbolic meanings attached to steambaths, it is better read as another reference to kinship. Later Mesoamerican imagery represents ropes in connection with birth, specifically as a symbol for umbilical cords,[58] and ropes or cords were widely employed in Mesoamerica as a metaphor for relationships of descent.[59] Ropes associated with steambath imagery at El Tajín may also be related to accession ritual,[60] which offers a variation on the theme of lineage and descent.

Confirmation for these interpretations can be found at Chalcatzingo in the highlands of central Mexico, where the same elements and combinations appear in reliefs carved on exposed rock faces.[61] Monument 1 (Fig. 10), known as El Rey, bears a striking resemblance to Gulf coast thrones.

The focus of the composition is a half-quatrefoil defined by parallel lines that enclose a seated figure holding an object that bears a double scroll. A crossed-band motif with curving projections appears on the upper edge of the quatrefoil; volutes extend from the opening. Elongated elements, often identified as raindrops, appear to fall from three bracket-like designs at the top of the composition. Circular motifs and plant-like elements surround the enclosure. The central theme—a figure seated in an enclosure holding something across its forearms—is shared with three-dimensional thrones; moreover, the specifics of elements and their combinations are the same as those found on Gulf coast thrones, especially Altar 4 at La Venta.[62] The crossed-band with projections—the eye and flame eyebrow motif widely employed in Olmec art—serves to animate Monument 1's enclosure, as do the eyes and fangs on Altar 4. The crossed-band appears on Altar 4 as well, though it is not part of the eye. The vegetal elements at the corners of the quatrefoil echo elements placed along the edge of Altar 4's recess. The figure emerging from the enclosure on Altar 5 at La Venta wears a headdress with the raindrop elements (Fig. 8).[63] Monument 1 is thus, in effect, the same image in cutaway profile.

Monument 1, like the Gulf coast thrones, is often interpreted as a zoomorphic cave, the mouth of a mountain, and/or the earth.[64] Grove reads the brackets as clouds, the elongated elements below as raindrops, and the volutes issuing from the enclosure as mist, noting that they evoke

Fig. 10 Detail, Monument 1, Chalcatzingo. Photo by John S. Henderson

later Mesoamerican notions of clouds forming in caves. These elements, along with the plants, suggest rain and fertility as primary themes and link the imagery with conceptualizations of motherhood. As with the thrones, considering Monument 1 in relation to steambath imagery offers a new, fuller understanding.

The volutes are the key elements and lend themselves at least equally well to identification as steam issuing from a steambath, particularly given their placement at the opening of the demarcated space. Sahagún records *Ayauhcalco* ("Mist House") as an Aztec metaphor for the steambath, and this interpretation seems applicable to Monument 1.[65] The seated figure, which seems to wear a skirt, is even more easily interpreted as a woman,

a mother, than counterparts emerging from throne enclosures, and she holds an object in the same way, as though presenting it (though it is not depicted as an infant). Cloud, raindrop and vegetal elements, and the themes they suggest—water, fertility, and rebirth—are perfectly consonant with the suite of meanings associated with steambaths.

A series of reliefs (Monuments 11, 8, 14, 15, 7, and 6) on the rock face adjacent to Monument 1 feature several of the same elements: double scrolls, volutes, raindrops, and especially depictions of plants, including squash, an important cultigen. This suggests that the reliefs were intended to be understood as a group with a common theme of rain, fertility, and rebirth.[66] Angulo's argument that the upward facing posture of all the zoomorphic figures in the group should be read as references to birth is interesting in the context of steambath imagery.[67] Just above the reliefs, a small channel cut into bedrock that feeds a series of small depressions in the rock near the reliefs may have been used in rituals relating to rain.

Two sculptures on slabs found at the base of the slope are closely related to the upper relief group. Monument 13 depicts the same quatrefoil enclosure, complete with vegetal motifs—including squashes—at the corners. The figure seated within it has a cleft head and snarling mouth, resembling more the infantile figures on thrones than the presenters. Monument 9 presents a frontal view of the quatrefoil, again with plants at the corners.[68] Eyes and a nose make the zoomorphic character of the monument inescapable. The eyes may have eroded traces of crossed-bands, and the eyebrows have protuberances with cleft-like ends recalling the clefts on the quatrefoil of Monument 1. Raindrop elements appear above the nose, along with a small, stylized face. The composition is strikingly similar to the quatrefoil mouth on the roof of the symbolic steambath in the Temple of the Cross at Palenque.[69] The interior of the quatrefoil (i.e. the mouth), is entirely carved away to form an opening whose lower edge is worn, as though by people moving through it. Monument 9 was probably once set atop a long mound bounding the north edge of the central plaza; this sector includes other carved monuments, high-status residences and burials, and a sunken patio construction with the only known throne outside the Gulf coast.[70] Monument 9 was designed to be set vertically, and the wear on the opening suggests that it might have served as an entrance to an enclosure. The restricted size of the passage is perfectly suited to an entry to a steambath, the structure embodied by the quatrefoil mouth.

Early Steambaths, Identity, and the Centralization of Power

Functional steambaths have also been documented in the Olmec world in contexts that indicate connections between motherhood and the constitution of identity and political authority. The earliest documented steambath in Mesoamerica was part of an unusually large household at Puerto Escondido, in the lower Ulúa valley of northern Honduras.[71] This residential complex contrasts with the rest of the community in size, construction technique, craft products, and imported raw materials; it is arguably the household of a chief. The steambath (Fig. 11) had a small circular chamber, 2.5 meters in diameter, with thick, rammed clay walls.

An adobe bench attached to the exterior may have been part of a dressing area. There was no interior feature for sitting and users would have sat on the earthen floor. A nearby pile of burned rock and ash is the detritus of heating stones to produce steam.

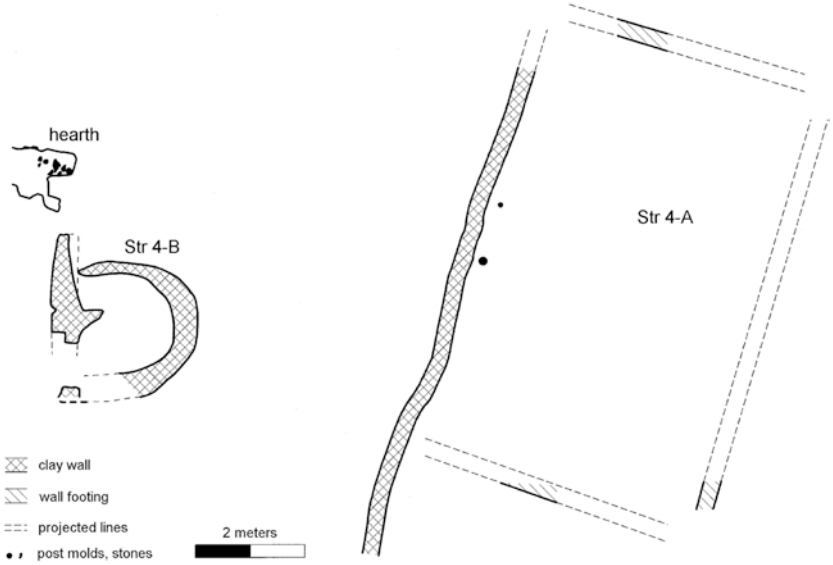

Fig. 11 Plan of Early Formative household (Str 4) with steambath, Puerto Escondido. Drawing by John S. Henderson

The steambath, along with imported raw materials (marine shell, obsidian from distant sources, and, perhaps slightly later, jade) and pottery designs indicating connections with a wider Olmec world reflect practices that created distinction within the community; they represent an early stage in the emergence of differences in status, wealth, and power. Elsewhere in Puerto Escondido, dwellings were smaller and simpler, access to raw materials from distant sources was much more limited, and indications of foreign connections were much less frequent. The construction of internal distinctions within Puerto Escondido drew on wider networks, some of which involved connections with elites in other parts of the Olmec world who employed similar serving vessels and items of bodily adornment. Emphasizing external relationships—especially if it involved assertions of cultural distinctiveness from the rest of the community coupled with claims to authority—was potentially divisive. Rituals involving the steambath, by emphasizing participants' local attachments and identities, their rootedness in the community—all stemming from the house, the steambath at its core, and motherhood—would have served to balance perceptions of foreignness and any hostility they might have engendered.

Concluding Remarks

The elements associated with steambaths—motherhood, fertility, birth, rootedness in the local community, descent, identity, caves, water—had emerged and become widely shared very early in Mesoamerican history. Imagery and the archaeological contexts of precolumbian steambaths associate them with public spaces and with the activities of the nobles who designed those spaces to enhance their status and bolster their claims to authority. At La Venta and San Lorenzo, lords were literally enthroned on images that conflated caves, which functioned as places associated with origin and ancestors, and steambaths, which served as venues of birth and transformation rituals (for instance, coming of age, heir designation, and installation in positions of authority). Steambath imagery drew on the powerful symbolism of the cave of origin and recalled actual rituals in the life cycles of individuals claiming status and authority, who used them to establish their rootedness in the local community and their connection with local ancestors, human and supernatural. By invoking motherhood and local roots, steambath symbolism based claims to special status on local legitimacy.

Its function in marking rootedness in the local community would have made the steambath an especially attractive nexus of symbols for claimants

to power without adequate local roots. A metaphorical connection of the steambath with the womb added a very attractive dimension, since emergence from the steambath, whether actual or imagined, signals rebirth. Lords who were foreign to the communities in which they aspired to authority, or whose assertions of connections with other societies made them seem so—are widely documented in later Mesoamerican polities.[72] Because of their intimate linkage to motherhood and local identities, steambath rituals—or allusions to them in public imagery—could retrospectively provide the local rootedness essential to legitimate authority.

At the beginning of the process through which stratified complex societies developed in Mesoamerica, emergent elites caused steambaths to be built in their relatively large and costly residential complexes. Practices involving steambaths, invoking local dimensions of identity that drew on motherhood, worked to enhance and to legitimize claims of special status and power. Linkages among the house, the steambath, motherhood, local rootedness, and local identity are clear from the beginning, as are the implications for more expansive, public and political arenas. Mesoamerican political symbolism soon deployed the same web of meanings, anchoring an insistence on female dimensions of leadership in steambaths and motherhood. Women, especially by virtue of their generative role as mothers, became central to the formation of individual, community, and broader "ethnic" identities and to the constitution of legitimate authority at every level.

Notes

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